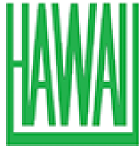

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Drawing Conclusions: Beardsley and Biography

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LINDA GERTNER ZATLIN

Drawing Conclusions: Beardsley and Biography

The life of Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898) abounds in contradictions, and it is these contradictions which have provided us with a source of speculation about the man and his art. Beardsley was an Englishman who admired French art and authors, a Victorian whose favorite century was the eighteenth, an artist whose most valued possessions were not paintings but rare books, an illustrator who wanted to be a writer, a student of eroticism who issued a dying request to "destroy . . . *all* obscene drawings" (*Letters* 439). His juvenilia give little hint of his strikingly original style, which he developed seemingly overnight. By his own declaration, he worked only by candlelight; and yet, as he once admitted, he despised Gothic cathedrals, for they "shut out" the sun (Lawrence 202). By the time he was twenty-three years of age, established British artists discussed his technique in their books; yet his work was praised more on the Continent than in Britain, where he was notorious rather than famous. British critics praised his facility with line even as they condemned the treatment of his subjects, simultaneously labeling them "salacious" as well as "sexless and unclean,"[1] but they were unable to ignore him. His work, accomplished during a brief six years of the *fin de siècle,* strongly influenced Art Nouveau, while its dramatic simplicity uncluttered Victorian art and cleared the way for various aspects of modernism. The interest which continues to be aroused by Beardsley's work has also continued to provoke speculation about the life out of which that work was created.

During the ninety-four years since Beardsley's death, his work has been intermittently brought before the public by devoted followers,

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and he has been the subject of three biographies, which have resolved some of the contradictions about him that confront us. In early December 1986, when Sotheby's auctioned diverse material by and about Beardsley, we were presented with an opportunity to revise our conclusions about this controversial *fin de siècle* artist. Two of his drawings were sold on the 4th and 5th, while on the 18th, four photographs—one never reproduced—and two illustrated letters—one never fully published—were offered. Although the whole lot was estimated at £9,000–12,700, the drawings brought £11,000, the letters and photographs £22,500 (Sotheby's Lots 29–33; Hillier).[2]

As with all evidence, evidence about Beardsley's life must be approached not simply with curiosity but also with caution. Sometimes, for example, letters are disappointing, for they may dwell on frustratingly mundane matters rather than on attitudes toward art or on artistic intentions.[3] In Beardsley's case, this frustration led even in his lifetime to the type of recorded gossip which has in no way allowed us to form an accurate picture of the man. Some artists are fortunate, as were Yeats, Joyce, and Wilde, to have a biographer like Richard Ellmann, or in the case of Cezanne, a John Rewald. The careful reconstruction of an artist's life, as undertaken by these biographers, has as its aim to provide the modern audience with carefully documented insights into the artist's philosophy.

The intricacies of biography were the subject of the late Richard Ellmann's last book, *a long the riverrun* (1988), in which he discussed, among other things, the difficulties of establishing influence—of a time, a place, a tradition, of contemporary artists and their work. Not heeding Henry James's caveat about the public and the private life of the artist (*The Aspern Papers,* 1888), many biographers are not content with exploring the artist's work and instead turn their attention to the investigation of a contiguous issue: the secrecy of an interior life. Did Kipling suppress an inclination to homosexuality? Was E. F. Benson or Edward Lear aware of homoerotic feelings? Did T. H. White ever engage in sexual activity? How shaky was Hemingway's sexual identity? Some artists have intentionally or unintentionally exacerbated the problem of privacy. Dickens, for example, deliberately destroyed many private papers. We now know that Trollope exaggerated his suffering at school, that Maugham necessarily concealed his homosexuality, that Freud deliberately abandoned his "seduction theory" because of "its distasteful insinuations about his own father" (Ingleby 547).

The 1890s was a decade crowded with anecdote, a time when the avant-garde considered artificiality its ruler, lying and masking its vice-

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roys. Unlike the 1990s, an age of personal revelation, the overstatements of the 1890s were paradoxically discreet, revealing little or nothing of the private life. Max Beerbohm's biographer, David Cecil, admits to an unsatisfied curiosity when confronted by Beerbohm's reticence, even in his private letters (3–4). This difficulty is compounded in the case of Beardsley, who like Beerbohm both drew and wrote, but who left fewer letters and seemed to have few close friends.

A prolific artist, Beardsley left 1096 drawings, according to A. E. Gallatin's 1945 catalogue. During the six years of his career, Beardsley created prospectus covers, posters, and frontispieces for numerous novels, as well as sets of illustrations for literary works. Of his posters, at least one, a twelve-foot tall Beardsley woman advertising performances of plays by George Bernard Shaw and William Butler Yeats, attracted considerable attention on the London streets. As the art editor of two prominent 1890s periodicals, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy,* Beardsley brought well-crafted art within the pocketbook of the middle class, realizing what would remain only a dream for William Morris and Walter Crane. In addition to juvenilia, Beardsley's written works include a translation of a poem by Catullus, four poems (of which one was unfinished and two were published), an essay on billboard art, a prospectus for *Volpone,* and ten chapters of *The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser,* an unfinished erotic novel. His correspondence, published in 1970, offers glimpses of a vanished world, one circumscribed toward the end of his life by the deterioration of his tubercular lungs.

In contrast to the letters of other Victorians, his letters are not voluminous in length or number—and certainly not revealing of his inner life. The letters do record the architecture, paintings, people he saw, the drawings and literary work in progress; acknowledge checks providing subsistence for him and his mother toward the end of his brief life; and exemplify the wry humor which enabled him to cope both with unfriendly critics and his crushing illness. One letter cites the importance of line in his drawings; two announce changes of style. His relationships with some well-known figures of the 1890s continue to remain unclear. Wilde often visited The Vale to see Charles Shannon and Charles Ricketts, the book illustrators Beardsley was to outstrip. During Beardsley's close association with Wilde, however, it is unclear whether Beardsley accompanied Wilde to The Vale, despite the fact that Beardsley was creating illustrations for Wilde's *Salome.*[4] The details of at least one other journey remain impenetrable. Although Beardsley penned one poem on stationery from a hotel in Cologne, no

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records exist confirming his travel to that city.[5] The biographies document his search for a climate more conducive to his weak lungs, note his changes of artistic style, announce his "over-night" success and his downfall—dismissal from *The Yellow Book* staff—after Oscar Wilde was arrested on charges of sodomy and was seen carrying *a*, but not *the*, yellow book.

While some writers place too much weight on the scant biographical material contained in Beardsley's correspondence, they simply ignore the contradictory descriptions of Beardsley left by his contemporaries. Obituaries and Edwardian memoirs reminisce about Beardsley and, in references varying from a few lines to lengthy chapters, mention his favorite haunts and drinking partners, recount his wit at dinner parties, describe his drawings, his dress, his personality. But few of these writers agree about the predominant characteristics of Beardsley's apparently "contradictory" (Symons 753) temperament. Max Beerbohm wrote that Beardsley was "full of fun in company."[6] The painter William Rothenstein suggested that his manner was affected. The art critic D. S. McColl remembered that he was "gentle." His co-editor at *The Savoy*, Arthur Symons, reported an "astonishing tranquillity." The writer Richard Le Gallienne intimated "great nervous energy." The publisher Grant Richards recalled him as "dark-mooded." Was Beardsley "a very loyal friend," as Beerbohm averred? Or was Symons more accurate in stating that the artist had "scarcely a friend in the fullest sense of the word" and "only one or two people for whom he felt any real affection"? Beardsley's acquaintances fail to agree about the time and the way he worked, as well as the effect of journalists' criticism upon him. Finally, no published account satisfactorily resolves the matter of his relationship with Oscar Wilde or the question, repeatedly raised, about Beardsley's sexuality. Rather than attempting through mere speculation to resolve the contradictory claims made about Beardsley, however, we must return to his work to find evidence of his philosophy of art. The letters, drawings, and photographs sold at Sotheby's afford one such opportunity.

