

Outraged Beauty: The Dionysian
Retinue and the Lineages of British
Aestheticism, 1918-1930

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Abstract

Since the writing of Walter Pater's essays 'A Study of Dionysus: The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew' and 'The Bacchanals of Euripides', the god Dionysus and his retinue of fauns, nymphs, and maenads occupied a conspicuous place within British aestheticism's engagements with classical antiquity. Owing to Pater's approving invocation of the recently disgraced painter Simeon Solomon's *Bacchus* canvases in the former essay, these engagements have often been understood to navigate the clandestine territory of aestheticism's queer sexual politics. Beginning with Pater's foundational writings, this thesis explores how these sexual politics proliferated in depictions of the Dionysian retinue executed by artists whose work is legible through, and engaged profoundly with, the lineages of late nineteenth century aestheticism. It argues that, in contrast to conventional narratives which consider the downfall of Oscar Wilde in 1895 to represent the terminal implosion of the movement, aestheticist iconographies, sentiment, and thought persisted significantly beyond this point and retained their transgressive associations between the Dionysian retinue and queer male identity and desire. First examining Dionysus and his male followers, the fauns, it argues that aestheticist productions encouraged desire for or identification with these figures amongst aesthetes. It then examines the fauns' female counterparts, the divine nymphs and mortal maenads, to argue that these figures and the realms they inhabited became spaces for imagining retributive violence against, or the negation of, male heterosexual authority.

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Fig. 190. Stephen Tennant, *Self-portrait*, c.1927. Pen and ink drawing. Dimensions unknown. Private collection.

Fig. 191. Wilmot Lunt, *Ulysses and the Sirens*, 1927. Print. Dimensions unknown. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.

Fig. 192. John Yunge-Bateman, *The Siren*, 1929. Print. Dimensions unknown. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.

Fig. 193. Charles Robinson, *Song of the Siren*, 1932. Print. Dimensions unknown. *The Tatler*, British Newspaper Archive.

Fig. 194. John William Waterhouse, *The Siren*, 1900. Oil on canvas. 81 x 53 cm. Private collection.

Fig. 195. Edward Poynter, *The Siren*, 1864. Oil on canvas. Dimensions unknown, Private collection.

Fig. 196. John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-1852. Oil on canvas. 76.2 x 111.8cm. Tate, London.

Fig. 197. John William Waterhouse, *Ophelia*, 1889. Oil on canvas. 97.8 x 158.1cm. Private collection.

Fig. 198. Cecil Beaton, *Baba Beaton as Ophelia*, 1925. Vintage bromide print. 19.7 x 24.8cm. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Fig. 199. Cecil Beaton, *Nancy Beaton*, 1929. Gelatin print. Dimensions unknown. Private collection.

Fig. 200. Gideon Horváth, *Faun with a hard-on looks into the advanced future*, 2021. Beeswax, glass, chains, macrame. 100 x 50cm. ISBN Könyv+galéria, Budapest.

Fig. 201. Gideon Horváth, *Mutilated Faun*, 2021. Beeswax, glass, chains, macrame. 70 x 50cm. ISBN Könyv+galéria, Budapest.

Fig. 202. Danny Osborne, Oscar Wilde Memorial Sculpture (detail), 1997. Jadeite, nephrite jade, porcelain, quartz, and thulite. 250cm. Merrion Gardens, Dublin.

Fig. 203. Danny Osborne, Oscar Wilde Memorial Sculpture (detail). 1997. Bronze and granite. 192cm. Merrion Gardens, Dublin.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

‘A Little Olympus Outside the Greater’: Beginnings

We begin by stopping in at a party. It is eleven o'clock on a rainy Thursday night in April, 1929, and we are gathered outside 1 Marylebone Lane, a five-minute walk from the fashionable London district of Mayfair.¹ We have brought wine with us at the behest of our hosts and we are preparing to brandish our invitations, a cumbersome business as they are sixteen inches tall to accommodate extensive lists of the hosts' likes and dislikes.² These invitations clarify the purpose of the strange clothes we are wearing, and what we are doing here in the first place. We have been told to come dressed as 'definite characters from Greek mythology', and even to go to the British Museum to copy examples of appropriate costumes from classical vases. Clad thusly, we have come to celebrate the birthday of a newly twenty-four-year-old man called Brian Howard and to mourn that another young man called David Tennant is leaving 'The New Athens' (Mayfair). The first of these names we will no doubt be familiar with, if perhaps largely indirectly from the gossip columns of society magazines such as *The Tatler* and *The Sketch*: we will know of his promise as a young poet, of his louche personal style and his affected witticisms, and perhaps even of the rumours swirling around his clandestine sexual exploits with other men.

To get hold of these invites, we must be certain types of people. Like Brian Howard, we are probably young men, and probably live relatively close to 1 Marylebone Lane. We have probably attended a public school, preferably Eton College, and then gone up to university, preferably Oxford, which we probably left without taking a degree after having spent three years throwing parties of our own. We may harbour ambitions to be painters, photographers, illustrators, or theatre designers; we may simply be content instead to spend our youth cultivating our tastes in art, literature, theatre, and clothes. We may be arriving at Brian Howard's party dressed as women— our fellow guests, the actors Ernest Thesiger and Nelson Keys, certainly have, disguised as Medusa and Penelope respectively— and occasions such as these are unlikely to be the only ones on which we wear makeup.³ We are probably gay men or, as a historian will one day write about people like us, we 'at least look it'.⁴ Our appearance may trigger bitter memories of some thirty years

¹ Anon., "Bright Young Things En Fete". *London Daily Chronicle*, Friday 05 April 1929, 5.

² D. J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation 1918-1940* (London: Random House, 2010), 126.

³ Taylor, *Bright Young People*, 126; Anon., "Society's Greek Freak Party". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 17 April 1929, 126.

⁴ Philip Hoare, *Oscar Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy, and the Most Outrageous Trial of the Century*. (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2017), 226.

before in disapproving passersby glimpsing us as we loiter in Mayfair, who may resultantly call us 'aesthetes'. They will mean it as a grave insult.

Our fellow attendees have likely shared many of our experiences and our interests, read many of the same books as us, and favour many of the same artists as us. One of these shared interests will be attested to by the party's spectacular and carefully choreographed set piece: at one in the morning, as a journalist will report two days later, Brian Howard is to be 'enthroned as Dionysus amid the cheers of the company'.⁵ This is the climactic moment of 'The Great Urban Dionysia', the party's name a reference to an ancient Athenian celebration in honour of the Greek god of wine, fertility, and madness. Dionysus will, however, have acquired new resonances that will certainly not be lost on the young men we imagine ourselves to be in 1929, resonances incubated not only by the artists among our contemporaries and fellow guests but by those of a bygone generation. By 1929, Howard's enthronement as Dionysus will appear to us as a brief and brilliant flicker of what we will consider from our reading to be 'outraged beauty', stirring memories of an essay written in a century before our own as we raise our glasses to salute our transmogrified host.⁶

⁵ Anon., "Classical Greek Party in London". *Dundee Courier*, Saturday 06 April 1929, 5.

⁶ Walter Pater, *Greek Studies* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920), 65.

Introduction

This thesis examines images of the Dionysian retinue in British art between the years of 1918 and 1930. It argues that the recurrence of these images in the period was the result of the continued promulgation of the ideas and iconographies of late nineteenth century British aestheticism. It explores the manner in which these mythological figures became vehicles for navigating queer territories within both the discourses of late nineteenth century aestheticism and their progenies in the early twentieth century. My analyses begin with the essays of Walter Pater, acknowledged in the 1920s as the progenitor of aestheticist discourses and a writer who dedicated considerable thought to Dionysus and his followers, before tracing the continuities and confluences with Pater's thought through the visual art of the aestheticist project. Exploring first the god Dionysus and his goat-footed male attendants, the fauns, in this fashion, I demonstrate how artistic depictions could alternately encourage desire for or identification with these mythological beings amongst queer male aesthetes. I then turn to the women of Dionysus's retinue, the nymphs and maenads, to demonstrate how these figures and the spaces they inhabit in classical myth offered models of resistance to, or negation of, heterosexual male authority.

The first chapter will explore images of Dionysus himself. It will introduce the Greek god of wine, fertility, and madness, and will situate aestheticist considerations of the god and his followers within their broader intellectual and artistic contexts. Beginning with the essays of Walter Pater, it will elucidate the manner in which Pater's Dionysus rehearsed the twin functions of identification and desire which are more commonly and recurrently found within depictions of fauns. My examination of artistic responses to this will pay particular attention to the art of Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, veterans of late nineteenth century aestheticism whose continued activities as artists, collectors, and mentors throughout the 1920s afforded them a significant place within the transmission of aestheticist discourses and the establishment of the lineages we are concerned with here. The second chapter will then turn to the faun to elucidate how the goat-footed creature's hybrid physiognomy became, within the hands of Pater and his progenies, the stuff of queer metaphor which encouraged identification between the aesthete and the faun. This chapter will

pay particular attention to the legacy of the illustrator Aubrey Beardsley, whose shadow over conceptions of aestheticism in the 1920s was as great as his influence over the art which engaged with the movement, and who frequently returned to the faun in a manner consistently legible through the writings of Pater. It will examine both Beardsley's works, widely available in reproduction in the 1920s, and also those created in the 1920s which bore his stylistic and thematic stamp. The third chapter will then examine the faun in the other role rehearsed in depictions of Dionysus, that of an object of erotic desire. Here, we will primarily explore the impact of the Ballets Russes' 1913 performance of *L'après-midi d'un faune*— itself arguably the product of a retroactive engagement with the legacies of nineteenth century British aestheticism— in codifying the faun as a locus for queer desire, focusing chiefly on the paintings of Shannon and Ricketts's progeny Glyn Philpot.

Shifting our focus from the male figures to the female figures of the Dionysian retinue in the fourth and fifth chapters, we will examine the role played within aestheticist discourses by both the nymphs who nursed Dionysus in his infancy and the maddened mortal maenads who reenacted their practices while under the thrall of the god's magical influence. The fourth chapter of this thesis considers *Modern Nymphs*, a collaborative project of 1930 which featured an essay by Raymond Mortimer and illustrations by Thomas Lowinsky, the former a writer whose essays evince a lifelong and stringent belief in aestheticism's transgressive potentialities and the latter another young friend of Shannon and Ricketts. It will situate *Modern Nymphs* within Mortimer's confrontational aestheticism, demonstrating that Lowinsky's 'fashion plates' subvert the conventional iconographies of the classical myth narratives they respond to in order to depict female figures imbued with the potential to inflict retributive violence against heterosexual male figures in a manner outlined within Pater's accounts of maenadic activity. The final chapter will then turn to the space that is being jealously guarded against intruding male presences in *Modern Nymphs* by examining the early photography, writing, and graphic work of Cecil Beaton. It will demonstrate that Beaton's repeated conflation of maenads and nymphs with the women of the stage— whom Beaton idolised, and into whose glamorous and feminised world he wished to escape— amounted to the construction of a modern thiasus envisioned along lines consistent with aestheticist lineages.

Before we approach this material, we must elucidate the meaning of our central terms, the parameters in which they function, and what their associations and resonances in the 1920s mean for our analyses. Doing so in essence amounts to attempting to answer the questions raised by the curious spectacle of Brian Howard's birthday party: why was a young man like Brian Howard interested in the figure of Dionysus? And why was he accepted by his audience as a fitting substitute for the classical god by 1929? We must also, however, first explore why answering these questions is of value to the discipline of art history, and which lacunae in extant scholarship an attempt to do so aims to fill. Articulating answers to these latter questions will also provide us with the framework through which the artworks we encounter will be considered, treated, and understood throughout this thesis.

Dionysus Amongst the Modernists, Dionysus Amongst the Aesthetes: Scope and Terminology

The material examined in this thesis occupies two lacunae, one between divergent fields within art history and the other between art history and its related disciplines. The first is between scholars of aestheticism and scholars of modernism, and particularly of modernist art which engaged with classical iconographies. The second is between the commonplace observation of these temporal boundaries within art history and their disruption within a tendency amongst literary scholars, which has shown recent signs of growth within the field and increasingly audacious inroads into wider cultural studies. My explorations here are aligned with these latter efforts, arguing for the importation of the central logic of this scholarship into art history. They are equally predicated upon the work of queer theorists and historians, building upon their research into the queer function of classical iconographies within late nineteenth century British culture, the interrelated queer sexual politics of aestheticism, and the queer nature of the figure of the 'aesthete' in the cultural imaginary of both the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. This thesis occupies a space which necessitates the utilisation of material from each of these three fields— its fundamental argument builds upon the work of literature scholars,

its analysis of visual material is art historical in nature, and its analysis of the texts which constituted the fundamentals upon which its visual material drew draws upon the work of queer theorists and historians– and a word concerning its relationship to them is thus pertinent.

In terms of my positioning within the field of art history, I argue that this thesis emerges from fissures between scholars of aestheticism as a late nineteenth century movement and scholars of modernism in the early twentieth century. Scholarship on aestheticism may disagree upon a precise date for the beginning of the movement but there is a generally accepted and precise date for its end: the twenty-fifth of May, 1895, the day upon which Oscar Wilde was convicted of gross indecency following the public revelation of his deviant sexual practices. This, along with the death of Aubrey Beardsley, are ‘familiar and tragic stories... [which] mark the end of the main stream of the Aesthetic Movement’ according to Lionel Lambourne’s book *The Aesthetic Movement*: writing almost twenty years ago, Lambourne’s recollection of these narratives as ‘familiar’ indicates the extent to which this conception of aestheticism had already taken hold.⁷ Indeed, this narrative persists in more rigorously academic studies than Lambourne’s introductory guide. Two texts which are of particular note for our purposes here for their interest in the relationship between British aestheticism and classicism, Linda Dowling’s *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Late Victorian Oxford* and Stefano Evangelista’s *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile*, effectively propagate this version of events, with Evangelista’s concluding chapter on Wilde featuring the subtitle ‘the end of aestheticism’ and Dowling concluding that the Wilde trial was responsible for ‘reducing any invocation of [aestheticism’s engagements with classicism] to something half ridiculous and partially suspect’.⁸

The point that these writers converge upon is, as Evangelista has it, that the ‘enemies of aestheticism’ who had long suspected that its creeds harboured the promulgation of stigmatised sexual practices ‘had their proof’ in the Wilde trials.⁹ In a word, the exposure of Wilde’s sexual proclivities led to the indelible association

⁷ Lionel Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 226.

