

Communication and Mobility across the Mediterranean¹

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I

In page 677 of Ferrante Imperato's *Historia Naturale* (Naples, 1599) the reader finds a series of objects bearing Chinese characters, in spite of which the captions describe them as '*inchiostro indiano rosso*' and '*inchiostro indiano nero nella sua cassetta*'. They may have appeared somewhat out of place in a book whose subtitle announces minerals and rocks as its main subject, with some more information about plants and animals 'never seen before': '*nella quale ordinatamente si tratta della diuersa condition di miniere, e pietre. Con alcune historie de piante, & animale, fin hora non date in luce*'. The fact is that in his ponderous 800-page tome, Ferrante does not describe plants, rocks, and animals just with an exclusively disinterested scientific scope. He also focuses on their use once these natural products have been processed into goods that can be put to a practical, and in general profit-oriented, purpose.²

These Chinese artefacts evoke a series of phenomena and processes, like the distribution in Europe of information about *exotic* lands during the early modern period. These exciting reports were brought back to Europe by sailors and merchants, and recorded not just in manuscript and printed travelogues, but also in the 'never seen before' objects and goods they transported with them. In the particular case of the *inchiostro indiano nero nella sua cassetta* these artefacts also evoke the use of ink not just for drawing, but also for ideograms and script: as the material means, in other words, employed to register and communicate information. They finally remind us that the Chinese had invented print and paper centuries before they were embraced in Europe and turned into two of the most important factors in the onset of what has come to be traditionally known as modernity.

Brought to the attention of European readers by sailors, merchants, diplomats and missionaries, these objects can be taken as allegories of some of the topics we would like to cover with our exhibition and catalogue. People, ideas, paper and things in motion are

just different aspects—agents, content, media—within the general phenomenon of human communication in all its complex diversity.

Our exhibition and catalogue offer visitors and readers a series of relevant samples from the collections of the *Biblioteca Riccardiana* whose variety and exceptional value turns them into excellent case studies of Mediterranean mobility. Whereas Giovanni Tarantino provides an interpretation within the general methodological and thematic scopes of the PIMo project, and Giorgio Riello addresses these samples as case studies for connectivity, entanglement, and the material turn in global history, my essay will approach their symbolic and communicative dimensions.

I will provide a brief survey of the way in which some of these documents, their genres (diplomatic *relazioni*, cartography, scientific treatises, travelogues, tariffs, prose fiction, poetry), their formats (manuscript, print, books, letters, leaflets), the material media they employed (paper, parchment), and the semiotic systems they used (script, iconic cartography, emblems, tables, catalogues) all constitute case studies of complex semiotic systems employed for the codification and communication of information and knowledge.

One of our aims is to illustrate the emergence of an increasingly globalized Mediterranean in which mobility and exchange of all sorts, while still subject to the powerful impulses of pre-existing trends, were also unfolding in different directions and gaining unprecedented levels of intensity and speed on account of innovative technology in fields like navigation, cosmography and cartography. These also included the improvement of already well-established methods, as well as the development of novel systems, for the codification, communication and administration of knowledge and information, mostly (although not exclusively) based on the so-called paper revolution. Paper itself constitutes a successful case of material mobility, since it arrived in Europe all the way from China via the Silk Road in the caravans of Arab merchants, who then spread its production and use across the Mediterranean around the 13th century.³

Paper-based libraries and archives are important when it comes to traditional approaches to the discipline of history. They also become iconic institutions in their own right which are frequently employed as beacons of prestige and power. But we intend to widen our scope beyond books and other paper-based documents, in order to include objects as both the material foundation for ideas in motion, and as artefacts which were

very frequently invested with a significant emotional capital by individuals and communities.⁴

An eclectic approach to these phenomena should contribute to achieve David Armitage's desideratum for a new interdisciplinary type of cultural historical approach to international relations, which can go beyond 'a more traditional diplomatic history centred on the archives and activities of states and their formal agents'.⁵ Whereas Armitage centres upon diplomatic history and international relations, the scope of the PIMo COST Action and the particular focus of our exhibition and catalogue require a more comprehensive and heterogeneous series of samples that can illustrate important aspects of mobility within the geocultural spaces of the Mediterranean. We focus on people, paper, ideas and things in motion, and especially upon what they all have in common: (a) the fact that they are mobilized, in one way or another, as connecting agents, and (b) that most, if not all, of this connectivity is of a semiotic nature. The production, exchange, and reception of these documents consequently fall within the general scope of communication.⁶ By documents here I mean not just paper or parchment, but objects in general, whose material foundation has been charged, or mobilized, with a semiotic function.⁷ This will allow for a comprehensive approach to both the linguistic and the material aspects of history, culture, and the emotions.

Our exhibition and catalogue illustrate a variety of typologies by means of which the construction of both self and community often rely on the simultaneous construction of an *other*—as demonstrated by the title page of *Histoire Generale de la Religion des Turcs*, which displays with forceful visual eloquence parallel images of Islam vs Christianity with a clear bias towards the latter, or the map of the Turkish Empire in the *Archontologia Cosmica*, significantly placed immediately after page 666. This is the case not only in political discourse, in literary texts, diplomatic *relazioni*, historical chronicles, sermons, news reports, and in general in any of the textual genres recorded in script upon media such as paper or parchment. This symbiotic construction of self and other also takes place in non-discursive, more iconic realms like the visual arts; in practices such as religious, courtly and diplomatic rituals and protocols (which other than semiotically invested objects, garments, and script, also involve people); and in the general production, circulation, and reception of symbolically mobilized objects (which in some cases may combine iconic signifiers with the use of script, such as the simultaneous use of images and texts in ensigns or coats of arms).⁸

There is therefore a decidedly material foundation for the semiotic and communicative exchanges in which the samples that we use engage. They were employed for the production and projection of narratives of self-identities, which, in Richard N. Lebow's terms, were then used to weave a network of international relations based on a competition for hegemony. Lebow claims that the establishment of international political relations is not merely founded upon the pursuit of material interest, but upon the construction and consolidation of 'identities that offer meaning, order and predictability' to the communities whose identity is at stake.⁹ Lebow's approach presupposes (a) a semiotic and narrative component and (b) an emotional substratum which informs these identities. Incorporating Lebow's conceptual tools facilitates an eclectic methodological framework for the interpretation of the emotional component in identity construction.

