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Urban Attunements:

Potentialities of a City's

Discomfort

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Abstract: This thesis investigates the affective implications of the politics of (non)belonging in the making of places. It asks the question of what a place feels like and it explores, through the concept of "palimpsestuous attunements" its multiple sensorialities (as theorised by Hamilakis). Drawing on the work of Kathleen Stewart, palimpsestuous attunements are defined as a labour to get attuned to the city's multiplicity, its presences and absence, and its (im)materialities. Data was collected through participant observation during eleven months of fieldwork (June 2015 – May 2016) in Latina (Italy). It explores people's use of the hyperbolic statement "there is nothing here" and it proposes a twofold argument. On one side, Latina finds itself in a relation of cruel optimism (drawing on Berlant's work), because of its inability to perform according to the normativity of Italian localism. On the other, ironies, hyperboles, and lamentations are used rhetorically as a political potential to exist otherwise (drawing on the works of Povinelli and Bryant and Knight). Through this analysis, this thesis provides a commentary on contemporary localisms in Italy, which are defined as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries. It also offers an exploration of the affective excess exuded in the urban environment by presences and absences, (im)materialities, and sensorialities.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

I want to dedicate a special thought to my *papà* (d. 2017) *mamma* (d. 2018) and *nonna* (d. 2019). Their passing was the most painful and difficult experience I have ever had to go through. They are all, in their own ways, part of this thesis: my dad taught me how to be curious about life's extraordinariness and never stop searching for its beauty; my mom taught me the difficult art of resilience and for that I am most grateful as it was thanks to her that I could find the strength to finish this thesis, despite all the grieving; my grandmother taught me to "sing so that the pain goes [*canta che ti passa*]" as she so often used to say. Without all they left with me in their very lives and deaths I would not be here.

The other person I will be eternally grateful for is my husband, who has walked with me in every step through my parents' and grandmother's passing and through this PhD. His love, patience, positivity and faith in me have given me the energy I needed to keep going in the darkest of moments. It is thanks to him that I have given a new meaning to love, I have found peace, and I have so much hope for the future. I feel these four people deserve a special place in these acknowledgments.

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There are many people who have left a mark in my PhD journey, starting with colleagues who have given me personal as well as professional support, especially Carmen, Matteo, and Dorien, who have been close not only as colleagues, but also as friends. I dedicate a special 'thank you' also to two dear childhood friends: Francesca Gio and Francesca Leotta, who read drafts of chapters of this thesis and offered their unique *latinense* point of view. I also want to thank all the people who helped me with navigating the bureaucratic maze of the university when I most needed it, as I requested extension after extension during the progression of my mom's illness. Stuart, especially, was incredibly

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In memory of my mom (1951-2018),

for she lives in every word

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed,
but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its
reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if
the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their
perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else."

(Calvino 1974:44)

1. Journeys

This thesis is a collection of journeys. I write of the migratory journeys of people from all over Italy, who live in a city called Latina. This place, however, is not always 'home', was not always a destination, nor a point of departure; it exists in-between. It was, for many, a transient place, and while many have left and moved on to different places throughout the decades, others also remained. It is their stories I explore throughout this thesis; the flows of people, experiences, and lives that make Latina what it is. I also discuss my interlocutors' and my own journeys during fieldwork. We were both involved in our own personal quests: it took long for my interlocutors to embrace my research which, I realised with them towards the end of my fieldwork, was exploring questions they had been asking themselves for years, long before I decided to undertake this project. What is Latina and what does it *feel* like? We all struggled with a strong sense of uneasiness when faced with these questions. For my interlocutors, it meant coming to terms with years of confusion, uncertainty, and instability. Stories, materialities, and

Chapter 1

absences of other places resurfaced as they tried to articulate their relationship with the city, what they thought and *felt* about it, what its meaning was for them. For me, it was both a personal journey, as I embarked in my own quest of what my 'home' was (wondering whether I was in fact returning 'home' for fieldwork), as well as an academic journey to experience and understand Latina under a new lens. What began as separate journeys, became intricately enmeshed through the process of fieldwork. Paths and lives crossed each other, moments and experiences were shared, new meanings were articulated. As I was leaving the field many made me promise that I would return to share my findings, because they themselves did not know how to answer those questions. During fieldwork, I was asked countless times "what have you found out about Latina?", to which I am now finally able to give an answer, albeit a partial and skewed one. My personal fieldwork journey was in many ways not dissimilar from that of my interlocutors, as I was born and grew up in Latina. I left at the age of 17 and fieldwork was the first and last time I returned for longer than just a few weeks. 'Home' was a complicated issue for myself, as well as for my interlocutors. This thesis is a polyphony of all these traces and many others, as people shared with me stories from their lives. We embarked together in a journey through their biographies, we travelled to other places and times as we both reminisced about the past or imagined the future. Throughout this work, Latina reverberates through the voices and silences, presences and absences, narrations and affects that these journeys evoked.

The doctorate journey is often split into a 'before' and an 'after': before the field – when I prepared to get back to Italy to carry out my research –, and after the field – when I returned to Durham to analyse my data and write this thesis. During the second half of my personal and academic journeys, this thesis became more deeply intimate. My parents and grandmother passed away as I was writing this work. As my mom and grandma were

Chapter 1

part of my everyday life while I was home to carry out fieldwork, they often appear in my fieldwork notes and throughout this thesis; my family was part of my research. I only now realise how important those fieldnotes are, not only for research purposes. Fieldwork was the last time I spent longer than just a few weeks with my mom and grandma; these fieldnotes and the experience of fieldwork have both a scholarly value and an even more important personal and intimate significance. As Okely (2007) writes, there is a form of a very personal bodily memory we carry with us after fieldwork; for me this memory is intimately and affectively connected to memories of my late mom and grandma, it is embodied within me. My presence and my life in Latina pass through them: it is through them that my connection to Latina was created in the first place and, therefore, my story is rooted in their memories and lives. My personal journey was intricately connected to their journeys and it becomes – with all other journeys – the story of this city. This thesis (which I completed after my mother's, grandmother's, and father's passing) is also, therefore, a deeply personal journey.

Nonetheless, this is first and foremost the journey of a city, as all these personal experiences, lives, and memories converge in this place, at this time. As Massey writes, this is "a notion of place where specificity (local uniqueness, a sense of place) derives not from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of relative isolation—now to be disrupted by globalization—but precisely from the absolute particularity of the mixture of influences found there" (1999:22). The city in question lies just South of Rome and just North of Naples, in central Italy. It is today called Latina, it was once known as Littoria, and did not exist before 1932. Its population is close to a 127 thousand people. This city, unknown to many, has been struggling with finding its place in Italy, in the world, and in people's lives. At the question "What is Latina all about?", I was told countless times "nothing". I became increasingly interested in finding the meaning of "nothing" and how

Chapter 1

my interlocutors felt about it. Ultimately, I also hope this to be a journey for the reader who, through my words, will travel through the narratives and emotions of an Italian city and its inhabitants, through their stories and beyond, in the sensorial and affective realms.

2. Movement

This thesis is also about movement. I consider here three meanings of movement. One has to do with the physical act of moving one's own body. The second, concerns moving as a metaphorical shift, as when one shifts (moves) one's own perception. The last meaning embraces, instead, the idea of being moved by emotions, the senses, affects. All these forms of movement, and its counterpart *stasis*, return over and over again throughout this thesis. Because of multiple migrations, physical movement has been a fundamental aspect of my interlocutors' biographies and memories. Many of them have arrived in Latina from different Italian regions, across the peninsula. The impact migrations have had for the city and my interlocutors emerges from the ethnographic material, which reveals how this one place does, in fact, encompass many places. Latina is also (but not exclusively) a chorus of materialities, sensorialities, and connections to elsewhere. Internal migratory flows are a common phenomenon in Italian history (Capello 2015; Colucci 2012; Gallo 2012; Pipyrou 2010; Pipyrou 2016a). Latina is not unique in being the destination of migrants, or a place of transition in search for a better life. Nonetheless, it is a peculiar case for two reasons. The first one is that it hosted one of the biggest refugee camps in Europe, multiplying connections and flows to faraway places and becoming even more of a transient place. The second, is that no one claims autochthony or provenance from the city. Everyone always states s/he comes from somewhere else. This complicates considerably the multiple meanings of 'home', for which there was never an easy definition. The coming together of people from different areas also raised important questions regarding the relationship between Latina and other

localisms, and between localisms themselves. This thesis offers, therefore, a contribution to the anthropology of Italy, which has often dealt with the duality of localisms and the nation. The case of Latina provides an interesting lens through which to analyse the presence of localisms, as well as the existence of the Italian nation-state, and the tensions their relation produces (Ballinger 2003; Pipyrou 2016a). Within these reflections, I wish to dedicate some space to power-producing kinesis, to the potentiality of "kinesis across multiple relations [and detachments]" (Pipyrou 2016a:23), that creates a space for "political representation".

Migrations are deeply sensorial and emotional journeys. Inspired by Hamilakis (2014) and his proposition that the senses are infinite, I wonder whether I am writing of a *sense* of movement. With this I mean the affective, sensorial, and material implications of movement, in all its forms. Starting from the physical and metaphorical movement inherent in migrations, as I described above, I strongly focus on the affective realms, on how we are moved and we move others affectively and sensorially. As in the case of migration, which is a kind of movement that deeply involves the body (first and foremost because it implies physically moving someplace else, but also more metaphorically because the body 'moves' and adjusts in the new environment), I explore the ways in which bodies are at the centre of the experience of movement through affects and the senses. Ethnographically, I delved sensorially in experiences of 'other' foods and languages, and on the affective toll of not belonging, or belonging otherwise. Through this kinaesthetic[1] exploration (Hamilakis 2014:22), I delve into a sensorial experience of places, as an involvement of the body in its entirety. Through their movement, bodies constitute places and *vice versa*, their boundaries overflow one into the other; in the kinaesthetic experience one of the other, bodies and places become one another (Casey

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[1] Hamilakis defines kinaesthesia as "the multi-sensory experience of the moving body" (2014:22).

Chapter 1

1996). With this in mind, I was likewise conscious of my own body, the space it occupied, the impact it had on others, and its movement through place. Some of the self-reflections throughout this thesis were developed out of this self-awareness. The multi-sensoriality the body produces and is involved in, promotes a constant engagement with the environment it is surrounded by. To more accurately portray such a connection between the body, the senses, and the environment I follow Pink's suggestion to shift from embodiment to emplacement (2011). I always consider, therefore, the body's multi-sensoriality *in* place and *through* place. The body, the senses, and the environment all resonate with affective charges. As affects move between objects and bodies, they also reside in places, which come to be charged with intensities (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Pink 2011). In Latina, my interlocutors strongly expressed this 'excess' in the uneasiness they felt towards the city. In Navaro-Yashin's words: "the environment exerts a force on human beings in its own right […] there is something in space, in material objects, or in the environment that exceeds, or goes further and beyond human imagination, but that produces an affect that may be experienced by human beings, all the same." (2012:18). These intensities were not only experienced by my interlocutors but reverberated also in silences and absences, giving them form despite their apparent invisibility.

Alongside the environment, I consider the importance of materialities and their encounter with bodies. Ahmed (2014) argues that affects are produced at the encounter between bodies and objects, and get transferred as qualities of those objects. As I analysed the ethnographic material, I realised, however, that the encounter between bodies and the absence of materialities produced strong affective charges. Absences and bodies are given shape through their encounter and the materialisation of absences' presence (see also Navaro-Yashin 2009; Navaro-Yashin 2012). Focusing on materialities encourages the exploration of the body in its physicality, the space it occupies, and the

Chapter 1

tangibility of its presence – or absence (Casey 1996; Navaro-Yashin 2012). This is particularly evident when I discuss the ethnography of foods and languages, which travel through bodies and through the environment, are dissolved in them, are felt and produced through them. The environment's and materialities' affective charges resonate in all these processes. I became more aware of these issues when I visited, a few months after their passing, my mother's and grandmother's empty homes. Not only did the experience of loss become much more relevant and significant in my life, which encouraged me to pay more attention to the deeply personal and intimate dimension in my interlocutors' migratory experience of leaving a place, moving to a new place, changing their lives, and losing connections; it also made much more evident the importance of the encounter between bodies, materialities, and environments. My grandmother's and mother's homes were very familiar places to me. Their physicality remained true, tangible: they existed somewhere, they were where they had always been. Nonetheless, they took a completely different form, meaning, and shape in the aftermath of my relatives' deaths. Their emptiness was a feeling I had never experienced before and those familiar places became from one day to the next unrecognisable, strange, they became the memory of what they had once been. This experience made me much more aware of shifting between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the home and the unknown. I became aware that things more often than not are neither or. As I felt such a duality towards my own private familiar places, I became more aware of the mixed feelings my interlocutors had towards the city. I realised in an even more striking way that places are made of people, of those who inhabit them, of their journeys and the plurality of their experiences, their lives, of fleeting and everlasting moments, the encounters that produce such intense affective charges.

Chapter 1

Through bodies, senses, environments, materialities, and affects my interlocutors got attuned to this place, to Latina. They got attuned to its multiplicity. In other words, they were always exposed and involved in the making of the city, in experiencing it, *feeling* it, embodying it, reacting to it, living it. They became part of it and the city became a part of them. Attuning oneself to the city meant that my interlocutors and myself were always constantly part of this place; the city was always already lived, and at the same it was always becoming (Stewart 2007). We belonged and contributed to the constant flow of affects, materialities, bodies, and senses from which places – this particular place – emerge. These charges and intensities were almost imperceptible, and yet they were *felt*, they resonated, they were an excess that was always there and always changing. In this, they were inconspicuously ordinary. It was their ordinariness that let them belong to and constitute life, the experience of a place: they *were* the place. In the experience of the city, these charges were always brewing, changing, flowing, constantly moving from one thing to the next (Ahmed 2014; Berlant 2011). Amongst these flows, materialities, and bodies, Latina found itself often 'in-between', 'out-of-place', and 'out-of-time'. At times, it balanced itself, at other times it was swept away by the affective forces its encounters produced and circulated. Between these tensions, it existed in an impasse, a *stasis*; but it also expressed its potentiality to become something else, to exist otherwise.

3. Tensions

As this brief introduction has discussed, in this thesis Latina emerges increasingly out of tensions, in the ever-changing and yet stagnant impasse of being 'in-between', it is "already lost or still ahead, just beyond reach" (Stewart 1996:16), while bearing in itself an alternative mode of existence (Povinelli 2011). For the sake of description, I summarise these tensions as follows, even though they constitute flows; they are inherently continuous, dynamic, messy, contaminated, and contagious. The first tension exists

between everything and nothing. As I mentioned above, my interlocutors often replied that in Latina there was nothing. Conversations were often interrupted by this statement, as 'nothing' does not require any further investigation, it does not spark any interest, it is empty. Despite the struggles to move beyond this 'nothing', I became increasingly interested in exploring its implications. What did 'nothing' hide? What did it mean? What did it stand for? As this thesis argues, nothing is never *just* nothing. Following Papadopoulou, I considered nothing as a 'no-thing': a perceived and existing absence, a residue, rather than a void; "absence is" (Papadopoulou 2016:370). The 'nothing' my interlocutors so frequently used to describe Latina became therefore *something*, it became everything. It was this 'nothing' that was holding within itself my interlocutors' feelings, experiences, lives, and perceptions of the city. I discovered how 'nothing' was an attunement that amounted to *something* (Berlant 2011; Stewart 2007); it was a constant vibration, a flow moving between bodies, materialities, environments. It was narrated, it was charged with affects, it belonged to multiple pasts as much as to multiple futures. Therefore, I explored ethnographically on one side how my interlocutors' perception of the city around them made Latina emerge as 'nothing'. On the other side, I delved into an alternative meaning of 'nothing'. Rather than understanding it as opposed to a presence (or *some*-thing), I considered the potentiality that it was 'nothing' that held *some*thing in its very existence. It was in the interplay between *some*thing and 'nothing', their being part one of the other, and in the meanings my interlocutors attributed to them, that I developed some of the analyses in this thesis.

The other evident tension is that between absence and presence. As I mentioned above, absence is not just nothing, it has its own presence, tangibility, reverberations. This is very evident in the ethnographic material. An absent building became in my interlocutors' stories a vivid and sensorial presence, almost like an absent limb (Papadopoulou 2016).

Chapter 1

Physical absence was often the shadow of what had once been present which, nonetheless, was not inexistent. Absent places were constantly being evoked through the sensorialities and materialities of foods and sounds. Moreover, as I mentioned above, absences permeated on bodies and circulated affects. In the case of a specific building, its absence was recalled, pointed out, it was repeatedly made evident. As people talked about it, remembered it, and imagined it, the building's absence took its own shape amongst other buildings. It was almost as if it existed precisely because of its absence. It became "affectively present" (Navaro-Yashin 2012:14). So, if affects are produced and circulate at the encounter between bodies and objects (Ahmed 2014), I argue that they also do so in the encounter between absent/present bodies and absent/present objects (see also Navaro-Yashin 2009; Navaro-Yashin 2012). On the other hand, I also noticed how present elements, tangible and visible, were often forgotten, overlooked. In other words, they became invisible and absent in the landscape. This duality of presences and absences (as both present and absent) is a recurring trope of this thesis.

Throughout this work, I explore the implications of the interplay between materiality and immateriality, a tension evoked by the discussion on absences and presences. I found this particularly important when discussing foods and sounds. Both display material qualities, and both are to some extent tangible[2]. Moreover, there is a materiality to the body and the corporeal experience of foods and sounds. The act of ingesting food transforms its materiality, it dissolves it, disintegrates it and through digestion it becomes part of the body itself. Equally, when sound is produced – for example as a voice –, it is either heard and therefore it is dispersed again in the body, or it is dispersed in the atmosphere. Reflecting upon this, I became interested in the materiality and immateriality of the built environment. I noticed the temporal elements in the embodiment of foods and sounds

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[2] In chapter 5 I explain the tangibility of sound.

Chapter 1

mentioned above and, therefore, I inquired in the ways materiality and immateriality become one another across multiple temporalities. With this in mind, I focused on the urban environment to explore how affects are produced not only through the present materiality or immateriality of buildings, but also through their past and future materialities and immaterialities, coexisting together at any one time. Following my argument about absences and presences, my interlocutors, therefore, got attuned and experienced the world around them as both at the same time material *and* immaterial.

Migration and movement left my interlocutors with many connections to absent and faraway places (which are distributed and made present through practices, materialities, memories, and narratives). These connections made evident some tensions between local and national dimensions. As I discuss the presence and meaning of localisms in Italy, however, the two are revealed to be more and more constitutive of each other, rather than two separate and opposing spheres. Latina, because of its many migrations, developed as a heterogeneous city, where people coming from different Italian regions have lived together for decades. Everyone has carried with themselves practices and knowledge from their places of origins. Often localisms are practiced, displayed, and negotiated in my interlocutors' daily lives. Tensions exist, therefore, between different localisms and their expressions. Amongst countless negotiations, contestations, and adjustments, my interlocutors find their own ways to express and practice localisms, which involve the city as much as their absent places of origins. As localisms' meanings are negotiated, so is the presence (and absence) of the nation. In this thesis, I discuss how public narratives create paradigms, in which Latina does not always fit. Among these tensions, between localisms and between localisms and the nation, Latina falls in-between, through the cracks. It does neither fulfil imaginaries of localisms, nor it belongs to the linearity of public national discourses, with strong affective repercussions.

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Chapter 1

Within these tensions, I identify one last dichotomy. Throughout this thesis, I implicitly address the existence of both the daily experience of the city, as well as its 'metanarration' or *genius loci* (Scarpelli 2013:62). In the chapters that follow, I often discuss both my interlocutors' daily experience with the making of relations and detachments, the affects they perceived, their practices, and the ways they engaged with the city. I also often analyse, however, the imaginations and narratives through which my interlocutors described the city. It is at the intersection between these two that the city happens, emerges, is produced, contested, and negotiated. The city becomes, thus, an animating and animated entity. It is distributed between the experience and lives of my interlocutors, and their desires, fantasies, dreams, imaginations, and narratives.

I have decided to describe these tensions in a way that could be perceived to be overly simplified. My aim, however, was to introduce them to give an overall vision of the themes that emerge frequently in this thesis. These tensions appeared over and over again as I was analysing data and writing. The more they became evident to me, the more I realised they were not separable; they were, in fact, expressions one of the other. Their indissolubility revealed that one was the other and they all coexisted in the ethnography. Even more tensions resurface throughout this work – such as the one between *istories* and History in chapters 4 and 7 as argued by Herzfeld (1987). My intention here, is to highlight the fact that in the oscillation between these tensions a force – a charge, an intensity, an energy – is produced, from which Latina emerges. I argue that it is this in-betweenness that makes the city, it (re)produces it, and so it (re)produces the affective charges I so often discuss. It is this constant movement, this constant almost imperceptible change, this constant going from one thing to the next (Berlant 2011; Stewart 2007) that I describe throughout this work.

Chapter 1

4. Outline

Throughout this brief introduction, I have already outlined the majority of this thesis' themes. However, for clarity and guidance, I will provide a short summary of each chapter before concluding this introduction. The chapter that follows introduces the literature on Latina and beyond. I discuss the ways in which Latina has always been described in relation to its past. I raise a critique to this approach and propose an alternative theoretical analysis. I focus on the city's affects to explore how a place emerges from its multiplicity. In doing so, I also address theoretically the anthropology of Italy, specifically for what concerns localisms and their meaning in contemporary Italy. I, thus, propose a working definition of localisms to take into account their composition at the intersection between affects, materialities, environments, politics, temporalities, and imaginations. I argue that a closer look at Latina's affects reveals that its multiplicity (of materialities, environments, politics, temporalities, and imaginations) offers two analytical routes: one strictly connected to localisms and the other as a potential to exist otherwise. In chapter 3, I focus on this thesis' methodological concerns. I use Pink's definition of 'ethnographic place' (2009) in order to discuss the ways in which Latina emerges as an ethnographic place. I write of some considerations I made during fieldwork, such as the issue of 'home' and of 'native anthropology' or the fact that I carried out fieldwork with my own family[3]. I also discuss how this description of Latina (this version of the city) was crafted beyond fieldwork also during the analysis and writing-up processes and how these have influenced this rendition of the city.

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[3] I wrote this chapter before the passing of my mother and grandmother. I am certain, if I were to write this chapter now, that it would be very different from what it is. However, I feel that my reflections on what it meant to carry out fieldwork with my own family and then experiencing their passing belong to a different work.

Chapter 1

Chapter 4 is the first analytical chapter. Here, through stories of migration, I offer a partial response to the criticisms raised in the literature review. I tell a story of the city through my interlocutors' voices. In doing so, I tell many stories, all of which belong to Latina and constitute it. I focus particularly on the power of narratives to create a space for both intimate biographies and the city to interweave. In doing so, I pay particular attention to the affectivity of narratives and on the non-linearity of narration, which evokes multiple pasts, presents, and futures in its constitution of the city. Chapter 5 is divided into two parts. In the first part, I focus again on migrations to discuss Italian localisms and their presence in Latina through foods and languages. I speak of the 'heterogeneous city', to portray the presence of multiple connections to other places in Latina. In the second part, I focus more closely on the sensorial and affective experience of these localisms and how they are distributed across materialities, affects, bodies, and environments. I argue for a new understanding of localisms as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries. In doing so, I recognise the importance of kinship (both as a practice and as a blood relation), the past, place (and the connections to it through kinship, birth, and the soil), the knowledge of a place, and of imaginations of places and localisms. Chapter 6 offers two analyses for Latina. I consider the affective presence of localisms in order to argue that on one side, Latina finds itself in a relation of cruel optimism[4] (Berlant 2011), as the existence of localisms themselves negates Latina's existence. On the other hand, I also propose that my interlocutors' use of 'nothing' can be interpreted as the existence of a potential way of being otherwise; in other words, it represents an alternative to the normativity of localisms in Italy. This has strong affective implications that can be *felt* throughout the city. Before concluding this chapter, I present some ethnographic material on the built environment and discuss how my interlocutors engage with it, given their feelings towards the city. Chapter 7 returns to the issue of

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[4] A relation of cruel optimism "exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant 2011:1).

Chapter 1

temporality. I draw on my discussion in chapter 4 to discuss the presence of multiple pasts, presents, and futures. However, I do so through an analysis of public historical narratives as determining who belongs and who does not to a unified and linear national narrative. In doing so, I identify Latina as 'out-of-time', as dissonant among all these public national discourses and perceptions of history and time.

Chapter 2

" "Cities also believe they are the work of the mind or of chance, but neither the one nor the other suffices to hold up their walls. You take delight not in a city's seven or seventy wonders, but in the answer it gives to a question of yours." "Or the question it asks you, forcing you to answer, like Thebes through the mouth of the Sphinx. " "

(Calvino 1974:44)

This chapter has been divided into two parts: I first discuss the literature review and research question and I then delve into some theoretical reflections. The literature review's aim is twofold. My primary aim is to present in depth the literature on Latina, from the period immediately before its foundation to today. While doing so, I also discuss some works that have provided an analytical and ethnographic inspiration to my own analysis of the city. Given its origins as a new town established by the fascist regime, Latina is often associated with the regime and its political and historical characteristics. I argue that this is causing the town to be researched, studied, and analysed only through its connections to that specific historical period, as a perusal of the literature demonstrates. This approach overlooks the societal, economic, and historical changes the town has undergone from its foundation onwards, while also failing to take into consideration the complexities of individuals' lived experiences. This study covers precisely this methodological and analytical gap. In the first section, my aim is to show how most of the literature has approached the study of Littoria/Latina in relation to a specific historical, political, economic, and social context, thus associating it with the

fascist regime, which governed in Italy from 1922 to 1943 (these twenty years are often referred to as the *ventennio*). In the second section, I discuss those works that go beyond such a portrayal and take into consideration the decades from 1945 onwards, when the city acquired the name of Latina. These works offer a different perspective on the city through alternative methodologies and approaches. I conclude with the research questions that have emerged form a perusal of the literature, before turning to the second part of this chapter, which explores the thesis' theoretical background.

I begin the second part with a reflection on Latina's absences. Following Doreen Massey, I then discuss a theorisation of places as relations, to then propose the use of the concept of 'palimpsestuous attunements' to describe my interlocutors' lived experiences of multiple relations and detachments. In the third section, I enquire into Italian localisms and propose a new definition: localisms as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries. In the last section, I draw all these elements together and, focusing on the literature on affect, I address theoretically the question of what Latina *feels* like.

Part 1: Literature Review and Research Question

1. Littoria/Latina

This section presents the literature on the city of Littoria/Latina, presenting those works focusing, firstly, on the years before 1945 when the city was still called Littoria and secondly, after 1945 when it was called Latina. Most literature refers to two names as the city changed name through a deliberation adopted by four members of the provincial committee of Littoria (*Deputazione provinciale di Littoria*) on the 31st of January 1945 (Ghirardo 2003a:3)[5]. Through a separation of the literature into two macro-categories, I

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[5] I have used the translated version of Ghirardo's book as it was published in Latina specifically to celebrate the 70° year of the town's foundation. It also includes some contributions by local politicians and journalists. For original work see Ghirardo 1989.

intend to highlight the focus most scholarly works have adopted when discussing Littoria/Latina.

Littoria/Latina was built in 1932 and was erected at the heart of fascist rule, when the fascist government was already consolidated in Italy and the war which brought the end of the fascist experience was still a decade away. This interdependence of the regime with the city has contributed to an image of Littoria/Latina as a representative 'new town', or 'foundation town'. The literature has framed such a discussion of 'new towns', and Littoria/Latina more specifically, within three major themes: the new towns' architectural features, the *bonifica* (the project through which a considerable area of marshes called *Agro Pontino* was drained to make place for agricultural development and the construction of urban settlements), and the regime's propaganda. Before proceeding with the analysis, it is important to stress that academic literature on the city is generally quite sparse. While there are some scholarly exceptions mentioned in this review, non-academic works (mostly journalistic ones) are often cited both in academia and beyond, as they provide representations of the town through rich collections of documents and secondary sources (see e.g. Cardarelli 2014; Folchi 1995; Polselli 2012; Sottoriva 1977). I now turn to the literature representing Latina as a 'new town'.

1.1. Latina as Littoria: The 'New Town'

Most literature describes Littoria/Latina as a 'new town' (*città nuova*) or 'foundation town'. The name itself ('*new* town') raises the important question of what these towns are new to (*new* being a relative term), which inevitably connects them to their foundation. It contextualises them within a very specific historical period and as the product of a set of economic, social, and political circumstances. As Gaborit (2010) very clearly states in her work, the definition of the term 'New Towns' (across different countries) is ambiguous and very broad. New Towns have been built in most countries across the world, from

Chapter 2

antiquity[6] to contemporary times[7]. The fascist regime launched the project to build several 'new towns', which was the result of historical events, state policies, and interventions characterising the fascist *ventennio,* which had a wide impact on Italy and its population. The foundation of new towns came about during a historical period that witnessed the consolidation of a fascist government in a climate of post-WWI complications and the presence of numerous veterans who, in turn, would become the first settlers of the newly built towns (Mariani 1976). Moreover, the government had to deal with the added obstacle of unemployment (Mariani 1976; Bo Frandsen 2001). For these reasons, one can understand the construction of new towns in relation to those regime's policies that aimed at creating a self-sufficient nation – a status called *autarchia,* or autocracy (Caprotti and Kaïka 2008; Protasi and Sonnino 2003) –, advocating for anti-urban policies – called *ruralizzazione,* or ruralisation –, and a demographic policy to increase Italy's population (Caprotti 2007a; Protasi and Sonnino 2003; Bo Frandsen 2001; Caprotti 2008). Therefore, most literature presents new towns as a product of the convergence of these factors and as a pivotal part of national economic development (Caprotti and Kaïka 2008:619). This consequently crates a strong relation between new towns and the fascist regime, as they came to embody the regime's interventions. The works I mention in this part of the review take into consideration different aspects of the constitution of new towns and explore their planning and development in broader contexts, while stressing their fundamental relation with the regime. More generally, they contextualise the towns' foundation within the historical and political events that characterised the fascist regime and its policies (Scricco 2014).

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[6] The name 'Naples' itself comes from 'Nea Polis', or new city (Gaborit 2010:24). In this review I focus on the ethnography of new towns built in the XX century.

[7] In Italy, the debate on 'new towns' surrounds primarily the use of the word 'town' within fascist anti-urban policies. According to different interpretations, between 12 and 147 new towns have been identified. Littoria/Latina, nonetheless, is always classified as a 'new town', despite the broad range of definitions. For the debate on what is a new town see Caprotti, 2007; Mariani, 1976, p. 195; Nuti & Martinelli, 1981, p. 8; Pennacchi, 2010; Weiner, 1976.

Chapter 2

In particular, Littoria/Latina is often envisioned as an emblematic new town for three main reasons. Firstly, it was the earliest to be built[8] (Ghirardo 2003a:101; Mariani 1982:101; Stefinlongo 2003); secondly, two years after its foundation, it became the provincial capital of a newly formed province (Mariani 1976:252; Mariani 1982:241; Ghirardo 2003a:101) and its largest (Harland and Liguori 2016:9) and most important (Burdett 2000:16; Stefinlongo 2003) administrative centre. Lastly, it stood in the centre of the hierarchical order (between smaller towns, farmhouses, and small villages) amongst the newly built centres (Caprotti 2008:953). The literature draws on these factors to describe the exceptional status of Littoria/Latina as a 'new town', embodying the emblematic elements of new towns built by the fascist regime. Even more recent works (e.g. Stefinlongo 2003 whose work is a contemporary sociolinguistic study of the city of Latina) highlight the exceptional nature of Latina as a fascist 'new town'. Stefinlongo acknowledges the existence of other factors that affected the city's foundation, such as the role of different migratory waves in the city's history that gave a heterogeneous and diverse character to its population. She, nonetheless, continues to stress a strong and direct connection to the regime, since "everyone knows [Latina] is the biggest and most important of the 'new towns' " (2003:83). Her work frames Latina as exceptional, as a direct product of the regime, built on the void left by the drainage of the marshes[9]. In order to understand Littoria/Latina in relation to its fascist past, many scholars also looked at architectural and urban features of the city at the time of its foundation, examining how the *bonifica* and the marshes contributed to a vision of the city as a redeemed land, thus embodying the principles of fascist propaganda. I will now inquire into each of these themes, starting with the city's architecture.

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[8] There is some debate regarding this as definitions of 'new town' are not consistent (see Pennacchi 2010 and n3). However, Littoria/Latina was the first town to be built in the Pontine Plain (*Agro Pontino*) after the *bonifica*.

[9] It is important to notice that Stefinlongo, nonetheless, carried out research through fieldwork, presenting, therefore, an innovative method of data collection when compared to the majority of works, which used primarily secondary sources.

Chapter 2

The new towns, and Littoria/Latina amongst them, represent a fundamental element within the regime's political and ideological development. Even when the shortcomings of these projects have been discussed (e.g. Mangullo 2015; Mariani 1976), all references are made to the towns at the time of their foundation. Works have discussed at length the way in which fascist politics and ideology were inscribed in the newly built urban landscape (Ghirardo 2003a; Mariani 1976). Scholars have stressed how Littoria/Latina emerged as a place whose architectural and urban shape was deeply embedded within the social, ideological, and political structure of the regime (Scricco 2014). Analysing the new towns in their architectural and urban features becomes a way to inquire into "the entire fascist experience" (Nuti and Martinelli 1981:8). As the provincial capital, Littoria shows "the most decorative characters" (Ghirardo 2003a:96), its development plan also reflects its role as first town to be built and as central to the province (Ghirardo 2003a:101). The town acquired in its material form more urban connotations than other centres (Ghirardo 2003a:104), but this reflected, as the literature describes, the gradual change of the regime's attitude towards the town and its international recognition. Littoria/Latina turned from rural centre to provincial capital. It came to symbolise not only the regime's ideology in its entirety (embodying many of its policies), but also "the physical representation of the alibi that Mussolini constitutes in front of Italy, but even more so in front of international powers" (Mariani 1982:145)[10], acquiring the status of a "positive symbol of Fascism" (Bo Frandsen 2001:78). In its architectural style, envisioned as a product of the fascist regime and its ideology, Littoria/Latina's form became "*the* symbolic expression of Fascism" (Sparke 2001:272). Much of the city's heritage is still standing today. Latina is not alone in experiencing the uncomfortable presence of contested heritage. As MacDonald has extensively discussed, contested heritage (in her case heritage belonging to Germany's Nazi past) is an uncomfortable physical presence

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[10] All works written originally in Italian have been translated by the author of this thesis.

Chapter 2

(2009; 2006b; 2006a). The politics of how this heritage is dealt with and interpreted in the present call into question re-elaborations of the past and visions of the future, which create tensions in the present and involve different actors. MacDonald raises important questions on the material and immaterial presence of the built environment and of heritage at the intersections between places and temporality and places and politics (2009; 2006b; 2006a). Her work has contributed greatly to my understanding of the role of governments, institutions, as well as individuals and communities in the shaping of the built environment and its meanings. The past is often contentiously narrated, interpreted, and given politically significant meanings in the present. These re-elaborations have strong implications for the materiality and immateriality of places, which are continuously the object of interventions and changes. This is evident also in Italy's contested fascist heritage (Benton 1999; Arthurs 2010; Malone 2017). When Littoria/Latina's architectural and urban forms are discussed, they are strongly associated to the regime and such connections become even stronger when the city is discussed in relation to the *bonifica*.

The *bonifica* is the term used to describe the massive land reclamation project undertaken by the regime[11], whose engineering efforts drained the marshes in the area where Littoria/Latina was to be built. As outlined above, since this project was deeply related to the regime and its policies, so were the towns that were built in the Pontine Plain. It is particularly interesting to look at how the newly drained area is represented as a "*tabula rasa*" (Bo Frandsen 2001:75), a blank canvas on which new communities were allocated (Tvinnereim 2007). The swamplands are depicted as a harsh environment plagued by malaria that required to be extirpated (Caprotti 2007b; Caprotti 2007a; Mariani 1982; Snowden 2008). Since the *bonifica* was the first successful project to drain the marshes (Caprotti 2007a; Caprotti 2007b; Mariani 1976), its magnitude encapsulates at best the

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[11] The *bonifica* began in 1927 (Mariani 1976) and was not completed until the 1950s (Mangullo 2015), after the end of the fascist *ventennio* and of WWII.

regime's policies (Mangullo 2015; Mariani 1976). Littoria/Latina, as a result, is portrayed as the coronation of this project and acquires a strong and important symbolic character as it takes the form of a new colony founded on a newly conquered land (Bo Frandsen 2001:75; Harland and Liguori 2016). New towns have often been the result of state-sponsored endeavours and they make evident the role of governments in the making of places. This is particularly noticeable in colonial contexts, where new towns embodied the colonial regime's propagandistic ideologies. The making of new towns was, therefore, embedded in relations of power that undermined local populations; urban planning and the built environment were used as powerful tools of control and definition of the 'Other' (Gandhi 2011; Rabinow 2014; Fuller 1988). In colonial contexts more specifically, the building of new towns was seen as a political tool of social control (Rabinow 2014; Fuller 1988; Gandhi 2011). This is important to bear in mind as the fascist regime also embarked in these colonial interventions (including Littoria/Latina and other new towns) and used architecture to serve its own ideologies (Fuller 1988; Arthurs 2010)[12]. The literature, therefore, discusses Littoria/Latina as a place that emerges out of the marshes, out of the *bonifica*, and out of the towns built afterwards. Gruppuso (2014), for instance, points out that a particular image of the marshes and of the *bonifica* (as a wild environment to be replaced by civilisation) has also been characteristic of the regime's propaganda.

To strengthen further the idea that Littoria/Latina represents a new town many scholars have also analysed what role political propaganda played during the development of the *bonifica* and of the new towns. In this regard, the *Duce* – Benito Mussolini - was portrayed as "Italy's great physician" (Snowden 2008:510) and the propaganda renamed

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[12] Post-WWII new towns have also often been sponsored by governments, however, given the historical events of WWII, their aim was more inclusive and there are examples of attempts at diversification within communities (Epstein 2011; Burkhart 1981). Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind the implications of top-down planning interventions embedded within governments' political objectives (Gaborit 2010; Finnegan 1998; Epstein 2011; Burkhart 1981; Holston 1989).

Chapter 2

Littoria/Latina as the "pearl of the *Duce*" (Mangullo 2015:21). Mussolini's discourses are also often reported to demonstrate the importance the *bonifica* and the building of the 'new towns' held for the regime (Mariani 1976). The project of the *bonifica* was publicly celebrated for being efficient and quick (Mangullo 2015:27). What began as a relatively small project (Mariani 1976:61) quickly became the flagship of the fascist regime. Foreign journalists granted extensive coverage to this and they over-estimated the figures of the *bonifica*, which came across as being even more striking than those in the national press (Mariani 1976:180–181). Mariani notices how without such strong propagandistic efforts the building of the 'new towns' could have equally been interpreted as "the story of the building of five little towns a bit pretentious and a bit clumsy" (1976:179). Bo Frandsen goes as far as to claim that "no other Italian region could claim a similar position in the official propaganda that turned the resurrected Agro Pontino into a model for the future" (2001:70). Moreover, the regime sponsored a number of films portraying the town (Liguori 2012) and the marshes (Gruppuso 2014) as two opposing environments, one civilised and the other to be conquered and eliminated. These films present the city as a redeemed land - one of the documentaries, for instance, was titled 'In the redeemed Pontine Marshes' (Gruppuso 2014:67). The ideological and political value of the *bonifica* for the regime, which characterised the newly drained lands as a *tabula rasa* and a virgin territory (Stefinlongo 2003:84), only reinforced the constitution of Littoria/Latina as a place embedded within the fascist endeavour of the *bonifica*, thus a direct product of fascist interventions.

The most important feature emerging from these works lies in their approach to the study of Littoria/Latina vis-à-vis the rise of fascism in Italy, its policies, and its propaganda, thus focusing exclusively towards a study of the past. Even the titles of some of these works reveal such connection: (*Mussolini's cities* [Caprotti, 2007b]; *Fascism and 'new*

towns' [translated title of the work by Mariani, 1976]; *The new towns of fascist Italy and of the America of the New Deal* [Ghirardo, 1989/2003]). For instance, Mariani's work from 1982, despite being titled *LATINA: History of a city*[13] (1982), dedicates only a brief chapter to contemporary Latina. While all these works provide important and valuable insights into the city's planning, birth, and development, they nonetheless identify Latina as a place that emerges primarily in relation to its past. The perusal of the literature shows how Littoria/Latina emerges as a place associated to the fascist regime, depicted as a product of a specific historical, social, economic, and political context. Particularly, this association solidifies further in the literature's discussion of the city's architecture in relation to the *bonifica* and the regime's propaganda. Littoria/Latina appears as an emblematic place whose symbolism is inevitably linked to the fascist regime. While the insights of these works are important, they nonetheless present some limitations.

Their focus is primarily historical and/or architectural, and methodologically they rely on documentary, archival, or secondary sources. While they create an image of the town as a product of the fascist regime, which explains its foundation, they overlook the changes the town has undergone after the fall of the regime. More importantly, they put too much emphasis on how the city emerges as a place in relation to the structural conditions that facilitated its foundation, thus failing to explore what role people played in its materialization and development. Studies on the town's architecture, the *bonifica*, and the propaganda amplify this depiction of Littoria/Latina as fascist because they create a narrative where the marshes are envisioned as a harsh environment to be colonised or conquered. Littoria/Latina is celebrated as the symbolic and material outcome of this process and of the fascist ideological values embedded within it. The town embodies in its emblematic and urban forms the successfulness of the projects undertaken by the

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[13] Original title: *Latina. Storia di una città.*

regime as part of its policies and interventions, to go as far as becoming its most positive element (Bo Frandsen 2001; Mariani 1982). The next section moves to discuss some works that go beyond this portrayal of Littoria/Latina, however, before turning to those works which discuss Latina after 1945, I will return briefly to the works I have just presented.

1.2. Latina beyond Littoria

While these scholars discuss primarily Littoria/Latina as a new town, they also mention Latina and its transformations. Many notice how the town's urban form changed and highlight the transformation of the original development plan. They also stress the negative abandonment of its agricultural focus (Ghirardo 2003a; Weiner 1976) and the radical transformation of its centre (Ghirardo 2003a:208; Mariani 1976:253). Ghirardo identifies in the "fascist matrix"[14] of these towns' centres the reason why they were neglected for decades after the fall of the regime (2003a:208). Other works argue instead that Latina maintains fascist features (Bo Frandsen 2001; Weiner 1976), suggesting that the city "stands as a memorial to [fascism]" (Harland and Liguori 2016:9) and "that, even today, [it] embodies and reflects the social and political conditions of the society that produced it" (Caprotti and Kaïka 2008:630). These works take into account – to some extent – how urban, social, economic, and political changes altered Littoria/Latina in the years after the fall of the regime (Bo Frandsen 2001; Ghirardo 2003a; Mariani 1976; Mariani 1982; Weiner 1976). However, they continue to discuss those in relation to the regime. Rather than moving past the town's roots (while still acknowledging them) and consider the city for the place it is in its contemporaneity; these works understand the city's changes as having altered the original fascist plan. In other words, I argue that these works only reinforce an image of Latina strictly tied to the

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[14] In the fact that they embodied fascist ideals.

fascist period, thus failing to move beyond Littoria and its historical context. Other works do so, and I will present them in the next paragraphs.

The city has undergone many social, economic, and political changes from 1945 onward. After the fall of the fascist regime, the town changed its name to Latina, and the adoption of such name is also reflected in the literature, which is why I will now refer to Latina only (rather than Littoria/Latina). It changed in its economy going from agriculture to industries, in a very short amount of time (Ferraresi 1991). The inclusion of Latina in the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South) has altered not only the town's political history, given the involvement of the Christian Democrat party, but also changed dramatically its territory, which became increasingly allocated to not-always successful industrial ventures (Mangullo 2015). In the last decades, the has town witnessed the increasing rise of the tertiary sector and an economy based on services (Strangio 2008 focuses particularly on tourism). The area has also experienced the establishment of a refugee camp in the second half of the XX century, which triggered both physical and social changes (Miccio 2016). Strangio's, Miccio's, and the following works have investigated more contemporary issues. Gruppuso (2016) has dedicated his anthropological work to an investigation of the relationship between people and wetlands in Latina's territory[15]. His innovative approach presents an understanding of wetlands as relational environments, going beyond a strictly geographical portrayal and focusing on social aspects in their constitution. Ciammaruconi (2009) critically evaluates the relation between memory and public rhetoric in the constitution of a civic identity in the city, through a study of political interventions on media (newspapers and public speeches). Methodologically, he relies on documents and speeches; nonetheless, he provides a compelling and insightful analysis of the relation between Latina and its past. Pellicano

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[15] The *bonifica*, while draining most of the marshes, has not removed entirely the water from the area.

Chapter 2

(2014) talks of Latina as being composed of three cities: Littoria (the historic centre), Latina (the expanded city) and the city's surroundings (the diffused city), recognising their disconnection, and advocating for a more coherent re-organisation of the three. While her short essay is still dedicated in part to juxtaposing the construction of Littoria as a celebratory moment for the regime and the changes undergone by Latina (seen in a less positive light), she, nonetheless, recognises an important continuity between the 'before' and 'after' (the foundation) of the city.

While the works I have mentioned here are scarcer than the works that focus on Littoria/Latina as *the* new town, their importance lies in how they provide original approaches to the study of Latina and its surrounding areas. They move beyond the static and essentialising representation of Latina as a place that exists strictly in relation to the fascist regime and its policies. They instead portray the city as a dynamic place, which has undergone several transitions since its foundation. These works contribute to a vision of a multifaceted place, considering social and political aspects that move away from a cursory focus on fascism. Some of these works, for instance, consider how people and their existence relate to Latina, thus participating to the creation of the city as a place. The social aspect emerges only briefly among those works discussing the years of Latina's foundation. Journalists in the 1930s have offered glimpses of how life was in the newly built towns (Burdett 2000); however, as Mariani notices (1976:71), there is a scarcity of material portraying the lives of peasants. While there is very little material in the literature that discusses the relation between people and the newly built town, the communities that came to populate the area have not been completely overlooked. They are often portrayed to be "alien communities" (Bo Frandsen 2001:77; see also Tvinnereim 2007), in opposition to those people who lived in the area before the *bonifica* and who were never assigned a farmhouse after the *bonifica* (Mariani 1982:18).

Chapter 2

Pennacchi (2010a:276), as well, suggests that the social element is a fundamental element of the new towns' constitution. He specifies that those people who came to populate the area became a constituting element of the town and contributed to the myth of its foundation (Pennacchi 2010a:279). As much as those towns were 'new', so such communities participated to the creation and circulation of this discourse, since they did not exist before. While his work more attentively considers those social aspects, it still explores them in relation to the fascist regime, thus stressing their involvement in the foundation. Other works provide sketches of the complex relation between people and Latina, such as Mangullo (2015). Citing Vöchting he describes the sense of uneasiness, depression and feeling 'out-of-place' (*spaesamento*) that settlers felt towards the town in the early years, adding how the different climate also contributed to such condition (Vöchting 1990 (1942) in Mangullo 2015:25). Similarly, Nuti and Martinelli point out how settlers had been promised a lot before moving to the *Agro Pontino* and "found themselves abandoned and blackmailed in the isolation of their new condition" (1981:8).

Lastly, I find particularly important to discuss Cotesta's work (1986; 1989). His research focuses primarily on the relation between people and the city of Latina, exploring a wide range of aspects that portray Latina's diverse social fabric. Through a series of surveys, Cotesta outlines the specificities of Latina's population, analysing how different factors such as gender, age, or the place of origin affect the making of relations. His contribution is fundamental in highlighting the city's profound heterogeneity, and my work builds on his approach. However, his research was carried out at the end of the 1980s, more than thirty years ago. The city has changed in these three decades and one of my thesis' aims is to fill this temporal gap. Moreover, Cotesta used primarily surveys as research method, while my study's ethnographic data has been collected primarily through participant

observation. Therefore, it represents a contribution to the study of the city from a novel methodological approach, which I extensively discuss in the next chapter.

As I discussed above, Latina was born already as a 'new town', planned and built by a government which promoted anti-urban policies. The people who came to live in Latina and populate it today are also protagonists of the city's essence, as are the people who inhabit it today and who arrived at different times of the town's history. Most of the literature produced on Latina omits a fundamental aspect: the city is lived, experienced, and produced by those who inhabit it daily and have done so during the foundation, but also in the following decades, up until now. Despite their many differences[16], several ethnographies discuss the newly formed communities in ways that resonate with the ethnography on Latina. There is a widespread concern with the new towns' newly formed communities and their cohesion. The towns have often been described as social experiments or laboratories (see Burkhart 1981 on Columbia and Cotesta 1989 and Mangullo 2015 on Latina), whose communities have struggled to foster a sense of belonging. Gaborit argues that there is "a preconceived notion that "nothing happens" in New Towns" (2010:99); while Epstein, describing the French *Ville Nouvelle* of Clergy, writes that "many fear that the city will become a site of modern *anomie*, with only a loosely knit social fabric and no sense of common vision to which the city's residents can adhere" (2011:162); Finnegan discusses how predominant stories on Milton Keynes describe it as "a settlement without a soul, lacking the centre and traditions which give older towns their identity. Milton Keynes is a maze of disconnected roads, brash new constructions without human memories, a cultural desert […] At best, it might be modern and utilitarian, but without roots grown over the generations it only masquerades as a 'community' " (1998:41). I have recognised similar concerns relating to sense of

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[16] Such as the historical period and geographical area where they have been built, the purpose of their construction, the promoters of their foundation, their successive developments, among others.

Chapter 2

belonging and community also in Latina and I discuss them throughout this work. Many of these towns have been built to welcome heterogenous communities (e.g. Epstein 2011; Burkhart 1981) and in some cases there is an evident discrepancy between the plan originally envisioned and its contemporary development (see especially Epstein 2011). These works indicate that Latina's experience is not unique, despite its historical roots (highlighting, therefore, even more strongly the need to overcome the city's association with the fascist regime). These concerns have influenced my analysis of Latina and of my interlocutors' perceived lack of a cohesive community, which I then analysed through the complexities of new towns' planning and development (such as, amongst others, the involvement of several public and private actors, the planning discrepancies, and the towns' multiple temporalities).

For this reason, I intend to distance myself form Pennacchi's remark that those who live in Latina necessarily participate in its foundation myth (Pennacchi 2010a). Rather, I argue that people do indeed make Latina what it is, and it is precisely for this reason that there is a need to re-frame its relation to its foundation (to its 'new townness') as it interacts with the town's contemporary social fabric. That is the reason why I find studies like Cotesta's to be particularly useful. The experience Italy and Latina had of the fascist regime needs to be critically contextualised and acknowledged as a product of multiple discourses, which have developed throughout the decades as a result of political, historical, and social events. As with other historical and political occurrences, its meaning is continuously re-elaborated and altered as it encounters interwoven local, national, and international narratives. To associate Latina *only* to its foundation (or to identify in it what is exceptional about the city) runs the risk of sealing it within an essentialising time-space, which does not critically acknowledge the town's complexity and the changes it has undergone throughout the decades. There are several issues

concerning the relation between places and temporality that emerge from the aforementioned works. These have been particularly important in my understanding of Latina as a place and of its own temporalities. The study of new towns reveals the emergence of multiple temporalities. A crucial moment in the towns' development is the planning stage, which holds in itself a not always fulfilled promise (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011). The future is ever-present in the planning of cities, and so is the imagination of what utopian place is to be crafted (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011; Yarrow 2017; Gaborit 2010; Irazábal 2004). Several ethnographies analyse the discrepancies between the plan and the reality of what the plan has become. In particular, they focus on the missed actualisation of the planning promises, resulting in an always deferred future and a never materialised present (Yarrow 2017; Gaborit 2010; Epstein 2011; Finnegan 1998; Irazábal 2004). The future becomes prominent in discourses on new towns also when they become emblems of modernity (Rabinow 2014; Holston 1989; Irazábal 2004), especially in its juxtaposition to the concept of 'tradition' (and all the broader associations made with either term). This future-oriented vision is often, therefore, embedded in narratives of progress, which not only portray the betterment of places, but also frame the newly formed communities (Epstein 2011; Burkhart 1981). As a consequence, temporality is often perceived as fragmentary, with versions of the past, the present, and the future (both the anticipated one and the deferred one) coexisting complexly. The past can equally be contentious in new towns, as they are often perceived to be without history (Gaborit 2010; Epstein 2011; Finnegan 1998). This resonates particularly strongly with the ethnography on Latina, which illustrates both the perceived lack of remote historical roots and the presence of contested heritage belonging to an uncomfortable and recent past. The ways in which history and the past are interpreted, negotiated, imagined, and reproduced affect the way the built environment is experienced and acted upon.

Chapter 2

Most of the works on Latina mentioned throughout this review, trigger the disappearance of people from their studies, they overlook the lived experiences of its inhabitants and how those contribute in creating and crafting Latina as a place. While other works hint at the complex relation between people and Latina, they do not focus on it except for Gruppuso (2016) and Cotesta (1986; 1989). However, the broader literature on New Towns demonstrates precisely the importance of investigating their social fabric. For these reasons, this study is interested in exploring the relation between people and places in contemporary Latina. I am interested in exploring Latina today as it developed from the social experiment of the foundation (Cotesta 1989; Mangullo 2015) and as it has changed throughout the decades. Similarly, Sottoriva, in his introduction to Ghirardo's work comments: "Born also from immigration, […] and the coming together of different ethnicities, the new pontine towns have lived in their growth this interculturalism as a constant as much as an unconscious motif" (2003:3). Miccio, in his introduction, writes the reasons why he decided to write his dissertation:

"[…]to recover a relation with the city which seems to have been negated to its own inhabitants. […] there is present a sense of cultural alienation towards what is the past and the present of this city: the new and old generations of immigrants […] had to abandon the cultural heritage of their homeland, however, and this is Latina's peculiarity, without being offered a new model to which to adapt their irrepressible need of sociality, without the city offering them a new baggage of traditions, of common history, of architectural places that could be perceived as one's own. Latina continues to configure itself as a place whose existence is indelibly connected to the element-travel. The meeting of indigenous and newcomers, which is a characteristic common to every migratory phenomenon, has transformed itself in the case of Latina in a meeting between different groups of immigrants, with an integral community dealing with problems of identity and a community that needs to be integrated which lacks a referential model" (Miccio 2016:8).

