

Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire edited by Laurel Brake, Lesley Higgins, and Carolyn Williams. Greensboro, NC: ELT Press, 2002. 380 pp. + 21 b/w illus. ISBN 0-944318-16-9. \$40.00.

Taken together, the essays in this new collection form a dynamic exchange of ideas, readings, and critical approaches, reflecting the range and intensity of contemporary interest in Pater. A sequel of sorts to ELT Press's *Pater in the 1990s* (1991), the essays in the present volume are taken again from the International Walter Pater Conference, this time at Christ Church, Oxford, in summer 2000. None of these pieces will impact Pater studies like the opening essay of the earlier volume, Billie Andrew Inman's account of Pater's homoerotic relationship with a Balliol undergraduate, William Money Harding, but their consistent quality, the interplay among them, and the book's overall organizational structure make this a more satisfying collection. The three editors, all well-known Victorianists and Pater scholars, have done a magnificent job of shaping the volume, with almost each succeeding essay resonating with others before it. The effect of reading the book from start to finish is something like attending a good conference where the participants are actually listening to each other's papers, disagreeing intelligently, building on and referring to earlier sessions.

The collection is large – twenty-one essays, including an introduction by James Eli Adams, organized into five sections. The first, "Considering the Career," contains only two essays, one by Angela Leighton and one by Laurel Brake, and I will return to these in a moment. The second provides a comparative analysis of Pater's reception in England, France, Germany, and Austria during the first part of the twentieth century. The other three sections treat the interdisciplinary context of Pater's work, the interconnection of gender and genre in his fiction, and Pater's relation to current critical theory.

The book's subtitle, "Transparencies of Desire," is taken from the opening essay of the collection, Angela Leighton's "Aesthetic Conditions: Returning to Pater." Leighton uses the phrase to describe Pater's characterization, in his essay on William Morris (1868), of Provençal poetry's earthly lovers as servants of love, but of love defined by an absence of the beloved, and so strange and dream-like, "somnabulistic, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them." The passage itself, later reworked into "Aesthetic Poetry" (1889), is addressed by only one other contributor, Jacques Khalip, who, in his essay on Pater's representations of the male body, emphasizes the sadomasochistic, antinomian desires of Pater's medieval servants of love. But, more generally, as the organizing trope of the collection, "transparencies of desire" highlights central preoccupations in contemporary Pater studies, including Pater's theorizing and representations of sexuality, desire, subjectivity, identity, and his use of transparency itself, or diaphaneite, as a central motif in