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Introduction

Gdańsk (*Danzig*) has a particularly renowned place in European history. The Baltic city has concentric, multiple identities as well as a fundamental strategic meaning. Its geographical position makes its history an entangled one: the city swung back and forth Polish and German/Prussian control over the centuries. Napoleon called Gdańsk «the key to everything». The territories surrounding Gdańsk were at the core of the Polish and German disputes in 1920-1939. The Nazi invasion of Poland, which initiated the Second World War, started with the Battle of Westerplatte, in Gdańsk. Forty years after, the first rifts in the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe were opened by the strikes organized by the Gdańsk trade-union *Solidarność*.

The history of Gdańsk's first public library is close to being as intriguing as that of the city itself. It is a history which is centrally related to Renaissance Italy. The *Bibliotheca Senatus Gedanensis*, i.e. the Library of the Council of the City of Gdańsk, was officially opened in 1596. It is not an exaggeration to say that the city owes its first library to a shipwreck. Indeed the library was foraged by the large donation of books belonging to the Italian Marquess Bernardino

Bonifacio d'Oria (Joannes Bernardinus Bonifacius), who was shipwrecked off the coast of the Hanseatic city. In exchange for an annuity, Bonifacio offered to the Council of the City his library, consisting of more than 1000 volumes across different fields, including theology, philosophy, grammar, literature, geography. The exploration of the collection is a significant way to explore the dialogue between Italian culture and Polish culture during the Renaissance, and more generally to highlight the paths of the Italian intellectual migration in Early Modern Europe.

The Renaissance was a fundamental period for the construction of the philosophical identity of Europe. Ideas and principles generated during this period bred deeply conflicting relationship with political and religious authorities, thus determining considerable migration through the different European states, with significant effects on the transformation of European culture. Within such context, the migratory wave coming from Italy was particularly substantial and influential.

In this book I will study the phenomenon of this migration from the point of view of a religious refugee. However, in this exercise we immediately have to take into account that this migration was not always motivated by the repression of heterodoxy and dissent imposed by religious authority. This complex and multi-faceted phenomenon will have to be examined from an innovative point of view. In the twentieth century, the migration of Italian intellectuals – especially when motivated by religious dissent – has often been studied with the aim of asserting the specificity or even the primacy of Italy. New studies, by analyzing the

diffusion and circulation across Europe of Italian doctrines and themes, seek to demonstrate the plurality of trends and cultures that concurred in the formation of modern European identity (and the decisive role played by Renaissance culture in this process). The underlying idea is that reception is not a mechanical and linear process: transmission always involves rethinking and various degrees of transformation. In this sense, the relationships between groups of Italian and non-Italian intellectuals, along with the oscillation between opposite phases of “Italomania” and “Italophobia”, are especially significant for describing the forms of assimilation taken by Italian intellectuals and doctrines within different national contexts.

In a famous work, Peter Burke has placed emphasis on the «original reception», rather than on the «passive diffusion», of the «Italian paradigm» in Europe (Burke 1998). From the very title of this work, Burke stresses the importance of studying geographical dynamics (and in particular centrifugal motions from European states) in order to understand essential features of Western culture in the timespan we are here investigating. Burke’s various contributions have elucidated several crucial aspects of the dialectical process between Italian and European intellectual phenomena and products, and have paved the way for further enquiry. Taking a look at the Polish cultural context is a way to explore a richer vision of the European Renaissance, by showing the interaction across borders and the blurring of ideas of «centers» and «peripheries».

All historical knowledge is mediated by the practice of reading, and the practice of reading often involves under-

linings, annotations, and scribbles in the margins of books. By studying Bonifacio's *marginalia*, this work will focus on two aspects of his collection, which have remained in the shade in the (not in-extensive) bibliography dedicated to his personality and his exile. The research on the biography and the library of Bernardino Bonifacio will be used both as a lens for exploring the attitudes of sixteenth-century Italian hereticism towards geography and in particular toward Islam and Ottoman Empire, and as a means to explore the transmission of philosophical knowledge through Europe.

Previous scholarly interest in Bernardino Bonifacio d'Oria has focused on his involvement in Swiss debates on toleration, while his philosophical preferences, his ideas about geography and his views on Islam have all remained comparatively unstudied. The *marginalia* preserved in his library are very enlightening in various ways: for instance, those from the period after the battle of Lepanto show a great interest in Islam as a religion and in the Ottoman Empire as a region. In this case, the interest probably arises from Bonifacio's own life experiences: born near Otranto, in the borderlands under attack by the Turks, he travelled throughout Europe in the company of two Berber slaves, perhaps faithful Muslims. A chapter will enlighten these fragments of his biography and the *marginalia* present in his collection of "geographical" books.

The Pomeranian Renaissance was the subject of a greater influence from Northern Europe than Italy; however, this is more true for architectural and artistic culture than for properly humanistic culture. In this area, the presence of Bonifacio' library may have had a sizeable impact on the

Gdańsk culture. In order to put this impact on display, the third chapter will be focused on the nucleus of philosophical books collected in his library, which show the interactions with Polish culture at the end of the sixteenth century.

The three chapters that constitute this book have been composed at different times and have been discussed in several places. In particular, I am glad to cite two conferences hosted by the University of Warsaw: «Cultural exchanges between Italy and Poland», organized by Salvatore Napolitano in 2010; «Renaissance in the Borderlands. Cultures of Humanism in the Polish and Ottoman Empires» organized by Giancarlo Casale and Valentina Lepri in 2014; moreover, I would like to recall the panel «The Polish Renaissance: Paths, Books, Ideas», organized by Valentina Lepri and Danilo Facca in 2013 for the Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in San Diego-CA. The first chapter aims to offer a general overview of the history of the Italian community in Poland during the 16th century; an earlier and enlarged version was published (in Italian) with the title *Artisti, banchieri ed eretici: il volto degli italiani nella Polonia del Cinquecento* in Napolitano S. (a cura di), *Scambi e confronti sui modi dell'arte e della cultura tra Italia e Polonia*, Napoli 2010.

I am fully aware that this book has the power to grasp only a small part of the wider field of cultural interactions between Italy and Poland, but I trust that it may nevertheless be useful in illuminating some neglected aspects of this relationship. Two main factors motivate my choice to merge my contributions and to publish them in a richer, largely reviewed version. The first is of scholarly nature: the fact

that, as far as I know, the last English contribute devoted to Bonifacio d'Oria dates back to 1932 (Church 1932). The second one, instead, originates outside of the academic debate. Pawel Adamowicz, the mayor of Gdańsk was killed in January 2019 at the age of 53. Adamowicz was a passionate supporter of the values of democracy and tolerance. His death arrives in a moment of progressive tightening of the borders in all Europe and in a difficult moment for the Polish democracy. I thought that the time was ripe to remember how the Gdańsk culture was reinforced, after a shipwreck, by a foreign traveller and his books.