Miccio's personal reflection (and the other reflections quoted above) is quite telling of the complexity inherent in people's relationship to Latina. His words resonate with the ethnography in the works of Green (2005; 2012; 2010), Ballinger (2003), and Berdahl

Chapter 2

(1999) who researched respectively Greek, Italian, and German borders. I am particularly interested in their explorations of the ambiguities that emerge at the intersections between hard to define people and places and their descriptions of daily life and the constant negotiations their interlocutors are embedded in. Resonating with Latina, I found compelling their reflections on being an 'insider' or 'outsider', which in such places are not easily identified and distinguished, and also their insights on the elements of movement and migration, a constant in my ethnography as well as theirs. These three studies are also particularly careful in highlighting the historical, political, and social complexities whose intersections make certain kinds of people and places emerge. The politics of how places come to be is also at the core of Brown's historical work on the geographical area made famous by the Chernobyl nuclear power plant (2005) and Stewart's ethnography of Appalachian communities (1996). Both works focus on places that escape the normativity of national narratives; they are in a certain sense 'out-of-place' within these narratives and exist uncomfortably (or 'disappear' altogether despite their material presence). It is important, therefore, to highlight that several actors (such as individuals, communities, organisations, institutions, governments, and private agencies among others) are politically engaged in the making of new towns and interventions on contested heritage, where several values and interests are at stake and hierarchical power relations are performed. Studies of new towns often highlight the role of planners as almost embodying the town itself through their vision for the future (Epstein 2011; Gaborit 2010; Finnegan 1998; Irazábal 2004; Abram and Weszkalnys 2011). However, most studies also recognise the important role played by governments and private investors, as well as the communities that live in the new towns. This is also the case in Weszkalnys' work (2010), which shows how the remaking and rebranding of Berlin's

Chapter 2

Alexanderplatz involved planners envisioning the city's future, but also individuals' who engaged with spaces daily, and re-elaborations of the city's past and its divisions[17].

Building from the work of these scholars, I intend to address and fill this gap with my work, as an anthropological study of Latina carried out ethnographically through participant observation in the contemporary city. Many of the themes discussed in this literature review resonate with the ones discussed by other scholars (such as the sense of loss experienced by New Towns' newly established communities). Therefore, my aim is to cover the gap in the literature on Latina bearing in mind the contributions offered by other scholars and anthropologists. I present this place's social fabric following the complexities this city embodies. It is the city of Latina, with its contradictions and intricacies, which I seek to investigate.

2. Research Question

The literature outlined above, reveals some interesting aspects of the academic production on Latina. Firstly, there is great focus on the foundation years, while more recent historical, political, social, and economic events have been researched in less depth. Despite very few exceptions, there are no works which discuss Latina's society (or aspects of it) as it is today. However, as highlighted in the previous paragraph, scholars have identified the fact that Latina's social fabric presents some particularities. Starting from these *motifs* (to use Sottoriva's expression cited above) mentioned only in passing, I explore what makes Latina so peculiar. The question I sought to research emerged as a contribution to the wide exploration of the relationship between people and places. For these reasons the main research question of this study becomes: How do people create

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[17] See also how individuals' everyday experience of the border affects the existence and being of the border itself (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Green 2005; Ballinger 2003; Green 2010; Green 2012), through governments interventions and people's daily interactions with it. This is evident as well in those places that escape normative narratives and are, therefore, politically 'out-of-place' (Stewart 1996; Brown 2005).

and foster relations to places and what elements affect these relations? More specifically I investigate how is Latina constituted as a place by my interlocutors and their experience of the city. Some corollary questions follow from the main research question: How do people live, represent, imagine, feel, and remember Latina daily? What does Latina *feel* like? What does it mean to live its spaces, representations, and imaginations daily?

My aim, throughout this thesis is to share with the reader *our* experience of the city - the experience of my interlocutors, and myself with them[18] - as together we navigated its many corners and ambiguities. I also want to share what if *feels* like to live such experiences as part of my interlocutors' everyday and (extra)ordinary lives. These questions not only arose from a perusal of the existing literature on the city; but were also shaped as I embarked on fieldwork. My initial research plan, in fact, aimed to focus on urban heritage and materiality. Even though my initial focus was still on people and their relation to the built environment, it evolved to include a broader definition of place and it became an inquiry into Latina as a more complex place, beyond its monuments alone. As the scope of my research broadened dramatically, I let my interlocutors take the lead and guide me through the city's labyrinths. My interlocutors embarked in such a quest alongside me. It is with these questions in mind that I embarked in fieldwork and the analysis I carried out once I returned from my field site. Ultimately, these questions together with the ethnographic data I collected also guided the writing of this thesis. Answering these questions will provide further insights on how Latina as a place is produced and how it, in turn, produces those who live and experience it daily. A vision of Latina, therefore, will take form throughout this thesis as I analyse the ethnographic material to discuss how my interlocutors shape, negotiate, and (re)produce relations between each other, between places, and between times. Moreover, on a broader level,

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[18] See next chapter for a discussion on the shared experience of fieldwork and of the place that emerged as I carried out my research.

Chapter 2

this study contributes to academic debates and ethnographies on place-making, as it explores different aspects of the processes which constitute places. In the next section, I will frame this study within theoretical approaches on place and place-making.

Part 2: Theoretical Background

1. Exploring No-Thing

When I walked into the cafe' I did not expect to 'do' any fieldwork that day. I was supposed to meet an old elementary classmate of mine and her mother for a much-awaited homecoming. I naively thought this reunion was unlike the participant observation that took most of my time. I told Giulia (my classmate) and Antonella (her mother) about my work, about why I had returned to the city for an entire year after having spent the previous several years abroad. I had returned to research Latina. Only when Antonella started talking and said: "Latina is a city without a soul" I understood fully the idea that fieldwork 'does' you[19] rather than the other way round. Antonella's words were some of the most startling I heard in the entirety of my fieldwork. In my 11 months of ethnographic research, I realised they were far from being the only ones. I heard comments about what was missing, what was incomplete. I had several discussions on the sense of detachment felt by my interlocutors. Through their realities and imaginations, I experienced myself the uneasiness they felt towards Latina. Often people apostrophised "There is nothing here! There is nothing here to study".

These hyperbolic negating statements actually reveal the richness of the ethnographic experience. They trace, albeit in different terms, the duality between History and *istories* discussed by Herzfeld (1987); the first is a formal narrative of meaningful events that legitimises and performs a particular structure, a narrative to which Latina does not belong to in the eyes of my interlocutors, who conclude that "Latina is nothing" and, therefore, cannot be an eligible 'object of study'. *Istories*, on the other hand, are the everyday stories, "the very antithesis of official History" (Herzfeld 1987:43)*,* as with their existence and circulation they question any formal narrative. Latina's 'nothing', therefore, becomes *some*thing through the exploration of its *istories*. During fieldwork, the city was

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[19] See Simpson 2006

often represented through its emptiness and through the impossibility of identifying any specific features, anything that would in some way or another characterise it, anything that belonged to Latina and to Latina only. These remarks raised important conceptual challenges. During the analysis of the ethnographic data I had collected, I found myself struggling alongside my interlocutors to locate what made Latina what it was. It is from 'nothing' that I, therefore, begin my theoretical and ethnographic journey, exploring places and the absences 'nothing' evokes. Papadopoulou (2016), drawing on psychoanalysis, differentiates between 'nothing' and 'no-thing'. Building on this distinction, she argues against an understanding of absence as synonymous with non-existence. "Absence is not a void […]. Absence is" (Papadopoulou 2016:370), she writes. The study of absences presents fundamental ontological and epistemological questions as it aims to investigate something that appears not to be there (Bille, Hastrup, and Sørensen 2010). The relationship between presence and absence reveals that which is in need of completion (Bille, Hastrup, and Sørensen 2010:12). It creates a state of suspension. What implications are there if a place is perceived to be in this kind of liminality? This can raise questions about ambiguity and about a place's status and the status of those who experience it (see e.g. Buch 2010a), which has important emotional and practical implications. Through this literature I ask, therefore, how places are constituted in the presence of absences and how this process is influenced by and influences people's relation to places. Pink understands "places as intensities of activity and presence" (2011:349); I would also add absences to her quote as a fundamental element in the fostering of the relation between people and places and the way both are constituted.

In this thesis, I explore these questions in relation to places through ethnographic data, focusing on three kinds of absences. Here, for the sake of description and clarity, I will

outline them separately. However, they are intricately enmeshed with one another, contingent on one another, simultaneous in their absent presence in my interlocutors' experience of Latina. The first kind of absence relates directly to the no-thing I have just discussed. Yarrow, citing Strathern's work, draws a distinction between "an absence of knowledge" and "a particular knowledge of absence" (2010:24). It is this acknowledgment of absence and its effects that I have often recognised in my interlocutors' words and actions, as they reworked their worlds through different kinds of knowledge in recognition of something amiss. Silences, as forms of communication, often constitute an expression of this kind of absence (cf. Pipyrou 2016b; Pipyrou 2016a) and were frequent in my own ethnographic experience of Latina. The second kind of absence concerns the physical or material absence of objects and persons (cf. Navaro-Yashin 2012; Buch 2010; Renshaw 2010; Højer 2010; Bille, Hastrup, and Sørensen 2010). This kind of absence questions the distinction between materiality and immateriality, tangibility and intangibility; it investigates the presence of absent objects and persons, their effects and permanency despite their immateriality, or physical absence. The last absence I encountered during my fieldwork concerns the potentiality of 'what could have been'. By this, I mean an absence that emerges from a temporally deferred existence, from a liminal contemporaneity (cf. Yarrow 2017), perceived in those places that fall in-between, through the cracks, and are always out-of-place, "already lost or still ahead, just beyond reach" (Stewart 1996:16).

Throughout this thesis, I investigate these absences' presences in their affective, emotional, and sensorial, (im)material, and relational dimensions, specifically for what concerns the emergence of places. How does Latina – this ethnographic rendition of Latina – emerges out of 'nothing' (no-thing)? How does one study something that seems not to be there? How can one determine whether something is there or not? Following

Carrithers (2012) first and then Pipyrou (2014b), I also ask what kinds of sub-certainties and ironies does this hyperbolic statement ("there is nothing here") open up to? Now, I will turn to a discussion on the theoretical background I focus on in my study of places and absences.

2. Palimpsestuous Attunements

2.1. The 'palimpsestuous'

In this section, I discuss the analytical lens of 'palimpsestuous attunements', which I employ as a metaphor to investigate absences and places. I will begin with the idea of 'the palimpsestuous'. This term, as both an adjective and a substantivised adjective, comes from an artefact called the 'palimpsest': a manuscript (made of paper, skin, or other materials) whose writing has been erased to make space for more writing (Dillon 2005). With time, however, the ink from the erased writing reappeared on the surface due to chemical reactions; it mixed with the text that had been written later, on the newly effaced parchment. This process created unique documents on which both texts revealed themselves and intermingled. In light of this unique characteristic of palimpsests, countless disciplines and works have adopted such a word, whose metaphors of multi-layeredness provide a wide scope of representations, ranging from literary criticism, geology, history, archaeology, and urban studies, to architecture, cultural theory, human geography, and more (e.g. Basu 2007; Chai-Elsholz 2011; Corboz 1983; Crang 1996; Huyssen 2003; Kinossian and Wråkberg 2017; Marshall et al. 2017 among others).

Rather than the palimpsest *per se*, I am interested in its palimpsestuous character. When I refer to palimpsests throughout this work, I always do so to refer to their palimpsestuous characteristics, rather than palimpsests as objects *per se*. This choice, as I will also discuss below, is aimed at distancing the metaphor from its literary connotations, focusing

instead on the relational processes inherent in that which is palimpsestuous. A palimpstestuous analysis of places emerges out of the ambiguity, coexistence, and relation between absences and presences. As Lara-Rallo writes: "the palimpsest involves a superimposition of presences and absences, heard and unheard voices" (2009:103). My aim is to interrogate how the palimpsestuous complexity of places is the result of processes of (dis)appearances and (dis)connections, which emerge through ongoing changes and dynamic alterations. Places, I argue, emerge through a prismatic polyvocality, where realms encounter each other, disappear only to reappear unexpectedly. In the ethnographic case I present throughout this thesis, the interrelatedness of each element with the others is not *a posteriori* of their emergence, but is constitutive of the very act of emergence, of coming into being and revealing itself. Such elements, moreover, are not one-dimensional. They are multifarious, complex, and display palimpsestuous features in themselves.

2.2. *Places as Relations: Connections and Disconnections*

The conceptual and metaphorical use of 'the palimspestuous' and its derivatives (such as palimpsestuousness), emerged as a result of my inability to analyse Latina (as a place) as an object of study or a product (given my interlocutors' remarks that "there is *nothing* here to study"). For these reasons, I began exploring the conceptual relevance of relations when analysing the creation and formation of places and wondered: How does this reflect on an analysis of a relation between people and places? What if, instead of focusing on the relation *between* people and places, places were to be theorised *as* relations? I focus on how places emerge at the intersections of physical, sensorial, emotional, affective, imaginative, performative, and temporal processes. Place, therefore, emerges as multiple (cf. Mol 2002; Yarrow 2019).

Chapter 2

This move (from relations *between* people and places to places *as* relations) draws heavily on Massey's work (1994; 1995; 2005). Places emerge precisely out of the relations constituting them (Massey, 1994, 1995, 2005), they are formed by their *throwntogetherness* that, as Massey (2005) recognises, also presents theoretical and conceptual challenges in attempts to grasp their multiplicity (Simonsen 2008). In this configuration, places emerge from relations, they are not pre-given (Massey, 2005), nor inert containers on or in which social life happens or just academic constructions (Rodman 1992:641). Places are instead constituted (Simonsen 2008; Ward 2003), they are necessarily processual and fluid (Simonsen 2008; Ward 2003). Their coming into being happens in dynamic encounters - they *are* those same encounters (Simonsen 2008:22). In a palimpsestuous manner, places are always constantly becoming as their multiple layers emerge and interact. Their contextual character makes them unique (Massey, 1994, 2005; Simonsen, 2008): two places can never be the same at a specific moment in time. Massey (1994:154) describes this as a "meeting place": the coming together of different relations creates a unique place. Such processes not only define the composition of place but are also in a state of flux as materialities, people, emotions, and other elements conjunct and disjunct constantly. For these reasons, it is impossible to 'go back home' because home has 'moved' (it will have changed) by the time one returns to it (Massey, 2005, p. 137). In this sense, Massey (2005:130) talks of places as *spatio-temporal events*. She describes how "the elements of this 'place', will be, at different times and speeds, again dispersed" (Massey, 2005, p. 141). There is a fundamental temporality to places and their constitution. So, Massey argues (2005:139), if 'here' is made of all these relations and processes, so is the 'now': "it won't be the same 'here' when it is no longer now" (Massey, 2005, p. 139). Casey, in different words, describes how "places not only *are*, they *happen*" (1996:27).

Chapter 2

I will return for a moment to Antonella's comment above. The soul is the centre, the core, the essence of a being, which Latina seemed to miss. In that instance, I realised that experiences of the city were characterised by a core that was either invisible, or maybe it could not be easily identified, or that was missing, or maybe people willingly did not pursue it. What I had been looking for – what Latina was all about – could not be found. Whatever the reason for this, it became clear to me that I had to find a way to explore what people, such as Antonella, were so adamant in pointing out – the 'nothingness' I will mention throughout the thesis –. These kinds of remarks, plentiful in the ethnography, also indicate kinds of detachment, whether they are expressed as a conscious willingness to distance oneself from the city or a feeling of not belonging. Therefore, I find it fundamental to expand Massey's work and also consider the conceptual implications of detachment. Yarrow et al. (2015) advocate for detachment to have its own conceptual and theoretical space, not as a form of relation and, therefore, conceptually subordinate to it. In this work, I consider detachment alongside relations as constitutive of places. Expanding on both Massey's (2005) and Yarrow et al.'s (2015) work, I argue that both relations and detachments are fundamental processes in the making of places and both should be considered theoretically, conceptually, and analytically in the ways places emerge. Throughout this thesis, I explore theoretically and ethnographically the coexistence of different kinds of detachment and relation (Yarrow et al. 2015:23), not as opposites or mutually exclusive, but as both part of processes of the (un)making of places, people, affects, and materialities (Jensen and Winthereik 2015). In arguing for their coexistence, I recognise that relation and detachment are not bound categories, but processes that inform one another, that enter one another and are, therefore, integral to one another. The palimpsestuous metaphor, as well, highlights this, as elements that bear no relation to one another come into contact and become the palimpsestuousness itself.

Chapter 2

This characteristic of the palimpsestuous – that it also includes in its metaphor the concept of detachment – provides it with a wider theoretical scope than other terms that have been used to describe relationality. More specifically, two terms that could have been useful here are intertextuality (and its predecessor heteroglossia) and imbrication. Neither of them contemplates the coexistence of relation and detachment. Nonetheless, they offer important contributions to the study of relations. They highlight the plurality of experience, the multiplicity of entanglements and the fact that they cannot be disentangled, while also recognising the processual character of relationality. Intertextuality is aimed at interpreting the object of study as text (Lazar 2015). I use the metaphor of the 'palimpsestuous' precisely to distance myself from strictly textual metaphors. My aim is to expand the scope of intertextuality to include practices, objects, and affects and at the same time overcoming the distinctions between subject and object, material and immaterial, absence and presence. The concept of imbrication, as theorised by Demetriou (2018), offers an even stronger metaphor in the representation of relations. In fact, it accounts for the unexpected, for the dynamisms of changing relations, and pays attention to what occurs 'in-between' the different layers (represented in her metaphor as leakages, soil, rain, and wind). However, there is no space for the theorisation of absences. With the use of the term 'palimpsestuous' my aim is to build on these and other contributions and to provide a wider metaphorical representation of relation and detachment. I now turn to attunements.

2.3. Attunements

Stewart defines attunements as a "labor of becoming sentient to a world's work, bodies, rhythms, and ways of being" (2011:445; see also Ahmed 2014). She describes it as an intimate process of experiencing and sensing the ordinary intensities of what is happening, "a labor that arrives already weighted with what it's living through"

(2011:448), through attachments and detachments. My aim is to explore ethnographically and theoretically my interlocutors' attunements to palimpsestuousness. How they come to term, experience, sense, and live through the relations and detachments, the presences and absences, the multitemporality (in other words the palimpsestuousness) of place. In doing so, and following Stewart, I focus on the ordinariness of their experience and, exploring closely emotions, affects, and the senses, inquire in the intimate sphere. As Pink has rightly observed, it is also the anthropologist who gets attuned to her fieldsite (2008; see also Navaro-Yashin 2012:20), a point I expand in the methodological chapter. As I will discuss in more detail below, in this conceptual exploration of sensing the world, I focus on the knowledge (or its absence) that emerges from relation and detachment, materialities, affects, absences and presences, which ultimately constitutes a *sense* of place (Scarpelli 2011; Scarpelli 2013; Feld and Basso 1996). Palimpsestuous attunements are, therefore, the intimate and ordinary labor and experiences of the relation and detachment of people, other places, materialities, affects, senses, imaginations, performances, practices, and representations constitutive of Latina. Before expanding the discussion on atmospheres, affects, and the senses I will dedicate a section to the social importance of places in Italy through a theoretical analysis of Italian localisms.

3. Italian Localisms

Localisms play a fundamental role in Italian ethnography and throughout this work. Latina's case exemplifies the issues surrounding administrative divisions and local affiliations in Italy. More specifically, it illustrates their ambivalent existence as on one side administrative centres and on the other as areas of common cultural traits in which individuals recognise one another. The two, more often than not, do not coincide (Carle

Chapter 2

2012:51)[20]. Nadel-Klein defines localism as "the continuing reference to place in assertion of a political or cultural will to distinctiveness" (1991:501). With this definition, she aims to focus on the experiential realm and on the re-elaboration of a localist worldview as a political device (Nadel-Klein 1991:514). She recognises, therefore, the intersections between localisms and global structures of power. Localisms are complex historical, political, geographical, and social constructs. Starting from this general definition, my aim is to primarily contextualise localisms in Italy – I will do so providing a brief thematic outline of the literature on localisms –; I will then locate this concept theoretically within this work, expanding on Nadel-Klein's working definition and her focus on localism's politics of experience while engaging with more recent work on Italian localisms.

Locality, localisms, and *campanilismo* have a long history in anthropological interpretations of Italian society. I will explore such analytical approaches, focusing on the relation between localisms and the nation-state. Before unification, the Italian territory was divided in several states which, as Pezzino (2002:42) notices, differed in their administrative, economic, and social organisation. Partly due to this, Italy has struggled to develop sentiments of national belonging[21] and often local attachments have emerged before a shared sense of national pride (Castellanos 2010; Carle 2012; Ferrarotti 1997). As highlighted by a number of scholars (Carle 2012; Cavazza 2012; Dickie 1996; Goddard 1996 amongst others), the country that emerged at the end of Italy's unification process at the end of the 19th century was a fragmented one[22]. The lack of an Italian national character is highlighted to this day. Castellanos (2010) describes how his interlocutors struggled to define a national Italian character and he recalls how president Ciampi's

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[20] Despite the prevalence of local affiliations, regions were not administratively constituted until the 1970s (Cavazza 2012; Levy 1996).

[21] This is also reflected in some ethnographies (e.g. Silverman 1975), which dichotomise local attachments as developing prior and against a national pride.

[22] There is a famous sentence attributed to Massimo D'Azeglio after unification: "With Italy made, we must now make the Italians" (Carle 2012:187; Dickie 1996:19).

government attempted to foster a stronger sense of national unity by encouraging citizens through the promotion of national symbols – such as the Italian flag and national anthem (Castellanos 2010:61). The difficulty in identifying common cultural traits and a shared national character are also related to the country's fragmented celebration of the past, which is experienced differently by different communities (see e.g. Foot and Owen 2012). The rituality of commemoration is, as reminded by Connerton (1989), a crucial element in the making of communities. There is a discrepancy, therefore, highlighted by Carle (2012), between the Italian state and the Italian nation: two entities in a difficult relationship with each other. So, even though an Italian nation-state has been formally constituted, local affiliations still detain an important position in individuals' lives. An expression of such attachments can be found in the idea of *campanilismo*, which denotes "the belief that people did not venture beyond the point where they could no longer see the bell tower (*campanile*) of their town or village" (Castellanos 2010:62). De Martino (1977:480) describes the moment when a Calabrian shepherd loses sight of the *campanile* as a deeply traumatic experience filled with anxiety, until the *campanile* re-emerges at the horizon (see also Vanni 2013). The concept of *campanilismo,* therefore, encompasses both an emotional experience (the feeling of being 'home', the sense of pride and attachment to a certain locality), and a dialectical touchstone in its relation with the nation-state (see e.g. Pratt 1987; Silverman 1975; Castellanos 2010).

The prevalence of localisms in Italian society has often encouraged the literature to focus on smaller scale realities as more prominent in people's lives and interests (c.f. Banfield 1967 who defined this as 'amoral familism'; Silverman 1975; Pratt 1987)[23]. This has promoted a stronger focus on the South of Italy, which has often been associated to its

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[23] Even if there are important differences between works such as Banfield's (1967) – whose focus on the nuclear family was seen as a sign of 'backwardness' in a Southern Italian village – and those of others (such as Silverman 1975; Pratt 1987; Galt 1991) – who instead historicised the tension between localities and the nation – an ethnographic and analytical friction seems to resurface often between these two localisms and the nation.

Chapter 2

'backwardness' *vis a vis* modern Northern European societies (cf. Banfield 1967), and has been portrayed as a collection of pre-modern and timeless communities. Two main criticisms have been raised against this analytical approach. Firstly, it overlooks the study of urban areas, as there is an important focus on villages and smaller communities (Goddard 1996; Pardo 1996), and also overlooks the interactions between the two (see Holmes 1989 for an ethnography on peasant-workers in Northeast Italy)[24]. Latina's case contributes to this ethnographic production, as the city's development and conformation often questions the tensions between understandings of cities, small villages and communities, and 'natural' settings. Secondly, it overlooks a fundamental historical dimension, which overcomes the understanding of such communities within rigid developmental trajectories (see Filippucci 1992; Cole and Wolf 1974; and also Galt 1991). This distinction traces another important dichotomy, between *civiltà* (civility) and tradition[25], as defining concepts in the hierarchical relation between the nation-state and localisms (Grasseni 2009), urban and rural areas, and between local political *élites* and the general population.

The tension between nation-states and localisms has in different ways been re-elaborated in more recent works (e.g. Stacul 2003; Filippucci 1992; Pipyrou 2016a). Filippucci (1992) provides a compelling analysis of Bassano, a city in the North of Italy. She argues, echoing Nadel-Klein's more general definition (1991), that oppositions (e.g. in the works of Silverman 1975 and; Pratt 1987) can be overcome if locality is understood as a symbolic construct born out of "a specific experience of domination" (1992:295), whose meaning is flexibly articulated by people and by the nation-state, who are both embedded in relations of power and historical contingencies (1992). She criticises, therefore, the

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[24]As Pardo (1996) and Goddard (1996) have discussed, this has prevented the study of urban areas until relatively recently. Since then, some notable ethnographies of Italian urban areas have been produced (e.g. among others Pardo 1996; Goddard 1996; Herzfeld 2009; Dines 2015).

[25] The first, Filippucci recognises (1992), is more often associated with the urban sphere and with change; the second, on the other hand, embodies elements of stability and is most often recognised in rural settings.

view that localism is just an expression of a 'backward' and timeless society. Stacul (2003) analyses the emergence of regionalist political movements as expressions of localisms, such as the *Lega Nord*, at the intersections between a weak national government and a country-wide economic and political crisis (Cento Bull 1996). Pipyrou (2016a), on the other hand, focuses on Grecanici's fearless governance in Southern Italy, as they negotiate their position *vis-à-vis* other local communities, organisations, criminal organisations, and the state (see also Prato 2016 on the Arbëresh communities). Cavanaugh (2012a; 2005; 2008) explores the political aesthetics of language in an Italian Northern town, highlighting the presence of both dialects and a national language. From these works, it emerges that nation-state and localisms should be analysed as being constitutive of each other.

A few considerations can be drawn from this overview and form Nadel-Klein's working definition. First, localisms' frequent presence in many anthropological (and non-anthropological) works on Italy demonstrates the fact that they are a fundamental aspect in Italian society, politics, and history. However, many works mentioned above also recognise the importance to historicise the existence and development of localisms. Through the discourses and practices of individuals, communities, and institutions, the nation-state and localisms are continually given meanings, re-elaborated, and performed in their presences and absences in everyday life. Localisms need to be historicised as products of contemporary socio-political intersections, recognising that they are dynamic processes. Cavanaugh (2012a) proposes the use of the term 'modern *Campanilismo*' to denote the social, political, and economic circumstances that contribute to the emergence of localisms in contemporary Bergamo. Understanding localisms and c*ampanilismo* in its present-day significance (or modern, as Cavanaugh would define it), promotes the understanding of their contemporary manifestations, expressions, and re-elaborations.

Chapter 2

This also means elaborating on individuals' interpretation of localism (Filippucci 1992; Grasseni 2009; echoing also Nadel-Klein 1991 on experience)[26], which emerges from a strong empirical focus on the ethnography. Finally, another important contribution is the understanding that localisms should not equate with an internally homogeneous group (Prato 2016), as Latina's case exemplifies.

3.1. Localisms as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries

Expanding on these approaches, I propose a working definition of localisms in Italy that encompasses what discussed so far, paying particular attention to localisms' political and historical dimensions and the role of kinship in the making of places. Localisms are defined here as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries. This definition draws on several concepts I will now discuss, starting with kinship. Works on localism in Italy focus as much on the importance of place in defining localisms as they do on social relations, particularly kinship (see e.g. Filippucci 1992; Pipyrou 2016a; Stacul 2003). Throughout this thesis, as it will be evident from the ethnography, kinship is understood as a complex form of relatedness (Carsten 2000a), whose relation to places informs my interlocutors' expressions of belonging. Belonging to place and to family cannot be reduced to either the social or the biological dimension. With the expression 'born and bred', Edwards (2000) describes precisely the role of both birth and upbringing in defining belonging (both to place and to family). Belonging encompasses, thus, a claim on elements – people, things, but also practices – associated with a specific place and is, therefore, expressed and performed in multiple human and non-human, material and immaterial interactions (Strathern and Edwards 2000). As my definition proposes, it is distributed (see Jones and Yarrow 2013 on distributed authenticity). Belonging, kinship, and place permeate, therefore, the everyday life of people (Strathern and Edwards 2000).

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[26] Grasseni (2009) argues for an understanding of localism that focuses on the way belonging is articulated by people through their statements and practices.

Chapter 2

However, time matters as much as place. Biological connections, while not in themselves defining of belonging, create a temporal connection (Strathern and Edwards 2000) that creates roots and strengthen connections (or divisions) with a particular family and place (Strathern 1981). It is my interest in the temporal dimension that has led me to consider the idea of genealogies, to which I now turn.

I make use of the concept of genealogies because of its multiple meanings. First of all, genealogy refers to "a mode of understanding human relationships" (Nash 2017:1). It both describes and constitutes relatedness in time and place. (Nash 2017). Relatedness and belonging are, therefore, elaborated through their continuity in time and their ties to specific places, as geographical histories become constitutive of kinship and vice versa (Nash 2017; Beyer 2011). Nash defines it as "a historical form of knowledge and practice [and] also an imaginative exercise in considering the place of ancestors within historical contexts" (Nash 2017:3). With the use of this definition of genealogy I, therefore, want to pay particular attention at how kinship[27], belonging, and family histories are re-elaborated rhetorically, practically, and discursively in the making of localisms (and places more generally). My aim is to focus particularly on the intersections between relatedness, place, and time and their multiple, contested, and dynamic meanings. To explore further these intersections I consider two more definitions of genealogy. Genealogy can also be defined as "a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges" (Foucault 1980:11 in Hamilakis, Pluciennik, and Tarlow 2002; see also Ahmed 2014:214). Following this, I investigate ethnographically how ideas of localisms (and places) are produced and circulated, paying attention to also my own genealogical knowledge of these terms (Hamilakis 2002). Finally, I consider Povinelli's definition of genealogical society as "discourses that stress social constraint and determination in processes of

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[27] See also interesting contributions to the concept of autochthony (e.g. Geschiere 2009)

subject constitution and construe the subject as bound by various kinds of inheritances" (Povinelli 2011:27). This political definition is aimed at addressing the normativity of localisms in the making of individuals and in their relation with other localisms and the nation-state, as they come to terms, re-elaborate, and navigate practical, affective, and discursive inheritances. Genealogy becomes, therefore, a distributed polyphony of blood, inheritance, property, politics, and affect (Povinelli 2002:219).

Pipyrou elaborates on genealogical knowledge and considers the political, temporal, and kinship dimensions in her ethnographic work. She expands on what said so far to encompass the fear of losing one's own genealogical knowledge and, therefore, also permanently change one's own future (Pipyrou 2016a). However, she also recognises how genealogical knowledge and memory elaborated through one's own ancestry are performed and reproduced and become important political tools to make powerful claims, while negotiating the role and presence of the nation-state (Pipyrou 2016a). With her and Povinelli's contributions in mind, I use the term 'imaginaries' (in the plural form) to indicate the political re-elaborations, reproductions, negotiations, imaginings, representations, practices, and performances inherent in the emergence of localisms and their meaning in Italy.

Localisms are theorised in this work as palimpsestuous, as kinship and genealogies have both the power to relate and detach (Strathern and Edwards 2000; Edwards 2000; Povinelli 2011; Pipyrou 2016a). With the use of the concept of 'genealogy' and its meanings, my aim is to address localisms' multiplicities (as embedded within geographical, kinship, and temporal dimensions), while at the same time encompassing their imaginaries as political tools through performance and *praxis*. I highlight their manifestations through human and non-human, material and immaterial elements, recognising their distributed quality. In this, I further take into account my interlocutors'

attunement in grasping their ordinary presence or absence in their everyday life. In the next and final section, I will return to Latina and its peculiarities.

4. A Moving Ethnography

In this last section, I will connect all the dots of what said so far: I will bring together palimpsestuous attunements, absences, and localisms and I will provide a theoretical analysis that builds on the literature on affect. The title of this section recalls both the frequent presence of movement (such as migrations) as a fundamental element in the ethnography, but also the processes of attuning oneself, of being moved by the affective sphere. I will begin by contextualising localisms and absences in Latina, I will then turn to a theoretical analysis of localisms in Latina and I will conclude with a theoretical discussion on the importance of material and sensorial affectivities throughout my work.

In the sections above, I first explored the presence of different kinds of absences to then argue for their palimpsestuous attunements: how individuals come to terms, re-elaborate, re-produce, negotiate, are affected by and affect kinds of relations and detachments as they negotiate absences and presences inherent in the making of places. I then discussed the fundamental role of localisms in Italy, highlighting their political, social, and historical realms and stressing their capacity to relate and detach, to create inclusion and exclusion, their palimpsestuous character. I begin from this point. Localisms in Latina are both strongly present (because of its history of internal migrations from different areas in Italy and distributed through kinship ties, blood and soil relations, the past, personal and collective memories, and its political re-elaborations) and both strongly absent. The 'nothing' of my interlocutors often refers to the lack of the city's specific features. If localisms are defined here as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries, Latina's localism seems to be dissonant and out-of-place. There is, returning to the first

Chapter 2

section, a knowledge of absence about Latina's localism and of a shared past, but also a material absence of its expressions (through materialities such as food), and an absence of the potentiality of a different Latina, more similar to other localisms. At the same time, and as I will argue below, Latina's localism is distributed through its absences and expresses a strong political dimension to it. People, materialities, and affects seem to fall in-between belonging and non-belonging – they are constantly out-of-place –, as dynamics of inclusion and exclusion and relations and detachments are complexly articulated.

I find it particularly relevant, therefore, to consider in this work feelings of dis-placement or being 'out-of-place' (Ward 2003) as expressions of a sense of place. People at times, in fact, do not feel *in* place *somewhere* even when they are, physically connected to certain places (Ward 2003). In other words, their physicality does not always correspond to their feelings. Therefore, it is important to comprehend how emotions and feelings not only connect, but also disconnect from places (or detach c.f. Yarrow et al. 2015), and how those processes influence each other. A place can be narrated, felt, experienced also through kinds of dis-placement or detachment (Yarrow et al. 2015). For these reasons, I inquire theoretically and ethnographically throughout this work in how 'out-of-placeness' relates to all processes of place-making I have discussed and to people's (dis)attunements to absences. I now turn to the theoretical implications of this, with a specific focus on affect.

It could be argued that people in Latina find themselves in a relation of cruel optimism, which "exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant 2011:1). This impossibility to reach the object of desire produces an impasse, a moment of suspension (Berlant 2011). To desire for Latina to acquire the normative status of a localism means at the same time to delegitimise it as it lacks the structures of

kinship, blood, soil, and history necessary for localisms' very existence. And yet, as also pointed out by Berlant herself (2011), this desire is so strong that despite the impossibility of obtaining its object, it is nonetheless continuously sought after. In this impasse, there is a "defeated potentiality" (Bryant and Knight 2019:127), that prevents any future to materialise. Bryant and Knight define potentiality precisely as "the future's *capacity to become future*" (2019:107 italics in original; see also Povinelli 2011), or the "otherwise-than-actual" (Bryant and Knight 2019:109). There is, in Latina's existence, a kind of potentiality that gives access to the future, as a fulfilment of an alternative social project (Povinelli 2011). Povinelli (2011), drawing on Deleuze and Agamben, describes how in the oscillation between affects and their idealisations (i.e. in this case between a feeling of belonging to a localism and its distributed expressions), there is a space in-between (out-of-place, as in out of localisms as they are expressed in Italy) for Latina to become something else. In her work, Pipyrou (2016a; 2012; 2010) mentions often the trope of victimhood as it is raised by her interlocutors. She identifies victimhood as a rhetorical tool (Pipyrou 2012), which in some cases can redefine a community in suffering as a form of *campanilismo* (Pipyrou 2010). Similarly to Pipyrou's argument, I propose that this could also be the case for Latina. The hyperbolic and ironic use of 'nothingness' (Carrithers 2012; Pipyrou 2012) can be interpreted as a rhetorical tool that provides an alternative to the normative presence of localisms; an alternative that emerges in-between localisms' affective and idealised expressions (c.f. Povinelli 2011). I argue, therefore, that Latina's distributed localism is embedded within these two potentialities and so are, therefore, its materialities, sensorialities, affects, and times to which I now turn.

4.1. *What does Latina feel like?*

In this last section, I discuss what the city *feels* like and what these affects do (Ahmed 2014). As I argued above, Latina finds itself in an impasse (Berlant 2011), an immanent

suspension that holds in itself the potential of the otherwise (Povinelli 2011; Bryant and Knight 2019), while aspiring for an unreachable normative resolution and its comforting affects (Berlant 2011; Ahmed 2014). My aim is to investigate how the impasse, as an ordinary crisis, works through the cracks, the spaces in-between (see Demetriou 2018 on her discussion of water and debris through the cracks)[28]. Here, crisis is ordinary because it is suffused in the everyday experience of my interlocutors, rather than a moment of heightened danger, or of change (Berlant 2011; Povinelli 2011; see also Pipyrou 2016b on silent crisis). It is what happens in the everyday, the intensities felt and acknowledged that amount to *something* (Stewart 2007), situations that do not necessarily turn into events (Povinelli 2011), but remain "a state of animated and animating suspension that forces itself on consciousness, that produces a sense of the emergence of something in the present that may become an event" (Berlant 2011:5).

Throughout this work I explore the ways in which Latina emerges through the performances, sensorialities, affects, and materialities of such an ordinary crisis. I recognise how the very naming of Latina as 'nothing' generates it (Ahmed 2014:13) through the affective qualities of its absences (Pipyrou 2014a on narrativising absence). Latina is constituted through talking about it[29], performing it, practicing it, and feeling it. This particular place at the particular time in which I carried out fieldwork is constituted and made unique by my interlocutors' local knowledge, as it is precisely this kind of knowledge which "creates places out of *nothing*" (Frake 1996:248 italics not in original). I explore, therefore, what emerges from Latina's absences and from my interlocutors' attunements to them (Navaro-Yashin 2012). I take Navaro-Yashin's definition of affects as an "analytical approach that allows sensing as a method to understand and

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[28] With this, I also expand Ahmed's work on skin surfaces (2014), moving beyond the surface itself, to explore the depth of the messiness of relations and detachments (c.f. Massey 2005). For this same reason I also do not employ metaphors of maps and mapping (see also Pipyrou 2016a:23 on maps and mapping).
[29] The Italian anthropologist Federico Scarpelli coins the expression *place-telling* to indicate those practices of "speaking about one's own places" (2011:113; see also Raffles 1999).

conceptualize one's surroundings […] affect is a charge that has a part to play in the sociality of the human beings who inhabit a space" (2012:20) [30]. Similarly, I also ask what places *feel* like, in recognition of their *charge* or, in Pink's words (2011), their *intensities*. In doing so, I explore how such affects 'resonate' (to use Stewart's term) in a particular place at a particular time (c.f. Massey 2005). Through the ethnography, I will explore my interlocutors' attunements to Latina and its charge.

Returning to the concept of genealogy mentioned before, there is a risk highlighted by Ahmed (2014:214) that ascribing an affective quality to something de-historicises it. I find it important, therefore, to pay particular attention to the genealogies of these affects. Affects carry within themselves multiple historicities, that move from the subject to the collective (c.f. Berlant 2011; see also Pipyrou 2016a on victimhood that has a history and opens up to the future). History is what ties the subject to her continuity and, therefore, "history is what hurts" (Berlant 2011:137), in its perpetual replication. Ahmed writes that "knowing that I am a part of this history makes me feel a certain way; it impresses upon me, and creates an impression" (2014:36). In Latina, the affects of 'nothing', therefore, cannot be just nothing, they are charges embedded in historicities that bring pasts, presents, and futures together. If affects are so embedded within their own genealogies so are the bodies who experience and get attuned to such affects. The next paragraphs focus on the senses, the body, memories, and materialities.

I argue, therefore, for a multi-temporal engagement with time. I draw on Hamilakis' work (2014), who adopts a Bergsonian view of time as embodied in matter and memory, which in turn contain multiple temporalities. I focus on memory (on remembering and

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[30] I follow Ahmed here in not providing a strict distinction between emotions and affects, but focusing my interest on the "*messiness of the experiential* […] and the *drama of contingency*" (Ahmed 2014:2010), in the emergence of places through attuning oneself to relations and detachments and to absences. I use the word 'affect' in recognition of the works of Berlant, Povinelli, Stewart, and Navaro-Yashin (whom I draw on heavily in this work), even though I also engage with scholars who have focused primarily on emotions (such as Ahmed) and the senses (such as Hamilakis).

forgetting) as a process through which places are constituted. Simonsen (2008:21) recognises two ways in which memory spatialises time: through an engagement with material culture through the physical environment (see also Hamilakis 2014) or through performative acts, rituals, celebrations (cf. Connerton 1989). Memory connects people to places and their temporalities, while also allowing for absences to emerge. Remembering, forgetting, but also imagining are all practices that gather multiple pasts, presents, and futures in disordered and non-linear processes. They relate and detach and are, therefore, palimpsestuous processes. The multiplicity of different temporalities is evident in the genealogies of emotions, ideas, and the making of places, it is embedded in the materialities and sensorialities of my interlocutors' bodily attunement to places, their objects and their senses.

Bodies and their movement often constitute and let places emerge via a physical and emotional engagement (Rodman 1992). The idea of 'emplacement', in particular, describes how a connection between mind-body-environment (Howes 2005; see also Pink 2009) takes place in the formation of places: through the senses and through affects. To do so, my aim is to explore what places *feel* like, how people become (dis)attuned to places through their bodies, their sensations, and their emotions and how in turn places are constituted through these sensuous and affective processes. Senses play an important role in the perception of environments, but also in memories and imaginations of them. They are a way to create a relation to places but also a way to constitute and structure them (Rodaway 1994:4). Pink (2008:181), for instance, discusses the experience of food-sharing and how such moments contribute to place-making. Senses are a fundamental element in the process of emplacement, which "allows us to reposition ourselves in relationship to the sensuous materiality of the world" (Howes 2005:7) and, I would add, also beyond that materiality, as we imagine, remember, and forget other places and times

Chapter 2

through the senses. Sensing also means getting to know, acquiring knowledge of what is being sensed (Pink 2008:181) and, as a consequence, *sense* of places develops into knowledge of a particular place (Scarpelli 2011). Memory, the material world, and the senses are, according to Hamilakis (2014:6), at the base of our kinaesthetic experience of the world. Senses are all-encompassing, multi-temporal, and infinite, they reach beyond conventional definitions of them (Hamilakis 2014; Rodaway 1994; Howes 2005), however, it is still important to recognise their political and genealogical ramifications (Hamilakis 2014). It is drawing on the work of Hamilakis that I consider, among other senses: sense of places, sense of movement, sense of times, and sense of belonging.

As Hamilakis argues: "The materiality of the world is sensorially perceived through all previous mnemonic experiences, not only of that specific materiality but also of all other materialities and all other experiential encounters" (2014:118). In this palimpsestuous entanglement of temporalities, materialities, sensorialities, affects, experiences, and places I explore the relevance of matter. I explore the ways in which people get attuned to the material world, from objects such as food to the built environment. In doing so, I recognise the multiple existences of materialities, their multi-temporality, and the way they question dichotomous relations between absences and presences. I explore how, in a palimpsestuous manner, materialities' presences and absences can both encourage relations but also detachments (Yarrow and Jones 2014; Navaro-Yashin 2012). I investigate how objects can acquire the affective qualities attributed to them (Ahmed 2010; c.f. Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007) and how they are constitutive and constitute those feelings and genealogies they are attached to. Places, for example, can 'taste' of particular foods, or they can sound in particular ways. Seremetakis defines commensality as "the exchange of sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling" (1994:37). Places are crafted through

such commensality, which can be understood as encompassing the entirety of the sensorial realm, in a multisensorial multilocality: places constituted and constituting multiple times, multiple memories, multiple affects, multiple relations and detachments. People get attuned palimpsestuously, kinaesthetically (Hamilakis 2014), and synesthetically to the complexity of everyday experience through their engagement with places.

With the ethnography in mind, I have provided here a theoretical overview for this thesis. I started from the literature review, to outline a significant gap in the literature on Latina: namely the constant association that is made between the city and the fascist regime and the lack of contemporary works that explore the city's social fabric. I, then, identified the research questions aimed at addressing and covering this gap. In the second half of this chapter, I have begun the discussion with the identification of three kinds of absences that can be found in Latina. I then proposed the analytical lens of palimpsestuous attunements to investigate Latina's absences and the making of places. The term 'palimpsestous' is aimed at describing the complex entanglements that result from different kinds of relations and detachments, while the term 'attunements' indicates my interlocutors' engagement and experiences with this complexity. The second part was dedicated to a theoretical exploration of Italian localisms, which were defined as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries. This definition describes the intricacies between kinship, place, relatedness, blood, and soil; it also addresses the expression of localisms through multiple spheres of experience; in using the concept of genealogy, it recognises the multiple histories, inheritances, and political lives of localisms, while acknowledging their constant re-elaborations and negotiations (as imaginaries). Starting from this definition of localisms and from the apparent absence of Latina's localism, I proposed a theoretical argument. I have theorised that Latina is in a state of suspension:

Chapter 2

on one side it is stuck in an impasse produced by a relation of cruel optimism, on the other side has the potential to constitute a new kind of localism. I also argue that this state of ordinary crisis is expressed through a multiplicity of affects, temporalities, sensorialities, and materialities, that I proceeded to discuss theoretically before concluding this chapter. Latina, as a place, was found and came to be when I, together with my interlocutors, engaged in multiple relations and detachments (see Scarpelli 2011). Therefore, throughout this thesis, I investigate people's palimpsestuous attunements to the ordinary crisis they experience in their making and unmaking of the city of Latina.

Chapter 3

THE MAKING OF AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PLACE:

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

> *" "I speak and speak," Marco says, "but the listener retains only the
> words he is expecting, the description of the world to which you lend a
> benevolent ear is one thing; the description that will go the rounds of the
> groups of stevedores and gondoliers on the street outside my house the
> day of my return is another; and yet another, that which I might dictate
> late in life, if I were taken prisoner by Genoese pirates and put in irons
> in the same cell with a writer of adventure stories. It is not the voice that
> commands the story: it is the ear." "*

> *(Calvino 1974:135)*

1. Introduction

This chapter reflects on the research methods used during fieldwork and the
methodological issues that arose while carrying out the research. As it will become more
evident throughout the following chapters, ethnographic data is at the core of this work.
It is starting from the ethnography that any theoretical considerations ensued, and it is
starting from the ethnography that I pursue an exploration of this ethnographic place.
Pink defines ethnographic places as "not the same actual, real, experienced places
ethnographers participate in when they do fieldwork. Rather, they are the places that we,
as ethnographers, make when communicating about our research to others" (Pink
2009:42). Following her definition, she outlines how these places emerge out of the

Chapter 3

"combining, connecting, and interweaving of theory, experience, reflection, discourse, memory, and imagination" (Pink 2009:42). They have "a material and sensorial presence" (Pink 2009:42) and they imply the involvement and participation of not only the interlocutors and ethnographer, but also of the research's audience and academia, as they are all embedded in processes through which meaning is produced. Latina's palimpsestuousness is, therefore, expressed in the interweaving of stories, experiences, emotions of my interlocutors and my own, as well as in its constitution as an ethnographic place through my presence in the field and the rendition I make of it throughout this thesis. Throughout this chapter, I recognise that inquiring into the assumptions, circumstances, and developments which characterise the ways in which methods are employed can inform and enrich the data collected. The research for this study was carried out primarily through extended fieldwork using participant observation, which lasted approximately 11 months, between June 2015 and May 2016. Fieldwork, and even more so participant observation, are defining methods of social anthropology (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). My interlocutors' ages went from 25 to over 90 years old, even though the majority was between 50 and 70. I talked to approximately the same number of men and women.

I have divided this chapter into six sections. In the first one, "Fieldwork and Absence", I reflect on my interlocutors' reaction to my research project, which led me to a shift in its focus. In the sections "Being in the field", I explore different aspects of my presence in the field: the relations that led to the emergence of myself (as an ethnographer) and of my interlocutors; the role of emotions during fieldwork; the way both fieldwork and academic practices contributed to the making of an ethnographic place. I discuss some ethical concerns, before concluding with a reflection on how Latina emerges through this thesis as an ethnographic place.

Chapter 3

2. Fieldwork and Absences: the study of an invisible place

"Listen to me. There is nothing here, there is nothing to study". This was the reply I received when I told a high school student (who was probably 16 or 17) that I was studying Latina. His dad is the owner of the Chinese restaurant where I was eating. He had an unmistakable local accent and had grown up in the neighbourhood, even though he spoke Chinese with his dad. I prompted him on why there was nothing to study, and he repeated what he had just told me: "There is nothing here". The idea that I was studying Latina was, to say the least, peculiar to many. Often, when I presented my research topic, I provoked a bout of laughter, which quickly turned into disbelief when people noticed my expression remained serious. Other times, people would tell me: "Eh, there is so much to study here!", but when asked to talk more about this, they swiftly changed the topic of conversation or left altogether. When I began fieldwork, the June sun was also a reminder of the approaching summer, of the intolerable heat and, most importantly, of the holiday season. This made people even less eager to listen to my academic ramblings. Stories of traumatic arrivals in the field abound in anthropology (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997:12 on narratives of entry and exit from the field). While mine was far from being traumatic as such, it was nonetheless bewildering. Weeks passed by and I could not find ways to go beyond those first reactions. So that begged the question, how to go about studying something that was perceived to be 'nothing' by many of the people I talked to? It was through these struggles that I have learned the erratic character of fieldwork. The understanding and exploration of a dynamic, ever-changing, and eventful fieldwork revealed many aspects that I had not taken into consideration, which I explore throughout this thesis. The city was dense, and it was enriched with stories and experiences I had not come to know before carrying out fieldwork.

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Chapter 3

My first question was how to approach methodologically (and, later, analytically and conceptually) a place with which many of my interlocutors had a conflictual or indifferent relation. Many people found my intention to study the city problematic; my questions were often unexpected and were met with surprise, as it can be seen in comments such as the boy's one, or Antonella's (see chapter 2). Through the analysis of data I carried out once I returned from the field, I framed this theme conceptually as 'absence'. My aim is, therefore, to discuss how my methodological choices contributed to the shaping of a place as it emerges in this thesis. As I confronted people's surprise and doubts regarding my research, I realised I had to change the way I carried out fieldwork. Before, I had planned to ask people rather directly their views on urban and architectural heritage, participate in urban renewal initiatives, and engage with the ways in which monuments were being used. Not only did my focus change to something that was not tangible and that I could not directly point at, it also became increasingly harder to find ways to talk to people about it. This was especially so because I was confronted with a very peculiar kind of absence. I was faced with 'nothing', as the boy in the Chinese restaurant repeated several times. My research field broadened as I followed my interlocutors' experiences, lives, and emotions, and as I became more and more interested in the entirety of the city (not only its monuments and architecture), while it became more fleeting, not easily framed, and even harder to talk about. Epistemological questions such as the ones I have already partially presented - How does one study something that seems not to be there? How to determine whether something is actually there or not? - crowded my diary and my personal reflections. I wondered how I was to approach this 'new' fieldwork. This meant being particularly open to the field's changes and my interlocutors' confusing responses and being able to dwell with them. I started paying much more attention to all that was left unsaid and while I knew from before that this was an important part of conversations, gestures, silences, and tones of voice suddenly became more evident and

prominent, as often people were left without words when they heard about my research. The way I approached participant observation and my interlocutors depended much on the interactions I was having and on my own experiences, which were being shaped by others as much as by the environment.

This is but one example of how non-linear and unexpected fieldwork can be (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). While writing my notes at night, after a day spent wandering through the city's streets and chatting with people, I realised how infrequently the topics I had planned to research came up in the conversations I was having. The field site and its dynamics were revealing themselves to be the opposite from the orderly and clear proposal I had submitted to the university: messy, unpredictable, and especially theoretically and emotionally challenging (Billo and Hiemstra 2013; Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). As both Billo and Hiemstra (2013) and Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) have argued, it is indispensable for the ethnographer to be flexible; flexibility becomes therefore a prerogative of fieldwork, which cannot unfold without questioning one's own assumptions. This is true for the more practical choices of how to record notes, to more theoretical insights on reflexivity, positionality, and fieldwork boundaries. When circumstances change, the researcher does not just passively live through them; rather, fieldwork progresses with a combination of occurrences and choices, some personal, some academic, and others ethical (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). My field site became, therefore, a site of discoveries, at times positive and at times negative, in which I was also involved. What emerged from the recognition of a serendipitous fieldwork, was also perceiving it as an intricate web of connections and disconnections (i.e. relations and detachments), and the processes which formed them. It was through understanding fieldwork as an all-encompassing process, which I have come to think of the methodological issues discussed in this chapter.

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Chapter 3

3. Being in the field

3.1. Being in the field (of relations)

Before arriving in Latina, I had reflected much about my positionality and I had dedicated time to identifying those characteristics that would have made a difference during my fieldwork. I presented myself (and thought of myself) as a *Latinense* (coming from Latina), because I was born and lived in Latina for 17 years. I knew, even before embarking in fieldwork, that I had already established and developed relations with other people in Latina and with the city itself. There were multiple layers at play. I had a threefold image of the city: as the place of my childhood (constituted through memories, experiences, and the relations I had crafted in the past); the city I had studied about and prepared for before starting my fieldwork (embedded in academic discourses and theories, already partially interpreted through this lens); and finally the city I was set out to discover. Having previous connections to the city meant that many had known me before I became an anthropologist, often through kinship or other personal networks. I often felt I had to negotiate between my 'professional' identity (as a researcher) and my previous connections. My presence in the field was a constant negotiation between different, and often conflicting, selves (c.f. Abu-Lughod 1988; and Panourgiá 1995). Even though people were fully aware of my research project, sometimes they would not treat me with the professionality I mistakenly expected. If I ever tried to assert my 'academic presence', people would become very distant and direct me to archives and books, which in their eyes were more legitimate sources of knowledge. On the other hand, being associated to my kinship and personal ties (as 'the daughter of', or 'the friend of') meant that I was often not taken seriously enough. Moreover, I wondered how my 'position' in between being a student and a professional, having been abroad, and having returned to study the city (something which puzzled many), were going to affect my daily life in

Chapter 3

Latina. I had not realised the combination of being a woman, a PhD student in a British university, and being only 25 years old would prove such an odd mix to most people I talked to. The majority of people I interacted with were in the 50 to 70 age group. I could not access every age group and I excluded minors for ethical reasons. Nonetheless, I had several conversations with people aged 35 to 50 and over 70. I also recognise that my presence affected not only which age groups I had easiest access to, but also the way such groups interacted with me. I felt older people treated me like I was still young and inexperienced and in need of guidance. To people my age, I was a quirky and somewhat disconcerting combination of experiences and ideas, as some quite frankly pointed out. They found my presence somewhat suspicious. This is, more broadly, a limitation of participant observation, which assumes the researcher's participation and therefore her involvement with the community. For this, participant observation requires a long time to collect data and only allows for a limited number of interlocutors to be involved in the project. Therefore, the knowledge produced during fieldwork is necessarily filtered through these limitations and the presence and influence of the ethnographer.

