Valentina Favarò, *Pratiche negoziali e reti di potere. Carmine Nicola Caracciolo tra Europa e America (1694-1725)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2019, pp. 200.

It is not easy to discuss this book by Valentina Favarò mainly because the many trajectories condensed in its pages issue from a research program that, as part of a solid tradition, is summarized in a title that is immune to the lure of flashy communication: "negotiating practices and networks of power."

This is certainly not the right place to discuss the importance that the issue of negotiation and the formal and informal practices underlying it has acquired in historiography over the last few years. This is a perspective that the book embraces in full.

We are aware, for example, that the careful construction of family politics, nuptial agreements and succession practices, was part and parcel of the multifaceted density that negotiation has taken on in the interpretive structure of early modern politics. The same can be said of the interaction between careers and the faction-generating effect of osmosis between personal growth and integration into intellectual networks suspended between institutional placement and the visibility of belonging. This research perspective has managed to bridge the complex divide between the public and the private dimension, which is so hard to define in that historical period. And it has done so without forgetting the importance of privileges, titles, and honors that the Court granted to figures whose careers were never only personal, especially when they transcended the local dimension and aspired to morph into transnational lineages.

Historians studying elites have not ceased to debate many of these themes. But I find that this book, in addition to taking full advantage of these historiographical trends, has intercepted the more and more acutely felt need to redefine the questions posed by a vast and ductile field, which today is threatened by an excess of modeling. The author's methodological proposal has not sought to latch onto the tradition of

the *histoire problème*. Rather, it has connected the personal life story of one representative of one of the principal houses in the Kingdom of Naples with the delicate redefinition of balances and allegiances during the shift of the throne of Madrid from the Habsburg to the Bourbon dynasty, and the consequent realignments within the polycentric system of the *Monarquía*. Favarò's discourse is far-ranging and solidly rooted in the sources and gives a broad account of the coeval discussion that arose at the fringes of the paradigm change in European politics. Her problematic slant on the question offers an opportunity to discuss new analytical perspectives starting from a comparison and an analysis of well-established historiographic approaches.

But let's go back to the title, or rather, the subtitle, and to the story of Carmine Nicola Caracciolo, the prince of Santobuono, who is the protagonist of this inquiry, and to the places and times it ranged through. These places are not seas, but lands (Europe and America), and the dates (1694-1725) are not those of a lifespan but refer to a specific phase in a carefully constructed career. Caracciolo's ascent began with the death of his father, whom he succeeded as head of his house, and ended with his descending parabola when a *residencia* trial caused his ruin. In the case of Caracciolo, the assessment of service – an administrative practice whose purpose was to check the mandate of royal officials in Spanish America – did not display the usual tolerance, whereby negotiation allowed procedures to be postponed. This brought the decline of a fortune that had been built precisely thanks to artful recourse to negotiation and tacitly accepted informal practices (pp. 156-165).

Yet this book owes a good deal to the method of biographical reconstruction and its ability to deal with gaps and plug them through rigorous use of sources.

The first part of the book is focused on the roots of Caracciolo's lineage, allegedly one of the wealthiest families in the Kingdom of Naples and traces its fortunes back to its medieval origins. The author traces its ascent, based on a careful marriage policy and the building of genealogical legitimacy, in line with a trend reflecting the needs of an aristocratic culture striving to reinforce the immaterial wealth of houses in the delicate transformative stage when elites were dominated by the expectation of holding offices and roles, and above all the ambition to achieve titles, such as perpetual Grandato.

In the first part of the book, the story deals with family policies and the spinning of economic and cultural strategies, essential tools to extend the spaces for negotiation. The author retraces the careful marriage policy that had led Marino, Carmine Nicola's father, to marry Giovanna Caracciolo di Torella, and his son to wed Costanza Ruffo di Bagnara,

thus bringing the Santobuonos into the most powerful circle of the kingdom's aristocracy. Favarò devotes equal attention to the future prince's education. Although it began far away from the capital, it was well steeped in the reformist and political ideas of the end of the century. Finally, the author deals extensively with the family's loyalist turn and Marino's decision to move to Naples to increase its visibility at the Viceroyal court. This new home base held strategic importance for his son in the time of Medinaceli's government, while in Naples autonomist drives became stronger and Macchia's conspiracy rising took place (pp. 25-35).