Within this eclectic framework connectivity is inseparable from communicability: the material mobility of things and people is inextricably tied to their natures as semiotically charged artefacts, on the one hand, and on the other, as individuals and communities that generate signifiers used for the construction of self-identity and for their relations with others. These processes naturally involve the intervention of traditional constituents in semiotics, such as sender, receiver, and message. To this classic triad we should add the material media upon which the message is codified. Beyond the semantic content of the message, we also need to address components such as the power relations between sender and receiver, and their respective universes of discourse, all of which determine the performative power of the message.

If we turn to diplomacy—arguably the most institutionalized and, consequently, regulated practice in international relations—it is easy to understand that it should be conducted by agents with advanced skills in translinguistic and transcultural communication, whose ultimate aim is the projection and defence of power. The purpose of some of the diplomatic documents we display (e.g. Riccardiana 1826) is precisely to train would-be Venetian and English diplomats in the rituals, uses, and eventually, cultural values, of the Ottoman and the Persian courts, with a view to providing efficient communication and avoiding the pitfalls of cultural misunderstandings, which could have fatal political, economic, or even military, consequences. Diplomatic credentials are also a clear case of semiotically mobilized papers with a powerful performative function, for these documents did not just identify ambassadors before a foreign court: they also legitimized them to conduct negotiations and sign politically and / or contractually binding agreements—recorded, of course, in documents.

If a culture can be viewed as a macro-text, a heterogeneous conglomerate of signifiers, then diplomats, travellers, merchants, translators, missionaries, and migrants are among the most relevant agents of exchange that engage in the construction of cultural identities.¹⁰ They are responsible for the codification of messages in a variety of media with a diversity of purposes and varying degrees of performative power—the latter of which will depend on their position within the hierarchies of their respective institutions and / or communities. What is even more relevant to our purposes, they also double up as actual people in motion facilitating the simultaneous movement of ideas, paper, and things.

In his essay, Giorgio Riello underlines the polyvalent nature of objects, and the fact that they can be mustered for the establishment of networked transcultural and / or transnational spaces. This of course, turns such things into fundamental primary sources, into documents, in other words, for the interpretation of the cultural historian. ‘Things, artefacts, luxuries and commodities’, he concludes, ‘were not the embodiment of an extraneous system of connections, but created themselves global spaces: things as actants to borrow Bruno Latour’s terminology’.¹¹ *Things as actants* is indeed another way of describing the phenomenon of semiotically mobilized objects.

II

It would be redundant to say that this is an essay that accompanies the catalogue of an exhibition with primary documents deposited in a library if it were not for the fact that the *Riccardiana* is a repository of information and knowledge of many different kinds in its own right. This turns it into one among the series of case studies that the PIMo Action seeks to sample, which include libraries, archives, cabinets of curiosities, museums, catalogues, tables, lists and collections of any kind.

Like archives, libraries are material records, parchment and paper-based memorials that register important aspects of the phenomena, the artefacts, the *signifiers* and the *signifieds*, involved in human mobility and communication.¹² There are, of course, libraries that use other media, such as *Ashurbanipal’s Library*, which consists of clay tablets.¹³ While using different media, Ashurbanipal’s collection still served in its own

day purposes very similar to more modern paper-based libraries and archives: the registration and administration of information and knowledge, and their use as one of the logistical infrastructures for the upkeep and expansion of empires—alongside other infrastructures, such as a network of engineering works and means for the transport of victuals, people, goods and troops. In the case of *Ashurbanipal's Library*, this power-projecting function has now been repurposed, after the original library has been subsumed—i.e. *re-signified*—as part of a much larger library, archive, and museum. For the British Museum is a complex signifier made up of a heterogeneous collection of artefacts that have been recontextualized to project a sort of performative power different from that for which they had been originally produced. The materiality of the clay artefacts in Ashurbanipal's library in London, or the basalt stele used as the medium for the codification of the Law Code of Hammurabi in Paris, now project a re-purposed performative power for audiences in the British Museum and the Louvre as they also display a potential for different interpretations depending on the disposition of the receiver. A French or an English nationalist, a Marxist internationalist, or a historian of a post-colonialist persuasion, to name just a few, will project very different gazes upon them.

Beyond their functional uses as repositories of information and knowledge, documents, books and libraries also feature in some of the items on display. In Tomasso Campanella's *La Città del Sole* a book presides over the central core of the *Solar City*, which stands itself as an urban encyclopaedia of sorts:

Nothing rests on the altar but a huge celestial globe, upon which all the heavens are described, with a terrestrial globe beside it. On the vault of the dome overhead appear all the larger stars with their names and the influences they each have upon earthly things set down in three verses. The poles and circles are indicated [i.e. the parallels and meridians], but not entirely since there is no wall below. Instead they are completed on the globes resting on the altar below. Seven lamps, each named for one of the seven planets, are always kept burning.

Around the cupola at the top of the temple there are cells, and there are as many other larger ones above the cloisters. These are inhabited by the clergy, who are forty in number.