I intend to start these reflections from the confusion I felt as I came to terms with the relational complexity I was embedded in. To do so, I follow Lichterman's suggestion (2017) to pay attention to mistakes, confusion, misunderstandings, and clumsy attempts at understanding what was happening, as they reveal important aspects of the research process and of the analysis. What can my surprise and disorientation when faced with my interlocutors' responses tell me about this specific ethnographic place? It is through the deep reflections this question requires that I explore the themes of this chapter, turning to epistemological considerations of how to study a place that seems to hold no value in the eyes of my interlocutors. It was thinking about this issue that I shifted my focus on the processes that contributed to the emergence of the city, rather than the city itself. It

was at this crucial crossroad that I questioned the idea of doing anthropology at 'home' (and on 'home').

Was I ever a 'native anthropologist' and was I ever doing 'anthropology at home'? These are complex questions that cannot be answered in an unequivocal manner. Debates about anthropology at home and native anthropology are grounded in the discipline's development and it is necessary to recognise them as embedded within anthropology's changes throughout the decades[31]. These two concepts ('native' anthropology and 'anthropology at home') have come to bear several different interpretations. Ryang (2005) makes an interesting observation when she discusses 'anthropology at home', which she argues is associated more easily with the West, in opposition to 'a field' located somewhere else, where 'natives' are located (and where 'native anthropology' happens). How, then, were the concepts of 'nativeness' and 'home' emerging during my conversations and interactions? Similarly, the critical views of Abu-Lughod (1991) and Narayan (1993) provided some answers, even though they did not seem to be exhaustive ones.

Many of the people I talked with did not feel 'at home' in Latina and they did not consider themselves to be from there. I had thought that I was, after all, going home, rather than arrive in 'the field'[32]. I realised that I could not define my presence in the field on my own, but it depended largely on what and whom I interacted with. When I thought about carrying out fieldwork at home, whose home was I thinking about? If I were to consider myself as a native anthropologist, what was I native to, and for whom? Did it matter that I considered myself at 'home', if no one else did? People's responses

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[31] A recognition of the discipline's changes also means recognising the different approaches inherent within a field of study. As Pink (2001:588) clarifies: "disciplines are not homogenous univocal masses; […] such approaches need to be historically and culturally situated; […] change, whether it refers to 'social and cultural change' or changing theoretical and methodological approaches is usually uneven, complex and characterised by series of appropriations, continuities and differences". My own methodological considerations are obviously affected by the academic assumptions I am embedded in.

[32] For a discussion on the dichotomy 'home' vs. 'field' see Knowles, 2000

Chapter 3

were unexpected and puzzling. I wondered whether there was such a thing as 'home' in Latina, and what the consequences were for my interlocutors and the way they experienced the city. In a rather egocentric attitude, I reflected upon *my own* positionality. However, it was my interlocutors who really shifted my own ground.

One more kind of interaction shaped further my experience in the field. I did fieldwork with my own family. I regularly interviewed kinship members (my mother and grandmother in particular) and participated in family events. I also include some memories from my past experiences, from my childhood, and from the years I spent in Latina. The literature suggests that not many anthropologists have embarked in research within their own families or, if that is not the case, few have written about the methodological implications of carrying out research with family members. As it is a prominent element of some of the ethnographic data I present throughout this thesis, I find it important to dedicate some reflections to it. From associating it to auoethnograhpy (Waterston 2005), to defining it as 'intimate ethnography' (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2006), doing research with one's own family members presents some challenges and some elements to ponder carefully. One of them is the duality of the researcher[33]. I recognised and experienced the double character of this type of research. Though, I was not only the granddaughter in my grandmother's presence, as I was not only the daughter in my mother's presence. I was also an anthropologist to them, informed by my kinship role. What shaped the way they perceived me was through our interactions, the context they took place in, and what relation we had. So, for example, at home my grandmother would scold me for something I had done wrong (treating me like her granddaughter), while outside, in the presence of others, she would praise my work as an anthropologist and would discuss my research. Some of the things she told while I was

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[33] Panourgia (1995) presents this stylistically in her work, where she uses two different names (and structures her narrative using the device of the *parerga*) in order to discuss her dual position of anthropologist and family member (such as daughter, granddaughter, cousin).

Chapter 3

carrying out fieldwork where being told with the knowledge that I was an anthropologist doing research as much as her granddaughter. One did not exclude the other. Carrying out fieldwork in one's own home adds a layer of complexity to the discussion I have presented so far[34]. When I talk about my own memories, I acknowledge that there is a contribution from myself; fieldwork is a shared experience and my memories are integral to the ones shared by my interlocutors. My role and status of daughter or granddaughter changed as I carried out fieldwork (see the work of Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2006). Some of the stories shared with me I had heard before, some questions I knew I could ask, some others I knew I had to avoid. As I carried out fieldwork, I had the privilege to listen to family stories that had never been shared with me. Calling this kind of ethnography 'intimate' portrays well the level of closeness between the anthropologist and some of her kin[35]. Some interactions were shaped by my roles of both family member and anthropologist, especially during family events were more family members were involved. Two kinds of intimacies were present during my fieldwork: a 'cultural'[36] one inherent in my connection to the city, and a familial one. 'Intimate' ethnography, nonetheless, comes with evident limitations, as I tried to navigate all these relations through my personal experience of Latina and my connections to people living there, which have deeply affected my presence and actions in the field.

These reflections on the concept of home and my own family were vital to my understanding of the field site, as well as my own position and that of others. More importantly, I had considered the meaning of home, family, and of my multiple selves *a priori*. I was ready to take into consideration how gender, age, and my kinship relationships would affect my experience of the field and how others perceived me.

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[34] I would not go as far as labelling this work as an autoethnography, as only parts of it concern my own family

[35] I struggle with the use of the word 'intimate' here, as all ethnographies assume a degree of intimacy, given the anthropologist's comprehensive involvement in any field site.

[36] I am referring here particularly to Herzfeld's concept of 'cultural intimacy' (1997)

However, I thought they would definitely have an impact. What was under scrutiny was what kind of impact they would have, rather than whether they would have it in the first place. As I looked back at my experience in the field, though, I have realised more and more that these categorisations mattered only when embedded within the interactions and relations I was having. I became aware of the fact that I had put too much 'self' in my *self*-reflexivity. As I mentioned above, I recognised my egocentric attitude as I inquired into my own positionality. However, I came to realise that the features I had identified (gender, age, birthplace, family status, etc.) were not fixed categories (Robertson 2002). That is the reason why, while distancing myself form the idea of positionality, I also attempt to use reflexive processes as interpretative and analytical opportunities (see Lichterman 2017). Therefore, my questions about the 'anthropology at home', becomes an analytical exploration of what 'home' meant for my interlocutors and myself and how its meanings emerged during fieldwork.

As the significance of 'home' emerged as a result of my interactions with my interlocutors, so did selves - both mine and that of others; selves which were always dynamic, ever-changing, and contingent. This is a particularly important point, as it informs the interpretation, analysis, and understanding of crucial elements in this thesis. Meanings were being produced, rather than being pre-determined, as my interlocutors and I interacted with each other and with the city, and as a consequence *we* were also constituted through this process (see Rose 1997). To be reflexive becomes, therefore, a way to inquire into these processes, to explore how ethnographic data and knowledge are produced (Rose 1997). Meanings are articulated through the encounter and interaction between people and depend on who is involved and the context in which such encounters take place (see also Amit 2000:2). The interactions I had were fundamental in (de)constructing each element that either felt part of me or of others, or other ascribed to

me or to themselves. The people I met, therefore, ceased being simple 'objects' of research. The power to define, rather than being only a prerogative of the ethnographer, shifted along a continuum and became a collaboration with my interlocutors (Agelopoulos 2003; Amit 2000; Kondo 1986). By including my own experiences and memories, I aim to collapse the distinctions between subject and object, interlocutor and researcher, native and non-native. I do not recognise a hierarchical relationship between the interlocutor and the researcher, nor one embedded in a discourse where the researcher is somewhat more objective, distant, or more conscious than the interlocutors. My frequent confusion and inability to understand what was happening is an example of this. Without a doubt, there is a purpose to the researcher's presence; however, the interlocutors as well have their own purposes, feelings, (re)actions, and motives. It would be unfair and unjust to think that they act only in the reproduction of society's structures. Rather, I consider my own and other people's responses to be the result of the intersections created by multiple encounters. As it will be evident from some ethnographic anecdotes, roles were sometimes inverted. I became myself an interlocutor as I was asked questions. My interest, experience, self, and presence all provided a prompt, even if not always verbalised, for conversations.

It was through these constant relational processes that I began feeling more 'at home' and people began recognising me more as being part of the city. Through relations, we shaped our selves and meanings were negotiated. By the end of my fieldwork, many of my interlocutors realised I was just trying to figure things out, as much as they were. As I made my way back from the field, I had many people asking me to come back once I understood how the city worked, to help them making sense of the environment we shared and of the 'nothing' they were so confused about. I came to the conclusion that the concept of an anthropology at 'home', or of a 'native' anthropology is not effective in

explaining the kind of knowledge I had before entering the field nor the one I produced thereafter. It is useful only when discussing my relations in the field, which have been, at times, influenced by the fact that I lived in the city and I had connections which existed before I started fieldwork. However, my connection to the city was far from defining alone the concept of 'home', classifying myself as 'native', or being the essence of the knowledge produced or my experience during my time in the field site. As argued by Angelopoulos (2003), 'nativeness' (and, I would add, other categories) is ultimately the result of social relations and of social interactions. It is the result of a constant exchange between people, the city, and oneself. The interweaving of people and situations is affected by many dynamic factors, which make each encounter unique. Knowledge is always the result of the ethnographer's and the interlocutors' complex and unique relation (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). I came to the conclusion that the categories of insider/outsider cannot be framed within precise and, even less so, universal principles (Agelopoulos 2003; Bakalaki 1997; Tsuda 2015), which increases the risk of considering one's own community (the so-called 'natives') as a homogeneous group (Bakalaki 1997). It is, therefore, crucial to recognise the fluid, contingent, and dynamic character of such definitions. I realised that during fieldwork, at different times and with different people, I was also a daughter, a friend, a student, or a young woman, whose meanings affected the way people perceived me and as a consequence affected our interactions. Fieldwork was, therefore, a constant dialogical negotiation, which continuously redefined 'nativeness', and every other category. As a result, it also redefined 'otherness' and led me to think about how, in such a heterogenous place like Latina, the concepts of insider/outsider are framed, beyond my own methodological experience (Agelopoulos 2003).

Chapter 3

3.2. Being in the field (of emotions)

After having argued for an understanding of fieldwork as a relational process, I will now focus more closely on that intimate side of fieldwork I discuss above, as my personal life is still so intricately connected to the one of my interlocutors and of the city. Throughout this chapter – and the thesis – I recognise my presence in the field as an important and influential element. Stoller - citing Bergé - talks of anthropologists' (over)implication (Stoller 1997:33): as researchers we are embedded within the field and our continuity with it (being part of it, participating in it, being entangled with it, and ultimately also shaping it) needs to be acknowledged through our capacity to consider our sensorial experiences, to produce a 'sensuous scholarship', in Stoller's words, with all its implications. I take this as an invitation to consider what the field *feels* like, as suggested by Navaro-Yashin (2012:20). In her work, Navaro-Yashin (2012:20) discusses the importance of affective charges experienced by the anthropologist, who needs that "attunement" with the field in order to carry out fieldwork in the first place. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, attuning oneself with the environment is a constant labour (Stewart 2011). As I was exploring my interlocutors' attunements I engaged with my own understandings and perceptions of what was around me. I describe often in this thesis how at times I was overwhelmed by Latina's negative affective charges or how my grandmother's stories resonated nostalgically with my own life history, even if they belonged to a different time and place. Through the ordinariness of life, I navigated – often without control – the rhythms and flows of my own and people's lives, as they all became a chorus from which the city emerged. I experienced the affective and sensorial complexity of places in my interlocutors' stories, silences, and practices. I moved physically and in my imagination, and in doing so discovered a kinaesthetic experience of the city (Hamilakis 2014). As Hamilakis (2014) so compellingly writes, I discovered

through its stories the infinitude of Latina's sensorial expressions. Embracing and reflecting on my own experiences has turned into a further analytical lens, as I aim to answer the question, amongst others, of what a city – this city – *feels* like. This reflection strengthens the connection between theoretical points (where I discussed affect in relation to places), my methodological approaches and considerations, and the analysis of data. The field is materially, sensorially, and affectively present (Pink 2009:42).

Emotions became a core element, which engaged my interlocutors as much as myself. Instead of trying to single out my analytical response to ethnographic data - leaving behind my notes of frustration, anger, joy, or confusion - I find it more useful to embrace these reactions as they can reveal important elements which would otherwise remain hidden (Davies 2010). In embracing and including my own emotions, my aim is to include myself as part of this narrative, as well as engaging with Davies' (2010) 'radical empiricism'[37] and move beyond the understanding that emotions are not relevant in scholarly production. In doing so I, therefore, address the broader importance of considering the affective sphere (Kirtsoglou 2018), thus collapsing the multiple dichotomies associated with the separation of subject and object, while also questioning modernity's paradigms and their influence on the body and its experience of the world (Hamilakis 2014). My experience cannot be separated from that of others because my reactions, my responses, my involuntary gestures and expressions ('silent' feedback I was so careful about when it came from my interlocutors) shaped the way fieldwork developed. My direct questions, as well, had an impact on the knowledge produced, as interlocutors responded accordingly. My intention is, therefore, to consider personal responses, social and cultural assumptions, conscious and unconscious feelings.

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[37] Davies (2010) traces the ways in which the researcher's emotions have been considered differently at different times in the development of this discipline. He advocates for what he calls, drawing on other works, radical empiricism (2010:3) in order to take into account in a more consistent way the researcher's emotions in the field.

Chapter 3

Experiences and emotions shaped my everyday life in Latina and changed the way I saw the city and others around me. Writing my diary was a way to release the tension I was feeling on a particular day, or to find a place for my frustrations, or to voice my confusion. It is also through writing the diary that I experienced my field site. While re-reading my notes, I noticed how many times I complained because the weather was too hot during summer. The roads were empty, no one would be walking outside in the heat, no one would want to engage in any conversation. If people talked, it was only to complain about the heat. My fieldwork started in June and, for the first three months, I collected very little data. When September started, and the heat slowly dissipated I was very worried about having too short of a time left in order to collect the necessary data for this study. Experiences like this, and the emotions associated with them, shape the way the field is experienced and *felt*. In another instance, I was particularly frustrated when someone addressed me calling me a 'little girl' (*bambina*), which I deemed a rather inappropriate term considering I was a PhD student carrying out a research. The connotations associated with the term 'girl' are not only gendered, but also denote a female individual in need of guidance because of her immaturity and naïveté (Kirtsoglou 2004:162 n6): the 'girl' is not yet a woman. The moment I was addressed as a 'girl', I felt stripped of my independence and capacity to fulfil my academic role. I did not respond and did not protest, mainly out of politeness and my will to avoid conflicts that would have affected my ability to find interlocutors, even though I voiced all my frustration when writing my diary. I realised only later that by keeping quiet and offering a shy smile I was reproducing myself the expected behaviour of a 'girl'.

Above, I have mentioned how I felt more at 'home' when people started taking my research more seriously, when my interlocutors and I started trying to figure out the way Latina worked together. In this recognition of how my perception of 'home' changed

Chapter 3

(and considering, therefore, how it could have changed for my interlocutors during their lives), I find Davies' (2010) understanding of anthropology at home particularly pertinent. He argues that 'home' should not be considered as a physical and geographical place, but rather it should be understood as encompassing a psychological dimension. Going back to my reflections on the anthropology at home and native anthropology, I recognise here even more the importance of affective experiences and emotions and how they shape the research and its outcomes. This was particularly evident when I was doing 'intimate ethnography' with my own family members. De Nardi calls her involvement in her own community 'autobiographical emotion', to indicate the heightened emotional reactions she dealt with while researching memory of the Resistance in her hometown in Italy. She recognises the emotional investment in the issues researched and the emotional negotiations which occurred during interviews (De Nardi 2015:27). I find that some of my research resonates with De Nardi's reflections (see also Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2006).

Looking back at my fieldnotes, I realise what an invaluable source they are in this regard. The written accounts of one's experience in the field are useful not only to record one's own observations, but also feelings and personal impressions. Personal reactions might change as time passes, when circumstance change, or when one leaves the field site; fieldnotes remain first-hand accounts of feelings related to the field site and its stories (cf. Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). There is a tendency to create a divide between the private sphere - the 'raw' notes written with emotional impetus –, from the public version of these notes (Lederman 1990) - often 'polished' and tidied up. I have tried to overcome this distinction in my work as much as possible and to include my own 'raw' notes and data to explore my time in the field affectively. While a lot is described through interviews, chats, and verbal interactions, a lot of the knowledge is acquired

synaesthetically and kinaesthetically (Hamilakis 2014). As Okely points out (2007), this creates a form of memory that transcends the one verbalised and articulated through written notes. The fieldwork's affective and sensorial charges do not end when one returns from the field. They remain with us and change us as we keep on navigating our own lives. My fieldwork experience became a fundamental part of my biography (Amit 2000:9), charged with intense sensorial memories, as I embarked also in a personal journey with my own family and my city. What is recorded through our own experience of the field stays with us, it belongs to us. Following the argument that ethnographic knowledge emerges from relations, I wanted in this section to focus more specifically on the emotional responses such relations provoke and how they can encourage a deeper analytical interpretation. In other words, understanding what Latina *feels* like and why can provide an epistemological tool to answer my research questions (Stodulka, Selim, and Mattes 2018). This is why Stodulka et al. (2018) call these "epistemic affects", in the recognition that we are embedded in relational flows with our interlocutors, which are experienced emotionally and sensorially, as well. It is important, therefore, to embrace this dimension, even though it can be hard to interpret at first (Stodulka, Selim, and Mattes 2018). It is again the confusion that requires an interpretative effort – mentioned above when discussing this fieldwork's absences – which can broaden the analytical horizon. Therefore, the writing which follows, is a combination of data coming from my notes and my fieldwork diary; the impressions I jotted down then, and the memories, sensations, and feelings I carry with myself of those 11 months; my analysis of data in conversation with a number of theoretical strands; and the complexities inherent in the process of writing.

Chapter 3

3.3. Being in the field (of practices)

My actions, together with my emotions and feelings, also contributed to shaping the field and the knowledge produced as a consequence of this (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997:15). Rose (1997), drawing heavily on Butler, stresses the importance of performativity in the emergence of selves and she concludes her reflections stating that: "This understanding insists that *we* are made through our research as much as we make our own knowledge" (Rose 1997:316, emphasis added)[38]. This is also true for my interlocutors, who were constituted through their actions and performances during my fieldwork. I, therefore, recognise the importance of one's own performative presence and how it affects and changes researcher and researched. Following the discussion above on the emergence of selves and knowledge through relations, recognising this makes such a process even more uncertain (Rose 1997). This was particularly evident when I asked people to talk about the city. My direct questions about my interlocutors' sense of attachment to Latina were often met with silence, irony, or doubt. These questions provoked reactions, which then gave space to an elaboration of the city as experienced and lived by my interlocutors. It is important to recognise my role and presence in those conversations, not as an out-of-the-scene observer, or as a neutral presence. As I have described throughout this chapter, I recognise my presence *in* the field through my actions, interactions, and reactions. In particular, I also want to highlight the role I have undertaken together with my interlocutors (I *participated* and not just *observed*) in the emergence of the palimpsestuous place that Latina is and, in the next paragraphs, I do so with a focus on academic practices.

There is a big emphasis, within the discipline of anthropology, on the act itself of taking notes, which forms an important part of the experience of fieldwork (Sanjek 1990), as I

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[38] Her quote is also relevant for what concerns the sensorial and affective experience of *doing* research.

have already discussed. If notes and the act of notetaking are so important for the discipline, it is equally important to consider what notes and notetaking (especially when they happen in public or in front of other people) mean for others, especially our interlocutors. When I did a pilot before carrying out fieldwork for this research project, I realised how impactful notes and the actions surrounding them were to my relations in the field. Some people were curious about what I was writing and in which language, some others found it distracting, others were worried that I would write something they did not want to be included in the final piece of work. Sometimes conversations did not flow as spontaneously because I was being slow at writing things down. Therefore, for this research project, I decided to avoid taking notes in front of people. While for ethical reasons (which are outlined in the following section), everyone was fully aware of my role and status as a researcher, the difference was noticeable when I was able to fully engage in every conversation I was having while making my interlocutors more comfortable, instead of looking down on a piece of paper. Thus, I decided taking quick notes as soon as possible – often when I went back into my car after having met someone – and compiling them all in a diary entry at night. This helped me to keep track of things, but also to make sure I had a more detailed account on my diary, rather than just sparse notes. Thinking about what notes meant for people I talked to, what comments they would make about them, and their reactions, helped me to develop my methods in a more congruous way in relation to the field site and its characteristics. For some of my interlocutors my notes were a mark of professionality (cf. Bakalaki 1997). People would often say jokingly: "Now you will go home and write all this down, won't you!". Other times, people would urge me to write something down they felt was particularly meaningful - from complaints about the city's urban problems to 'truths' about the city's past and its inhabitants. Through this process, I became increasingly aware of how not only my interactions with others, but also my practices and gestures were shaping my

relations in the field. Taking notes, I realised, was a form of relational activity: even though I was the only one actively engaging in it, it involved my interlocutors and it affected their reactions and responses. It was through these relations that the field took form.

As part of my experience of living in Latina and carrying out participant observation, I interviewed my interlocutors, in interactions which are better described as informal chats. These occurred both in public spaces (e.g. cafes), and in interlocutors' homes. I had more than thirty longer conversations, and countless encounters around the city. Some of the longer conversations happened over a few occasions as I met some interlocutors several times. When I arrived in the field, I identified some venues where I could find some gatekeepers. I volunteered in one of Latina's museums, I spent some time in Latina's senior centre, and I spent time with my own family and neighbours. I have used social media and data from newspapers. I collected newspapers during my stay in the city, I accessed news outlets through social media, and I have joined groups on social media that discuss the life of the city. I have used the data collected on both social media and newspapers ethnographically and to support data collected directly from my interlocutors. Rather than collecting data systematically on newspapers and online, they became part of my daily life in Latina (and they were used heavily by my interlocutors) and that is why and how they became part of this study.

Practice, however, does not end with fieldwork. An ethnographic place, as understood by Pink (2009), is constructed also within the boundaries of academia – through the data analysis and the writing process. Data analysis was carried out on all the material I collected (interviews, fieldwork notes, personal observations, social media posts, newspaper articles). My primary source of data are my field diaries, which I wrote at the end of each day during my fieldwork. In order to carry out the analysis, I organised the

data by themes, trying to identify recurring topics of conversations, words, or expressions (such as describing Latina as 'nothing', which I later conceptualised as an absence). Once I categorised my data, I proceeded with compiling it into sections (which then became chapters) and I proceeded to building the narrative between them through writing.

As Stoller puts it: "How can one develop a sense of place - that is, of locality - in scholarly expression?" (1997:42). It is in this attempt that I recognise all the elements I have discussed throughout this chapter. One evident limitation concerns the problematic process of turning daily life into written form. This is especially so since sections of this thesis and portions of data concern sensorial and emotional reactions (see Okely 1994). Portraying a dynamic palimpsestuous place in writing holds challenges precisely because of its dynamism and the juxtaposition and superimposition of elements. Not only is this an attempt to portray some individuals' daily lives, with all their nuances and particularities, but also to describe a palimpsestuous place, in a constant process of becoming. The writing of a thesis necessarily requires some organisation and structuring, which will affect the reader's experience and the portrayal of Latina. Moreover, the added difficulty of discussing senses and emotions comes from their intangibility, their laying in between the inside and the outside of the body, and their being at times inexpressible in spoken or written words. In the next section I consider some ethical concerns and I conclude with a reflection on how Latina, as an ethnographic place, came to be.

4. Ethical Concerns

Before ending this chapter, it is important to discuss some ethical concerns inherent in the way the research was carried out and in this thesis' development. As the AAA states, the paramount concern for an anthropologist is the safeguard and well-being of her interlocutors (American Anthropological Association 2012). My fieldwork was carried

out with this important thought in mind. Before starting fieldwork, I decided I would not have asked for signatures. This decision was taken after carrying out a pilot research in which I realised people found signatures suspicious. Herzfeld (Herzfeld 2009; see also Giordano 2012) also discusses this when talking about his fieldwork in Rome. Asking for signatures was going to hinder or entirely prevent any process of communication aimed at building trust between my interlocutors and myself. I, however, made sure consent was explicit and it was renewed several times during conversations. I also made sure everyone was fully aware of my role as a researcher. Ethical concerns need to be reworked continuously as circumstances often change during fieldwork (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). Moreover, it is not always possible to foresee every instance in which the anthropologist's ethical assumptions will be questioned. When introducing ethnographic data, I will, therefore, discuss any ethical concerns I encountered. I also consider excluding any information which I deem to be too sensitive. I have decided to anonymise every interlocutor to avoid any issue, even if this was not explicitly requested. Latina is not a particularly big city and many of my interlocutors know each other. I prefer to avoid people being able to be recognised as I might unknowingly disclose information that might affect some of my interlocutors. Anonymity is obviously compromised when I mention my family members. Those people I mention are aware of my research and, as I carried out fieldwork with my own family and this has affected the way it developed, it is inevitable that I specify my relationship to them. This obviously discloses who they are. However, I have been even more careful when including ethnographic data related to individuals whose identity has been made known in this thesis and I made sure they are fully aware of being mentioned in this work. I make use of both data from social media (primarily Facebook) and newspapers. Research online has been discussed at length (Hine 2005). For what concerns ethical implications, Facebook is a social media platform that requires users to sign in. Therefore, most of the information shared can only be viewed

by users who are registered. Users can post in both their own 'walls' and on groups. As Facebook lies in between these private and public realms, whenever I will report something from it, I will grant full anonymity to everyone, so that any individual behind comments or posts cannot be identified.

5. Conclusion: The Emergence of an Ethnographic Place

Pink (2009), in her definition of an 'ethnographic place' (see introduction to this chapter), considers multiple elements that contribute to the making of ethnographic places. Throughout this chapter, I have discussed how this place – ethnographic because of my epistemological relation with it – emerges throughout this thesis. I have also, therefore, reflected into how knowledge is produced.

First of all, the fact that my interlocutors themselves struggled to frame their (our) city underlines the fact that 'the field' is not to be discovered or found (Martinez 2018:1), nor is it detached and existing *a priori* of the process of fieldwork (Amit 2000:6). Rather, it emerges during research. This particular city with all its heterogeneity, posed important questions on the idea of a bounded field site, occupied by one bounded community (Amit 2000:13). When making methodological considerations about 'the field', it is a fundamental step to also ask oneself how they affect the knowledge produced during fieldwork, which is illustrated and developed throughout this thesis (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997). It is a process which implies the questioning of 'where' is the field, not in geographical terms, but in its social and political circumstances (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). When my interlocutors so adamantly repeated that there was 'nothing' to study, I had to reframe my assumptions about 'the field'. The knowledge about Latina, as it is presented in this thesis, was constituted in the interaction between my interlocutors and myself as we tried to understand the city together. I began these reflections, therefore,

from the epistemological and methodological questions I asked myself when confronted with this 'absent' field. In the section "Fieldwork and Absences", I explored the ways in which this 'encounter' with the field has encouraged me to shift my focus from the city, as an object, to the processes through which it emerges. I considered upon how serendipitous and unpredictable fieldwork can be, and I also reflected on moments of confusion and misunderstanding as knowledge-producing opportunities, as they require a deeper engagement with the questions we ask ourselves (see Lichterman 2017).

From this confusion and the shift in focus to processes and the emergence of the city, I inquired into the process of fieldwork itself and I asked myself how Latina was being constituted. Through a discussion on 'anthropology at home' and the involvement of my own family in the research process, I considered how both myself and my interlocutors emerged through the research and through my presence in the field. I wondered what was the significance of doing 'anthropology at home' and whose home was I writing about. My interlocutors' change of attitude towards my project led me to the understanding of home as a relational concept, which emerges from interactional processes. This recognition helped me to understand how other categorisations (e.g. age and gender) were the result of interactions, rather than pre-established categories. Moreover, through my exploration of carrying out fieldwork in my own family, I discussed how such categories change, shift, and emerge through relations between the ethnographer and her interlocutors (see Rose 1997). Especially when I discussed doing research in my own family, I realised that I was not either a kin or an anthropologist, I was something new which was the encounter of both these identities. As a consequence, I recognised the contingent character of identities which, because of their emergence through relations, are in a constantly changing flow. Being in the field also meant engaging with it emotionally. This was a particularly important recognition, given the

relational aspects of fieldwork. Emotions and senses revealed themselves to be a further tool to inquire into the density of the field site. To recognise my interlocutors' and my own emotional response was fundamental to understand aspects that would otherwise remain hidden. Emotions were not always easily interpreted and at times they were expressed with confusion. These were important occasions to reflect further on the circumstances that encouraged these emotions to arise. Emotions, therefore, became both a relational feature, through which I connected to my interlocutors, as well as another lens through which to understand the city (Stodulka, Selim, and Mattes 2018).

After outlining the relational character of ethnography, I explored some of the practices that affect the way fieldwork happens. In doing so, I discussed note-taking and interviews as part of the method of participant observation, while focusing primarily on the *participation* aspect. Living in the city meant that I engaged in a number of daily practices, through which I met people, I talked to them, I read newspapers, and so on and so forth. However, the making of an ethnography does not end with fieldwork. In this section, I also recognised the scholarly practices that produce an ethnography, such as data analysis and the writing of the thesis. Pink (2009) recognises the involvement of the ethnographer and of an audience in the making of an ethnographic place. In light of what I have discussed throughout this chapter, I argue that an ethnographic place emerges from the conjunction of all the elements discussed. If the ethnographer's and the interlocutors' identities emerge out of relations, so does – in this case – the place being studied. Latina, I argue, emerged during the entire research process. It emerged in the analysis of the data and during the writing of this thesis, as I made connection, weaved in anthropological theories, reflected on my methods, and communicated Latina to a specific audience. As Ursula Le Guin wrote: "The story is the way the story is told" (Le Guin 2004:48). The emerging ethnographic place is this unique conglomeration of elements. This is the

Chapter 3

reason why many of the debates I presented in this chapter will return throughout the thesis, as these processes cannot be separated. Latina, therefore, emerges even more as a unique, palimpsestuous place because of the multiple, intersecting, overlapping relations (both before, during, and after fieldwork) which have contributed to the city you are presented with in the rest of this thesis. The next chapter focuses particularly on how different (hi)stories can be told about the city of Latina. It draws on some of the arguments I have advanced in the literature review to suggest a polyvocal representation of Latina's past through my interlocutors' stories and memories.

Chapter 4

The City Beyond History

"The city is redundant: it repeats itself so that something will stick in the mind. […]
Memory is redundant: it repeats signs so that the city can begin to exist"

(Calvino 1974:19)

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I look at 'the city beyond History' to unravel the multiple (h)*istories* which constitute this place, to write a "non-domesticated multiple history" (Hastrup 1992:3) of Latina. I have, so far, introduced the city through the literature written about it, and through my theoretical understanding of it. In this chapter, I explore how my interlocutors get attuned to the palimpsestuousness of the city's multitemporality. I argue that they do so by narrating *istories* (c.f. Herzfeld 1987) and locating both their biographies and other far-reaching stories within them. The ethnography shows the complexity and density of multiple pasts, presents, and futures. This is, therefore, an attempt to present a brief "radical history of a place" (Massey 1995:191). Moving beyond bounded places in space and time, this approach provides an awareness "that what has come together, in this place, now, is a conjunction of many histories and many spaces" (Massey 1995:191).

In this chapter, and in this thesis more broadly, I explore the ways in which my interlocutors get attuned to the palimpsestuousness of places. More specifically, in the ethnography that follows, I do so by looking at the way my interlocutors not only locate themselves in space and time through their narratives, but also act (define, negotiate, contest) through story-telling (Pipyrou 2016a:131), as well as through *place-telling* (Scarpelli

2011). Narratives have the power to "create presence to what is absent and truth to what is imagined and forgotten", while also "[creating] absence where there is presence and ignite imagination and speculation where there is truth" (Buck and Pipyrou 2014:262). This is even more evident with affective narratives (Pipyrou 2014a; see also Navaro-Yashin 2009; Navaro-Yashin 2012). I, therefore, dedicate some of the analysis after the ethnography to discuss the affective and sensorial spheres inherent in memories and in the experience of time (Hamilakis 2014). I follow Hamilakis (2014) – and, therefore, also Bergson – in the understanding that the multiplicity of memories is essential to the constitution and perception of time and place. In doing so, I raise a criticism against an objective view history (Hirsch and Stewart 2005), and offer instead what Giordano has called an "actualised history" (Giordano 2012:24). With this, he indicates the way in which anthropologists inquire into historical narratives as they are employed in the present. I made a stylistic choice of separating the narratives from the analysis to allow for the reader to follow their flow. I recognise my own authorial role in doing so and therefore, drawing on my discussion in the previous chapter, also offer a commentary on writing and the knowledge produced as a result. I will begin by introducing the migrations and what a focus on them can contribute to an understanding of Latina's pasts. The second part ("Stories of Latina") is dedicated entirely to the ethnographic data. I will then discuss my approach to these narratives and how they contribute to constituting Latina as a multifaceted place ("A Radical History of Latina").

2. The City Beyond History: histories of migrations

As I have outlined above, the literature on Littoria/Latina focuses overwhelmingly on the first twenty years of the city's existence. The literature overlooks the social dimension in the constitution of the city and revolves around 'historical facts', neglecting the direct social experience individuals have had of the city throughout the decades. By presenting

Chapter 4

Latina's *istories* through my interlocutors' narratives, my intention is to contribute to a more complex understanding of Latina's past and of history more generally. I do so with a focus on movement and migrations and I rely heavily on both ethnographic data and information from works on Latina's history. I start each of the three parts with the story of a woman. I use these three stories because in each of them there are elements that connect to broader histories and the experiences of other interlocutors. They provide a cue to explore other stories, while telling their own. These three ladies – Elda, Grazia, and Alda – were friends and the stories I have decided to separate were shared with me during one single afternoon when they met. Their experiences include the stories of how they arrived in Latina, through different migrations. Despite their different provenances, they all talk about the city and their experience of it. Migrations are a common experience for many in Latina, which was populated by different groups of people at different stages of the city's past. Latina's migrations occurred in the broader context of a country, Italy, which has experienced as a whole significant internal migratory waves– both incoming and outgoing ones (Gallo 2012; Teti 2015) –, at times caused by natural disasters and geological instabilities throughout the peninsula, which have forced the relocation of entire communities (Capello 2015; Colucci 2012; Gallo 2012; Pipyrou 2016a; Pipyrou 2016b), the lack of employment in certain areas, or the creation of new opportunities in other areas (Arru and Ramella 2003; Capello 2015; Colucci 2012). The first migration in Latina coincided with the establishment of the city. The censuses of 1931 and then of 1936 recorded a growth in population of 72.84% (Strangio 2008:43). Parisella (1986:17–20) identifies a series of features that characterised the first settlers' migration. It was a migration by colonisation, where the peasants were included in a wider mechanism of colonisation of new lands, and their movement was aimed at constituting a new society[39]. For these reasons, it was a strictly controlled migration. Groups generally moved in

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[39] See also the discussion in chapter 2 on New towns and new communities.

families (the familial social organisation was fundamental to this particular migration) and the migration was final (another important aspect of the colonisation efforts). The population came predominantly from Northern regions: 86.9% of first settlers in Littoria/Latina came from Veneto (Parisella 1986:16). Given the social and political implications that promoted the colonisation of the *Agro Pontino*, there was a strong element of subalternity in the settlers (Parisella 1986:20). *Coloni* (settlers) depended on the regime and on its institutions for their permanent stay, and they were also strictly controlled by them (Parisella 1986).

A second important migration occurred during the years of the industrial development of the territory, which encouraged people from all over Italy – but especially from Latina's province and from Southern regions – to move to Latina. Gaspari writes how in the area of Aprilia-Cisterna-Latina[40] between the 1950s and 60s the population grew by 40%, with 300% more people employed in manufacturing industries (1986:256). Cotesta (1989) discusses the differences between these two major migratory waves: the first one was conducted in a more systematic and organised way carried out by the regime, where people often moved in bigger groups and from the same geographical areas, while the second one saw the arrival of migrants who travelled more independently, as it was in fact a spontaneous decision of families to move for economic reasons. Other migrations were encouraged by the presence of a refugee camp, the expulsion of Italians from Libya in the 1960s (Casacchia and Natale 2012; Polselli 2012:221), and more general migratory flows from other European and extra-European countries, which have interested Europe as a whole[41]. Miccio observes how both the first internal migration and the migration of refugees to the camp were planned and carried out systematically at first, which did not allow either community to develop spontaneously, even though those plans were altered

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[40] Aprilia and Cisterna are neighbouring towns of Latina.

[41] It should be noted that beyond the migrations that have characterised the city, Latina has experienced also all the migrations that have interested Italy at large, and which were not particular to this city.

Chapter 4

throughout the decades (2016:50). His observation resonates with Cotesta's point from above, emphasising the impact Latina's migrations had on its social fabric, and how each migration's characteristics contributed to shaping people's experiences of the city. In fact, the political, social, and economic conditions distinctive of each migration deeply affected the relocation motives and processes of each group. During the two major migratory waves (the one planned by the fascist regime and the one encouraged by the industrial development), which occurred only a couple of decades apart, those who arrived with the first migration did not have time to concretely settle before a new migratory wave brought new people to the city (Cotesta 1989). Since its foundation, in 1932, Latina has become a diversified and heterogeneous place, as ethnographic data reveal. This is the reason why my concerns about doing anthropology at 'home' resurfaced every time I was confronted with Latina's heterogeneities, as I have also discussed in the methodological chapter (chapter 3). While listening to people's stories, I also realised that Latina had many connections to other places, which transcended geographical and administrative delimitations.

These migrations' characteristics have inevitably influenced the political, social, and economic environment in Latina. They have contributed to shaping what Latina is today, through migrants' experiences and the experience of those who were already in the city. By exploring ethnographic and historical data, my aim is to inquire into how Latina underwent a series of societal changes through its migrations, and how the reasons why they occurred have affected both people's experiences and the city's development. I have chosen the women's stories as prompts, because in the way they have intermingled throughout the decades and through their friendship, they reflect the way in which stories of the city have coexisted, overlapped, come together, were erased, and resurfaced palimpsestuously. I, therefore, consider other interlocutors' stories and lives, revealing the

multiplicity of experiences inherent in the city and the migrations, and the polyphonic character of this chapter which, starting from the women's stories, branches out into other lives, other times, other places. I have, therefore, divided the ethnography and analysis with this structure in mind, introducing each woman's voice on its own and then using core elements in the narrative – the refugee camp, the *bonifica*, the industrial development – to explore other stories. I then provide a broader analysis on narratives and their power. All these stories show how personal biographies come to constitute the city's stories and vice versa, which is particularly evident in Latina, given its history of migrations. Rather than being two opposite poles, my interlocutors' lives and the city's life are interwoven, they constitute each other. The ethnography is particularly revealing of how enmeshed stories, people, places, and events are. It offers a reflection on the ways in which my interlocutors used these narratives to get attuned to the city and its palimpsestuousness (to its multiple times and places) inherent in the very existence of Latina, which emerges from this multiplicity.

3. Stories of Latina

3.1. Elda

I picked up my grandmother at her home and drove her to Elda's place. Elda is one of her closest friends, and so is Grazia, who joined us shortly after. When I met them, in June 2015, Elda was 92 years old, my grandmother 87, and Grazia 86. When we walked in the house, my grandmother and Elda became emotional. They cried as they had not seen each other for roughly two years. Before, they often used to play cards together. Elda lived in what looked like a 'foundation house' (*casa di fondazione* – a house built during the foundation years before WWII), though she maintained it was built in the post-war years. She lived alone, despite her age, in a house with 1950's interiors. My

grandmother and Elda made a lot of jokes about their age; they joked about being 'still there', and they joked about death. The three ladies wore lipstick and necklaces. They spoke for long about their misadventures with their Romanian *badanti*[1]. The three women all spoke with a strong and recognisable accent, and Grazia often spoke in dialect. Elda arrived in Latina when she was 24 or 25 from Fiume. Fiume is today called Rijeka and is part of Croatia (Ballinger 2003). In the aftermath of WWII, the Julian March's borders were renegotiated, and this resulted in the exodus of many Italians (Ballinger 2003). Ballinger's ethnography (2003) discusses the tensions between those who left the region (*esuli* or *andati*) and those who remained (*rimasti*). Elda belonged to the first group, however, she pointed out straight away that she does not consider herself a refugee because she and her family are Italian, and they have always been so. Fiume, she recalled, was a really beautiful city, she remembered the beach and the tram she used to get there. She also used to go to the theatre, which she said was as beautiful as the one in Trieste. She arrived in Latina leaving everything behind. They placed her in a shelter divided in four parts and she was given the side without windows. She arrived in Latina pregnant and with a young daughter. Her husband was from Pordenone. When she arrived, she recalled how in Latina there was nothing, and to go to *palazzo M* seemed very far. However, she said she got used to the situation straight away and she even decorated her shelter with blankets to create a kind of sofa. She had seen Latina in the documentaries of the *L.U.C.E.* institute[2], which produced a number of documentaries on the Pontine Marshes and on the city that became Latina (Caprotti 2007b; Caprotti and Kaïka 2008;

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[1] *badante* (plural *badanti*) is a term used in Italy to call caretakers, who play an essential role in Italy's family-based welfare system (Paniccia, Giovagnoli, and Caputo 2014). The term indicates primarily women migrant workers in a derogatory way (Rugolotto, Larotonda, and van der Geest 2017). These women often live in elderly people's household, as in my grandmother's case, and so they occupy an ambiguous position in-between being part of the family and being treated with suspicion (Rugolotto, Larotonda, and van der Geest 2017), as Elda's and my grandmother's complaints illustrate.

[2] Gruppuso (2014:68) traces the history of the L.U.C.E. institute, created in 1924. The name stands for "*L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa*" (Educational Cinematographic Union). In October 1925 it becomes a governmental agency.

Chapter 4

Gruppuso 2014:78–111; Liguori 2005; Liguori 2012) and it had seemed really beautiful to her. When the shelter next to hers was left empty, she moved in straight away and her supervisor, who was her neighbour when she was in Fiume, reproached her. She replied saying that she had been allowed to move by the director, even if that was not true. Her husband was a policeman and she was very attached to him. She digressed and spoke of the cemetery; she told me how she had asked, after her husband's passing, for his grave to be moved because she thought it was in a bad position[42]. After roughly a year in the refugee camp, Elda and her family found a council house, the same where she lived when we met. She said she had been very lucky to have been given the house. These constructions were as beautiful as the ones built by the *Duce* (Benito Mussolini). Though, she said, he made the big mistake of allying himself with Hitler. She remembers Jewish people in Fiume, and she clarified that those who had any problems were "helped three times", meaning that they were not discriminated against. She remembered how people did not know what was happening and Jews had really beautiful shops. She also had some Jewish classmates in her class. Elda changed topic once again, and she told me of how she went back to Fiume with her daughter to show her how it was and to show her the house she had to leave. Her desire to show her daughter her childhood home encapsulated the important role migration and movement had in Elda's life. It also encourages a reflection on the idea of home and the connection many of Latina's inhabitants have with other places, while touching upon the issue of kinship, which I discuss in the next chapter.

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[42] I left some digressions in the narrative, to give the reader a sense of the way the conversation with Elda progressed. These commentaries are part of the flow of Elda's memories as she moved from one story to the next. This will also be particularly the case with Pietro's narrative below.

Chapter 4

Elda mentions being taken to the refugee camp as soon as she arrived in Latina. The camp was frequently mentioned in conversations, especially by people who had seen it and were old enough to remember it. It represented, therefore, a prominent feature in Latina's urban life and in my interlocutors' wider experience of the city. Moreover, as a transitory place, it reinforces in my interlocutors' narratives the imagery of Latina as a place of transition, of movement, and of migration. These narratives are affectively charged, as people recalled their negative or positive experiences of the camp. One afternoon, I met Emanuela Gasbarroni, a film director who has filmed a documentary about the camp, where she tells the story of the refugees who had been located in the camp (2018). The camp, she recognised, had changed throughout the years, welcoming people of different nationalities (Elda belonged to one group of the many that were housed in the camp). There was a need, she argued, to consider the camp in all its transformations, as not the same entity throughout the decades. She pointed out that the administration had done nothing to help the integration of refugees who lived in the camp, but other citizens, despite the lack of institutional commitment, welcomed it in a positive way and she clarified that no negative acts were ever recorded against the camp.

The camp was formally called *Campo Profughi Stranieri di Latina* (*CAPS* of Latina) "Rossi Longhi". It was instituted in 1957 and it closed in 1989 (Angeletti 2012; Miccio 2016). Up until 2012 it remained the biggest and most active refugee camp in Italy (Angeletti 2012). Today, after years of decay, it has become Latina's branch of the faculty of economy of the university of Rome. While active, it hosted refugees coming from different parts of the world: refugees form the Istrian and Dalmatian areas (such as Elda) together with Yugoslavian refugees who arrived in the post-war years; in the '60s it hosted Hungarian and Czech-Slovak refugees; finally, in the '80s, most refugees came from Poland

Chapter 4

(Angeletti 2012). The camp was instituted in former barracks, which housed the 82° infantry battalion (Miccio 2016). This was the reason why, before being formally named "Rossi Longhi", it was commonly referred to as the *ex-82*. When it was constituted, the camp laid outside of the city centre (Miccio, 1989/2016 here makes an interesting comment regarding the historic centre of Latina. He writes at page 52: "[…] the Camp Rossi Longhi ended up being incorporated within the current *historic centre,* despite the limitations that this word acquires in the context of a young city such as Latina"). According to Miccio (2016), the conformation of the camp and its position contributed to its isolation. He describes it as a "closed zone" (2016:52), because of a wall in white concrete which confined the area. It was as much of a protective structure as it was an isolating one (Miccio 2016:52). Angeletti (2012:27) describes how it was modelled on detention and interment centres during WWII, and it had strict regulations to manage the lives of the refugees it hosted, making it a confining space to live in (Angeletti 2012:26–27). At the entrance, one could read a sign stating "Gateway to the future", which remarked the transitory character of refugees' stay (Angeletti 2012:27), even though some like Elda ended up staying in Latina. Given its peripherality and seclusion, it is not surprising that many of my interlocutors did not have good memories of the camp.

As I reread Elda's story while writing the thesis, I realised it was reminiscent of other stories about the camp. I introduce here the narratives of Clara and of Piera and Giuseppe, who, contrary to most of my interlocutors, spoke fondly about the refugee camp and the people who lived there. Their stories demonstrate how their personal biographies, the life of the camp, and more broadly the life of the city, all become part one of the others, all are enmeshed in multiple relations and detachments, and they all emerge as they are narrated. Clara was born in Latina 1963. I met her on a very cold February afternoon, in front of a steaming cup of very hot tea. She has lived her whole

life in Latina and her parents as well were born in the city. I was surprised by this: usually only those born after the 1970s belonged to the second generation. In her family there were people who came from many different places: there was "Armenian blood, Slavic blood, blood from the North [of Italy], and so on and so forth" she added. She used to live behind the courthouse, near the refugee camp. While she attended middle school, she used to walk by the refugee camp – strictly on foot as that was the way she reached the school – but she specified that nothing ever happened to her. She had some really beautiful memories and, contrary to many people I have spoken to, she spoke well of the camp. When she was 15 or 16 years old she was involved in sourcing clothes for Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees (see Miccio 1989/2016, p. 13, some of the refugees' nationalities were 'exceptions' to the nationalities usually hosted in the camp). She also dated an Israeli guy who had false Hungarian documents to escape from the war. Clara remembered how there were good and bad people there, and she told me of some families who afterward adopted some of the children in the camp. She told me she had heard stories of ex-refugees who had come back to Latina because they had liked it. She attended a conference organised by Emanuela Gasbarroni (where she presented the making of her documentary). Clara repeated to me what she had heard: 80 thousand people passed by the camp, and there were no doubts that each of them had stayed there at least six months. All these people, thought Clara, carry Latina and their experience of the city with them, in all the places they went to (Canada, Australia, United States, etc). Therefore, Latina is spoken about a lot and in a good way by many; for Clara this means that it is an 'international' city. Filippo, as well, gave a similar representation of the city through the camp, portraying it as a welcoming city. In fact, he noticed how Istrian refugees (like Elda) had been applauded instead of being hissed, by the people of Latina. Something which had not happened in other places in Italy. Through relations and the places Clara experienced, the camp became part of her narrative and it came to constitute

Chapter 4

a further lens through which she saw and experienced the city. Her memories of the camp were indissolubly connected to the way she lived and represented an (international) image of Latina.

Piera and her husband Giuseppe were also close to the camp. Piera told me how, one year, they were told by a friend to take "three or four" Vietnamese refugees home for Christmas, so they would spend Christmas Day with a family. Giuseppe returned home with 27 Vietnamese refugees and the couple hosted them all on Christmas Day. Piera told this story with much amusement as she recalled the chaos the refugees' arrival had brought in their home. She remembered with a smile how their inquisitive eyes wandered around the room, astonished by everything they considered a novelty and could not recognise. As she remembered this episode, she took some photos to show me. In it, there were the people they helped, now much older, with their own families. They had relocated to the US after having stayed in the camp. Amongst the photos there was a recent one taken in Piera's house. She was very moved when she told me of the surprise visit she received a few years back from that same family, who showed up on her doorstep one day while touring Europe. The couple's story is particularly interesting because Piera and Giuseppe arrived in Latina as displaced persons because of the war. Giuseppe had lived in the *ex-82* (the site of the refugee camp before it was formally established as the *CAPS* "Rossi Longhi" of Latina) for 13 years. Their experience of the camp was interwoven with their own life history, as their families had experienced having to leave a dangerous place in search for safety. What is evident in both vignettes is the fact that these narratives not only represent a positive vision of the camp, but also reveal how the camp became embedded in a wider experience of the city. The making and unmaking of connections with the camp and its guests weaved Clara's and Piera's stories (and lives) with those of the refugees, of the camp itself, and of the city. It is precisely this

making and unmaking of connections that I am particularly interested in here, as it is this process that contributes to the emerging of the city and of the lives of those who have been experiencing it. This will also be evident below, as I discuss some of my interlocutors' negative experiences of the camp.

Piera's and Clara's stories, Emanuela's opinion and research as she produced the documentary, and Filippo's comment all portray a positive relation to the camp. However, the majority of other narratives represented the camp as a dangerous and threatening place, as the narratives that follow demonstrate. Adele was born in Latina in 1951. She told me how, when she was younger, she remembered her parents telling her not to pass by the refugee camp. She said it was indeed true that many of the refugees used to get drunk, but it was equally true that there were a lot of good people. Echoing the filmmaker, she thought there was never the will to get to know those people on the part of Latina's inhabitants. Other passing comments described the camp as "a dangerous place"[43] that "one could not even look at"[44]. Angela and Giovanni said that those who lived there were often drunk, and it was not a safe place. Through these short memories and comments, the camp is identified as a space (a dangerous one) associated with the (often drunk) refugees. Miccio's analysis, which I mentioned above, is particularly interesting here, as he recalls the camp's secluded structure. Imma's comment is particularly telling – the camp should not have even been looked at – which reinforces the representation of a forbidden and unknown place, to stir away from. In contrast to the more positive narratives above, this is another way to relate to the camp as a place (and as a physical urban entity, as a presence) and to the stories and people who passed through it. In the ethnography, it is possible to notice how personal stories become the stories of the camp and the stories of the city, to return to being again personal stories.

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[43] As Gabriella described it.
[44] As Imma described it.

Chapter 4

My interlocutors weave the camp in their memories of the city, as they navigate it through their narratives. This interweaving of stories (re)produces the personal, as much as representations of the camp, and of Latina, which are constantly reworked and re-presented as they come in and out of each other. A multitude of relations and detachments emerged in these stories between personal experiences, places, people, narratives, and ultimately the city, which in turn emerges through all these dimensions. Latina, as a unique place, is constituted among other things through the existence of the camp (including its changes, the fact that it does not exist as a camp anymore) and all the relations (between people, places, and stories) that emerged because of its existence.

