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### Lejosne, Fiona. *Ecrire le monde depuis Venise au XVIe siècle. Giovanni Battista Ramusio et les Navigazioni et viaggi*

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**Lejosne, Fiona.**

***Écrire le monde depuis Venise au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Giovanni Battista Ramusio et les Navigationi et viaggi.***

Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 174. Geneva: Droz, 2021. Pp. 664 + 4 ill. ISBN 978-2-600-06227-5 (paperback) CHF55.

*Écrire le monde depuis Venise au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* is the published version of Fiona Lejosne's 2016 PhD dissertation on Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485–1557) and his compilation of travel accounts, *Navigationi et viaggi* (3 vols., 1550–9). This comprehensive book is divided into an introduction and three parts, each part consisting of an introduction and two or three chapters. An epilogue, focusing on the diffusion of the *Navigationi et viaggi*, closes the book. In the introduction, Lejosne positions her research in relation to prior research on Ramusio and *Navigationi et viaggi*, principally Marica Milanese (editor of the modern six-volume edition of the work), Massimo Donattini, and Romain Descendre (the first to tentatively suggest a political reading of the work). Throughout the book, Lejosne expresses her agreement or disagreement with these three as well as with other researchers on whom she draws.

In the first part, “Giovanni Battista Ramusio, secrétaire et géographe,” Lejosne traces Ramusio's work in both worlds through extensive archival research. This part consists of an introduction explaining how to pierce the anonymity of a Venetian secretary and two chapters focusing on Ramusio's apprenticeship in the heart of the bureaucracy and in the humanist publishing world, respectively. Ramusio spent his whole career as secretary to the various political offices of the Venetian state from his days as an apprentice starting in 1505 until his death in 1557, when he was secretary to the Council of Ten. Lejosne has been able to find traces of Ramusio with the help of graphological comparisons between autographic letters and material produced within the chancellery. Her argument is that Ramusio's activities as a humanist and geographer benefited from his professional experience. In addition to following Ramusio closely both in the chancellery and in the publishing world of Aldo Manuzio, Lejosne also provides the reader with an introduction to the intricate workings of the Venetian state and publishing world.

The second part, “Connaître et décrire le monde au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” focuses on Ramusio as the compiler of geographical texts, mostly travel accounts. Lejosne points out that both epistemologically and editorially, the compilation



was an innovation (188). While Ramusio's interest in geographical literature may have started out as a wholly private interest, it became a publishing project by the 1530s when he undertook the editing and publishing of accounts of Spanish exploits in the New World, which had been brought back from Spain by his friend Andrea Navagero. These were later included in volume 3 of the *Navigazioni et viaggi*. Lejosne discusses the process of professionalization that the project underwent, as well as the contributions made by Ramusio's main collaborators, the most important being the publisher Tommaso Giunti who was in charge of economic and administrative tasks relating to publishing, such as applying for printing permits. The other important contributor was Ramusio's friend, the medic Girolamo Fracastoro, who gave the work a more scientific profile. Letters between the two men, or rather Fracastoro's replies to lost letters from Ramusio, show them discussing individual accounts several years prior to publishing. Ramusio dedicated all three volumes to Fracastoro. The final chapter (chapter 4) in this second part focuses on how Ramusio's new geographical understanding extended the world from the ecumene of the ancients to encompass the whole globe, thus expanding what was known of the early modern world considerably. Lejosne discusses Ramusio's use of ancient sources as well as the role played by experience.

The third part, "*Les Navigazioni et viaggi*, un projet de géographie politique," focuses on a more politically inclined reading of the work. Lejosne argues that Ramusio expands his role of geographer to include him being an advisor to princes (chapter 5). She goes on to situate the *Navigazioni et viaggi* firmly in a Venetian context, both intellectually and politically (chapter 6), before she argues, in the final chapter, that there is a connection between the *Navigazioni et viaggi* and the cartographer Giacomo Gastaldi's maps displayed on the walls of the Sala dello Scudo in the Ducal Palace. This final chapter functions to emphasize not only the Venetian context but also her point that the work was just as much the result of Ramusio's professional occupation as secretary to the Venetian state as the result of his intellectual preoccupations.

Lejosne argues her main point convincingly, namely, that the *Navigazioni et viaggi* should be considered as both a scientific work of early modern geography and a political work seeking to incite the Venetian patriciate and other European princes to invest in the exploration of the world, by showing the close connection between both of Ramusio's roles in two ways: throughout the book Lejosne supports her argument by references to her extensive archival search



and a close reading of the *Navigazioni et viaggi*—dedications, *discorsi* (Ramusio's comments on the knowledge to be gained from the travel accounts), his treatises on the history of the spice trade, and his joint treatise with Fracastoro on the annual flooding of the Nile, as well as the travel accounts themselves, usually using at least three different examples from the *Navigazioni et viaggi* in every instance. The work is a solid contribution to the history of knowledge and to the book history of *Navigazioni et viaggi*. Future research on Ramusio and his compilation will have to take Lejosne's findings into consideration.

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