Rising above the cupola there is a pennon to indicate the various winds, these being thirty-six in all, and the weather that accompanies each of these is known.

*Here too there is a book in which matters of the utmost importance are inscribed in letters of gold.*¹⁴

In *I Mondi del Doni* books stand for the worlds of knowledge which, like the new territories opening up before the eyes of European explorers, were coming under the ken of scholars. An emblem with a similar analogy also features in the title page of Francis Bacon's *Instauratio Magna*.¹⁵ They have, in short, and just like all the items on display in the exhibition, as well as those included in this catalogue, a material dimension which constitutes the foundation for their double function, practical and symbolic, and their status as material tools and icons.

The exhibition and the catalogue also include items that illustrate the birth of modern science and the development of different disciplines of knowledge such as mineralogy, botany, zoology and anthropology, many of them produced within a pre-disciplinary context in which reliable accounts (*empirical* or *scientific*, we would call them today) of natural phenomena, cultural others and indigenous peoples are frequently indistinguishable from fantasy, myth and fiction.

The semiotic mobilization of things in motion includes processed goods that were subject to trade. Some of these, like coffee, tea, and chocolate are identified with the ethnic and cultural background of the regions where they were produced and from which they were subsequently exported to Europe: Arabia, China, and Mexico. They flaunt their double value, first as a case of material goods in which a natural product is processed and traded for a profit, and then also as icons whose material nature is semiotically processed and turned into a signifier of the cultures and the peoples that produced them.¹⁶ The excitement involved in the consumption of a novel product was thus compounded by the allure of its exotic nature. We need not go very far back in time to remember how products of this sort were advertised in 20th-century media, with stereotypes reminiscent of the ethnic groups and cultures associated to them, and whose use today would be considered offensive and politically incorrect. This is a significant case that demonstrates how a change in cultural values renders certain icons not just obsolete, but also socially unacceptable—or in other words, how shifts in social paradigms can alter the nature of their perlocutionary effects.

Plants and vegetables that produced consumer goods like coffee, chocolate and tea frequently emerged from the pages of treatises in natural philosophy to evolve into icons subsequently appropriated by the European bourgeoisie as symbols of their own genteel

metropolitan habits, and by cultural historians and philosophers as metonymies of new social and ideological paradigms. The consumption of tea came to embody traditional values of sociability within private domestic spaces, whereas coffee houses turned into emblematic public spaces for the exchange of ideas and political opinions.

The European appropriation of cultural, religious and political others also manifests itself in the way in which Western hegemony, on the one hand, and on the other the non-European communities upon which the former sought to prevail, all came to be represented in maps. As our samples prove, early cosmographic volumes combined the disciplines of chronography and cartography with anthropology. But this phenomenon also features in more specialized books on mineralogy and botany. In these printed spaces faithful visual reproductions of real plants and rocks appear alongside animals on display as monstrous alterities, residues of the vocabulary and iconography of sixteenth and seventeenth century natural philosophy, which were still indebted to authoritative texts like Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*.

A certain Whig view of the history of science has also tended to occlude important contributions by non-European cultures to the emergence of the most technological and scientific aspects of modernity—such as Muslim contributions to navigation techniques, which in our catalogue is exemplified by the use of highly technical Muslim cartographic information by Ramusio in his *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, buried underneath a mass of exclusively European travelogues. Another good example that encodes this competition for the appropriation of political, religious and cultural capital across the Mediterranean during the almost 500 year-span covered by our project appears in the *Racconto storico della veneta guerra in Levante*, one of whose illustrations shows a 'Veduta d'Atene da Mezzo Giorno', with a view of Athens dominated by the Parthenon turned into the 'Gran Moschea', standing on top of the Acropolis, with the ruins of the Areopagus and Hadrian's palace at its feet. They all stand as architectonic icons of the past power of Greece and Rome, glorious mirrors upon which Christian Europe sought to contemplate itself, and which now appear defeated, and flanked by ostentatiously Muslim buildings within a redefined urban context that symbolized Ottoman occupation. Three major Mediterranean powers and cultures, Greece, Rome and Turkey, combined in one single city.¹⁷

In contrast with the *Racconto storico della veneta guerra*, Riccardiana MS 3490 illustrates an attempt to build bridges across different religious identities and sentiments. This is a manuscript sammelband with letters and documents that belonged to Angelo

Maria Querini (1680 – 1755). A librarian and a scholar, Cardinal Querini displayed an ecumenical spirit with respect to the European religious civil wars of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and some of these letters describe the efforts that went into his edition of Cardinal Pole's correspondence. Reginald Pole (1500-1558) was a victim himself of Henry VIII's break with Rome, and he was for some time deemed by some as a possible leader for a *via media* between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Querini's letters illustrate the process and the challenges of dealing with correspondence and using personal papers as modular pieces of information which, once properly processed, could become some of the building blocks within the historical narrative of a critical edition. They also bring to the foreground a significant link between two different moments in the early modern history of Europe. The early sixteenth-century competition for hegemony among different European powers during the Italian Wars was soon compounded by a different sort of conflict when Luther triggered the Protestant Reformation. Domestic conflict at home gave rise to important concerns about the necessity for a common response to the Ottoman threat which materialized, inter alia, in eirenic proposals by humanists like Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives. About two hundred years later, this eirenic tradition found an enlightened continuation of sorts in the ecumenical efforts of scholars like Querini.¹⁸

The Riccardiana also custodies significant cases of political communication in the form of diplomatic reports, such as *Relazione di Costantinopoli* (Riccardiana 1826), a collection of diplomatic documents that provides an overview of the sort of exchanges established by European diplomats with the Ottoman and the Persian Empires during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *relazione* that gives the sammelband its title is a very long document (59 fols.) by Bernardo Navagero (1507-1565), Venetian Ambassador to the Ottoman Court.¹⁹ After a mission to Constantinople he elaborated this account of the habits and rituals of the Turkish court for the Venetian senate, which, beyond its immediate use as political communication, could be employed in the training of subsequent Venetian envoys. Beyond the Ottoman Empire there is also a copy of another *relazione* by Robert Shirley, the well-known English ambassador to the Persian kingdom. Both must have been read by potential diplomats alongside another *relazione* included in the manuscript, such as the anonymous 'Modo di negoziare della corte di Costantinopoli'.

