been fruitfully informed by recent theoretical and sociological accounts of the eighteenth-century reader, as well as by other studies of individual readers.

While I have registered some minor disappointments with these essays, they result from the inevitable limitations of the discrete essay format and of the book's brevity. This limitation is in itself valuable, in that it points to the need for scholarship focussed squarely on the print culture of eighteenth-century Scotland, as opposed to studies such as Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* and Leith Davis's *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation, 1707-1830*, which have made us aware of Scottish contributions to the formation of British cultural institutions. It is to be hoped that *Volume II: 1707-1800* of the projected four-volume *History of the Book in Scotland* will further address this gap. In the interim, this handsome, well-written collection and catalogue is admirable in what it does accomplish, in putting both the Scottish culture of the book, and Canadian contributions to the study of that culture, into the hands of readers.

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James G. Nelson. *Publisher to the Decadents: Leonard Smithers in the Careers of Aubrey Beardsley, Wilde, Dowson*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000. xvi, 431 pp.; \$35.00 (hardcover). ISBN 0-271-01974-3.

Literary scholars of the 1890s era know about Leonard Smithers, and one of the things they know is that he was a publisher of low octane pornography in limited editions, or as Oscar Wilde observed, "one for the author, one for [him]self, and one for the police." On another occasion, Wilde wrote that Smithers "is so fond of suppressed books that he suppresses his own."

James G. Nelson's volume is intended to rehabilitate Smithers's reputation and present him as a serious publisher of artists and poets whose careers suffered because of a censorious press and public in Victorian England, especially after Oscar Wilde's imprisonment for sexual "offences" in May 1895. Professor Nelson presents his defence of Smithers with painstaking bibliographical research and detailed

descriptions of his publications along with a biographical study of his career and his generous treatment of near indigent artists. There are chapters dedicated to explorer and translator of erotica Sir Richard Burton, the unstable and sickly poet Ernest Dowson, and the dying artist Aubrey Beardsley, as well as Oscar Wilde, in exile after leaving prison in May 1897. Nelson's theme is Smithers's courage in supporting pariahs by facing down the aggressive, judgmental daily press, and his generosity in readily supplying money, especially when he did not have any to spare, to the incessant demands of Beardsley and Wilde. There is also much useful information on Smithers starting up *The Savoy* magazine as a rival to *The Yellow Book* when the latter's publisher, John Lane, spooked by the Wilde trials, fired controversial artist Aubrey Beardsley. In establishing *The Savoy* and hiring poet/critic Arthur Symons as editor and Aubrey Beardsley as art editor/illustrator, Smithers showed daring and highly developed aesthetic values in offering such a beautifully produced literary magazine, which lasted 8 numbers, from January 1896 to December 1896. Included in its numbers were avant-garde poetry by Yeats, Dowson, Symons, John Gray, Lionel Johnson, Hubert Crackanthorpe, essays by George Bernard Shaw and Havelock Ellis, stories by Joseph Conrad and Max Beerbohm, illustrations by Beardsley and William Blake (which got Smithers in trouble with W.H. Smith book sellers and cost him dearly in sales), and translations of the poetry of Mallarmé, Moreas, and Villon. Smithers paid the highest rates for poetry and prose and was very popular with writers for that and for his hospitable "at homes" with wife Alice, and for the late night convivial carouses at the Crown, the Cock, and the Café Royal.

Included in each biographical chapter are proper bibliographical descriptions of Smithers's published books along with the size, date, price, etc., of each edition. At the conclusion of the study of Smithers's career are 65 pages of appendices by bibliographer Peter Mendes. Appendix A has a short history of Smithers's partner, H.S. Nichols, and their "Erotica Biblion Society" (1888-1896), catering to a select clientele of wealthy, often aristocratic bibliophiles of specialized tastes. Appendix B outlines Smithers's history with the excellent printing house, the Chiswick Press, perhaps the best printer of quality books in England, with fine paper, exquisite typography and design, and distinctive bindings. This appendix includes an annotated checklist of Smithers's publications printed by the Chiswick Press, 1895-1899, including two books of poetry by Arthur Symons and two by Ernest Dowson as well as eight numbers of the *Savoy*, Oscar Wilde's "The

Ballad of Reading Gaol" (seven editions) and his plays *An Ideal Husband*, and the first published edition of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and perhaps Smithers's finest production, Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock," with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley.