I

Both of the letters offered at auction were written to Beardsley's schoolfellow, G. F. Scotson-Clark (1872–1927). The volume of the artist's collected letters (1970) contains seven letters written between July 1891 and February 1893 to Scotson-Clark, with whom Beardsley had attended the Brighton Grammar School. Like Beardsley, Scotson-Clark had moved to London and worked in the City. In 1892, he emi-

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grated to the United States, where, according to Maas et al., he became a successful businessman (*Letters* 20 n1), according to Donald Weeks, the editor of *Art Amateur Magazine* in 1893 (72), and, as we have recently discovered, a designer of posters as well. Also like Beardsley, Scotson-Clark wanted to attend the Herkomer School of Art at Bushey, Hertfordshire; both applied in 1891 but lacked sufficient funds to enter (*Letters* 20 n9). There is a hiatus in the correspondence between these young men, from September 1891 to Beardsley's last letter to his friend. In this letter, written around 15 February 1893, Beardsley reports with muted glee, modest enough in light of the "Beardsley Boom" London was experiencing, of his phenomenal success. Six of the letters, including one of those sold, appear in Maas et al. in their entirety. Overall, the letters report in an informal and enthusiastic manner on Beardsley's excursions to various exhibitions, private collections, the opera, and the theater, as well as on his "latest productions" (*Letters* 20).

Of the two letters auctioned at Sotheby's, the earlier one has never been fully published. It bears no date, but Maas et al. wisely place the excerpts from it after a letter reporting on Beardsley's visit to the painter Burne-Jones written on 13 July 1891 and addressed not to Scotson-Clark, but to A. W. King, Beardsley's housemaster at the Brighton Grammar School. The previously published sections of this four-page letter, which recounts Burne-Jones's advice to the young artist, have been printed out of order. We have therefore reproduced it in full as Appendix I, with punctuation added where necessary.

Beardsley devotes two-thirds of page four, between the references to *Le Morte Darthur* and his signature, to a sketch of a mountain reflected in a lake. On the left and barren side of the mountain, rain falls on a silhouetted figure with a walking stick and with arms stretched wide, who has already ascended a third of the way. On the right side of the mountain, trees bloom under the radiance of a sun labeled "ART." While we cannot ascribe any definite connection between this crude sketch and his reference to Malory's text, their juxtaposition is curious. Does it imply that Beardsley might already have had a sense of illustrations he would draw, months later, when on commission for the "glorious book," which would bring him over the crest of the mountain into the radiance of the short-lived but significant "Beardsley Boom?"

The other letter, which appears in Maas et al. and which was first reproduced by Lewis Hind in *The Uncollected Work of Aubrey Beardsley* (1925), is missing a picture originally enclosed by the artist—

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"a Real Art TREASURE—a hasty impression of Whistler's *Miss Alexander* which I saw a week or so back; a truly glorious, indescribable, mysterious and evasive picture. My impression almost amounts to an exact reproduction in black and white of Whistler's *Study in Grey and Green.*"[7] The letter itself contains a poem[8] by Beardsley and enough sketches, eight in all, to make it a "real art treasure" for a collector of Beardsley's work. Page one bears five sketches (Fig. 1). Separating the first two columns of writing is a drawing of Beardsley's head and shoulders as a planter, flowers emerging from it on a tall stalk. Underneath the Beardsley planter, a smaller but full-length figure of Beardsley reading the newspaper refers to him "swearing and cursing because he [sic] was idiot enough to miss the Walter Crane show of pictures. I only saw the advertisement thereof on the last day of Exhibition." Underneath the second column is a faint sketch of Holbein's *Ambassadors,* which Beardsley had seen the day before and in this letter termed "damned ugly." (The next month he recanted, telling Clark he felt "somewhat ashamed" of his first judgment [29].) To the right of that sketch, below the third column (and not shown in the photograph), Beardsley sings a song recently composed by Scotson-Clark, who ostensibly is the pianist. Rarely able to resist a pun, Beardsley separates the last two columns with a tall, painfully undernourished artist, whose trouser bottom bears the words "High Art." The letter contains no specific reference to this last sketch. Yet, because he wonders about "the distance between our present position and Herkomer's Glory Hole" and adds, "Don't I wish I could get there!", it is reasonable to conjecture that the figure of "High Art" represents Beardsley and any artist who was restrained from working full time at his chosen vocation; Beardsley himself, at the time he wrote this letter, was forced to endure humdrum employment.

On page two are the poem and three drawings. Less than one-third of this page is taken up by a copy of Whistler's portrait of his mother (Fig. 2), about which Beardsley writes, "the curtain [is] marvellously painted, the border shining with wonderful silver notes. The accompanying sketch is a *vile* libel." Below this picture, extending from its lower right edge to the bottom of the page and dividing the poem from the other drawings, is a line (Fig. 3) constructed of eight profiles. Facing in alternate directions, each regards either the poem or the letter's closure; the line ends in the lower half of a torso standing on tiptoe. The sketch next to the line is a bust of a Roman Caesar, crowned with a wreath of laurel leaves. On the right side of the wreath is another circlet, enclosing Beardsley's initials, with his address above and the date