III

Like the Homeric poems which constitute its main source, the *Aeneid* is full of episodes at sea that reverberate down the centuries for those who venture on the waters of the *Mare Nostrum*. Its hero, Aeneas, can be viewed as a polysemic icon of Mediterranean mobility. Heroic or not, travellers' accounts, frequently including shipwrecks, punctuate the folklore and the literature of the different traditions and linguistic communities that surround the Mediterranean basin. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, and after the contribution of Arab science to navigation with the compass and the astrolabe, they run parallel, and sometimes also become entangled, with more technical accounts of the invention and history of navigation. This is the case of the *Arte de Navegar*, by Pedro de Medina, first published in 1545 (Valladolid: Francisco Fernández de Córdoba) and subsequently translated into different languages, of which we display two different editions, in Italian and French. Medina's work is an excellent case of ideas and knowledge in motion, collected and processed by people in motion (pilots and sailors), and then turned into beautifully illustrated book-objects that were distributed in their original and in translation. Conceived in the Sevillian milieu of the *Casa de la Contratación*, Medina's work is a typical product of its own time. After its Spanish *princeps*, it was very soon translated into French, Italian, Dutch and English, during an age when any sort of information on the skills and techniques involved in cartography and navigation amounted to an intangible product of enormous value in the competition among European powers for global expansion. Medina's work is also the product of the increasingly sophisticated use of alphanumeric techniques for the recording of information that resulted from the observation of natural phenomena by international networks of sailors and cartographers.

Travelling heroes and sailors meet merchants and financiers in Lorenzo de' Medici's *Rime*, where this most famous of Renaissance merchant bankers rhapsodizes about the myth of the Golden Age—an ideal time, he recounts, well before cartography taught men to measure the land and the coast, before navigation was developed, even before money was invented and trade developed. And well before, indeed, paper facilitated the gradual dematerialization of global finance—for without the paper-based credit that circulated across the Mediterranean, and then across the globe, many of the exchanges illustrated by

the items in the catalogue would not have been possible, or would have run a much slower course.

*Teneva occulte nel ventre la terra
le triste vene in sé d'ogni metallo;
né il fèr disio i cor mortali afferra
d'oro; e non era per paura giallo,
né ferro si trovava atto alla guerra;
né col freno o col piè suona il cavallo;
né il bronzo propagava la memoria;
né sete alcuna era di mortal gloria.*

*Nereo quieto e ciascuna sua figlia
d'Argo ancor la prim'ombra ne' lor regni
non avièn visto pien di maraviglia,
o da remo o da vento mover legni;
né misurare il mare e i liti a miglia,
con mille altri dannosi e novi ingegni.
D'isole ancor non s'era il nome udito:
parea finissi il mondo ov'era lito.²⁰*

The myth of the Golden Age is also closely linked to travelogues through their connection with utopian literature, which in this period frequently avails itself of a traveller's account as the narrative framework. Some of the most prominent cases include the imaginary John of Mandeville, Thomas More's *Utopia* (whose narrator Raphael Hythlodæus claims to have been one of Vespucci's companions), Tommaso Campanella's *La Città del Sole* (a dialogue between a Genoese sailor and a Knight Hospitalier), and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (an imaginary island discovered by some European castaways off the coast of Peru). In all of these cases, readers hear about fabulous new lands through the diegetic voice of a traveller not dissimilar to the voices we read in the printed letters and *relazioni* by Columbus, Vespucci, and Ramusio. Not infrequently, some of these narratives resorted to devices based on cartography—Thomas More's map of *Utopia* is a case in point, as is the use of maps in Zaccaria Seriman's *Viaggi di Enrico Wanton alle terre incognite australi ed ai regni delle Scimmie e dei*

Cinocefali. We have already mentioned how the allegorical devices employed by Campanella include ideas borrowed from cartography. And in their own turn, sixteenth and seventeenth century cartographers populated their treatises and maps with fantastical accounts of monsters and imaginary kingdoms—such as Prester John, whose kingdom appears as late as 1649 in the *Archontologia Cosmica*.²¹

In a figure like Leo Africanus we find a 16th-century Odysseus, a new sort of Aeneas. Like the Trojan hero, he stands as the epitome of an exile who must cross the sea, forcibly displaced by military conflict and occupation. Like so many other heterodox Europeans—for Leo was born as a Muslim European—in the sixteenth century, he experienced exile, and was also *encouraged* to switch allegiance and identity in order to survive on both shores of the Mediterranean. Like many of these travellers, he also became a mediator between Europe and Africa, whose description he provided for Ramusio's *Navigazioni et Viaggi*. Leo Africanus was a victim of this particular form of displacement, from the North to the South and the East of the Mediterranean, in a pattern which in the sixteenth century also included the Jewish communities forced to convert or leave the Iberian Peninsula after 1492: a part of the story of those who moved to the Ottoman Empire is in chapter thirteen of Pierre Belon's *Les observations des plusieurs singularitez*.²² Hispanic Jewish communities, or Muslims like Leo Africanus were part of the first wave of non-Christian European exiles, who were followed decades later by Spanish Moriscos expelled in 1609, victims of religious intolerance and the fragile political and military situation on the Northern and Southern shores of the *Mare Nostrum*.²³ Their predicament, and the political and military context that determined their fate are inscribed in the manuscript copy of an *Ordenanza* issued at *El Escorial* on June 4th 1607, which regulates the function and uses of Spanish galleys.²⁴ Its fols. 39r-39v establish that the main function of these galleys should be to provide security for the Strait of Gibraltar and protect trade with the Indies. The galleys—manned by slaves and forced labour, whose presence is also regulated—should in particular secure the coast of the Kingdom of Granada from the onslaught of corsairs, so that the new population of *Cristianos viejos* who had moved in to replace expelled Muslims could settle down safely.