⁸ Stefano Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), 158-165; Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1994), 153-154.

⁹ Evangelista, *British Aestheticism*, 159.

within the public consciousness between aestheticism and homosexuality, both of which Wilde appeared to personify, and his punishment demonstrated that it was too dangerous for future generations to associate themselves with aestheticism's tarnished iconographies and ideas: thus, the movement effectively ended. Dowling is perceptive in noting that this was felt particularly strongly with regard to aestheticism's engagements with classical texts and images as Wilde's defence of his actions in the dock, attempting to legitimise love between men through recourse to Platonic philosophy, amounted to what Daniel Orrells memorably characterises as 'teach[ing] a lesson about Plato in public, to an audience of men and women, most of whom had never read Greek at an Oxbridge tutorial'.¹⁰ This in turn amounted to the public exposure of the inextricable links between classicism and queer sexuality within aestheticist discourses, the investigation of which is Dowling's major project: Dowling coins the term aestheticism's 'homosexual counterdiscourse' to explain the manner in which interpretations of classical myths and customs 'work[ed] invisibly to establish the grounds on which... "homosexuality" would subsequently emerge as the locus of sexual identity' within the movement.¹¹ Exploring the material gathered in this thesis thus constitutes arguing for the extension of the very thing which is often thought to have caused aestheticism's spectacular implosion in 1895, a reinterpreted classical past 'gorgeously mingled with curious odours and strange luxuries' to quote Richard Jenkyn's lyrical assessment, and in doing so it argues that those potent perfumes still clung close to classical draperies in the 1920s.¹²

If the implication of classical philosophy in the Wilde trial rendered aestheticist interpretations of classical iconographies particularly susceptible to the confines of the rigorously observed periodisation of the movement, the treatment of these same iconographies in the 1920s by scholars of modernism erects a similarly formidable conceptual barrier. Scholars of aestheticism within art history broadly accept the temporal strictures of the movement, and scholars of modernism have historically had little reason to challenge this. A brief and spirited essay by Elizabeth Prettejohn, 2006's 'From Aestheticism to Modernism, and Back Again', summarises and questions the general relationship between the two fields, with the former

¹⁰ Daniel Orrells, *Classical Culture and Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 192.

¹¹ Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, xiii.

¹² Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 295.

movement often disavowed as an embarrassingly lightweight and insignificant precedent for the latter.¹³ As Prettejohn notes, this too was likely tied to the legacies of aestheticism's association with effeminacy and ultimately with queerness: these facets of the movement stand in implicit opposition to 'the masculine construction of Modernism', in which 'there is something feminized, and vaguely disreputable, about loving art, or still worse, being an "aesthete"'.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the increasing influence of queer theory in art history since the early 1990s did not engender the salvaging of late nineteenth century British art, and particularly that which engaged with classical images, as the latent homophobia Prettejohn detects was often replaced by attacks which either sublimated reservations about the effeminacy of aestheticism more fully into discourses around its decorative nature or, remarkably, condemned it instead for its now apparently conservative sexual politics. The writings of Richard Jenkyns concerning what he blithely terms 'aestheticism, decadence, symbolism and all that', or Bram Dijkstra's more stridently militant *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin de Siècle Culture* are representative of this tendency, with the latter text paying particular attention to iconographies surrounding nymphs and maenads to mount its polemical case.¹⁵

The conventional disavowal of a suspiciously effeminate or misogynistic and culturally purportless aestheticism is further complicated by modernist scholarship's equally strained relationship with the proliferation of classical iconographies in the 1920s. As in the case of aestheticism, a revivification of classical imagery in this period was often treated as an embarrassing interruption in the teleological narrative of modernism's heroic striding towards the future. At its most stringent, opposition to the artistic legitimacy of this post-War embrace of classical iconographies has understood the tendency to represent an intellectually bankrupt retreat from the legitimate achievements of pre-War avant-gardes, a case advanced most notably in Benjamin Buchloh's polemical essay 'Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression' of 1981.¹⁶ Indeed, Buchloh's essay even posited that the seemingly innocuous return of

¹³ Elizabeth Prettejohn, "From Aestheticism to Modernism, and Back Again". *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 2, 2006, 5.

¹⁴ Prettejohn, *Aestheticism to Modernism*, 5-6.

¹⁵ Richard Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 268; Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin de Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹⁶ Benjamin Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting". *October*, 16, 1981, 39.

figurative art, of which that concerning classical themes was merely the most egregiously *retardataire*, aided and abetted the development of authoritarian regimes throughout Europe in the 1930s.¹⁷ Buchloh's charge against the proliferation of classical iconographies in the visual culture of the 1920s is essentially that their employment necessitates an artist withdrawing their right to engage with anything but the most reactionary of politics, similar charges to those levelled at the art of the late nineteenth century which likewise navigated classical and mythological themes.

Efforts to rehabilitate the modernist turn towards classical iconographies found first in the scholarship and curation of the late 1980s and early 1990s arguably tacitly accepted the bases of these arguments as much as they quarrelled over the aesthetic legitimacy of the works in question. The term that is now most frequently employed to reckon with an outpouring of classical imagery in the 1920s is the 'return to order'. The logic underpinning this construct presents an interest in such imageries as a fundamental dislocation from intellectual conversations before the First World War to establish a socially and aesthetically normative and conservative *tabula rasa* in visual art, responding to a societal craving for order and stability after the conflict. Ana Carden-Coyne, writing of classicism's corralling into reestablishing these ideological values across the anglophone world, notes that in the period after the war classical aesthetics were 'effectively politicized... [because] modern war brought man face-to-face with his own primitivism, his psychological savagery, and his inner barbaric character... [cultures] must reach into the ancient past to find again the tools with which to rebuild civilization'.¹⁸ Within this schema, Carden-Coyne notes, 'Pater's interpretations of classical art were overturned' in the period; the transgressively queer resonances of the texts themselves and the milieu from which they stemmed, disinterring the Wildean ghosts of 1895, were self-evidently anathema to the 'return to order'.¹⁹

Carden-Coyne's book *Reconstructing the Body* is among the most thoughtful analyses of this tendency in visual culture, and it is indeed testament to its holistic approach to the anglophone world that Pater is named at all in its pages. The foundational texts and exhibitions in rehabilitating the 'return to order' marginalised

¹⁷ Buchloh, *Figures of Authority*, 4.

¹⁸ Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43, 46.

¹⁹ Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 33.

British art entirely. Kenneth Silver's influential book *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (1989) which, as its title suggests, focused its analysis exclusively upon art created in the cradle of canonical modernism, was the first major publication to advance the narrative of the 'return to order'.²⁰ A year later the Tate's landmark show *On Classic Ground*, designed to redress the 'contempt' in which classicised painting in the 1920s had heretofore been held, noted without further explanation that there existed comparable movements to the 'return to order' in Britain but that these were absent from the exhibition because 'the decision was taken to explore the specific reinterpretation of *classicism*, rather than a more general return to the figurative tradition, and thus to concentrate upon the Latin countries'.²¹ The privileging of European art over British art is far from concentrated to our period of study, but it creates a problem specifically pertinent to our explorations. Namely, when an interest in British art of this period began to gain ground over the last fifteen years, the logic of the 'return to order' was sufficiently entrenched within art historical scholarship to be imported with little question into the very context which the curators of *On Classic Ground* had intentionally excluded.

The book that acted as the central catalyst in this revival, Alexandra Harris's *Romantic Moderns* (2010), did not itself engage with this as its study of indigenously British aesthetic vernaculars precluded a thoroughgoing engagement with classicism.²² However, writers and curators who followed Harris's interest in the period turned their gaze more fully to classical iconographies and did so through the lens of the 'return to order'. We find, for example, the catalogue for Simon Martin's 2017 exhibition *The Mythic Method: Classicism in British Art, 1920-1950* describing the reemergence of classical iconographies in Britain after the War as a 'return to order', a claim repeated in the catalogue for the National Galleries of Scotland's exhibition *True to Life: British Realist Painting in the 1920s and 1930s* of the same year.²³ Both catalogues support these readings through recourse to the same brief

²⁰ Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

²¹ Elizabeth Cowling, "Introduction". *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Leger, De Chirico, and the New Classicism, 1910-1930* (London: Tate, 1990), 11. Italics in original.

²² Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010).

²³ Simon Martin, *The Mythic Method: Classicism in British Art, 1920-1950* (Chichester: Pallant House, 2017), 14; Sacha Llewelyn, "What Sort of Truth?: British Realist Painting Between the Wars". *True to Life: British Realist Painting in the 1920s and 1930s* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2017), 30.

article from a 1919 copy of the *Sunday Telegraph* as their evidence for the veracity of their narrative.²⁴ The catalogue for the Tate's 2018 exhibition *Aftermath: Art in the Wake of World War One*, which displayed British art alongside its better-known continental contemporaries, also dedicates a chapter provided by Simon Martin to the 'return to order' in which the same *Telegraph* article recurs in a similarly pivotal role.²⁵ Frances Spalding's 2022 *The Real and the Romantic: English Art Between Two World Wars* contextualises classicised British art within a broader study of competing revivalisms in the period and eschews the *Telegraph* article, but draws primarily on Martin's catalogue for *The Mythic Method* as the fundamental text for its analysis and concludes that an 'admiration for the classical past... had a particular purpose: after the First World War and the immense trauma left in its wake, there was a need for stillness, calm, discipline, order, and self-possession'.²⁶ Even scholarly texts which have aimed to more fully elucidate competing revivalisms in the period have internalised the logic of the 'return to order'. Jane Stevenson's *Baroque Between the Wars: Alternative Style in the Arts* (2018) analyses an embrace of baroque aesthetics in Britain throughout the interwar years, but draws on a lineage of art historical thought which characterises the 'baroque' as the dichotomously opposed antecedent to the 'classical' to scaffold the transgressive nature of its case studies. Central to Stevenson's project is a quotation from Eugenio d'Ors which asks that, if 'the style of civilisation calls itself Classicism... To the style of barbarism (the persistent, permanent underside of culture) do we not give the name of baroque?'.²⁷ This division allows Stevenson to position the baroque as the exclusive mode of the 'frivolous, prodigal, feminine, queer, decorative, and equivocal' art of the period.²⁸

We *may* call the 'style of barbarism' baroque, but we may equally call it 'Dionysian' with regard to a parallel dichotomy drawn in the late nineteenth century between Apollo and Dionysus that will inform our analyses; baroque revivalism *may* be considered feminine and queer but, as we have seen, so were aestheticist discourses which were consistently predicated upon reinterpreting the classical past.

²⁴ Martin, *The Mythic Method*, 14; Llewelyn, *What Sort of Truth?*, 30.

²⁵ Simon Martin, "The Return to Order". *Aftermath: Art in the Wake of World War One* (London: Tate, 2018), 72.

²⁶ Frances Spalding, *The Real and the Romantic: English Art Between Two World Wars* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2022), 249.

²⁷ Quoted in: Jane Stevenson, *Baroque Between the Wars: Alternative Style In the Arts, 1918-39* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1.

²⁸ Stevenson, *Baroque Between the Wars*, 3.

This thesis argues, therefore, that we do not need to look to movements positioned as disavowals of classicism to find these values and tendencies in British art. It is worth noting in a general sense that imagery surrounding Dionysus, characterised by the classicist Walter Otto in the first modern study of the subject as ‘the god of ecstasy and terror, of wildness... the mad god whose appearance sends mankind into madness’ and whose encounters with mortals are ‘startling, disquieting, violent’, seems relatively unlikely to enshrine the values of order, reason, and harmony associated with the ‘return to order’.²⁹ In a more specific sense, the twin assumptions that Wilde’s classicised rhetoric (and those of his forebears which were belatedly discredited by the revelations of his trial) was explosive enough to demolish aestheticism entirely in 1895, and that classical imagery could have been purged so utterly of these associations not thirty years later that it could exclusively enshrine socially normative values in the 1920s, seems untenable. That the cultural historian Philip Hoare can quote the 1916 case of an officer in the British army accused of ‘homosexualism’ who was said to have possessed ‘a rather hysterical temperament more like a girl than a boy’, and who ‘aroused everyone’s suspicions by knowing Latin and Greek’ at his trial, would certainly suggest that classical knowledge had not shed its aestheticist associations by this period.³⁰

Importantly, these associations remained in place throughout the 1920s. Terence Greenidge, an Oxford contemporary of Brian Howard’s, used his 1930 study of the ‘aesthetes’ at Oxford in the period to protest that, although ‘queer deeds may occasionally get done amongst those who come from over-emancipated Public Schools... It is no good to sneer, “Platonic love- I know what that really means”’.³¹ At one such over-emancipated public school, Cyril Connolly– an Eton contemporary of Brian Howard’s and a prep school contemporary of Cecil Beaton– recorded that homosexuality was ‘the forbidden tree round which our little Eden dizzily revolved... its presence in the classics was taken for granted’.³² Harold Acton, also schooled at Eton with Brian Howard, referred to a homosexual peer who fled England to avoid the exposure of his criminalised activities as a ‘Greek born out of time’.³³

²⁹ Walter Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 65, 74.

³⁰ Quoted in: Philip Hoare, *Oscar Wilde’s Last Stand*, 28.

³¹ Terence Greenidge, *Degenerate Oxford* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1930), 90.

³² Cyril Connolly, *Enemies of Promise* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1938), 233-234.

³³ Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (London: Methuen, 1948), 102.

