

*Charles Ricketts, Everything for Art: Selected Writings* edited by Nicholas Frankel. High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire: Rivendale Press, 2014. 354 pp. + 8 colour, 33 b/w illus. ISBN 978-1-904201-22-9. £40.00; \$65.00.

Charles Ricketts is remembered today largely for his contributions to the art of the book, especially his illustrations and designs for Oscar Wilde's *A House of Pomegranates* (1891) and *The Sphinx* (1894) and for the Vale Press (1896-1904). And yet his contributions to the medium of prose – that other art of the book – have been largely overlooked. Nicholas Frankel's *Charles Ricketts, Everything for Art: Selected Writings* aims to correct this oversight by drawing Ricketts's writings together in one accessible volume. Here Ricketts's oeuvre, most of which originally appeared in periodicals, is organized into four sections: writings on printing and book design, writings on art, his memoirs and recollections, and his fiction. The volume also includes a chronology, a long introduction, a short appendix of Victorian commentaries on Ricketts's work, and more than 40 illustrations. Scholars of the fin de siècle period will find a great deal of interest here, especially those concerned with fine printing, the decorative arts, aestheticism, or decadence. Ricketts's collaborative friendships with Oscar Wilde and Michael Field, documented in the memoirs section, will attract anyone interested in the lives and careers of these writers. Ricketts was an artist who worked in numerous media, but Frankel's volume asks us to recognize in these essays a "synthesis of the ideals" across his artistic practice.

Ricketts was born on the Continent to an Italian mother and an English father, and throughout his career one finds evidence of "an affinity with Continental art and ideas" as well as with the emerging Arts and Crafts movement in England. As a young man in the early 1880s he trained at the City and Guilds Technical Art School as a professional wood-engraver, just as engraving was being eclipsed by photomechanical means of reproduction. While the moment may seem inopportune, Ricketts was poised to build on the Pre-Raphaelite revival in the art of woodcutting that had been led by such artists as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Holman Hunt. Ricketts "was determined to integrate the roles of artist and engraver, thereby raising the eminence of wood-engraving as an artistic medium." The Pre-Raphaelites had relied on the Dalziel brothers to do the actual engraving of their illustrations, but in his essay "A Note on Original Wood Engraving" (1897), Ricketts describes the "detached draughtsman," the separation of the artist and the engraver, as an "evil" to be overcome in the art form. He looks back to "those few master-craftsmen who were designers and engravers at once," who had a "sense of the material to hand," and thus "made good use of the solid masses of wood."