3.2. Grazia

If Elda confidently focused on her experience of living in the camp, Grazia was more reserved and talked about her memories of how harsh life was in the newly drained *Agro Pontino*. Grazia's reserved attitude is reflected in the narrative below; I have accompanied her voice with other material. She was born in 1927. She arrived in what was then Littoria in 1932 (year of the town's foundation) when she was only five years old. When Grazia was in Veneto, where she came from, her family worked for a landowner. I noticed how she still used words and expressions in the Veneto dialect. She told me of her wedding, of how she reached the church on foot and her shoes hurt a lot. Buses started serving that area only later. She stressed this to show how rural the area was. When she arrived in Littoria/Latina, her family cultivated the land and they had cows. They skimmed the milk they produced, which had to be given away, so that they could keep the cream. They would pick up the leftovers from the threshing machine because the *Duce* wanted the products of the land, which they took to the *Consorzio*. The land reclamation consortia were in charge of carrying out the *bonifica* locally (Caprotti and Kaïka 2008), together with the ONC (*Opera Nazionale Combattenti* – National Veterans Organisation), which was an

institutional body in charge of organisational duties and the colonisation of the land (Parisella, 1986; Stabile, 1982: 72; Ghirardo, 2003). As mentioned above, the *bonifica* and subsequent migration of first settlers involved many official governmental bodies. During the time in which the many 'new towns' of fascism were built, the regime implemented a series of agricultural reforms, within an ideological and political scheme celebrating rurality (Falasca-Zamponi 1997). Following anti-urban policies, the government implemented a number of projects, including the "Battle of Wheat" to increase internal wheat production, while weaving together images of war and land (Falasca-Zamponi 1997:149). These war-themed representations were widely used in the propaganda to promote the reclamation of the Pontine marshes (the *bonifica*), in the area where Littoria/Latina was to be erected (Ghirardo 2003b:57) The rhetoric talked of a conquest of the land and Ghirardo quotes a document from 1937 which states that those who worked on the *bonifica* were "a crowd of soldiers in war equipment, exposed to the most lethal dangers (malaria), and the conquest of the Agro Pontino [the Pontine Ager] collected its death tribute" (ONC, 1937 in Ghirardo 2003b:57). Moreover, the area was populated through what was called by the regime an internal colonisation (Ghirardo 2003b:75) - a term which again reminds of war and conquest (see also above for details of how these policies affected the first settlers' migration). Grazia's family came to the *Agro Pontino* as the regime attempted to populate the area. Towards the end of the conversation Grazia said "Write this! Write this! It was a shame that there were no toilets in the *poderi* [farmhouses]". She said people would make do and during the night they would use a basin. Her comment, together with the comment regarding the bus and the fact that "the *Duce* wanted everything", are particularly telling of the fact that what was most prominent in her memories, and what she stressed the most as we talked, were the harsh conditions people lived in. The *poderi* were farmhouses with one or two floors and a surface area between 128 and 213 meters squared (Ghirardo 2003b:79). Ghirardo

describes them as such: "with four or five bedrooms on the first floor, and kitchen, storage room and stables for cows and horses on the ground floor; [the houses] were built with local bricks and stones, calcareous or made of tuff, the mortar was made of a mixture of lime and pozzolana, and window fixtures and structures were in chestnut wood" (Ghirardo 2003b:79). She continues describing that there were 18 types of houses and each one of them was numbered on its façade. Ghirardo (2003b:79), as Grazia so vehemently pushed me to write, notices the uncomfortable arrangement of the farmhouses, without toilets nor running water. As Ghirardo points out, some families were coerced into moving and, despite the agricultural production the newly built areas had been erected for, 90 percent of those families were new to agricultural work (Ghirardo 2003b:79–80). Grazia's family is certainly an exception to this, though she did not tell me whether they moved to the *Agro Pontino* voluntarily. There are other personal testimonies of the harsh life first settlers endured in the *Agro Pontino*. Parisella quotes one testimony recorded in the 1950s from a first settler who says: "It seemed to us that we were living in a big prison camp (…). It was not too bad but one constantly lived with the nightmare of the surveillance by the officers and sub-officers of the *Opera* [abbreviation for ONC]. They even came to wake us up at night for inspections" (Russo, 1955 in Parisella 1986:21).

3.2.1. From farmhouses to a small city

As Grazia talked about, lives of *coloni* (settlers) revolved around agricultural work. The narratives that follow, in dialogue with Grazia's story, focus on the first years of Littoria/Latina, the first settlers, and the aftermath of the war. They include stories of the first settlers' migration, as well as broader historical events, such as the fascist *ventennio* and the war. At the same time, they offer a commentary on how the city looked like and how it changed during the first few decades of its existence. Moreover, these narratives

Chapter 4

show how interwoven personal biographies are not only with the city's life and its urban presence, but also with the history of the entire country. The ONC assigned around 4500 *poderi* (Stabile 1982:8)[4]. Of all the first-settlers, 889 lived in the urban centre and were employed as officers of institutional bodies, while 6016 moved to the countryside and the newly established farmhouses (Stabile 1982:71). Pietro's family had a similar experience as Grazia's, and his narratives resonate and complement the ones provided by my grandmother's friend. Both narratives testify to how hard life was in the *Agro Pontino* as both Grazia's and Pietro's families faced poverty and difficult living conditions. Pietro arrived in Latina when he was only three years old. He was born in Ferrara in 1932 and he was 83 years old during my fieldwork[45]. He arrived in the *Agro Pontino* in March of 1935. He often told me he wished he could have studied but he could not because of his poverty. He had to work straight away and interrupted school when he was in fifth grade. When he was young, Pietro used to work behind the plough with the oxen. His family was composed of 22 people[5] and when he used to get hungry his grandmother used to tell him to drink water so that the hunger would pass, but the reality was that she had nothing else to give to him. They were based nearby Pontinia (another 'new town' built by the regime), close to Littoria/Latina. More precisely, his *podere* was in *Borgo Vodice* (*borghi* were small centres, satellite towns). In one of our longest conversations, he told me about life during the 1930s and 40s. In school, he was given every day fish oil because boys were very slender. They used to take the spoon from home and then the teachers used to check that they had swallowed it entirely. "The fish oil is disgusting", said Pietro. At home, they gave him quinine instead, against malaria. At first it was sweet, but then it

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[4] These numbers do not only report those who moved but also the high natality rate of the area. Mangullo (2015:30) describes how "in 1941 Littoria [Latina] was, for the fourth consecutive year, at the top of the demographic national ranking"

[45] It was with great sadness that I heard of Pietro's passing shortly after my grandmother's passing. I am glad some of his memories found their way in this thesis and I am grateful for all the chats we had.

[5] Mangullo quotes Palmardita (Mangullo 2015:29–30) who stated in a report written between 1935 and 1936 that a population of 15.000 *coloni* lived in 1.150 *poderi*, with an average of 14 individuals per house, he predicted that given the natality and mortality rates the average inhabitants in each *podere* would be 16. Pietro's family seemed particularly large.

was really bitter. Pietro contracted malaria anyway. In fact, he said, he had an enlarged liver because of hepatitis, which often accompanies malaria. He remembers how malaria gives the body raging fevers that make one's body shiver a lot. Malaria was a widespread problem in the *Agro Pontino*. Mangullo (2015:28) writes of how the *appoderamento* and colonisation (the placing and populating of *poderi*) of the area began before malaria had been completely eradicated. Many texts discuss the harshness of the living conditions of the first settlers (see e.g. Ghirardo 2003b; Parisella 1986) and the fascist propaganda celebrated the bravery of those who undertook such a struggle (see above). Pietro continued talking, our conversations went in many directions, and were often led by Pietro's fragmented memories – sometimes he would be staring out into the nothingness when he would start talking unexpectedly –, other people's interventions, or some recollection he had seeing some detail in our surroundings.

Pietro's stories expand what Grazia mentioned timidly. I have decided to include them here as they make evident the connections between his personal biography (his arrival to the *Agro Pontino*), the city (life as a first settler), as well as broader national narratives (such as his memories of what life was like during the fascist regime and the war). Pietro spoke about the *bonifica* saying that the area used to be a garden: one could even drink the water from the streams because it was so clear and there was a lot of green. He thought that also the *poderi* were beautiful when they were all new. Pietro often repeated that the war had destroyed everything, even the great *bonifica* works of Mussolini and the beauty of this territory. He said: "Hitler, what a jerk" (a comment that reminds of Elda's remark that Mussolini's biggest mistake had been his alliance with Hitler). He told me of how many popes had tried to reclaim the land in this territory but only Mussolini had succeeded. Strangio (2008:35–36) gives a brief summary of the attempts before the regime to drain the plain, starting from the Romans, and by two popes (Sixtus V and Sixtus VI); none of

them, however, was entirely successful. When Pietro was young, they used to make him

sing: "Mussolini Mussolini Alala". Him and his mates, instead, used to distort it singing:

"Mussolini, Mussolini, potato and salted codfish [*Mussolini, Mussolini, patate e baccala'*] and

they used to get beaten for that. The black shirts[7] used to be very violent and beat people

up. Once, he entered in a shop and the shopkeeper spit on the ten liras[46]. The fascists

(the black shirts) arrived straight away and they beat him up. Pietro saw Mussolini three

times, but he only told me two stories. The first time he went to the city for a parade and

it was raining a lot. He had the uniform of the *Balilla*[47] soaking wet and "it stank like

cholera". It was 1939. Because it was such bad weather, he found shelter below the

stands where people were sitting down. Below the stands he found five liras which were a

lot of money at the time. Probably they fell from someone richer who was sitting up

there, he thought. He put them in his boot not to lose them. Once he returned home, he

showed them to his mother, and he said: "I wish Mussolini visited more often. The

second time he met Mussolini was during the threshing in *Borgo Montenegro*. These events

were very common and were part of the regime's propaganda to celebrate Mussolini as a

farmer and the regime's Battle of Wheat, which I spoke briefly about above (Falasca-

Zamponi 1997:152). In Sabaudia [a nearby town] there is a mosaic portraying this event.

During the war, soldiers passed with their van and took away his mother's only goose.

Moroccan soldiers, instead, threw him into a canal. He went there to exchange a crate of

tomatoes for some cigarettes. The soldiers took the tomatoes and threw him in the canal.

Pietro, however, did not clarify nor talked more about these instances. His stories were

often interrupted by other people who were sitting nearby us, or by Pietro's memories

which flowed in as he remembered events and stories to tell me (his old age might also

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[7] The Black shirts were first military squads, but afterward came to indicate Mussolini's supporters (Lazzaro & Crum, 2005, p. 2; their uniform was composed of "a fez, a black shirt, a black tie, black pants, and a black belt" (Falasca-Zamponi 1997:241n54; see also Willson 2013)

[46] Mussolini's profile was engraved on the ten liras.

[47] See Willson (2013)

have contributed to this). He often changed topic, repeated certain stories, or stopped to remember some details which had escaped his mind.

The war arrived also in Littoria/Latina. I found it peculiar that only Pietro and Giuseppe remembered the war while talking to me. Giuseppe, mentioned above, said he was housed in the *ex-82* (which later became the refugee camp) as a displaced person. Pietro remembered how Littoria/Latina had been bombed and he remembered the sounds of the war, which he replicated while narrating. Works on Latina mention the vast destruction brought by the war (e.g. Polselli 2012:65–67). Mangullo (2015) writes about damages the city suffered. He describes how "the state of the *poderi* was systematically summarised into three groups: "minor damages", meaning inferior than 35%; "major damages", meaning between 35% and 80%; beyond 80% the building was deemed destroyed. Of the 2957 *poderi*, 299 were destroyed, 507 had major damages, and 1492 had light damages; only 659 remained intact" (Mangullo 2015:22). Adding to this, it should also be noted that lands had been flooded again by water and the area was dangerously covered in landmines (Mangullo 2015). In a 1944 letter to the Ministry of War, it was described how "lacking instruments and directions [the *coloni*] resorted to a method that was as "empirical" as dangerous, namely burning the stubbles in the fields: every explosion indicated, in theory, one less device" (Mangullo 2015:23). Pietro's grandfather had a *podere* but after the war his family left, and they sold it for four million and 700 thousand liras. This was the fate of many *poderi*. Mangullo (2015:35) reports that "on the 14th of October 1952, 321 *poderi* had already been abandoned or resold (more than 10% of the total)" and, he continues, this was just the beginning.

The division of the land into *poderi* and fields created a well-defined organisational grid. The city's landscape has changed visibly since then, and urban transformations have taken over the horizon, once dotted by farmhouses. I thought these signs of Latina's

Chapter 4

bonifica and agricultural past had been erased. However, this was not the case. Looking

out from a window in my house I could see this patch of green grass in the middle of a

busy and heavily built neighbourhood. It was unkept and often the grass, yellow in

summer when the weather was particularly hot, grew to over a meter tall. I wondered why

an area which looked so 'empty' (i.e. it was neither a park, a flower bed, nor was it being

built on) stood in the middle of the city. I discovered, through a conversation with one of

my interlocutors, that it belonged to the area of a *podere*. It is a sensitive story, which still

has legal and emotional repercussions today, so I will not delve deeper in its

particularities. The conversation I had with my interlocutor, however, where I discovered

the story behind this patch of land, was a turning point in my fieldwork: I started noticing

more and more those traces left by the way my neighbourhood, and many others around

it, looked like a few decades earlier. On my road, there was still a *podere* standing, with

what used to be its serial number. In the same way as stories overlapped, were erased,

resurfaced, and interweaved, so did traces in the landscape. My interlocutors' stories were

tracing lines in Latina's landscape, or were evoking already existing signs. In the same way

as the refugee camp morphed into different expressions through my interlocutors'

memories and words (and whose urban presence has also changed, as it is now a

university filled with students' lives and trajectories), so did the traces left by the

farmhouses and their fields. Latina was emerging palimpsestuously through all these

convergences. Grazia's family was given one of these farmhouses and on some occasions

when my mother used to drive her home, through the countryside, she would tell stories

of her experience in the *poderi* and the fields.

The narratives that follow move beyond the life in the *poderi* to describe life in Latina in

the immediate post-war years, when the city was still small, while also describing the

changes it was slowly going through. Angela's family was also given a *podere*. She was born

Chapter 4

there in 1948, after the end of the war. The *podere* was located where now is a famous butchery. Giovanni's family, her husband, moved near where now a well-known cafe is, practically in front of Angela's *podere*. The two grew up together because there were not many children in the area. All around there was the countryside. When Giovanni's family moved home and went to live in that area, he told me of how people used to tell his family they were crazy to go live on farmland. Giovanni and Angela remembered that when they were children the town was very small and there was 'nothing'. Angela brought out a photo of the land behind the *podere*. It is even possible to see the courthouse (far in the distance) because there was absolutely nothing. Angela's *podere* was close to my home. Nowadays, the courthouse is not visible anymore and in between Angela's land and the building there are countless apartment blocks. Pietro also told me that in the post-war years in Latina there was 'nothing'. Where we were sitting – at the café below my grandmother's house – there were only *poderi*. Angela continued saying that the boundary of Latina was the public park and after that there was only countryside. Slowly, the city grew bigger and so authorities asked Angela's father to remove his cows because of their smell. Their land was not very big (7 hectares) compared to other *poderi* far from the centre, which could even reach 25 hectares. The land was smaller because they were close to the city centre. Her grandfather sold the land and the *podere* and new buildings were erected. Angela was heartbroken when it was decided to demolish the *podere* (she told me this decision was not taken by her family) because it was the house where she had grown up in. She said she cried a lot when this happened because they could have saved it and built around it. She told me that even after the regime ended, the ONC still decided what kind of crop *poderi* had to cultivate. Pietro's, Grazia's, and Angela's memories were woven into a territory that has deeply changed during the decades. The city that emerges from their stories is a smaller city, and the life of its inhabitants revolved around agricultural work. It was particularly interesting to notice the

Chapter 4

overlapping of elements from the past and the present (such as Pietro telling me that where we were having coffee used to be farmland, or looking at Angela's photo and the vastness of the countryside in what is today a heavily populated area, or yet again the remaining patch of land and the *podere* on my street). These traces, which emerged and disappeared through memories and materialities, demonstrated the coexistence of several dimensions and revealed a city constituted through these traces' encounter.

Despite small changes, like the ones in the story of Angela and Giovanni, Latina was still portrayed as a 'village' in many of our conversations. These are some of the memories that describe life in the city in the 1950s. Gabriella lived most of her life in Rome, until 15 years ago, when she moved to Latina. She told me that after the public park there was 'nothing', there was the countryside. When she used to go for a picnic with her friend the limit not to be passed was the gates of the public park. Her friend used to live where there is the pharmacy *Latina Est* and to go there it was quite a travel. One had to get organised the day before. Her friend used to leave her shoes at the beginning of the driveway and wear her clogs. There were not proper roads there. When she travelled from Rome, she used to be freer to get around because the city was much smaller than the capital. Everyone knew everyone else. Adele said that Latina, when she was a child, was a 'village'. Every two or three weeks the puppets' theatre used to come, and the children took their little chairs from home to watch them. Rita told me about the community centre (*circolo cittadino*) which, in the 1950s, was the only meeting point. Families used to go there often to dance. Imma arrived in Latina from Naples in the mid-70s while pregnant. As soon as she arrived she told her husband she wanted to visit the city. She told me how her husband used to look at her unable to understand her request. She used to insist and insist because she wanted to visit the whole town, not only downtown (she used to live in a block on one of Latina's main downtown streets). Her

Chapter 4

husband replied to her: "What city do you mean?" because by vising the few streets she had already seen most of it. Her second house was in *Via Verdi* and it was still marshy. She remembers she could hear frogs from her window. This was similar to what my uncle told me. Across the road from his house, behind a row of houses, was a small wood of eucalyptuses. In the mid-70s he used to go there to catch frogs. In fact, my grandmother was very much against moving to the house she lived in. The rental price and the size of the house convinced her otherwise in the end, but the area was in the middle of the countryside and for her it was too far from the city centre. Today it sits just outside the centre of the city, which has expanded dramatically. Clara remembered when as a child she used to go out and play with her friends and the roads were not even paved. Latina ended at 'the mushroom' (the aqueduct) behind the stadium, and after that there was 'nothing'. When children played outside there was always someone who looked out to check on them, even if it was not their parents. Clara remembered vividly that one knew all the families in the street where one lived, even the neighbourhood. People knew what everyone else did, their professions. When she was a child one could leave the house's keys on the door. Latina was a village, it was small, it was easy to get around.

I have decided to report these stories to portray multiple representations of this palimpsestuous place. I find these stories particularly interesting because not only they provide an image of how the city was in the past, they also present some of the transformations the city has undergone, and they reveal Latina as a place constituted by the interweaving of all these elements. Each person, memory, material and immaterial trace, holds within itself multiple stories, places, people, and intersections. In these narratives, Latina *is* the bombed city, or 'the village' where there was nothing and everyone could leave their door open; Latina *is* also the still marshy city whose boundaries ended at the public park or at the aqueduct behind the stadium. These

narratives show how the first settlers' migration shaped the experience of some of the interlocutors I mention, and how their presence and the way the city was after the *bonifica*, also influenced the experience of later migrants. Through these narratives I want to highlight some of the ways in which the reasons and dynamics of the first settlers' migration have contributed to (re)producing one version of this place, which was then interwoven with all the other versions, to (re)produce what this place is today, in its unique palimpsestuousness. What I found particularly interesting in all these recollections, was my interlocutors' use of contemporary geographical references, as they intersected with their memories. Traces, material elements, memories, stories, and representations all contribute to constituting Latina's multitemporality as they (re)produce what the city is today and how it is experienced by my interlocutors.

3.3. Alda

Nonna Alda[6] was my grandmother (*Nonna* means grandmother in Italian). She was born in 1928 in Noceto, near Parma. I have heard stories from her life and from the years she arrived in Latina many times. Her stories will appear frequently in this thesis. What follows is just a short excerpt of her experience of moving to Latina. She arrived in Latina when her husband's factory moved part of its production there; moving to Latina meant that she lost her job and became a housewife. This was in 1964, my mother was thirteen at the time, while my uncle was seven years old. *Nonna* Alda occasionally spoke in dialect. The whole family moved, including my grandmother's mother-in-law, Zaira. Everyone called her *Nonna* Zaira in the family. My grandmother remembers *Nonna* Zaira always cursing Mussolini because he had built Latina and she had to move there when she was already very old. She despised the *Duce* for this, amongst other things. When my grandmother arrived in the *Agro Pontino* she said she found water everywhere. It had

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[6] My grandmother's name was not changed because identifying her as my grandmother already de-anonymises her. See chapter 3 on methods for a discussion on this.

rained and there were pockets of marshes here and there. Afterward, her husband had brought her to Rio Martino (a coastal location outside of town) and there she saw the sea, the canal, and more puddles. For her it was strikingly different from the landscapes of the *Pianura Padana*, in the North, which she was used to. She often repeated the sea had been a beautiful gift when she arrived in Latina, however she often repeated of how much she missed her hometown. She remained very attached to it. When she introduced herself to strangers, she always added that she was from Parma, straight after saying her name. She used to travel often back to Parma, to visit friends and family. I noticed how her narrative differed from Elda's, whom as a refugee could only return to Fiume many years after having left. When *nonna* Alda drove back to Latina, she always stopped in a service station near Florence. She complained of how all the service stations after Florence were dirty because they got closer to the South, which she always described as being neglected and in disrepair. At the sides of the roads, she recalled, there was a lot of garbage. She repeated to me several times how sorry she was that 'they' [the administration] never organised and developed the seaside and the beach, which was one of the few features of Latina she truly appreciated. She said the coast had stayed the same since when she had arrived 47 years before and had never been improved with services. Her story complements the ones told by Elda and Grazia, as she moved to Latina during the industrialisation of the territory and experienced the city differently than either of her friends did. While my interlocutors still described Latina as a 'village' and as a very small city during the 70s, it was during these decades that it was developing industrially and growing in size.

3.3.1. The Cassa per il Mezzogiorno and Beyond

Latina underwent two major public investment works: the *bonifica* and the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*. The *Cassa* was an institution whose aim was to invest in the South, the

name ('fund for the South') was chosen precisely to give the idea of a pot of money dedicated to Southern regions (Ginsborg 1990:162). Latina, given its post-war difficulties, was included in the program (Strangio 2008:45). It is interesting to notice, in this particular case, the association of Latina with the South (Ferraresi 1991) – an association often made also by my grandmother, especially in her comparisons with her hometown and when she recalled her trips up and down the peninsula. The *Cassa*'s funds were first used to re-establish and complete the works of the *bonifica*, damaged by the war (Mangullo 2015:9). Latina was then the protagonist of a more extensive industrialisation which lasted until the end of the '70s and which promoted the growth of population, income, employment, traffic, education, public and private building stock (Strangio 2008:47). Both the *bonifica* and the *Cassa*, in two separate occasions, were defined as two great illusions. Without a doubt, they have been two great processes of modernisation, which have deeply altered the territory (Cotesta 1989:163). Mangullo (2015:7), as well, describes the *bonifica* and the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* as "two close and intensive public interventions", which were imposed from the top by institutions; to these it is possible to add, according to Miccio (2016), also the refugee camp. In a very short amount of time (in less than a century), the *Agro Pontino* went from the *lestra* in the marshes (the pre-*bonifica* dwelling), to the *podere*, and finally to the factory (Mangullo 2015:8); changing once again in the '80s and '90s as the tertiary sector grew and the industrial sector declined (Strangio 2008:48). With the *Cassa*, a community of *coloni* who relied primarily on agriculture, came to be populated also with factory workers: those previously unemployed who came indistinctly from the plain and the surrounding mountains (Mangullo 2015:13). Between 1951 and 1961, 2468 units moved from agriculture to industries, *poderi* were partitioned, and many were sold to new peasants – from other regions (Parisella 1986 n30 p. 27), or Italians from Tunisia and Libya (Stabile 1982:191). *Borgo Sabotino*, a small centre near the coast, became the location for a nuclear power station. Multinational and

national industries flourished. As D'Incertopadre (a trade union leader) writes in his memoir, between 1951 and 1981 Latina had one of the most striking growths in Italy (D'Incertopadre 2015:28). Strangio notices how the entire province registered a population growth of 53% during those three decades (Strangio 2008:47).

My grandfather, whom I never had the chance to meet as he passed away six months before my birth, came to Latina through this national development scheme. He came first in the 50s – his industry was moving part of the production to Latina –, and did not like the town, but he ended up deciding to move there anyway in 1964 (despite his mother's complaints). His story is a story to be heard often in Latina, as many people moved with the intention to return to their hometown, with the sole reason of improving their economic status (which made this migration different from the definitive character of the first settlers' migration). One of the industries that opened in Latina was the *Centrale del Latte* (a milk industry). Pennacchi, a local writer, describes it in one of his short stories: "What impressed us – the people of Latina – the most, however, was the *Centrale del latte*. It was here, for us, the real sign of modernity, because after all we had always been able to switch on the light in the houses even before the nuclear power station. Instead, milk not. Only the rich could buy it in bottles from the milkman […], everyone else got it at home from the *colono*. They went around with the bins on the bikes – freshly milked, still warm – they came up the stairs, rang the bell, you came out with a pot and they, with a measuring cup, would fill it bit by bit and would annotate it on a booklet." (Pennacchi 2010b:53). Such quick and radical changes had deeply affected the lives of those who had been living in Latina. Pennacchi gives an amusing portrayal of this through his vignette, especially in the way he recognises the changing roles of *coloni*, whose milk services were being replaced by an industry. In a similar way, my grandmother had to leave her job to follow her husband. The industries introduced new

'actors' to Latina: new migrants from different regions and from surrounding territories, trade unionists, factory workers, and factory managers (see especially the stories in Pennacchi 1994; Pennacchi 2010b). D'Incertopadre (2015:39) writes of how the factory managers from Genoa were not all in agreement with the plan to move the production line to Latina. He writes of how they thought the people in the *Agro Pontino* were ignorant and corrupt. However, D'Incertopadre points out, they had not taken into consideration the city's heterogeneity and, therefore, the fact that it was populated by people coming from many different areas, who could not be essentialised as having all the same character. Through these narratives it is interesting to notice how the migration that followed the industrial development interacted with the *coloni* and the migrants who were already in the area. Latina's landscape changed dramatically during this time, as many apartment blocks and industries were built during these decades, giving to Latina the urban form it has today. These narratives make all these intersections emerge and they reveal the intricacies between the different migrations, the events that caused them, the encounter of people and places. Therefore, what emerges from an exploration of Latina's pasts, is the convergence of lives, stories, and trajectories that have to this day left a trace in the contemporary city and have contributed, through their existence and reproduction, to the emergence of a palimpsestuous city.

4. A Radical History of Latina

Through the lens of Latina's migrations and the ethnographic data, some important elements emerge in the understanding of the city. Each migration that interested the city of Latina, was unique in its characteristics. The ethnography above is particularly telling of this. The stories of the three women, who arrived in Latina in three different moments and through three different migratory waves, are interwoven in their experience of the city and of each other. As I have explained above, these were radically different

Chapter 4

migrations, which have all affected and changed the city in unique ways. The women's stories intersect with the stories of the other interlocutors, who told of the same places and events, but from different perspectives. First settlers came from primarily Northern regions through a colonisation program, Italians and foreign refugees arrived because of their political status, migrants during the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* came for economic reasons. Each group's motivations are embedded in their experience of the city and were changed and challenged by the encounter with every other group. So, not only did migrations changed people's lives and their social roles through movement (e.g. Elda not wanting to be considered as a refugee and her neighbour who became her supervisor, my grandmother who became a housewife, or first settlers who became peasants), it also did so through the encounters these people had with each other and with the city. The *coloni* of the first migration found themselves working in factories, while new Italian immigrants from Tunisia and Libya took over the farmhouses spared by Latina's urban growth. What is particularly evident throughout this chapter is that the migrations were encouraged and deeply affected by specific social, economic, and political conditions; nonetheless, they materialised and changed through the everyday lived experience of people. It was them who, through their lives, expectations, encounters, and relations to other people and places, (re)produced and changed the city. The city grew in size, changed, and its spaces have undergone plenty of transformations: from the new apartment blocks in the 1960s and 70s, with their imposing heights compared to the foundation buildings, to the refugee camp, built as barracks then turned into a refugee camp and finally a university. Moreover, migrants coming from different geographical areas brought those places (with their ways of speaking, their practices, and memories) to Latina. All these dimensions, throughout the decades, came together, interwoven into an urban fabric through which Latina emerges. Therefore, the focus on migrations allows for these elements to emerge and for the ethnography to show how enmeshed and tightly

Chapter 4

inextricable they are. Moreover, these narratives often arose spontaneously, demonstrating that the experience of migrations (either personal or for example through having experienced the presence of the camp) has fundamentally shaped my interlocutors' biographies and their experience of Latina which, as I argue, emerges through these stories.

Through the ethnography, it is possible to notice the way Latina's past can be told through a polyvocality of stories. This polyvocality and the presence of multiple *istories* raises the question of what narratives *do*. Following Buck's and Pipyrou's argument (Buck and Pipyrou 2014; and also Pipyrou 2014a) at the beginning of this chapter, I ask, therefore, what was made absent or present through the narratives collected here, what was imagined and what was stated as truth. I would also add that narratives blur the boundaries between absence and presence, imagination and truth. In the ethnographic anecdotes presented above, the absences and presences were made particularly evident by the narratives concerning the refugee camp, which is both absent and present today. In fact, the camp itself does not exist anymore, but its buildings have been repurposed as a university and it is still vividly present in my interlocutors' memories. In a similar way, the *poderi* have left urban traces, despite the drastic changes the city has undergone. Moreover, in exploring my interlocutors' experiences of migrations, there are geographies that are equally present and absent, such as people's places of origins and their trajectories, as they moved to Latina from other places. Drawing on this power of narratives, my interlocutors' stories evoke and dissolve the city, other places, people, events, and even themselves. This was evident when I mentioned my surprise at the absence of stories about the war[48], which slipped through all the other events. On the other hand, other places (physically absent) became present and vivid – such as Fiume or

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[48] See also the works of Pipyrou (2016b) and Knight and Stewart (2016) for their discussions on silence concerning traumatic memories.

the refugee camp – and so were people being remembered in the stories. In this sense, it is also possible to give new meaning to Clara's comment that Latina is an "international city". Its 'internationality' and uniqueness lie in the fact that in its constitution are embedded its connections to 'elsewhere' (Massey 1995:183). I consider, therefore, how "stories about the past do not merely render visible a person's connections to persons and places, they make and break those connections" (Edwards 1998:146). The narratives allowed my interlocutors to make broader claims on events that they imagined, reframed, and recontextualised, such as Mussolini's actions. In some instances, they established their own truths, such as when Grazia vehemently pointed out that I should have written down (testified even) about the lack of toilets in the farmhouses. As these examples show, together with others throughout the ethnography, narratives offer an opening, an opportunity for re-elaborations, contestations, negotiations; they "[allow] for the self to be at once retroactive and proactive" (Buck and Pipyrou 2014:265). In asking what narratives do, I recognise their performative aspect (see also the "performative condition" of historicity in Hirsch and Stewart 2005:262), through which people, places, and events are "re-enacted, re-created and in the end re-claimed as they are 'pulled' by the narrative forces in different and perhaps opposing directions – that of pastness and futureness, objectivism and subjectivism" (Buck and Pipyrou 2014:263).

As a consequence, through affective narratives (Pipyrou, 2014; Navaro-Yashin, 2012; see also Knight & Stewart, 2016), my interlocutors create an opening for their intimate biographies and selves to be performed, re-elaborated, negotiated, contested, evoked, dissolved, imagined, and established as truths. I want to highlight here the importance of sensorial and affective perceptions in the way time is experienced[49], as my interlocutors' stories demonstrate. There are plenty of examples of this: from the fear of the camp, to

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[49] See Knight and Stewart (2016) for their discussion of 'affective history'.

the regret of having kept distance from it; from Elda's grief, to my grandmother's lifelong longing for Parma; from the disgusting taste of fish oil, to the smell of the drenched uniform. Sensorial and affective experiences are a fundamental element in my interlocutors' narratives and memories. According to Hamilakis, "time [is] immanent to sensorial experience" (2014:199), to which I would also add affective experience. If these narratives are understood as an opening, as I discuss above, then they are also a way to get attuned to multiple temporalities through memories and experiences. Following Hamilakis' argument that the senses are infinite (2014:113), I also wish to distance myself from Western modernist understandings of temporal and sensorial perceptions. I do so by proposing, as I explored my interlocutors' attunements to the palimpsestuousness of Latina's multitemporality, the existence of a *sense* of time, inherent in the sensorial and affective experiences of multiple pasts, presents, and futures (Hamilakis 2014:159) and expressed, in this particular case, through narratives. Multiple temporalities (multiple pasts, presents, and futures), places, and people are always in the "process of becoming" (Hamilakis 2014:116).

These narratives represent a sensorial chronotope of Latina, but also more broadly of Italy (c.f. Hamilakis 2014:157–159), where places, times, events, and people are sensorially and affectively evoked and dissolved, while emerging through these processes. Through their narratives, my interlocutors locate themselves in time and place and in doing so they *create* multiple times and multiple places (they do so through the articulation of absences and presences, imaginations and truths). Memory constitutes an essential component of these processes, as it is so intimately connected to the sensorial and affective experience of multi-temporality (Hamilakis 2014). As Hastrup (1992:10) writes, events are recorded (and therefore remembered) during their happening. In any given moment, people recall such events, they re-elaborate them, and this contributes to

shaping the present[50]. Hastrup (1992:10) points out how this process shapes the 'future' – a present which is not yet present –, as people identify meaningful moments. Both in the act of recording and in the act of remembering people make connections and disconnections. It is through these processes that multiple pasts, presents, and futures come to coexist. Hastrup's argument resonates with Hamilakis' Bergsonian approach. Stressing the importance of sensorial experiences of time, he discusses the way memories pullulate every present moment, resonating with different pasts, presents, and futures in their ability to relate and detach (Hamilakis 2014:122). As my interlocutors' memories demonstrate, through the making and unmaking of connections, there is no linearity to time.

In recognition of the non-linearity and non-sequentiality of time, this chapter also partially addresses the relationship between anthropology and history. I recognise history's multiple temporalities, non-linearity, and non-objectivity, in contrast with Western modernist understandings of it as linear, sequential, and objective (Hamilakis, 2014; Hirsch & Stewart, 2005; Knight, 2012; Knight & Stewart, 2016). History is instead approached as 'historicity', as a "human situation in flow" (Hirsch and Stewart 2005:262), explored ethnographically through experience (Hirsch & Stewart, 2005; Knight & Stewart, 2016). This conceptual shift allows for the connections between pasts, presents, and futures to be made evident as well as for time to be explored ethnographically to highlight its "diffuse, continually ramifying character" (Hirsch and Stewart 2005:269; see also Hamilakis 2014 on Bergson and memory). Therefore, as suggested by Hirsch and Stewart (2005), in this work I focus particularly on the social processes that produce the past, the present, and the future and their representations. It is the anthropologist's

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[50] Moreover, as I mention briefly above, I was part of my interlocutors' present when they shared their stories with me.

Chapter 4

prerogative to investigate history under this lens, rather than as a chronological collection of past events (Giordano 2012:32).

Drawing on these works, I have decided to present Latina's pasts through my interlocutors' narratives, rather than writing a chronological account. A chronological sequence of events creates a single historical narrative, while also posing the question of when such a chronology begins[51]. I ask, therefore, what kind of place emerges if instead of considering history as a static and objective chronological sequence of events, it is envisioned as the interaction of multifaceted, sensorial, and affective processes. As Massey describes it: "The past, then, helps make the present. But it is a two-way process. For all these presences of the past are multivocal" (Massey 1995:187). Latina's past can, therefore, be 'known' through an exploration of my interlocutors' stories, permeated with affects and senses, relations and detachments, presences and absences, imaginations and truths. The way Latina exists today, the way its pasts are perceived, understood, and retold, and the way individuals experience it is a process grounded in many dimensions; the intricacies between the stories being told, the stories lived, and broader (even national) narratives and stories, all shape the city's pasts, presents, and futures. This means inquiring into the ways in which the past, its malleability, when and how it is recollected, and the memory of it, all contribute to individuals' social experience of history as it is embedded into worldviews (Hastrup 1992). Before concluding, I dedicate one final reflection to the kind of knowledge produced in light of the analytical approach suggested throughout this chapter. Recognising the multiplicity of time and its non-linear and non-objective character, while also discussing the power of narratives, calls for a reflection on my own presence in the field. As I have argued in the previous chapter, my

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[51] As I discuss later on in this thesis, in Latina's case this is particularly controversial as the beginning of such a chronology is a very precise moment in time (in 1932). This has important political implications. In making this point, I would like to draw the attention to the fact that even a chronological sequence of event (the choice of events, when the chronology starts) is a political and non-objective process.

presence has affected the kind of knowledge produced during fieldwork and beyond. In my crafting of this chapter, I have contextualised the narratives with material from other texts and my own authorial voice. In doing so, I have inevitably influenced the stories being told. I recognise, therefore, the power of narratives, my own and that of my interlocutors, and the emergence of Latina as an ethnographic place through my interlocutors' stories as much as the story I have written myself in this chapter.

5. Conclusion

The migrations and the rapid and sudden changes which characterised this city, demonstrate the dynamic character of this place and its heterogeneity. These are stories of everyday life, but they also interweave with elements which form part of the city and its pasts (such as the refugee camp) and of national events (such as the fascist *ventennio* and the *Cassa*). I have decided to structure this chapter following my interlocutors' narratives and avoiding a strict chronological and factual description of historical and economic information. I have started with a brief introduction and an explanation of the purposes of this chapter, highlighting its connections to the criticisms raised in the literature review. I have discussed Latina's migrations and their contribution to an understanding of Latina's pasts. I have then presented the ethnography, which I have divided into three parts. Each part was introduced by the story of one of three women (Elda, Grazia, and Alda). I presented the refugee camp, the city as a 'village' in the past, and the transition between the rural to the industrial city. I discussed Latina's heterogeneity and how Latina became the end point of many migrants, who contributed to the creation of a very diverse population. Rather than present background information about Latina only through a chronology of events, I did so using my interlocutors' memories and stories and analysing them as affective narratives, recognising both their power (by asking the question of what narratives *do*) and the presence of affective and

Chapter 4

sensorial perceptions. I argue, therefore, that this is one of the ways in which my interlocutors get attuned to the palimpsestuousness of Latina. I did this because the way in which Latina is experienced, perceived, and represented is at the crossroad between memories, events, people, places, and stories. It is not possible to tell one history of Latina; I have, therefore, chosen to tell its multifarious, interwoven, entwined stories.

In this chapter, therefore, I have given three contributions. Adopting the lens of migrations and movement, I have provided a response to the criticism raised during the literature review, which argued that Latina is primarily described through its relation to the fascist regime. At the same time, I have argued for a more malleable understanding of history (in my criticism of a chronological sequence of events) and I have briefly discussed how this contributes to the dialogue between anthropology and history. This has strong implications for our understanding of places as their palimpsestuousness emerges also out of the intricacies between pasts, (hi)stories, events, memories, recollections, and temporal narratives. Finally, following my discussion in chapter 3, I have offered a commentary on my presence in the field, my authorial role and the act of writing in shaping an ethnographic place. Through these contributions and the exploration of affective narratives, I reveal Latina's palimpsestuousness. It is where stories encounter each other that the city takes shape. It is in this process of coming into contact, contaminating each other, going into one another (either through people's encounter or the encounter of their stories in the writing of this thesis) that what could have been one single-voiced history is explored through a prism in order to travel through its many colours. In the next chapter, I will go back to migrations, to the encounter of people, and to my interlocutors' memories as I focus specifically on the "heterogeneous city", showing how the historical heterogeneity of Latina's migrations

Chapter 4

and stories affects people in their everyday life. Ethnographically, I will do so focusing particularly on the senses, to explore Latina's palimpsestuousness from a different angle.

Chapter 5

THE HETEROGENEOUS CITY

"For those who pass it without entering, the city is one thing; it is another for those who are trapped by it and never leave. There is the city where you arrive for the first time; and there is another city which you leave never to return. Each deserves a different name; perhaps I have already spoken of Irene under other names; perhaps I have spoken only of Irene."

(Calvino 1974:125)

If in the previous chapter I explored my interlocutors' attunements to Latina's palimpsestuousness through their narratives discussing the city's multiple pasts, in this chapter I do so through my interlocutors' experiences of foods and languages and the senses associated with them. I do so to portray ethnographically Latina's heterogeneity and to investigate what kind of place emerges from my interlocutors' sensorial experiences. This chapter emerged spontaneously during data analysis, as I realised the amount of material I had collected on foods and languages[52]. The spontaneity of the data is particularly telling of the pervasiveness of foods and languages (and their sensorial realms) in everyday life. While being ordinary elements, foods and languages are strategically performed and practiced in the (un)making of relations to the past, to kin, to others, and to places. Moreover, they are an interesting lens to inquire into Italy's

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[52] I use here the generic term 'language', but I will differentiate between languages, dialects, and accents later in this chapter.

Chapter 5

localisms, which take on a peculiar significance in Latina, given its history of migrations. I draw on my theoretical understanding and my working definition of localisms as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries (see chapter 2). Local affiliations will, therefore, be explored through their associations to specific foods and languages. In doing so, I expand the idea of a sensorial chronotope of Italy (c.f. Hamilakis 2014), introduced in the previous chapter. Time (memory), space (localisms), and the senses were all part of the ways in which my interlocutors got attuned to the city and through which the city was known, reproduced, and evoked. My own personal experience of growing up in a family that came partly from Northern Italy provides some of the ethnographic data for this chapter, as I had to confront myself since my birth with a different dialect and different culinary traditions. It is in my own experiences that I found a cue to explore the sensory realms related to foods and languages. Drawing on my discussion on memory in chapter 4, I reflect upon the connections between memories, senses, and materialities (Hamilakis 2014). The ethnography provides an interesting lens to explore my interlocutors' bodily, sensorial, and social experiences of migrations and Italy's localisms. What emerges from this chapter is a heterogeneous city. I have divided this chapter into two parts. The first one presents the relation between localisms and foods and languages, providing both a brief general discussion on localisms (to continue my analysis in chapter 2) and a broader discussion on the social relevance of foods and languages. I then explore in depth my own memories of foods and languages. In the second part, I focus on sensorial memories and I reflect on how an ethnography of the senses (and the multiple temporalities, places, and experiences it evokes) reveals my interlocutors' attunements to the city's relations and detachments (i.e. its palimpsestuousness). Before concluding, I reflect on Latina's heterogeneity, in light of the material presented throughout the chapter.

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Chapter 5

Part 1: Italian Localisms through Foods and Languages

1. Localisms in Italy

In the first part of this chapter, I am particularly interested in expressions of localisms and in their relation to places, as the encounter of people from different geographical areas is integral to the experience of the city[53]. Carle uses the term 'conscience of belonging' to describe how this conscience "appears, it manifests itself, as a conscience of being part, of referring oneself primarily to a given reality, having a precise opinion of what this means" (2012:50)[54]. She continues by specifying that individuals often define their own belonging through an opposition to others. Her argument reminds of Eco's essay, where he discusses how Italy – as a nation – does not have enemies and therefore struggles to define itself (Eco 2016). It also resonates with Romano's work in Rome's neighbourhood of Trastevere (2013). Through an analysis of Trastevere's official maps and his interlocutors' markings on them, Romano discusses how different definitions and boundaries of Trastevere are drawn, contested, and negotiated. He recognises that some of these narrations can be interpreted as rhetorics of *campanilismo*[55] (Romano 2013:122). He draws on Scarpelli, who writes that "we know that *campanilismo* […] is often a theatre, a way to take centre stage, more than a deep and cognitively challenging element." (Scarpelli, 2007, p. 19 in Romano 2013:122–123). Through an exploration of foods and languages and drawing on Carle's and Romano's observations, I focus on my interlocutors' understanding and performance of localisms. As one of my interlocutors described it: "in Italy there is a situation of 'feuds', where the 'local' is much worthier

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[53] My residential complex alone was a microcosm that portrayed Latina's heterogeneity, where people and their families came from Puglia, Sicily, Veneto, Lazio, and Campania.

[54] The difference she draws between identity and 'conscience of belonging' is that the first – less concrete and more abstract – contributes to the replication and reproduction of social models; while the second is constituted by elements that are more easily identifiable, which individuals are able to point at and recognise themselves in (Carle 2012:50–51)

[55] For a definition of *campanilismo* see chapter 2. I will return to the issue of rhetoric in more depth in the next chapter.

than the national". In other words, I look at the performance and *praxis* of distributed localisms in the everyday experience my interlocutors have of the city. I inquire in the ways they use foods and languages to draw boundaries, to frame genealogically the meaning of belonging, and give a commentary on how they locate themselves within Italy's divisions. When claims are made through foods and languages, there are often multiple rhetorically articulated meanings, through which political and social imaginaries are reproduced. Through ethnography and my interlocutors' narratives, I will explore the ways in which meanings are (re)produced in relation to localities and places and how representations of those places - their superimposition, juxtaposition, and erasure - contributes to my interlocutors' perception and portrayal of Latina. I will focus on the everyday expressions of my interlocutors' 'conscience of belonging' (see above); on how localisms are expressed through performance and *praxis*; how they are distributed through materialities, senses, spaces and times; how their meanings are articulated through multiple genealogies; how they come to constitute political and social imaginaries; and how this affects my interlocutors' experiences of Latina. Conversations on foods and languages were, often, the locus where local differences were negotiated. It is to the performance and *praxis* of this heterogeneity that I now turn.

2. The social relevance of food and language

As I mentioned in the introduction, these data emerged spontaneously. I never focused directly on the way my interlocutors experienced not only foods and languages but also the senses associated with them. However, foods and languages came to the surface and permeated my interlocutors' daily lives through the performances associated with them (Wilson 2006). They are important social elements, whose presence and consumption are helpful in marking specific places, times, and social roles. In Italy, the social role of foods intersects with local affiliations and traditions, as cooking and eating

practices are associated with specific geographical areas (cf. Trubek 2008; Wilson 2006). Therefore, 'other' places are known both through eating, as well as through 'doing' food. In Latina, these aspects relating to foods are made more evident by the city's migrations. Recalling and cooking foods from their places of origins can be an important experience for migrants, who in doing so create a connection to faraway places (Law 2001; Teti 2015). Objects (foods in this case) have the power to evoke multiple spaces and times, and constitute a "geography […] mnemonically linked to places" (Hamilakis 2014:136; Knight and Stewart 2016:8). Materiality is laden with sensorial memories, both personal ones as well as the genealogical, ancestral, and mythical memories of places (Hamilakis 2014:136). The ethnographic examples in this chapter are particularly telling of this. They illustrate both how foods often are produced by and produce certain places, but also how they are ubiquitously present in my interlocutors' everyday lives. Coffee is an example of this.

Coffee was the only food consistently mentioned across regions and localities. In Latina, people would address it simply as *caffè*, but what they were always referring to was one specific kind of coffee: the Italian *espresso*[56]. *'Ci prendiamo un caffè?'* ('why don't we go for a coffee?') was probably the most frequent question I was asked. I noticed in my diary the fact that coffee was familiar to everyone and was often present as a background element during conversations, which could not be said about many other foods. Cafés, where I often met people if I did not visit them in their own homes, were the setting for most

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[56] *Espresso* is often associated with Italy at large (as also famous café chains in Britain remark, such as Caffè Nero, whose slogan recites "Award Winning Italian Coffee"). However, I was surprised to discover in a paper by Morris (2010), that widespread consumption of the drink I refer to throughout this chapter only began in the 1970s. Morris highlights that "espresso is a preparation process, not a product" (2010:182) that has been increasingly associated with 'Italian culture' throughout the decades. Its widespread social presence in cafés was encouraged by the fact that its preparation process, until very recently, could not be carried out at home. Given the facility with which espresso can be consumed, cafés also changed design (Morris 2010:173). Even though in my experience sometimes people do differentiate between coffees from different regions – e.g. Neapolitan coffee (not to be confused with the one brewed in a *napoletana*, a different kind of coffee machine) is deemed to be stronger and more flavourful than other kinds of coffees – these differences are usually associated to the kind of water being used or other factors, while the espresso coffee mixture is always the same.

interactions. As a young woman I was often offered a coffee (both outside and when visiting people at home), to the point I had to drink decaffeinated *espresso* (to many of my interlocutors' surprise) because I was being offered too many coffees in the same day[57]. Coffee seemed to be one of the very few elements which everyone shared, and which was used as a channel for interactions. It was through drinking countless *caffè* that I established my relation to others as a researcher carrying out fieldwork, while engaging in an informal and daily practice. Goddard (1996:210–211) makes similar observations, noticing that coffee is a mark of hospitality and it plays a role in the constitution of social relationships, while at the same time establishing gender relations (she noticed how men often offered or invited other men outside of the home to have coffee at a café, while at home the onus of preparing and offering coffee was on women)[58]. She also recalls her struggles of constantly being offered a coffee and never being able to reciprocate[59]. It was through coffee consumption that a relation was established, an ordinary practice was enacted, and food was consumed. There was another event in which coffee played a particularly important role. I was at Elda's place, to listen to the ladies' stories, and my mom got ready to prepare coffee. Elda looked at her and asked whether she knew how to make coffee. My mom certainly knew how to do so, but Elda wanted to do it herself nonetheless, while explaining each step to my mom. Once the *moka*[60] was ready, my mom fastened it, but Elda, despite her 90 years of age, wanted to check it and tightened the coffee maker even more. The practice of making coffee was used to establish a generational relation, between my mother and Elda, who through her actions established herself as an older, and therefore wiser and more knowledgeable individual. This is one

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[57] Given the fact that often in the literature one finds that anthropologists thank their interlocutors with gifts and favours (e.g. Kondo 1990), I was quite puzzled by this rather ironic situation.

[58] This is also true for age. I was often offered coffee by older men and women because I was perceived not to be financially independent, given my age, or at the very least with a really low income.

[59] It was precisely this ambivalence of asking people for help with my research, while being treated as a guest, as well as engaging in such an ordinary conversational practice that I found puzzling during the analysis of data, especially when re-reading my fieldnotes where I discovered many of these instances (Kondo 1990).

[60] The Italian coffee maker every household owns.

example of how food, and coffee in particular, was used not only to establish a relationship, but also to determine people's roles. These very short examples illustrate food's presence in everyday life and how the practices and the meanings associated with it help individuals to establish, reinforce, or mark social roles and boundaries, whether they concern gender relations (as in the example from Goddard) or age-related hierarchies (as when my mom prepared coffee in Elda's place).

Food is also pivotal in determining specific times, where specific social practices are enacted. Christmas is one of them and it is a time rich with smells and tastes. Its celebrations involve most areas of an individual's life in the weeks leading to Christmas Eve. A lot gets invested in procuring the foods[61] , cooking them "the way they are to be cooked" (as my grandmother would say), and eating them. The foods that mark this specific time change locally in Italy. In Latina these culinary habits often meet within families which come from different areas. In my family, Northern and Southern ways became every year the ground for negotiations, debates, and compromises. On Christmas Eve, we followed my grandmother's ways (*tortellini* filled with ricotta and spinach with a sauce of melted butter, sage, and Parmesan cheese and fried salted codfish). My mom remembered having the same meal when she still lived in Parma, before moving to Latina[62]. The day after, on the 25th of December, we used to have lunch at my aunt's place (she comes from the region of Campania). I remember how we had both my grandmother's *cappelletti* and lamb cooked the way it is cooked in my aunt's area. My grandmother was always very outspoken and critical about the way my aunt's mother used to cook, as the ways of cooking from the two regions are very different and families

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[61] Involving elaborate planning and theories on where and when is best to get certain types of foods, such as fish.

[62] Goddard (1996:215) describes Christmas Eve's meal in Naples as consisting primarily of *vermicelli* with clams, a salad with cauliflower, and eel: a very different meal than my family would have, following my grandmother's Northern traditions.

Chapter 5

were perpetually negotiating their belonging through sharing (as well as cooking and eating) food.

Hamilakis offers a reflection on commensality as "events that disrupt normal temporality" (2014:87). Christmas does precisely this: it creates a temporal mark through the sharing of particular foods with other people in a specific context. Commensality creates sensorial memories (Hamilakis 2014; Seremetakis 1994), such as those of my own childhood[63], of my mother's, and my grandmother's. Through the yearly repetition of these practices, other realms such as sensorial memories, temporalities, relations, detachments, genealogies, and myths are reproduced and reinforced (Hamilakis 2014:87), but also negotiated, contested, and renewed. Relations and detachments to localisms occur through distributed networks of materialities, practices, sensorialities, and memories, which (dis)connect from places and their genealogies, both familial and ancestral. Foods are constantly at the core of place-making and vice versa, as new ways of celebrating are created, and faraway places emerge. My interlocutors constantly enacted and were embedded in practices of food/place-making in their mobile lives (Simonsen 2008; Ward 2003). As my interlocutors decided what to eat, prepared the food, learned the recipes, remembered how things were done in the past, they got attuned to the city and to the dynamic and contingent performance of localisms.

In these memories and anecdotes, it is already possible to notice some local differences in the ways foods are prepared and eaten. The analysis of the data revealed many ethnographic instances when these differences were particularly evident. One evening, I was strolling down the main road in downtown Latina (*Via del Corso*). I had seen advertisements for a chocolate fair (*Festa del Cioccolato*) to take place that evening and I

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[63] I have such a vivid memory of the oily smell of the fried saltcod that permeated on clothes and objects and filled every space of the house when my grandmother used to cook it during Christmas Eve. The small house and open plan kitchen were filled with the strong smell for days.

was curious to visit it out. In my notes, I noticed that the fair was rather small with less than 20 stands. I also noticed the variety of places the chocolate artisans came from. Even though they were all Italian, each stand had a clear indication of their region or city: there were merchants from Perugia, Palermo, Modica, Volterra, among others. To try the chocolates from these different areas was almost like doing a sweet culinary tour of Italy and explore its "sensory geography" of Italy (Walmsley 2005:47). As foods in Italy are often associated to specific geographical areas it is easy in supermarkets to spot *Parma* ham, *lardo* (pork fat) from *Colonnata* (cf. Leitch, 2003), *salame* from *Felino, taralli* from *Puglia*, *piadina romagnola* (from Romagna), *panforte* from *Siena*; the list could go on forever as even the smallest villages often have their own local food products. Both Bassiano and Cori[64], produce their own bread and ham, which are marketed in local shops and supermarkets with the villages' names. Each locality advocates for the uniqueness of their own culinary products. Food variety can also be identified in shops and businesses[65]. A few months after I finished my fieldwork, I read the news of the passing at 78 years old of a well-known restaurateur in Latina. His name was Gennaro, a name which alone revealed his Neapolitan origins. Newspaper articles recalled how he opened his *pizzeria* in 1971 (Balestrieri 2016). The mayor shared a public message to celebrate the life of the entrepreneur: "Gennaro Lomasto brought to Latina a tasty, original, and historic piece of Naples" (Balestrieri 2016). The president of the council's cultural commission added: "Gennaro was a hard worker, always ironic and profoundly connected to his roots, which he relocated in a Latina in between the old and the new" (Balestrieri 2016). Because of his business (and his name) and the extent to which the pizza embodies a Neapolitan culinary symbol, he was always associated with Naples, despite having spent most of his life in Latina. In Latina, foods' and localities' characteristics were continuously negotiated

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[64] Two villages in the hills and mountains near Latina.
[65] Latina still has a Sicilian patisserie which opened at the end of the 1950s, more than one Neapolitan *pizzeria*, and a restaurant whose cuisine comes from the Po valley.