Despite the fact that both Greenidge and Acton's remarks explicitly acknowledge the danger of professing 'Platonic love' like Oscar Wilde or being 'a Greek born out of time' – a term that Wilde himself may have liked, having used one poem to exhort sympathetic readers to 'inform ourselves/ Into all sensuous life [of] the goat-foot Faun' – eye-witness accounts of the culture of the 1920s also indicate a persistent desire to engage openly with the very movement Wilde was felt to embody.³⁴ The architectural historian Osbert Lancaster protested that 'the 'twenties [are] too often regarded as a period of sustained frivolity, [but] were in fact a time of great creative vitality' owing to 'the fertilising stream of aestheticism, driven underground in the mid-'nineties by the Wilde scandal, [which] had flowed powerfully'.³⁵ Cyril Connolly later recorded that the Wilde trial 'was responsible for a flight from aestheticism that lasted twenty years'; elsewhere, he noted its potent reemergence during his schooldays when he 'succumbed to [the] aestheticism... in the air' and spent his time reading Walter Pater.³⁶

Moreover, literary historians have increasingly sought to prove that these accounts were accurate assessments of the cultural production of the time, problematising the fissure between aestheticism and modernism evinced in art historical scholarship and curatorial activity. This argument has been most thoroughly enumerated in *Decadence in the Age of Modernism*, a collection of essays edited by Kate Hext and Alex Murray, whose introduction argues that 'decadence persisted, elegantly, queerly, and tenaciously [after 1895]... the main thread that draws together these twentieth-century innovators in the decadent tradition is their defiant place outside the dominant culture and their use of decadence to critique prevailing ideologies of politics, gender, and sexuality'.³⁷ Murray, in a 2015 article, had already suggested this narrative in microcosm by investigating the hold the literature of the 1890s maintained over Evelyn Waugh's imagination.³⁸ Kristen Mahoney's book *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence*, also published in 2015, likewise saw a generation of writers in the 1920s utilising 'late-

³⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Stories, Plays and Poems of Oscar Wilde* (London: O'Hara Books, 1990), 765.

³⁵ Osbert Lancaster, *With an Eye to the Future* (London: John Murray, 1967), 85.

³⁶ Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*, 47, 244.

³⁷ Kate Hext and Alex Murray, Introduction. *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2019), 12. As we shall see, 'decadence' is the favoured term amongst literary scholars for what I here term 'aestheticism'.

³⁸ Alex Murray, "Decadence Revisited: Evelyn Waugh and the Afterlife of the 1890s". *Modernism/Modernity*, 22, 3, 2015, 593-607.

Victorian aesthetic strategies to fashion a peculiar political voice that was at once highly engaged and purposefully marginal... reanimating the aesthetic of the Yellow Nineties for the 1920s'.³⁹ These texts were anticipated by one year by Vincent Sherry's *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* which concentrated its analyses more concertedly upon literary form; Sherry still, however, acknowledged that the '1895 spectacle offered a sort of tableau vivant for the sexual dreads of a generation' but also, 'in the disturbances it stirred, provided an opening into new gender imaginaries', indicating the importance of these legacies in continuing to navigate and explore queer sexual desire and anxieties.⁴⁰

These efforts continue to proliferate both within and beyond literary studies. Kate Hext, for example, has extended the project to film studies with her recent book *Wilde in the Dream Factory: Decadence and the American Movies* (2024) which traces the influence of Wildean modes through twentieth century Hollywood cinema.⁴¹ That such a project is possible would surely indicate that a beat, so to speak, has been skipped. If it is possible to credibly argue for Wilde's influence over figures as far-flung from the writer as the archetypal gangster in American cinema, it is surely plausible to argue for the continued influence of aestheticist discourses over British artists in the 1920s who were making use of the same classical iconographies as their late nineteenth century precedents and, indeed, often maintained personal relationships with survivors of the period.⁴²

That this case has not yet been made in art history— despite Hext's reminder to her readers that aestheticism and its lineages are only seen as primarily literary movements at the expense of their pronounced influence over visual art— means I will be stating it somewhat polemically here.⁴³ By this I mean that I am interested in tracing the influences upon the artworks examined in a specifically British context, privileging the very source materials which currently remain entirely absent from extant scholarship. There are sections of this thesis that will explore work by European artists— one recurrent figure in the first three chapters is the German

³⁹ Kristen Mahoney, *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 5, 9.

⁴⁰ Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 24.

⁴¹ Kate Hext, *Wilde in the Dream Factory: Decadence and the American Movies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

⁴² Hext, *Wilde in the Dream Factory*, 114-138.

⁴³ Hext, *Wilde in the Dream Factory*, 4.

photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden, while chapter three will also engage with material produced by the illustrators Georges Barbier and Roberto Montenegro who were French and Mexican respectively. However, these artworks will be considered only within British contexts, von Gloeden's photographs as collectable objects which satisfied an apparent demand for homoerotic images utilising iconographies common to Pater's writings and Barbier and Montenegro as illustrators of British books (whose style was moreover influenced significantly by British artists of a previous generation). Similarly, many of the artists whose oeuvres form major case studies throughout my analyses spent time within other artistic cultures, most often that of Paris, and were likely alive to the influences they found there. This is most obviously the case in the work of Glyn Philpot, whose relocation to Paris in 1931 was felt to be responsible for his decision to 'go Picasso', as the press reported, in developing a more recognisably modernist and experimental style: the subtitle of an early Philpot biography, Robin Gibson's *Glyn Philpot: Edwardian Aesthete to the Thirties Modernist* attests to the notion that British aestheticism is tacitly understood to be irreconcilable to this continental modernism.⁴⁴ I do not seek to deny the veracity of these other potential points of influence; nor, however, do I seek to trace them here. As Gibson's book suggests, Philpot's work has already been discussed in terms of its relation to his European contemporaries; Thomas Lowinsky's work has already been situated in its uneasy relationship to European surrealism.⁴⁵ An entire exhibition and accompanying catalogue have been dedicated to Cecil Beaton's relationship to the culture of New York, where he frequently worked (although with some irony for our purposes his appeal for American audiences is attributed to his image as 'an Edwardian-era dandy in the mold of Oscar Wilde' in this book).⁴⁶ My insistence upon the relevance of British aestheticist discourses within the work of these artists, meanwhile, allows for the development of new perspectives upon the artworks themselves, while also allowing for the development of a holistic and original counternarrative concerning the fate of these discourses within British art. I do not seek to present my readings as the only legitimate readings of these often multifaceted artworks. Instead, simply because these readings have not been presented at all, I seek to present them as clearly as possible here,

⁴⁴ Robin Gibson, *Glyn Philpot: Edwardian Aesthete to Thirties Modernist* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1984), 29.

⁴⁵ Monica Bohm-Duchen, *Thomas Lowinsky* (London: Tate, 1990), 19.

⁴⁶ Donald Albrecht, *Cecil Beaton: The New York Years* (New York: Rizzoli, 2011), 11.

opening pathways for further research into the relationship between the aestheticist iconographies of these artists and their interactions with geographically broader spheres of influence.

One crucial difference between my analyses and those of the literary historians to whose project my own is evidently aligned is of terminology, seemingly a minor difference but one which highlights an important point as to my interactions with the third field I draw on: queer theory. Unfailingly, literary historians prefer the term ‘decadence’ to my ‘aestheticism’, with the former term occurring in the title of every book and article mentioned thus far. My preference for the term ‘aestheticism’ is twofold. Firstly, along with its related term ‘aesthete’ and at the seeming expense of the equivalent terms ‘decadence’ and ‘decadent’, the word was ‘often in the air’ in the 1920s, as Jane Stevenson writes of her queer, feminine ‘baroque’.⁴⁷ We shall explore this subsequently. Secondly, my analyses begin in each case with the writings of Walter Pater, a figure who is more easily and convincingly considered within ‘aestheticism’ than within ‘decadence’. The two terms do not exist within a stable relationship to one another, with one frequently shading into the other: Richard Gilman concludes, in his book-length study of the word ‘decadence’, that ‘there never was a time... when Decadence showed itself in clean lines, set off from the rest of art and thought... there never was a time when Decadence was definitive, since nobody agreed on what the definitions were’.⁴⁸ Efforts to resolve these instabilities by eliding the boundaries between the two include Kristen Mahoney’s coining of the phrase ‘decadent aestheticism’, Gilman’s clunky term ‘the Aesthetic/Decadent period’, or Richard Jenkyns’s blithely dismissive discussion of ‘aestheticism, decadence, symbolism and all that’.⁴⁹ Broadly, however, ‘decadence’ incorporates Pater’s influence but, owing to its association with the final ten years of the nineteenth century in particular, not the specificities of his writings themselves: ‘aestheticism’ thus both allows for a more accurate representation of the cultural climate of the 1920s and a more accurate representation of my analyses.

⁴⁷ Stevenson, *Baroque Between the Wars*, 1.

⁴⁸ Richard Gilman, *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1979), 99.

⁴⁹ Mahoney, *Post-Victorian Decadence*, 5; Gilman, *Decadence*, 138; Richard Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence*, 268.

This brings my thesis into contact with queer theory because it is within this field that Walter Pater has become a central figure in conceptions of late nineteenth century culture, literature, and sexual politics. Pater first occupied this role within Richard Dellamora's 1990 *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*, which built upon Foucauldian conceptions of queer male identity formation in the late nineteenth century to argue that aestheticism in general, and Pater's texts in particular, evinced a greater interest in sexual desire than the theoretically cerebral, disinterested philosophies of aestheticism would indicate.⁵⁰ Billie Andrew Inman's full investigation into the nature of the romantic relationship between Pater the Oxford don and William Hardinge, an undergraduate, was published in *Pater in the 1990s* a year later and provided the biographical material necessary to cement Pater's place as a queer writer.⁵¹ Since this point Pater has played a pivotal role in the work of queer historians and queer theoreticians who have focused upon the late nineteenth century. This includes the work of Linda Dowling and Stefano Evangelista, whose texts we have briefly encountered and which aim in large part to trace what Dowling calls the classicised 'homosexual counterdiscourse' of aestheticism through late Victorian social and literary cultures. It also includes Matthew Michael Kaylor's *Secreted Desires: The Major Uranians-Hopkins, Pater and Wilde*, which serves to further elucidate the manner in which Pater and his progenies considered their position as queer men through the lens of classical pederasty; at its most ambitious it includes Dustin Friedman's recent *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (2019) which dedicates its first two chapters to Pater to argue for the influence of Hegelianism in the construction of a queer aesthetic theory of looking.⁵² Pater's centrality to queer narratives was perhaps more publicly confirmed by the placement of a copy of his first book, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873), within the display cabinets of the

⁵⁰ Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

⁵¹ Billie Andrew Inman, "Estrangement and Connection: Walter Pater, Benjamin Jowett, and William M. Hardinge". Ed. Laurel Brake and Ian Smalls, *Pater in the 1990s* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 1991), 1-20.

⁵² Matthew Michael Kaylor, *Secreted Desires: The Major Uranians-Hopkins, Pater and Wilde* (Brno: Masaryk University, 2006); Dustin Friedman, *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2019).

Tate's 2017 exhibition *Queer British Art*, billed by its curator Clare Barlow as 'the first to tell this story for British art' and merely 'a step towards a conversation'.⁵³

The works in which *The Renaissance* was contextualised within *Queer British Art*—paintings by Glyn Philpot, photographs by Cecil Beaton, a painting of Dionysus by Pater's friend Simeon Solomon, a photograph of John Addington Symonds, illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley, works by Henry Scott Tuke and Wilhem von Gloeden, jewellery designed by Charles Ricketts, and ephemera from the Wilde trial—is also indicative of the broader interest in aestheticism as a specifically queer discourse in the past thirty years (and a tentative indicator of its possible survival beyond 1895). Alan Sinfield's *The Wilde Century: Oscar Wilde, Effeminacy and the Queer Moment* (1994), focusing on how the public persona of Oscar Wilde conditioned and codified queer self-fashioning to accept aestheticism as a component part since 1895, has been particularly influential within this.⁵⁴ Its analyses have been more recently supplemented by Dominic Janes's complementary books *Oscar Wilde Prefigured: Queer Fashioning and British Caricature, 1750-1900* (2016) and *Freak to Chic: "Gay" Men in and Out of Fashion After Oscar Wilde*, which sought to expand the temporal remit of Sinfield's thesis in a Janus-faced fashion.⁵⁵ John Potvin's *Bachelors of a Different Sort: Queer Aesthetics, Material Culture and the Modern Interior in Britain* (2014) expanded these investigations out from the body to the constructed environment and features chapter-long considerations of the interiors occupied by Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon on one hand and Cecil Beaton on the other, with both chapters evincing central concerns as to what was specifically queer about these artists' 'aesthetic' lodgings.⁵⁶

I also share with these writers their preference for the term 'queer' to refer to the figures we are concerned with here. 'Queer' is necessarily applied retroactively but it is my contention that it more accurately and more succinctly reflects the sexual politics of British aestheticism and its lineages than related, although distinct, terms such as 'homosexual', which perhaps superficially suggest a greater sense of

⁵³ Clare Barlow, Introduction. *Queer British Art, 1861-1967* (London: Tate, 2017), 12.

⁵⁴ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Oscar Wilde, Effeminacy and the Queer Moment* (London: Cassell, 1994).