As an exile forced to leave his home, Aeneas prefigures the fate of many individuals and communities who underwent similar predicaments. The shores of the Mediterranean have seen many sail away in search of a new land, and its bosom has turned into a necropolis which continues to receive human remains, from mythical figures like Aeneas'

steersman Palinurus, to the wretched Northern and Sub-Saharan African migrants, who, alongside Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern refugees, have drowned by the thousands since the current immigration crisis started—all of them displaced by famine, deprivation, war and poverty in their respective homelands.

A tempest, illustrated in the beautiful Virgilio Riccardiano, drove Aeneas to the Carthaginian coast, and under the protection of Queen Dido.²⁵ A tempest also witnessed the consummation of their love in *Aeneid* IV.160-172. And a combination of Virgil's characters with contemporary accounts of sailors and shipwrecks in fabulous islands stirred Shakespeare's imagination in *The Tempest*, a play in which the sea oscillates between the Mediterranean and the Caribbean—patent proof of the symbolic power of seafaring upon the European imagination during this early age of exploration.²⁶ In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* a shipwreck sets in motion a plot that involves the righting of wrongs brought about by the forced displacement of Duke Prospero of Milan and his daughter Miranda. The play also involves relations between the communities on the Southern and Northern shores of the Mediterranean: the ship which Prospero's magic causes to flounder and eventually come ashore on his island is carrying the King of Naples and his entourage back to the Italian Peninsula from a trip to Tunis:

*Gonzalo: Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we put them on first
in Africa, at the marriage of the King's fair daughter Claribel to the King of
Tunis*

Sebastian: 'Twas a sweet marriage, and we prosper well in our return

Adrian: Tunis was never graced before with such a paragon to their queen.

Gonzalo: Not since widow Dido's time.

Antonio: Widow? A pox o'that. How came that widow in? Widow Dido!

Sebastian: What if he had said widower Aeneas too? Good lord, how you take it.

*Adrian: Widow Dido, said you? You make me study of that. She was of Carthage,
not of Tunis.*

Gonzalo: This Tunis, sir, was Carthage.

The Tempest, 2.1.70-84

Another of the characters, Caliban, bears the name of the Caribbean natives that were used by Montaigne in one of his essays to denounce the treatment of natives in the new territories (*Des Cannibals*, in *Essais* I.31, 1580). Shakespeare thus contemplates the

Caribbean through a Mediterranean lens, as much as he casts classic Mediterranean and European myths, such as the Golden Age, upon his plot. Gonzalo, one of Prospero's councillors, describes the island as a combination of More's *Utopia* and Lorenzo de' Medici's *Golden Age*:

*I th' commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all,
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty—
[...]
All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth
Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.*

(2.1.162-171; 175-180)

The island is 'full of noises, / Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not', says Caliban, who has been interpreted as a symbol of European ambivalence towards the natives: half carnivorous beasts, half blessed, prelapsarian creatures untainted by civilization, he stands as an allegory for victims of colonialist exploitation and deprivation. In a very interesting case of more recent cultural translation, the Caribbean has been described as the Mediterranean of the New World, a mirror-like image of the fertile combination of languages, cultures, and ethnic groups knit together by sea routes in the *Mare Nostrum*. The Nobel laureate Derek Walcott (1930-2017) recreated his native Caribbean following the literary, cultural, and symbolic archetypes that have come to be associated with the Mediterranean of the *Odyssey* in his *Omeros* (1990). From the Greek

Homer to the Caribbean *Omeros*, Mediterranean cultural patterns, iconic and narrative blueprints of sea travel, emigration, and cross-fertilization still contribute to generate new myth-making—i.e. poetic—accounts of traumatic displacement like transatlantic slavery.

As the mythical founder of the first pan-Mediterranean Empire, Aeneas also symbolizes colonial competition for hegemony in military, political and cultural terms. All subsequent powers with imperial ambitions have sought to appropriate the legitimacy that comes with imperial Rome's cultural and political capital. Romans explained their enmity with Carthage by tracing its mythical origins to the tempestuous and tragic love affair between Dido and Aeneas. 'This Tunis, sir, was Carthage', says the wise counsellor Gonzalo in *The Tempest*. The identification of Tunis with Carthage was something that the well-read Gonzalo might have encountered in several different accounts. The *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (Stamp. 10939) illustrates a map of Tunis with the battle that led to its definitive Ottoman conquest in the summer of 1574 against the background of the ancient ruins of Carthage (*veteris Carthaginis ruinae*). Tunis and La Goleta had been incorporated almost four decades before into the dominions of the Hispanic monarchy, as a result of the so-called *Jornada de Túnez*, Charles V's successful expedition in 1535. This is an event that features in several media in the period, from inexpensive and popular news pamphlets, to the exclusive Flemish tapestries that celebrated the victory—the latter of which constitute an interesting case of luxury objects in motion.²⁷ The *Jornada de Túnez* also features in Münster's *Cosmography* (Stamp. 10933), where the history of Carthage and Rome appears alongside an account of the imperial expedition against Barbarossa.²⁸ The Spanish poet Garcilaso de la Vega was among the soldiers who participated: he was wounded and his convalescence in *La Goleta* gave him some of spare time to compose his sonnet XXXV, in which he proclaimed that the Roman Empire was undergoing a rebirth in those ancient Carthaginian parts.²⁹