Chapter 5

and performed as they encountered each other and came into contact, highlighting constantly people's experiences of migration. The ethnographic accounts presented throughout this chapter illustrate how food was used in order to talk about the experience of arriving in Latina, from a different town, and confronting oneself with the new people and their culinary habits. This, sometimes, turned into ironic encounters. One day, while at the local market, my grandmother saw some yellow flowers on a stall. She could not believe her eyes when she realised the stall was selling what back in her hometown was fed to cows. She had never eaten this regional delicacy called *broccoletti* (broccoli rabe). More broadly, the ethnography presented so far, illustrates the pervasiveness of food in everyday life as a ground for negotiations between different local performances and practices (such as in my family during Christmas time) and in the negotiation of social roles (such as in the instances I mentioned surrounding coffee); as the expression of the strong connection between foods and localities in Italy (through the products one can find in supermarkets and Latina's chocolate fair)as its performance can become iconic of a specific geographical area (such as in the case of Gennaro and his pizza).

These strong culinary traditions are an expression of the strong attachment to localities. As Castellanos and Bergstresser discuss (2006), there is a strong sense of relatedness between the food that is produced in one specific place and its characteristics (cf. Trubek 2008). Counihan (2004) describes her interlocutors' awareness of the uniqueness of their culinary products in recognition of the differences with other culinary traditions. These kinds of discussions were frequent during my fieldwork, where people chatted and sometimes 'argued' about the proper way to cook certain foods, or how certain famous dishes had to be cooked. I often heard people debating on the ingredients and processes to make a dish as simple as broth. Once, I was at a restaurant by the beach with my

grandmother. The restaurant owner, from Naples, was explaining her how he was used to make *lasagne*. In Naples, the *lasagna* is a very rich dish, and it is usually filled with all sorts of foods, including peas, mozzarella, and tiny meatballs. As when she argued with my aunt's mom, my grandmother energetically replied: "No! *We* make it another way" and went on to explain how her region's version was much simpler, containing only ragout and bechamel sauce. The pronoun 'we' identified her with a community, different from the restaurant owner's one (see also Leitch 2003:445 on lard). It also turned her into an insider of this community (and consequently framed the owner as an outsider) and in so doing she reproduced an imaginary, stressing the extent of her difference form the restaurant's owner far beyond the making of *lasagne*. In both their explanations there was a subtle assertion that each recipe was, for each speaker, the 'right' one. In Latina, these kinds of exchanges were very common. The *lasagne* and the use of the pronoun evoked multiple imaginaries in the conversation between my grandmother and restaurant owner. Moreover, the discussion over the best way to *make* the *lasagne* (together with the negotiations on what foods to prepare for Christmas) reinforces the element of *praxis* in the negotiations between people and in the making of places and localisms. In this particular ethnographic example, even though the dish is called in the same way (it was for both my grandmother and the restaurant owner '*lasagne*'), what makes it different and, therefore, differentiates the two interlocutors is precisely the making of the dish; it is through multifaceted *praxis* (the making of food, but also eating it, learning how to make it through multiple sensorialities) that these negotiations are made relevant in the daily life of my interlocutors. There is a sense, therefore, that food is sensorially embedded in the history and the past of a community, through its performance and practice (Castellanos and Bergstresser 2006; Hamilakis 2014; Wilson 2006), it embodies its essence in the way it intermingles personal biographies and the memory of places and communities. To reiterate, food (the way it is cooked and eaten, as well as the way it tastes and it feels)

Chapter 5

associates individuals and their senses of selves with a community (Hamilakis 2014; Mintz and Du Bois 2002; Seremetakis 1994). It contributes to defining who we are and to create and foster meaningful relationships. In this particular case, it was also a helpful ethnographic lens to inquire into localisms and expressions of the 'conscience of belonging' described by Carle (2012). It was for me a surprise, as I had never realised the role food played in the everyday experience my interlocutors had of Latina and of all its inhabitants, and how it became an expression of the city's heterogeneity.

2.1. *The missing national food*

The chocolates, the cheeses and cured meats, the versions of *lasagne* and ragout are all examples from my fieldwork which show how much variety one can find within the country and within Latina itself. Even dishes that are shared by more than one region are characterised by very different recipes and procedures, resulting in very different end products. The lack of a national food was made apparent by the silences surrounding an Italian dish, shared by the entire peninsula (apart from coffee discussed above). This is, without a doubt, something to be analysed as part of much wider economic, political, and historical events; it expands further the discussion on localisms. As Castellanos and Bergstresser (2006:187) discuss, in Italy there is a stronger connection between food and locality, rather than the nation. Equally, the latter lacks strong elements of identification, such as food. Castellanos and Bergstresser (2006:189) highlight how the idea of a " 'standard' Italian food" comes to have a meaning only in foreign contexts. Therefore, not only did food, and the narratives and practices surrounding it, expressed the many peculiarities of Italy's localisms; it also accentuated food's and localisms' relationship to the nation. Wilson (2006:22) wrote that "food is much more than a symbol, and its role in national development is also that of feeding the nation, a part of the diet that sustains and reproduces the peoples of the nation". In Italy, this is true for local communities,

rather than the nation at large. So, if on one side food is an important part of processes through which local communities are made and reinforced, the same cannot be said for the nation, despite food's fundamental role in marking the times, senses, emotions, and boundaries of nations (Hamilakis 2014). In Latina, food becomes both the way in which people recognise themselves to be part of different communities, but also the way in which they share a common experience of migration.

3. Languages and Dialects

Given the association certain foods and dishes have with specific geographical areas (regions, villages, cities, etc.) and the variety encountered within Italy's borders, it should come as no surprise that there is a similar disparateness when looking at dialects and accents. One morning, I entered a perfumery where I heard this conversation taking place between a shop assistant and a costumer. The shop assistant exclaimed: "Miss (*Signora*), you must surely be from Puglia (*Pugliese*)!". The lady replied: "Yes, indeed, I am from Lecce.". He then continued: "Then you entered into the right place! I love Puglia!". This short exchange gave me much to think about. I had not paid much attention to the lady's accent before I heard the shop assistant's remark. Though, I thought, it must have been a reasonably strong accent in order for him to recognise where she was from just by hearing a few spoken words. It was not uncommon for me to hear different accents while speaking with my interlocutors. My diary entries were often complemented by my own observations about each individual's accent. The carpenter had a Northern accent, probably from Veneto, and so did Mr. Trevisan, whose last name is an indication of his relatedness to Veneto. The shopkeeper down the road had a strong and unmistakable Neapolitan accent. My grandmother's neighbour had a slight accent from Calabria. All these people, while they might have occasionally dropped a word in their own dialect during a conversation, communicated primarily in Italian.

Chapter 5

Accents, dialects, and languages play an important role for my interlocutors. They are embodied, discussed, stressed, and negotiated through the enactment of the politics of language (see also Cavanaugh 2012b). With the expression 'politics of language' my intention is to specify that languages are often connected to other realms – e.g. nations -; in Latina's case they are strongly evocative of localities (see specifically Pipyrou 2016a for a compelling study of the 'politics of language' in Calabria). Through languages entire imaginaries are evoked and performed (similarly to the way my grandmother spoke of her *lasagne*). As when my grandmother negotiated her belonging to Parma through remarks about foods and their preparation, in a similar way she used language in contexts where it mattered to her. In other words, not only are foods and languages associated to certain geographical areas and ways of being, they are also strategically stressed in particular contexts, or as expressions of a person's 'conscience of belonging'. Therefore, when languages are spoken, they evoke broader worlds of meaning. Such connections are never neutral and develop in specific economic, political social, and historical contexts which are embedded in relations of power. A clear example of this is the village of Sezze, near Latina. Sezze has its own dialect and it is often joked about in Latina. A newspaper article published in January of 2014 reported an interesting story. During a trial, the expert in charge of wiretap transcripts admitted he could not understand what was being said during the conversations because the defendants spoke in Sezze's dialect – *dialetto setino* (Redazione 2014). The comments on the newspaper's online page are particularly telling of the association made between dialects and a locality's characteristics. In the comments, the imbalanced relation between Latina and Sezze was evident. One of the comments read:

The dialect is only for the lucky few, you will never manage to understand the joy one feels in knowing how to speak it and in understanding it. You ought to remember that many typical expressions are untranslatable, that is because only those who belong to that culture can grasp their true meaning. That is why I feel superior to many poor things who will never have the pleasure of understanding a conversation in dialect. […] Remember: "THE DIALECT BETTER EXPRESSES THE CONCEPT"[66] (Redazione 2014).

Another commentator spoke directly about Sezze's and Latina's divisions:

I hope that one day there will be a flooding and because you despise us so much because of the way we speak calling us freely ignorant, we will be armed to the teeth and we will prevent you from climbing on our beloved mountains! Dear citizens of latrine [this is a pun on the words Latina and *latrina*, which means latrine] when we, inhabitants of the villages of the *Lepini* mountains [the mountains were Sezze is located], were making history you were still a marshland! Do not forget this…[67] (Redazione 2014)

These comments are interesting because they illustrate not only the linguistic rivalry between Latina and Sezze, but also the 'politics of language' I mentioned above; they show how, in other words, the dialect becomes a connection to a specific locality and its characteristics (such as the reference made to Sezze's longer history in comparison to Latina). By the 'politics of language', therefore, I indicate all these other dimensions (i.e. what a way of speaking evokes, for example a geographical location or a particular way of being, which are often used to make political claims of (non)belonging or value judgements), which both constitute the meaning of languages, dialects, and accents but are also constituted by them. Acts such as saying that "the dialect is only for the lucky

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[66] *Il dialetto e' riservato a pochi eletti, non riusce mai a comprendere la gioia che si prova a saperlo parlare e comprendere. Ricordate che molte espressioni tipiche sono intraducibili, poiche' esprimono dei concetti che solo chi fa parte di quella cultura ne carpisce il significato vero. Per questo mi sento superiore a tanti che poverini non avranno mai il piacere di aver compreso un discorso in dialetto. […] Ricordate: "IL DIALETTO RENDE MEGLIO IL CONCETTO"*

[67] *spero ke un giorno arrivi un alluvione e dato ke tanto ci disprezzate x il nostro modo di parlare dandoci gratuitamente degli ignoranti noi armati fino ai denti vi impediremo di salire sulle nostre amate montagne! cari cittadini di latrina quando noi abitanti dei paesi dei monti lepini facevamo la storia voi eravate ancora palude! non dimenticatelo…* [Spelling as in the original]

few", or that "I feel superior [for speaking a dialect]", and offering historical interpretations reproduce such an imaginary and also connects some (and separates others) from a form of genealogical memory and knowledge (as it occurs when eating certain foods). By saying this, I am not only referring to a family's genealogical memory (Pipyrou 2016a; Pipyrou 2016b), but also (as I mentioned in chapter 2) to the knowledge of what it means to belong to a certain place and to the constitution of that localism's broader knowledge (Foucault 1980:11 in Hamilakis, Pluciennik, and Tarlow 2002; see also Ahmed 2014:214): a place's intrinsic meaning, which only people connected to it have access to (such as through the dialect, as stated by the claim).As one of my interlocutors from Messina (Sicily) said one evening: "There is much behind a dialect. Dialects are not just languages, or different ways of speaking, they embody traditions and cultures expressed through the dialect". Moreover, I would add, they are not separable from other dimensions of daily life. Antonio, a Neapolitan who has been living in Latina for a very long time, made a similar comment. He said that the dialect gives a sense of unity and it can help to distinguish oneself from nearby villages. This dialectical relation between different dialects was evident in the examples from newspapers on Sezze's dialect. The rivalry is reciprocal, as it was shown in a satirical Facebook group, where Sezze's dialect was described as a "barbarian language". I will return to these ethnographic vignettes below to provide a further analysis.

There are a few more considerations to be made regarding dialects, including a necessary clarification on the use of the words 'dialect' and 'language'. As the ethnographic anecdotes describe, dialects are a common element in Latina. People often find themselves speaking what in Italian are commonly referred to as dialects, which come from different areas of Italy (broadly speaking, it is possible to delineate some of the dialects present in Latina by identifying the geographical areas of immigration described

in chapter 4). As it happens with food, each region, area, small village, have their own dialects (and their own linguistic expressions performed through them). Given the wide variety of linguistic forms in Italy, it is common for people not to understand other dialects. My grandmother, for example, kept repeating how she could not understand the Neapolitan dialect. One of my interlocutor's granddaughter, when she heard her speaking in *Veneto*, was surprised and asked her: "*Nonna*, are you speaking in English?". I use the term 'dialect' throughout as it was the term most commonly used during my fieldwork; however, dialects consist of different languages, which share with Italian the Romanic roots (Lepschy, Lepschy, and Voghera 1996). This is because they preceded the birth of Italian as a language, and therefore cannot be considered to be dialects (derivations) of the Italian language (Lepschy, Lepschy, and Voghera 1996:70). Italian derives from the Tuscan dialect, which was considered to be the most suitable to represent Italy (Richardson 2001). However, De Mauro's study (1976 in Lepschy, Lepschy, and Voghera 1996; see also Richardson 2001:64) revealed how only a very small percentage of people spoke it when Italy was unified in 1861. The fascist regime attempted to promote a unitarian view of Italy with a series of policies, including mandatory education for everyone and limited use of dialects (Cavanaugh, 2008; Richardson, 2001). The major change, however, arrived with media, and more specifically television (Richardson 2001). My mother, who was in her 60s at the time of my fieldwork, understood but could not speak the dialect from Parma (which my grandmother used to speak fluently) because, as she often told me, she was not allowed to speak it at home. Her grandparents and parents regularly spoke it, so she understood it clearly, however, she was forced to respond in Italian. This was, she said, because the dialect was regarded as the language of the folk. The relation between dialects and the Italian language has been uneven and complex throughout the centuries (see e.g. Cavanaugh, 2008, 2012; Lepschy et al., 1996); moreover, it has been strongly affected by processes of modernisation, which have aimed

at fostering and promoting the idea of a modern nation by distancing it from the backwardness of the past[68].

I wish to provide a further analysis of the ethnographic data presented so far and draw some conclusions. To do so, I focus on the work of Cavanaugh, who draws on Bourdieu's theory of distinction to argue for a social aesthetic of language (Cavanaugh 2012a:11). By this she means that the aesthetic characteristics of languages' sounds - its form and its function - are socially and culturally produced and evoke broad "extra-linguistic" elements. Moreover, with this term she recognises the complex "texture" of the sensorialities, practices, affectivities, and politics of language, which develop within socio-economic, historical, and political encounters (see also Cavanaugh 2008)[69]. She, therefore, highlights the "intersection of power and emotion" in the drawing of group boundaries (to decide who belongs and who does not) and the making of hierarchies. Drawing on the concept of a social aesthetic of language, it is possible to further the analysis of some ethnographic data presented above, and more specifically the ones concerning Sezze. What is clear from the examples above, is that there is a strong rivalry between people in Sezze and people in Latina. Describing Sezze's dialect as a 'barbarian language' replicates the hierarchies between the Italian language and dialects, which I have mentioned above. On the other hand, and this is the element in the comment I reported I am most interested about, Latina is constantly talked about negatively because of the *lack* of a dialect (and the extra-linguistic features it evokes). *Sezzesi*'s dislike of Latina is the result of a complex relationship between the two areas, which developed at the intersection of social, political, economic, and historical contexts[70]. My aim here,

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[68] The use or negation of the past by both the fascist and other governments is a complex and very broad area of inquiry, which I cannot exhaustively address here. See, for example, the work of Mammone (2006) and Pezzino (2005).

[69] The examples above give an ethnographic hint of how unbalanced such a relation can be.

[70] A friend of mine whose family comes from Sezze mentioned that *Sezzesi* hold resentment towards people in Latina as they were not involved in the *bonifica* and the allocation of *poderi* (Ferraresi 1991). Moreover,

however, is not unravel the deep and complicated reasons of Sezze and Latina's rivalry. This would be beyond the scope of this work. Rather, I am interested in making a point about how much speaking in a certain way connects the speaker and listener to a whole set of features (place, foods, ways of being, etc.). Language, as much as food, is used as a way to essentialise the difference in the other and her character. This is why Latina's case is particularly interesting. When Latina is referred to (as in the comments above) it is precisely its lack of features that is evidenced, rather than a set of defining characteristics. As I will expand on below, it is precisely this lack of characteristics that represents Latina's oxymoron, as it becomes paradoxically its most defining characteristic (i.e. there is 'nothing' here). Therefore, if other places' cohesion (e.g. Sezze) is manifested through a set of characteristics (including language and food), in Latina's case this cohesion is portrayed by precisely its lack of cohesion alone, as there are no other unifying characteristics to draw upon.

So far, I have looked at how ordinary elements such as food and languages, which have both important social roles, in Italy and in Latina are embedded in broader discourses of local and geographical affiliation. These are displayed through negotiations over what to eat, how to prepare food, and how to speak. This was my experience also throughout my life and, therefore, in the next section I focus on some of my own memories, in order to illustrate with more ethnographically rich details, the importance and presence of other places, through the everyday engagement with foods and languages. What remains evident throughout the entirety of this chapter is foods' and languages' pervasiveness in the everyday – which makes them so ordinary to become almost invisible – and with them the other places they constantly evoke.

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historically, the villages on the surrounding mountains of Latina have always been associated with left-wing politics ("they have always been red" as my friend said), while Latina because of its past has always been associated to right-wing politics.

Chapter 5

4. Personal Experiences

4.1. Experiencing cheese, ham, and raw horse meat

When I was a child, growing up in Latina, my grandmother fed me *Parmigiano*. As the name recalls, this famous cheese comes from my grandmother's hometown, Parma. *Parmigiano,* Parma ham (*prosciutto di Parma*), and other typical dishes, have been a staple of my diet. The ham's salty taste and the cheese's rounded flavour[71] are not only very familiar to me, but they are also connected to memories from my past. It was not infrequent for my grandmother to praise the good qualities of the cheese, its calcium content, and how it was more nutritious and healthy than other supermarket snack (*merendine*). She also made sure I was always aware of where the cheese and the ham were from, of her pride in coming from a land that produced such delicacies. As I snacked on them, my grandmother spoke profusely of her hometown. My knowledge of Parma was often communicated through the food I was given, which often came with a story. My grandmother remembered it with nostalgia and longed for it, despite her 40 years spent in Latina. The tastes I experienced were intertwined with these narratives, some of which talked about her life in the countryside. My grandmother's family was particularly poor, and they worked as tenant farmers in very harsh conditions. She told me how she was in charge of pulling the oxen forward in front of the plough, she used to pick tomatoes in summer, she used to glean[72], she used to plant potatoes; her mother used to feed the pig and used to leave when it was being slaughtered because she had taken care of it the whole year and it was too painful to her to hear it being killed[73]. From the pigs came the *prosciutto* and from the wheat came the flour my grandmother used to make homemade pasta. I have decided to include these memories as they changed my experience of the

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[71] Which I have discovered only recently could be defined as 'umami'.
[72] Pick up the wheat spikes left after the threshing.
[73] Pigs make a very loud 'screaming' noise when they are being killed.

field and they encouraged me to explore the ones of my interlocutors. It was through the constant emergence of sensorial memories (Hamilakis 2014), as I was exploring my own experience of the world and its materiality, that I recognised the multiplicity of memory, beyond its expression in narrative (see also Okely 2007 as discussed in ch. 3). When I left Latina and I met other people from Emilia, I realised I could relate to them through my experience of *emiliano* food[74]. When they discussed the different kinds of cured meats produced in the region, I knew exactly what they were talking about, they had been part of my life. Some of these foods also set me apart from others in Latina. When I was a child, we often ate raw horse meat, which is frequently eaten in Emilia. There was only one butcher in townthat sold it. To the majority of people, raw meat to begin with, and especially horse meat, was seen with abhorrence. On the other hand, it was a normal thing for people in Emilia, whom I could relate to. Through my experience of eating these foods and listening to the stories that came with them, I paradoxically had a memory of places I have never visited in my life to this day. One element, however, differentiated my experience of these foods from those who had eaten them in Emilia. My experience was contextual and contingent on the fact that my grandmother had shared them with me in Latina (my experience was, therefore, influenced by place) as much as it was influenced by my interactions with others. Eating raw horse meat, for instance, was defined also by my interactions and relations with those around me who did not eat it. As it will be even more evident in the next sections, the experience I had of certain tastes cannot be separated from the interactions related to them (in this case with my grandmother, with other people from Latina, or with people from Emilia), nor it can be separated from the contexts (buying horse meat in Latina in the only butchery that sold it) and the narratives that came with the foods (such as my grandmother's stories).

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[74] My grandmother often used the adjective *emiliano* to call everything from the region of Emilia-Romagna. Parma is located in the part commonly referred to as Emilia and for my grandmother anything she could describe as *emiliano* was a matter of pride, from the food to her temper, which she directly associated with her hometown.

Chapter 5

Food tasted all these things together. As I explore the meaning of food in Latina, I realise the power it has to connect worlds, through the everyday, and through time and space.

This is a nursery rhyme my grandmother used to sing to me when I was a child:

Piòva, piòva

L'acqua nóva,

I bisen i van a scola,

E la gata l'ag cura andré

E i bisen i turnan indré.

Piove, piove (It rains, it rains)

L'acqua nuova, (new water)

I gattini vanno a scuola (the kittens go to school)

E la gatta li rincorre (and the mother cat runs after them)

E i gattini tornano indietro. (and the kittens go back)

I still remember the rhyme by heart, even though I had to ask for help while writing it. In fact, I know the sound of certain phrases in dialect but not their written form. When comparing the two versions (dialect above and Italian translation below), it is possible to notice straight away the lexical differences between the two. They sound quite different also to the ear, maybe even more so than in writing. This is only one example, the closest to my own experience, of many I could report.

I was sitting at the café on the ground floor of my grandmother's flat. Pietro joined us shortly after. He started chatting with us when he, somewhat unexpectedly to me, started speaking in dialect with my grandmother. They engaged in a lively conversation, even

Chapter 5

though I could hear my grandmother struggling to pronounce some of the words in dialect. I realised she was a bit rusty in her dialect fluency. She very seldom spoke with far-away relatives, who still lived in Parma but, apart from that, since the death of her husband, she did not speak it daily, as no one else in the family learned how to speak it well enough to have a conversation.. Even though Pietro came from Ferrara, their dialects were close enough for them to be able to communicate fluently. As they chatted, I watched them in fascination. *Parmigiano*, the dialect my grandmother spoke (and also the cheese she was very proud of, discussed above) - named after the city of Parma[75] -, was ever-present throughout my life. From sayings to nursery rhymes, I remember picking up words in dialect in my childhood and beyond. As I described when talking about my grandmother's pride for food which came from Emilia, she also displayed the same sense of pride when talking in dialect or about her dialect.

Being Latina such a heterogeneous linguistic environment, interlocutors often told me of how they learned from their parents and grandparents what are considered to be vernacular languages. This was also my own experience, as it can be seen from the rhyme I reported above. Even though I do not have Parma's accent, I know some words in *Parmigiano* through my grandmother[76]. Most people in Latina will have grown up with relatives (parents, grandparents, and so on and so forth) who speak with an accent or, in some cases, also speak a dialect. One episode, in particular, caught my attention. I was sitting with my mom, my grandmother, and Pietro at the café. We had been speaking about everything and anything, when Pietro turned to me and spoke to me in dialect. He then said to me: "Did you understand?", my mom promptly replied: "Of course she understood, she understands some dialect". My notes betray my confusion at what had

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[75] Name of dialects and foods often bear a direct geographical connection.
[76] There is a former classmate of mine who understands Veneto, as her parents used to speak it at home. Another friend, in her 30s, was fluent in Veneto. However, such fluency is not common among younger people.

just happened. I barely understood few of Pietro's words, and only vaguely got a sense of what he was trying to say. There was a sense that I was supposed to at least understand my grandmother's dialect. In Pietro's question, and even more so in my mother's reply, there was a distinctive fear of a break (or loss) of genealogical knowledge (Pipyrou 2016a:63), which would have disrupted my connection to a specific place and to the past, to its continuity and performance (Hamilakis 2014). If on one side my capacity to understand dialect would have granted me access to the broader imaginary of the place the dialect belonged to (as in the example of Sezze mentioned above), it would have also highlighted my strong connection to my family and to its own ancestral memories (and therefore to a different kind of genealogical knowledge). In part 2, I will explore how these two kinds of genealogical imaginaries are expressed and performed through the senses.

Part 2: Sensorial Explorations

1. Sensorial memories of foods and languages

As mentioned briefly, there are strong parallels between the role played by food and that played by dialects. As one can taste different foods associated to specific regions, so one can hear a number of dialects. Moreover, as recipes and the taste for certain foods - such as my taste for horse meat - are passed down within families, form one generation to the other, so are sounds: dialects are not taught in schools, they can only be learned at home[77], as children replicate the different sounds of certain letters. This reinforces the strong ties between kinships and place. Even though they might not speak a dialect, many people will still retain an accent in their way of speaking. Tastes, smells, and sounds are

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[77] Lepschy et al. (1996) discuss how the country, from unification to 1991, saw an increase in Italian speakers, creating a situation of bilingualism (where people speak both Italian and their own dialect) rather than of monolingualism (where people speak only dialects). The important presence of dialects, nonetheless, remains.

senses which permeated my interlocutors' daily lives. As the ethnography shows, these senses shaped their experience of Latina and of its heterogeneity. Foods and languages are related to sensory spheres, even beyond taste, smell, and sound (Hamilakis 2014). Another characteristic they share is that they involve the body. Eating, but also speaking, are physical activities embedded within cultural frameworks of meaning. The ability to pronounce certain sounds - such as the dialect pronunciation of the nursery rhyme above - and the ability to savour and recognise certain tastes are learned bodily capabilities. My experiences illustrate how my genealogical knowledge of Parma became a part of myself through the food I was eating, cooking, and the dialect I was listening to and attempting at times to speak. I recognise immediately the saltiness of Parma ham, the combination of the leaner meat lined by the white fat. Eating Parma ham is equally a textural experience: the meat is tougher than the soft fat, which melts in the mouth. I remember vividly the texture of raw horse meat, which we usually had minced. It was soft and it was usually accompanied by olive oil, salt, and lemon juice, whose acidity contrasted the iron and blood taste typical of raw meat. The dialect's sounds were also a sensory experience as I tried to reproduce the close 'o' [œ] of the word *piòva*, where my mouth closed in a specific way, much different from the more open 'o' [ɔ] of the Italian word *piove*. As the mouth learns how to taste certain flavours, so it learns how to pronounce words. In recognition of senses' multiplicity (Hamilakis 2014), this could also be a sense in itself – the sense of sound production (like taste) – as it is a bodily experience through which the world is perceived, and "which produces spatial and temporal encounters" (Hamilakis 2014:80). My grandmother and my own sensory experiences and food practices reproduced Parma in the context of Latina, they communicated it while constructing it in a new and different way, which I learned as I grew up. While Parma and Latina emerged through these processes, I was also constituted through the food practices and experiences that

contributed to my knowledge and perception of those places (Rodaway 1994), but also of myself and my own body, of my own family, and of others (Teti 2015).

1.1. Of mussels and neighbours

When I asked my grandmother about her arrival in Latina, one of the first stories she recalled, was meeting her new neighbour. Filomena (a name my grandma had never heard when she was in Emilia) was from Caserta, near Naples. In one of their first encounters, Filomena brought a mussel for my grandmother to try. As she lived her whole life in the vicinities of Parma, far from the sea, she had never had a chance to try seafood, which was very common in Southern Italy, where Filomena came from. As we talked, my grandmother recalled the fishy smell of the mussel, which for Filomena was a delicacy. She wrinkled her nose, her face turned into an expression of disgust: it was not a pleasant smell to her. "It stank", she remembered. Nonetheless, she accepted Filomena's gift. The mussel was raw, as it is common to eat them this way in the South. Mussels' texture is very particular: soft, sloppy, and they occasionally hide some sand, which crunches under one's own teeth. My grandmother ate it. She did not remember this experience as a pleasant one. She said she had the *voltastomaco* (literally, she felt her insides going upside down) for three days after that. She felt really sick. Her expressions, as she told this story to me, mimicked her feelings and the memory of disgust she felt then. Senses have a strong power and often transcend words. In communicating with me, my grandmother's facial expressions were much more effective in sharing her emotions towards her experience. Rather than explaining her sensorial reaction, she portrayed it in her bodily gestures.

Chapter 5

In a way, my grandmother got to know Filomena through the mussel (Hamilakis 2014; Pink 2008). In accepting the seafood she was given, she was also accepting the other person, her ways, and what my grandmother thought were rather weird tastes (Hamilakis 2014:83). In offering a food typical of her culinary background, Filomena was offering herself, as the mussel became an extension of her body (Hamilakis 2014:113). Food, in this context, became a communicative tool, a way to share one's own world (Sutton 2001). The different experience the two women had of the mussel (which for my grandmother was new and unpleasant, while for Filomena was an ordinary delicacy) testifies to the two women's much broader different life experiences (Walmsley 2005). My grandmother could, somehow, experience Filomena and her lived experience, through the sharing of Filomena's food. She was learning about Filomena as the mussel made her way through her body. The things she told me about her neighbour after she recalled this encounter were similar to her facial expressions and descriptions of the mussel (c.f. Ahmed 2014:28, 83). Her memories of Filomena were not always positive ones. Drawing on Chau's work (2008; see also Højlund 2015) and my previous reflections when I talked about the raw horse meat, I argue that my grandmother's sensorial experience of the mussel was related to Filomena and the memory she had of her (Hamilakis 2014). Her taste of the mussel and the senses produced in that instance are embedded in the encounter between my grandmother, her body, Filomena, both women's lived experiences, and their being neighbours in Latina. Moreover, the social world Filomena and my grandmother were part of was being produced and reproduced in my grandmother's sensorial experience. It lied inside and outside of her body. Here, come to relevance interesting debates on the boundaries between the private, more intimate sphere, and the public one (Holtzman 2006; Sutton 2001). The experience of

Chapter 5

eating and feeling sick was a very personal one to my grandmother, but it is contingent on the social realm in which both Filomena and my grandmother engaged. The act of ingesting the mussel gave a particular and contingent significance to the two women's interaction (Wilson 2006). As this example shows, drawing a distinct line between the outside and the inside is not easy. The same is true for my grandmother's memory (Sutton 2001). Even though she discussed a personal experience, her story evokes broader lived experiences and other stories one can hear in Latina (Wilson 2006).

1.3. The bodily experience

These considerations resonate with the idea that the body, in this instance, works as a separation between the outside and the inside. Scholars have frequently debated the idea that "one is what one eats" (see e.g. Maye-Banbury and Casey 2016). Food acts as a substance which has the ability of changing one's own constitution. When I told my interlocutors that I studied and lived in Britain, often one of their first worried questions was what I ate there and whether I could find food to cook with. In this ethnographic context, my grandmother's initial bodily refusal of the mussel, and then acceptance (or better, the way she perceived and narrated this event), have a strong significance in the idea that it was through a bodily process that she both came in contact with and produced the world surrounding her. This is why her vivid descriptions were so striking to me. Her facial expressions, her use of the word *voltastomaco*, her tongue sticking out in disgust all communicated her experience. The sensory experience mattered because it was the expression of her journey of arriving in another city, far away from her hometown, and confronting herself with individuals who were different from her (Walmsley 2005). Senses - the smell of the mussel, its texture, its unpleasant taste - are so evocative in this context, that my grandmother chose it as the defining narrative of her encounter with Filomena and with Latina. Her memory of those senses embodied her encounter, even

Chapter 5

though as we kept talking, she spoke more about Filomena and her habits. Her experience - including her memory of it and what she decided to highlight in her narrative - was one of revulsion. As Holtzman argues and as my grandmother's story showed, 'bad' foods and bad cooking might be more memorable than good culinary experiences, which Holtzman associates instead with "epicurean sensibilities" (or a "Western Epicurean sensuality" which privileges the pleasurable experience of food 2006:364–365). Taking into consideration 'bad' foods as much as 'good' ones has important implications in the understanding of what meaning is given precisely to the negative memories and feelings associated with a specific food narrative (Holtzman 2006). My grandmother's experience is also connected to the present – as she recalled it at the time of fieldwork – and as it will be shown in the next chapters as well, my grandmother's view of Italy's internal divisions was coherent with these stories. This highlights food's contingent meaning on social relations (the interaction between my grandmother and Filomena) and on places where such interactions occur (Latina in the 1960s and my grandmother recalling it when I asked her what her experience was of coming to Latina).

This was not my grandmother's only encounter with unknown foods. In another instance she recalled the first time she bought squid. The white, slimy, viscid consistency of the squid's meat was unknown to her. The squid was a new sensation to her hands, as was the mussel to her taste, or was the town and its people to her new everyday life. My grandmother told me how it took her years to get used to handling the seafood. Touch was another sense used to describe encounters with others. My neighbours one evening started chatting about the local market, which takes place every Tuesday morning. Pina was passionately complaining about *Sezzesi* (people who live in Sezze) and 'those'[78] from

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[78] Here, as well, pronouns are used to demarcate boundaries.

the mountains. She despised their habit of rummaging through the products and touching the fruits and vegetables and making them, therefore, inedible (see Ahmed 2014:83 on the "performativity of disgust"). She was very upset at the unhygienic state of the market as a consequence of 'their' behaviour. This is an example of how, even just the touch of a person, changes the nature and substance of food. A person's touch contaminates it, it makes it unhygienic. Here, rather than having a food which is associated to one specific territory, a 'neutral' food such as fruits and vegetables is being changed by the hands of 'those' who come from the mountains. This resonates with the rivalries surrounding the dialect from Sezze, which I mentioned above. As the *Sezzesi's* touch is considered contaminating, so their dialect is considered to be cacophonic and incomprehensible[79]. Pitkin reports his interlocutors who stated: "I cannot stand the dialect from Sezze. Naturally I know that Paola cannot do anything about it, as she was born there, but it sounds really wrong" (Pitkin 1992:272).

I can imagine my grandmother's encounter with Filomena to be characterised as much by the foods they shared as by their strikingly different accents. Sounds, as much as tastes and smells, are sensorial experiences. There is, moreover, an element of inescapability, especially in the presence of smells and sounds, as they propagate through space and cannot be controlled (Walmsley 2005). The rhyme I learned when I was a child has sensorial characteristics, as I recognised the sounds my grandmother repeated, and I learned to pronounce. It is not just dialects that can be learned and recognised, but also accents. I briefly mentioned in the ethnography presented above, people not only spoke in different dialects, but sometimes, even when they were speaking in Italian, it was possible to hear inflexions in the way they pronounced certain words, or letters. I wrote down frequently the accent of people speaking to me. It was a very prominent feature in

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[79] See discussion above on the essentialisation of people through their provenance.

all of my interactions. It was not rare that people were asked where they came from based on their accent. One morning, a carpenter came by my house. He had a strong accent, from Vicenza, as he revealed later. My mother told him: "One can hear your accent. (*Si sente*)". He told us that he was born in Latina and now lives in the neighbourhood of *Nascosa*. When he was a kid he used to go to the church of *San Marco* [Latina's cathedral and most important church]. That was the only time he left his neighbourhood, where everyone spoke Veneto. As shown, accents and sometimes dialects are an important and noticeable presence in people's interactions. I want to focus here on the acoustic dimension highlighted by my mother when she met the carpenter. He had spoken in Italian, nonetheless, the sounds he produced were a clear indication of his origins. Accents, as Cavanaugh (2005; 2012a) illustrates, are phonetic components, rather than a different language as are dialects. Cavanaugh (2005; 2012a) shows the different ways in which single vowels are pronounced in the Bergamasco accent (see also the example above from the perfumery). Sound, therefore, becomes a material element which gets delivered from the speaker to the listener (and as I mentioned above is often inescapable). Just like the mussel above, it becomes an extension of the body. Alongside the other elements of speech (such as the language and the content) the accent contributes to the meaning that gets communicated while talking. Sound itself, as a sense, communicates alone something to the listener, while also affecting the speaker's body: it is the mouth that feels and senses what it means to produce sound, while at the same time there is a sensorial and emotive response when it touches the ear (Hamilakis 2014:74) Sounds are used to draw boundaries, to foster relations, and to mark detachments (Salustri 2013:84). An open or closed vowel, just like the taste and smell of a pizza, connects a person through a sensorial experience to other realms. Cavanaugh (2012a:5) makes the distinction between form and content, between *how* something is being said and *what* is being said. I think it is possible here to create a parallel with food

dishes. There is the taste of a food (like the sound of a speech) and then there is the recipe, its ingredients (the content). Both give meaning to the element being analysed, whether it is a speech or a dish. Angela, one day, told me that she found it hard to speak Italian when she met someone whom she knew spoke Veneto, her dialect. In this example it is possible to analyse the interaction between the Italian language, dialects, and accents. Angela spoke in Italian, so I could understand her. However, she told me, in a strong Veneto accent, that she spoke in dialect when she knew the person she was talking to spoke Veneto, as well. Through her accent (the sounds that composed her words) she demonstrated her attachment to Veneto, while speaking in Italian. Therefore, it was her way of speaking, her language, and her ideas about dialects that were being shared in that comment. I noticed three elements recurring in people's verbal communication: the language that was being used (either Italian or a dialect), the content of the conversation, and the actual sounds being used (the accent). These three components worked together to convey the meaning interlocutors attached to the concepts of language, dialect, and accent, and more broadly to localisms. Antonio, whom I mention briefly above, worked in the province's public administration and often travelled to nearby locations, closer to Rome to the North and closer to Naples to the South. He told me how he would change accent in meetings to resemble more a Roman or a Neapolitan accent. In this way, he said, the people he was negotiating with would be more willing to agree with him. This example echoes my grandmother's experiences and my neighbour's unease with the market's produce being touched by other people. In these anecdotes, the bodies are not just a locus where senses are experienced. As Chau suggests (2008), through our experience of the world we contribute to its sensory charge. Therefore, my interlocutors were not just experiencing passively the outside world's sensory stimuli, but they were also often implicated in their production and in the emergence of sensory realms of experience (Hamilakis 2014).

Chapter 5

The senses are a fundamental ethnographic element which emerges throughout this chapter. The data show how such a spontaneous, and yet pervasive, presence of the senses can contribute to understanding different aspects of the city of Latina and its heterogeneity (see also Law 2001). The ethnographic anecdotes reveal the multitude of meanings the senses embody. While they are closely related to the body, they are also often moved and made evident by elements external to the body. This was the case in most of the ethnography, from my grandmother's story of the mussel to listening to familiar dialects. The environment, other bodies, and the materialities that surround us are fundamental triggers to our sensorial responses. At the same time, we can be producing sensory realms through our presence and agency. In their being simultaneously 'inside' and 'outside', the senses defeat the separation of the two. Howes' (2005) understanding of emplacement as a coming together of the body, the mind, and the environment becomes particularly evident in the ethnographic data I have presented (see also Pink 2009). My interlocutors navigated the city, other places, and their relations through the senses and through the foods and languages they were able to hear, taste, smell, and touch (Walmsley 2005). This combination of mind/body/environment is necessarily social in its character (Howes 2005) and multitemporal. In fact, the experience my interlocutors had of their senses were shared first at the time when they occurred (e.g. when my grandmother met Filomena) and then again when they were being remembered (e.g. as my grandmother recalled the story to tell me about it).

The practices related to the senses I have described embody in themselves not only the action in itself, but also the emotions, memories, and the persons associated with them (Seremetakis 1994). Feeling (sensing) and doing are part of the same realm of experiences of places. I want to highlight here, therefore, the complexity of the sensorial experience my interlocutors had of places and how many elements (such as memory, migrations, the

senses, practices, among others) contribute to this complexity. I also want to highlight the way they are intricately related with each other: it was through eating the food, cooking it, learning about it, and listening to my grandmother's stories that I 'tasted' the foods she was offering; in the same way, the dialects 'sounded' all of the stories, places, memories, and traditions I had learned as I was listening to Parma's dialect. Tastes, smells, touches, and sounds were in some cases experienced negatively, as in the case of Sezze's dialect or the contaminating touch of people form the mountains, or my grandmother's experience of the mussel and the squid. Tastes (and smells) and sounds are multifarious and complex in all the dimensions they embody, including the practices associated with them, reinforcing their bodily aspect. What is evident from the ethnography presented so far, is that the sensorial experiences of my interlocutors are embedded within and contribute to establishing social relations and detachments and are at the same time expressions of those relations and detachments. In the next section, therefore, I discuss how the ethnography reveals the making of (dis)connections through the presence of foods and languages, and the senses associated with them.

2. Genealogies of palimpsestuous places

2.1. Past

My interlocutors often talked about their pasts and remembered events and moments of their lives. This was particularly evident in the previous chapter, where I discussed Latina's history through my interlocutors' stories. In this chapter as well, my interlocutors' and my own memories form an important part of the ethnographic data I present. These stories are rich of sensorial details which evoke or are evoked by memories. They reveal the complicated and multifarious experience of migration that my interlocutors recalled often during fieldwork. Their sensorial memories evoked faraway

places, which nonetheless belonged to my interlocutor's lives. These places were distributed in the tastes, smells, and sounds I experienced together with my interlocutors and revealed how central the experience of migration (and of being related to other places) is to people who live in Latina. By sharing their sensorial experiences, they shared, therefore, knowledge of those places and, in some instances – such as in the case of my grandmother or Pietro –, they passed down this knowledge to me. In this, the senses reveal a deeply social dimension, as they move from the body to "the surface of things" (Seremetakis 1994:6), and back again to the body[80]. For Seremetakis, memory becomes "a *sense* organ in-itself" (Seremetakis 1994:9 emphasis added). Senses and memories stimulate each other as they emerge in people's daily lives and they are mediated as much through bodies as through social and material worlds. Moreover, by teaching and passing down this sensory knowledge, languages and foods are projected into the future (Sutton 2001; see also Abarca and Colby 2016). Sensorial memories (see for e.g. Simonsen 2008; Hamilakis 2014; Seremetakis 1994 and the discussion in chapters 2 and 4) interact with malleable pasts, presents, and futures, which get re-elaborated and articulated through relations and practices. Abarca and Colby describe this as a "polytemporal consciousness" (Abarca and Colby 2016:4), as it emerges from the temporal and spatial connections inherent in sensorially remembering foods. As sensorial memories are passed down between generations, pasts, presents, and futures are articulated. The pasts evoked by sensorial memories are not just biographical ones, but also ancestral and mythic ones. I am referring here to the fact that genealogy can also indicate the history of knowledge, and how meanings and ideas are developed (Foucault 1980:11 in Hamilakis, Pluciennik, and Tarlow 2002; see also Ahmed 2014:214). Through foods and languages, one does not only *in-corporate* (c.f. Hamilakis 2014:170) (dis)connections to one's own kin, but also transcendentally to a wider community. Commensality becomes, therefore, a way to get

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[80] See also my discussion in this chapter and the previous one of the relation between materiality, the senses, and memory in Hamilakis (2014).

to know and access a place's knowledge (a place's meaning, what defines it and makes it what it is), as many of the examples in this chapter demonstrate. It creates connections to ancestral and mythic pasts and it provides continuity (Hamilakis 2014), while also demarcating boundaries between those who belong and does who do not. A place's genealogical knowledge is complemented by the knowledge shared through kin relations (in itself genealogical); sensorial memories play a fundamental role in the constitution and dissolution of various genealogies.

2.2. Kin

My neighbours, one evening, were chatting about how to grow mixed leaves salad (*misticanza*). Both Pina and Gabriella explained each step of the process. Their knowledge, they told the rest of the group, came from their grandmothers and mothers and from their *orti* (vegetables gardens). I often had conversations with my grandmother on foods and their preparation. Once I returned to Britain, I called my grandmother one evening to ask her how to prepare a *risotto* with courgettes. We started talking about food and, as Christmas was approaching, she exclaimed: "You should really learn how to make *cappelletti*!". She had been making *cappelletti* every year since I could remember. She had learned how to make *cappelletti* through her own mother and grandmother. Her skilled practice was, as suggested by Yarrow and Jones (2014), a fluid process encompassing materials, bodies, tools, and movements, that she expertly reproduced. In the same way, by skilfully speaking in dialect, she recalled her hometown and transmitted it to me, as part of our present and as a vision of her past. Kin relations were often highlighted, reinforced, confirmed, and created through foods and languages. One of the most striking examples of this was when my mother remarked that I understood dialect when inquired by Pietro (see section 3.2 above). This knowledge is not only expressed through words, but also through bodily sensations and gestures, which are shared between

generations. This was particularly evident in the vignette where I discussed my taste for raw horse meat or *Parmigiano*, but also when I discussed my ability to tell a nursery rhyme in dialect. Not only am I able to recognise certain sounds (or recognise certain tastes and smells) and associate them with a certain dialect and therefore a place, my body is also capable - to some extent - to reproduce those sounds. In Pietro's question about my dialect knowledge and my mom's response, there is not only a claim to knowledge, but also an element of performance. I recognise, therefore, the importance of localisms' *praxis* and performance of *praxis*, which are then used as political tools to make claims and constitute localisms as imaginaries (see chapter 2). In Pietro's case, but also when my grandmother prompted me to learn how to make *cappelletti*, the performance of *praxis* was strongly connected to the issue of my belonging to a community and my ability to embody and perform both my family and a place's genealogical knowledges.

Dialects and foods are not only embodied because of their sensory experience. Walmsley (2005:52) discusses how during her fieldwork women described their ability to make good food as being a part of them. In a similar way, I could only learn of my grandmother's dialect and her recipes through her. Her ability to cook certain foods in a specific way was the combination of embodied memories and practices. She did not follow any written instructions, nor did she know how to phonetically write the words she pronounced, and yet she knew the position her mouth needed to be in to produce certain sounds. Equally, she knew the consistency of the pasta dough to make *cappelletti*, she knew the quantity of a pinch of nutmeg, or how long the *cappelletti* had to be boiled for. Her sensory and embodied knowledge was not only a result of the taste of certain foods, but also the ways in which certain bodily practices – learned and remembered since childhood – engage the body, the world, other bodies, and their intersensoriality (Walmsley 2005:47). Parma and Latina were simultaneously produced through all these

Chapter 5

life-long processes (Pink 2008), which I was supposed to learn in my role as granddaughter.

The ethnographic data presented throughout this chapter is particularly telling of the coexistence of blood ties and practices in the making of kinship (Carsten 2000b; Edwards 2000; Strathern and Edwards 2000). My ties to my grandmother were forged and reinforced by our exchange of foods, senses, and sounds. Two anecdotes were especially illustrative: when my grandmother stated I should have learned the traditional Christmas dishes and when Pietro assumed that I spoke my grandmother's dialect. In the first instance, learning how to cook a particular dish would have meant acquiring knowledge not only of the dish itself, but also of the stories, the pasts, and the traditions associated with it (see also Seremetakis 1994). By learning how to cook it and reproducing it, I would have also reproduced (and performed) all these elements, and therefore also reinforced my kinship tie to my grandmother, through the practice of food. This constitutes a form of genealogical memory that creates a bond between the person, her family, her ancestors, and place (Nash 2017; Pipyrou 2016a). Through skills and practices (as well as through blood ties) passed down between generations, belonging to a place is reinforced and reproduced, while also demarcating continuity with one's own ancestry (Nash 2017). When Pietro assumed I spoke dialect, and my mother promptly responded on my behalf, it was the recognition that in that context language - as a practice - highlighted my relation to my family and the place it came from, even though I have never been there. This is the reason why my mother promptly responded to clarify any doubts about my ability to understand 'our' dialect. This ethnographic anecdote emphasises both how language is *practiced* locally and how it is embedded within the social world (see Pennycook 2010), and also how kinship is forged out of practices (Carsten 2000b), which include languages (speaking, learning a language or a dialect, choosing how

to speak in specific moments, and so on and so forth). For example, when my mother claimed I understood dialect, my blood ties to my family (and to a specific place) were made evident by highlighting my ability to perform my family's dialect. It was through a practice shared socially – namely, the speaking of a dialect – that my blood ties could materialise, in my interlocutors' eyes and could be performed. It was because of this that it was so crucial that I showed my ability to understand and speak dialect. On the other hand, in an inverse process, my grandmother insisted on teaching me how to make *cappelletti*, which for her was an essential element in being associated to a certain place (Parma). The fact that I could not perform such a culinary practice was for her a disappointment and it took away from my ability to be a full *Parmigiana* granddaughter, despite of our blood relations. Blood ties and practices informed each other. My interlocutors used different understandings and constructions of kinship in order to promote and express their relation to others and to places. In the ethnography presented, it is possible to notice how my interlocutors, therefore, used social and biological explanations in malleable ways and often used them interchangeably (Carsten 2000b). Hence, in exploring the question of how kinship, as a form of relation, contributes to the making of places, I have presented some ethnographic data that shows how kinship ties are particularly important in the way places are experienced, constructed, and (re)produced. Moreover, throughout this chapter I have also focused on senses and, partly, also on emotions and I recognise the importance of family as an emotional locus, where important feelings are elaborated and expressed (see Goddard 1996). In this sense, therefore, localisms are genealogical imaginaries, because they are partly politically constituted by the way one's own ancestry and generational ties in time and space are imagined, performed, and reproduced. The practices that are associated to places are often performed and reproduced to make and reinforce political claims of (non)belonging.

Chapter 5

Foods and languages, and the senses associated with them, were not only important elements in the making and unmaking of relations to times, places, and kin, they also played an important role in the articulation of relations to others. My grandmother's and my neighbour's stories are particularly telling of this, especially considering their endings. My grandmother eventually ate the squid and mussel, despite her disgust and sickness which followed. My neighbour, however, refused to buy the vegetables and fruits, refusing what had been touched by other people. What those people represented to her made the food polluting, it made the food dirty (cf. Khan 1994). Even if in different ways, here, as well, there are metaphors of 'bad' foods. Food becomes a way to draw boundaries, to make connections and to separate (Debevec and Tivadar 2006) and to share ideas about homogeneity and heterogeneity (Appadurai in Khan 1994). In other words, foods play a role in the making of relations and detachments. In the ethnographic accounts reported, this was done through instances where the body comes into contact with food and the - sometimes negative - sensations associated to it. Both stories are particularly telling of how other people and foods can be contaminating. In my grandmother's case this contamination was portrayed through her memories of feeling sick, of the mussel's taste and consistency, and of the 'weirdness' of the unknown foods. In Pina's case, other people's touch was the sense which contaminated the food and made it inedible to her. In both instances, the stories remark a separation, the drawing of boundaries between people, but also between places. In Italy, these connections are even more relevant as foods are often associated to localisms and to the people who associate themselves with them. Moreover, in Latina's context, these memories are connected to painful stories of migration (see previous chapter), of getting to know a new place and the feeling of disorientation associated with this experience. Mundane acts, such as eating

and speaking, which usually fall in the background of daily lives, became instead unsettled, unknown, and unfamiliar experiences.

Languages, the act of speaking, and the sensory experience of sounds, were important instances were relations and detachments were created, (re)produced, or reinforced. It was through the materiality of sound that many of my interlocutors expressed a 'conscience of belonging'. However, dialects and accents were also used to draw boundaries. In a similar way as when my neighbour reacted to 'mountain' people's touch, there were rivalries between certain dialects, as in the examples concerning Sezze. Speaking one dialect or another, producing certain kinds of sounds, created a connection to some, while at the same time fostering a disconnection to others. The way Antonio changed his accent according to where he travelled is particularly telling of this. These last examples illustrate the third meaning of localisms as genealogical imaginaries. More specifically, I am referring to the role of genealogies in the constitution and reproduction of power relations (Pipyrou 2016a) and in the making of subjects (Povinelli 2011). In other words, through the ethnography, I have shown how genealogical knowledge (both referring to one's own ancestral and kinship ties, and to the history of the meaning of a particular place) is used rhetorically to draw boundaries and make claims on who belongs and who does not. These claims are often embedded within power relations and hierarchies of value and they affect the way people relate and detach from others. In the making of imaginaries, my interlocutors imagine, perform, practice, negotiate, and contest, the perceptions and meanings attributed to places, as they are politically and rhetorically used to make claims about localisms, Latina, and more broadly the nation. I will now discuss how my interlocutors see Latina's foods and dialects in light of the connections to so many other places they so frequently talk about.

Chapter 5

3. Latina, the Heterogeneous City

Above, I mentioned the case of an expert who could not understand Sezze's dialect during a trial. The second comment I reported (the one comparing Sezze's millennial history to Latina's marshes), not only spoke in favour of the dialect but also raised in harsh terms the rivalry between Latina and Sezze. In this section, I explore the implications that such strong displays of a 'conscience of belonging' hold for Latina. One of my interlocutors once said that "if one goes to Siena, it is possible to see [to recognise] the *senese* [citizen of Siena], or for example the *aretino* [citizen of Arezzo]". He explained this by saying that those are 'compact realities'. It seemed to me that he was referring precisely to the 'conscience of belonging' described by Carle (2012). It is possible to associate Siena and Arezzo with certain foods, dialects, and other features. I wondered therefore, what makes those realities 'compact'? What relation do these other places have with Latina?

3.1. Where is Latina's food?

After having spent over two hours chatting in her shop about Latina, Lia sighted: "After all, we don't even know what the typical dish of Latina is"[81]. In light of all that has been written so far in this chapter, it is possible to see the implications of such statement. In fact, it encapsulates the three meanings of localisms as genealogical imaginaries I outlined above and in chapter 2. First of all, it signals a missing genealogical link and a lack of genealogical memory (Pipyrou 2016a) between families, their ancestors, and place, as Latina is too young to have 'local' families. Secondly, it stresses the fact that there is no genealogical knowledge inherent to the place; in other words, the missing dish demonstrates the impossibility of tracing the history of what this place means. Finally,

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[81] A similar case was observed by Filippucci (2004) in a French town that had been rebuilt after the war. She explores the ways in which her interlocutors negotiate national and local understandings of French *patrimoine.*

this is also a political statement: following Povinelli's definition of genealogical society (Povinelli 2011:27) and Pipyrou's discussion of the political uses of genealogical histories (Pipyrou 2016a), it is possible to analyse this statement as the impossibility of making rhetorical and political claims on Latina and its boundaries, on who belongs and who does not, on what kinds of subjects are constituted within its boundaries. Lia, and the people who had visited her shop during those two hours, had spoken very pessimistically about the city. With her last statement, she was just reiterating her point as I was already on the door, on my way out. Her remark was summarising what she had told me that far and was making a final point about her discontent. It was the last straw. As every small village has its own culinary habits, which are perceived to be rooted in the territory and to go back centuries, not to have one is perceived to be limiting. A newspaper article (Grassucci, 2017c) described how in order to celebrate Latina's Christmas (i.e. the 18th of December, the day of its inauguration), people should have eaten some sweets from Sezze. The author, citing other famous foods from other places, claimed that an 'unremarkable' place cannot produce something with such a sublime taste, as Sezze instead does. As a consequence, he made a direct parallel between the extraordinariness of Sezze and the 'ordinariness' of Latina. There is no food that embodies Latina's essence for others to try, taste, ingest, digest, and be changed by it. This is the way Latina is perceived to be.