⁵⁵ Dominic Janes, *Oscar Wilde Prefigured: Queer Fashioning and British Caricature, 1750-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); *Freak to Chic: "Gay" Men in and Out of Fashion After Oscar Wilde* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

⁵⁶ John Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort: Queer Aesthetics, Material Culture and the Modern Interior in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

historical veracity. Firstly, 'homosexual' implies a quantifiable understanding of sexual orientation, and implicitly localises discussion to the expression of sexual desire. While a specifically homosexual orientation is undoubtedly common to most of the artists and writers discussed in the ensuing chapters, it cannot accurately be applied consistently: Potvin's acknowledgement of the publicly unexplained nature of the relationship between Ricketts and Shannon, for example, means that it would be inaccurate to utilise this term.⁵⁷ Moreover, the term 'homosexual' would itself be retroactively applied to some figures, particularly Walter Pater, owing to the instability of this term's emergence in the late nineteenth century. As Heather Love observes in her study of queer temporalities, Pater 'might be understood as living and writing before the birth of public modern homosexual identity'.⁵⁸ Love argues that such an identity only developed in the wake of the Wilde trial, a thesis commonly advanced by scholars who seek to understand the history of sexuality through a 'constructionist' lens: at its core this argument builds upon Michel Foucault's famous assertion that while 'the sodomite had been a temporary aberration... the homosexual was now a species' in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁹ Foucault's thesis hinges on the notion that the pathologizing and punishing medical and legal discourses surrounding homosexual activity in this period shifted an emphasis away from isolated sexual acts and towards the notion that 'homosexuality' was instead a pervasive identity. Within a specifically British context, Foucault's ideas have been utilised in considerations of a nascent queer cultural life in the period, most pioneeringly in the scholarship of Jeffrey Weeks who variously refers to these discourses having 'the effect of forcing home to many the fact of their difference and thus creating a new community of knowledge' and explaining how 'law and science, social mores and popular prejudice set the scene, but homosexual people responded... [by creating], in a variety of ways, self-concepts, meeting-places, a language and style, and complex and varied modes of life'.⁶⁰ Aestheticism may undoubtedly be considered to be a central component in this process for many and is

⁵⁷ Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 90-91.

⁵⁸ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 7.

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 43.

⁶⁰ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2017), 109; Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), 33.

thus involved in the development of Foucault's new 'species' of homosexual, but its earliest texts and images belong to a period predating its codification: just as the term 'homosexual' is inaccurate to reflect the situation of artists like Ricketts and Shannon, it is perhaps inaccurate too owing to its complex periodisation to refer to figures such as Pater.

For reasons related to these two examples, I instead employ the term 'queer'. Firstly, the term suggests not a specific orientation but rather a deviation or distance from heteronormative patterns of behaviour and expression; thus it is possible for Potvin to suggest that, while Ricketts and Shannon's lifelong partnership may not have been specifically *homosexual*, it was certainly 'queer' insofar as it disrupted normative patterns of experience. Similarly, the first three chapters of this thesis are concerned primarily with issues of identification and desire which are explicable through the term 'homosexual', but the remaining two are not: when we turn our gaze to the relationship between male aesthetes and the women of the Dionysian retinue, values and ideas that are defined by deviation from heteronormativity, but not strictly in relation to a (homo)sexual orientation, instead predominate. Similarly, the ability of the term 'queer' to encompass deviation and difference defined along the lines of gender and sexuality also means that it can encompass material drawn from the period in which 'homosexuality' as a social identity was developing without misrepresenting its sexual politics. As we shall see, a central concern of the first chapter is Pater's insistence upon Dionysus's effeminacy, which is presented in Pater's account of Euripides's play *Bacchae* as the reason for his persecution. The issue of the relationship between homosexuality and effeminacy is a particularly vexed one, and there exists little agreement as to precisely when effeminate self-presentation became a codified indicator of homosexual orientation. Linda Dowling and Alan Sinfield, for example, both claim that there is no stable connection before 1895; other constructionist queer theorists argue for a connection which significantly predates this, with Weeks arguing that the linkage was in place by the beginning of the nineteenth century and Mary McIntosh using her influential essay 'The Homosexual Role' to suggest its emergence in the eighteenth century.⁶¹ My own sense is that the linkage was likely to have been recognised by some, if by no means

⁶¹ Weeks, *Coming Out*, 37; Mary McIntosh, "The Homosexual Role". *Social Problems*, Vol. 16, 2, 1968, 187.

all, readers before 1895– it is likely significant that Dowling and Sinfield do not comment at all upon Pater’s essays on Dionysus, in which the repeated emphasis upon the god’s effeminacy would be difficult to convincingly read without acknowledging its potentially queer resonances. However, because this linkage was likely not detectable to all of Pater’s readers and the issue belongs to what Sinfield calls his ‘whole argument about who hears what’, the term ‘homosexual’ may again be unable to sufficiently encompass the central issue of ‘effeminacy’ in Pater’s foundational writings.⁶² Given it is presented by Pater as the reason for Dionysus’s persecution in the *Bacchae*, however, and given it encodes his fundamental alterity and otherness in this text, it is certainly ‘queer’ in the manner that Ricketts and Shannon’s living arrangements were.

As with decadent scholars within literary studies, I am considerably indebted to the work of writers who have explored these areas and, indeed, their specific analyses of Pater’s essays on Dionysian themes and their interrogations of the queer nature of the ‘aesthete’ as a cultural figure will directly inform my own, just as extant scholarship on the ‘construction’ of modern homosexuality lies at the base of my understanding of the sexual politics of aestheticism. As in the case of the literary scholars, however, my approach to the material considered within this thesis will differ in its aim and scope from theirs. Summarising trends within Pater scholarship in a 2008 article, Kate Hext argued that ‘whatever the assessment of queer perspectives on Pater, they do succeed in further highlighting that Paterian aesthetics are not explicable within the palace of art alone... Pater’s critical future will be within a broader cultural history’.⁶³ What this refocusing of interest in studies of Pater has meant, however, is that the ‘palace of art’– and particularly that of modern art– has fallen into a state of comparable neglect. Some studies which aim to connect Pater to the art of his contemporaries have been produced, among them Elizabeth Prettejohn’s chapter ‘Walter Pater and Aesthetic Painting’, Lesley Higgins’s ‘Walter Pater: Painting the Nineteenth Century’, and J. B. Bullen’s extensive effort to trace each of Pater’s allusions to contemporary painters, ‘Pater and Contemporary Visual

⁶² Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, 89.

⁶³ Kate Hext, “Recent Scholarship on Walter Pater: ‘Antithetical Scholar of Understanding’s End’”. *Literature Compass*, Vol. 5, 2, 2008, 412.

Art'.⁶⁴ This thesis builds upon these interventions by reversing the emphasis in the symbiotic relationship between Pater's theories and modern art. While Prettejohn, Higgins, and Bullen explore the impact of modern art on Pater, I wish to posit that Pater's writings conversely exercised an influence over modern art up until 1895 and significantly beyond it. This necessitates a shifting of lens for understanding Pater's texts. Rather than considering Pater on a philosophical, theoretical, or literary level, I approach his essays as repositories of striking, coded images which begged to be realised, expanded upon, and modulated in visual art— and indeed were. This is not to say that Pater's words are treated on a surface level. This would be impossible as a study of Pater's texts, owing to their elusive and allusive nature, is necessarily the study of their subtexts and intertexts and requires careful attention to yield meanings; indeed, particularly in my focus on the faun in chapters two and three, I present readings of Pater's imagery which have to my knowledge gone previously unelucidated. However, it is to say that I attempt to limit my analyses to that which could have been feasibly detectable within the subsequent generations of Pater's readers whose work I examine, and that I am less concerned with Pater's intimations of queer desires in terms of what they meant for Pater himself and more for what they meant to these subsequent generations of intoxicated readers.

I have so far attempted to explain the position of this thesis within art history and its position in relation to the complementary disciplines from which it also draws. It is now pertinent to turn to the players within this thesis, examining the threads which draw them together and exploring what makes them legible as 'aesthetes' after 1895.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Walter Pater and Aesthetic Painting". *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 36-59; Lesley Higgins, "Walter Pater: Painting the Nineteenth Century". *English Literature in Translation, 1880-1920*, vol. 50, 4, 2007, 415-453; J. B. Bullen, "Pater and Contemporary Visual Art". Ed. Elicia Clements and Lesley Higgins, *Victorian Aesthetic Conditions: Pater Across the Arts* (New York: Macmillan, 2010), 33-47.

Aesthetes in the 1920s

As we have seen in the recollections of Cyril Connolly and Osbert Lancaster, both of whom we shall encounter again, the generation who came of age in the 1920s (and at least one of whom would end the decade by dressing up as Dionysus) certainly felt themselves to be caught up in a renewed current of what they called ‘aestheticism’. Given, as I have stated, I am interested in examining these currents from Pater onwards in terms which would have been legible and accessible to the artists we shall shortly examine, we must also consider what these people meant by this within their own cultural climate. In a word, we must consider what made one an ‘aesthete’ in the 1920s. It must first be stated that this term is often used in art historical, literary, and sociohistorical texts in a relatively casual manner, as we have employed it up until this point; that is to say, without attempting to formulate a definition of the term. To this we must add that there is so little agreement over the term that it would be beyond my scope to attempt a holistic definition here. Rather, I propose to utilise the term as it was implicitly defined within public discourses in the 1920s.

The first attempt to define ‘aesthete’ comes in Walter Hamilton’s 1882 book *The Aesthetic Movement in England*, a primary account which concludes that aesthetes ‘are they who pride themselves upon having found out what is the really beautiful in nature and art, their faculties and tastes being educated up to the point necessary for the full appreciation of such qualities’.⁶⁵ Implicit in Hamilton’s definition are the two manners in which the term ‘aesthete’ has most commonly been used ever since. Firstly, the nebulous characteristics identified by Hamilton may only signify an ‘aesthete’ if the figure described played an active part in the culture of late nineteenth century aestheticism, as they self-evidently did in Hamilton’s case and as they often continue to do. Consider, for example, Richard Aldington’s early compendium of writings from the late nineteenth century, *The Religion of Beauty: Selections from the Aesthetes* (1950), or Ian Smalls’s *The Aesthetes: A Sourcebook*, a similar project of 1979, in which the titular term clearly denotes such membership and is employed without question.⁶⁶ That the term performs the same function in

⁶⁵ Walter Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1882), vii.

⁶⁶ Richard Aldington, *The Cult of Beauty: Selections from the Aesthetes* (London: Heinemann, 1950); Ian Smalls, *The Aesthetes: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1979).

Jonathan Bristow's recent volume *Extraordinary Aesthetes: Decadents, New Women, and Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (2023) indicates that this implicit definition remains common enough currency.⁶⁷

Equally, another early study of the movement, Robert Vincent Johnson's *Aestheticism* of 1946, noted that 'aesthetes, in [a] broad sense, have obviously existed before and since the nineteenth century'.⁶⁸ The notion of aesthetes 'in [a] broad sense' refers to a perhaps more casual and yet more commonplace definition in which the label 'aesthete' connotes a commitment to art, sometimes to the virtual exclusion of social or political concerns, which need not necessarily bear a particular relationship to late nineteenth century aestheticism. Thus it is possible for Lionel Lambourne, in his richly illustrated guide to 'the aesthetic movement', to position as temporally and aesthetically distant a group as the abstract expressionists of the 1950s as a movement of aesthetes on theoretical grounds; thus it is equally possible for Kate Hext to conflate the even more disparate figure of the Hollywood gangster with the aesthete.⁶⁹

The trouble inherent in these categorisations is either their narrow strictures, in the case of 'aesthete' referring exclusively to participants in late nineteenth century aestheticist networks, or in their destabilising imprecision when using the term to refer to any group or individual after this point. In the case of the former, this definition is evidently insufficient to describe the figures examined in this thesis. Glyn Philpot, the oldest artist taken as a case study here, was only eleven years old in the year of Oscar Wilde's trial and the apparent combustion of aestheticism; Cecil Beaton, the youngest, would not be born for another eight years afterwards. Moreover, this definition would appear to be discredited by the fact that the term 'aesthete' was much in the air to refer to artists and writers of even Beaton's generation in the 1920s. The second definition, however, is too general to be of much use as a methodological apparatus and is equally problematised by the strongly felt associations of the term in the 1920s. If the term 'aesthete' only referred to an elevation of artistic and aesthetic concerns above all others, it is reasonable to assume that the position of the aesthete may have been held to be an irresponsible

⁶⁷ Ed. Jonathan Bristow, *Extraordinary Aesthetes: Decadents, New Women, and Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023).

⁶⁸ Robert Vincent Johnson, *Aestheticism* (London: Methuen, 1969), 10.

⁶⁹ Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 229.

one. It does not, however, account for Terence Greenidge's eye-witness account of contemporary understandings of the aesthete in the 1920s, in which Greenidge summarised the popular image to be of 'a pallid, indoor creature... [whom] homosexuality attracts'.⁷⁰

Another insightful voice on the meaning of the term in our period of examination is Harold Acton's, who titled the first volume of his autobiography *Memoirs of an Aesthete*. Acton was perceptively cognisant of the changing fortunes of the epithet, prophesying that 'the success of Sadler's Wells Ballet even during the buzz-bomb period' of the Second World War indicated that 'by the time this book is out [in 1948] the word aesthete may have become a popular favourite'.⁷¹ He was also cognisant of the strength of its cultural currency during his youth in the 1920s, noting that the term 'clung to me since I left school'.⁷² The implication here is that the term demonstrably was *not* a popular favourite, but a nonetheless persistent presence, in the language of the 1920s, and *Memoirs of an Aesthete* begins with an indication as to why these two things were true— Acton records his friends' fears that the term aesthete would 'prejudice all your readers in advance', because 'Old Oscar screwed the last nail in the aesthete's coffin'.⁷³

Acton's account of the term, like Greenidge's, prefigures the writing of the queer theorist Alan Sinfield in the 1990s. In *The Wilde Century*, Sinfield argues against the claim made in Richard Ellman's meticulous biography of 'Old Oscar' that "aesthete" was, 'in [the] context [of the 1880s] almost a euphemism for homosexual'.⁷⁴ Sinfield's contention is not that no such equivalence existed, but simply that it did not exist *yet*. Instead, he suggests that the public persecution of Wilde ensured that 'Aestheticism became a component in the image of the queer as it emerged' in the late nineteenth century: the thrust of his thesis suggests that the identity of the queer male subject in Britain was created more or less precisely in the image of Wilde from 1895 onwards.⁷⁵ 'Aesthete' remained, therefore, an identity that was frequently defined in the negative, as a signifier of an aberrant or dissonant sexual register. Even Walter Hamilton's generalising definition of aesthetes as those

⁷⁰ Greenidge, *Degenerate Oxford*, 82.