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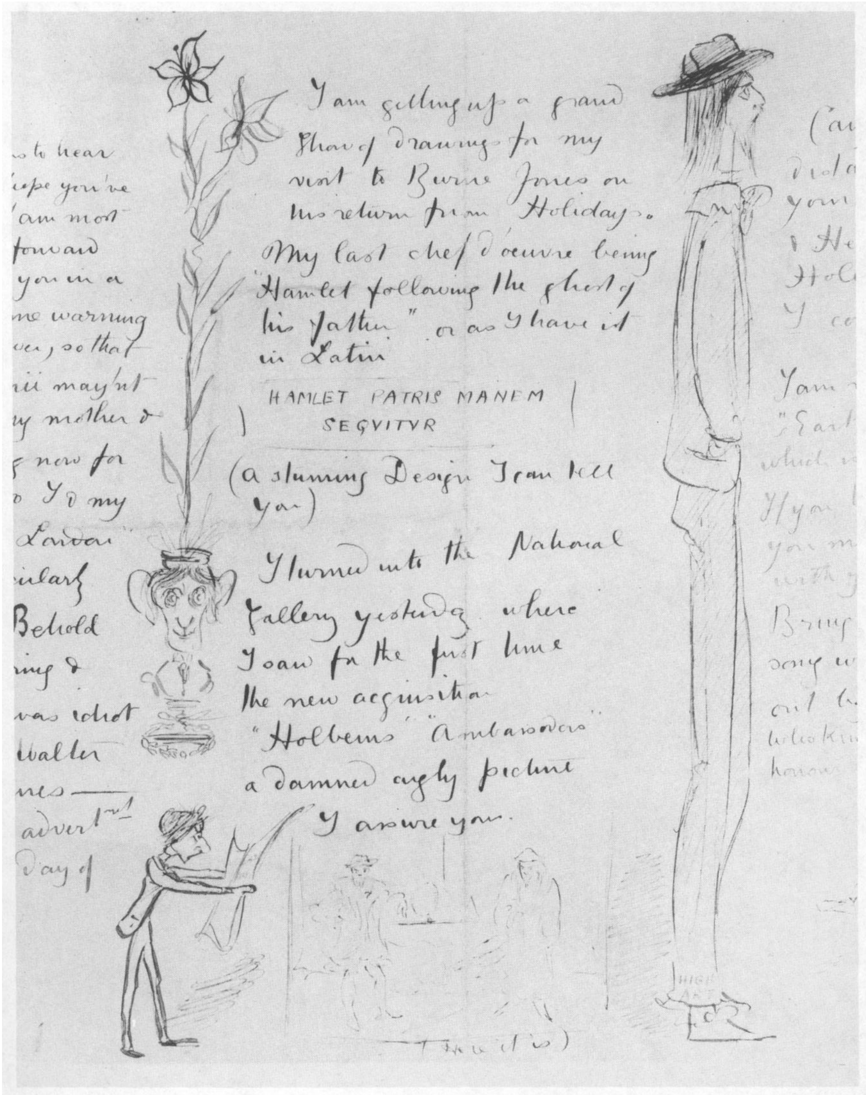
I am getting up a grand Show of drawings for my visit to Burne Jones on his return from Holidays. My last chef d'oeuvre being "Hamlet following the ghost of his father" or as I have it in Latin

HAMLET PATRIS MANEM SEQVITVR

(a stunning Design I can tell you)

I turned into the National Gallery yesterday where I saw for the first time the new acquisition "Holbeins" "Ambassadors" a damned ugly picture I assure you.

Figure 1.

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Figure 2.

Figure 3.

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of the letter, 8 September 1891, below. Beardsley lifts the wreath from the emperor's head to form his cartouche, quite possibly as a symbol of his desire for fame.

As an emblem of Beardsley's fierce desire for fame, the bust echoes a posthumous anecdote recounted by Ellen Beardsley about her son when he was very young. After attending a service in Westminster Abbey and observing the memorial busts and stained glass windows, the small child asked which one he should choose, adding, " 'For I may be a great man some day.' " He chose the bust, " 'because I am rather good-looking' " (Ellen Beardsley 79). The bust of this childhood anecdote and of the letter is transformed into a statue in a letter to his last publisher, Leonard Smithers (*Letters* 254). But after his final 1893 letter to Scotson-Clark, Beardsley was never again as exuberantly open to any correspondent, even to his sister Mabel (Benkovitz 76), whom he increasingly shielded from news about his worsening condition.

II

The two drawings that were auctioned were published during the artist's lifetime. Beardsley executed the border (Fig. 4) for his first major commission, J. M. Dent's edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1893–94), which appeared in twelve installments commencing June 1893. Created along with approximately 350 chapter-headings, borders, initials, ornaments, and full- or double-page illustrations, this border of stylized acanthus leaves, placed at the beginning of chapter one in Book XX, flows in intricate Art Nouveau curves, punctuated at irregular but harmonious intervals with curled buds. The leaf stalks entwine, curving back on each other to form a swirling background for the leaves with a restlessness that the late Brian Reade found characteristic of the borders for this text (317 n70, 319 n104, 320 n107, 321 n125). Here, the background dramatically enhances the three-dimensional quality Beardsley gives to the leaves and the stalks.[9] The undulating movement in this border and the plump buds on the verge of blossoming are two of the sensual, organic qualities in Beardsley's early work which were rapidly to influence Art Nouveau.

The second drawing dates from the same time. This small head, right shoulder, and left hand of Pan (2½″ × 3¼″; Fig. 5) was further reduced in size and published on page fifty-one in Walter Jerrold's *The Bon-Mots of Sydney Smith and R. Brinsley Sheridan* (April 1893). Although H. R. Woudhuysen reported this drawing as "unrecorded," it appears in Hind's book of uncollected drawings under the title,

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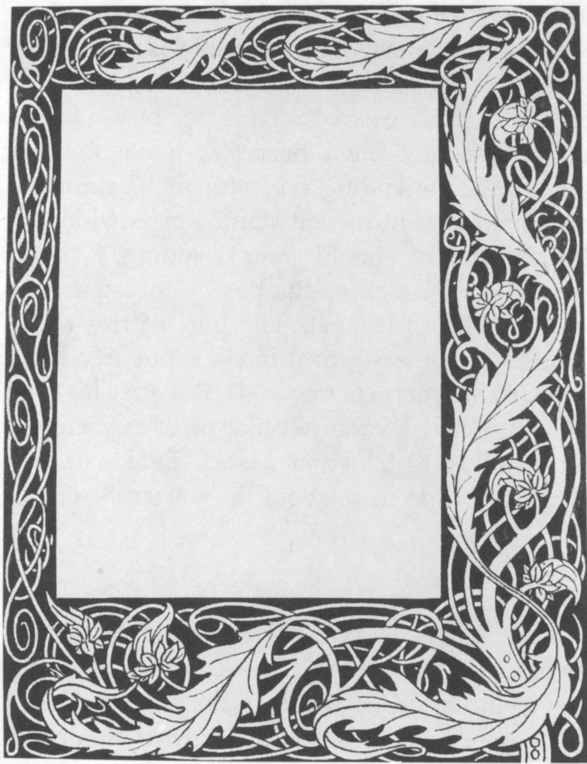

Figure 4.

Figure 5.

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"Head of Satan," with the incorrect date of 1894.[10] The drawing is one of the earliest inscribed with Beardsley's "trade mark," which was inspired by Persian calligraphy and signatures on Japanese woodblock prints. He used the emblem until mid-1894, afterwards signing drawings with his name, his initials, a pseudonym, or even by leaving them unsigned. His mark is in the shape of a rough, rather phallic diamond formed by three parallel lines, the middle one jutting higher to accommodate below it three stylized hearts in descending size. The smallest of these forms the bottom tip of the diamond.

The image is placed toward the top of the paper on which it is drawn. The overall design is an inverted triangle, with the strongly inked musical instrument forming the bottom point. The leaves at the left and right, along with Pan's continuous eyebrow, create the triangle's legs and keep the viewer's gaze within these parameters. Muting the bold black and white, indeed giving the picture a three-color quality, are the tiny lines delineating the hair on Pan's paw, head, and beard. Seen in right profile, Pan glowers, his pipes dangling from his seemingly unattached left paw. At first glance it appears that this drawing bears marks of Beardsley's "hairline" style,[11] but these lines, which extend halfway across the top of the drawing as well as around Pan's shoulder, pipes, and little finger, function as ropes. From them can be discerned the reason for Pan's dour expression. By these thin lashes, this god of the woodlands and flocks is tied to the tree, bound horn, upper torso, paw, and pipes to and by his native element. Isolated, unable to play and thereby unable to lure others into the woods, Pan leans his head against the tree, eyes closed, brow furrowed in a disgruntled frown.