Some of the items on display also codify a diversity of religious and identitarian sentiments which constitute the background for cultural and doctrinal controversies, as well as more violent encounters. Many of these resulted in religious persecution, slavery, exile, imprisonment and in general several forms of enforced, and therefore traumatic, displacement across the Mediterranean. Derek Walcott's account of Afro-Caribbean slavery in a poem with a strong Mediterranean background also carries distant echoes of the African-Mediterranean slave trade that preceded its transatlantic counterpart, and coexisted with it after 1492, when African slaves that had usually circulated throughout

the Mediterranean, began to be transported to the Americas *en masse*. Next to religious and political exiles the Mediterranean also teemed with vessels powered by slave labour.³⁰

Rome and Carthage, the images and symbols usually associated to them, were appropriated, refashioned and used by sixteenth century Christian Europe to account for their confrontation with an enemy that came from the East, in this case Muslim infidels. In these, and in many other cases, the Mediterranean served a double purpose, as a road for traffic, trade and peaceful exchange of people, goods and ideas, but also as a path for displacement and exile, a battlefield between different communities, their interests and their beliefs.

IV

Like Leo Africanus, fifteenth-century Greek scholars who moved to Europe under pressure from Ottoman expansion on the Eastern Mediterranean constitute well-known cases of people and ideas in motion. They brought both manuscripts and linguistic skills with them, and alongside their European students, collated, edited, translated and distributed the works of authors like Pausanias, Strabo and Ptolemy. The result was a redefinition of cosmography and cartography which also built upon the know-how and the instruments imported into Christian Europe from the Islamic world.³¹

The exhibition and catalogue include maps elaborated with traditional techniques, such as the early 17th-century *Carta nautica fatta da Messina*, which proves that portolans, although gradually rendered obsolete by more advanced methods for cartographic representation, coexisted with the great works of universal cosmography like Ortelius, Münster, or Mercator. Theirs was a new sort of cartography which combined Biblical chronography, anthropology, zoology and botany with geometry, trigonometry, and astronomy. They resorted to the use of alphanumerical techniques for the recording of empirical astronomic and geographic information—which was frequently provided by their own direct observation, or sent by international networks of pilots and correspondents—with a view to its subsequent translation into visual maps and ekphrastic accounts. Münster is an interesting example of this predisciplinary stage, since he includes information that today would remain within the bounds of separate disciplines.

Ekphrastic cartography is represented in our catalogue by the *Frammento di Portulano ossia Guida di Navigazione*.³² A manuscript collection of information for navigation along the coasts of Spain and Italy and then on to Malta, it proves the variety of formats and methods employed by pilots. Its eminently practical description of the capes, bays and currents, the data about distances between different locations, couched in a plain, discursive format constitutes a revealing contrast with the highly technical languages and symbols of mathematics and trigonometry employed in Ptolemaic cartography and with the mostly visual conventions used in portolans.

Trade also featured among the main impulses behind the mobility of people, primary goods and manufactured products, all of which became also vehicles for the circulation of knowledge and ideas.³³ This combination of goods and information is exemplified by the *Tariffe* in our exhibition, which shows that traffic between Italy and the Levant consisted of material goods like paper, but also more immaterial services related to linguistic mediation.³⁴ Translation amounted to a fundamental strategic infrastructure of a virtual nature, a service in other words, not quantifiable in material terms, but financially accounted for as an expense with the rest of the parameters that intervened in the commercial exchanges between these two regions of the Mediterranean. And of course, translation in general was also fundamental for the exchange and distribution of ideas, and for the establishment of national identities through the construction of a literary canon.³⁵

The expenses on *turcimanarie* recorded in the *Tariffe mercantili del Levante* thus constitute very interesting case studies for the simultaneous trade in goods and information (fol. 65r ‘Tarriffe di Turcimanarie’). Accurate and timely information was also of the essence when, beyond trade in material products, it came to more sophisticated paper-based financial operations such as letters of credit or letters of exchange, which required good coordination between the different agents located in the places throughout which paper money and credit circulated.

V

Our project aims to put into historical perspective current migratory phenomena and the emotions generated by and around them. These new waves of people in motion across the Mediterranean have come to compound pre-existing crises in traditionally established European national identities, which have for some time now been put under considerable pressure by the forces of cultural, demographic, and economic globalization. The latter have in turn been facilitated by the exponential development and universal reach of digital-electronic mass media as well as by new technologies and material infrastructures for unprecedentedly fast and efficient traffic of news, goods, people and capital across vast distances. The emotionally charged reactions among important sectors of European public opinion to these movements of people across the Mediterranean, and the political weaponization of those emotions by neopopulist nationalism emphasize the relevance of a close examination of case studies culled from the period that goes between the end of the 15th and the 18th centuries, when currently threatened national identities were undergoing, albeit through a far less accelerated pace of semiotic mobility, a period of formation vis a vis a series of cultural others. The vocabularies and the iconographies of these cultural-national identities have been in circulation for centuries, they reverberate with considerable vigour today, and still play an important role within current culture wars and political debates. The exhibition and the catalogue provide a series of samples that exemplify a phase in the ongoing dialectic between local identities versus connected and communicative globalization, of the sort proposed by Armitage, a series of case studies in the cultural history of international relations that prefigure what Étienne Balibar described as ‘an open process of immanent transformation of national identity, national sovereignty, and national membership... the transnationalization of the political whose results are not really predictable’.³⁶ Two decades after Balibar published this statement, the unpredictable results are fast catching up with us.