⁷¹ Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, 2.

⁷² Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, 2.

⁷³ Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, 1.

⁷⁴ Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, 84.

⁷⁵ Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, 84.

who ‘hav[e] found out what is the really beautiful in nature and art’ was clarified by the statement that ‘those who do not see the true and the beautiful- the outsiders in fact- are termed Philistines’, indicating the fundamental alterity of the aesthete’s position.⁷⁶ In the 1920s Hamilton’s term ‘philistine’ was broadly replaced by ‘athlete’, as James Potvin and James Brooke-Smith have both elucidated in their studies of aestheticism as a social and implicitly sexual identity in the 1920s, and this shifting towards bodily activity clarified the increasing focus upon the aesthete’s actions more than his thoughts after the Wilde trials.⁷⁷ As we have seen, this emergent queerness was inextricably tied to understandings of the classical past both within and without the cultures of those who associated themselves with aestheticism. Bathing oneself in the streams of aestheticism flowing through the 1920s– particularly those that flowed from the mountains of Nysa, the mythological region in which Dionysus was raised– was thus a deeply transgressive act.

What emerges from the findings of queer theorists like Potvin and self-described aesthetes of the 1920s like Acton which foreshadow them is a modulated definition of ‘aesthete’ which unites the figures examined in this thesis. ‘Aesthete’ in the 1920s referred to a queer man who was understood through, and understood himself through, the social and artistic lineages of late nineteenth century aestheticism. Indeed, an ‘aesthete’ in the 1920s actively invited comparisons to his predecessors. Martin Green’s 1976 ‘narrative of decadence’, *Children of the Sun*, acknowledged that ‘the dandies of the 1920s looked back to those of the 1890s... They exchanged anecdotes about them, recited remarks they had made, collected objects associated with them, sought out acquaintances who had known them, designed clothes and rooms and houses like theirs, and simply and literally imitated them’.⁷⁸ Linda Dowling notes that *The New Republic*, an 1877 novel which featured a satirical portrait of Walter Pater to lampoon his aestheticist creeds and his conspicuous attachment to the sexual mores of classical antiquity, became ‘a kind of textbook of Oxford aestheticism which would be consulted by undergraduates in the 1920s’, while Philip Hoare wrote that ‘it was as if Oscar had never died... The aesthetes of the

⁷⁶ Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement*, vii.

⁷⁷ Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 251-254; James Brooke-Smith, *Gilded Youth: Privilege, Rebellion, and the British Public School System* (London: Reaktion, 2019), 141-171.

⁷⁸ Martin Green, *Children of the Sun: A Narrative of “Decadence” in England After 1918* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 23.

Twenties reran the Nineties'.⁷⁹ In some circles, Hoare's assertion was supported with bizarre literality: the spirit medium Hester Travers Smith achieved infamy in the 1920s for allegedly communicating with the spirit of Oscar Wilde, publishing an account of his messages in 1924.⁸⁰ Wilde's spirit returned to earth to spout classical allusions, reminisce about Pater, and was asked about Aubrey Beardsley by the composer Constant Lambert at the behest of his older friend Charles Ricketts.⁸¹

The figures examined in detail here were certainly involved in the business of cultivating and revivifying links to the aestheticism of a previous generation. Thomas Esmond Lowinsky and Glyn Philpot were both close friends of Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, while Philpot also corresponded with Wilde's former lover John Gray, owed commissions as a portraitist to another of Wilde's former lovers, Robbie Ross, and owned an incredibly rare copy of John Addington Symonds's privately printed book about homosexuality and classical antiquity, *A Problem of Greek Ethics*.⁸² Indeed, that Charles Ricketts and his lifelong companion Charles Shannon wrote of Philpot and his fellow artist Vivian Forbes as 'the Ricketts and Shannon of the near future' suggests that the aesthetes of the late nineteenth century recognised their progenies in a subsequent generation, just as this subsequent generation turned back to learn from the aesthetes of the late nineteenth century.⁸³ Beaton recurrently referred to himself as an 'aesthete' in his diaries and memoirs, and as an undergraduate at Cambridge was 'enlightened... about the decadence of the naughty Nineties' by one of his teachers during a period in which he was also reading Pater.⁸⁴ At the close of the decade, a 1929 diary entry records his disappointment that he could not corner Elizabeth Marbury, hosting a party Beaton was invited to, to hear 'the whole story of Wilde and his trial'.⁸⁵ Most importantly for our purposes, he made his debut as a book illustrator by providing decorations for an almost entirely unknown 1928 copy of *Twilight of the Nymphs*, a collection of eroticised retellings of classical myths by Wilde's erstwhile friend Pierre Louÿs which Beaton peopled with

⁷⁹ Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 111-112; Hoare, *Wilde's Last Stand*, 228.

⁸⁰ Hester Travers Smith, *Psychic Messages from Oscar Wilde* (London: T. Werner Laurie Limited, 1924).

⁸¹ Stephen Lloyd, *Constant Lambert: Beyond the Rio Grande* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014) 78.

⁸² Bohm-Duchen, *Thomas Lowinsky*, 15; Simon Martin, *Glyn Philpot: Flesh and Spirit* (Chichester: Pallant House, 2022), 121.

⁸³ Quoted in: Paul Delaney, *Charles Ricketts: A Biography* (London: Clarendon Press, 1990), 314.

⁸⁴ Cecil Beaton, *The Wandering Years: Diaries, 1922-1939* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1961),

⁸⁵ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 179.

nymphs and maenads.⁸⁶ Philpot returned often to the figure of the faun throughout his work across a ten-year period, and Lowinsky collaborated with Raymond Mortimer— whose essays attested to his faith in aestheticism as a transgressive and rebellious force against an old structure of patriarchal power and philistine conformity he termed ‘Victorianism’— to develop the book *Modern Nymphs* (1930) which self-evidently concerned itself with classical themes and Dionysian figures.⁸⁷

In doing so, these artists were representative of a broader tendency of young men bathing in the streams of aestheticism observed by Osbert Lancaster. Brian Howard and Harold Acton established the ‘Cremorne Club’ while still at Eton which numbered Oscar Wilde among its ‘honorary members’ alongside the likes of Beardsley and Ricketts: if only in their imaginations, Acton and Howard belonged to the same ‘club’ as these artists and writers.⁸⁸ The writer Beverley Nichols penned a column for *The Sketch* in which he recorded that, ‘when I “have my doubts” about anybody... I close my eyes and imagine them in the nineties... I can picture the flash of a green carnation, and over it the pale face of Osbert Sitwell, tense with undelivered epigrams, driving down Piccadilly in a hansom on his way to dine with Dowson at the Café Royal’.⁸⁹ References to Ernest Dowson, the Café Royal, epigrammatic conversation, and a green carnation— respectively the friend, favoured venue, habit, and infamous boutonniere of Oscar Wilde— indicate how literally Sinfield’s remarks about an embrace of the queer model of the aesthete epitomised in the example of Wilde could be taken. Nichols repeated the remark about Sitwell’s epigrams in his period piece of 1958, *The Sweet and Twenties*, a book in which he also recorded his initial antipathy towards Cecil Beaton who he viewed as unduly affected.⁹⁰ As one of ‘the aesthetes of the twenties’, he wrote, Beaton ‘seemed to have mistaken his decade, to have retreated, quite deliberately, into the nineties... He might have walked straight out of some revised version of *Patience*’, the 1882 operetta which satirised the first generation of aesthetes.⁹¹ Even in the late 1950s,

⁸⁶ Pierre Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs* (London: Fortune Press, 1928).

⁸⁷ Raymond Mortimer, *Channel Packet* (London: Hogarth Press, 1942), 126.

⁸⁸ Green, *Children of the Sun*, 156.

⁸⁹ Beverley Nichols, “Woad!: Celebrities in Undress”. *The Sketch*, Wednesday 31 March 1926, 605.

⁹⁰ Beverley Nichols, *The Sweet and Twenties* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1958), 50.

⁹¹ Nichols, *The Sweet and Twenties*, 210.

Nichols viewed Beaton's writing as 'Cecil's last link with the nineties, recalling the distant echoes of Beardsley's *Sous La Colline*'.⁹²

Despite the length of the shadow cast by the figure of Wilde in particular, an interest in the less blatantly scandalous elements of aestheticism were equally understood to have signified an allegiance to the movement's queer self-fashioning. Cyril Connolly, for example, pointedly observed that 'in the preaching of the careful Pater beckon the practices of Wilde'.⁹³ He was encouraged to think so by a spate of books published throughout the 1920s by members of aestheticist circles in the 1890s which courted a younger audience by canonising and aggrandising late nineteenth century aestheticism, all of which attested to the central importance of Walter Pater in the project. Literary historians such as Kristen Mahoney have drawn attention to the appearance of books such as Richard le Gallienne's *The Romantic Nineties* (1925), Bernard Muddiman's *Men of the Nineties* (1920), and Osbert Burdett's *The Beardsley Period* (1925), along with Max Beerbohm's 1928 exhibition of caricatures of the key personalities of late nineteenth century aestheticism, *Ghosts*, to demonstrate that the construction of aestheticism in the 1920s was the product of an intergenerational and symbiotic relationship.⁹⁴ Le Gallienne positioned Pater as 'the Master who bade [the aesthetes] burn always with that hard gem-like flame', advice which, le Gallienne intimated, was responsible for the 'macabre shadow' looming over the movement; elsewhere, he credited Pater as 'the founder of the Aesthetic Movement... the most potent influence on the school of young men of whom I shall later have to speak'.⁹⁵ Bernard Muddiman recorded that the spirit of the 1890s was 'disseminated like a perfume from the writings of Pater in the men who came after him... It was, so to speak, a quickening stimulus to them as the rediscovery of a manuscript of Catullus'.⁹⁶ Osbert Burdett flatly stated that Pater 'influenced all of them', although elsewhere his livelier prose also indicates clearly the sexual proclivities of his intended audience of future aesthetes.⁹⁷ 'The fate of some of [aestheticism's] figures has lent a scandalous glamour to the arts', Burdett wrote.⁹⁸ If we are somehow to miss this obvious reference to Wilde's downfall,

⁹² Nichols, *The Sweet and Twenties*, 212.

⁹³ Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*, 228.

⁹⁴ Mahoney, *Post-Victorian Decadence*, 2-3.

⁹⁵ Richard le Gallienne, *The Romantic Nineties* (New York: Doubleday, 1925), 160-161, 98.

⁹⁶ Bernard Muddiman, *The Men of the Nineties* (London: Henry Danielson, 1920), 135.

⁹⁷ Osbert Burdett, *The Beardsley Period* (London: John Lane, 1925), 162.

⁹⁸ Burdett, *The Beardsley Period*, 270.

Burdett's assertion that it thrills 'the more imaginative schoolboys' – a fact suggested to his mind by *The Loom of Youth*, a novel by Evelyn Waugh's older brother Alec which created a national scandal for its depiction of romantic entanglements between boys at public schools – we may swiftly dispel any illusions as to who he is referring to.⁹⁹ Muddiman's reference to a rediscovered Catullus manuscript may aim at similar ends in a coded, Paterian manner, as the first English-language versions of Catullus's poems which refused to obfuscate their pederastic content appeared in the 1890s owing in part to the work of Beardsley's publisher Leonard Smithers.¹⁰⁰

It was not merely the aesthetes of the 1920s who conceived of themselves as the inheritors of the aggrandised world paraded before them by the likes of Burdett, Muddiman, and le Gallienne; rather, their detractors revived this same language in attacking them in terms which were often clearly sexual, attesting to the strength of association between aestheticism and homosexuality in the period. 'Caricature, which was once a deadly weapon, is now but another means of advertising', Walter Hamilton had noted, 'and so far from being withered by the pictures... published about them, Aesthetes have only flourished the more, and they now openly avow and practice that Aestheticism which previously they felt almost bound to restrain within their own immediate circle of acquaintances'.¹⁰¹ The relationship between caricature and queer identity has more recently been investigated by Dominic Janes, whose *Oscar Wilde Prefigured* dedicates a chapter to the aesthetes of Hamilton's period; Dennis Denisoff's *Aestheticism and Sexual Parody, 1840-1940*, has likewise enumerated the unwitting propagation of aestheticism and its queer sexual politics through the mechanisms of satire and parody.¹⁰² Both texts also indicate that the undercurrent running through these critical interpretations was a sexual one, such that Hamilton's reference to an aestheticism previously restrained to an 'immediate circle of acquaintances' may be read as unwitting innuendo.

Strikingly, parodic or critical responses to aesthetes in the 1920s suggest surprisingly direct continuities with similar responses in the 1880s and 1890s. A 1926 article in *The Tatler* referred to undergraduate aesthetes as 'the lily in the hand

⁹⁹ Burdett, *The Beardsley Period*, 270.

¹⁰⁰ Maxine Lewis and Christina Robertson, "Shameful Kisses: A History of the Reception – and Rejection – of Homoeroticism in Catullus". *Antichthon*, 55, 2021, 187-188.

¹⁰¹ Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 88.