Appendix C by Mendes is a list of Smithers's Rare Book Catalogues, and Appendix D, by Nelson and Mendes, is a scholarly and very useful checklist of Smithers's publications, many of the early ones being clandestine and the last ones pirated editions. The 78 pages of notes and the index are detailed and carefully done.

In making the case that Smithers was a major contributor to the modern publishing of quality books, and much more than a pornographer, Nelson has to contend with the wit of Oscar Wilde, one of the main beneficiaries of Smithers's generosity. Scholars of the 1890s are familiar with Oscar Wilde's description of Leonard Smithers after meeting him in Dieppe in the summer of 1897, where Wilde was lurking under the pseudonym Sebastian Melmoth after his release from Reading Gaol. There was much drinking and late night revelry and witty talk, and Wilde enjoyed Smithers immensely, describing him in a letter of 10 August to a friend:

He is usually in a large straw hat, has a blue tie delicately fastened with a diamond brooch of the impurest water—or perhaps wine, as he never touches water: it goes to his head at once. His face, clean-shaven as befits a priest who serves at the altar whose God is literature, is wasted and pale—not with poetry, but with poets, who, he says, have wrecked his life by insisting on publishing with him. He loves first editions, especially of women: little girls are his passion. He is the most learned erotomaniac in Europe. He is also a delightful companion, and a dear fellow, very kind to me.

Two of Nelson's main themes can be found in this commentary: Smithers's support of starving artists/writers and his personal interest in sex. Married for many years to wife Alice and a good parent to his son Jack, who later wrote a friendly reminiscence of his father, Smithers also managed an active sex life on the side, for example taking up with dancers like Yvonne from the *Thalia* for companionship when he went to Paris to tend to publishing interests there. Smithers was described by his fellow pornographer, H.S. Nichols, as "a lustful, lascivious and shameful satyr" (quoted by Peter Mendes in Appendix A, 288). However, Nelson downplays Smithers's extracurricular love life by describing it as "sexual peccadillos" and blaming Victorian England for being prudish. Nelson interpolates several screeds against Victorian morality, written with

heat and what sounds like anger in an otherwise low-key and scholarly book devoted to bibliographical concerns. Here is one of Professor Nelson's outbursts:

Both Beardsley and Wilde attained celebrity in the early Nineties, yet at the most crucial juncture of their lives, both found themselves in the unenviable position of having been cast down from the pinnacle of eminence without friends, without money, and without a patron. As fate would have it, at that moment of crisis, the same man, strangely, entered their lives and, in each case, served as friend, supplier of money, and publisher. That man we know to have been Leonard Smithers. That he would welcome the opportunity to know these pariahs to whom Victorian society, indecorously and without decency, had shown its morally stiff and sanctimonious back, was characteristic of Smithers, who was, given the age in which he lived, refreshingly free from the taint of social snobbery, moral self-righteousness, and bigotry. Unregarding of his society's commands as well as of its hypocritical behavior and puritanical standards of conduct, Smithers, stepping out boldly where others feared to tread, made common cause with the despised artists and writers of the Decadence.

An example of slanting the evidence on Smithers's behalf is the beginning of his last sentence in his introduction to this volume: "Deserted by his wife and son ... as his life came to an ignominious end in 1907...." This is an interesting spin on his wife Alice moving into a run-down hotel because of poverty, her growing despair and alcoholism, and years of putting up with infidelity by her husband, who may well have been dying of syphilis. Professor Nelson refers to what Smithers called his "muscular rheumatism" as "rheumatoid arthritis," but those terms were often Victorian circumlocutions for syphilis, which was rampant at that time amongst artists and writers: Guy de Maupassant, Alphonse Daudet, Jules de Goncourt, and probably Henri Toulouse-Lautrec died from the disease.

Putting aside these strenuous attempts to defend Smithers, the reader of this volume has an excellent resource to appreciate Leonard Smithers's contributions to literary life and literature in supporting talented artists who were neglected in their own time and preserving works (and in beautiful form) that would have been lost otherwise. For that, literary history is indebted to both Leonard Smithers and Professor Nelson.

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