This Pan can be examined from a biographical standpoint in two ways. First, it can be related to the restrictions placed on Beardsley by his rapidly deteriorating health. By 1893 Beardsley had recovered from the hemorrhages of the lungs which had restrained him from concentrated artistic efforts for eighteen months, from 1889 to 1891. He may have been aware, however, that his health could abruptly fail, which it did in August and November 1894. Descriptions of the artist during 1893–94 unfailingly include the adjectives "pale" and "emaciated" (see, for example, Hind [xvi] and Dent [68]). While these terms could refer to a genetically inherited complexion and body type, we have no similar descriptions of other family members. It is more reasonable to accept his white face and painfully thin frame as results of anemia and loss of appetite, both of which accompany tuberculosis.

The second biographical implication of the drawing is the supposed

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relationship between consumption and sex. In nineteenth-century folklore concerning tubercular patients, the desire for sex increased as the power to engage in intercourse diminished. Desire was supposedly diverted to a marked preoccupation with sexual thoughts. Because Beardsley executed drawings with erotic details, it has been a commonplace that he was prey to a sort of sexual erethism. Yeats averred that "his disease presented continuously before his mind, as one of its symptoms, lascivious images" (92), and this "fact" was accepted even by the late Ian Fletcher in his recent and elegant discussion of Beardsley's work (Preface). Nonetheless, neither social histories which trace the disease from 1850 forward nor current medical texts mention this connection, even in terms of folklore (Smith, Bryder). According to Delutha H. King, M. D., who regularly treats tubercular patients, in seventy percent of the male tubercular population the prostate is enlarged, causing pain, but Dr. King has neither seen nor read in medical literature about a link between the disease and increased thoughts about sex (Interview). A preoccupation with erotic thoughts, as Brian Reade remarked, is not inappropriate to a man in his early twenties (19). It is pertinent in this light to observe that the overall design of the Pan under consideration, an inverted triangle, drawn when Beardsley was in his twentieth year, symbolizes the *mons veneris.*[12]

The Victorians were familiar with Pan as a symbol of sexuality, but most likely would not have focused on the sexuality of the design itself. To us, the way the demigod is depicted may offer a clue about the way the artist saw his sexual ability. An early representation of this demigod, this Pan is not the first of his fauns and satyrs, although it is the most powerful and fierce. Drawn during the time Beardsley studied the Greek vases at the British Museum, nineteen male, female, and child versions of satyrs languidly grace chapter-headings and a border for *Le Morte Darthur,* six full-bodied males the three volumes of *Bon-Mots.* At least eight more drawings of fauns were published in 1894 and 1895, and these become increasingly domesticated. The penultimate drawing to use this Greek motif, a design for the prospectus and front cover of *The Yellow Book,* Vol. V, (April 1895), contains a tame faun whose hair is covered with bunches of grapes and leaves. He docilely sits on a river bank and reads from a small book to a young lady clothed in a full-skirted dress. In notes to the frontispiece of John Davidson's *Plays* (1894), Brian Reade speculates that the faun may represent Beardsley (340 n317), and that the face could easily be called a caricature of Beardsley's early *Self-Portrait* (Reade, plate 23). In the last drawing depicting this motif, an unused design for a *Yellow Book*

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poster (c.1895), a faun with a face similar to the one in *Plays* appears as a tiny, clothed doll. His head is emphasized by a large amount of hair. If he represents the artist, the emphasis on the head is possibly indicative of Beardsley's desire to ignore bodily ills and concentrate instead on ideas for drawings. Unlike the drawing sold at auction, these gentle fauns also differ from the satyrs described by Beardsley's first-person narrator in chapter five of *Venus and Tannhäuser*. As they become "intoxicated" and press "ardent embraces" on the human beings, they "waxed fast and furious, and seemed as if they would never come to the end of their strength" (51). If we are to accept the fauns as representative of Beardsley himself, the contrast between them and the Pan of the drawing sold, as well as the satyrs of the novel, would seem to suggest that the tame Beardsleyan fauns symbolize the waning of his sexual ability.[13]

III

Three of the four photographs sold at Sotheby's have been published. The earliest, taken when Beardsley was approximately eleven and one-half years old (Fig. 6), appears on page 158 of Malcolm Easton's psychoanalytic biography, *Aubrey and the Dying Lady* (1972). The last, which Easton includes on page 255 and which earlier writers have also reproduced, shows Beardsley in late November or early December 1897 (Fig. 7) in his room at the Hotel Cosmopolitain in Menton, France, where he would soon die. Viewed in profile with his left side facing the camera, Beardsley sits in front of reproductions of Mantegna's *The Triumphs of Caesar,* of Da Vinci's *The Slave,* as well as of works by their school, and approximately seven feet away from the photographer; the photograph is asymmetrically composed, much like one of Beardsley's drawings. The copy auctioned is inscribed to Herbert Pollitt, the collector who purchased enough of Beardsley's work for the artist to want "to see your framed collection of Aubreys" (*Letters* 369).[14] Pollitt might have been presented with the photograph had he visited the artist in Menton during late December or at the turn of 1898. Pollitt seems to have been the sole person before whom the dying artist felt no need to maintain a brave front, as evinced by a note Beardsley wrote to Pollitt upon his arrival in Menton on 22 November. In it, Beardsley writes frankly that "I am abominably ill" (*Letters* 396). Pollitt's answer must have been to propose a trip to Menton, which would have been a farewell, for on 11 December Beardsley writes, "Do come. How charming to see you the livelong day, my sympathique and amusing collector" (*Letters* 405). Yet none of the

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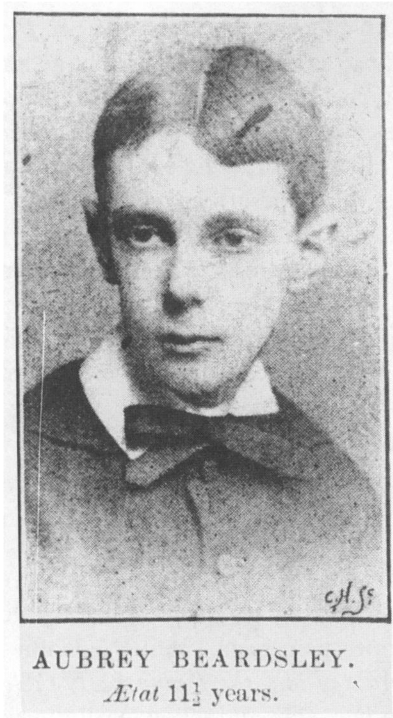

Figure 6.

published letters written during the last three months of Beardsley's life refer to a visit by Pollitt.[15] Unless a previously unknown letter surfaces, it seems logical to conclude that Pollitt's trip did not take place and that Beardsley sent the photograph to him.

The other two photographs are from a set (total number unknown) taken by H. H. Cameron of London at the end of August 1896.[16] In March of that year, Beardsley suffered a complete breakdown of health and two months later began a trek in search of a climate more conducive to his tubercular lungs. He moved from London to Crowborough, back to London, from there to Epsom, and in mid-August to Boscombe, where he remained until late January 1897. A few days after the August 1896 visit to London, Beardsley hemorrhaged again. Yet his spirits did not flag, and during 1896 he produced major works in different styles for *The Savoy,* Pope's *The Rape of the Lock,* Aristophanes's *Lysistrata,* Dowson's *The Pierrot of the Minute,* two drawings for *Ali Baba,* as well as composing two poems and continuing to write *Venus and Tannhäuser.* Nonetheless, the photographs taken in August reveal his illness more sharply than a subsequent set, made in Bournemouth in early 1897.[17]

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Figure 7.