I was chatting to Lucia, one afternoon. She had lived her whole life in Rome (until the day she moved to Latina) and considers herself to be a *Romana*. She told me of one time when she was reading on the newspaper about the town of Mantova, in the North of Italy. She remembered how the article talked about the *mozzarella* of Mantova. She found this hilarious. The *mozzarella* is a cheese that is produced in Latina, with many cheese factories producing all kinds of *mozzarella* varieties. "It is a local dish", Lucia strongly

remarked, because many dairy farms produce it in the area. Her assertion brought my attention to the fact that even those dishes that could be considered to be from Latina, are often overlooked. Lucia found it ironic that no one recognised *mozzarella* to be a local dish, while the newspaper recognised it as being a dish from Mantova. Latina's food - and more importantly what Latina smelled and tasted like - was hiding in plain sight. Lucia made a distinction between foods that are usually produced in other areas of the province – such as Gaeta's olives[82] – considered to have a stronger culinary heritage, while Latina is considered to have no foods of its own.

3.1.1.Latina as a culinary crossroad

Lucia also talked about the culinary traditions of Latina, which she thinks are strongly influenced by Rome. She mentioned a conversation she had with her son, who is a restaurateur. He said that Latina could exploit all the gastronomic traditions of nearby places. According to him, and Lucia agreed as she repeated her son's views, there are many delights in Latina. This is the result of the city being a meeting point (Lucia used the Italian word *crocevia*, which translates to crossroad) for many different people. This could also be seen in the conversations and ethnographic accounts I have reported in this chapter. The variety of foods and ways of cooking my interlocutors talked about, are a tangible demonstration both of food's importance, and also of Italy's fragmented local affiliations. In Latina, this was made all the more evident by the absence of something considered to be 'local' and the great variety of foods from different places people encountered in their daily lives. However, through the examples reported, my aim is also to highlight the fact that local affiliations are not closed boxes, whose characteristics can be listed within clear and defined boundaries. Every ethnographic anecdote I have chosen to present here, is the result of interactions and relationships. Cook and Crang

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[82] Gaeta is a well-known seaside town in the Southern part of Latina's province

Chapter 5

(1996), while focusing primarily on consumerism and globalisation, present, nonetheless, a very interesting case to discuss culinary heterogeneity. They argue against the idea of perceiving cultures as mosaics, focusing instead on social constructions and connections. Culinary traditions, therefore, what is named to be 'authentic' is, in actual fact, the product of specific interactions. Without overlooking food's important relationship to places and individuals, they recognise and underline the contextual character food's meaning carries. So, if on one side Latina is perceived not to have its own culinary tradition, on the other hand it is the place where all these other foods come into contact one with the other. It is the place where these foods change, are re-elaborates, tasted again under different conditions (Teti 2015). As a consequence, the places they remind of change in their representations. This is the reason why both Gennaro's *pizzeria* from Naples and the restaurants of "*La Padovana*" ('the woman from Padova', a city in the north) and "*Fogolar*" ('hearth' in Friulan dialect) came to represent the city, despite being so strongly associated with other geographical areas. On a Facebook group where people were reminiscing about the now closed "*La Padovana*" and in a newspaper article talking about the "*Fogolar*" (Zamarian 2018) it is possible to read of typical Northern dishes such as the *polenta*. These dishes can be found more easily in the outskirts of Latina, where most first-settlers communities received the *poderi*. The journalist who wrote about the "*Fogolar*" interviewed its owners who pointed out that "the tastes of our land of origin joined and mixed themselves throughout time with those of the foods of the Lower and Middle Lazio" (Zamarian 2018). Having discussed some ethnographic accounts of foods and their tastes and smells I now turn to the other sense discussed in this chapter: the sounds of languages, dialects, and accents.

3.2. Dialects in Latina

Antonio, mentioned above, ended his reflection on dialects and the sense of unity they contribute to create between people, saying that this was lacking in Latina. Chiara said something similar, saying that she misses having a dialect because she was born in Latina and never learned to speak one. She loves the sound of Neapolitan because her family comes from Gaeta, whose dialect resembles the ones that can be found in Naples' region. Salvo, her husband, who used to speak dialect, told me he was sorry he was forgetting it (lit. losing it [*lo sto perdendo*]) because for him it was the symbol of his belonging. He told me how his parents spoke different dialects, even though they lived in nearby villages, only 20km apart. It was not uncommon for me to hear people talking about dialects as something that was missing in Latina as no 'local' accent or dialect is perceived to exist. So, even if some people still recall experiences of not being able to speak dialect (like my mother), many interlocutors also expressed their sadness at the perceived absence of a dialect and an accent in Latina. However, this was not always the case. Giovanni said that he learned so many different dialects. He was not able to speak them all, he explained, but he understandood almost everything. The characteristics of each language and dialect and their dynamic meanings (cf. Cavanaugh, 2012) are particularly salient in Latina, which served as the background to the encounter of very different people. My interlocutors recall memories of these dialects meeting within families. Silvia told me of when, while in the car, her family used to sing a rhyme in Veneto and her mom used to get really upset because she was a "*marocchina*" (literally "Moroccan", a derogatory term used to describe people who came from the Lepini mountains) and could not understand what was being said, while her father came from the North.

Chapter 5

Something that was quite striking to me, when I started doing fieldwork, was the fact that I could hear a 'local' accent, a way of speaking which I recognised as being typically from Latina. In my fieldnotes, I have an entry a couple of months after starting fieldwork, which describes the way a neighbour speaks with a strong accent from Latina. I discussed this with some interlocutors, and I discovered that many felt there was a way of speaking typical of the town. Two designers told me that, as the migration from Campania increased, it affected the way of speaking. The way people spoke in Latina, they thought, had increasingly taken on accents from Campania. They told me that the accent had changed, while before it was sort of an accent '*veneto-romanesco*' (a mix between the accents of Veneto and of Rome). According to them, fluctuations in the language did not give points of reference to the city and its citizens. Something people mentioned more frequently was the sound of Latina's accent. As I discussed when talking about foods, dialects and accents (and the sensory experience my interlocutors had of them) were contextualised in the experience they had of the city. The comments on Latina's accent were particularly interesting. They express people's recognition of certain sounds which, either positive or negative, are associated with the city. Latina's accent is also often associated to Rome because of their similarity and geographical proximity. A friend of mine from Rome, however, could clearly hear the difference between the two. He said that it is true that the two resemble each other, however, Latina's accent is more 'sung'. One of the designers pointed out how it always sounds as in an interrogative tone, as if the speaker was always asking a question. Another friend of mine said that Latina's accent sounds like this: "*nanananana*" (not reproducible in writing). He was mocking the sound structure in Latina's accent, which to him sounded like a rhyme. All these ethnographic examples show how, even though other places' accents and dialects play a very important role and are discussed by people, there is a sense that a local accent is starting to emerge. This debate was encouraged in a post on Facebook, where a group admin highlighted the

interrogative rhythm of Latina's accent, recognising that it represented a local feature. Many people wrote about their distaste towards this way of speaking, while others tried to identify its origins: some talked about the dialects spoken in the mountains (remarking their distaste); others recognised the accent's similarity with Rome's accent, while highlighting its differences; some commentators explained it was the middle-ground between all the Northern and Southern accents present in the area. This is an interesting example of how different accents and dialects somehow came to become part of the city, in the same way as Gennaro's pizza or the Northern restaurants' *polenta* did, as well.

3.3. Absences as relations

Relations to other places are very evident in this chapter. My interlocutors constantly remarked how they cooked and ate certain foods or highlighted their ability to speak in different dialects. They made comparisons between different foods and dialects and discussed their encounters. Features of different geographical areas were constantly mentioned, practiced, performed, and made evident. All these places have a presence in Latina, they are constantly (re)produced through my interlocutors' words and actions. As this last section has discussed, however, this also means that Latina emerges increasingly as a city that lacks all these features (despite hints, such as discussed above in relation to Latina's dialect, that this will change in the future). My interlocutors, through their discussions of other places, constantly reproduce this "knowledge of absence" (Yarrow 2010:24)[83], which is dealt with through other knowledges (such as genealogical ones) my interlocutors have acquired. My interlocutors and ethnographic data from social media often highlight people's struggles to recognise a 'conscience of belonging' in Latina, as they cannot point at a specific food or a specific dialect (or accent) as defining features of the city. The material absence of *Latinensi* foods and languages and the vivid presence of

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[83] See also chapter 2.

Chapter 5

foods and languages from other places makes this particular absence even more striking

and present. Every time the food or language recalling another place is present, Latina's

absences are made evident and emphasised. In this chapter, however, my intention is also

to show how these absences represent a form of relation. Because many people in Latina

are still connected to their or their families' places of origin, Latina becomes a place

where to encounter many different places. If there is not a food or language that is

specifically *Latinense*, there are multiple foods and languages from different places

experienced polyphonically and in the specific context of this city. In the same way, if one

linear and objective History cannot be told (as argued in chapter 4), there are plenty of

istories to be discovered (Herzfeld 1987). As I have discussed throughout this chapter,

sensorial memories and materialities are fundamental in the making of communities and

of their boundaries, even of national ones (Hamilakis 2014). With this in mind, I ask what

the implications for a city are, whose sensorial memories seem to be absent. I argue that,

instead, this no-thing is in fact Latina's palimpsestuousness (its multiple relations and

detachments) and it is also through the experience of foods and languages from a

multitude of places (in other words the experience of localisms) that my interlocutors get

attuned to it. People continuously renegotiate their 'conscience of belonging' to other

places through an engagement with others, with kin, and with the city itself. These

absences, therefore, as I mention in my theoretical chapter (see also Bille, Hastrup, and

Soerensen 2010), are not just a void. The non-presence (or confused, hazy presence) of

Latina's foods and languages has provided a lens to inquire into how complex the

experience of a heterogeneous place can be. The absences my interlocutors mention, are

a way to relate to the city, its multifariousness, and its multiple places within it. The foods

and languages from other places they experience daily are contingent on their presence in

the city and are, therefore, practiced and performed in certain ways precisely because they

exist in Latina today. Latina is, therefore, experienced sensorially as my interlocutors

make sense of the tastes, touches, smells, and sounds they encounter through a relation with the city. Massey's definition of the uniqueness of places as a "meeting place" takes, throughout this chapter, an even more salient meaning (Massey 1994:154) As they navigate their relations and detachments to multiple actors and places in this heterogeneous city in all its palimpsestuousness, people in Latina (re)produce a relation to the city and in doing so they give it meaning.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have inquired in my interlocutors' attunements to places (through foods and languages). In doing so, I have introduced some issues surrounding localisms in Italy. An important point I make throughout this chapter is that local affiliations in Italy should not be understood as static wholes coming into contact with one another. Rather, they are negotiated daily, they are dynamic and ever-changing. As the ethnography has shown, this 'conscience of belonging' is performed and practiced daily, which makes these 'local' categories particularly malleable and fluid. This was explored through ethnographic data on foods and languages and their (extra)ordinary roles in daily life. By the end of my fieldwork Latina, what I considered to be 'home', was a culinary palimpsest of tastes and smells, of foods from different regions which had been passed down in families and recipes which had been re-elaborated in the new city. It was through food and its relationship with localisms in Italy that people marked their belonging to one group or another. Moreover, connecting to such communities also means connecting to a wider 'world' of meanings, borne in food and all that surrounds it (Grasseni 2014).

Through the ordinary presence of foods and languages I also explored how the body is involved in their experience. Practices are a fundamental element that emerged strongly in the ethnography presented in this chapter. As I mentioned above, it was through

Chapter 5

eating that I learned of my grandmother's birthplace, as well as through listening and learning how to speak her dialect. This was also the case when she prompted me to learn the family's traditional Christmas dishes and in the way I memorised the nursery rhyme in dialect. In the second part, I explored the sensory experience of my interlocutors and my own. Taking into consideration the idea of emplacement as involving many personal dimensions, including the body, I realised that it seemed like my interlocutors were emplaced in far-away places. However, this led me to ask what these multifarious relations and detachments to other places could tell about Latina. Throughout this chapter, I have drawn on my discussion of localisms in chapter 2 and in my definition as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries. Through the ethnography, I have explored the three meanings of genealogical: in the making of kinship, in the constitution of a place's meaning, and in its political uses to draw boundaries and identify insiders and outsiders. It is in the ways they politically imagined, performed, negotiated, practiced, (re)produced, and re-elaborated that I recognise them as imaginaries. I have done so with a focus on memories' multisensoriality. I argue that the perceived absence of a 'local' food or dialect, which can characterise Latina as a place, could be understood to be a form of relation to the city. In fact, it was through this constant display of ordinary heterogeneity that my interlocutors engaged with the city and its representations. The significance, meaning, sensory effect, and experience of all the food and languages I have discussed are embedded in the intricacies of this palimpsestuous city. Latina's being as palimpsestuous was evident in this chapter through all the relations and detachments my interlocutors foster in the presence and absence of foods and languages. Their positive or negative presence contributed to processes of place-making and to the emergence of the city I explored through the ethnography (Simonsen 2008). In the next chapter, starting from Latina's heterogeneity, I will inquire into what the city *feels* like. I will focus closely on the use of rhetoric in the making of claims, and on affects and emotions. In doing so,

Chapter 5

I will reveal one more aspect of the palimpsestuousness of this city and the relations and detachment that continuously (re)produce it and are, in turn, reproduced by it.

Chapter 6

THE CITY OF DISCOMFORT

"This said, it is pointless trying to decide whether Zenobia is to be
classified among happy cities or among the unhappy. It makes no sense to
divide cities into these two species, but rather into another two: those that
through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires,
and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it."

(Calvino 1974:35)

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed my interlocutors' attunements to the city's heterogeneity. I did so, through an exploration of the absences and presences of foods and languages in Latina. My analysis of the ethnography encouraged me to inquire into the sensorial and emotional qualities of distributed localisms. The experiences and feelings my interlocutors shared with me and with each other was pervasive. Eight months after the start of my fieldwork I added at the end of a journal entry: "It almost seems as if Latina has been built on its own emptiness and on whatever it lacks". I felt caught up in the 'nothingness' my interlocutors talked about and my efforts to understand it. I was seeking a 'soul' that according to Antonella did not even exist, and I was explicitly told by the boy at the Chinese restaurant to give up with my pointless research. It fluctuated, as one interlocutor said in a comment I mentioned above. This was the nothingness I was trying to grasp, together with my interlocutors. In this chapter,

Chapter 6

I continue this exploration by focusing on the meaning of a *sense* of place in Latina. I ask the question of what the city *feels* like and, in following Ahmed (2014), I reflect on what these emotions *do*.

My intention is to move beyond the understanding of Latina as a mosaic of its multiple localisms. Drawing on the previous chapter's analysis, I could have developed further the argument that Latina is simply the sum of Italy's localisms and their performances. I feel compelled, however, to move beyond this proposition, as it does not provide an exhaustive analysis, but rather a starting point for further reflections, which I offer in this chapter and the next. In exploring the question of what Latina *feels* like, I address the broader question of what Latina *is*, to which my interlocutors responded with a hyperbolic 'nothing'; in other words, this chapter is an investigation of the multiple meanings of 'nothing' and of the city, of what transpires from absences and silences and what remains concealed in narratives and presences. As I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the study of what appears not to be there (of absences as well as the meanings my interlocutors gave to the word 'nothing') presents some epistemological and ontological challenges. As I reflected upon these challenges, I investigated absences and silences from different angles (such as narratives of the past in chapter 4 and foods and languages in chapter 5). Drawing on some of the themes I have introduced before, in this chapter I use the analytical lens of affects. It is through affects that I intend to explore how a place is inhabited, how its intensities and charges resonate (Pink 2011; Stewart 2007; Navaro-Yashin 2012), and how my interlocutors got attuned to it, even though they framed it as 'nothing'. As I will argue later in this chapter, it is precisely through its constant repetition that 'nothing' turns into *something*, it acquires a charge, which makes Latina emerge.

Chapter 6

The ethnography reveals distributed affective charges as they move across materialities, environments, geographies, people, bodies, imaginations, practices, absences and presences. The intimate and the collective are intertwined in the intensities they produce and are contaminated with. The making of the palimpsestuous city becomes, therefore, a process of encounters, of relations and detachments, between multiple ordinary elements. As it can be seen in chapters 4 and 5, my interlocutors' attunements were a labour embedded in their everyday lives, Latina was part of their biographies, their foods, their languages, and their engagement with the city and its spaces. These ordinary affects (Stewart 2007) were pervasive, all-encompassing, constantly shifting from one thing to the next. By stressing affects' ordinariness, I intend to reflect upon the fact that I considered Latina to be extraordinary. In the words of Berlant: "the extraordinary always turns out to be an amplification of something in the works" (2011:10); I ask, therefore, what was that amplified *something* (or no-thing) I perceived during my fieldwork and beyond and how precisely its ordinariness made it *almost* imperceptible, and yet palpable and so extraordinary. I find Berlant's understanding of 'crisis ordinariness' particularly useful in answering this question. For her, 'crisis ordinariness' is an impasse, a state of suspension characterised by not-yet events, by pressuring situations that instil change in lives without ever erupting (Berlant 2011). Through affects, my aim is to explore my interlocutors' attunements to these disruptions and how this constant "state of animated and animating suspension" (Berlant 2011:5) is where worlds are made. The ordinariness of these affects is, therefore, both fleeting precisely because of it being ordinary, while also being overpresent (Berlant 2011), heavy, and contagious.

I believe this was what made it so hard to grasp during my fieldwork, and yet it was also very evident, palpable even. My theoretical and analytical approaches are the result of my own and my interlocutors' difficulty in grasping Latina and defining it. In the words of

Chapter 6

Berlant, Latina's ordinariness, however, absorbed all this incoherence and contradiction through its porosity (Berlant 2011:53). Nonetheless, this constant uncertainty was uncomfortable. Ahmed describes comfort with the example of a body sitting in a chair. If the body and the chair fit together, then the chair is said to be comfortable, but what determines the 'comfort' of the situation is actually the encounter between the body and the chair (Ahmed 2014:148). The encounters between my interlocutors and the city were, on the other hand, always deeply uncomfortable; this did not allow one to disappear into the other but made surfaces, as Ahmed calls them, more and more evident. It is focusing on these encounters and the discomforts they produced, that I inquire into my interlocutors' and the city's out-of-placeness, as a condition of not feeling *in* place *somewhere* (Ward 2003) – i.e. in not finding the right comfortable chair for one's own body. In exploring these multiple encounters, I also delve into Latina's palimpsestuousness (its relations and detachments) and investigate its affective charge.

After this introduction, I offer two analytical routes. In the first one, I consider how a rhetoric of localisms forces Latina and my interlocutors in a relation of cruel optimism, as localisms are normatively performed and reproduced. This creates an impasse where my interlocutors recognise Latina's absent localism, which however can never be attained as it would negate Latina's very existence. The second part offers a different analysis. I propose that the impasse is also a space of potentiality where a new way of being can be articulated and performed. I focus on my interlocutors use of hyperboles, ironies, and lamentations as rhetorical tools to speak against the normativity of localisms (as a rhetoric of the potential otherwise) and I ask whether the 'no-thing' my interlocutors so often repeated could be interpreted as a form of *campanilismo latinense*. Before concluding, I draw heavily on Navaro-Yashin's work (2012) to explore how these affective charges shape my interlocutors' experiences of the built environment and of the city's spaces and

geographies as their bodies come into contact with the physical presence (and absence) of buildings, squares, and streets. I now turn to the first analysis of this chapter.

2. Cruel Optimism

In the previous chapter, I discussed how localisms have histories (both through kinship but also beyond, as ideas) and I showed through the ethnography on foods and languages how these histories are used politically to make claims and draw boundaries. Because of this, at the encounter between foods and languages and bodies, localisms become present through affectively charged intensities. The vegetables became disgusting when they were touched by 'them' (the people 'from the mountains'), the mussel became disgusting when it reached my grandmother's mouth (see Ahmed 2014 and above). During the encounter between bodies and objects, boundaries were being drawn between my neighbour and 'them', my grandmother and Filomena. These distinctions became a way to differentiate what was good from what was bad, what was familiar from what was strange (Ahmed 2014:83). They became a ground to negotiate the unstable categories of the 'known' and 'unknown'. Disgust, Ahmed argues, emerges in the contact zones between bodies and objects; however, she also points out that disgust has an already embodied history (2014). The making of borders through senses, reactions, and emotions is therefore already embedded in localisms' genealogies, in the histories of their meanings. Through the reaffirmation of these borders (through for example the expression of one's own disgust), localisms' genealogies are politically reproduced and performed, and they are turned into normative categorisations (see Ahmed 2014). As I have discussed often so far, localisms in Italy are constantly being performed, reproduced, practiced, and reaffirmed; they are, in other words, the norm. The association between a bounded place and its own culture is reproduced when imagining localisms in Italy also through the

Chapter 6

media: through satire as well as TV programmes[84] (see Ginsburg 1995). Moreover, as illustrated above, selves are essentialised through performances of places. Localisms are often represented, performed, and especially imagined as wholes (e.g. when one of my interlocutors said one could 'see' the *senese* as a coherent whole). As Imma described it one day: "It feels like Latina is formed of a lot of circles" and she drew the circles with her fingers on the table while telling me this. It is through localisms' genealogies that my interlocutors made political claims, which gave broad and historical meanings to the use of pronouns such as 'you' and 'me'. As it is declared, each pronoun bears in itself both pronouns (Ahmed 2014:2); one cannot exist and cannot be given meaning without the other. The use of 'we' (and other pronouns) is a repetition of structures and norms (as they recall localisms' worlds of meaning), inscribing insiders and outsiders within an affective response that deciphers ambiguity (Berlant 2011) – *we* find *you* disgusting. Despite being contingent, when they are declared, pronouns define, organise, and reproduce norms, giving structure to Latina's uncertainties.

I wish to return here to Lia's statement from the previous chapter[85], as her use of the pronoun 'we' offers further reflections. My grandmother's and my neighbour's use of 'we'/'them' connected and separated them from wider communities, associated with practices, languages, foods, and other elements. This was not the case, however, in Lia's statement. Even though she uses the pronoun 'we', she then negates it by specifying that there is an absence of knowledge concerning the 'we' and its features (she mentions specifically the typical dish). There is a fantasy of the 'we', but there is also the immediate recognition of its impossibility. I find this to be an example of a relation of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011). As I have outlined in chapter 2, a situation of cruel optimism

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[84] As I write this thesis two programmes caught my attention: one stages a competition between Italian villages. In each episode the hosts showcase the particularities of each village (foods, dialects, dances, etc), highlighting their uniqueness. The other show is a culinary competition between chefs coming from different regions, where competitors have to cook each other's 'traditional' dishes, using 'local' ingredients.
[85] "After all, we don't even know what the typical dish of Latina is".

occurs when the object of a subject's desire prevents her attainment of it, creating an impasse, a situation of suspension (Berlant 2011). In this first analysis, I argue that people in Latina find themselves in a relation of cruel optimism and, therefore, in an impasse. My interlocutors, as it transpires from the words of Lia, aspire to recognise themselves in a localism, they fantasise about a 'we', they desire the multiplicity of localisms' expressions (such as foods and languages – this can also be seen in the discussion concerning the *latinense* dialect in the previous chapter). However, Latina and its existence are negated by the very existence and normativity of localisms. To have a localism, would make Latina disappear, which happened every time people reiterated strongly their attachments to other places. This is, therefore, the impasse: despite one's own desire and fantasies, the very idea of localisms delegitimises Latina's presence. The structures of blood, soil, kinship, history, and the senses that give meaning to localisms cannot be traced, reproduced, practiced, performed and ultimately normativised in Latina, unless they are associated to other places and make Latina's absences even more present. Other places (and other localisms with all their features) were constantly being reproduced and performed in Latina, and this reinforced their boundaries and characteristics. Every time my grandmother insisted on the good qualities of the *parmigiano*, she performed and repeated Parma's localism and in doing so reproduced and fixated its normativity (see Ahmed 2014:12 who draws on Butler). This has important implications for my interlocutors' relation with the city, as it encompasses the affective realm. This constant going back to other places can be seen as a need to *feel* 'normal'[86] (Berlant 2011:180). Latina is not even the *you* (the 'other'), which in itself has its own boundaries; Latina *is not*, and I argue that partly the 'no-thing' my interlocutors so often repeated comes from this absence of knowledge, form the inability to draw one's own boundaries and identify who belongs and who does not. As it will be seen throughout this chapter, the affective

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[86] 'Normal' in this instance refers to being within the norms.

response to this was strong, including feelings of shame as "*the affective cost of not following the scripts of normative existence*" (Ahmed 2014:107 emphasis in the original).

2.1. Searching for the *Latinense*

As I have mentioned several times already, the broader associations of localisms and their genealogies were used politically as rhetorical tools in the constitution of subjects, in the making of claims, and in the drawing of boundaries. This was done through their performance, (re)elaboration, and contestation. Associating oneself or others to a specific place had important consequences in the interactions between people and in the production of Latina and of other places. Categorisations of selves emerged, therefore, in conjunction with the places they were connected with or separated from. In this section, I explore how concepts such as being *Latinense* (being of Latina) were articulated by my interlocutors, as Latina and the memories and stories of other places came into contact. Moreover, I seek to explore the ways in which such representations are employed rhetorically by people, including myself.

The term 'the *Latinense*' sometimes made its way into conversations. As with the city, hard to define amid all the expressions of different localisms, so was the idea of a person from Latina. Pina, my neighbour, was adamant one night in affirming that "the *Latinense* does not exist". From very early on, it was clear to me that this puzzling classification ('the *Latinense*') was far from being easily defined and even less effortlessly appropriated. When used in its substantivized form, to describe a cohesive group of individuals sharing a particular set of characteristics, the '*Latinense*' was used in derogatory and belittling ways. While in the supermarket one day, I met one of my mother's former colleagues. We exchanged a few formalities as one does when it has been some time since seeing each other, and I briefly explained what I was doing back home. I talked about my research and the fact that it had been funded by a British research agency. She commented that

only *Latinensi* do not care about anything, while the British were clearly interested in my research efforts. The use of 'the *Latinense*' as a category becomes especially problematic *vis a vis* other 'local' Italian categories (i.e. the *napoletano*, the *veneto*[87], etc). I analyse these characterisations as expressions of my interlocutor's sense of self (their own and that of others). I follow Battaglia in her understanding of the self as a 'representational economy' (Battaglia 1995:2). Selves, according to her, emerge out of the conjunction of subjects' multiple ramifications. Therefore, similarly to the ways in which places emerge out of specific configurations making each place unique at a particular moment, selves are situational and "chronically unstable" (Battaglia 1995:2). Given their situatedness, the ways in which selves are articulated are, therefore, rhetorical performances. Any determination of selves is problematic: selves cannot be described according to static and all-encompassing characterisations (Kondo 1990). In her expression of "crafting selves" (Kondo 1990:48), Kondo points specifically to the dynamic, contextual, and interactional processes which make and unmake selves. In the same way as the normativity of localisms is performed, repeated, and established rhetorically through the practice and narrative of foods and languages, it is also displayed through the articulation of selves. I use these ethnographic examples illustrating the making of selves to show how the *Latinense* is constantly negated, despite attempts at identifying it, reiterating a relation of cruel optimism. In other words, I explore "what *use* a particular notion of self has for someone or for some collectivity" (Battaglia 1995:3 emphasis in original); more specifically, I do so in relation to the making of places and I ask the question of how articulations of 'local[88] selves' (i.e. the *napoletano*, the *veneto*, the *latinense*, etc.) contribute to the making of Latina at specific moments in time. Therefore, through the ethnography, I intend to investigate how these situational 'local selves' emerged and how their rhetorical

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[87] Sometimes these categorisations refer to a city, e.g. the city of Naples, other times to a wider geographical area, e.g. the region of Veneto.

[88] 'Local' here relates both to the idea of localisms but also to the fact that these articulations are elaborated locally, in Latina's context.

Chapter 6

articulations addressed broader discourses and claims, relating to the city and to localisms and their ramifications, such as kinship.

Specific associations between places, selves, and their characteristics were often used rhetorically to describe the people associated to those places and the places themselves. This recalls the second and third meanings of genealogies in my definition of localisms. In fact, calling someone *napoletano*, or *veneto*, for example, associated her with the place's genealogical knowledge, while also making a value judgement on that association and, therefore, using it as a powerful rhetorical tool. As foods and languages were 'tagged' with their provenance, so were people. Often my neighbour Gabriella used the origin of people to identify them. It was not uncommon to hear her describing the families in the building facing ours with epithets such as 'the *Firenze*' (the woman coming from Florence), or 'the *Ponzesi*' (those coming from Ponza[89]). Selves were essentialised through their connection to particular places. One day, as I was walking out of a building after meeting one of my interlocutors, I met a lady as she entered through the main door. We started chatting. She had been in Latina for 50 years, but she was born in Calabria and her parents were *calabresi*. She said that she still "felt Calabria inside her and she couldn't manage to feel part of this city [Latina], but she couldn't exactly explain why". She said she "was indifferent to the place and unfortunately, she pointed out, it was so also for many people with whom she discussed, these feelings got handed down to one's own children". Nonetheless, she said she got angry when people spoke badly about it because, as a matter of principle, it was not right. In my diary I wrote of my surprise that this was the first thing this woman had shared with me. I did not know her before our very brief encounter, and yet it was her first reaction when I explained in a few words what my research was about. I reflected that her feelings must have been strong enough for her to

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[89] Ponza is an island in Latina's province.

share them so freely and I wondered whether she had thought about these issues even before meeting me.

In Latina, the making of selves and its rhetorical uses were particularly evident, because people who associated themselves to all corners of Italy interacted on a daily basis. Given Italy's heterogeneity and Latina's history of migrations, there were always reverberations of other places, as it was extensively illustrated in the ethnography of foods and languages. In representations, stories, conversations, and imaginations it was a constant going back and forth between places and selves. Encountering others from different regions, 'crafting' their selves, 'crafting' one's own self, engaging with the city, and articulating the experience of the internal migration, all had a profound impact in my interlocutors' experiences. One afternoon in September, I met Cinzia, my grandmother's carer. She told me of how "she felt bad at the 'Volta' [a middle school]". She said that others would discriminate against her in class because she was from Naples. They would ask her: "But what do you wear?" and they would look at her from head to toe. Her classmates were all *coloni*'s children who came from the North (they were all *Veneti*). Umberto Eco writes of how the "enemy always stinks" (2016:15). This reminds of the stories of disgust presented before, as through localisms people drew boundaries and judged who came from different geographical areas. My own grandmother often argued that her carer did not work well enough because she was from Naples, and people from Naples, as everyone asserts, are notoriously lazy. As discussed in the chapter dedicated to dialects, these associations were connected to genealogical abstractions of stereotypes and ideas of selves, which were then projected onto others. Herzfeld (1997:202) argues that stereotypes are "a discursive weapon of power", through which the other is reduced to the absence of an attractive feature. Insofar as stereotypes, in this case, also denote the use that is made of certain genealogical representations and imaginations of the self

Chapter 6

(Battaglia 1995), they become rhetorical devices in the making of selves and of places. After a book presentation where my research had been mentioned, a man stopped me on the side of the road, curious about my interests in the city. He said "the *Veneti* are a group that does not open easily, and they remain among themselves". Afterward, he said that Latina had been ruined in the last 20 years because people from other [Italian] places had arrived and, "not wanting to be racist" he said, they brought with themselves different traditions and different ways of thinking. This, according to him, had profoundly changed the city. These tensions were often exemplified by comments that described how Latina had been "Neapolitanised[90]"; these comments were usually negative. In his work on "inventing the enemy", Eco (2016) tells the personal story of when a taxi driver asked him who were Italy's enemies. He realised that Italy had none, maybe because it had so many internal rivalries between big and small towns. These rivalries are often steeped in centuries of antagonisms revealed in different contexts - e.g. claiming authenticity over 'cultural' products such as foods or expressing rancour over football (Carle 2012). Latina does not have such strong frictions with others, nor does it have a clear and defined enemy to fight against[91], even though throughout Italy distinctions are frequently made between other places, especially the North versus the South of the peninsula.

As I mentioned above, kinship relations were often involved in the making of selves and places (as I also argue in chapters 2 and 5 when I discuss localisms as genealogical imaginaries). Kinship, place, and self-characterisations were often used rhetorically in conversations. Some ethnographic anecdotes will help to clarify this. One day I went to Giovanni's and Angela's place. Giovanni asked me where I was from, and I said I considered myself to be a *Latinense*, as I was born in Latina and lived there until I was 17

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[90] Latina had become more like Naples.
[91] The only fleeting 'enemy' people talked about during fieldwork was the city of Frosinone, which is Latina's football adversary *par excellence*. Occasionally, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there was also some rivalry with the village of Sezze.

years old. He disagreed with me with a peremptory "NO!". He explained that no one is from Latina. Maybe, he conceded, only his grand-children's generation can be considered to be from there. He asked me where my parents were from. I explained my mom was from Parma and my father was Greek. He looked at me and I could see he had a pleased expression on his face. I had proved his point, after all. When my mother walked in, a few hours later, it was her turn to respond to Giovanni's question. She said she could say she was from Latina, after having lived there for more than 50 years. Giovanni, however, reacted the same way he did with me, and my mother clarified her parents were indeed from Parma. Giovanni had proved his point once again. There are several elements to be analysed in this short anecdote. First of all, there is Giovanni's question of where I was from, which, as I have mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, was a fairly common question in Latina, which carried with itself a set of assumptions. As I reread my notes during the data analysis, I also realised my response to be particularly significant. I decided to present myself as a *Latinense*, an action (and a performance) that only later I realised encapsulated much of what I was looking for in my interlocutors' responses. As Battaglia points out, when investigating the rhetorical making of selves, there is an important question to be asked, namely: "why we or our subjects take up one rhetorical position or another, or to what feared or hoped-for effect we engage the rhetorics we do. Put another way, we must ask to what effect one rhetoric engages another in relation to which it defines itself." (Battaglia 1995:7). Positing myself as *Latinense*, I was crafting my self as that of a native[92]. Moreover, my answer was rhetorical as it not only implied the existence of the '*Latinense*', its recognition highlighted my belonging to it, ascribing to it specific meaning. The process of my own self-making was cut short by Giovanni, who promptly replied. However, in my response I had already delineated a characteristic I found in myself as 'the *Latinense*': I was born and had lived there for some time. Claims of

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[92] I have already discussed in chapter 3 the difficulties of defining 'nativeness' as a category.

nativeness often present a rhetoric of authenticity and of a bounded culture (Boyarin and Boyarin 1995:17). Boyarin and Boyarin relate their question of nativity to birth (1995:17). This is an interesting element also in my conversation with Giovanni. As I mentioned in the previous chapter when talking about my grandmother's understanding of my roots as *emiliana*, belonging or not to a specific place depended both on claims of autochthony and on kinship ties. In the conversation above, I claimed my autochthonous status, while for Giovanni (and for most of my interlocutors) kinship ties were paramount in the definition of one's own origins (the autochthonous claim was true only for one's parents or grandparents). Therefore, two 'natural' elements - blood and soil - came to be rhetorically used in the making of selves in relation to places. Both of them, in conversations I had, had a naturalising power. Geschiere defines 'autochthony' as "being born from the soil" (2009:2). In the conversations I have presented and the ones I will present shortly, when Latina was discussed, blood ties became the primary connection to one's own roots. Autochthonous claims were made following the assertion of one's own familial ties. The way this was presented was often as Giovanni also did: "You are from [place], because your parents come from there". There is, therefore, a Janus-faced 'rhetoric of naturalisation' used here, which relies on both autochthonous and blood ties. The following ethnographic examples will help to clarify this.

One day in December, my grandmother told me of how she believed in the existence of 'race', which according to her was made up of the place one comes from and all its traditions. She said that there is also the 'culture', which concerns the intellectual knowledge one has. She told me she is of the *emiliana* race – even though having stayed in Latina she has changed a little bit – nonetheless, she stays *emiliana*. My grandmother's explanation of the idea of 'race' is interesting if compared to Giovanni's comments above, as they both stress the relevance of autochthony and the connection between the

Chapter 6

self, place, and blood. Place acquires a pivotal role in defining and presenting oneself. Many of my interlocutors talked about the connections they had to their places of origin or birthplaces (cf. Capello 2015). Some, like Imma and Anna, came from relatively nearby places - Naples and Gaeta - and they told me of how they used to travel back often to visit families. These were, at times, weekly trips. When her husband was transferred from his job, the two options Imma had were Palermo and Latina. She told me how for her, the latter felt like a prize, as it was closer to Naples and in a couple of hours she could return to her hometown. Naples, she said, was bigger than Latina and her roots were there. In Latina she was alone [her family was far] and therefore she went back to Naples to give birth to both her daughters. During the Christmas holidays she used to spend a whole month with her mother-in-law, and she wished for her daughters to go to university in Naples because, after all, she considered that one as the place of her origins. The daughters, however, decided to attend Rome's university because they grew up in Latina [which is closer to Rome]. Her trips to Naples had become less and less frequent. Contrary to Imma's daughters' decision, I met younger people, such as some of my friends, who travelled to Veneto, Sardinia, or Naples during holiday periods. Even when trips were scarce, as in the case of my own grandmother, people remained attached to those other places, embodying and experiencing them. One evening I was chatting with some neighbours and I wrote what follows in my diary: "Gabriella made a negative comment about Neapolitans. She said she cannot stand them, and Pina got jokingly angry because she is also of Neapolitan origins. What counts, Pina said, are the parents' origins and so, even if she grew up someplace else, she considers herself Neapolitan like her parents. She continued talking about Chiara, saying that even if she was born in Latina what counts is that her father and grandfather are *Gaetani* [from Gaeta]. Despite Pina's comment about her, Chiara said she was from Latina but she was not at all convinced by her statement." Pina also said that her children, even though they are born in Latina, have

Chapter 6

grown up and have been educated according to their family of origin and the place the family came from. As the comment made by Pina shows, my interlocutors navigated these representations of selves daily.

2.2. (Un)making boundaries

What transpires from the ethnographic accounts above, is precisely this difficulty my interlocutors have to find 'the *Latinense*'. Comaroff and Comaroff (2001) discuss how the idea of autochthony creates the opposed category of 'alienness'. This dichotomy is complicated in Latina. My interlocutors often claim that they are autochthonous to other places (such as their own or their parents' towns and regions of origin), however, at the same they are not entirely alien to Latina either. They are in-between, hence their ambiguous status. They are suspended in an impasse. No one in Latina is autochthonous and, as a consequence, no one is entirely alien either. Nonetheless, in this impasse boundaries are made and unmade, localisms are articulated rhetorically, and places emerge. In all the narratives considered above (and in many narratives reported throughout this work), there is a recurring element: alongside Latina there are always other places being mentioned, places that often set a standard Latina cannot reach. I met Vittoria one afternoon in her home. She is in her late 70s and has worked as a teacher most of her life. We talked for hours and she told me that, when young, she had promised herself to never come to live in Latina, partly because of political reasons. She had travelled a lot with her father and moved to many different cities. She passed by Latina sometimes. From my diary: "Then she laughed, and she told me: "Never say never, I've been here for 44 years". When she visited Cori[93] she said she felt at home. She said with fascination how the road to Cori they usually drove on revealed at every turn a different landscape and a different history". Vittoria talked affectively about Cori,

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[93] The village in the mountains where her husband comes from.

someplace else, the same way the calabrese woman talked of Calabria, in the vignette above. The feeling of closeness to other places that many of my interlocutors expressed (such as Vittoria and the Calabrese woman), provided an *affective structure* (Berlant 2011:2), which fuelled the fantasy of their attachment to Latina. In other words, the immediacy and intensity of their affective connection to Cori and Calabria testified to the possibility of attachment to places – even potentially to Latina – while at the same time negating the potentiality of an affective connection to Latina, because Latina never was – and never will be – like Cori or Calabria. This is, once again, a cruelly optimistic relation, exemplified especially in the words of the Calabrian woman who recognised Latina's difference, but was unable to explain it.

Before moving onto the second analysis of this chapter, I offer one final reflection on the ethnographic material presented so far and on the concept of cruel optimism. Drawing on my definition of localisms as genealogical imaginaries, I have explored through the ethnography the rhetorical uses of localisms and of the histories of their meanings. In doing so, I have highlighted how localisms are given a negative or positive value according to the way in which they are rhetorically presented. My interlocutors, as a consequence, draw boundaries and make claims genealogically. Latina's palimpsestuousness is evident, therefore, in the way it emerges from the relations between selves and other places, in their imaginations, representations, and articulations. Latina, when confronted with these other places, emerges increasingly as 'out-of-place', as incoherent, confusing, and characterised by absences. The performance of these boundaries between Latina and other places, is negotiated daily in different times and different places (Green 2010). Moreover, as rhetorical representations of such boundaries change continuously, they have the power to make places visible or invisible (Green 2010). It is through this dynamic that Latina emerges as 'out-of-place'. I have expanded

Chapter 6

the discussion I started in the previous chapter to analyse the way Latina is articulated *vis a vis* other places and to do so, I have inquired specifically in ethnographic data concerning the making of the *Latinense* self. The ethnography revealed that the very aspiration and desire of a localism in Latina delegitimises its own existence and the existence of the city, suspending my interlocutors in a relation of cruel optimism. Whenever the rhetoric of blood, soil, and kinship is articulated when drawing boundaries between oneself and others, Latina's absences are made more and more evident. It becomes, therefore, impossible to draw the city's boundaries, to identify *me* and *you*, to make genealogical claims and use them rhetorically as power tools. Latina is in an impasse, it is out-of-place. Giovanni's question of 'where are you from?' acquires, under this light, complex meanings. As Berlant writes when discussing Cantet's film 'Human Resources', the question 'where is your place?' from rhetorical becomes genuine: "perhaps, in the impasse of the transitional present, where situations unfold in ongoing crisis, what were rhetorical questions become genuine ones" (Berlant 2011:195). Her reflection is useful to understand Latina's cruel optimism. The question 'where are you from?' (or 'what is your place?') was used rhetorically as it sought a certain kind of answer, through which Giovanni argued for localisms' normative genealogies. This same question, however, ceases to be rhetorical when it makes evident the absence of a localism in Latina. If one avoids rhetorical answers (such as my own, or Giovanni's) one is left with silence, which exemplifies an absence of knowledge. The question 'what is your place?' is unanswerable, and to say 'I am from Latina' would be the same as stating one is from no-where, one has no-place, one is out-of-place. The impossibility to answer this question *is* the impasse: it is the suspension between desiring to belong to a place and yet being unable to do so. It encapsulates, in other words, the relation of cruel optimism I have been outlining in this entire section through the ethnography. As my interlocutors' words illustrate, this precarious condition has strong affective charges, it is a *sense* of out-

of-placeness (see chapter 2 and above), rather than a *sense* of place, which turns into an intense affective placenessness (Berlant 2011:194). The cruelly optimistic relation is replicated over and over again as the *Latinense* (i.e. a *sense* of place in Latina) is searched for, desired, imagined, and it does not exist (yet).

3.   Rhetorics of the Potential Otherwise

The *Latinense* does not exist, *yet*. It is starting from this adverb that I now embark on an alternative analytical route. Instead of focusing on the missing localism in Latina, I propose that a closer look at the impasse my interlocutors found themselves in can provide a different understanding of the city's discomfort. In this section, I start from Povinelli's (2011) and Knight's and Bryant's (2019) understanding of alternative resolutions residing in the potentiality of a future *yet* to come, in order to explore how through hyperboles, ironies, and lamentations my interlocutors claim a space for themselves *vis a vis* Italian localisms' normativity. As I have outlined in chapter 2, Povinelli's work focuses on the space in-between affects and their idealisation where, she argues, alternative social projects find their expression (2011). With a strong focus on "life as it has been lived" (2011:6) – resonating with getting attuned to a 'crisis ordinariness' –, she proposes a closer look at *quasi-events*, which through their proliferation and specificity render potentiality historically specific and meaningful. Knight and Bryant have written more specifically on potentiality "as the future's *capacity to become future*" (2019:107). Drawing on Agamben and Strathern, they recognise potentiality as a present absence, which they call the "otherwise-than-actual" (2019:112), ontologically ephemeral. In providing an alternative analysis to Latina, I draw broadly on the ideas of Povinelli and Knight and Bryant to inquire into Latina's absences as the presence of a potential otherwise, as a unique conjunction of immanent elements that have the power to influence the future (Bryant and Knight 2019; see also Pink 2011). I inquire into my

interlocutors' attunements to this impasse bearing the potential otherwise through the affective charges it emanates and is drawn into. My reflections began when I noticed my interlocutors' anger when outsiders criticised the city. I now turn to these ethnographic examples.

3.1. A central Italian dilemma

In this section, I will discuss the geography of Latina, to try and locate it within Italy through my interlocutors' words. Latina is in the middle. Geographically, in fact, Latina is in Central Italy. When I mentioned Antonio's tricks of speaking different dialects, in chapter 5, I reported his story of how he switches dialects whether he visits the Northern part of the province, or the Southern one. Latina sits right in between the two, in between Rome and Naples, in between the North and the South. Rome is the capital of Italy, while Naples is the third city in Italy by population. Their influence and importance are felt in Latina, as well as in Italy at large. Lia, whom I have mentioned in the previous chapter, talked about the years in which Latina became more independent from Rome, noticing the important presence of the capital in Latina's development. Nonetheless, these two entities are felt and play a role in the way Latina is seen. These two cities also have their own characteristics and therefore being associated with one or the other affects Latina, as well. For example, as one interlocutor mentioned, Latina is always close to Rome, but never to Naples. This is because Naples does not have a good reputation (see section above where I discussed how Latina was perceived by some of my interlocutors as being negatively "Neapolitanised"). The use of absolute adverbs – always and never – strengthens the importance of emphasising distance from Naples and closeness to Rome. Its in-betweenness was also mentioned by another interlocutor while speaking about criminality. Latina, he argued, sits in the crossfire between Northern and Southern criminal groups.

Chapter 6

Latina, thus, sits geographically in between the North and the South. However, the division between the two is not a straightforward line. It is rather an area with flexible boundaries that in cartography is identified as 'Central Italy'. Del Negro describes the position of Abruzzo (a neighbouring region to Lazio) as "[straddling] the line between the North and South thus [occupying] a liminal space in the regional debates of Italian politics. While some maintain that the province belongs to *il Mezzogiorno* (literally, "the midday", the region that runs from Sicily to the area just south of Rome), others situate it in *il Centro-Nord* (the Center-North region), distancing it from the South and its reputation for underdevelopment" (2004:6). The same can be argued for Latina's province. During the establishment of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, Latina was included as part of "the midday", while the first settlers' migration created a strong connection to Northern regions. Latina's 'out-of-placeness' is, therefore, also evident in its ambiguous and, as Del Negro defines it, liminal geographical position. Moreover, the province of Littoria/Latina was proclaimed on the 18th of December 1934 (Mariani 1976:252), exactly two years after the city's inauguration. Strangio defines the province of Latina as a "geographical invention" (2008:33). Given its constitution after the *bonifica*, Strangio (2008) identifies the case of Latina as one where political and administrative aims were paramount in its conception[94]. This resulted in a geographically heterogeneous province (encompassing hills, plains, islands, and coasts). As Strangio (2008:34) explains, the territory chosen to become the province of Littoria/Latina was created by separating other territories, some belonging to the area of Rome to the North and some to the area of Naples to the South. The province has suffered from this heterogeneity and separations and "it had to overcome not a few difficulties in the creation of its own image

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[94] See also the discussions in chapters 2 and 4 that illustrate briefly the role of propaganda in defining the fascist 'new towns' and the *bonifica*. The proclamation of the province of Latina is embedded within the political discourses associated with the city's foundation.

independent from the influence that, because of its geographical collocation, was exercised upon it by the big areas of Rome and Naples" (Strangio 2008:35).

As a consequence, it was not uncommon for me to hear comments about my interlocutors' distress when others, confused by Latina's position, would ask whether it was part of Rome. It often happened that in order to explain where Latina was, my interlocutors would tell me of how they had to say it was near Rome, otherwise others would not be able to locate it. This happened to Gabriella one day. She went on a pilgrimage to visit a Catholic sanctuary with an organised bus trip. There she met a nun and told her she came from Latina. Once home, she told us of how she had to tell the nun: "You know Rome?", because she said that no one knows where Latina is. I personally had many experiences like this, as I often had to explain my research to others who barely knew anything about Latina. I remember once a man from Sicily told me how he knew that Latina existed just because the train line made a stop there. He knew the name but had never even wondered what was there. Another time, on a plane, a young man from Rome told me he knew nothing about Latina, despite having lived his whole life a short train ride away. These reactions were at times frustrating both for myself and for my interlocutors, who engaged in heated discussions both in person and on social media[95]. These can be interpreted as instances of cultural intimacy. Herzfeld (1997) defines cultural intimacy as those characteristics that are shameful for a society. However, only those considered to be 'insiders' can point them out and criticise them; if others do, they are attacked and pushed away. My interlocutors, as it is by now evident from the ethnography, often criticised and underlined Latina's ambiguity, however, they were very upset when someone else implied Latina's (geographical) invisibility and unimportance (such as the numerous times in which it was mistakenly pointed out that Latina was part

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[95] This was particularly evident when evening news on a famous TV channel talked about a *Latinense* singer as coming "From a small village near Rome" (Cusumano 2018). These kinds of mistakes happened regularly.

of Rome's province). I noticed that this occurred as well when Latina was spoken badly by journalists. My interlocutors and many of Latina's inhabitants strongly voiced their disagreement on social media, while in closed groups often complained about the city to fellow inhabitants. These affective reactions prompted me to reflect upon the reasons for this anger and such a strong display of cultural intimacy. I wondered why it mattered so much to my interlocutors that other spoke wrongly about Latina, and highlighted its inexistence, its unimportance. If I had found an answer to my interlocutors' sense of shame, as an affective toll on falling out of normative parameters, I could not explain their anger and its collective character. Occasionally, my interlocutors also praised the city (e.g. when it was called an 'international' or 'welcoming' city). One interlocutor during a chat sighed and said: "After all we are normal". A closer look at the ethnographic material and the works of Povinelli, Pipyrou and Knight and Bryant provided some answers.

3.2. *Campanilismo Latinense*: Hyperboles, ironies, and lamentations

The ethnography that follows, and I will later analyse, is a collection of imaginations, hyperboles, ironies, and lamentations used by my interlocutors to describe the city affectively. The imagery of the Far West was often used on social media and by my interlocutors. The Far West is not only by definition far, it is also a desolate and dissident place, with its own unwritten laws and organisation, almost 'anarchic' in the way everyone can act as they wish. This rhetorical imagery recalls a place separated from the larger society, where things work differently than anywhere else. This fits the widely shared idea that Latina is not like other Italian places, it is somewhat separated from the workings of the country, especially for what concerns the way Italian localisms are understood and experienced publicly. Adele, on the other hand, said how it almost felt like an American suburb, without limits nor boundaries to surround it. In my diary I added that her

comment seemed to point to the fact that Latina, precisely because of its unboundedness, cannot be a coherent whole. As I have already discussed, boundaries are fundamental in the definition of who is an insider and who is an outsider, they are fundamental in the definition of who belongs within the boundaries and who does not.

I talked to Marco in the cramped top floor of a cafe' in the oldest square of Latina. This is an excerpt of what I wrote in my diary from our conversation: "Marco said that this seems always a transient place, and therefore people do not invest in it and stay close within their own families, within their *nucleo*, there isn't a community". I heard this comment again, when talking with Imma. I wrote: "She said that often people say: "I come from…" and deep down there is the backdrop of wanting to go back, to go back home, to go away. Here people arrive and leave. Everyone is *di passaggio* [passing by] and they have the desire to go back (or so they believe)." The imagery of the marshes, as well, was heavily used rhetorically: a haunting image, referring to Latina's past and also one of the most incisive representations. Every time I left, my friends never failed to ask me when I was going to go back to the marshes. This image was also used by Adele and by Maria Francesca as they described Latina. Interlocutors and more broadly Latina's inhabitants (especially on social media) used the image of the marshes evocatively, as a place where people get bogged down, they get swallowed up. I could not avoid thinking about the marshes' water's lack of transparency, its murkiness. While hinting at the town's past, my interlocutors made use of a strong rhetorical image to represent the city as still, a place where nothing ever changes, nothing moves forward. These metaphorical images not only create a strong link with Latina's past, they also provide a powerful emotive expression. This is the way a journalist described it: "My city does not give company, nor it concedes solitude […] this is a place where one starts over, it is like certain faraway places: Siberia, Alaska, Patagonia. It is a lost place near Rome […] Here

you cannot find the seven world wonders […] not even one, you find the undertow of the world. No one here is himself, we mask ourselves with the new version of ourselves and we hide the wrinkles of who we were. […] We are actors without act, speakers without script. […] It is a unique place of ordinary inhabitants, lost in illusion."(Grassucci, 2017a). The emotions connected to the city are an important element in my interlocutors' experience of it.

