

Charles Ricketts, A Biography by J.G.P. Delaney. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. Pp. xxii, 429. ISBN 0-19-817212-5; \$96.00.

Biography is a much debated and scrutinized form; it has earned genre status in the Modern Language Association, and historians, psychoanalysts, art historians, and literary scholars have argued vociferously over its pitfalls, especially the author's personal identification with the subject or psychologizing attempts to get inside the subject's mind. This study of Charles Ricketts (1866-1931) presents a traditional, empirical type of biography which maps out the subject's network of friends and acquaintances, activities and contributions without aggrandizement or excessive psychologizing. Its publication also indicates our own

renewed interest in this period, as further reflected in the pending *Encyclopedia of the 1890s* (Garland, forthcoming) and other recent biographies of 90s figures. Sometimes lapsing into determinations based on national character and the romantic presentation of Ricketts as an outsider (despite his busy social life and his success and admission to the staid Royal Academy), Delaney has thoroughly researched the mass of letters and periodical reviews of Ricketts' art and designs, but sometimes falls prey to the anecdote which often encumbers biographies. Delaney has published several articles on Ricketts and lithography and has edited some of Ricketts' letters.

Ricketts was a charismatic, eclectic polymath, a type that has come to characterize the end of the nineteenth century in his synthesis of artistic creativity with scholarly revivalism and historicism. He was an