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More, in fact, than any other photograph, the strongly lighted portraits by Cameron disclose the advances made by the tuberculosis which would kill Beardsley on 16 March 1898. In the portraits made by Cameron, Beardsley's fringe, dampened and slicked back, exposes a forehead over which his skin is taut, like the rest of his haggard and fleshless face. Beardsley termed "superb" (*Letters* 162) the head and shoulder portrait (Fig. 8), which first appeared as the frontispiece in *A Book of Fifty Drawings* (1896). His open jacket emphasizes the length of his face, while his slicked-back hair and clean-shaven jawline make him appear far younger than his twenty-five years. The shadow under his eyes and his serious expression betray his illness. Beardsley stares at the viewer, yet his thoughts seem far away, as if preoccupied with his fragile condition. The gentle and vulnerable face causes one to wonder about the demonic intent ascribed to his drawings.

The second photograph in the set sold at Sotheby's (Fig. 9), previously unpublished, is posed, and it employs the harsh light with more artifice. Beardsley casually brushes his cheek with the fingers of his right hand. (In a picture reproduced in *Letters to Smithers* [1937] which appears to belong to this group, Beardsley's fingers are loosely curled below his ear in a slightly different pose.) In contrast to the clarity of his long-fingered hand, the shadows it casts soften his jawline and help to abbreviate the length between his chin and cheek. Despite his poor health, the artist had lost none of his wry humor: this particular copy bears the autograph of Guilio Floriani, the pseudonym with which, as a practical joke, he signed his cover drawing for the September 1896 issue of *The Savoy* magazine.[18]

The three adult photographs suggest several things about Beardsley. The artist wanted to be noticed, and the photographs intimate the way he must have tried to control his public image. Yeats reported his "wish to be stared at" (90), and Beardsley revelled in the fame which came to him with the appearance of *The Yellow Book,* when "his name was a household word" (Dane, "Thoughts" 10). The adoption of a pose to create an effect had been cannily used by Wilde to defend lying (*The Decay of Lying,* 1889) and by Beerbohm to advocate the use of cosmetics as a mask ("A Defence of Cosmetics," 1894). During the heady years of 1893–94, while commissions rolled in, Beardsley pretended not to have a financial need to work in order to exploit contemporary notions of the avant-garde artist as a man of leisure. He was no less shrewd with his manner of dress. On social occasions, he became an advertisement for his drawings. He was seen everywhere, clad in black and white with lemon yellow gloves or, with a yellow tie, in

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Figure 8.

Figure 9.

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shades of gray—a variation on his artistic use of black and white (Macfall 17; Pennell 42).

The theatricality of the photographs seems to be reinforced by Beardsley's spoken language. Haldane Macfall, an art critic who became acquainted with the young artist in 1895 and who wrote the first of the three biographies, related that, "He affected a voice and employed picturesque words in conversation."[19] In the artist's letters we find oxymorons, such as "perfectly monstrous" and "simply ravishing," as well as descriptions of a city as "quite sweet," the contents of a book as "delicate," or a review as "delicious"—all of which reek of artificiality (*Letters* 51, 162, 94, 109, 113). According to Maas et al., Marc-André Raffalovich apparently chided him for overusing "adorable" (*Letters* 85). Macfall said that the artist gave the "impression of intense artificiality," and it was probably because of such affectation that the painter William Rothenstein, an early friend, had difficulty remaining friendly with Beardsley during those years.[20] Gushing descriptions in letters to friends such as Robert Ross, William Rothenstein, Ada Leverson, Leonard Smithers, and André Raffalovich contrast with his consistently businesslike manner in his letters to publishers and unaffected notes to his sister Mabel (for example, *Letters* 63, 69, 77).

Contemporary accounts and Beardsley's demonstrated ability to choose his words according to his audience testify to the adoption of a particular style when it suited him. The photograph Beardsley signed with a pseudonym (Fig. 9), for example, is theatrical, as are his picturesque descriptions and precious conversation. This supports the view stated in one obituary that the artist "affected a very artificial pose in his manner and conversation."[21] As did Rothenstein, this writer attested, without giving a date, to a change in Beardsley's behavior: "much of this vanished; partly . . . because of increasing common sense, partly because of the illness which was beginning to numb his vitality" (49). The difference is evoked strongly in Fig. 8, in which Beardsley's gaze is sad but without affectation, probably the reason writers of posthumous books preferred to publish this photograph. Viewed in this context, the last picture taken of Beardsley (Fig. 7) reveals the utilization of a very different type of mask at the end of his life.

This photograph places him in a studious environment. Books fill the Japanese-inspired bookcase; reproductions of his favorite Mantegnas and Da Vincis block out a portion of flowered wallpaper. Scrupulously dressed, hair neatly combed, the artist reads in a chair, care-

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fully distancing himself from the notion that he was bedridden. Posing as if he were merely on vacation in order to fuel his imagination for further drawings—rather than to give in to repeated attacks of the disease that was destroying his lungs—Beardsley seems oblivious to the four mismatched flower patterns in the carpet, wallpaper, chairs, and bed-hanging.[22] In fact, Beardsley would complete only three more drawings for *Volpone* before he was completely incapacitated. Although his face is turned and far from the camera, divulging few manifestations of tuberculosis, the progress of his illness is clearly revealed in the emaciation of his body.[23] Despite his worsening condition, he depicts himself as a man hard at work—which was in part true when this photograph was taken in December 1897, and throughout January 1898, when he completed with effort the prospectus and planned to finish what remained of the twenty-four drawings commissioned for *Volpone.* One almost feels as if Beardsley himself succumbed to this illusion, for this was his last, if intermittently, productive period.[24] Six weeks later, on 16 March 1898, Beardsley died.

IV

Analysis of the material sold at auction provides no answers to any of the mysteries surrounding Beardsley, but it does fill in some gaps about his personality and his relationships. Dating from the earliest part of his career, the letters reinforce his well-known hunger for fame. By publishing one letter to which we previously did not have full access, we can supply additional information about Beardsley's daily activities and about some personal qualities. The sketches and drawings in these letters disclose the artist's visual humor through both pictorial puns and style: in his sketch of Whistler's portrait of his mother, for example, the head is drawn in the style of Burne-Jones.[25] The two drawings sold, which were executed only two years later, show the artist's skill in moving from style to style. While the border is reminiscent of William Morris and Burne-Jones, the *Head of Pan* foreshadows abstract art in its juxtaposition of black and white. This drawing reveals Beardsley moving towards his mature style—occasionally recalling another artist's, but already Beardsley's own. By establishing that the drawing of Pan put up at auction had been published before, we can correct faulty information. We can speculate about the photographs, but like the letters and the biographies, they serve to underscore Beardsley's total immersion in his art, not to yield secrets.

