

Abstract [Navigation](#)

The definition of *Navigation* is conceived as a screenplay following the three-act structure model of narrative fiction. The writer, born in Venice, currently living in Cape Town, is occasionally a sailor. The three acts – *Navigation in Canal*, *Navigation on Ocean*, *Navigation on River* – are geographically located in an ideal navigation towards the southern tip of Africa and, whilst partially moving backwards through time, they are meant to share discoveries beyond the visible horizon. The stranding of the *Ever Given* in the Suez Canal, the legendary origin of the term *posh* and the map of human migrations in South Africa drawn by George Stow are pretexts for embarking on a journey towards the meanings and imaginaries of navigation.

[Navigation](#)

La definizione di *Navigation* è organizzata come una sceneggiatura cinematografica secondo il modello della struttura in tre atti della scrittura di finzione. Lo scrittore, nato a Venezia e attualmente residente a Città del Capo, è occasionalmente un marinaio. I tre atti – *Navigazione in canale*, *Navigazione sull'oceano*, *Navigazione sul fiume* – si collocano geograficamente in una traversata ideale verso la punta meridionale dell'Africa e, pur muovendosi parzialmente a ritroso nel tempo, intendono condividere le scoperte oltre l'orizzonte visibile. L'incagliamento della *Ever Given* nel canale di Suez, l'origine leggendaria del termine *posh* e la mappa delle migrazioni umane nel Sud Africa disegnata da George Stow sono pretesti per intraprendere un viaggio verso i significati e gli immaginari della navigazione.

VESPER No. 5

MOBY DICK: AVVENTURE E SCOPERTE | ADVENTURES AND DISCOVERIES

Quodlibet

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*Vesper* è una rivista scientifica semestrale, multidisciplinare e bilingue, si occupa delle relazioni tra forme e processi del progetto e del pensiero. Ponendo lo sguardo al crepuscolo, quando la luce si confonde con il buio e l'oggetto illuminante non è più visibile, *Vesper* intende leggere l'atto progettuale seguendo e rendendo evidente il moto della trasformazione. Pitagora identificò nel pianeta Venere sia la stella della sera (*Hesperos*) che quella del mattino (*Phosphoros*), i due nomi si riferiscono allo stesso astro ma posto in condizioni temporali differenti. *Vesper* dichiara quindi una posizione più che un oggetto e privilegia il situarsi che ne profila lo statuto. Non è qui accesa la luce tagliente dell'alba, che promette giorni completamente nuovi e alti sol dell'avvenire, ma quella che fa intravedere nella penombra una possibilità nell'esistente.