¹⁰² Janes, *Oscar Wilde Prefigured*, 171-191; Dennis Denisoff, *Aestheticism and Sexual Parody, 1840-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

is worth two in the field movement', directly revisiting the popular association Hamilton observed between lilies— among 'the badges of the true Aesthete', Hamilton recorded— and aesthetes.¹⁰³ The piece was accompanied by drawings provided by Arthur Wallis Mills which depicted first the aesthete in the company of his athletic antagonists (fig. 1) and then the aesthete at an 'exotic' party (fig. 2). The first of these shows three stereotyped aesthetes, one brandishing a flower, another swooning at its beauty, and a third prissily filing his fingernails. These figures are contrasted with their masculine counterparts, three exaggeratedly hulking athletes in sporting attire or conservative tailoring. The marked differences between this group and their counterparts recall Dennis Denisoff's observations of caricatures of aesthetes in the 1880s with relative exactitude. Like their predecessors, the group exhibit 'small figure[s], and curved hips... stand[ing] with their arms gently bent toward their hips, while their bodies perform something of a whiplash curve' to 'contrast with the "masculine" pose of the other men in the drawing'.¹⁰⁴ In the second drawing, an aesthete holds forth over the beauty of another brandished flower to a gaggle of dissolute bohemians; in the absence of a more manly group to contrast him to, Mills includes further effeminising details that Denisoff also records as favourites of *Punch* cartoonists of a previous generation, a pair of heavy-lidded eyes and a 'limp wrist... thrown in for emphasis'.¹⁰⁵

In fact, Mills's figures may find themselves equally pleased with the former company as the latter, the writer A. S. Frere Reeves's accompanying article insinuates. 'The aesthete even has a certain admiration for muscular spontaneity', Reeves noted, the homoerotic suggestion lurking close to the surface.¹⁰⁶ In both text and image, there are also subtle intimations that classicism in general, and Dionysian iconographies in particular, may have something to do with these suspicious figures. Frere Reeves's text imagines an outsider surveying an aesthete at university and whispering 'you should have seen him in the Greek play!' to another onlooker; Mills's second drawing features a woman sat on the floor beside the aesthete who fingers his

¹⁰³ Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 35; A. S. Frere Reeves, "Alma-Martyrdom". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 01 December 1926, 422.

¹⁰⁴ Denisoff, *Sexual Parody*, 75.

¹⁰⁵ Denisoff, *Sexual Parody*, 75, 81.

¹⁰⁶ Reeves, *Alma-Martyrdom*, xlvi.

hand and who sports a headdress of grapes and autumnal leaves, like an archetypal maenad of Dionysus's train, to convey the licentiousness of the 'exotic party'.¹⁰⁷

Dionysian trappings notwithstanding, similar 'aesthetic' iconographies are found in caricatural reactions to the artists explored in this thesis, particularly Cecil Beaton. The cartoonist Anthony Wysard had a particular penchant for pillorying Beaton as an effete aesthete, as in a 1930 caricature (fig. 3). In Wysard's depiction, Beaton's figure is instantly recognisable as an inheritance from the wasp-waisted aesthetes of the late nineteenth century despite the fact he is surrounded by the trappings and results of his distinctly twentieth-century practice of fashion photography. Developing Arthur Wallis Mills's suggestiveness further, the exuberant colouring of Wysard's caricature makes clear that Beaton's lips are painted and his eyes heavily made up, aspects of his toilet that Beverley Nichols recorded generated 'malicious gossip' and disgust towards him.¹⁰⁸ Beside him sits a conspicuously outsized vase containing a bouquet of lilies which, as Dominic Janes notes, possess an unusually close physical kinship to Beaton's 'flowery head and curving, stem-like body'.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the grotesque exaggeration of Beaton's upturned nose in Wysard's rendering means that even his one visible nostril is elongated to mirror the shape of the lily petals beside him. Wysard was to repeat the trick more forcefully in a cartoon labelled a 'queer nightmare', in which the celebrities of the day are recast as pantomime characters (fig. 4). In this instance Beaton appears in full drag at the far left of the composition, covered from the waist down by a mound of rose petals but clearly intertwined with fellow queer artist Oliver Messel. Directly opposite them reclines the socialite Doris Castlerosse, perhaps the only woman with whom Beaton was ever known to conduct a heterosexual affair; in her hand she grasps two intertwined lilies which appear to extend the strange resemblance between man and flower in Wysard's 1930 caricature and directly stand in for Beaton and Messel, indicating the emasculation of the two effeminate male figures in the grip of a domineering female one.

Glyn Philpot received similar treatment at the hands of the cartoonist Powys Evans in 1924 (fig. 5). Denuded of any telltale lilies and willowy body— only his head

¹⁰⁷ Reeves, *Alma-Martyrdom*, 423.

¹⁰⁸ Nichols, *The Sweet and Twenties*, 213.

¹⁰⁹ Janes, *Freak to Chic*, 154.

and neck are visible— Philpot’s stemlike and etiolated neck is nonetheless suggestive of the aesthete’s weak and strangely vegetal body, while the heavy-lidded eyes of his predecessors recur. Philpot juts into the composition, the majority of which is taken up with his painting *The Journey of the Spirit*, to closely examine a nude classical torso. Grasped in Philpot’s hand, the torso not only obscures the genitalia of the naked, painted figure behind it but also functions as its euphemistic stand-in, its body held erect in front of the painted figure’s groin. Simon Martin has suggested that Evans’s drawing indicates that ‘Philpot’s reputation had become so synonymous with the representation of the male nude that it could be the subject of caricature’ and that the torso ‘conveniently covers the nudity’ of the background figure.¹¹⁰ This is arguably a charitable reading of the phobic sexual politics at play. Rather, Philpot’s gazing at and handling of the classical sculpture which is also a relatively blatant phallic symbol arguably implicates Philpot in a prurient act suggestive of stigmatised desires.

The combination in Powys Evans’s caricature of Philpot’s appearance as a willowy effeminate with his conspicuous interest in classical male forms returns us to the fact that it was not merely an interest in lipstick and lilies that signified an aesthete in the 1920s; the associations between classicism, aestheticism, and queerness that were dramatically intensified in the Wilde trials evidently persisted. As we shall see in the following chapters, imagery surrounding the Dionysian retinue became centrally important in the continuation of the project upon which these links were predicated, the ‘homosexual counterdiscourse’ of aestheticism identified by Linda Dowling wherein classical iconographies became spaces for articulating desire, identification, and dissent for queer aesthetes. In a short catalogue produced to accompany the Fogg Art Museum’s 1979 exhibition *Dionysos and his Circle: Ancient Through Modern*, the classicist Caroline Houser remarked that the figures of the Dionysian retinue ‘have been used loosely in modern art to express whatever beliefs the artist holds’ in modern art.¹¹¹ In the art of the aesthetes, however, this is far from the case. Rather, the treatment of the Dionysian retinue within British aestheticism and its lineages represents a holistic, concerted project initiated in the writings of

¹¹⁰ Martin, *Philpot*, 107.

¹¹¹ Caroline Houser, “Changing Views of Dionysos”. *Dionysos and his Circle: Ancient Through Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 23.

Walter Pater and taken up by the artists of subsequent generations for whom Pater's evocative imagery still held a deep fascination.

Pater returned to Dionysus in two essays penned in the 1870s, "A Study of Dionysus: The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew" and "The Bacchanals of Euripides", which were posthumously collected together in his *Greek Studies* of 1894.¹¹² In these essays Pater laid out the grounds upon which successive generations of artists would think of the god and his followers, and encouraged aesthetes to consider Dionysus to be their god. Despite writing before the advent of queer theory in Pater studies, Robert and Janice Keefe observe in their book *Walter Pater and the Gods of Disorder* that Pater's Dionysus is 'a rather Wildean deity' who 'acts as an outlandish but highly civilised opponent of cultural philistinism'; writing some time later, Yopie Prins has likewise identified the Dionysus of these essays as 'the prototype of the decadent aesthete'.¹¹³ Turning first to the god himself in the subsequent chapter, we will examine how Pater's conception of Dionysus interacted with classical and contemporary precedents to construct Dionysus in the image of both the aesthete and the object of the aesthete's desire, exploring too how the influential figures of Beardsley, Ricketts, and Shannon transmitted this conception to their followers through their illustrations and paintings. We will then turn our attention in the following chapters to Dionysus's followers, the fauns and the nymphs.

¹¹² Pater, *Greek Studies*, 9-52, 53-81.

¹¹³ Robert Keefe and Janice Keefe, *Walter Pater and the Gods of Disorder* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1988), 11; Yopie Prins, "Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters". *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 51.

Chapter 1

‘The Divine Wild Creature Himself’:

Picturing Dionysus, Navigating Desire

On Wednesday the twenty-ninth of June, 1927, an advertisement appeared in *The Bystander* for a tailoring firm which promised to sell clothes to ‘the man of cultured taste’.¹¹⁴ Men, it argued, found shopping for clothes boring because ‘women are subtly catered for in leisured and artistic surroundings [in clothing shops] whilst men are not’.¹¹⁵ To counteract this, the tailoring firm boasted that its ‘rooms are furnished as a club, in which the customers are received as guests, and where no licensing restrictions can possibly prohibit comfort’.¹¹⁶ To encourage men to take to this feminised pursuit, it attempted to entice readers of *The Bystander* with an illustration which was evidently intended to evoke what its writer called the ‘atmosphere and personality’ of the clublike rooms.¹¹⁷ In the illustration, three young men loiter by a well-stocked bar attended by a smartly dressed older man, while in the foreground another young man lounges before a fireplace and reads an illustrated paper like the one the advertisement appeared in (fig. 6). On the table beside this last figure is a cocktail and an ashtray and on another table the accoutrements of a ‘man of cultured taste’ – a pair of gloves, a hat, and a cane – have been discarded, lying at raffish angles. To make young men like the ones in the picture buy more clothes, this illustration was entitled ‘The Order of Dionysus’.

The pitch was clearly aimed at men like Brian Howard who, as we have seen, was ‘enthroned as Dionysus’ for his twenty-fourth birthday two years later. It was produced by Pope and Bradley, a tailoring firm based in Mayfair which was headed by the tailor, playwright, spirit medium, and polemicist Herbert Dennis Bradley. Bradley’s firm attempted to channel anger towards figures of ridicule such as the ‘the elderly and corpulent’ whose palpably laughable rallying cry was ‘let the young man of today be manly!’, as a 1919 advertisement had it, in order to signal its allegiance to its potential clientele.¹¹⁸ Almost unknown now, Bradley was a celebrity in his own right throughout the 1920s, noted in *The Bystander* as ‘the Bond Street clothes man who has the lively, picturesque adverts, and writes books and goes to all the first nights’ and later recalled in *The Graphic* for ‘the witty advertisements he used to

¹¹⁴ Herbert Dennis Bradley, “Atmosphere and Personality”. *The Bystander*, Wednesday 29 June 1927, 642.

¹¹⁵ Bradley, *Atmosphere and Personality*, 642.

¹¹⁶ Bradley, *Atmosphere and Personality*, 642.

¹¹⁷ Bradley, *Atmosphere and Personality*, 642.

¹¹⁸ Herbert Dennis Bradley, “For Her and Her Alone”. *The Tatler*, Wednesday 31 December 1919, 31.

write... one of the solaces of the Great War'.¹¹⁹ By Bradley's own estimates— which admittedly tend towards self-aggrandisement— he was assured of an audience of five million readers for his advertisements.¹²⁰ He was also clearly on the side of the aesthetes, as his defence of effeminate men would indicate. Bradley's published writings, often taking the form of aphorisms, evidence his favouring of the Wildean mode and include lines such as 'a woman wears a halo when she cannot wear beautiful clothes'.¹²¹ Indeed, he was among the guests at the seances of Hester Travers Smith who, as we noted in our introduction, participated in the business of revivifying the culture of late nineteenth century aestheticism with eccentric literalism by claiming to commune with the ghost of Oscar Wilde.¹²² Bradley's pronouncements included Dionysian allusions, characterising the young woman of the 1920s as the 'modern nymph' and stating his opposition to the encroachment of the thoroughly 'athletic' institution of the Officer Training Corps in public schools, a favourite target of adolescent aesthetes like Howard and his 'Cremorne Club' at Eton, by stating its brand of 'discipline is anti-Dionysus'.¹²³ A 1929 advertisement in *The Sketch* further announced a new shop frontage which was more beautiful and distinguished than Paris, New York, and Berlin.¹²⁴ All of these cities were, however, when 'compared with ancient Athens... a mass of concrete and bricks'.¹²⁵ 'It is from a desire to conform to classicism that Pope and Bradley have now rebuilt the frontage of their premises', it continued: 'this new design is the work of that traditional artist, Charles Sykes [who also executed *The Order of Dionysus*], and the conception is so fine in character that it may create a renaissance for twentieth century Mayfair'.¹²⁶ Bridging the gap between the late nineteenth century and the aesthetes of the 1920s, Bradley also adapted the first publicly performed stage version of Evelyn Waugh's novel *Vile Bodies* in 1932.¹²⁷

What *The Order of Dionysus* indicates is that among the projected five million people who saw Pope and Bradley's advertisements was a sizeable body of young

¹¹⁹ Anon., "Blanchette Has a Dream". *The Bystander*, Wednesday 07 March 1923, 583; Anon., "The London Stage". *Graphic*, Saturday 14 December 1929, 542.

¹²⁰ Herbert Dennis Bradley, "The Gentle Art". *The Sketch*, March 17 1920, 446.

¹²¹ Herbert Dennis Bradley, *Not for Fools* (London: G. Richards Ltd., 1920), 190-191.

¹²² Herbert Dennis Bradley, *Wisdom of the Gods* (London: T. Werner Laurie Limited, 1925), 147.

¹²³ Herbert Dennis Bradley, "Discipline". *The Bystander*, Wednesday 20 October 1920, 208.

¹²⁴ Herbert Dennis Bradley, "The Street of Fame". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 01 May 1929, xxviii.

¹²⁵ Bradley, *Street of Fame*, xxviii.

¹²⁶ Bradley, *Street of Fame*, xxviii.