Favarò also interprets the family's accumulation of seigneurial possessions in terms of the transition from feudalism to modern ownership. She devotes much attention to economic factors, regarding them as an essential component of career planning; as in the case of Marino's decision to abandon the image of a lord entrenched in his possessions, and his direct management of these possessions to guarantee the regular income required to sustain the costs of urban prestige. Above all, Favarò found information in the Caracciolo private archive allowing her to determine the extent of the feudal and private possessions seized from Carmine Nicola when, after concluding his diplomatic mandate in Venice, he had to acknowledge the impossibility of returning to his homeland, which had been taken over by the Empire. The pages devoted to his conscious decision to give up these possessions, given his factional choice in view of the complicated succession to Charles II of Habsburg, clearly highlight the consequences – not just personal, but for the whole family – of his loyalty to the Bourbons, which earned him a privileged relationship with the court of Madrid and, in 1711, both the coveted *Grandato* and the governorship of Peru (pp. 89-93).

Thus while Favarò presents the story of the Caracciolos as the product of the aristocracy's awareness of its strategic weight within the kingdom – in a multifaceted scenario where gaining privileges and political importance depended on one's direct relationship with the king, as the role of the *Consejos* was being gradually marginalized – she presents the transactional effectiveness of Carmine Nicola's decisions as reflecting his personal ability to make flexible use of certain strategic elements. The scholar attributes equal importance to Carmine Nicola's understanding of contexts and keen awareness of the shift that had occurred in political culture and of the ongoing intellectual debate, which had set the stage for his difficult choice of new allegiances.

In addition to the economic papers, the Caracciolo archive reveals Carmine Nicola's dense correspondence with Philip V, and hence his familiarity with the king. While not seeking to take part in military campaigns – a traditional sign of loyalty for the kingdom's aristocracy

– Carmine Nicola artfully used this exclusive communication channel to earn credit by displaying his gift for diplomacy.
The evolution of Court dynamics is also regularly reflected in this correspondence. Carmine Nicola's timely decision to shift his allegiance to improve his career opportunities reflected his penchant for negotiation, an art he was to practice throughout his life.
In his passage from the Neapolitan to the Spanish court, his bond with princess Orsini, chief chambermaid to the queen, was to grant him enough visibility to be sent to Rome as ambassador extraordinaire. The shifting of his allegiance to *Monsignor* Trémoille, brother of the princess and French ambassador, allowed him to make up for his ineffective decision to attach himself to Cardinal Janson and thus obtain appointment as head of the kingdom's diplomatic office in Venice. Favarò thoroughly highlights the polymorphic complexity of this neutral stance, and its crucial importance in the tactical game opposing the armies of Philip V and Charles of Habsburg.
Finally, Carmine Nicola returned to Madrid and joined the powerful "Italian party" endorsed by the new queen, Elisabetta Farnese, and Cardinal Giulio Alberoni, who were to dominate the court of Madrid until the expulsion of the latter, who was not to be indifferent to the prince's disgrace.
In piecing together Carmine Nicola's career as he made his way through roles and allegiances, the book paints a vast fresco of institutional and political history. Far from being a mere background, this fresco dominates the scene, crowded as it is with actors intent on repositioning themselves in a factional game where the genius of relation-weaving went hand in hand with conspiracy. In these dynamics, Santobuono proved his mastery of observation and espionage strategies. It is these, rather than the court's protection, that earned him the perpetual *Grandato* in 1711, as well as his appointment as Viceroy of Peru.
It is therefore evident that, along with his flexibility in entertaining relations and his observational skills, the fundamental negotiation tool Caracciolo relied upon to build his career was mobility, intended in extensive terms. This is borne out, for example, by the shifting of his personal center of gravity, between protections and reciprocal support networks, and his ability to rely on his family, not a secondary resource in his effort to display visible and operative loyalism. His wife's decision to accompany him to Peru, in spite of her pregnancy – a gamble that would cost her life – and the presence of his eldest son at his side appear no less important than the fact that his mother stayed behind in Rome to take care of the family's assets and his other children, and deal with the possible change in political conditions in the Kingdom. The involvement of his family complemented and bolstered the prince's personal credibility.

