

*Green Bushes* and *Flowers of the Forest* became such C eleste-identified vehicles that, as with Irving in *The Bells* or J.C. Williamson in *Struck Oil*, their literary collaborators have largely dropped from cultural memory. Jim Davis offers similar speculations about the East End repertoire of the actor-manager Sarah Lane at the Britannia, arguing for expansion rather than diminution of concepts of both authorship and translation.

This performer-driven interrogation of dramatic "authorship" in favour of collective authorship of the spectacle (including the agency of the audiences) is a well-established line of argument within theatre scholarship, and would operate as effectively without the factoring in of gender. Here gender concerns are passengers in an already operative historiographic trend. If one accepts the conclusions of these scholars, then "authorship" should be extended to all the women and men who laboured in the collaborative arts of popular theatre in the nineteenth century. While maintaining some unease at this broad-church approach, with its potential dissolving from view of specialised contributions to theatrical crafts, I would have little basic problem with this democratising development. In fact I'd welcome the radical interrogation of dramatic authorship as a strategic assault on those specifically high-art Modernist demiurgic heroes: the Playwright and above all the Director. These masculinist self-fashionings successfully created, through their narratives of revolution, transcendent talent and unique creative authoring of the spectacles, enduring avant-garde fantasies now overdue for a severe overhaul even as Author and Director continue to duke it out for theatrical authority. Scholars and popular theatre are inescapably aware of the material and institutional conditions of cultural production; its interactive and collaborative nature with historical moment, immediate audiences and craft colleagues. This well-researched and provocative feminism-driven volume launches such a central historiographic critique from within the disciplines of nineteenth-century popular theatre scholarship and feminist history, and calls for a wide readership well beyond its primary audience of Victorianists.

**Veronica Kelly**

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***The Book Beautiful: Walter Pater and the House of Macmillan*, edited by Robert M. Seiler. London: Athlone Press, 1999.**

Walter Pater, like Dante Gabriel Rossetti before him and William Morris, James MacNeill Whistler and Oscar Wilde after him, believed that the book should be thought of as an aesthetic object. One of Pater's primary objectives, therefore, was to exercise control not only over the content of his writing, but also over the shape and form of its publication. Robert Seiler's *The Book Beautiful* records in great detail the relationship that eventuated between the author and his publisher by presenting in one volume a complete collection of the Pater-Macmillan correspondence, 189 letters in all. These letters exemplify the role Pater played in the bibliographical aspects of textual production, such as page layout, typography, paper selection and binding, a role normally reserved for the publisher. They also illustrate the challenges faced by

publishers in their need to balance the author's demand for aesthetic appeal, with economy and durability in the book-making process. Such historical information is important for two reasons. First, as literary texts come to us through a complex web of social and industrial processes that in turn direct, or constrain, the way we decode their meaning, the author's original conception is often clouded or goes unnoticed. These letters provide a valuable literary insight into the exchanges and lines of thought that led to the eventual form of Pater's publications. Second, in the editor's own words, they are a useful showcase of the business of "bookmaking" during the period 1872 to 1912.

Seiler's introduction is lengthy and particularly helpful as it provides a survey of the three stages of Pater's career. He begins with the author's early career from 1858-73, giving an outline of the content and theory behind his first review essays, articles and collections for the *Westminster Review* and *Fortnightly Review* in which he refined his critical method. Seiler notes particularly Pater's review-essay of Johann Winckelmann's *The History of Ancient Art* (1764), the last section of which makes up the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*. It reads like a manifesto for the liberation of the human spirit from the trammels of the modern world, with the conclusion that the real aim of culture is "the love of art for its own sake" (5). Pater feels at this stage that it is time to approach Macmillan and Co. to publish certain books he had in mind.

Seiler digresses from the survey of Pater's career to give a brief account of the apprenticeship of Daniel and Alexander Macmillan. What becomes apparent is that they are no ordinary booksellers but, like Marius the Epicurean, possess that rich and genial nature, well fitted to transform an aesthetic philosophy of life into a theory of practice. Daniel writes to a fellow bookseller in Glasgow: "you never surely thought you were looking for bread! Don't you know that you are cultivating good taste among the natives of Glasgow helping to unfold a love of the beautiful among those who are slaves to the useful."

Seiler's next section is devoted to an historical survey of the industrialisation of bookmaking, with separate headings devoted to those aspects which affected the external appearance of the book, notably printing, papermaking, binding and commercial bookmaking. The important changes that occurred resulted in the improvement of bookmaking technology but a decrease in the quality of the materials. The physical format of the book became ugly and flimsy. This is where Seiler's elaboration of the development of Pater's theory of aestheticism becomes relevant. In the face of the commercialism that governed book production a handful of writers, artists, small presses and publishers began a movement towards the revival of fine printing. In this section Seiler describes the contributions of Rossetti, Whistler, the Daniel Press, William Morris and his Kelmscott Press, the Chiswick Press and Bodley Head publishing house, among others, in the inauguration of this new cra in book design, highlighting their theories and philosophy of aestheticism. The next section focuses on the preeminence of Macmillan and Co. in the field of quality bookmaking.

Seiler's format here is arranged for reasons of coherence rather than as a strictly chronological survey. So although he gives an historical account of Macmillan and Co. up until 1897, it is logical for him to then survey the middle and later periods of Pater's literary career between 1872-78. Seiler's thinking here is that the reader needs to

understand the history behind Macmillan and Co. before he or she can appreciate the relationship of the publishing house with Pater as a Macmillan author. Seiler outlines the theory and content of Pater's Macmillan publications, commenting on the reactions of reviewers who were scandalised by the philosophy of hedonism put forth in Pater's works, and also describing the physical format of each published work. He also makes reference to those letters in the collection which illustrate the active role Pater took in the presentation of his works—defining him as a man who is concerned above all with the book's physical appearance. *The Book Beautiful* further investigates several posthumous publications as well as the relationship between the House of Macmillan and Pater's sisters, Hester and Clara, who oversaw their brother's estate after his death in 1894.

The collection of letters is presented chronologically. Seiler's editorial principles are kept as simple as possible. He indicates the source of each letter and appropriate information about where it has been printed before, in addition to standardising the format of the letters, situating date, address and closing in the same place. He places all postscripts after the closing, regardless of their position in the manuscript, and takes very few liberties with the text, spelling out abbreviations and offering readings of illegible handwriting and correcting slips of the pen for the sake of readability. Any allusions the writers make throughout the letters are put into context in the explanatory notes, which are situated in one section at the back of the volume. Titles of books, names of writers, details about publication and distribution, information about publishing forms, and outlines of key issues, including methods of payment and details of copyright, have all been annotated.

I have offered here an "appreciation" of Seiler's *The Book Beautiful*—a sympathetic reading of his volume of edited letters rather than a "criticism" in terms of external criteria (as Matthew Arnold defined the concept). It should be noted, however, that this work would be of more value to scholars of Victorian bookmaking and publishing than to those interested in an in-depth critical evaluation of Pater's philosophy of aestheticism. Pater has been presented as an example of that group of writers and artists who believed in the book as an aesthetic object and urged the revival of fine printing.

**Correne Joyes**

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