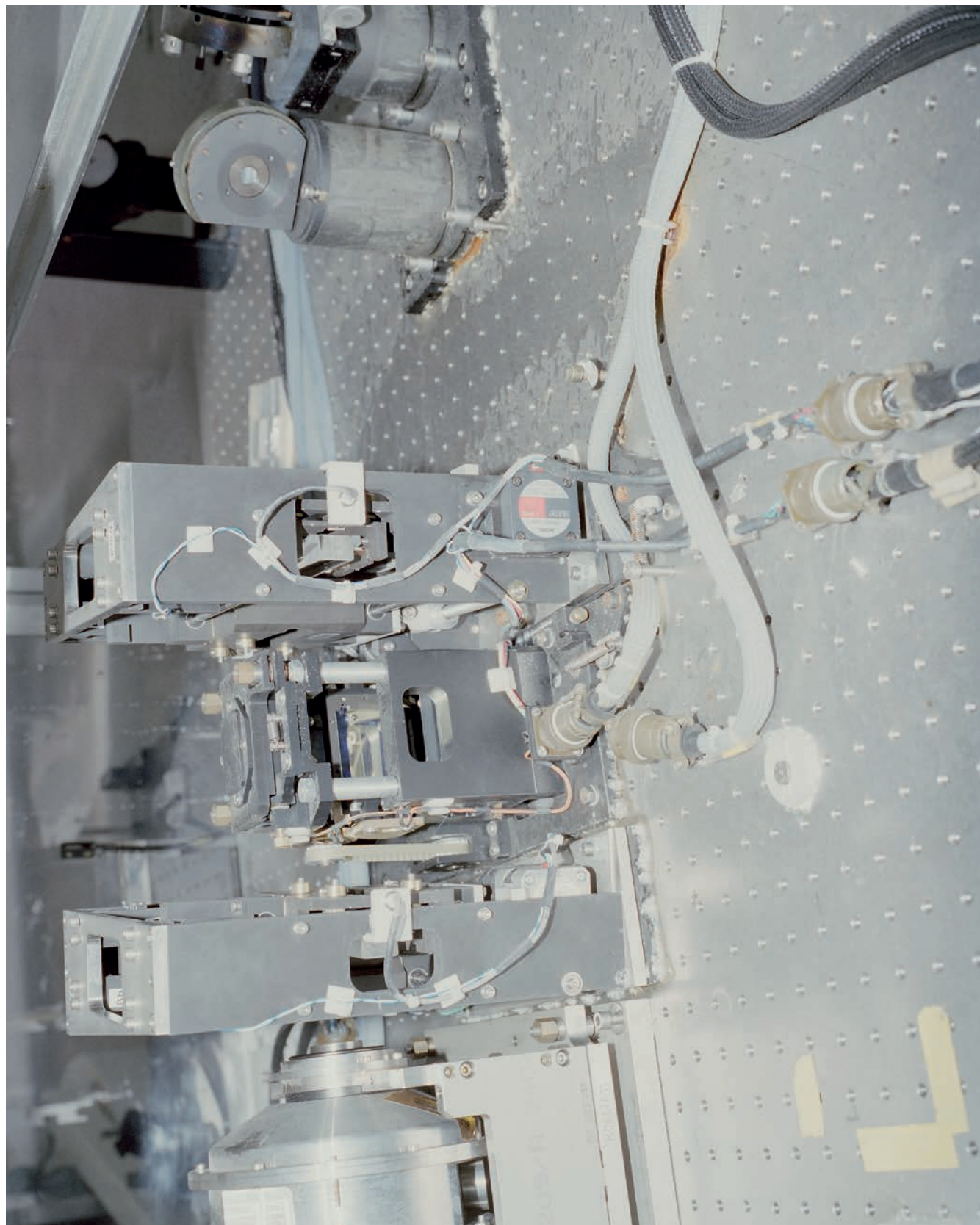
Richiamando e rinnovando la tradizione delle riviste cartacee italiane, *Vesper* ospita un paesaggio articolato di modalità narrative, accoglie forme di scrittura e stili differenti, privilegia l'intelligenza visiva del progetto, dell'espressione grafica, dell'immagine e delle contaminazioni tra linguaggi. La rivista è pensata nella sua successione di numeri tematici come discorso sulla contemporaneità, nello spazio di ogni singolo numero è articolata in un insieme di rubriche che gettano luci differenti sul tema. Nel procedere delle diverse sezioni – editoriale, citazione, progetto, racconto, lezione, saggio, inserto, traduzione, archivio, viaggio, ring, tutorial, dizionario – mutano i riverberi tra idee e realtà, si accende l'intreccio tra evidenze concrete e loro potenzialità, potenziali trasformativi, immaginari. Le rubriche sono pensate non per aggiornare istantaneamente ma per indagare condizioni progettuali e per fornire strumenti e materiali dall'*ombra lunga*.

*Vesper* is a six-monthly, multidisciplinary and bilingual scientific journal which deals with the relationships between forms and processes of thought and of design. Gazing into the dusk, when light slowly merges with darkness and the illuminating object is no longer visible, *Vesper* aims to interpret the act of designing through tracing and revealing the movement of transformation. Pythagoras identified in the planet Venus both the evening star (*Hesperos*) and the morning star (*Phosphoros*), assigning the two names to the same star observed in different temporal conditions. *Vesper* thus states a perspective rather than an object, privileging the condition that defines its status. Rather than the sharp light of dawn, heralding a brand-new day and promising a brighter future, it is the twilight that allows you to have a glimpse at the potential of what is already there.