Knowledge about Beardsley's private life may forever lie beyond our grasp, although it is probable that his personality was never fully

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formed. Facts of his early life—tubercular symptoms at the age of seven, the resulting departure for boarding school (where, his mother reported, he developed the quality of "stoicism"[26]), his intellectual upbringing in a household in which there was no strong male from whom to learn, and intermittent incapacitation—might be psychologically informative.[27] On the surface, the frequent bouts of inactivity resulting from his illness most likely inhibited the development of his personality: later in life he formed friendships only with difficulty, exploiting instead the security of his status as spectator.

Beardsley's delicate health often set him apart, as it did upon his entry as a sickly twelve-year-old at the Brighton Grammar School. The physical constraints imposed by his ill health relegated Beardsley to the position of observer rather than participant and limited his interaction with his peers. Encouraged at school in reading, writing, and drawing, Beardsley flourished in these areas. While there he did have a "crush" on an unidentified Miss Felton, to whom he wrote a letter. Nonetheless, development of his social skills must have lagged behind, for we are told as well that he "kept to himself" and that he was "remote, aloof" (Richards 280; Beerbohm 546). Macfall fleshed out these comments: "From the very beginning, Beardsley lived in books —saw life only through books—was aloof from his own age and his world, which he did not understand nor care to understand"(40). His "intimates" were the heroines of nineteenth-century French novels, the refuge he sought from the Miss Feltons of the 1890s. Moreover, Beardsley's adoption of a theatrical manner at about this time supports the idea of a mask, which might have disguised an undeveloped ability to trust other people. Yeats, who admired Beardsley, placed the artist in the thirteenth phase in his analysis of psychological types, *A Vision.* The thirteenth phase is one of the closest to human perfection; individuals located here are concerned not with people but with ideas.[28]

As we have seen, Beardsley continued to resort to a mask. Once Beardsley made the decision to become an artist, Macfall writes, he "sought to acquire [the] atmosphere" of those he considered to be the "great ones" (40). Adopting their manners—smart clothing and conversation—probably served the dual purpose of assisting the artist to fit into their society and to "try on" a type of behavior. In 1893, for example, when he became famous, his choice of monochromatic clothing provided the additional, theatrical way of attracting and fulfilling his need for public attention. This need could also explain why Beardsley at twenty gravitated toward Oscar Wilde. But Wilde was generous, though at times malicious, eighteen years older yet not

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remote, extravagant but langorous, witty, and with a zest for life—traits all perfectly natural to him.[29] For Beardsley, to whom drawing came naturally, Wilde's flamboyance must have been unsettling. If, as Richard Ellmann asserted, Beardsley "spurned" Wilde after the writer's release from prison in 1897 (551), he most likely did so because he was incapable of being a friend (although no extant documentation records anything other than uneasy cordiality between the two). Outside of his sister, with whom he had been close since childhood, there is little evidence that Beardsley trusted anyone enough to form friendships—which explains his reliance on masks to control his interaction with other people.

The question of Beardsley's sexuality is equally a matter of speculation, based as it would be on interpretations of fragmentary evidence. Some of his first contacts in the London avant-garde, notably those who had power to help Beardsley make contacts for commissions—Aymer Vallance, Robert Ross, and Wilde—were homosexual. Beardsley might have believed it expedient to behave like those whose acquaintance he sought to strengthen and retain. For example, his letters to Smithers contain bawdy heterosexual jokes and equivocal comments about his own sexuality, but he may have felt that this behavior, too, was expected of him. And while his first-person narrator in *Venus and Tannhäuser* reveals a capacious knowledge of both hetero- and homosexuality, such information could have been gleaned from his constant companions—books.[30] One psychoanalyst of Beardsley's preoccupation with sex in his drawings—in which the natural world and human beings are eroticized—finds that Beardsley is confused about his sexuality.[31] He may in truth have been asexual, an emotional hermaphrodite.[32] Just as we are unable to define Beardsley's personality and to discern whether he truly disliked or finally deserted Wilde, we have little concrete evidence of sexuality other than anecdotes, bits of gossip, ambiguous comments in letters, and diagnoses of biographers.

Speculating that Beardsley's personality development was incomplete and accepting that he was often an observer forces us to remember that, despite his talent, he was a very young man. In addition to allowing Beardsley a measure of Jamesian secrecy, such a perspective assists us in making sense of the disparate threads of Beardsley's reported behavior; it assuredly ties into his total immersion in his art. Beardsley "was always drawing to himself" landscapes, buildings, people for subsequent pictures (Symons 756) and flippantly told an interviewer that one could always tell where he had been from his drawings (Lawrence 202). While working, he could escape from the

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realization that he had little control over many facets of his life: his health, his imitators, his finances, criticism of his work, or the English press which labeled him Wilde's brother under the skin. His constitution, the times, the place, the people worked against Beardsley, but over his art he had total control as, for example, over his observer-narrator in *Venus and Tannhäuser.* And we, too, have recourse to the work, the arena in which we might expect a fuller revelation of an artist's life and his personality. Because many of his pictures are ambiguous, expectations that the work will be revealing of the life are frustrated. This is true except in one area: where Beardsley plays with notions of voyeurism.[33] What he could not depict because of English censorship, he could imply through an intellectual voyeurism—that ambiguity which unsettles the viewer. Until light is shed by further discoveries on all that remains inexplicable in Beardsley's brief, tragic life and on his unique gifts as an artist, we have but the drawings to remind us that his fragile body and his mind constituted merely a studio in which he created art that shocked the philistines by probing social vices, that assisted in clearing the way for modernism, that continues to delight as well as intrigue successive generations of viewers and artists. But were it not for Beardsley's human failure, those generations might never have seen his artistic triumphs.

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

APPENDIX I

July 1891

11 Lombard Street, E. C.

My dear Clark,

Many thanks for your letter. I have just had a charming epistle (4 pages) from Burne-Jones. He advises two schools: first, Mr. Brown's Academy at Westminster (impressionist),[34] second, South Kensington,[35] but gives much preference to S. Kensington. Two hours daily work is quite sufficient for me, so as you suggest, I mean to attend night classes. Here are some extracts from his letter. "I should like to see your work from time to time, at intervals say of three or six months. I know you will not fear work, nor let disheartenment *langour* [sic] you because the necessary discipline of the school seems to lie so far away from your natural interest and sympathy. You must learn the grammar of your art, and its exercises are all the better for being rigidly prosaic." (Copy of Signature) E. Burne-Jones. His spelling is somewhat funny, his writing execrable!

I can tell you I am not a little pleased at getting so lengthy an epistle.

I am most awfully glad to hear of your song. I think it *simply marvellous* considering all things; my people could hardly believe it. When it is published, I will do my little best to introduce it about.

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I have had some grand nights at the opera lately, as box and stall tickets have fallen my way somewhat.

Your idea of the Naturalistic school is really the same as "Preraphaelitinum." "Painting things as they *are.*"

I suppose you know that the school which goes by the name of Naturalistic was much in vogue amongst Spanish artists in the seventeenth cent[ury,] "Spagnoletto" (a regular *Zola* in art) being one of its chief glories. The school also went by the name of "The *Dark* Painters."[36]

My latest productions show a great improvement: "The flower and the leaf" from Chaucer; and two pictures from Aeschylus's "Libation Bearers" (Κηφοϱϛε) viz. "Orestes and Electra meeting over the grave of Agamemnon" and "Orestes driven from the city Argio by the three Furies."[37]

I am about to illustrate the life of the great wonder-worker Merlin.[38] My drawings, bar these, are with Mrs. Russell Gurney, a *great* art patron.[39]

I am now deeply engaged in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* [sic], a glorious book, I can assure you.