As metaphors of marshes, the Far West, and other liminal and desolate places emerged during conversations, I asked myself plenty of questions while I confronted myself often with a discouraging sense of malaise and disillusionment, of discomfort [*disagio*], towards everything that concerned Latina. How to navigate heterogeneity, temporal and spatial dissonance, and individuals' discomfort? How to articulate a shared experience of the city based on the commonality of spaces and the voiced impression that there is nothing to be shared? At the beginning of our chat, Adele pointed out straight away that she did not have an easy adolescence. Her father was very strict and therefore she did not go out much. She attended a secondary school with a specialisation in teacher training (*scuole magistrali*), which was located in *palazzo M*. She then left Latina to attend university. She said those are the years when one builds the strongest friendships; so, because she studied in another city, she did not develop any friendships in Latina. She came back to Latina to work later in her life. Both her grandfather and father worked in shops in the centre of the town. She had strong ties to the city, despite her prolonged absence. During our conversations, she told me how "she has always felt like an outsider. She said for her Latina is an impersonal city because of its architecture, but not only because of that […]. Adele said that there is a general feeling of resignation, however, there are not strong feelings amongst people. Maybe, she said, it is because it is a young city and, therefore, it does not have a history, at least for what concerns her idea of history. She really likes the

surroundings and there is beautiful nature, but in the city itself there is nothing. She said, however, with regret that she has never done anything to improve this, but it didn't even occur to her, it never even crossed her mind. During our entire conversation I felt a sense of estrangement, but with a heavy heart." (from my diary). Adele asked me often to ask her questions. Our conversation was dotted with long silences and she repeatedly was left lost for words. She mentioned often this sense of detachment between herself, Latina, and others. Vittoria also told me of how Latina had always rejected her. I noticed often, in our conversations, her feeling of rejection, of not feeling at ease. Hers and Adele's experience of Latina revealed the profound disjuncture and sense of estrangement associated with the city and other individuals. People who experienced themselves the migrations (such as Vittoria and Imma), often spoke of Latina as if it were a place of exile. This resonates strongly with the imagery of Latina as a transitory and liminal place.

These kinds of comments emerged regularly in conversations. Pietro spoke of the city's degradation, Giulia and Giacomo talked about how: "Italy is full of beautiful places… and then there is Latina", Gabriella mentioned that: "Latina offers nothing. They have also closed the theatre now. There isn't any culture and there isn't any art". As we talked, Marco asked me a rhetorical question: "After all, what do we - me and you - have in common?". He meant, in other words, what do we share? He was trying to highlight the fact that even if we were born in the same city, and we should have had many things in common, we did not have them. "Therefore", he added, "we are very lonely". He thought that "elderly people, for example, have a sense of loneliness because they do not elaborate this relationship with the city, with their own roots and spaces as 'we' [me and him] do through writing about the city and studying it. According to Marco they feel this loneliness, but they will never know where it emerges from. In the *borghi* the situation is different, because it is still possible to hear people speaking in *veneto* and the identity has

remained more consolidated, he explained". On a different day, as I was visiting Lia in her shop, a friend of hers entered and introduced himself. This is what I wrote in my fieldwork diary that night about the encounter: "When Lia told him about my work [my research], he rolled his eyes as if to say: "Forget it". Studying this city, everyone agrees, is really complicated". The last sentence was my own comment, after I had received countless responses such as the one Lia's friend gave me. A month after having arrived in Latina I voiced my frustration: "I wonder why the first reaction people have when I say that I study Latina is a negative one towards the city. Sometimes they say everything sucks and that there's nothing to study, sometimes they say that everything sucks and that is the reason why I have to say such things. They often speak about rubbish and about how the city is not taken care of nor loved". The fact that the city was not loved was another trope in my conversations. Interlocutors often pointed their finger to local politicians, while other times they talked about fellow citizens' lack of love. Another interlocutor said: "Nowadays, Latina has become the city where one complains". Similarly to Adele's confession, she also added that no one had done anything to feel part of this city.

I found myself in the midst of culinary and linguistic heterogeneity but, as one of my interlocutors put it discussing the lack of a local dialect: "These linguistic fluctuations […] don't give a point of reference to people". I equally felt lost in the silences, shrugs, indifference, dismissal, and negativity that my questions inevitably provoked. This instability, uncertainty, incompleteness, ambiguity, and indistinctness are epitomised by a comment made by one of my interlocutors. On my diary I wrote: "My interlocutor said that we were not even able to invent ourselves, to create something for ourselves. Being ironic he said that at least we could have invented *Vape* [a famous mosquito repellent, he was referring to the territory's marshes], given that we had so many mosquitoes, but we

didn't even manage to do that, someone else invented it". His bittersweet joke resonates with what Lia said when she was talking about local food; more broadly it relates to those comments that in Latina there is 'nothing'. From my diary: "When I asked her [Adele] about the city at first she was really astonished. She looked at me, she shrugged, and she said she did not know what to tell me". The appearance is surely that Latina has no distinguishable characteristics. It is incomplete and indistinctive. Through this thesis, a *sense* of detachment and fragmentation transpires from the ethnography, a *sense* of discomfort. A *sense* of absence, of something missing, pervades the many stories I have heard. During a conversation with a friend, I jotted down a comment of my own, in which I reflected upon the fact that Latina always seemed to be the negative of something [as in a photograph's negative]. I noticed how this emptiness was suddenly so evident, how it slowly came to delineate Latina. The city was shaped through my interlocutors' interactions with places and with others, contextually and dialectically, in a fluid process rooted in individuals' experience (Stewart 1996). For my interlocutors, it was apparent that they shared *no-thing* with others and with Latina.

The other example that encompassed many of the conversations I had with my interlocutors is a Facebook post on a satirical page, called aptly "Latina SWAMP". The public post shows a screenshot from the famous cartoon "Spongebob", where the main character holds an empty glowing suitcase. The caption states: "When you show all the beautiful things in Latina [*Quando mostri tutte le cose belle di Latina*". The post was introduced with the words: "Yes, Rome is wonderful, and Florence is beautiful, but Latina…[*Si meravigliosa Roma, bella Firenze, ma Latina…*]". The post received 561 reactions and over 50 comments. On social media, the concept of the *Latinense* was often associated to satirical imageries; the 'typical' *Latinense* was often portrayed as a caricature of a very generic and simple individual. I find this use of Latina's nothingness to be

particularly caustic, but to be very similar to many comments I heard about Latina's 'nothingness'. Another satirical post during winter joked on the fact that it had snowed everywhere else in Italy, while Latina was such 'a loser' that it had to import even the snow.

As I described in the previous section, through my fieldwork notes, I felt unsettled by these reactions. I did not know how to articulate them, how to ask about them, what to take from them. They were pervasive. These feelings remained with me long after the end of fieldwork, throughout the analysis. It was evident to me that I was as much part of this as were my interlocutors and my questions about Latina were both responses to a pre-existing status, but also contributed to its production (Bille, Bjerregaard, and Sørensen 2015; Navaro-Yashin 2012). Moreover, the data I present here is inevitably affected by this. I found it particularly difficult to navigate my interlocutor's confusion. From being puzzled at my research topic to their vague comments about the city and how it made them feel. At times this was shared in talking, at other times my interlocutors reacted with silences and shrugs. This chapter is saturated with affects, it focuses on my interlocutors' (and my own) *sense* of the world that surrounded us.

My interlocutors' imageries, statements, and metaphors are a mixture of hyperboles, ironies[96], and lamentations. I follow Pipyrou (2014b) and Carrithers (2012) in arguing that hyperboles create sub-certainties, which belong to a "performance of irony [that] opens a field of possibilities" (Carrithers 2012:52). Pipyrou defines sub-certainties as "a redirection of perspective" (2014b:535). By using hyperboles, my interlocutors – similarly to the way *reggini* did in Pipyrou's work – present some sub-certainties, which then give scope to an ironic (i.e. a potential otherwise) way of inhabiting and getting attuned to Latina's missing localism. Repeating continuously how different (and lower) Latina is

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[96] On irony and crisis see also Knight 2015.

Chapter 6

when compared to everyone else and how there is *nothing* there, resonates with Pipyrou's interlocutors' use of the trope of victimhood (2014b; 2016a). I argue, therefore, that through these sub-certainties my interlocutors question the normativity of localisms and they affectively experience (get attuned to) the 'crisis ordinariness' they are embedded within (Pipyrou 2014b). The use of hyperboles becomes, therefore, an ironic potential of an otherwise existence, which they engage with rhetorically. The affective and hyperbolic 'no-thing' (and all its different expressions I have discussed throughout this chapter and thesis) become, therefore, a form of attunement to the impasse, which opens to the potentiality of an alternative way of being, which is also immanent in my interlocutors' lived experience of the city and of the normativity of localisms. Expanding this argument about hyperboles and ironies, I also include lamentations. In both hyperboles and lamentations, a sense of repetitiveness transpires. They became almost a kind of litany of complaints and dejection. Sijakovic (2011) discusses the lament in Greek tragedies as a therapeutic and creative act. I find some of her insights interesting to analyse my interlocutors' way of repeating constantly that there is nothing in Latina. Sijakovic highlights how the lament in Greek tragedies is a cathartic and constructive ritual, where the lamenter woman bridges the gap between life and death (2011:88). I argue that my interlocutors' continuous repetition that 'there is nothing in Latina', together with their silences and shrugs, has similar effects. In fact, their litanies come to fill that empty and liminal space occupied by Latina when its incongruities emerge (when faced with imageries of localisms and of other places). Moreover, laments work both on an intimate and personal level, but also help to constitute the community (Sijakovic 2011).

I return here to Ahmed (2014:13), to provide a different lens to analyse the ethnography. If above, I argued that repetition fixates normativity (i.e. the repetition of localisms through practices establishes their normativity and reproduces it), on the other hand

repetition also produces objects. Therefore, here I argue instead that my interlocutors' constant repetition of ironic hyperboles and lamentations (of sub-certainties) *creates* Latina as a counter-discourse to the normativity of localisms, as a reaction to the changes brought about by the 'crisis ordinariness' (Berlant 2011; and also Knight 2015). Latina exists despite the normative structures inherent in localisms (which, as seen before, delegitimise it); it could be argued even further that the ironic existence of Latina bears in itself the immanent potentiality to be otherwise. I read my interlocutors' affective responses as a form of discomfort. Returning to Ahmed's example of the chair above, the encounter of my interlocutors' bodies and the city (both as a physical but also as an imagined entity) was never a perfect match. This is evident from the ethnography. This discomfort is a form of attunement "*about inhabiting norms differently*" (Ahmed 2014:155 emphasis in original); it is the way in which my interlocutors' live through the 'crisis ordinariness' of the impasse and the affects it produces as they engage in rhetorics of the potential otherwise; it is, in other words, a *campanilismo latinense*.

4. The City 'Out-of-Place'

Before concluding, I take a slight detour to reflect on the affective experience my interlocutors have of the materiality of the city, in light of the analyses presented so far. In doing so, I wish to address the space in between objects and affects (Navaro-Yashin 2012), to explore the affective presence of absent buildings, and to explore the encounter between bodies and the materiality of the city (Ahmed 2014). Most of my interlocutors have a very peculiar experience of the city's spaces and often talk of their inability to feel comfortable when walking in Latina's streets. The city's urban form, both in its conformation and in its (im)material presence (and absence), affects deeply my interlocutors' perception and daily experience of Latina as a place. The physicality of the

Chapter 6

city's spaces is embedded in my interlocutors' narratives, and in their imaginations and representations of the city.

4.1. Phantom Places

A monument that was often mentioned was the *Casa del Contadino* - the Peasant's House. It was built during the foundation years and it was decorated by statues, which now can be found around the city. It was demolished in the 1950s to make place for the tall skyscraper 'Pennacchi' (*Grattacielo Pennacchi*), which used to be the tallest in town before the construction of the *Torre Pontina* (Pontine Tower). Despite its absence and despite the fact that many have not seen it standing, the *Casa del Contadino* has taken a very interesting place in the urban collective imaginary. Its demolition has remained in the memory and came to epitomise the changes undergone by Latina in the post-war years. Some of my interlocutors have personal memories of it. Marco mentioned it, saying that even after the war it was a meeting point in which people organised dancing events in the evening. Peasants from nearby areas, the majority of the population, met there. He said that the building was replaced by the skyscraper Pennacchi, which is the antithesis of a meeting place for the community. As we talked about monuments, Marco said that "governments had made a mess", another example of which is the staircase of the post office. Another architect mentioned the demolition that occurred after the war, of which the *Casa del Contadino* is the most famous. He said that "it was an example of rationalist architecture and it should have been preserved". The architect added that also the post office had been 'raped' (he used exactly this term) when the staircase was removed. Some people remember the *Casa del Contadino* as the 'most beautiful' foundation building. During our chat, Angela took out a calendar with old photos of Latina. There was one of the intact post office and she exclaimed: "Look how beautiful the staircase was!" and she recalled how she used to walk below it on the way to school.

Chapter 6

Often people shared images of the building and staircase on social media, writing of personal memories, but almost always mentioning their regret that the building and staircase had been demolished. These two architectural elements had become monuments in their absence, in the way they were commemorated, represented, and in the aesthetic and urban importance they were bestowed with.

What makes these two architectural elements relevant is their absence. It is almost a 'hyper-absence' or, in the words of Buchli (2010), an 'immaterial presence'. It is precisely the way these urban elements are experienced, represented, and imagined through their absence that confers them the importance they hold in my interlocutors' narratives. Following Papadopoulou's analysis (2016), the *Casa del Contadino* and the staircase can be understood as phantom places (see also Navaro-Yashin 2012). Papadopoulou draws on Merleau-Ponty's example of the missing limb to describe those places that turn into phantoms in their absence. She writes of how "we can repress combining with the current present of a place (presence) by attributing exceptional value and thus referring to one of its pasts (absence which we perceive as immaterial presence). As a result, we interact with a place that is materially attested in the present, but we perceive a place that is as absent as the amputated limb" (Papadopoulou 2016:370). As phantoms, the *Casa del Contadino* and the staircase impose their 'immaterial presence' on my interlocutors' experience of the city's spaces. The urban present form (the presence mentioned above) in Latina's case is demonised (the skyscraper is less valuable than the *Casa del Contadino*), and the phantom marks his presence through the imaginations and narratives that are made of it every time its present (i.e. the skyscraper) is mentioned. The skyscraper is out-of-place, but so is the absent building, which no longer has a physical place in Latina's urban space. I want to highlight, here, the "polysemy" (Papadopoulou 2016:379) of Latina. I understand this polysemy to be another way to describe Latina's

palimpsestuousness. These buildings' presences and absences come together in palimpsestuous ways. Latina emerges through them and its image is increasingly that of an 'out-of-place' city.

4.2. Dispersive streets and squares

As with many other aspects presented in this work, I received a mixture of responses when I asked my interlocutors their perceptions of the built environment and the urban landscape. Some liked the city and its buildings, others not quite so. Some, such as architects and urban planners, looked at it through expert eyes, while others shared their personal opinions. Many conversations encompassed memories of how the city looked in the past, others criticised the administration for their interventions. One of the urban elements interlocutors mentioned most often were the squares. The public place *par excellence* (Low 2010), was often under scrutiny. In conversations, people mentioned the conformation of Latina's squares, their state, and their uses.

On a sunny spring morning I had a chat with an architect. She stated that "the city's squares, and particularly *Piazza del Popolo*, are *chiatte* [like a barge, very long and with a shallow bottom], a bit *sbragate* [slouched]". This is because "they are very wide, but the buildings are not tall and therefore they do not keep people within the square". The same characteristic was noticed by another interlocutor, who said that the majority of squares in Latina are not welcoming. "They do not welcome the population" – she stated, "They are dispersive". Marco also commented on this. He said that there is a great sense of loneliness. People do not feel part of a community, there are no physical urban reference points – such as squares – in which people find a sense of the collective[97]. The architecture was not the only thing to be scrutinised and talked about. The state of the buildings was also often a matter of conversations. One day an interlocutor, while we

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[97] This resonates with some comments on dialects in chapter 5.

were strolling in the main square, told me how: "*Piazza del Popolo* is in deterioration. It is abandoned. It is covered in wild grass; it is not even a lawn. One could almost pick *cicoria*". *Cicoria* is an edible plant which grows spontaneously in fields. During a stroll, I noticed that there was some bread scattered around, in big crumbs, in the middle of the flower beds. Another interlocutor talked about how "*Piazza del Popolo* was dirty. There were not even the saplings anymore. She went there with her husband (it had been a while since she had been there) and she was left speechless. She stopped and she could not believe her eyes". This complicated relationship with Latina's squares and especially, it seems, with *Piazza del Popolo*[98], is undoubtedly embedded in other ways in which individuals engage with the city. It seems like it comes to exemplify the absence of a centre, of a core to bring everyone together. This is particularly so with the negative comments regarding *Piazza del Popolo*, as it represents the urban, symbolic, and political centre of the city. After the war, new neighbourhoods have arisen, such as *Viale Petrarca*. Both Luca and Carla, an estate agent, made interesting comments on the centre. Luca said that people outside were nostalgic for the centre. Carla told me how recently there is a trend towards the centre and many people look for a house there. In the 90s, on the other hand, people used to go to the neighbourhoods of Q4 and Q5 (in Latina's peripheries). She thinks that maybe people look for those roots they do not have. I find Luca's and Carla's comments very interesting in that they both highlight the difficulties of defining a centre. Centre and periphery are porous in their relation, and are constituted by experience and perception (Bon and Repič 2016). Discussions that concerned the city at large, not only its squares, can further shed light on this.

The same architect I have already mentioned said that the city is not looking inward and there are no walls; it is dispersive, as Adele's imagery of an American suburb described.

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[98] *Piazza del Popolo* is not only Latina's central square, it is also symbolically the heart of the city. This is where the City Hall is and all the major roads lead to this square, which makes these comments even more significant.

Chapter 6

During our conversation about the city, at some point Maria Francesca exclaimed bluntly: "Latina is really ugly!" and she added that maybe that was the only appropriate way to describe it. Strolling in Latina, one can easily discern the different architectures which make up the urban landscape. Small red-brick buildings or colossal travertine white ones are generally identified with the foundation years, while tall blocks of flats were built primarily during the 60s and 70s. Another architect I met, Claudio, told me that the reason for this was that Latina, until very late, did not expand itself in the periphery. Everything happened within the same perimeter of the city. Therefore, '*centro storico*' (the 'historic centre') and periphery were concentrated within a very restricted space. This is the reason why one can see some skyscrapers together with residential buildings usually found in peripheries in the 1960s. Luca, one of the architects, told me how the centre of Latina had always been residential. There were the buildings of *INCIS* and *INA* (council buildings built by the fascist regime). Neighbourhoods then changed, there was a differentiation as the years passed. For example, the houses of *INCIS* and *INA* were primarily for employees, who were associated with mobility. In the 1960s, these houses became owner-occupied dwellings. Their comments made me reflect on Latina's urban palimpsestuousness, as elements of the foundation buildings appeared and disappeared amongst 1960s flats, and vice versa. Among the foundation buildings and the 1960s apartment buildings one more element stands out somewhat in the distance: the *Torre Pontina* - the Pontine Tower - the tallest skyscraper in the city, which can be seen from miles away. Many did not like the high-rise building, as it imposes itself unto all the landscape surrounding it. The architect Luca said that being the tallest thing one sees arriving in Latina it does not represent a reference to civil society, but it is based on private property. As with time, with absences and sense of loss, Latina's space also challenges individuals' relationship with the city. The heterogeneity of its architecture, the foundation buildings which have been altered after 1945, and the planimetry of the city

seem to contribute to this sense of detachment and absence of a centre, both physical and imaginative. There are a few spaces to be shared with others, and those are in the urban area I took into consideration for my fieldwork. However, not everyone can participate in these spaces, as satellite towns [*borghi*] and peripheral neighbourhoods are hard to reach. One of the questions I had to deal with as I carried out fieldwork was where did Latina end? If on one side I struggled to locate it geographically in any straightforward way, on the other I struggled to point its boundaries on a map. Latina's council's administrative territory is much wider than the one I considered for my research, even though communities and *borghi,* which lie outside of my arbitrary research perimeter, were often discussed. The urban centre is, nonetheless, delimited by a sign, which welcomes visitors with the wording: "Latina city of the 20ᵗʰ century [*Latina citta' del Novecento*]". The sign, even if it provides a geographical boundary, is not enough to delimit the centre conceptually.

Moreover, the spatial heterogeneity of Latina's town planning [*urbanistica*], does not provide, in the eyes of my interlocutors, physical or imaginative spaces to share with others, in which to recognise a sense of locality and belonging. Adele said how she thought the rationalist architecture was one of the elements that made this city impersonal, albeit it was not the only one. Later in our conversation she also said how she had always seen Latina's architecture as harsh and austere. Raffaele talked about the columns of the Revenue Office [*intendenza di finanza*]. He felt crushed, he said: "I feel like I am being imposed a model, but maybe this was its purpose". He feels much more welcomed when he goes to Rome. This sense of strangeness and detachment was mentioned in two conversations I had with Antonella and Adele. Antonella told me how she thought Latina was a dormitory town. As soon as she could, she decided to go out during the morning (in the past she was employed and did not have enough spare time to

do so). She noticed that there were 'rough-looking' guys in the streets and was intimidated by their presence. She was saddened by this because she said: "you are not in charge [*non sei padrone*] of YOUR OWN city (she emphasised this during the conversation)". Adele, on the other hand, told me of how once she retired, she decided to go out during the morning because, while she was working as a teacher, she never had the chance to do so, as every morning she was at work. She realised that up to that point she had only seen the city from the perspective of her own height. Now, she could instead raise her eyes, to see what was around, but she realised that she had never raised them before, because there was 'nothing' to see. If contextualised in the ethnography presented so far, these narratives can be understood as belonging to the shared discomfort individuals have in coming to terms with Latina (cf. Ahmed 2014 and my discussion above on discomfort at the encounter between bodies and objects, in this case the city). Their relationship with spatial elements - such as the city's architecture or its planimetry - is constructed and in turn constructs their relationship to the city at large. It contributes to the way in which the city is imagined and experienced and cannot, therefore, be understood separately from other narratives that concern the city (see also Navaro-Yashin 2012). Latina's geographical ambiguity and its urban form presented for my interlocutors a palimpsestuous cacophony of elements. Absences and presences, ambiguous boundaries, phantom places, and uncomfortable streets and squares all contribute to my interlocutors' difficulty to relate to the city. Elements emerge constantly as 'out-of-place', as does the city, whose liminal material existence affects deeply my interlocutors' experience of its spaces.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered two analytical routes and a short detour. The first analytical approach focused on my interlocutors' relation of cruel optimism with

localisms. There is a strong desire to follow localisms' normative structures, and yet those same structures delegitimise Latina's existence and the existence of a *Latinense* localism. This tension leaves my interlocutors suspended in an impasse, intensely charged affectively. In the second analysis, I have instead proposed that my interlocutors use the absence of a localism in Latina as a rhetorical tool to create, within the impasse, the potential of an otherwise way of existing. I argue that the hyperboles and lamentations they use rhetorically create sub-certainties that give way to irony and to the re-elaboration of localisms and their meaning. I interpret these as the demonstration of the potentiality of an alternative existence, outside of the normative structures of localisms. I then offered a detour to inquire into the ways in which my interlocutors experience the materiality of the built environment affectively, in light of the analyses provided before. If in the first two sections I analysed the reasons for my interlocutors' discomfort, in the last I explored its expression in the encounter between my interlocutors, the built environment, and its excess. The ethnography shows how affective charges were felt when my interlocutors interacted physically with the city. This materiality was made evident by the coexistence of presences and absences and their ephemeral ontological status (Bille, Hastrup, & Sørensen, 2010). The environment resonated with affects at the conjunction between bodies and materialities, revealing my interlocutors' discomfort (Ahmed 2014). Their encounter produced an affective 'excess', in the words of Navaro-Yashin (2012:18), that permeated the world my interlocutors experienced. I explored these resonances through the ethnography, how affects travelled between bodies, environments, and materialities (Ahmed 2014; Hamilakis 2014; Navaro-Yashin 2012). The city was felt in its presences and absences, in the intimate and the collective, in the phantoms of its buildings, in its centres and peripheries. The discomfort my interlocutors experienced was evoked by the gaps, the silences, and absences they perceived in the idea of Latina as a place, as well as in its urban materiality. The very encounter between their

Chapter 6

bodies and these absences gave shape to both the surfaces of their bodies and the (im)materiality of phantasmatic objects and environments (Ahmed 2014; Navaro-Yashin 2012). My interlocutors' got attuned to the intensities of this "state of animated and animating suspension" (Berlant 2011:5), whose ordinary affects were constantly buzzing, constantly moving between bodies and things (Stewart 2007).

This chapter argued that knowledge about the city, a *sense* of place, emerges through the affective realm. 'No-thing' is never *just* nothing. It is a complex, palimpsestuous (formed of relations and detachments), affective and material encounter. As I have shown in my double analysis, *sensing* the city (Navaro-Yashin 2012), showed how emotions both have a history that constitutes them (which emerges every time those emotions are felt, displayed, and articulated), while also producing the future (as they bear in themselves the potentiality of shaping worlds). It is in this duality that Latina's 'no-thing' became *something* my interlocutors' got attuned to, felt, sensed, and experienced. I will dedicate the next chapter to some reflections on the "City-out-of-Time".

Chapter 7

THE CITY 'OUT-OF-TIME'

"As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks it up like a sponge and expands. A description of Zaira as it is today should contain all Zaira's past. The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls."

(Calvino 1974:10–11)

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will consider the role of temporality - of how the relation between multiple pasts, presents, and futures affects the city and its people; I will also analyse Latina's History taking into consideration the way History is practiced and talked about publicly in Italy, analysing its role in practices of nation-(un)making; more broadly, I will discuss the importance ideas regarding history, the past, the present, and the future have and how these ideas affect the way the city emerges and how it comes to be made into a place.

In chapter 2, I outlined the importance time holds in the constitution of places. Massey discusses this in relation to her theory of places as unique *spatio-temporal events* (2005:130). In her theorisation of place-making, therefore, Massey (2005:18) recognises how space

Chapter 7

and time have to be considered together because imaginations of one affect how the other is constituted and vice versa. It is in this specifically that she also argues for each place's uniqueness and for its ever-changing character (see also Simonsen 2008). As places emerge from relations and detachments (between people, stories, emotions, and other elements), they are also constantly being (un)made, (re)produced, changed. At the same time, they affect those elements that constitute them. In the understanding of places as events, it is important to recognise their temporality. Massey (2005:139), in other words, stresses that if we pay attention to the 'here' in the processes through which places emerge, we also have to pay attention to the 'now', as the two are not only both constitutive of places, but are also indivisible. In places' coming into being, in their dispersion, in their fluctuations, and in their constant changes, there is always an element of temporality to be considered. It is important here to stress that even if I discuss multiple pasts, presents, and futures separately, they all coexist in the making of Latina as a place. In this chapter, my aim is to pick up some 'temporal threads' that were left throughout this thesis. In chapter 4, I presented a 'radical history' of Latina and argued against an understanding of history as linear, continuous, and embedded in a 'cause-effect' sequentiality. In this chapter, I return to the duality between *istories* and History, to analyse how their coexistence makes multiple temporalities emerge. In chapter 5, I used the idea of genealogy to partially describe localisms. I return to the concept of genealogy briefly to discuss how the past is part of a place's genealogical knowledge. I dedicated the majority of chapter 6 to an exploration of the 'no-thing'. Here, I analyse it through the lens of temporality, looking at the potentiality of not having a history (while confronting normative historical structures). I wish to explore the way in which every moment is formed of a multitude of sensorial and affective memories, which therefore, produce a temporal polyvocality (Hamilakis 2014). Practices such as remembering, forgetting, but also imagining not only affect the relations and detachments that make places emerge

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Chapter 7

(constituting themselves as a kind of relation), but they also affect the temporalities involved in place-making. In this multiplicity of elements, pasts, presents, and futures are (re)elaborated in nonlinear, messy, and discontinuous forms. During my fieldwork, this produced a 'temporal vertigo', as Knight (2016) has defined it, that made it hard for my interlocutors (and myself) to locate ourselves temporally. Both Knight (2016; 2012) and Pipyrou (2014b) discuss how moments of heightened crisis can recall events that occurred in the past, project people into to the future (or prevent any future to be formulated), or question the present moment. In this work, I argue that in Latina's case this also occurs in the impasse of a "crisis ordinariness" (Berlant 2011), which forces change without being blatantly disruptive, where *quasi-events* (Povinelli 2011) never quite explode. This will be evident throughout this chapter, as the ethnography reveals the (dis)appearance of multiple pasts, presents, and futures. Keeping affects in sight as a central overall theme of this work, I inquire in the ways in which "history is what hurts" (Berlant 2011:137), as it establishes normative discourses. Latina often falls through the cracks (see discussion of debris and imbrication in Demetriou 2018) of such narratives and it emerges, therefore, as 'out-of-time'. I consider the ways in which understandings, representations, imageries, and rhetorics of time (of History, of the past, of the future, but also of the present and their messiness) make this particular unique place emerge.

I will start with some ethnographic data on 'alternative histories', which connect to some of the material presented in the previous chapter. I will then discuss some of the ways in which History is understood and presented publicly in Italy. As with the case of localisms, these imaginations and representations of History (and more specifically of a national History) affect the way History and the past are experienced in Latina. In the fourth section, I analyse the presence of the fascist past through multiple lenses, while in the fifth section I explore the contradictions between imageries and rhetorics of a young

city and claims for an ancient history. In the last section I focus on Latina's unattainable future.

2. Alternate Histories, Defeated Potentialities

Trying to explain day by day, to different people, what my job as a researcher and as an anthropologist entailed was a constant challenge. People often gave me surprised, suspicious, and inquisitive looks. The best ways I had to describe in practical terms what I was doing in Latina was saying that I was studying the city (which was often met by the comments I discussed at length in previous chapters) or jokingly admit I was spending a lot of time chatting to people. One day, however, one of my interlocutors explained it in such a simple and concise way that took me by surprise. I wrote in my diary: "We also talked a bit about my research and Stefano said a really beautiful thing: I interpret the present". In that moment, I realised how much I had tried to unsuccessfully navigate people's attempts to redirect me to books and libraries, or to documents and archives. That 'present', I felt, was the key to my research. It is starting from the present that, in this chapter, I investigate the relationship between past-present-future. I focus on my interlocutors' articulations of them to guide the reader through Latina's temporalities. I have started this chapter stressing the importance of the 'present' to introduce some ethnographic material on it. I will begin with an ethnographic vignette.

During his book presentation, Salvatore told this 'joke': "A businessman has to travel to Rome for work. His secretary calls him and tells him the flight and accommodation in Rome are very expensive, but if he wants, she can book everything for him in Latina. In Latina there is a cheap airport, Rome is only 40 minutes away. In the evening, with the metro, one can have dinner in the centre and taking the metro again go all the way to the seaside and relax at the spa". For anyone who has some knowledge of Latina, this is a

rather bitter joke. The bitterness of its irony lies in the fact that all the things mentioned (the airport, the metro, etc.), as Antonio specified, have been started, some of them have been paid for, some of them were just planned but they were all never accomplished. They do not exist in today's Latina, yet they are not entirely absent either, as they exist as unfulfilled potentialities (Yarrow 2017). During the presentation, he added that he wanted to show what Latina could have been, but which fundamentally is not. If on one side, people responded so pessimistically about Latina's present, on the other they imagined alternative presents, alternative ways in which the city could be. Many, such as Antonio, said that this territory had a great potential. Maria Francesca said that "this land could have been a paradise because of the beautiful places that there are here, such as the seaside and Sabaudia[99], it could have become the California of Italy". These other presents connect the past, the present, and the future. They talk about a past from which to be launched towards a future which, however, never was, which never materialised. Even more so, they speak about the present, they narrativise a present that could be, but ultimately is not.

Alternate histories (or allohistorical narratives) have often been used in 'what if' scenarios in literature (Rosenfeld 2002). They are rhetorically crafted to convey feelings or opinions about the present (Rosenfeld 2002) which, in Latina's case, often depicts the alternate history as better and more successful than the city's current state (Rosenfeld 2002 calls these 'fantasy histories', as opposed to 'nightmare histories' where the past is worse than the current present). The rhetorical use of alternate histories fits with the ethnographic data presented already, where my interlocutors complained about the city and expressed their negative feelings about it. The bitter-sweetness of my interlocutors' imaginations of alternative histories contributes to constituting the 'here and now' that Latina is today

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[99] Nearby coastal town.

(see Massey 2005:125). These allohistorical narratives, do so through imaginations of different versions of Latina which, even if they are subjective, they can still be identified in several narratives (Rosenfeld 2002). So, if on one side these allohistorical imaginations and representations make a certain kind of city emerge; on the other hand, they also complicate the relationship between the present, the past, and the future. In fact, the present is not as good as the alternate present is narrativized and imagined to be. These representations implicate that something could have been done differently in the past, as the present is perceived to be a product of decisions and actions that occurred in previous decades. Moreover, there exists the illusion of a different future which, however, will never be attained. I find these allohistorical narratives particularly interesting as they provide intersections between allopasts, allopresents, and allofutures. It is at the intersection of all these temporalities and 'what if' conjunctions that Latina emerges. The city that existed during fieldwork in the eyes of my interlocutors was less successful and 'ideal' than the one they imagined through their allohistorical narratives. These comparisons between two different representations of the city (one perceived to be 'real' and the other 'alternate'), reinforce my interlocutors strong views that in Latina there is 'nothing' (while the allohistorical narrative shows all that there could be). The presence of these allohistorical narratives – and therefore the absence of the present they narrate – also demonstrates the existence of a defeated potentiality. As Bryant and Knight write when talking about the Greek crisis (2019), the potentiality of a future does not always materialise. The affective qualities of this defeated potentiality are often those of exhaustion, distrust, apathy, or abandonment (Bryant and Knight 2019:127, 131). As I mentioned in the introduction, I argue that potentiality can be defeated also in instances of 'crisis ordinariness', as in Latina's case. In the impasse, my interlocutors' constantly face the tensions between the rigidity of normative localisms and attempts to address that normativity through different ways of existing, between the potentiality of the otherwise

(see previous chapter) and a defeated potentiality, between the possibility and impossibility of the future, between being in a state of suspension and the constant movement that occurs within it, between the presences and absences these narratives evoke. The alternative present illustrated in narratives of allopresents, embodies a future that will never materialise. In the allopresent's vision, the present moment is already a future that did not turn out the way it could have. This absence of a future is one of the three absences I presented in chapter 2. As Yarrow (2017) argues for the Volta Resettlement Project in Ghana, there is a *sense* of what the present could have been, but ultimately did not materialise. This absence is "the remembered anticipation of a future" (Yarrow 2017:568) which, as it will be seen throughout this chapter, is a frequent temporal trope in Latina. As the ethnography reveals, this had several implications for my interlocutors and raised several questions: how do multiple pasts, presents, and futures shape my interlocutors' temporal experience of Latina? How is a *sense* for multiple pasts, presents, and futures articulated and expressed? What affects circulate and how do my interlocutors get attuned affectively and experientially to this multiplicity? Alternative histories are one ethnographic example that give a partial answer these questions, as also are public discourses of national history in Italy, to which I now turn.

3. Italy and its pasts

As I discussed for what concerned localisms, public discourses on history have deeply affected Latina and its relation to its own pasts, while at the same time framing its historical position within the nation at large (see also the literature review in chapter 2). In this section, my aim is to provide an overview of Italy's complicated relationship with its pasts, delineating some of the issues that have shaped the way history, the past, and the future are experienced and articulated in Latina's present. As Galli Della Loggia observes (2010a), Italy's past has been affected not only by socio-economic changes, but also by its

geography. Italy has always been at the intersection between the Mediterranean and Europe[100]. In this section, I will discuss two fundamental events in the history of Italy as a nation (the *Risorgimento* and the *Resistenza*) and I will analyse their role in delineating a national historical narrative.

The *Risorgimento* (tr. 'Resurgence') is considered to be the historical moment that marks the birth of the Italian nation. It consisted in a series of events that culminated in 1861 with the constitution of a unified Italian nation-state. This transition, however, has led to a series of consequences that are still perceived in Italy today, and exacerbated several pre-existing issues. The newly formed nation had to confront itself with other European powers. Carle (2012) underlines how the late Italian unification is a matter of shame and a sign of weakness, an "original sin" (Carle 2012:133). Moreover, Italy lacked in its historical narrative a revolutionary event (such as the French Revolution) where two opposed social groups came into conflict (Carle 2012:136). The unification was, rather, promoted by elites, with a marked intervention of foreign powers (Carle 2012; Galli Della Loggia 2010a; see also Ferrarotti 1997). This has provoked a discrepancy between the political constitution of the Italian state and the proclamation of an Italian nation, which has been aggravated by Italy's geographical and historical internal divisions (Carle 2012). As Galli Della Loggia describes it: "politics arrived where history could not arrive" (2010a:142); there was a situation of hyperpoliticisation, with a revolution that started from above (Galli Della Loggia 2010a:142). Internally, the *Risorgimento* accentuated a number of significant polarisations and tensions. Galli Della Loggia highlights the fact that the *Risorgimento* did not occur from the centre towards the edges of the country; it rather started in the country's extremities (Galli Della Loggia 2010a). This decentralisation of the unification was aggravated by the "urban-regional policentrism"

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[100] Galli Della Loggia (2010b) suggests using the term "geopolitics" to encompass Italy's complexity

Chapter 7

(Galli Della Loggia 2010a:65), which has contributed in part to the expressions of localisms still present in Italy today. Gori (2015) notices this fragmentation of the nation also in its experience of the *Risorgimento* through its localised representations during commemorative exhibitions in 1911 (see also Connerton 1989 on the importance of commemorations for collective identity). The fragmented character of the unification (because of its decentralised development and the presence of numerous localisms) had an influence on the unification process and its results, together with other factors such as the presence of the Catholic church (Galli Della Loggia 2010a). Italy was also invaded by a number of foreign powers (whom, as I mentioned above, were also influential during the unification process). The country's fractures meant that, as Galli Della Loggia (2010a) points out, there was never a single foreign invader. This reminds of Eco's reflection on Italy's incapacity to identify a single national enemy, which is a fundamental element in processes of self-identification (2016). For these and other reasons outlined throughout this thesis, Italy represents, therefore, a unique case within Europe, which has come to be represented as a geopolitical catastrophe (Galli Della Loggia 2010a:60). Other tensions that emerged during the unification of the country occurred between elites versus masses and the monarchy versus the republic (Gori 2015). As Davis (2012:505) argues, if on one side the founding myth of the *Risorgimento* formed and legitimised the creation of the Italian nation, on the other, because of its fragmentation, Italy's internal conflicts remained a social, political, economic, and historical reality. These fractures are still evident between local affiliations, as well as between the North and the South of the peninsula. The North-South divide, as I have mentioned in the previous chapters, has become a recurrent *topos* in public discourses in Italy and in the academic literature[101]. After unification, the North and South of Italy became part of the same nation; however, their encounter also made their striking differences emerge. In Italy and beyond, the

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[101] (see e.g. Gramsci 1963; Schneider 1998; Pipyrou 2010; Goddard 1996)

overarching expressions "Southern Problem" or "Southern Question" (*la Questione Meridionale*)[102] indicate all the issues associated with the separation between North and South. The divisions can be identified in the economic sphere (see discussion on the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* in previous chapters), in the geopolitical one (Galli Della Loggia 2010a), as well as in the social one. Davis (2012:509) discusses how often the South has been identified as the North's 'other', against which was crafted a stereotypical idea of 'the Italian' after unification. Italy's fragmentation was present before the *Risorgimento* in all its localisms, but it also became paradoxically more evident after unification, as certain tensions such as the North-South divide became more prominent. Since its birth as a nation, Italy has, therefore, been characterised by the duality between the state and the nation (Carle 2012; Galli Della Loggia 2010a; Davis 2012). As Galli Della Loggia (2010a:81) describes it: "there is a missing encounter between the geography of the State and the geography of society". This is evident in recent attempts made by the government to reinforce a national sense of belonging as they re-inscribed once again the memory and commemoration of the *Risorgimento* (Castellanos 2010; Gori 2015; Foot and Owen 2012). These celebrations have, throughout the decades, taken different public meanings, especially during the *Resistenza* (the 'Resistance') and the post-war years.

The term '*Resistenza*' indicates the movement mobilised against nazi-fascism at the end of WWII (Ginsborg 1990). The partisans' and allies' efforts culminated with the liberation of Italy on the 25th of April, which is still celebrated widely today in Italy as the "*Festa della Liberazione*" (Liberation Day). Both the *Risorgimento* and the *Resistenza* have been represented as defining founding moments in the history of the nation as they both provided myths of a unified national sentiment (Carle 2012). However, as it is often discussed in historical, social, and political analyses, the *Resistenza* (just like the

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[102] The use of these terms already indicates that it is the South of the peninsula the problematic entity.

Risorgimento) was characterised by strong internal divisions, to the point that it could be argued it was in fact a civil war (Ginsborg 1990). Moreover, national and public commemorations and narratives of the *Resistenza* have to confront themselves with individuals' conflicting memories (Mammone 2006; Ventura 2010; De Nardi 2015; De Nardi 2016). In fact, the *Resistenza* is a recent event that is still vivid in individuals' memories and resonates socially and politically in Italy (Ventura 2010; Mammone 2006; see also Ballinger 2003). As I will discuss in the next section, the fascist twenty years of rule in Italy are still controversial (Ballinger 2003) and its memory is divisive even between family members (Carle 2012; Ventura 2010; see also the novel by Pennacchi 2003). The *Risorgimento* and the *Resistenza* represent, nonetheless, two key moments in Italy's history and most importantly they represent two moments of great change. The first one saw the creation of the Italian nation, the second the end of fascist rule and the advent of the Republic. Both are remembered publicly and have changed meanings throughout the decades, which has weakened the creation of a single historical national narrative. The *Risorgimento* was used politically by the fascist regime to promote a sense of national belonging. In the post-war years, national symbols and commemorations were associated to the totalitarian regime and were not publicly displayed (Carle 2012). If on one side national unity was promoted through the ideology of the *Resistenza*, which was also part of the teaching of history in schools (Carle 2012), the symbols associated with the Italian nation (such as the flag or the national anthem) took controversial meanings (Carle 2012). Because of this, the 1961 (the centenary) unification celebrations made an attempt to reclaim the narrative of the *Risorgimento* through the lens of the *Resistance*. The *Resistance* has also changed meaning, especially in memories and in public discourses. If before it came to represent a narrative of national unity against a foreign invader and against the evils of Nazi-fascism, it has increasingly been described as an internal conflict (Ventura 2010; Mammone 2006; Ginsborg 1990).

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Chapter 7

From the discussion above, it is clear that Italy struggles to create a unified national narrative for its own pasts, while nonetheless establishing some Historical cornerstones, such as the *Risorgimento* and the *Resistenza*. These two events are framed in public discourse as constituting of modern Italy. Latina, as it belongs to Italy, sits uncomfortably among historical events, memories, re-elaborations, and commemorations. The city cannot claim any connection to the *Risorgimento* because it was built after its occurrence. Moreover, its territory was formerly part of the Catholic church's state, which played a controversial and antagonistic role during the unification of the nation (Carle 2012). Therefore, Latina's geography (even before the city was founded) is distant from the *Risorgimento*'s past. The city is frequently associated to the fascist regime, because of its origins, and therefore, has another past that cannot be publicly shared and celebrated, given the prominence of the *Resistenza* in public discourses. Latina is in an uncomfortable position as it always emerges as 'out-of-time'. So, if on one side there are multiple *istories* (as discussed in chapter 4), there are also multiple Histories (c.f. Herzfeld 1987). The difference between the two is that, despite their multiplicity, Histories are shared normatively through public discourse (as I have just discussed). There are several implications for this for what concerns Latina's temporal dimensions. Through a closer look at the example of Latina's fascist past, I will illustrate how Latina emerges as 'out-of-time' because it falls outside of normative national Historical discourses (even if there is not one unified narrative). Similarly to my first analysis in chapter 6, concerning localisms, I argue that "history is what hurts" through the repetition of normativity (Berlant 2011:137). I, therefore, will explore the affective dimensions and the histories of such pain (Ahmed 2014).

Chapter 7

4. The Fascist Parenthesis

The fascist regime and its connections to the city of Latina, provide an interesting ethnographic case to explore the effects of History (Herzfeld 1987) and its affective repercussions (Berlant 2011; Ahmed 2014). I will start by providing some reflections on the way this particular past is experienced in Latina, in light of its role in Italian history. I will then discuss how the presence of fascism is still *felt* today, and how it affects my interlocutors' understanding of Latina and of their *sense* of temporality. I will then discuss how the end of fascism represents a break in time that provoked a number of repercussions for the city and its spaces. The last part of this section discusses the *Bonifica* as another fracture in time that has framed Latina's birth within a specific cultural and propagandistic framework.

Ballinger (2003) talks about fascism as a parenthesis in Italian history. As I write this, an MP proposed a new law against fascist and Nazi propaganda (Reato di propaganda del regime fascista, sì della Camera 2017), attracting criticisms on whether such a law would go against the constitution, which grants freedom of speech to everyone. The debates, protests, disagreements, and uproars which followed this political event are a demonstration that fascism in Italian public life is far from being a concluded affair. This is just one example amongst many in which fascism and its legacy resurfaces in Italian public life. Ballinger (2003) discusses how this parenthesis is seen as not being related to its past or its future, as if it represented an island in Italian History. In other words, it falls outside a vision of a linear, unified, national, Historical narrative. Here, I am particularly interested in investigating how being related and associated to such a historical event affects my interlocutors' understanding of time, the affects produced by the multiplicity of pasts, presents, and futures, and my interlocutors' attunement to a *sense* of temporality. In Latina, fascism seeps through the parenthesis' walls, it reaches everyday life through

the built environment, through memories (see Pietro's story in chapter 3), through some of the city's stories. Fascism bleeds through the cracks of History in Latina and it is expressed, embodied, and experienced in personal memories as much as in the built environment, in presences as well as in present absences. A newspaper article a few years ago was circulated in the city because it presented a vision which associated Latina's contemporary issues with the fact that it had been founded by the fascist regime (Caporale 2013). I want to avoid these kinds of deterministic generalisations, which frequently angered my interlocutors. My aim is to treat fascism as one of those narratives, one of those stories that contribute to the way Latina is today and the way it is perceived and experienced by my interlocutors. As I carried out fieldwork, I realised that for my interlocutors this is only one story among many. This chapter and this section more specifically, are a more direct response to the criticism I raise in the literature review, where I discuss Latina's essentialisation through the fascist regime. As I argued before, there is a need to analyse and understand fascism's complexity in contemporary Latina. Its heavy presence in the city is also determined by public Historical discourses and narratives. I seek, therefore, to explore the complexity of the coexistence of the regime's buildings and monuments, my interlocutors' personal memories and experiences, and national discourses. It is the intersection of these multiple dimensions that can provide some analytical answers to the presences and absences of fascism in Latina.

4.1. Fascism's presences and absences

As Italy underwent many changes with the fall of the regime, so did Latina. One of my interlocutors still remembers the transition between what was once called Littoria and then became Latina in 1945. He said that "human temperament [*l'indole umana*] always follows power, and so also during fascism someone was there to march, but after the fall of fascism they all became antifascists". Documents show that many of those who were

in power during the regime remained in administrative positions also afterward. Despite the problematic relationship with the regime and the transition to the republic, the foundation years are remembered as an important moment in the city's past. It could not be otherwise, as it is during these years that Latina came to be the way it is today, as a city built on reclaimed marshland. This is the reason why many of the people I talked to redirected me to books and documents which dealt with the 1930s. Some have called this the "myth of the foundation" (Liguori 2005). Some people, however, told me how they were tired of hearing only about the foundation. One in particular, even though her family was a family of first settlers, said she was fed up with all that was being said about the foundation and the *bonifica*. Without a doubt the fascist regime, as a historical and political event, permeated Latina and affected individuals' memories and experiences of the city. Fascism is learned as being part of the city's history (as that which made it come into existence), it is seen every day in the built environment, and it is heard sometimes in conversations. Sometimes it lingers on the surface of conversations as something everyone knows exists, but prefers not to deal with. It is also a past which cannot be easily claimed, because of its national significance. This resonates with Pipyrou's research on narratives of relocations (2016b). Through her interlocutors' silences, she explores the ways the frictions between micro and macro histories affect the present (Pipyrou 2016b:56). She recognises how power dynamics shape the making of history (see also Trouillot 1995). However, as it occurs in Latina, Pipyrou (2016b) also notices that the silence behind the reworkings of history "does not mean that the affective qualities are lost and that remembrance cannot be instigated by a future crisis at the heart of sanctioned history" (Pipyrou 2016b:57). Inquiring in fascism's presence in Latina reveals that the past's affects are distributed in absences, memories, materialities, and sensorialities. Through affects and the sensorial experience of the world, multiple pasts and their effects move between environments and bodies, between the material and the

immaterial (Hamilakis 2014; Navaro-Yashin 2012). Silences make these tensions even more relevant and evident. In Latina, silences and absences are often loud and visible, as they emerge in the frictions between *istories* and Histories (Herzfeld 1987). An exploration of Latina's built environment can help to clarify this.

It is in between these silences and spoken narratives, that fascism's presences and absences materialise in Latina's urban landscape. As I have already discussed in the previous section, monuments and buildings belonging to the fascist era appear and disappear in the city's streets and people's memories. The *Casa del Contadino* is one of these buildings. Its presence remains vivid in people's experience of the city, while its materiality is absent and has been replaced by a skyscraper. Ahmed argues that "Through emotions, the past persists on the surface of bodies" (2014:202). In the case of the *Casa del Contadino*, I propose that Ahmed's argument can be applied also to absences. It is the absence of the building that 'impresses' itself on bodies (Ahmed 2014). When my interlocutors spoke about the *Casa del Contadino*, they did so affectively: they thought it was beautiful, that it was a pity it had been destroyed, that it was better than the more modern skyscraper. These are not simple and straightforward juxtapositions between fascism and what came after. Following Ahmed, I interpret them, instead, as embodying Latina's complexities. My interlocutors' affects, evoked by the absence of the building, emerged at the intersection between the multiple narratives of memories, *istories*, and Histories. The building's absence was 'impressed' upon my interlocutors' bodies, and made all the contradictions between memories, *istories*, and Histories evident, tangible, affective. This is an ethnographic example of how absence can be so strongly affectively present (Navaro-Yashin 2012), and how the coexistence of multiple temporalities, sensorialities, and materialities creates confusion, it destabilises linear narratives. Navaro-Yashin's work is particularly interesting in this regard. She explores the affective presence

of Greek-Cypriots in Turkish-Cyprus (after the partition) through the remnants of their houses and objects. What is present (the materialities once belonging to Greek-Cypriots) makes the Greek-Cypriots' absences very present and evident, and reinforces ties to the past, as these objects belonged to what became 'the enemy' (Navaro-Yashin 2009). In Latina, I argue that that which is present and/or absent, that which is material and/or immaterial, questions the normativity of Historical narratives, as it evokes multiple *istories* and memories. Affects move between bodies and environments, between absences and presences, and in so doing they become the expression of the complexity inherent in the multiple meanings the absence of a building acquires.

Other buildings, on the other hand, are still standing throughout the city. One of the most controversial ones is undoubtedly *Palazzo M*, with its marbled alphabetical shape. Built in the shape of an 'M' in honour of Mussolini, it was then damaged during the war. However, it was restored in the post-war years. Documents in the archives seem to indicate that the reason why it was restored (rather than being demolished) was because of the city's need of built spaces, following the war's widespread destruction. *Palazzo M* today houses the financial police [*Guardia di Finanza*] and the residence permit office. It is not uncommon during the day to see a long queue of migrants waiting to obtain their residency papers. During fieldwork I was surprised when people seemed not to have anything to say about it, despite its historical significance. Some recalled going to school there or being housed there as refugees during and immediately after the war, others used its flowerbeds for dog walking. *Palazzo M* is a particularly interesting building in this respect. Its presence is marked by its hyper-absence, as people seem not to notice its monumentality. This present absence collapses linear temporalities, as it embodies multiple meanings, in its shape and contemporary use. As Maria Francesca told me, monuments coexist with the everyday life of the city. For example, she said, often

children play on the war memorial. At the beginning of my fieldwork, my intention was to study the fascist heritage still present in the town. However, I quickly realised it was not a matter of much importance for many of the people I was talking with. I shared this experience with Vittoria, and I asked her why she thought this was the case. She told me that people are indifferent to monuments. "As if today, they are there… without too much importance" she said. I explained her how this left me quite speechless. She told me that "we do not have a vision of the past and most of all events like fascism have not been re-elaborated by the collectivity. Therefore, no one cares about monuments in Latina because there is not any interest for the past". Vittoria's comment reveals that perceptions of the city are not bounded to only spatial or urban concerns but are affected by many elements. The awkward relationship to time, the temporal fragmentation and heterogeneity my interlocutors described at length, interact with the space and with its own fragmented presences (or absences). In their construction of the city, my interlocutors come to terms with all these dimensions and they all contribute to an imagination of the city.

While in other contexts (see e.g. Macdonald 2009; Macdonald 2006b; Macdonald 2006a on Germany; and Weszkalnys 2010 on Berlin) there has been a long and conflictive effort to deal with contested heritage, Latina's buildings seem to have changed meaning in less planned and debated ways. This is partly due to Italy's incapacity to deal with its own past as a nation, which has left much of fascist heritage in a temporal limbo (Benton 1999; see also Macdonald 2006a on Germany). If fascism is considered to be a parenthesis 'out-of-time', an island within the national narrative of Italy's past, these material remnants are 'out-of-place' and 'out-of-time' inconsistencies. In their relation to a contested historical event, they also carry within them (literally in their shapes and functions) controversial features. Boyer (1994:343) discusses the "rhetorical meaning" of the urban landscape,

which is inscribed politically and socially. The fascist regime had precise plans for its buildings and public spaces (its "civic art", as Boyer calls it) and it communicated its values through them (Ghirardo 2003a). For example, its city hall tower was higher than the church's one (Ghirardo 2003a) - this raises questions on the presence/absence of *campanilismo*, whose landmark was instead the church's tower and its bells. The public city streets were crafted in a way that produced a certain kind of 'fascist' man (Atkinson 1998), but not a woman. Latina's public urban landscape represented for the most part specific messages and ideals; it acquired, therefore, "rhetorical meaning" (Boyer 1994:343). Boyer writes: "Monuments are really mnemonic devices intended to stir one's memory, they are calendar spaces set aside to commemorate important men and women or past heroic events" (Boyer 1994:343). Moreover, as Hamilakis writes when discussing Byzantine churches, they are "performative" and "multi-sensorial" environments (2014:75). In contemporary Latina, not only the heroism the built environment once embodied cannot be celebrated as such, its performative and sensorial attributes have changed, as people engage with them differently (*Palazzo M* is a case in point, and so is the absent *Casa del Contadino*). The city *feels* differently nowadays, as chapter 6 discussed. Nonetheless, between absences and presences, the fascist past becomes more or less (in)visible, more or less silenced or narrativised. With the fall of the regime, many of Latina's buildings underwent a process of mutilation, they were maimed of those symbols that most evidently recalled the regime and its ideology - such as the *fascio* (Benton 1999). Hamilakis, writing about Athens, describes the process through which classical monuments were returned to their original shape, "as the ritual purification of the sacred locales of the nation" (Hamilakis 2014:43). In Latina's case, the presence of buildings from the fascist regime disrupts the normative linearity of national Historical narratives. Latina's buildings are, therefore, 'out-of-place' and 'out-of-time', and their mutilation and miming are necessary in order to partially re-inscribe them in the nation's locales.