There are other aspects besides Carmine Nicola Caracciolo's relocations that are highlighted in the book's overview of his diplomatic career. From short and prestigious journeys, such as that of Maria Luisa di Savoia with her entourage from the coast of Liguria to that of France, to long and difficult ones such as Caracciolo's voyage to take possession of his seat in Lima, Valentina Favarò shows us how it was not just the destinations, but the journeys themselves that constituted a significant component of Caracciolo's ability to negotiate. They offered opportunities to weave relationships, and also changed his point of observation, such as in the case of his long sojourn in Cartagena, which the prince used to fully consider his proposal to the king for creating a third viceroyalty that would help bridge the critical distance of the Colombian region from both Madrid and Lima. Carmine Nicola thus accommodated Philip V and Cardinal Alberoni's penchant for reform, which found fertile terrain for experimentation and latitude for negotiation precisely in the overseas possessions.

The centrality of the question of spaces and their delimitation in this investigation is also visible in the author's perspective on the new viceroy's seizure of power. Indeed, she calls his style of government "Neapolitanization," placing the stress on his chain of allegiances and his choice of imposing the network of *familiares* who had followed him. Furthermore, she again takes up the historiographical debate on the dilation of the national dimension in the Spanish imperial system. While in the European *reinos* the strategies of the *Monarquía hispanica* proceeded on the interwoven planes of politics and social regulation creating a vast and recognizable field of operation, seen from the American perspective the problem is a different perception of those who saw things from a distance. The choice of a Neapolitan viceroy, while strategically sound and comprehensible in the context of the new reigning house's allegiance policy in Europe, was incomprehensible in the overseas territories. Here, it was perceived as damaging to the negotiating practices of the creoles and to the equilibria that the local elites had achieved through their participation in Spanish rule. Many scholars have drawn attention to this shift in perspectives. For example, people from different parts of the Iberian Peninsula had managed to achieve unity only thanks to the "otherness" generated by distance, and this very unity fostered fears of a viceroy who was "foreign" with respect to the Crown and the king. A dynamic of subtle violence was at play, triggered by the imposition of antithetical cultural models and the adoption of subtle new bargaining dynamics, relative not so much to formal rules as to the labyrinth of informal practices that so much of the management and exercise of power hung on, and to the contractual relationship established between the king and the creoles.

Favarò's book offers many other stimulating observations, but I would like to close this discussion with the most interesting ones namely those on Caracciolo's Peruvian experience.
This book could not be any more distant from the now outdated approach to global history via macro analyses, which has been especially prevalent in the historiography. It is also distant from the attempts of some scholars to adopt the micro historical perspective.
As we have seen, the book's broad-scoped tracing of the European dynamics connected with the dynastic change on the throne of Madrid and the resetting of the balances of the polycentric Spanish monarchy is not a mere background but an essential part of the story. However, the part dedicated to the preparation of Caracciolo's journey to Peru, his stay there and, finally, the heavy consequences of his Peruvian residency for the final decline of his career – which ended with two trials, that of *residencia* and the one entrusted to the *oidor* of the Audiencia de Lima in 1722 – adheres to the increasingly popular trend in studies reconnecting the "four parts of the world" to strengthen scholars' anchorage in sources to highlight the multifaceted nature of the relationship between Spaniards and the nativos in Spain's extra-European possessions. In these spaces, the Westerners, far from having won all along the line, developed practices always suspended between violence and negotiation to project an image of unchallenged dominion to hand down to history.

Vittoria Fiorelli
Università Suor Orsola Benincasa, Naples