¹²⁷ Anon., "The Vaudeville". *The Stage*, Thursday 21 April 1932, 12.

men who would both understand and be attracted by the confluence between the mannered decadence of the Mayfair clubhouse and the ancient Greek god that is almost casually evoked in the illustration. In this chapter we shall investigate how this arose, with Bradley's approximations of Wildean cadences pointing to the answers. As the classicist Albert Henrichs has observed, and as Sykes's illustration which invokes but does not depict Dionysus would suggest, images of Dionysus are comparably rare in art from the mid-nineteenth century onwards as images of his retinue increasingly supplanted those of their god.¹²⁸ Within the artworks of the aesthetes, however, there exists a minor tendency which pictures the god in terms propagated or defined by the foundational writings of Walter Pater. Observing this tendency reveals that images of Dionysus rehearse the gestures more fully and clearly expressed within images of his retinue, particularly in images of fauns: in this chapter we shall see how Dionysus becomes for the aesthete a locus for the twin functions of identification and desire. We will begin by elucidating the contours of Dionysus as understood by Pater and the intellectual and artistic contexts in which these contours were clarified. We shall then examine these two aspects of Dionysus, firstly Dionysus as 'the prototype of the decadent aesthete' as Yopie Prins argues and then Dionysus as a homoerotic locus, establishing the parameters for our investigations into the proliferation of his followers in the subsequent chapters.

Dionysus as Aesthete: Pater, Beardsley, Wilde

Before we begin, it is pertinent to establish the basic facts of Dionysus as a deity, and which of these became essential to aestheticist imaginings of the god. The first part of this is somewhat easier in theory than in practice: Christopher Faraone noted in his introduction to the comprehensive study *Masks of Dionysus* that Dionysus is 'undoubtedly the most complex and multifaceted of all Greek gods', while Henrichs summarises that, 'in short, Dionysus defies definition'.¹²⁹ Certainly, as this chapter

¹²⁸ Albert Henrichs, "Loss of Self, Suffering, Violence: The Modern View of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard". *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 88, 1984, 219.

¹²⁹ Christopher Faraone, "Introduction." *Masks of Dionysus* (Ithica: Cornell University Press), 1993, 1; Henrichs, *Loss of Self*, 209.

reflects, Dionysus recurs throughout the images and discourses we are concerned with here in different guises befitting a god who ‘by his very nature is disposed to wear different masks and who was known to reveal himself in different ways at different times to his worshippers’.¹³⁰ The situation is further complicated when examining what Henrichs terms ‘the modern Dionysus’, the development of which marked a change in the god’s fortunes that Henrichs dates to the 1870s in which Dionysus was more commonly discussed as ‘an abstract concept’ than as a corporeal figure.¹³¹

Nonetheless, a thoroughgoing biography of Dionysus the god has been established in the scholarship of Walter Otto, whose 1933 book *Dionysus: Myth and Cult* was the first modern study of the god and remains the most extensive text of its kind. The basic facts, as Otto records them, are as follows. Dionysus was a god who was born to a human mother, Semele, and an Olympian father, Zeus. When Zeus’s divine form was revealed to Semele, she was spontaneously consumed by flames from which Zeus extracted Dionysus by incubating him in his thigh before birthing the child himself.¹³² To protect him from the wrath of a jealous Hera, Dionysus was secretly conveyed by Hermes from Olympus to be raised at Nysa in the safety of a company of nymphs who acted as his nurses and, later, his celebrants. His epiphanic appearances among mortals are characterised by their ‘startling, disquieting, violent’ nature: as Otto notes, ‘terrifying disturbances are engendered in his vicinity... the god appeared with such wildness and demanded such unheard-of things, so much that mocked all human order’.¹³³ The cult of Dionysus was typically believed to have originated beyond Greece— he is referred to often as a Thracian deity, who joined the pantheon of Greek gods only belatedly— and conquered Greece through the irresistible force of the effect he engendered in those who followed him or through the brutal retribution that he and his retinue were capable of inflicting upon enemies, particularly in the violence of his maddened female followers.¹³⁴ This latter detail is evidence of the most profound effect Dionysus inspired in his followers, and the detail that birthed the dematerialisation of Dionysus in late nineteenth century writing; namely, his ability to drive his followers into altered states of divinely

¹³⁰ Faraone, Introduction, 2.

¹³¹ Henrichs, *Loss of Self*, 218.

¹³² Otto, *Myth and Cult*, 65.

¹³³ Otto, *Myth and Cult*, 74, 76.

¹³⁴ Otto, *Myth and Cult*, 77.

inspired madness in which the normative demands of social order were overcome. He was equally an agrarian god associated with a plethora of vegetation and animals including, most prominently, the vine, the fig tree, the leopard, and the bull.

Pater's interest in Dionysus, as we have noted, took the form of two essays that were both most likely written in or around 1876 and were posthumously collected in *Greek Studies*, and the god figured prominently in Pater's mind. As Kate Hext's research has shown, Pater's second book was initially to have been titled *Dionysus and Other Studies*.¹³⁵ While this was abandoned in 1878 for unclear reasons, the centrality of Dionysus to this project demonstrates the depth of Pater's attachment and, indeed, his fuller writings on Dionysus are anticipated by fleeting references to the god in his first book *The Renaissance*.¹³⁶ It is important to note that Pater's interest in Dionysus was not in itself idiosyncratic within the artistic, philosophical, and intellectual contexts of the 1870s: an interest in Dionysus brought Pater's voice into concert with broader intellectual tendencies implicating mythography, philosophy, literature, and visual art during the nineteenth century. Margot K. Louis influentially termed this tendency the 'anti-Olympian topos', describing in this term a waning of interest in the remote, pristine Olympian deities of the classical canon in favour of the 'chthonic' deities and their mystery cults, including Dionysus, for their perceived authenticity and sensuality.¹³⁷ These shifting sympathies challenged prevalent notions that the classical past stood for many of the ideals which we have seen it was thought to stand for once again in the 'return to order' of the 1920s. Within the 'anti-Olympian topos', Louis claims, 'the Mysteries were no longer as sober, reverent rituals... instead, the focus turned to the orgiastic and ecstatic elements of the chthonic rites', and the art that responded to this cultural turn in which 'Dionysiac revelries proliferated rapidly... popularized a headier version of Greece' than ever before.¹³⁸ Pater's project, and thus the project of what Linda Dowling calls aestheticism's 'homosexual counterdiscourse', is arguably one subversive tendency within this broader cultural shift. It is the logic of Louis's 'anti-Olympian topos' that Stefano Evangelista is employing, for example, in

¹³⁵ Kate Hext, *Walter Pater: Individualism and Aesthetic Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 96.

¹³⁶ Hext, *Walter Pater*, 97.

¹³⁷ Margot K. Louis, "Gods and Mysteries: The Revival of Paganism and the Remaking of Mythography through the Nineteenth Century." *Victorian Studies*, 47, 3, 2005.

¹³⁸ Louis, *Gods and Mysteries*, 343, 351.

discussing Pater's efforts 'to create a place within classicism for what was traditionally perceived as anti-classical or romantic, for the troubled and inharmonious, irrational and fleshy side of the Greek imagination'.¹³⁹

As Henrichs argues, the 'anti-Olympian topos' did not send painters to their easels *en masse* to record Dionysus's likeness: all of the paintings Louis refers to in order to support her hypothesis concern Dionysian revellers and members of his retinue rather than the god himself.¹⁴⁰ While this state of affairs may be commonplace within art history, Henrichs further demonstrates that the 'anti-Olympian topos' was also the catalyst for the internalisation and dematerialisation of Dionysus that we have acknowledged at the outset of this chapter: it was in this period that Dionysus was 'destroyed... as a god' but 'preserved... as a concept'.¹⁴¹ It is not at Pater's feet that Henrichs lies the blame for this but rather those of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose landmark essay *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) cast an unavoidably long shadow over subsequent understandings of the Dionysian retinue.¹⁴²

Central to Henrichs's argument about the dematerialisation of Dionysus is the fact that 'the term "Dionysian" can be found much more often in *The Birth of Tragedy* than the name of Dionysus'.¹⁴³ This refers to the thesis of Nietzsche's argument that 'the continuous development of art is bound up with the duplexity of the Apollonian and the Dionysian', a dichotomous schema in which Apollo and Dionysus lose their status as unique deities and become instead the symbolic figureheads of broader impulses at work both within the psyche of the individual and the cultural logic of entire civilisations.¹⁴⁴ 'In the Apollonian structure', Nietzsche writes, 'parallel to the aesthetic necessity for beauty, there run the demands "know thyself" and "not too much", while presumption and undueness are regarded as the truly hostile demons of the non-Apollonian sphere'.¹⁴⁵ In contrast to this, the Dionysian impulse revealed itself in bacchanalian rites involving 'extravagant sexual licentiousness, the waves of which overwhelmed all family life and its venerable

¹³⁹ Stefano Evangelista, "A Revolting Mistake: Walter Pater's Iconography of Dionysus". *Victorian Review*, 34, 2, 2008, 202.

¹⁴⁰ Louis, *Gods and Mysteries*, 351.

¹⁴¹ Albert Henrichs, "He Has A God in Him: Human and Divine in the Modern Perception of Dionysus". *Masks of Dionysus*, 23.

¹⁴² Henrichs, *A God in Him*, 24.

¹⁴³ Henrichs, *A God in Him*, 23.

¹⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 21.

¹⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 40.

traditions; the very wildest beasts of nature were let loose'.¹⁴⁶ The Apollonian values of restraint, order, and harmony require constant guarding against the dangerous and chaotic thrall of Dionysus, with Nietzsche characterising Doric art as 'a permanent war-camp of the Apollonian: only by incessant opposition to the titanic-barbaric nature of the Dionysian was it possible for an art so defiantly-prim, so encompassed with bulwarks... to last for any length of time'.¹⁴⁷

Nietzsche's positioning of the 'Dionysian' as a force of fundamental alterity shares Pater's identification of 'the troubled and inharmonious, irrational and fleshy side of the Greek imagination' that Evangelista identifies, and it is tempting to assert that Nietzsche's influence would be the greater in aestheticist conceptions of Dionysus and his retinue. Certainly, Henrichs's assertion that Nietzsche's dominance meant that Pater by contrast 'had next to no influence on the modern study of Dionysus' would appear to encourage us to follow classical scholars in this, and Nietzsche's works were widely available in English by the 1920s.¹⁴⁸ Those who came of age after the First World War were, as the historian David Thatcher wrote, 'the first generation of Englishmen to reach maturity with a complete English translation of Nietzsche at their elbow'.¹⁴⁹ This was owing to efforts during the Edwardian period made by a small number of writers and philosophers such as Oscar Levy and Anthony Ludovici to translate Nietzsche's complete works into English, a task completed in 1913.¹⁵⁰ However, British Nietzscheanism which engaged with the figure of Dionysus represented a strain of thought that was implicitly or at times explicitly hostile to the aesthetes. Ludovici provided an idiosyncratic repudiation of prohibition in 1921 which expounded lengthily upon Nietzsche's notion of the 'Dionysian man'; the noun was perhaps as important to Ludovici as the adjective, as he spent the 1920s and 1930s calling for a retrograde, aggressively heteronormative ideal of a 'masculine renaissance' anathema to aestheticist discourses and hymned Dionysus within this schema for his apparent restoration of male sexual potency.¹⁵¹ A little magazine entitled *The London Aphrodite* which ran from 1928 to 1929 and is

¹⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 40, 29-30.

¹⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 42.

¹⁴⁸ Henrichs, *Loss of Self*, 239.

¹⁴⁹ David Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England, 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 10.

¹⁵⁰ Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 12.

¹⁵¹ Anthony Ludovici, *Man's Descent from the Gods* (London: Heinemann, 1921), 118; Stone, *Breeding Superman*, 41.

recorded by David Thatcher as the preeminent Nietzschean publication of its time in Britain was founded by the Australian expatriate Jack Lindsay and his artist father Norman Lindsay, with Jack providing perhaps the first English language investigation into Nietzsche's Dionysus in 1929.¹⁵² Jack Lindsay equally, however, used an editorial essay in *The London Aphrodite* to rail against 'fiddling aesthetes trying to explode into bombs of nervousity and achieving only a thinner brand of aestheticism' who were placed at odds with what he later recalled as the *Aphrodite's* 'bullroaring Dionysiac declarations'.¹⁵³ As Nietzsche's identification of 'the aesthetic necessity for beauty' with the dichotomously opposed Apollo would indicate, a relationship between Dionysus and aestheticism— and indeed even a situation in which Dionysus could be imaginatively cast as 'the prototype of the decadent aesthete', as Yopie Prins observes— was by no means to be assumed as it was in Charles Sykes's *Order of Dionysus*, and it is in Pater's points of difference from the dominant philosophical tendencies of the 'anti-Olympian topos' and its legacies that we grasp the contours of the aesthetes' god.

Pater's focus on Dionysus differs from Nietzsche's more dominant version in two significant and significantly intertwined ways. Firstly, Pater broadly resists the god's dematerialisation, retaining a focus on Dionysus as an individual. Indeed, a lack of corporeal form appears to inform Pater's surprisingly dismissive approach to the arcadian deity Pan, widely popular amongst Pater's contemporaries to the extent that he eclipses Dionysus utterly within some fields of artistic production.¹⁵⁴ Pan is described in 'A Study of Dionysus' as 'quite different from [fauns] in origin and intent, but confused with them... he is but a presence; the spiritual form of Arcadia'; this is the extent of Pater's account of 'the uneventful tenour of his existence'.¹⁵⁵ Secondly, a maintenance of focus on the physical qualities of Dionysus allows Pater to highlight the very aspects of the deity which are stifled in Nietzsche's model. The literary scholar Jessica Wood, in her study of 'Dionysian creativity', argues that Nietzsche's preference for 'the Dionysian' over Dionysus allows him to subtract from

¹⁵² Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England*, 8; Jack Lindsay, *Dionysos: Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche, An Essay in Lyrical Philosophy* (London: Fanfrolico Press, 1929).

¹⁵³ Jack Lindsay, "Norman Douglas: An Essay in Humanistic Values". *The London Aphrodite*, vol. 5, 1929, 385; Jack Lindsay, *Fanfrolico and After* (London: Bodley Head, 1962), 121.

¹⁵⁴ Patricia Merrivale records that Pan is easily the most frequently invoked Greek god in late nineteenth century 'minor lyric poetry': in Patricia Merrivale, *Pan the Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 118.