Following the tradition of Italian paper journals, *Vesper* revives it by hosting a wide spectrum of narratives, welcoming different writings and styles, privileging the visual intelligence of design, of graphic expression, of images and contaminations between different languages. The journal is conceived as a series of thematic issues that build a discourse on the contemporary. Each issue is divided into sections that offer a range of diverse perspectives on the theme analysed: editorial, quote, project, tale, lecture, essay, extra, translation, archive, journey, ring, tutorial, dictionary. Throughout the different sections, reverberations between ideas and reality change, connections emerge between tangible facts and their potentials, transformative prospects, collective perception. The principal aim of these sections is not to provide instant news, but to offer an in-depth investigation of different instances of design and to provide tools and materials that have a long-lasting effect.

## VESPER No. 5

## MOBY DICK: AVVENTURE E SCOPERTE



Editoriale | Editorial  
8 – 15

[Sara Marini](#)  
Moby Dick: avventure e scoperte  
Moby Dick: Adventures and Discoveries

Citazione | Quote  
16 – 23

[Herman Melville](#)  
Purpose

Breve estratto da un testo critico che definisce la rotta o le coordinate di attraversamento del tema. | Brief excerpt from a critical text concerning different perspectives on the topic.

Intervista | Interview  
24 – 38

[Paolo Portoghesi con | with Manuel Orazi e | and Marco Vanucci](#)  
Architettura e matematica  
Architecture and Maths

Dialogo volto ad approfondire la posizione di un autore. | Dialogue aimed at delving into an author's position.

Progetti | Projects  
40 – 53

[Andreas Kreul](#)  
Call Me Cachalot. Some Reflections on *Drawing Restraint #9* by Matthew Barney  
Chiamami cachalot. Alcune riflessioni su *Drawing Restraint #9* di Matthew Barney

Contributi che indagano le ragioni, le *mise-en-scène*, le risultanti di progetti realizzati attraverso le voci degli autori e/o di critici. | Contributions that investigate the reasons, the *mise-en-scènes*, and the results of an accomplished project throughout the voices of the authors and/or the critics.

54 – 65

[Fabrizio Barozzi, Diletta Trinari](#)  
Without Coordinates. London Design District  
Senza bussola. London Design District

66 – 78

[Nicola Russi, Alessandro Benetti](#)  
Un'avventura di confine. Sceneggiatura di un progetto in quattro atti  
Pushing Boundaries: A Four-Act Structure for a Project

Racconti | Tales  
80 – 83

[Pierluca Ditano, Michela Tomasi](#)  
(appunti da) Queste cose non avverranno mai ma sono sempre  
(Notes from) These Things Never Happened but Have Always Been

Narrazioni testuali o per immagini attraverso realtà note o ipotetiche. | Textual or visual narratives exploring actual or hypothetical worlds.

84 – 90

[Sarah Mazzetti](#)  
La valigia  
The Suitcase

Saggi | Essays  
92 – 107

[Davide Deriu](#)  
Adventures in Scale  
Avventure in scala

Saggi critici articolati in citazioni, note, iconografie e una bibliografia. | Essays including quotes, notes, iconography and bibliography.

108 – 121	<a href="#">Massimo Rossetti</a> <i>It's moving! It's alive!</i> Nascita, evoluzione, migrazione e morte delle tecnologie <i>It's moving! It's alive!</i> Birth, Evolution, Migration, and Death of Technologies
122 – 139	<a href="#">Felice Cimatti</a> Divenire blatta. Errore e godimento Becoming a Cockroach. Error and Enjoyment
140 – 151	<a href="#">Paolo Garbolino</a> I segni e le prove Traces and Evidence
152 – 166	<a href="#">Caterina Padoa Schioppa</a> “Giochi semplici e molto seri” ‘Simple, very serious games’
Inserto   Extra 170 – 179	<a href="#">Armin Linke</a> Clues Indizi
Tutorial 180 – 194	<a href="#">Vittorio Netti, Olga Bannova</a> Space Architecture. Designing Beyond the Sky Space Architecture. Progettare oltre il cielo
Archivi   Archives 196 – 205	<a href="#">Filippo De Dominicis</a> Descrizioni dell’inevitabile e dell’ignoto. Constantinos Doxiadis e l’avvento di Ecumenopolis, 1960-1961 Descriptions of the Inevitable and of the Unknown. Constantinos Doxiadis and the Advent of Ecumenopolis, 1960-1961
206 – 211	<a href="#">Fernanda De Maio</a> Il corpo dell’architettura “Made in Olivetti”. La Casa Olivetti a Santiago del Cile di Alberto Cruz C. e Miguel Eyquem A., 1973 The ‘Made in Olivetti’ Body of Architecture. Casa Olivetti in Santiago de Chile by Alberto Cruz C. and Miguel Eyquem A., 1973