¹ This is a previous version of an article that will be included in a forthcoming volume published under the auspices of the Inter-University Network for Global History (GlobHis) at the University of Florence (José María Pérez Fernández, Giorgio Riello & Giovanni Tarantino, *Encounters at Sea: Paper, Objects and Sentiments in Motion Across the Mediterranean. An intellectual journey through the collections of the Riccardiana Library in Florence*). This volume grew out of an exhibition held at the Riccardiana Library in Florence, 13 February–13 March 2020, which was in turn one of the activities organized as part of COST Action 18140 *People in Motion: Entangled Histories of Displacement across the Mediterranean (1492-1923)* – or ‘PIMo’ for short. The exhibition complemented the symposium *Encounters at Sea: Material and Symbolic Mobility across the Mediterranean*, also organized by PIMo. The research that led to the elaboration of this essay and also to the different introductions for each of the respective sections in the forthcoming book was made possible by a STSM scholarship from the PIMo COST Action. I am grateful to its chair, Giovanni Tarantino (who first proposed the idea of organizing an exhibition alongside the conference), for giving me the opportunity to work in a place like the *Biblioteca Riccardiana*. I must also express my gratitude to its director, Francesca Gallori, and librarians Teresa Sansone and Rossella Giovannetti, for their kind and generous support during my stay at the *Palazzo Medici-Riccardi*.

² Ferrante Imperato. *Dell'istoria naturale di Ferrante Imperato napolitano. Libri XXVIII. Nella quale ordinatamente si tratta della diuersa condition di miniere, e pietre. Con alcune historie di piante, et animali; sin'hora non date in luce*. (In Napoli: nella stamperia a Porta Reale per Costantino Vitale: [Felice Stigliola], 1599). Riccardiana Stamp. 10065, p. 770-771.

³ Lothar Müller. *White Magic: The Age of Paper*. [Weisse Magie, München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2012] (Cambridge, UK & Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014) 63. Harold Innis. *The Bias of Communication*. [1951] (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 19. Jonathan Bloom. ‘The Transfer of Paper and Paper Making to Christian Europe’, in *Paper Before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001) 203-213. For a more recent account of paper against the general background of print and current reading practices, see ‘Paper’ in Multigraph Collective’s *Interacting with Print. Elements of Reading in the Era of Print Saturation* (Chicago University Press, 2018) 223-242.

⁴ Alexandra Walsham, ‘The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe’. *Past and Present*, Supplement 11 (2016): 9 – 48. See also Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway & Sarah Randles, eds. *Feeling Things. Objects and Emotions throughout History* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁵ David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 6)

⁶ José María Pérez Fernández, ‘Translation and Communication: War and Peace by Other Means’. In *Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing in the Early Modern World*, ed. by T. Sowerby and J. Craigwood. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019) 87-100. See also Pérez Fernández ‘Translation, Communication and the Circulation of Political Vocabulary in Early Modern Europe: Ceriol’s *El Concejo y consejeros del príncipe* (1559) and Philippe’s *Tractado del consejo y de los consejeros de los príncipes* (1584)’. Forthcoming in *(Re) Thinking Translations: Methodologies, Objectives, Perspectives*, ed. by Alessia Castagnino (Routledge, 2020).

⁷ ‘Any object can be a thing, but once it is framed as or entered into evidence—once it is mobilized—it becomes a document, an instance proper to that genre’, Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge. Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) 3

⁸ Giorgio Riello, ‘“With great pomp and magnificence”: royal gifts and the embassies between Siam and France in the late seventeenth century’, in Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, eds., *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 235-265.

⁹ Richard N. Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 14-19, 257. When it comes to nationalist communities, the classic reference is still Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. (London & New York: Verso, 1991)

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture’, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 3–30.

¹¹ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network-theory*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹² See for instance the *Regole per fondare una libreria publica* (Biblioteca Riccardiana, ms. Ricc.2112 c. 141-142)

¹³ Further details at <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/a-library-fit-for-a-king/> (accessed on 06/02/2020)

¹⁴ Tommaso Campanella. *La Città del Sole: Dialogo Poetico. The City of the Sun: A Poetical Dialogue*. Translated with introduction and notes by Daniel J. Donno (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981) 31.

¹⁵ Anton Francesco Doni. *I mondi del Doni. Libro primo*. (In Vinegia: per Francesco Marcolini, 1552 (Riccardiana Stamp. 3388)). *Francisci de Verulamio, summi Angliæ cancellarij instauratio magna* (London, apud [Bonham Norton] and John Bill, 1620 (USTC 3009376)).

¹⁶ Vincent Levine, *Elenchus Tabularum...* (Harlemi Batavorum: sumptibus Auctoris, 1719) Riccardiana Stamp. 15519.

¹⁷ *Racconto storico della veneta guerra in Levante diretta dal valore del serenissimo principe Francesco Morosini capitan generale la terza volta per la Serenissima Repubblica di Venetia contro l'Impero Ottomano ... Opera postuma di Alessandro Locatelli, con li adornamenti delle piante del p.m. Vincenzo Coronelli cosmografo*. (Colonia: Albrizzi, 1691 (Riccardiana BB 12127))

¹⁸ Riccardiana ms. 3490. The result of Querini's troubles was his *Epistolarum Reginaldi Poli S.R.E. cardinalis et aliorum ad ipsum*, 5 vols., (Brescia, 1744-1757).