Yours for ever and ever

Aubrey V. Beardsley

"Your name should stand you in grand stead in the musical line."

NOTES

I am grateful to Morehouse College for supporting time to begin writing this essay, to Sotheby's (London) for permission to reproduce their photographs, and to Jack Hillier for alerting me to and discussing with me the Beardsley materials sold at Sotheby's in December 1986. Jack's gentle suggestions and encouragement continue to play no small part in my endeavor to unravel mysteries surrounding Beardsley and his work.

1. See, for example, "*The Yellow Book,* Vol. IV," 317; Hal Dane [Haldane Macfall], "Art," 98; Haldane Macfall, *Aubrey Beardsley,* 141–47.
2. At this writing, prices for Beardsley's drawings incline sharply: *The Achieving of the Sangreal* brought £95,000 at Sotheby's on 19 June 1987.
3. A case in point is Oscar Kokoschka, whose letters were published in 1986. They harp on money but rarely refer to art. At the opposite extreme is Franz Kafka, whose voluminous correspondence, like his diaries, is painfully detailed. From his letters we begin to comprehend his tortured emotions but continue to wonder about the mind which created *The Metamorphosis.*
4. Without citing from where her information came, Benkovitz said that he did visit The Vale (68). In his new biography of Ricketts, J. G. P. Delaney refers to John Rothenstein, son of the painter and Beardsley contemporary William Rothenstein, who claimed that Beardsley visited The Vale. Ricketts himself denied that Beardsley was ever there, although Ricketts was an unreliable source where his competition was concerned, as Delaney rightly points out (84).

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5. Maas et al. suggested that he did (94). That hotel, the Englischer Hof, and its records no longer exist.
6. Beerbohm, 539; Rothenstein, 135, 187; McColl, 31; Symons, 752; Le Gallienne, 135; Richards, 275; Beerbohm, 540; Symons, 752.
7. The full text of this letter appears in *Letters* on pages 24–5.
8. Written after Beardsley recovered from a major hemorrhage during 1889–91, the poem presciently expresses the fear that he has been allotted only a brief time to achieve the fame he so deeply coveted.
9. At the same time that Beardsley labored to complete the enormous number of designs for this translation of Malory's work, he was creating other drawings in which he refined his techniques of simplifying line and massing large areas of blacks and whites. Together with the asymmetrical placement of figures, which he adopted from Japanese woodblock prints, these techniques became his hallmarks, and they strongly influenced Art Nouveau. Perhaps more significantly, they helped to remove the clutter characteristic of Victorian art and to influence his contemporaries as well as our own.

   Included in his work during 1893–94 were posters for plays and bookstores; frontispieces for novels, most of which were published by John Lane; individual pictures, some of which were reproduced to accompany Joseph Pennell's laudatory article about this new artist in the April 1893 inaugural issue of *The Studio;* five drawings intended for *Lucian's True History* (1894); and numerous vignettes for three volumes of *Bon-Mots* (1893–94). The most notorious of his creations during these years are the illustrations for Wilde's *Salome* (1894) and drawings for *The Yellow Book,* which began publication in April 1894 and published Beardsley's work through January 1895. (Except for the drawings for the spine and back cover which were apparently overlooked, Beardsley's work for the April 1895 issue, already in production, was withdrawn when he was fired [Reade 348 n370 and n371]).
10. Woudhuysen, 1400; Hind, n.p. The catalogue of the Brooklyn Museum's exhibition of Beardsley's work, held from December 1923–January 1924, lists as item 104, one of the "Drawings for *Bon-Mots,*" *Pan Asleep.* By whichever title, this drawing is clearly the one offered for sale and, equally clearly, has been recorded twice before.
11. Beardsley also uses this style in *The Achieving of the Sangreal,* Reade, plate 33; *How King Arthur Saw the Questing Beast,* plate 56; *Siegfried, Act II,* plate 164; and *A Snare of Vintage,* plate 253.
12. As I have argued elsewhere (*Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990]), the triangular design of the *tailpiece* for his poem, "The Three Musicians," represents the same anatomical area.
13. The male protagonist of *Venus and Tannhäuser* was originally named Aubrey. Beardsley later changed it to Fanfreluche—perhaps to distance himself from the amorously active consort of Venus?
14. From the letters we learn that Pollitt owned *The Impatient Adulterer* and a bookplate Beardsley had designed for himself. (The original drawing for the bookplate is now in the Scofield Thayer Collection, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. In a fascinating piece of detective work, Steven Hobbs, the present owner of Pollitt's copy of Beardsley's *A Book of Fifty Drawings* (1896), ascertained that the artist inscribed the words, "MR POLLITT'S BOOKPLATE,"

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above the drawing in that text on 27 February 1897. Carl Hentschel, whose firm made many of the blocks from Beardsley's drawings, made the bookplate from that copy [521–25].)

According to Aymer Vallance's 1923 catalogue, Pollitt also owned *Enter Herodias* in its original state, with the genitals of the figure at the right uncovered (Reade, plate 285); *Flosshilde* and *Alberich,* illustrations for *Das Rheingold,* and *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy* (these three reproduced in *The Savoy,* December 1896); *Apollo Pursuing Daphne;* and vignettes to Acts I, II, III, and V of *Ben Jonson His Volpone: or The Foxe* (Leonard Smithers, 1898). Reade (369 n455) adds *Erda* and two others for *Das Rheingold,* reproduced in *The Savoy,* December 1898; as well as *Ali Baba,* first reproduced in *A Second Book of Fifty Drawings* (Leonard Smithers, 1899).

Benkovitz relates that Pollitt was then a student at Cambridge and that he particularly enjoyed acting the part of women on stage (148). For Beardsley, he was a genuine patron, who "dispersed Bailiffs with a stroke of your pen" (*Letters* 286). Pollitt was the model for the eponymous protagonist of E. F. Benson's novel, *The Babe, B.A.* (1897). In this very light story, the Babe reads *The Yellow Book,* hangs on his walls "several of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations" (33), and wishes he "could look as if Aubrey Beardsley had drawn [him]" (101).

15. On the 23 December 1897, Beardsley's salutation addresses Pollitt as "Dear and only Friend" (*Letters* 412). His last letter to Pollitt speaks of "a vile congestion of the lungs" but admonishes, "Pray breathe not a word of this to anyone" (*Letters* 436). Pollitt seems to have replaced Marc-André Raffalovich as a confidant. Raffalovich, who financially supported the artist after he was fired from *The Yellow Book* and again for the last twelve and one-half months of his life, appears to have been a major force in Beardsley's 31 March 1897 conversion to Catholicism. Raffalovich seems to have exacted another price as well: that Beardsley sever all contact with Oscar Wilde, toward whom Raffalovich was hostile.
16. H. H. Cameron was the youngest son of Margaret Cameron, the pioneer portrait photographer.