Forma e modo d’espressione di questa rubrica sono a discrezione dell’autore. | The section consists in the original contribution of an author.

Manuale d’uso per l’esecuzione di pratiche e/o operazioni. | Instructions to carry out practices and/or operations.

Testo critico che accompagna una selezione di materiali d’archivio presentati con le loro coordinate di provenienza. | Critical text accompanying a selection of archival material presented with its source reference.

Dizionario | Dictionary  
212 – 213

212 – 213	<a href="#">Ana Ivanovska Deskova,</a> <a href="#">Jovan Ivanovski, Vladimir Deskov</a> Manoeuvre
214 – 215	<a href="#">Tomà Berlanda</a> Navigation
216 – 217	<a href="#">William Boelhower</a> Ocean
218 – 219	<a href="#">Giulia Zompa</a> Gruppo
220 – 221	<a href="#">Alessandro Virgilio Mosetti</a> Hic
222 – 223	<a href="#">Enrico Miglietta</a> Intuito

Definizioni critiche di tre lemmi in italiano e tre lemmi in inglese contribuiscono alla precisazione del tema. Il dizionario prosegue con l’evolvere di “Vesper”, si compone in itinere. | Critical definitions of three headwords in Italian and three headwords in English that contribute to point out the issue’s topic. The definitions through the issues of “Vesper” will compose an ongoing dictionary.

The following log entries in support of a definition of *navigation* are conceived as a screenplay following the three-act structure model of narrative fiction. The writer, born in Venice, currently living in Cape Town, is, occasionally, a sailor. The three acts are geographically located in an ideal navigation towards the southern tip of Africa, and – whilst partially moving backwards through time, they are meant to share discoveries beyond the visible horizon.

1 – *Navigation in Canal* – or the Setup and catalyst for the sequence of events. March 23rd, 2021: At 07:40 am the container ship *Ever Given* is caught in a sandstorm whilst sailing northbound through the Suez Canal at the 5.4 nautical mile mark (measured from Port Suez). The strong winds, with gusts in excess of 40 knots, cause the loss of steerage and the hull deviates from its course. The 400-meter-long ship runs aground and turns sideways, unable to free itself, blocking the canal on both sides. It takes six days for a complex salvage and refloating operation to wrench the ship from straddling between the shorelines of two continents and set her free, finally reopening the crucial maritime passage between the Red Sea (and Indian Ocean) and Mediterranean Sea. The impact of the grounding on the global economy is immediate, whilst the complicated shell ownership structure of ship has led her to be seized by an Egyptian court, pending payment of adequate compensation for both the salvage operations and alleged reputational damage to the Suez Canal Authority. As a further collateral damage, the mostly Indian crew members remain to date effectively detained on board.

The narrative of the struggle between ownership of the means of production, and labour, is nothing new, neither historically, nor when related to the art of navigation. What appears possibly ironic though, is its location, when one thinks to the construction of the Suez Canal, over 150 years ago, as one of the effects of hydro-colonialism. The term, recently introduced by Kerry Bystrom and Isabel Hofmeyr, is meant to describe the ‘necessity of recalibrating the geographical hierarchies consolidated through intertwined Western imperialisms’ thus opening new modes of reading marine landscapes and imagining futures.