¹⁹ *Relazione di Costantinopoli*, (1552)

²⁰ Stamp. 3165: *Poesie volgari, nuouamente stampate, di Lorenzo de' Medici, che fu padre di papa Leone: col commento del medesimo sopra alcuni de' suoi sonetti*. (In Vinegia, [eredi di Aldo Manuzio il vecchio], 1554, fol. 98r.)

²¹ Prester John and his kingdom also feature in Ramusio (Vol. I fol. 290v)

²² Stamp.16100: Pierre Belon, *Les observations des plusieurs singularitez*. (Paris, 1554, Chap. XIII, 'Des Iuifs habitans en Turquie' (fols. 181r-182r))

²³ Recent contributions to the debate about religious conflict, exile and emotions include Giovanni Tarantino and Charles Zika, ed. *Feeling Exclusion: Religious Conflict, Exile and Emotions in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2019) and also Nicholas Terpstra's *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World. An Alternative History of the Reformation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

²⁴ Riccardiana 2542. *Ordini da osservarsi sulle Galere di Spagna*.

²⁵ Ricc. 492: Virgilio riccardiano (Miniatore: Apollonio di Giovanni)

²⁶ Sylvester Jourdain's *Discovery of the Barmudas* (1610) describes it as 'the Isle of Divels'. The wreck was reported in a letter by William Strachey, known as the *True Reportory of the Wrack*, dated 15 July 1610 but published for the first time in Samuel Purchas' *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625).

²⁷ The pamphlets include the following:

Lassault de Le[m]pereur a barberosse [Lyon: Pierre de Sainte-Lucie, 1535], USTC 53625.

La grant armee de Lempereur le quel sen va combatre contre le Turc. Barberousse et tous infidelles [Lyon: Pierre de Sainte-Lucie, 1535], USTC 34834.

La copie dune lettre mandee de Thunes de la prinse de la gollete au Seigneur do[n] Gaspard de Mendoza gentilhomme de Lempereur / [Francoyo de Ferrare], [Lyon: Pierre de Sainte-Lucie, 1535], USTC 53651.

On the series of tapestries, see Antonio Gozalbo's 'Tapices y crónica, imagen y texto: un entramado persuasivo al servicio de la imagen de Carlos V', *Potestas* 2016(9) 109-134. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/Potestas.2016.9.5>

²⁸ Münster, Sebastian, *Cosmographiae Universalis*. (Basilea, 1552 (Stamp. 10933)) 1119-1120 and 1121-1122.

²⁹

Boscán, las armas y el furor de Marte,
que con su propia sangre el africano
suelo regando, hacen que el romano
imperio reverdesca en esta parte,

han reducido a la memoria el arte
y el antiguo valor italiano,
por cuya fuerza y valerosa mano
África se aterró de parte a parte.

Aquí donde el romano entendimiento,
donde el fuego y la llama licenciosa
solo el nombre dejaron a Cartago,

vuelve y revuelve amor mi pensamiento,
hiere y enciende el alma temerosa,
y en llanto y en ceniza me deshago

³⁰ Riccardiana ms. 1978 – Erasmo Magni da Velletri, *Imprese fatte dalle Galere d SAS Messo in Luce da Rasmio Magni da Velletri* (1602)

³¹ Pomponius Mela. *De situ orbis*. (Venezia: Bernardinum Venetum, 1499). Riccardiana, ed. R. n° 381 (504); Pausania. *Descrizione dell'Ellade*. Cod. gr. cartac. del. Sec. XV-XVI. Riccardiana 29; Pausania. *Pausaniae Commentarii Graeciam describentes* (Venezia: in aedibus Aldi, et Andreae Soceri, 1516) Riccardiana ed. r. n° 411(305); Nigri, Dominici Mari, Veneti. *Geographiae Commentariorum libri IX. Una cum Laurentii Corvini Novoforensis Geographia et Strabonis epitome per D. Hieronymum Gemusaeum translata, etc.* (Basileae, 1557) Riccardiana 10955.

³² Riccardiana 1929, 'Notizie per chi navica curiose et belle'.

³³ *Galeria dei Popoli del Mondo, ossia Storia dei Costumi, Religioni, Riti, Governi d'Ogni Parte del Globo*. (Venezia, 1838) Riccardiana Sala V D.3.4

Pierre Belon, *Les observations des plusieurs singularitez* (Paris, 1554) Riccardiana Stamp.16100

³⁴ Ricc. 2523: *Tariffe mercantili del Levante*.

³⁵ Doni, Anton Francesco. *La libreria del Doni fiorentino. Nella quale sono scritti tutti gl'autori uulgari con cento discorsi sopra quelli. Tutte le tradutioni fatte all'altre lingue, nella nostra et una tauola generalmente come si costuma fra librari* (In Vinegia : appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1550). One of the texts in the *Codice Vaglianti*, (Ricc. 1910) is arguably the first translation of the Qu'ran into a European vernacular, dated around the 13th century, which in our exhibition was displayed alongside a manuscript Arabic lexicón.

³⁶ 'There are indeed *supranational structures* (above all in the form of administrations and representative bodies) and there are *postnational cosmopolitical anticipations* (in particular, the attempt to create a political identity that is open to continuous admission of new peoples and cultures) in the construction of Europe. But the basic problems result from an open process of immanent transformation of national identity, national sovereignty, and national membership, which I tentatively call the transnationalization of the political, whose results are not really predictable'. Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* [first published as *Nous, citoyens d'Europe? Les frontières, l'État, le peuple* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001)], trans. J. Swenson, (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004) p. viii.