Nonetheless, this process is still not sufficient, it is incomplete. In fact, on the one hand there is no way to purify and 'normativise' these buildings' meaning entirely, because they were built for political and ideological purposes, which are at the opposite end of the narrative of the Resistance. In other words, it is not possible, as in Hamilakis' case, to remove modifications and additions to restore the buildings to an 'original' state, associated with the purity of the nation and with historical linearity. These buildings were created because of the fascist regime and, even though they have been changed and used in different ways since then, they are intimately connected to fascism. On the other hand, they cannot be demolished entirely, because they belong to the urban fabric of a city; to remove any building with an association to fascism would mean to destroy a considerable part of the city centre. Moreover, as noted again by Hamilakis, attempts of erasure are not successful as, despite their absence, materialities remain present in sensorial and biographical memories evoking temporality's multiplicity (the *Casa del Contadino* and *Palazzo M* are particularly representative of this), which disrupts, as I have also shown, the linearity and homogeneity of normative narratives (Hamilakis 2014:124). Latina's urban landscape remains, therefore, 'out-of-time' as it cannot claim its own past, while paradoxically being also in a hyper-temporality, as it is so strongly connected to a very specific temporal dimension - which, however, is negated in a national Historical narrative of Italy's past. The end of fascism represents a break in time, which affected many urban elements, such as the city's toponimies, to which I now turn.

4.2. City's names

During the writing of this thesis an event stirred public criticism in Latina. The main public park, named after Mussolini's brother but called by everyone "*Giardinetti*" [little gardens], was going to be renamed after two well-known judges who fought the Mafia and were assassinated at the beginning of the 1990s, Falcone and Borsellino. The public

administration was under the spotlight as Laura Boldrini, the then President of the Chamber of Deputies, was due to attend the ceremony. The polemic which arose from this event highlighted the difficulties in dealing with the heritage from the 1930s. People researched documents and newspaper articles, which revealed that the naming of the park to Mussolini's brother had happened long after the fall of the regime. Some argued that it belonged to the past of the city and should have been kept that way. I was not in Latina when this event took place, however, the comments and remarks I could read on newspapers and social media were a sign of the fact that Latina's toponomastic changes brought the city's past and its controversies to the surface. The fact that no one had cared about the park's name before this event, shows how elements can be made visible or invisible, absent or present, through processes and events.

Latina was not new to these kinds of institutional territorial transformations. Its name, as well, was changed from Littoria to Latina when the regime fell. Documents from the archives testify to the confusion of the administrations during this transitory period. Telegrams to national offices in Rome asked for clarifications on the exact name of the city (was it supposed to be Latinia or Latina?). Toponomastic changes affected the entire city, whose roads and squares during the regime had been named after important events and people connected to the regime itself. The only building which did not change its name is *Palazzo M*, despite its rather evocative initial. The fascist regime had also inscribed the territory through names. Satellite towns (*borghi*) still bear the names of famous WWI battles (e.g. *Borgo Piave*, *Borgo Podgora*, *Borgo Sabotino*, etc.). This was meant to remind first settlers, who were war veterans, of their heroic efforts (Raffaelli 1996). It also created a strong link to the North of the peninsula, where these sites are located and where most first settlers came from. Latina's territory, in central Italy, was as a consequence dotted with names of Northern places. Before the regime decided upon

these names, these localities were called with evocative names linked to life in the marshes, such as *Gnif Gnaf*, whose onomatopoeic sound resembled that of boots in the marshes' water, or 'Grave's pool' (*Piscina della Tomba*) and the 'Dead Woman' (la *Femmina Morta*). These frequent changes in the toponymy of Latina and beyond created even more obstacles to people's ability to connect to places, which changed names three times in just over two decades. As Clara said, some elderly people she had spoken with still call Latina 'Littoria' and they call money '*Franchi*' (Francs) as they used to be called when they were younger.

There are several reasons why places are named in certain ways, some are without a doubt political, while others belong to personal memories. Raffaelli (1996:229) argues that the regime's use of toponymy was aimed at creating a connection to WWI (as it can be seen in Latina's satellite towns) and to legitimise the regime's power providing continuity in the country's history. In doing so, the regime weaved together personal and biographical memories with Historical narratives. Raffaelli (1996:229) argues that this was especially true in New Towns, where previous local names were never taken into consideration. The fall of the regime represents, according to Raffaelli (1996:234), Italy's first loss *en masse* of place names, while up until then names had reflected the continuity between historical periods. As I have described throughout, the break with the fascist past was practically immediate and it illustrates clearly the intention to separate fascism from a national Historical narrative. As the controversies and the confusions related to Latina's place names demonstrate, names play an important role in the constitution of places. Pina-Cabral (2013) wrote about the importance of names and naming in Bahia. His work goes well beyond the scope of my reflections here, as it focuses on the cultural significance of naming persons, rather than places. Nonetheless, he discusses the relation that is forged between the named and the namer, which can give some insights into

Chapter 7

Latina's toponymy. He writes that: "our names (a) can evoke our namers, (b) can actualize their intentions as inscribed in the original act of naming, and, finally, (c) convoke a continuity of identity (a co-presence) with the namers" (Pina-Cabral 2013:77). These characteristics embodied by the act of naming can help to understand how striking the break between the fascist regime and the post-war years has been. The regime, in fact, playing the role of the namer, created that strong connection between itself and Littoria; the city became an extension of the regime that created it, because of its material form, but also in its names, in what they inscribed upon the place and what they evoked. Frake (1996:235) writes of how: "unlike persons, whose creation preceded naming, places come into being out of spaces by being named". It is interesting here to notice how both pre-fascist and fascist names linger in the memory of this particular place. They are both present and absent in Latina as traces. The act of renaming, therefore, which happened both when the city was built and at the fall of the fascist regime, only partially erases and reinscribes a territory. These overlaps, erasures, and contaminations manifest a place's palimpsestuousness. Names provide boundaries (Frake 1996:235) and throughout this thesis I discuss at length the way the idea of bounded territories and their names (such as in discussions of localisms) are perceived and articulated in Italy. I conclude, therefore, that these changes have had a significant (affective) impact on the city; I wonder whether Latina became a different place through each renaming. I recognise, therefore, the dissonance between these toponomastic breaks and the continuity in people's experiences and memories. Without a doubt, these changes and temporal fractures have left traces and signs that appear and disappear from view. They affect my interlocutors' relation with the city as they navigate these toponomastic presences and absences and the different cities associated with them, which all conflate in the place they experience daily.

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Chapter 7

The *bonifica* represents in Latina's past the other important break in time, alongside the fall of the regime. If the change of the city's name and its toponimy could almost be associated to the coming into being of a new place, the *bonifica* is more literally seen as the genesis of the city, as that process that allowed the city to be built on reclaimed land. Before the *bonifica*, the *Agro Pontino* had been occupied throughout; Gruppuso's study (2014) on the pre-*bonifica* territory discusses the life in the marshes and the attempts by fascist propaganda to depict this time as a wild world needing to be tamed by civilisation. According to him and to other studies, such as Strangio's (2008), there was much going on in the area before the foundation of the city. Some people did mention this to me (Gruppuso's work is available in the local bookshop so others had a chance to read it). However, the most widely shared imagery of the pre-*bonifica* landscape was that of an unconquered, wild, and primitive natural setting. The fascist *bonifica* was not the first attempt to clear the Pontine and other marshes. As I briefly mentioned in chapter 2, there had been several other attempts, other reclamations throughout the centuries. These, according to Bevilacqua (1996:409), after Italy's unification came to become sites of nation building. This was the case during the *ventennio;* fascist rhetoric not only made of the *bonifica* one of its most important national endeavours, but also tied it with its strong ideological premises. Therefore, as Gruppuso (2014) has argued, the imagery associated with the marshes became that of an uncivilised land, ready to be occupied, conquered, and colonised (see also Caprotti 2008; and Caprotti and Kaïka 2008). The imagery portrayed through the fascist propaganda and the subsequent *bonifica* became so strongly associated with fascism that, as Bevilacqua argues (1996:415), the centuries-old encounters and interventions on the flooded lands were forgotten in national memory. Fascist propaganda established a rhetorical juxtaposition between civility, progress, and

modernity *vis a vis* the primitive and wild nature of the marshes (and with it its people), that remained ingrained for decades in individuals' relation with nature and the countryside, even well after the fall of the regime (Bevilacqua 1996:416). In using a rhetoric of primitivism to be fought through war (see chapter 2), fascist propaganda identified the wild nature, the marshes, malaria, and the communities who lived in those territories as its own internal enemy. In the regime's re-elaboration of History and of the past, the marshes became its own past and also, simultaneously, its own 'other' (Massey 2005:122–123), especially when it was used rhetorically to advance the government's propagandistic imagery of progress and modernity. An analysis of the *bonifica* and the imagery associated with it provides a space to reflect upon temporality's multiplicity and the idea of modernity. As Hamilakis writes: "Western modernity gave rise to the fantasy and delusion of the autonomous human, the fearless individual, the self-sustained and self-producing entity that could rule over sensibilities, and tame and conquer sensorial experience, at the same time as it could colonise, tame, and conquer other peoples, faraway places, and chronologically distant realms" (2014:55). Fascist propaganda fulfilled many of modernity's aspects as articulated by Hamilakis, in its attempts to foster a new society (and therefore, a new public *man* – women were relegated to the domestic sphere), ready to conquer and dominate the 'other'. Latina was, therefore, built upon these ideological premises. However, this ideal of modernity has not remained constant throughout the decades, and Latina's case makes this evident. The modernity (and future) envisioned by fascism did not materialise and, as I discuss below, it has become a defeated potentiality in Latina's existence (Bryant and Knight 2019), it is in other words the absence of 'what could have been' (Yarrow 2017). The meaning of modernity is not, however, univocal. Today, 'modernity' is not what was considered to be during the fascist regime. Following Hamilakis' argument that there are "multiple modernities" (2014:3), I argue that Latina finds itself in-between these multiple modernities. If on one

side, fascism's modernity did not withstand the fall of the regime (leaving Latina in the limbo of a defeated potentiality), on the other Latina does not fulfil the nation's modernity. In other words, Latina falls outside of the normativity of the modern Italian nation, to which belong Historical narratives of the *Risorgimento* and the *Resistenza*, as well as the essentialising discourses on localisms (see also my discussion in the literature review on the tension between modernity and tradition in New Towns). All these different modernities hold in themselves multiple temporalities, where pasts, presents, and futures coexist. In fascism's case, the *bonifica* was seen as a primitive place, backward compared to the civilised fascist society. Fascist ideology and propaganda also relied heavily on imagery and metaphors from the Roman empire. At the same time, the building of the new Towns was projected towards the future, they were the very embodiment of what a fascist society and its citizens were supposed to be like. Today, Italian national narratives present different temporalities, constituted by a Historical narrative developed from the *Risorgimento* and *Resistenza*, but also the timeless character of localised traditions, which are envisioned as belonging to a faraway and primordial past – almost out of historical time (Filippucci 1992). Within these multiple temporalities belonging to different modernities, Latina falls between the cracks. It finds itself 'out-of-time', dissonant amongst multiple temporalities and multiple modernities.

If one follows Massey's argument that each place is a unique event, a specific conglomeration of traces, stories, and relations (Massey 2005), then Latina as it is presented in this thesis emerges precisely out of this "here and now" (Massey 2005:125), which all these representations belong to. The existence of such a past and heritage in Latina, contributes to a sense of fragmentation and absence. It complicates the relationship to time as it is perceived as being at once the moment of creation, but also that which cannot be proudly presented, nor it cannot be celebrated. It is both a present

past and an absent presence, which my interlocutors deal with and experience daily. Moreover, my interlocutors had to navigate, articulate, and re-elaborate multiple temporalities and modernities. The city's fascist past poses the problem of a messy temporality. As I discussed throughout this section, Latina is associated to a historical event that is considered to be a parenthesis 'out-of-time', with fractures and discontinuities in the city's temporal linearity. Moreover, the modernist fascist legacy can also be perceived in the way the *bonifica* has been articulated by the regime's propaganda and in its display of the pre-*bonifica Agro Pontino* as primitive. On the other hand, the Italian nation's modernity does not provide a space for Latina to exist, either. Fascism, therefore, is not just a historical presence. Amongst other elements, it also contributes to the articulation of multiple coexisting pasts, presents, and futures. In the next section, I will focus more closely on the relation between the near past and the ancient past, as they also affect my interlocutors' experience of Latina's times.

5. Far and near pasts

5.1. The young city with no history

Despite claims of antiquity (see below), or studies to highlight the years which preceded the foundation, it is an inescapable shared assumption that Latina, as it can be seen today, did not exist until the 1930s. The city council celebrates this occurrence on the 18th of December, date of the inauguration of the city, during which Mussolini gave a speech from the city hall's tower[103]. On this day there are usually celebrations and institutional initiatives. While I was carrying out my fieldwork, a few celebrations were carried out on the day. At the time, the city's mayor had been replaced by an interim town administrator, who delivered a speech in the first square where the building of

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[103] http://www.comune.latina.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/35441.pdf - at this web address on Latina's city council's website it is possible to read in Italian the full transcript of Mussolini's speech.

Chapter 7

Latina started[104]. I noted in my diary my surprise at realising that the council had called flag-wavers from Sermoneta[105] to celebrate the event, even though they had no connection with the town. I also noticed how more people participated in the festive celebrations, rather than the institutional ones. The institutionalisation of the 18th of December as the day when Latina's inauguration is commemorated, and the many posts on social media to commemorate the ground-breaking on the 30th of June, create a visible marker in time where to locate the birth of the city. In this section, I analyse the tangibility of the past and the implications of being in a 'young town', as it was often addressed by my interlocutors. Massey (2005; 1995) argues for the importance of both time and geography in the way places are defined. She discusses the need for a continuity between past, present, and future in giving power to historical narratives to portray 'truthful' images of a place through its past (Massey 1995). However, she continues, the places portrayed are forever lost, they are an ideal past version of the present place (Massey 1995; see also Edwards 1998). In Latina, these processes cannot occur. As it is argued throughout this chapter, the city's multiple temporalities complicate the relationship with the past. The 'young town' presents a temporal oxymoron that makes the city's temporal incongruity even more evident. Latina has been called "The old girl" (Vecchia Bambina 2015) by a local newspaper, and an interlocutor of mine explained that: "Latina is a young city, which has gotten old too quickly and which, as a consequence, has lost its memory". Multiple temporalities not only complicate my interlocutors' relation to the city, they are also used rhetorically, as in the two examples just mentioned. Throughout this section, these contradictions are evident and highlight the difficult relationship between Latina and its temporality.

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[104] This square is where the builders' huts were located, as Pennacchi's remembers (2010a). This square was called the *Quadrato* (i.e. 'the square', the geometrical shape, because of the layout of the builders' huts).
[105] A village in the nearby mountains.

Chapter 7

Archaeological finds represent, without a doubt, a material trace of the past. As outlined below, they are traces of an ancient past and they create a spatial and territorial connection to that past. In Latina's region, those traces are scarce and always far away from the city. However, there are other kinds of materialities which emerge in museums and beyond. One day I was visiting the Museum of the Pontine Land [*Museo della Terra Pontina*]. It is a local museum, established in a 'foundation building'. The building used to house the *Opera Nazionale Combattenti* (National Association of Veterans) and before the creation of the museum it housed the ARSIAL (*Agenzia Regionale per lo Sviluppo e l'Innovazione dell'Agricoltura del Lazio* - Regional agency for the development and innovation of agriculture of Lazio). The museum is a collection of reconstructions and artefacts from the foundation years, including objects related to the treatment and investigation of malaria. The objects on display, therefore, rarely date to before the early 1900s. Visitors to the museum often noticed this. It was in more than one occasion that I heard people commenting on such objects and their familiarity. In June, I wrote on my diary how a group of visitors came to the museum. I found it interesting how people discussed having some of the objects on display still at home. For others, they were a common sight in their grandparents' houses. On another occasion, one of the museum's donors paid a visit. She had donated some furniture to the museum which belonged to her husband. When she visited, she told me of when she brought her granddaughter to visit the exhibition. The child, upon seeing her grandfather's furniture inaccessible behind a rope, burst into tears. This lady's story is significant in highlighting the kind of different materiality that is represented by the archaeological finds and the objects preserved in the museum. In the latter case, objects which are commonly found in households - I even remember seeing a camera that worked with a film roll - were placed in the museum, behind inaccessible ropes. They represented sort of an oxymoron, as visitors experienced those objects as both being part of a museum and as being part of their homes. The

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materiality of the past and its tangibility are exacerbated by the fact that these objects belong to both realms, defying temporal boundaries. They are used or were used as everyday objects but are also located in institutions aimed at preserving them. The tangibility of the past becomes evident in my interlocutors' experiences. That is the reason why it is not possible to draw strict lines and boundaries between the past, the present, and the future. The example of the child crying over his grandfather's inaccessible objects, reveals the deep affective dimension of materiality. In their duality of belonging to the child's memories and existing in the museum, these objects acquired a polytemporality, as they connected personal memories with the *istories* of the city and the History told throughout the museum (Knight and Stewart 2016). Moreover, the child's sad reaction demonstrated the personal connection that existed to both the grandfather and the material existence of the objects in the museum. As Ahmed writes (2014), emotions get transferred to objects, which come to acquire the qualities of the emotions they are associated with, even though emotions emerge at the encounter between objects and bodies (i.e. the chair is comfortable). The child's sadness is the result of the encounter with the grandfather's, an encounter which also evoked the child's memories (Hamilakis 2014). The strong affective charge of these objects is connected deeply with their material presence in people's everyday lives. Navaro-Yashin (2012; 2009) explores the affective intensity of materiality in her work. In her ethnography, present objects become connections to absent people; it is this absence that makes those objects so intensely and affectively present. In the museum, on the other hand, the objects are both present and absent. While they do recall personal memories and absent people, they are also made inaccessible by the museum. There is, therefore, a sensorial absence (cf. Hamilakis 2014) in the inability to use the objects as everyday objects, as personal memories remember them. These objects, therefore, become charged with multiple temporalities and affectivities, as they relate and detach my interlocutors to different

realms and times. The case of the museum is different from other kinds of materialities, such as archaeological sites. As I explore ethnographically below, archaeological remains evoke different kinds of memories and affects, related to the past of the nation (Hamilakis 2014). They belong to a different collective sphere, further from the domestic presence of the objects in Latina's museum. Archaeological finds have a strong connection to a distant past, while being used rhetorically to make broader claims about a community or a territory, which also gives a perspective on the future (Knight and Stewart 2016:8). Inquiring in both kinds of objects – in their materiality, temporality, and affectivity – in Latina, sheds some light in the intricacies of multiple temporalities and how their coexistence and messiness affects my interlocutors' attunement to the city. This is also evident when the city is addressed as being 'young', to which I now turn.

On multiple occasions, while carrying fieldwork out, people used the epithet 'young' when referring to Latina. People often called it a 'young city'. Sometimes it was also referred to as a 'New Town', in reference to its foundation. After all, some of the first settlers are still alive today and saw the town being founded. Latina was even 'younger' than my own grandmother at the time of fieldwork. This is particularly interesting when chronology and biography are considered together. Boyarin and Boyarin (1995) write about Jewish marks on the body as signs of a temporal continuity before and after the individual person, which are used to make rhetorical claims on selves. Reflecting upon this, I realised that in Latina that continuity through marks in place (rather than one's own 'culturally' marked body) cannot happen. There are still living people whose life out-times the one of the city. Even for younger people, the fact that the city is 'young' cannot provide personal biographies with a long and acknowledged presence in time. As chronology and geography both influence personal biographies and the constitution of people, the fact that Latina is a 'young' city removes the possibility of providing a broader

self-narrative in people's attachment to place and its history. The idea of a 'young' town was often mentioned as an explanation for Latina's many 'absences': the absence of a long history, or of a historic centre, or of a shared sense of collectivity, of a typical food and a local dialect. The previous chapter outlined in depth the sense of absence and fragmentation my interlocutors often talked about. I often heard people making comments such as "It must be because it is a young city". For some, being a young city had clear consequences on the city in the present. Francesco talked about the fact that being a 'young' town did not allow for traditions and habits to settle. Adele, after listing a number of negative aspects concerning the city, said that maybe it was because of the fact that it was a 'young' city and therefore did not have a history, at least for what concerned her idea of history. Later on, while talking about the historic centre, she said that "yes, there was a historic centre because in actual fact there was a history but… dunno" she concluded[106]. Maria Francesca, on the other hand, told me how "she thinks her father, who moved to Latina with the rest of the family, was attracted by the fact that it was a 'young' town. She said that being a 'New Town' allowed people to arrive there and to start from zero, to be whomever one wanted to be and not having to confront oneself with traditions and customs that were already present in the territory. However, later on in the conversation, she reflected upon the negative sides of this. She said that being a 'New Town' indeed creates a lot of freedom, however, at the same time this means that there is a lot of individualism". Raffaele, who is a mathematician, used a mathematical metaphor to describe how he felt about the idea of a young town. He said that saying Latina is a 'young' town is "A and the contrary of A", meaning that it gets used to describe and justify everything. Alfredo was of a different opinion. He said that Latina is spoken about too much and too often in bad ways. He said that people say it is a fascist town. In reality, according to him, it is a new and young town, and as such it is a bit of a

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[106] The concept of the historic centre is actually very recent. See Dines 2015 for more on this.

clean slate (see also Maria Francesca's comment above). This means that there are ways of doing things that have not always consolidated themselves and, therefore, it is hard to navigate all this. On the other hand, though, it also a place to shape, where to grow, and where to build. He came back after a period of time far away because he noticed there was a lot to do here. Other elements contribute to the perception of Latina as a young town. One of them is the fact that the moment of the foundation becomes particularly tangible. Rather than being lost in a faraway time and in mythical narrativizations, there are photos and personal memories to complement it. It materialises not through myths, but through more tangible and 'recent' sources. The idea of a young town is also strengthened by a sign that welcomes visitors. The local administration welcomes everyone to the "city of the twentieth century" (*Citta' del Novecento*)[107]. These examples illustrate how emotions have a history (Ahmed 2014) and I argue that they represent affectively the two analytical routes I provided in the previous chapter. The 'young' town is used at times to remark that in Latina there is 'nothing', the absence of history becomes an affective state that does not allow for the city to move beyond the impasse. The absence of a past prevents a future from being envisioned and actuated. On the other hand, the other comments portray the city as a 'clean state', whose absence of history cannot be used to justify its existence as a 'no-thing', but rather provides the potentiality that Latina holds to exist otherwise. As Ahmed writes, while she recognises that emotions have a history, they also "open up futures" (2014:202). The absence of History becomes, therefore, a history in itself, open to the potentiality of an otherwise existence (Latina as "a place to shape, where to grow, and where to build"), which produces a new "historical sensorium" (Berlant 2011): new potential affects, in contrast with the "historical sensorium" of normative History and localisms.

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[107] Using the street sign with the brown background dedicated to sites of historical and cultural interest.

5.2. Ancient Histories

The 'young city' is too closely connected to the present. My interlocutors, therefore, often felt the need to claim a more ancient past. Often, when I told people about my research, I was told about the archaeological finds of the territory, or I was directed towards books and archives. These remarks point towards two important elements in the construction of the past: antiquity and written historical sources. There are not archaeological ruins in Latina itself. However, there are traces in the territory surrounding the city of Roman and more ancient settlements. Interlocutors, nonetheless, mentioned them as signs of continuity, of an existing past. As I mentioned above, materialities are affectively and temporally important in the making of places. As interlocutor mentioned straight away the archaeological finds (amongst which there were also fossils of dinosaurs) that were discovered in Sezze. Filippo, on the other hand, talked about *Satricum*, an archaeological site that could be reached with a 20-minute drive from the city. From my diary: "We also talked about the archaeological finds of this area. We talked about *Satricum*, and he said with pride that Latina's history is way longer than we thought. Even in *Rio Martino*[108] they found some remains of a roman villa. In *Satricum* they dug out the remains, then whatever could not be taken away they re-buried it in the ground so that it did not get damaged. Now the dig is led by a Dutch researcher who, according to Filippo, understood the importance of the place. He says, as well, that we are stupid because we do not take the opportunity to take in our hands this archaeological site and this other team of archaeologists will take all the credit for it." Filippo's words resonate with the perceived incapacity to engage with the territory, as it was said above about the mosquito repellent. It highlights the importance given to an ancient and Roman past and the continuity that its material traces can draw to the present. This was also mentioned in

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[108] A seaside location closer to Latina than *Satricum*.

a newspaper article where a journalist highlighted how the territory's history went far beyond its fascist past (Grassucci, 2017b). His comment presents a dual rhetoric: on one side it creates continuity with an ancient past, on the other it also undermines fascist heritage as the sole material narrative of the territory. This might be related to a broader and more complex understanding of history not only as something that belongs to a finished past. Trouillot (1995:7) writes of how there is an "assumption that history requires a linear and cumulative sense of time that allows the observer to isolate the past as a distinct entity" , but also as the identification of Italy's cultural roots specifically in the Roman past (Carle 2012). Carle (2012) considers this to be one of the tenets conveyed through the teaching of history in schools, while at the same time it is also a matter of great pride for the country and its ancient past. In Filippo's words, and in the words of those who so frequently mentioned archaeological remains, there is almost a legitimising intent, in trying to validate people's presence on the same territory. When I discussed localisms as genealogical imaginaries, I often mentioned that genealogy went beyond familial ties, that it also indicated the meaning of a particular place, how it has come to be the way it is. The making of these connections with the past through a territory's archaeology create and reinforce the genealogical knowledge of a place. There is an affective dimension to this, as I have discussed above when talking about the affective charge of materialities and the making of collectivities/the nation, as well as a sensorial one. In fact, these sites make the past visible, tangible, and sensorial (Hamilakis 2014). There is a sense of pride in having a long history, which can be traced back to illustrious Roman roots. Prestige and importance seem to grow with how far back in time one can trace one's own roots. The allure of ruins, as described by Augé (2004), might contribute to this vision of archaeological finds as valuable and admirable. According to Boyer (1994:144), it was in the nineteenth century that ruins acquired a visual value, as they had the power to "move the spectator in mysterious ways" (see also Hamilakis

2014). The materiality, allure, and grandeur of ruins provide a tangible and ancient point of reference to claim a historical past to celebrate. They also re-insert Latina within the linearity of a national Historical narrative, by undermining the fascist heritage and celebrating Roman and ancestral roots. Hamilakis, as I have mentioned above, speaks of how Athens' buildings were purified of any addition, so that their features could be more directly associated to antiquity and an ideal of Athens in the past (2014). While, as I argue above in relation to fascist buildings, this process of purification was not entirely successful in Latina, when analysing ruins, a different rhetoric is presented. By claiming the existence of a more remote past that fits more neatly in the nation's timeline, more controversial associations are undermined. My interlocutors' attachment to the territory's archaeology resonates with some points made by Hirsch and Stewart (2005) and by Palmie and Stewart (2016). Both works outline how a post-Enlightenment idea of history in the West has influenced the way history is understood and studied. Amongst the main points of this conception of history, Palmie and Stewart (2016) identify continuity, which can also be seen in attempts to create a connection between Latina and the Roman past. In this way, Latina is seen as not having been out of nowhere but can be localised as belonging to a certain temporal narrative. Another important point highlighted by Hirsch and Stewart (2005) is the clear separation between the past and the present. While the present is inevitably shaped by the past - as per the idea of continuity described above -, this same past is also static and unchanging because it has already happened and it is over (Giordano 2012; Trouillot 1995). Therefore, the past is documentable and can be reconstructed through research and evidence. Claiming connections to an ancient past was, therefore, another way my interlocutors engaged with the city's temporality.

These two apparently contradicting ways of understanding the past - one celebrating the territory's ancestral roots and the other talking about Latina as a 'young' city - both

belong to discourses and narratives used to construct the past, and consequently also the present. As Palmie and Stewart (2016) point out, despite the possibility of recognising some common patterns in the way history and historicity are understood in the West, homogeneity cannot be taken for granted in any society. Latina's case and the way the past is talked about demonstrate this. As I have shown, there are some recurring elements in the understanding of the past - such as the value attached to antiquity and documentary evidences -, other elements, however, complicate the relationship between pasts, presents, and futures. Individuals talk about archaeological sites as much as the idea of a 'young' town. The two coexist side by side and blur the boundaries between not only the past and the present, but also different versions and kinds of pasts and presents. They question the linearity of time as a succession of causes and effects and of events which neatly follow one another. Imaginations of pasts and presents are both essential to the way in which both such pasts and presents are constructed and affect each other (Brown 2005). In my interlocutors' narratives a tension exists between the near and far pasts associated with the city. These two temporal landmarks, moreover, create gaps in time, as the city's past is seen as being either remote through the claiming of the archaeological sites or very recent. As it is evident throughout the rest of this chapter, as well, multiple pasts, presents, and futures all contribute to the perception and production individuals have of time and the passing of time. Time becomes, therefore, flexible: it is a product of individuals' everyday experiences of social dimensions and phenomena (Munn 1992). Time is embedded with other social spheres, it blends in them and in turn contributes to producing them, and therefore it is an essential element in the experience of Latina.

6. Conclusion: Latina's Futures

Throughout this chapter, I have explored the ways in which multiple presents and pasts are experienced in Latina and how they affect my interlocutors' perception of the

city and its temporality. What about the future? Before concluding, I will dedicate a short reflection to Latina's future. Discussions concerning the future were mostly bleak. While talking to her friend, Lia said that "she hopes that this is the bottom as it cannot get much worse than this". On the other hand, according to her friend, it is not like this, we can still get worse. These types of comments were common. This is epitomised by Raffele's words: "In its way of reproducing political and social models, Latina is a city that always looks at the past". Data also reveals that Latina has undergone two important changes: the *bonifica* that anticipated its foundation and the industrial development promoted by the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*. Both these 'illusions', as they were called elsewhere in this thesis, were centred on a narrative of modernisation for the city. The first one was embedded in the fascist regime's ideals of progress, while the second one encouraged the industrial development of the territory, changing drastically its economic purpose. Both were public governmental endeavours, implemented from the top. However, they also both ended somewhat abruptly; the first left an inconvenient and contested urban and historical legacy, while the other left the ruins of an unsuccessful industrial modernisation. The other characteristic they share is that both projects promised a certain kind of future for the city, which never materialised. The visions they proposed collapsed with their demise. Latina remained, therefore, in this temporal limbo, stuck between pasts that cannot be commemorated and futures that will never be. These temporal tropes return over and over again, as I have already discussed throughout this chapter the defeated potentiality of a future that has not materialised and Latina's position in-between multiple modernities.

This future is represented by all those changes that the city has never experienced, but that were planned and, in some cases, started to be implemented on the territory, leaving a material, sensorial, and affective legacy in people's memories. A widely spoken case is

the nuclear power station, active between 1963 and 1987 (Elli 2011), of which a carcass remains in the countryside near the city. This was also undoubtedly the case for the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (to which the nuclear power station belonged), even though there are plenty of smaller projects that were never completed. Cardarelli, a local journalist, even wrote a long report titled "The incomplete" (*L'incompiuta* Cardarelli 2014), where he lists all these unfinished projects. Antonio's joke mentions some of these attempts - such as the Light Rail, connecting Latina to Rome and the seaside, or the airport. In the centre of the city stands, as a visible reminder of this 'incompleteness' of the city, an unfinished skyscraper. The *Palazzo Key* (Key Building) is well-known by everyone and is often the subject of debates and satire that addresses specifically all those city projects that were never finished. On one of the city's Facebook groups, someone mentioned the building, saying that is now unsafe, but that when it was built it almost seemed to belong to science fiction (merging together the past, present, and future of the building's existence). Another user commented below a photo of the skyscraper published by a newspaper that it was "eternally unfinished". Satirical posts highlight the fact that the skyscraper remained incomplete - one of them ironically writes that "Palazzo key.exe has stopped working" as if it were a corrupt software that could not be executed. These comments speak to a view of the future as untenable. Such projects promised a different future, which will never materialise itself. The city remains, instead, stuck in a temporal limbo, of which these 'urban ruins' are a constant material reminder. Here, the metaphor of the marshes becomes once again more vivid: there is no way forward to reach a future that was once promised.

Throughout this chapter, my aim was to analyse my interlocutors' relation to time through the city. I argue that Latina complicates the relationship between pasts, presents, and futures. In fact, temporal narratives present multiple alternate presents, contested

near and remote pasts, and out-of-reach futures. The heterogenous temporal realities experienced by my interlocutors affect the ways in which Latina is known. This is the reason why this chapter focused so closely on ethnographic material and on the way time is articulated today. This was fundamental in order to reveal the temporal multiplicities discussed by my interlocutors (Palmié and Stewart 2016), who navigate their experience of living in Latina through time as much as through other social dimensions. This is especially so considering the fact that, as discussed throughout, temporal boundaries and interpretations are constantly being reworked and questioned. They are far from being fixed and official frameworks. In Latina times are stretched, they overlap; their flexibility is embedded in the daily social articulation of the city. Moreover, as time is an element indiscernible from other spheres of social experience, it shapes and is in turn shaped by my interlocutors' constructions. The ethnographic acts of talking about it, researching it, and engaging into conversations about it with my interlocutors were in themselves moments of production, in which time was reworked and crafted. Latina finds itself in the midst of an inescapable and fragmented temporal heterogeneity, of which movement is an important element amongst many. "Time is a heavy presence", as a friend of mine once said.

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed some of the ways in which a national historical narrative affects the way in which time and history are understood and experienced in Latina. Because of its controversial pasts and its non-linear and fragmented sequence of events, Latina struggles to fit into national narratives. For this reason, I argue that it is 'out-of-time' as its existence is incongruous in the way history is represented publicly. On the other hand, however, Latina is also hyper-temporal. One of the reasons why the city struggles when confronted with Italian localisms is because is not able to claim and celebrate a communal (and remote) past. As Filippucci (1992:14)

notices, a remote, shared, and static past provides a community with traditions that define it by being precisely out of time. Latina, by being unable to identify such past and being instead constantly tied to a controversial and very recent past, could instead be equally seen as hyper-temporal. As a consequence, history in Latina hurts (Berlant 2011), through the city's inability to participate in historical normative discourses. Ginsburg (1995) argues that the circulation of indigenous media opens a "discursive space" for indigeneity. I find that Latina forces the opening of a "discursive space" in Italy where fascism, a silent parenthesis in Italian contemporary historical narratives, has to be discussed, because it imposes its presence through the city. In doing so, temporal boundaries are constantly being trespassed through the traces left by past events (see Green 2010). These multi-temporal dimensions contribute in a significant way to people's experience of the city and are charged with affects, which I have explored here and in the rest of this thesis. They are made of parallel presents, which did not realise themselves, alongside futures which are felt in the same way, as unreachable; they are made of ancient histories which are claimed alongside contemporary and tangible ones; they are made of historical events which cannot be grasped and used, though they form part of the city's narrative. Pasts, presents, and futures hold, therefore, polyvalent temporal meanings (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Navaro-Yashin 2009; Pipyrou 2016b; Pipyrou 2014b; Yarrow 2017; Knight 2012; Knight 2016): what was once future, is today present, alongside allopresents, other futures, and pasts. Any given moment is experienced and interpreted across multiple temporalities, which produce a 'temporal vertigo' (Knight 2016), and so are the materialities my interlocutors engage with (Knight and Stewart 2016). Time seems on hold; it seems to be stuck in the marshes my interlocutors so often mentioned. These multi-temporal dimensions contribute to the confusion, *sense* of detachment, and discomfort of my interlocutors and of people in Latina. The 'young' city challenges perceptions of time and, therefore, inevitably affects my interlocutors' experience of the

city. My interlocutors' words reveal the affective responses they have when dealing with time, the feelings they experience.

Bon and Repic (2016:8) argue that "people define their position in relation to particular places and their cultural meaning". In Latina, pasts, presents, and futures intermingle palimpsestuously (i.e. they have the power to related and detach). They appear and disappear, they overlap, they are silenced or spoken about loudly. They are embedded in material forms or in their absence (Navaro-Yashin 2009; Navaro-Yashin 2012). Latina is, therefore, both 'out-of-time' and hyper-temporal. It is so intimately embedded in the history of the country, while being often excluded from it. I believe this contributes to people's feelings of discomfort towards the city and to their experience of it. Through an analysis of Latina's multiple temporalities, this chapter illustrates ethnographically my interlocutors' palimpsestuous attunements. As Ahmed writes, "Knowing that I am part of this history makes me feel a certain way; it impresses upon me, and creates an impression" (2014:36). The ethnography presented throughout this chapter resonates with this statement and once again, as I explored Latina's affects, I realised that the nothing can never be *just* nothing.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

1. *Senses* of Place

Throughout this thesis, I sought to answer the question of how Latina is constituted as a place by my interlocutors and their experience of the city. I investigated the ways in which people live, (re)present, imagine, feel, and remember Latina daily and I analysed the city's representations, imaginations, materialities, and sensorialities. I have provided an ethnographic rendition of what Latina *feels* like, in recognition of its multiplicity. I understand '*feeling*' here as a comprehensive experience of the city, in its environments, materialities, and affectivities. It is in the way Latina was felt by my interlocutors that I discovered their *sense* of place. My analytical journey began with my interlocutors' repetition that there was 'nothing' in Latina. I wondered, therefore, whether it was still possible to speak of a *sense* of place and a *sense* of the city, despite the multifarious absences I encountered during fieldwork. In order to investigate these questions, I used the concept of 'palimpsestuous attunements'. Massey argues for an understanding of places *as* relations (2005). Building on her work, I proposed a palimpsestuous approach to places that takes into consideration absences and presences, relations and detachments, and multiple temporalities. I argue that my interlocutors experienced and perceived (got attuned to) the city through its multiplicity and through the constant movement inherent in the making and unmaking of relations and detachments (Pipyrou 2016a:23). I explore ethnographically my interlocutors' attunements as a "labor" (Stewart 2011:445), a constant engagement in perceiving, producing, experiencing, sensing, in other words

feeling, the city. My interlocutors lived the world around them in its entirety, in the smallest of its details and its most evident features, they were always *in* place (Casey 1996). Throughout this work, I have often emphasised how the city was always constantly becoming, happening, while also being already there, and holding in itself potentialities for its own future being. Latina resonated with intensities in my interlocutors' feelings. I sought to investigate the 'excess' this particular environment produced (Navaro-Yashin 2012).

1.1. Exploring *Senses* of Place

A *sense* of place is a combination of experiential sensorialities, which emerge at the encounter between individuals and places. Through *sensing* it, a place – the city – is known (Scarpelli 2011; Scarpelli 2013). This knowledge is circulated, (re)produced, negotiated, contested, experienced, sensed. Throughout this work, I understand 'knowing' as an all-encompassing term, to indicate the capacity to draw onto one's own knowledge, to narrate it and imagine it – what Scarpelli (2011; 2013) has called *place-telling* and metanarration – as well as the total experience of the city, in its sensorial, affective, and bodily dimensions. This was a challenging task for what concerned Latina, as its beginning was in 'nothing'. Scarpelli, drawing on Searle, writes that a declaration is: "to make something happen by declaring that it happens" (2013:65). I wondered, therefore, how Latina happened through the declaration of its 'nothingness'. In seeking for a *sense* of place in Trastevere, Scarpelli defines it as: "a local *recognition* of a specificity to which – with commitment and widely various forms – one participates" (2013:66). It is starting from these assumptions that I realised that my interlocutors were indeed recognising a specificity to Latina, even if they expressed it as 'nothing'. It was by declaring that Latina was 'nothing' that they, in fact, constituted it, they let it emerge. Following my argument about absence, which becomes visible and present precisely because it is not there, in a

similar way this 'nothing' resonated with my interlocutors' all-encompassing knowledge about Latina. While I will return to the senses and affects below, here I want to highlight the importance of narrative (of metanarration of places and the practice of *place-telling*) in the way places emerge and are constituted, in the way they are represented and imagined, in the way they are known. Chapter 4 discusses in depth the power of narratives not only to represent places polyvocally, but also to evoke multiple temporalities. A place becomes a place because of knowledge, *no*where becomes *some*where, *no*thing becomes *some*thing.

Knowledge of a place as an all-encompassing experience of that place was also fundamental in my understanding of localisms. I described localisms as kinship-inspired distributed genealogical imaginaries (see chapters 2 and 5). I started by taking into consideration the elements that constituted localisms: their genealogical character (interpreted as ancestral and familial roots, but also as knowledge of a place, as I mention above, with political potential), the importance of place and kinship and their multiple meanings (from relatedness to autochthony), their being distributed (across materialities, sensorialities, and affectivities) imaginaries (recognising thus both the sphere of experience and that of intentionality and imagination in localisms' political uses). This analysis of localisms was important first to understand the heterogeneity of Latina's inhabitants, who come from many different Italian regions, but also to explore what localisms tell us about Latina. Moving from a *sense* of *other* places, I investigated how this multiplicity of connections to other places matter in Latina and in constituting it. A *sense* of place in Latina necessarily passes through this plurality.

In Green's words: "what constitutes the 'local' itself can be the outcome of the meeting of heterogeneity" (2010:270); returning to Scarpelli's citations above, Latina's 'local' emerges from the peculiarity of the encounters and their multiplicity (see also Massey, 1999, p. 22). Through these encounters, in chapters 5 and 6 more specifically, I discussed

the making and unmaking of borders. I investigated how people engage in the rhetorical use of localisms and how through these processes they render boundaries visible or invisible (Green 2010). Throughout my work, I stress the importance of relations and detachments in the making of Latina, as Green also describes it: "This performance of border is, in part, a simultaneous recognition and negation of border, and a bringing together of differences that make a difference" (2010:270). Moreover, performances of boundaries can evoke multiple temporalities, materialities, and sensorialities: "location is also the outcome of that encounter" (Green 2010:270) and, building on Green, I would add different *kinds* of encounters.

The other understanding of *sense* of place I sought throughout this work attempts to consider both the metanarration of places as well as their experience (Scarpelli 2013). This meant recognising that places emerge from affects, senses, perceptions, and experiences, which in themselves constitute one's own knowledge of a place. It was helpful, therefore, to use the idea of emplacement *vis a vis* embodiment (Feld and Basso 1996) in order to describe this constant connection between the body – its materiality, experiences, actions, and reactions – and place – its materialities, excesses, charges, and intensities. The meaning of a *sense* of place became, thus, much more complex and all-encompassing. As I have also discussed in the introduction, I have considered multiple senses, in the recognition that the senses are infinite (Hamilakis 2014). In chapter 6, I explored Latina's affects. I focused on how my interlocutors get attuned to the city's excess (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Stewart 2011). In doing so, I recognised the constant flow between their lives, their bodies, and the city, at time imperceptible and yet affectively palpably present (Navaro-Yashin 2009; Stewart 2007). Latina's *sense* of place was, therefore, a constant process of experiencing, sensing, feeling, telling and imagining the city; it was a process of attuning to it and, ultimately, intimately knowing it.

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Chapter 8

2. Affects

In this exploration of Latina's *sense* of place, I recognise, throughout the thesis, the importance of affects, drawing on the works of Ahmed, Berlant, Navaro-Yashin, and Povinelli. Ahmed argues for the importance of the naming of emotions, as naming gives form to and constitutes things[109] (2014:13). In Latina's case, however, I was presented with the opposite. My interlocutors did not name Latina and its emotions. They constituted Latina through 'nothing', silences, and absences. While the excess the city produced, its affective charge, resonated in my interlocutors' lived and my own, emotions were very rarely named as such (e.g. the *sad* city, as in Ahmed's example of the *mourning* nation). I wondered, therefore, what the consequences were of these unnamed emotions. In response to Ahmed's argument, I proposed for a renewed exploration of the affective state of nothingness. Drawing on both Ahmed (2014) and Navaro-Yashin (2009; 2012 especially her writing on absence), I argue that the absences evoked by defining Latina as 'nothing' had a strong affective presence, which was felt deeply by my interlocutors. Therefore, both naming and not naming constituted their objects affectively. Throughout the thesis, and especially in chapter 6, I have explored these affects and their repercussions, their presence in the environment, through materialities and absences.

2.1. Materialities' Affects

In this work, materialities are an important aspect through which affects are felt, sensed, and experienced. As Ahmed (2014:148) points out, it is at the encounter between bodies and objects that affects are produced and are transferred as qualities of those same objects (i.e. the comfortable chair). I have often presented ethnographic anecdotes of encounters between bodies and objects that were strongly charged with affects and I

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[109] She makes the example of the *mourning* nation, which is produced as mourning when it is named as such (Ahmed 2014:13).

Chapter 8

identified three main characteristics they have. In chapter 5, I discussed the way

materialities and their affects hold a place's knowledge. I analysed the case of localisms

and the foods attached to them and I have presented how disgust is produced through

specific encounters. I explored the intersections between a place's genealogical

knowledge (both familial and ancestral), the materialities through which this knowledge is

distributed, and the effects of their encounter with bodies. Going beyond this, I analysed

how the affectivities produced in this encounter (such as disgust) and their object (i.e. a

disgusting food) are used in rhetorical ways to make political claims; these are usually

associated with the people and places related to those materialities with the intention to

detach from them, distinguish oneself from them. Materialities also play an important

role in evoking memories and their affective dimension. There are examples of this

throughout the thesis, especially in chapters 4 and 7. In chapter 7, I wrote of a

grandmother who recalled her grandchild's commotion in seeing the grandfather's

belongings displayed – and therefore inaccessible – in a local museum. The affective

intensity of the child's reaction (as remembered and narrated to me by the grandmother

during our encounter, which also took place in the museum) were evoked by the sight of

the grandfather's furniture. Hamilakis, drawing on Bergson, writes about the fact that

every moment is constituted by a multitude of memories, which resonate with affective

charges and sensorialities (2014). Therefore, materiality evokes in each encounter a

chorus of feelings, sensations, and memories stimulated by experiences and perceptions

of the environment surrounding us. Even the absence of such materiality or of people

(such as the inaccessibility of the furniture in the example above or the absence of the

grandfather) are catalysts for the emergence of memories, affects, and senses. The third

and last characteristic of materialities' affects I want to highlight here is again connected

to temporality. As explored in depth in chapter 7, materialities (including ancient ruins,

controversial buildings, or personal belongings) are polytemporal (Knight and Stewart

2016). Not only, as discussed above, they evoke multiple memories, but they also relate to larger affective Histories. These can be, for example, national Historical discourses, which normativise temporal narratives and their linearity. Latina, in the specific instance of fascism's legacy, falls through the cracks of these narratives, in Latina "history is what hurts" (Berlant 2011:137). The city's material presence is not only evocative of this, but also ferments Latina's affective charge and excess. The same occurs in the presence of ancient ruins, which provoke affective reactions and connect places to ancient histories, which can evoke larger Historical narratives, such as the Roman past in Italy.

As I have already mentioned in this conclusion and as I argue throughout the thesis, the encounter with materialities' absences can make strong affective intensities emerge. As I reflected on the affective presence of absence, I rely on Navaro-Yashin's work (2009; 2012), who has written about the presence of objects belonging to Greek-Cypriots in Turkish-Cyprus. In Latina's case, I discussed the presence/absence of other places, people, and buildings. One particular case made evident the affective charge of absences: the *Casa per il Contadino* (chapters 6 and 7). The affective intensity of this buildings' absence and the memories it evoked made the building tangible, it gave it shape, precisely through the excess it produced. The building's absence resonated with affects and it had a strong and vivid impact on my interlocutors' experience, their perception of it, the way they remembered it, but also their imaginations. In a different case, when I discussed the ancient ruins in chapter 7, the absence of these ruins in Latina was evidence of the absence of the tangibility of History. The material presence of ruins connects places to an ancestral and common Historical narrative, which Latina could not claim. Materialities as well as absences represent fundamental elements of this work. It was through an exploration of the ethnographic data on them that the city's affects emerged. It was the encounter between my interlocutors and materialities and absences, among other things,

that fostered people's urban attunements, as flows of things appearing and disappearing gave the city its affective, material, and sensorial form.

3. 'Crisis Ordinariness' and the Impasse

All the processes I describe in my thesis occurred as ordinary flows in my interlocutors' lives. In chapters 2 and 6, I discussed Berlant's idea of 'crisis ordinariness' as a state of continuous change which, however, never explodes into a perceivable and tangible crisis (Berlant 2011)[110]. Povinelli (2011) defines these as *quasi-events*, as they do not reach the magnitude of events. Nonetheless, there is always a constant buzzing, brewing, fermenting (Stewart 2007). Despite its imperceptibility, the movement and happening of these *quasi-events* change lives; it forces change through its presence in ordinariness, it has an impact and resonates with affective charges, which environments exude as excesses. The ethnographic data explores precisely this 'crisis ordinariness' in my interlocutors' lives, their experience and perception of it, their reactions to it. Berlant defines the ordinary as "a porous zone that absorbs lots of incoherence and contradiction, and people make their ways through it at once tipped over awkwardly, half-consciously, and confident about common sense" (2011:53). In this thesis, I have investigated how my interlocutors navigate incoherence, how they perceive it affectively, and how at the same time they wade through the porosity and intensity of the ordinary. Through their visions, relations, and detachments, this porous zone becomes the locus where differences and tensions (as discussed in the introduction) are negotiated, re-elaborated, absorbed, and coalesced (Bon and Repič 2016).

It is through a 'crisis ordinariness' that, I argue, Latina finds itself in an impasse, characterised by a relation of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011). In chapters 6 and 7, I analyse

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[110] On crisis see also Pipyrou (2014b) and Knight (2012).

Chapter 8

the normativity of localisms and of a national Historical narrative, as impediments to Latina's very existence. Latina falls through the cracks of normative discourse, which establishes localisms as fundamental geographical, political, social, and historical elements of Italian communities. In chapter 6, I explore my interlocutors' reactions to this relation of cruel optimism through the affective sphere. I investigate the ways in which my interlocutors understood, felt, and negotiated both the normativity of localisms and their experience of Latina. In chapter 7, on the other hand, I explore normative national Historical discourses, which also exclude Latina and its multiple pasts. I discuss both the material presence of the fascist past, as well as the absence of ancient ruins and of an ancestral linear past, which would re-trace and create a connection with national Historical narratives. People in Latina, therefore, while aspiring to fulfil the normativity of localisms and of History, are permanently excluded from it, as it precisely this normativity that negates Latina's very existence, leaving the city in an impasse and engaging it in a relation of cruel optimism.

The analysis of the ethnography of this 'crisis ordinariness' offers, however, also an alternative interpretation, which I discuss in chapter 6. Following Bryant and Knight (2019) and Povinelli (2011), I argue that Latina exists as a potential alternative to normative discourses, as a response to those discourses. I analyse my interlocutors' continuous repetition that "there is nothing in Latina" as an assertive act to constitute and 'impose' Latina's presence and existence, despite normative boundaries. I recognise the cathartic power of lamentations as performative and rhetorical tools that give shape and power to a community (Sijakovic 2011). I also focus on irony, hyperboles and their rhetorical uses as techniques to establish sub-certainties and truths (Carrithers 2012; Pipyrou 2014b). Through my interlocutors' hyperbolic ironies, lamentations, and repetitions, Latina *exists*, it is given a shape, it is constituted, it is performed, it becomes a

truth. Recognising in Latina the potential for an otherwise existence not only allows for a re-elaboration of the city's pasts, but also for the imaginations of multiple futures (Bryant and Knight 2019). I argue, therefore, that instead of seeing this as a relation of 'cruel optimism', the 'nothing' becomes *some*thing, and more precisely it becomes a kind of *campanilismo latinense*, an expression of what is peculiar and different about this city, what characterises it (Pipyrou 2014b; Scarpelli 2013). Latina *is* this hyper-absence. Drawing on Ahmed, I argue that Latina becomes an uncomfortable city, whose discomforts are an expression of the ways in which it "inhabits norms differently" (Ahmed 2014:155). As Latina also exists materially in its urban dimension, I also explore the ways in which these perceptions of the city affect my interlocutors' relation with the built environment, its presences and absences. Drawing on Navaro-Yashin (2012), I investigate the affective realm of environments and present, through my interlocutors' voices and perceptions, Latina's 'excess'. I recognise, therefore, that the ordinariness of affects (Stewart 2007) and of crisis' fermentation (Berlant 2011), is also expressed in the affective state of absences (Navaro-Yashin 2012) and in Latina's buildings, monuments, streets, and squares.

As I carried out fieldwork, a number of elements emerged, to form a constellation of the ways in which a relationship between people and places reveals itself. I started from my interlocutors' stories, through which I also discovered their silences. I tracked down the many other places which, through connections to the city and its people, play an important role in constituting Latina and its representations. People spoke of the ways in which movement, home, migration, and homelands shaped their journeys, their destinations, and their departures. My interlocutors offered me food to taste and languages to hear. They remembered and shared their memories, to portray lost times, places, and lives. They got lost, found themselves again, claimed a place in the myriad of places and stories which make up a city. They changed in our encounters and Latina itself

Chapter 8

has changed in this intense process of fermentation. They spoke through metaphors and imaginations, and they travelled to faraway times and faraway places. My interlocutors explored the realms of the tangible and the intangible; they confronted the ambiguities of presences and absences. They *felt* atmospheres, emotions, affects, connections, senses. I did also experience all this with them. Juxtaposed and superimposed layers upon layers came together and separated to create a polyvocal thickness. Throughout this thesis, I argue that it is this multifariousness which makes places what they are. I argue that a sense of place emerges from encounters - from mixing and moving, from proximity and distance, from contamination - in a constant and interminable flow. In each chapter, I focus on relations and detachments and on what emerges from them. The relations and detachments inherent in encounters that constitute places are the locus where bodies, affects, imaginations, absences, presences, narratives, memories, temporalities, and the city itself - among others - emerge and come into being. Relations and detachments, therefore, are explored at different scales: between people, senses, narratives, memories, and, to refer to this thesis' research question, places. Each chapter constitutes a different fragment, a different lens through which the palimpsestuous place is explored, a different fragment through which my interlocutors got attuned to it, and a different lens through which the reader – I hope – got a glimpse of this city. As we have come to the end of this particular journey, Latina resonates in a chorus of affects and senses, silences and narratives, presences and absences, as it continues to flow from *no*thing to *some*thing.

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