But how does one engage with the positioning of oneself within a changing sea scape. What is the horizon sailors look at, whilst imagining how to reach beyond it, and how can it relate as a bridge to the African continent, as the *Ever Given* was doing, momentarily connecting both sides of the canal?

2 – *Navigation on Ocean* – or the Confrontation. October 17th, 1935: in a letter to the editor of the “Times Literary Supplement”, a reader writes to suggest the origin of the word *posh*. He argues that it would derive from the first letters of the phrase ‘port out, starboard home’, which might have designated the most desirable accommodations on a steamship voyage from England to India and back, since it would have offered passengers the odd chance to catch glimpses of Africa’s shoreline. It is one of various spatial stories that enjoyed popular currency during the 1920s and 1930s. This fictional tale is of relevance here to locate the imagery of the experience between the white bodies on the passenger ships circumnavigating the globe, traversing undifferentiated international waters, in contrast with the trade and slave routes which were constructed to extract goods and labour from the continent.

Such race-migration theses play an important role when unpacking a definition of navigation as the ‘science of directing a craft by determining its position, course, and distance travelled’. Being concerned with finding the way to the desired destination, avoiding collisions, conserving fuel, and meeting schedules, navigation (also in its extended definition of looking at the world through a browser window) appears to have too often become a technocratic science at the service of the imperialist project.

It was not always the case. In a compelling reading of Swahili navigators, Edward Alpers references the words of Sulaiman al-Mahri, author of five important sixteenth-century navigational works, according to whom there were ‘two basic kinds of route; that along the coast and that out to sea’ (Alpers 2018). And in order to position oneself in relation to the coast, the increase in maritime traffic during the 13th century may have coincided with the advent of seaside mosques along the coast of East Africa, as they would provide landmarks on an otherwise featureless shoreline.

The binary distinction between the two routes is though possibly misleading, in that Swahili – and other – horizons – are not exclusively oceanic, but also continental African. The tension around the ‘geographical movement of history’ which were taken up as part of the long Scramble for Africa, would go on to include Cecil Rhodes’s outrageous Cape-to-Cairo railway project, and Livingstone’s long attempts at establishing his theory of the central African river system, ultimately incorrect.

3 – *Navigation on River* – or the Resolution of the story. January 1st, 1905: As the result of the dedicated commitment of Lucy Lloyd, George William Stow’s *The Native Races of South Africa* appears in print. It is published posthumously and contains the map shown here. Stow had been, in his own way, a navigator. Arrived in southern Africa in the middle of the 19th century, the British geologist had felt compelled to explore,

puzzling over the nature of the great southern continent, the marvellous existence of fossils, and the migrations of its people.

