

Pourtraits divers de Jean de Tournes: Édition critique et fac-similé du tirage de 1556 ed. by Maud Lejeune.

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 ***Pourtraits divers de Jean de Tournes: Édition critique et fac-similé du tirage de 1556 ed. by Maud Lejeune (review)***

Robert J. Hudson

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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“Curieux” is the qualifier chosen by Maud Lejeune to bookend her critical edition of the 1556 volume of *Pourtraits divers* published by Jean de Tournes in the humanistic hub of Renaissance Lyon. Appearing twice with slightly different connotations in Lejeune’s opening sentence, once in her concluding phrase and peppered throughout the 240 pages of her introduction (in both her prose and in citation of others), *curieux* aptly describes this enigmatic album that Lejeune undertakes to explain in meticulous detail. Meaning, of course, “curious” as a direct cognate in English, “inspiring inquisitiveness and a desire to explore,” *curieux* also carries with it the idea of that which is “singular, unusual and particularly odd”—each signification applying readily to the text at hand. With the objective of exploring the various curiosities surrounding this print collection of 62 wood-cut engravings, entirely devoid of written script save for a minimalist title page, Lejeune’s efforts result in a painstakingly thorough, richly annotated, and substantially significant analysis of previous attempts, along with her own hypotheses, aimed at understanding this curious work.

Dedicating her opening pages to a biographical study of the chief collaborators (authors?) of the text, celebrated Lyonnais printer/bookman Jean de Tournes and his favored illustrator “le Petit Bernard” Salomon, the painter/master engraver responsible for some if not all of the illustrations from the present volume, Lejeune shrewdly slants her historical exposé towards the social milieu of the two, their mutual and individual acquaintances, as well as any other tendencies or motivations that may enable her to respond to the curiosities the text presents. What follows is a detailed explanation of the art of engraving, which includes: the technical aspects of the artform, the font and size of early typeset, the choice of paper, ink quality, binding practices, etc., along with a biographical summary of some of the more prolific printers in Lyon and a discussion of the finest mills and paper stocks available in

Renaissance France. In so doing, Lejeune taps into the field of both material book history as well as that of artistic print production, thus providing an impressive level of formal meta-analysis before examining content.

As she shifts her focus to the text proper, Lejeune catalogues and groups each of the 62 engravings, offering a physical description of what is represented and even suggesting potential ways of analyzing the individual wood-cuts. Discussion of the reception of the more successful illustrations, which appeared in best-selling Lyonnais editions of Plutarch and Petrarch or **[End Page 321]** accompanied the works of contemporaries and friends (i.e., Jean Bouchet, Maurice Scève), is tempered by the acknowledgement of the numerous engravings that were never used before or after the 1556 publication (or 1557 re-edition) of the *Pourtraits divers*. Indeed, examining its reception allows Lejeune to build to some of the essential curiosities presented by the text: Who is the author/who are the artists? Who is the target audience? To what end was this volume created? To these questions, Lejeune concludes her introduction with four hypotheses as to the potential destination of this text: Is it 1) a financially motivated gallery of illustrations to include in a text, 2) a best-of album anthologizing the work of various master engravers including Salomon, 3) a sort of collector's edition to offer to friends or to share in one's diplomatic travels, or 4) a catalog of prototypes for sculptors, painters, artisans and tradesmen? Exploring the virtues of—while remaining skeptical to—each argument, Lejeune asks in parting if the minimalist presentation of the text might not allow it, remaining true to Renaissance Protean form, to conform to each of these ends.

The facsimile first edition that completes the volume is that of the pristine, unmarked, and unaltered copy housed in the U.S. Library of Congress, reproduced in actual *in-octavo* size and even including the blank reverse sides of each page, as Lejeune states, to give the idea of the materiality of the album (245...

These complaints aside, Popper's book is fascinating and compelling. The energy alone required to delve so deeply into esoteric historiographical debates is admirable, and Popper not only plumbs but animates the depth of such debates. The reader emerges with an understanding not only of Raleigh's *History* but also of the broad political and intellectual culture that surrounded it. Such an understanding is starkly that of the difference of the past: it is hard to imagine the Presidents and Prime Ministers of today employing scholars of ancient history to ensure they not repeat the mistakes of the past.

NICHOLAS MORGAN, English, UCLA

Portraits divers de Jean de Tournes: Édition critique et fac-similé du tirage de 1556, ed. Maud Lejeune (Geneva: Droz 2012) 430 pp.

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