    Sotheby's, Lot 32, incorrectly conjectures that the photographer was Frederick Evans; see *Letters* 158, 169.
17. W. J. Hawker of Bournemouth was a friend of the showman, Charles B. Cochran, who had attended the Brighton Grammar School with Beardsley. Beardsley's mother praised this set, taken between late January and April 1897. Sending one of these photographs to Robert Ross, she wrote that she preferred it to "any other he has ever had done [because] he looks a nice boy in it with no nonsense of any kind about him" (Ross 46). These photographs include more of Beardsley's torso than the head and shoulder portraits. In them Beardsley is closer to the camera than he is in Fig. 7, and the artist appears to be in much better health.
18. Leonard Smithers, the publisher and bookseller to whom Beardsley had been introduced soon after his dismissal from *The Yellow Book,* began *The Savoy* in January 1896. A showcase for Beardsley's art, the magazine also published his translation of "Carmen CI" by Catullus, two original poems, and a bowdlerized version of *Venus and Tannhäuser* as "Under the Hill." *The Savoy* ceased

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publication in December 1896, after eight volumes were issued, because of Smithers's financial difficulties. But the health of his art editor, no longer able to produce drawings on a sustained basis, must have played a role in the publisher's decision.

19. Macfall, 40; William Rothenstein's word portrait is to the point in detailing "his butterfly ties, his too smart clothes with their hard, padded shoulders . . . his spreading chestnut hair, parted in the middle and arranged low over his forehead, his staccato voice and jumpy, restless manner" (187).
20. Macfall, 40; on his last visit William Rothenstein found a "new gentleness" in Beardsley's manner, "all the artifice had gone" (317).
21. W. L., 49. For comparison, see the photograph of Raffalovich published in Benkovitz and in Ellmann's life of Wilde. Seated stiffly and seeming to support himself with his right palm pressed to the chair seat, Raffalovich languidly touches the carnation in his buttonhole with the fingertips of his left hand, which is bent into a right angle at the wrist.
22. From the evidence of this photograph, we might assume that the artist was reticent about his ill-health, but this was not the case. Among people who knew Beardsley, it was a common assumption that he knew he had only a brief time allotted to him. As if to reinforce for the reading public both his awareness and his control of that time, in the last year of his life he told an interviewer (March 1897) that he had "always" worked for his own enjoyment (although this had not been the case with the large number of drawings he was under contract to produce for *Le Morte Darthur*) and, "with a laugh" as he talked about being an "invalid," rhetorically asked, " 'How can a man die better than by doing just what he wants to do most?' " (Lawrence 198). He could discuss the state of his health, but whatever his emotions about dying were, he kept those private.
23. *Letters,* 410: on 22 December 1897, he worried about his weight loss.

    As this photograph suggests, Beardsley appears to have been a tall man. With the term "lank" (17), Macfall describes him as long and lean. But the artist's height has not been discussed, and there exist no photographs of him standing with other personages of the 1890s, which might provide a clue for comparison. The bentwood chair (made either by Thonet or in his manner) in which Beardsley sits offered a promising lead. After obtaining measurements for the Thonet sidechair from Dr. Barry R. Harwood, Associate Curator of Decorative Arts, The Brooklyn Museum, I asked Dr. Henry Gore, Chairman of the Department of Mathematics, Morehouse College, for assistance.

    With the measurements of the Thonet chair (variance in the size of one made by another firm would not be large), Professor Gore determined that the artist stood 6′ 1″. His calculations were as follows: the height of the chair seat from the floor is 18″; the seat width is 16″; the length of the chair back from seat to top is 17″. Using the seat width as one unit and measuring Beardsley's body with a ruler, Dr. Gore ascertained that the length from knee to hip is one and one-half units or 24″; from knee to foot, one and one-eighth unit or 18″; from the hip to the top of the chair one and one-sixteenth unit or 17″; from the top of the chair to the neck, three-eighths unit or 6″; from the neck to the top of the head, one-half unit or 8″. The total equals 73″ or 6′ 1″.
24. *Letters,* 401–2, 403, 407–8, 409, 412–14, 416–18, 420–21, 424–8. From these let-

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ters it appears that his November 1897 comment to Mabel, "nothing but work amuses me at all" (386), was an understatement. Working or thinking about drawing vitalized Beardsley for the following three and one-half months. These final letters, which make plans for a new magazine and direct the reproduction of his drawings, reveal not only an incisive mastery of the craft of book illustration, but also an increased self-assurance about the way he wanted his drawings announced as well as produced.

25. At the date of this letter, Beardsley's art was strongly influenced by Burne-Jones, his wit by Whistler. References to the two men in this drawing constitute an open, perhaps ironic, admission of his admiration.
26. Ellen Beardsley, 75; see also page 80, where Mrs. Beardsley stated that her son "never quite grew up."
27. By analyzing the drawings, Malcolm Easton postulates the theory that Beardsley wanted to be a woman. Other psychoanalytic readings are possible and need to be considered.
28. I am grateful to Dr. Elizabeth Jacobs for discussing with me details of Yeats's *A Vision.*
29. For a contemporaneous portrait of Wilde, see Rothenstein (86–7).
30. Virtually all those who came into contact with Beardsley commented upon the breadth and depth of his knowledge of books. His more than passing acquaintance with pornography probably lies behind William Rothenstein's comment that the artist "explored the courts and alleys of French and English seventeenth and eighteenth-century literature" (136).
31. I am grateful to Charles P. Tauber, M. D., for validating my conclusions about Beardsley (Interview).
32. Wilde may have sensed Beardsley's asexuality. His comment to his friends, Ada and Ernest Leverson, " 'Don't sit on the same chair as Aubrey, it's not compromising,' " suggests more than a remark made to "teas[e]," as Benkovitz would have us believe (118).
33. Reade, 20; Ian Fletcher also saw Beardsley's drawing as mediating between the author and the reader, recognizing the artist as an observer, "the voyeur who sees all the game" (Preface). The concept came to Beardsley, I believe, through his study of erotic Japanese woodblock prints, notably those by Harunobu. Utamaro has been widely acknowledged as a chief influence, but earlier Japanese masters, whose work was printed in black and white, exerted an equally strong magnetism.
34. The editors of Beardsley's letter take their text from "Sale Catalogue of Anderson Auction Galleries, New York, 18 December 1928, and J. Lewis May, *John Lane and the Nineties* (1936)." I have included the published notes to this letter; they appear in quotation marks below and in notes 35 and 37–9.

    "Frederick Brown (1851–1941) was head of the Westminster School of Art 1877–93. In 1886 he was one of the founders of the New English Art Club." Beardsley was made a member of this club in 1893.
35. "The Royal College of Art."
36. Knowledgeable in music as well as in art and literature, Beardsley was modest. Here, he gracefully corrects Scotson-Clark, suggesting that the latter really meant to say the Pre-Raphaelites, not the Naturalistic School.

    Lo Spagnoletto, the Spaniard, to whom Beardsley refers, was the pseudo-

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nym of Guiseppe de Ribera (1591–1652). Although he was considered a member of the Spanish school of "Dark Painters," de Ribera was born in Naples.

37. "Not recorded."
38. "An early reference to his work on *Le Morte Darthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, for which he made over three hundred and fifty illustrations between 1892–94. Beardsley did not receive Dent's commission for this work until 1892, so that at this stage the idea must have been his own. There is no evidence that he made any drawings on this subject before 1892."
39. "Emelia (née Batten), widow of Russell Gurney (d. 1878), Recorder of the City of London and M. P. for Southampton" (*Letters* 26).

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