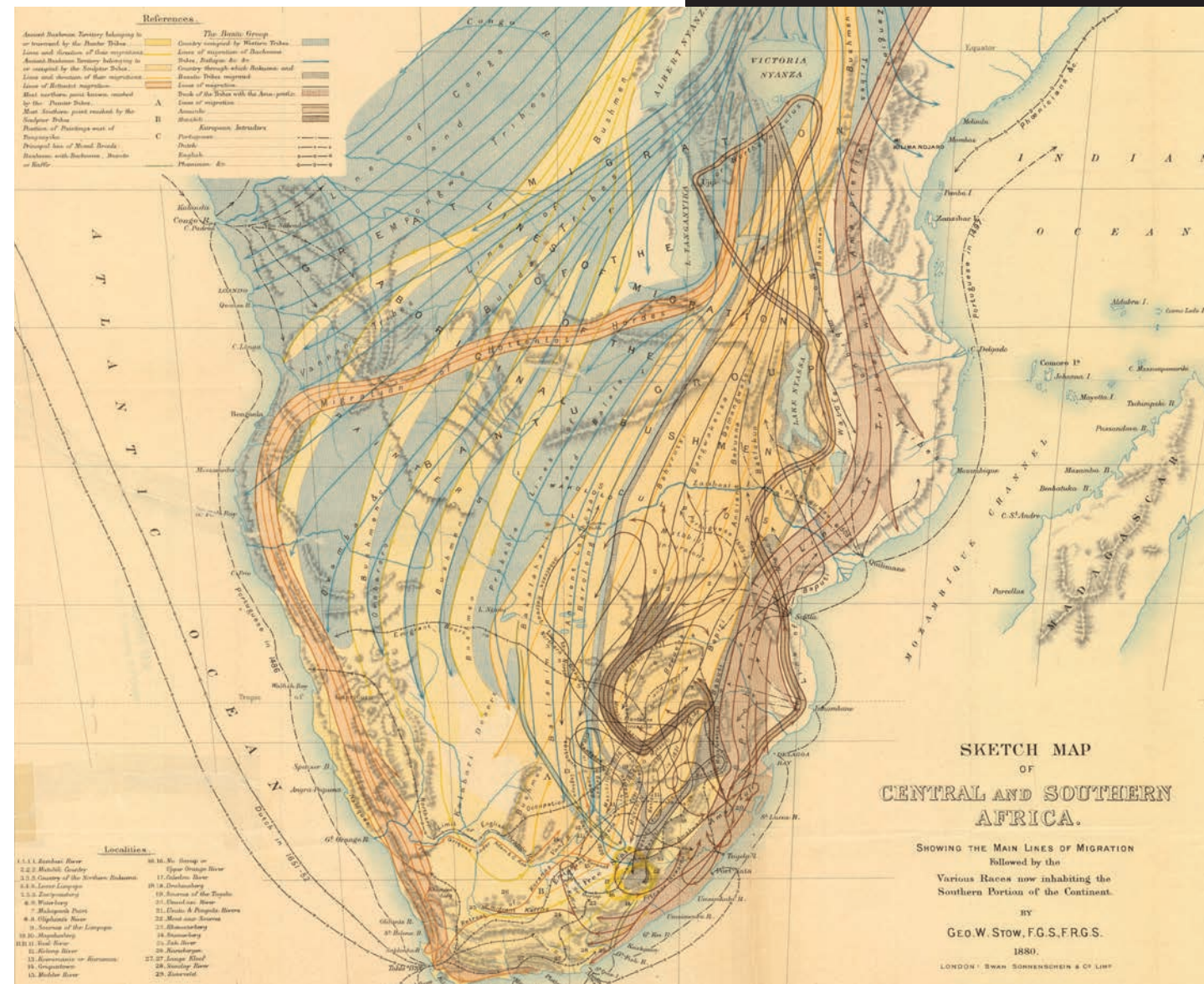
This is why the imagery suggested in maps such as George Stow’s is intriguing, as it surfaces modes of traversing Africa’s plains rather than circumnavigating its coasts. The landscape of savannahs, bush, and waterways is a sort of sea, which needs coordinates and way points to situate oneself, each day marked by movement towards a new horizon. If in *Ulysses’ Sail*, Mary Helms had argued how ‘long distance travel and political unitization of knowledge of distance places/people/things’ (Helms 1988) frequently become powerful tools of expression, what I’m positing here is that the lines and flows appear as underwater currents, which require a navigational aid.

Ebbing and flowing as if following the lunar movements, they overlay with the topographical accidents, drifting along the courses of water. In a recent novel Namwali Serpell personifies the notion of *drift*. Following the life of three generations of characters, it is the story of time on the Zambezi river, close to the Victoria falls, and is narrated through the eyes of mosquitos. In centring the narrative on the notion of drift, and the uncertainty of the navigation, it helps to bring full circle the idea that any map is incomplete, and that navigation is a journey without end.

*Bibliography:*

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George William Stow, *Sketch map of central and southern Africa: showing the main lines of migration followed by the various races now inhabiting the southern portion of the continent*, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Limd., London 1905. Courtesy Princeton University, Stanford Libraries.



*navigation*, [nav-i-ga-tion | \ na-və-'gā-shən] noun. | 1. the act or practice of navigating / the act or science of finding a way from one place to another | 2. the science of getting ships, aircraft, or spacecraft from place to place especially: the method of determining position, course, and distance travelled | 3. ship traffic or commerce | 4. the act of moving around within a website or between websites. Merriam-Webster online dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/navigation, accessed 04/07/2021.