¹⁵⁵ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 15.

his considerations the central role of women in myth narratives surrounding the god.¹⁵⁶ This suppression of the feminine in Dionysus's myths is also paralleled by a suppression of the effeminate in his person, which is alternately a recurrent and pronounced feature of Dionysus in Pater's accounts. Pater's statements in his *Bacchanals* essay that Dionysus is 'a woman-like god... it was on women and feminine souls that his power mainly fell' and that the band of maddened mortals who follow him 'is *almost* exclusively formed of women' certainly invite questions as to who Pater means by 'feminine souls' just as they open up places within Dionysus's train for his queer male readers.¹⁵⁷ Yopie Prins, for example, has questioned whether Pater is intimating that 'one of those "feminine souls" is his own'.¹⁵⁸ This characterisation is extended to the god himself, allowing for a degree of identification between aesthete and deity.

The effeminate Dionysus who appears in both Pater's 'Study of Dionysus' and the 'Bacchanals' essay is indeed ghosted by the god's fleeting appearances in *The Renaissance*, in which Pater invokes both Michelangelo's sculpture of the god (fig. 7) and a painting of him initially attributed to Leonardo (fig. 8). In the case of the former, Pater praises Michelangelo's expression of Dionysus's 'sleepy seriousness, his enthusiasm, his capacity for profound dreaming'.¹⁵⁹ In the case of the latter, Pater compares the Leonardesque Dionysus to Leonardo's *Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 9), 'whose delicate brown flesh and woman's hair no one would go out into the wilderness to seek'.¹⁶⁰ Owing to the compelling androgyny of this figure, 'we are no longer surprised by Saint John's strange likeness to the *Bacchus* which hangs near it'.¹⁶¹ As Elizabeth Prettejohn has observed, the reference points Pater draws upon to scaffold his construction of Dionysus including Michelangelo and 'Leonardesque figures... all involved homoerotic connotations'; his interest in the unstable gendering and conspicuous effeminacy of Leonardo's rendition provide the first indications that Pater's Dionysus shares with the aesthetes their suspicious appearance suggestive of nonnormative sexual practices.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Jessica Wood, *Portraits of the Artist: Dionysian Creativity in Selected Works by Gabriele D'Annunzio and Thomas Mann* (Lausanne: Peter Lang, 2017), 54.

¹⁵⁷ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 57.

¹⁵⁸ Prins, *Greek Maenads*, 52.

¹⁵⁹ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (New York: Modern Library, 1919), 65.

¹⁶⁰ Pater, *Renaissance*, 97.

¹⁶¹ Pater, *Renaissance*, 98.

¹⁶² Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Pater and Painting*, 46.

Pater's championing of a portrayal of a young and androgynous Dionysus by his friend Simeon Solomon (figs. 10-11)– as Prettejohn observes, Pater's dating is inexact, so he may refer to either of Solomon's paintings on the theme– is commonly read as a signal that Pater's Dionysus is intimately related to queer sexuality, as Solomon had by the time of Pater's writing 'A Study of Dionysus' faced legal and social persecution for attempting to solicit sex from men in public toilets.¹⁶³ It is Pater's inclusion of this contemporary iteration of the god in his 'Study of Dionysus', alongside another invocation of Michelangelo's sculpture, that has Evangelista argue that Pater's essay 'begs to be read' within 'a rich tradition of homoerotic art' related to Dionysian myth; Prettejohn records that the 'pale skin, curling hair, and full mouth' of Solomon's *Bacchus* 'is analogous to the [female] Rossettian type', extending the heavily related associations between Dionysus and effeminacy glimpsed in *The Renaissance*.¹⁶⁴ Pater invokes Solomon's *Bacchus* as 'a complete and very fascinating realisation' of a late stage of the god's development which he argues is rarely expressed in art, that of 'a melancholy and sorrowing Dionysus' who he also finds in an engraving by the Renaissance artist Girolamo Mocetto wherein the god presents 'a face, comely, but full of an expression of painful brooding' (fig. 12).¹⁶⁵ Dionysus's arrival at this state comes, in Pater's observations, from his exit from his arcadian 'little Olympus outside the greater' in order to 'enter... Athens, to become urbane like... [the] noble youths'.¹⁶⁶ His entry into the *polis* mirrors both his growing maturity and, with it, his pronounced effeminacy, as Pater describes Dionysus shifting from 'the ruddy god of the vineyard' into a 'white, graceful, mournful figure' whose skin appears 'honey-pale, like the delicate people of the city, like the flesh of women'.¹⁶⁷

It is this Dionysus who also occupies Pater's attention in his 'Bacchanals' essay, a study of Euripides's play *Bacchae* in which Dionysus confronts and conquers the Theban king Pentheus who is repulsed by Dionysus's effeminacy and who Dionysus faces in his 'outraged beauty' when captured, assured of the bloody victory his maenads will ensure for him over the philistine ruler. It is in this essay that Pater

¹⁶³ Prettejohn, *Pater and Painting*, 38.

¹⁶⁴ Evangelista, *British Aestheticism*, 41; Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Publishing, 2000), 220.

¹⁶⁵ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 42.

¹⁶⁶ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 9, 39.

¹⁶⁷ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 40.

refers to Dionysus as ‘a woman-like god’ and also as ‘especially a woman’s deity’ who garbs himself in the same raiment as his female followers; ‘in the course of his long progress from land to land, the gold, the flowers, the incense of the East, have attached themselves deeply to him’, Pater records, noting how these opulent decorations ennoble the god’s ‘perfumed yellow hair... [and] white feet, somewhat womanly’.¹⁶⁸

The ‘mournful’ quality Pater identifies in this Dionysus, who has left the safety of his ‘little Olympus’ and has subsequently faced persecution by the likes of the uncomprehending Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, may be understood as a figure whose inner state confirms the queer resonances of his outward appearance. ‘This image of the beautiful soft creature become an enemy of human kind, putting off himself in his madness, wronged by his own fierce hunger and thirst... is the most tragic note of the whole picture’, Pater writes of the embattled Dionysus, the advent of whose suffering parallels the advent of his effeminacy in the structure of Pater’s essay.¹⁶⁹ As it was the recently persecuted Solomon whose understanding of this figure is ‘complete’, the natural and irresistible desires indicated by a ‘hunger and thirst’ should perhaps be read as a metaphor for libidinal desire, and previous scholars have made this step. Kate Hext observes that Pater portrays the god as ‘a terribly vulnerable figure’ who ‘is simply unable to control his wild desires or the effect he has on others’, and Dustin Friedman directly sees in this figure ‘a historical prefiguration of the plight of the late Victorian homosexual, doomed to destruction by desires beyond his control by a cruel and oppressive society’.¹⁷⁰ That Pater subsequently traces the afterlife of this suffering Dionysus to the figure of the werewolf in Western folk cultures may perhaps support this because, as we shall see in the following chapter, it is the same physiognomic hybridity and confounded boundary between animal and man in the werewolf that forms an important constituent in Pater’s conception of the faun as a queer subject.¹⁷¹

While Pater turns it to contemporary ends, the effeminacy he finds in Dionysus is not the product of his and Solomon’s imaginations nor even those of the Renaissance predecessors invoked in Pater’s essays. As Walter Otto records, there is

¹⁶⁸ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 64, 62.

¹⁶⁹ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 47.

¹⁷⁰ Hext, *Individualism and Aesthetic Philosophy*, 101; Dustin Friedman, *Before Queer Theory*, 67.

¹⁷¹ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 42, 47.

no shortage of references in antiquity to Dionysus's feminine appearance, the suspicion it arouses, and occasionally even the queer sexual practices it signals. 'The Christians sneer at his effeminacy', Otto writes, 'to which the strange story of his encounter with Prosymnus can also bear witness', this in reference to a myth narrative in which Dionysus's masturbates with a figwood phallus on the grave of his once-prospective male lover Prosymnus.¹⁷² This narrative refutes the general trend in classical depictions of the god observed by Michael Jameson, as it is among the few stories which record sexual activity on Dionysus's part; he is generally depicted or described as remaining aloof from the sexual activity of his retinue.¹⁷³ Beyond infrequent episodes of sexual activity, however, Dionysus's sexual alterity is betrayed not by his activities but by his appearance as Pater indicates. Jameson draws attention to the difference in ancient portrayals of an ornately costumed Dionysus with other male gods, of whom 'the display of their bodies is consistent with their ostentatious masculinity', while Eric Csapo notes that the Pentheus of Euripides's *Bacchae* is perturbed by the sleekness of the god's hair which suggests an 'unfamiliarity with wrestling' and the paleness of his skin which connotes 'deliberate avoidance of outdoor activities'.¹⁷⁴ These final observations indeed return us obliquely to the cultural battle attendant upon the revived interest in aestheticism in the 1920s, that of the perceived war between 'athletes' and 'aesthetes', reminding us of the identification of aesthetes with effeminacy which allows for equivalences to be made between aesthete and god in Pater's essays: 'Pentheus' is to 'Dionysus', in Pater's understanding of the *Bacchae*, broadly what 'athlete' was to 'aesthete'.

Pater's decision to focus upon Euripides's *Bacchae* in his second essay on Dionysus not merely allows him to highlight the persecution of the god owing to his effeminacy but also the spoils of his 'outraged beauty', the eventual killing of Pentheus by the maenads.¹⁷⁵ Richard Dellamora speculates that 'Dionysus's ability to triumph over his antagonists satisfies subliminal fantasies of revenge against a hostile society', and we shall see when we turn our gaze to the female constituents of Dionysus's retinue that the terrifying power they were capable of wielding over men

¹⁷² Otto, *Myth and Cult*, 176.

¹⁷³ Michael Jameson, "The Asexuality of Dionysus". *Masks of Dionysus*, 44-45.

¹⁷⁴ Eric Csapo, "Riding the Phallus for Dionysus: Iconology, Ritual, and Gender-Role De/Construction." *Phoenix*, 51, 3, 1997, 261.

¹⁷⁵ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 75.

was at times an attractive, retributory weapon for aesthetes.¹⁷⁶ But the greater victory Dionysus attains in Pater's 'Study of Dionysus' also parallels his growing effeminacy, cosmopolitanism, and sophistication as a god, and further increases the sense in which Dionysus is aligned to the 'decadent aesthete' that Yopie Prins finds in Pater's writings. Upon his entry to Athens, Pater remarks that Dionysus goes amongst the 'urbane young men' to 'contribute through the arts to the adornment of life, yet perhaps also in part to weaken it, relaxing ancient austerity'. That Dionysus's influence 'through the arts' should make itself felt as a weakening influence requiring the relaxation of 'ancient austerity' suggests that Dionysus's arrival in Athens ushers in a period of decadent culture. The going among the 'urbane young men' of this sexually aberrant stranger god seems replete with queer potentialities that accompany and perhaps exemplify the general 'relaxing' of Athenian culture, a point to which the machinations of Dionysus's influence in Pater's imagination further attest. Dionysus is cast in 'A Study of Dionysus' as 'the inherent cause of music and poetry; he explains the phenomena of enthusiasm, as distinguished by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, the secrets of possession by a higher and more energetic spirit than one's own'.¹⁷⁷ To illustrate his point, Pater provides an imagined portrait of the Greek men who Dionysus goes among in Athens, the central figure of which is a male youth filled with Dionysian 'enthusiasm'. 'The things he could never utter before, [the youth] finds words for now... It is in this loosening of the lips and heart... that Dionysus is the Deliverer', Pater argues.¹⁷⁸ As Stefano Evangelista notes, Pater's 'idiosyncratic blending of Plato and Dionysus is carried out in blatantly homoerotic terms', his invocation of the *Phaedrus* in which pederastic love is openly discussed suggesting a queer function to Dionysian 'enthusiasm' as readily as his discussions of loosened lips and strange new utterances in the homosocial space of the Athenian symposium.¹⁷⁹ Pater appreciates, Evangelista argues, 'the sweet decadence of the Attic symposium, where refined young men abandon themselves to promiscuous embraces; indeed, the connection between the Athenian banquet and Dionysian possession is entirely original to him'.¹⁸⁰ It is perhaps also Pater's characterisation of the metaphysical machinations of divine inspiration— 'the secrets of *possession* by a

¹⁷⁶ Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, 177.

¹⁷⁷ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 18.

¹⁷⁸ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 19.

¹⁷⁹ Evangelista, *A Revolting Mistake*, 215.

¹⁸⁰ Evangelista, *A Revolting Mistake*, 216.

higher and more energetic spirit than one's own' – that suggests that Pater is thinking here in terms of the pederastic logic of 'Greek love', intermingling in this phrase the notion of an older man educating a younger lover and the physical, erotic charge attendant upon it in such relationships.¹⁸¹ Lene Østermark-Johansen's reminder that 'cult images of the winged Dionysus [Pater's Dionysus the Deliverer] are frequently related to the erect phallus' in discussing this passage demonstrates a further, equally veiled intertext in the sexual politics of Pater's writing here.¹⁸²

In 'A Study of Dionysus' the god's path to victory does not rely on the bloody violence of the *Bacchae* but on instigating a seemingly decadent culture amongst young men through filling them with his 'enthusiasm', the dissemination of which is discussed in highly eroticised terms and which in turn results in the revelations of 'things [his followers] could never utter before'. This could, indeed, be retrospectively read not simply as a point of identification between Dionysus and the aesthetes instigating their own homoerotic culture through the arts but as a point of identification between Dionysus and Pater himself. As Richard le Gallienne reminded readers in 1925, 'Pater was virtually the founder of the Aesthetic Movement' and 'the Master who bade them burn always with that hard gem-like flame', poetically evoking Pater's influence over the thought of the aesthetes of the 1890s and beyond in a manner akin to Pater's evocation of Dionysus's influence in Athens.¹⁸³ Pater's accounts of Dionysus, particularly his fullest writing on the god in his *Study of Dionysus* essay, thus present the god in terms which are dislocated from more dominant Nietzschean discourses and which instead entertain the possibility of identification with the god amongst Pater's followers. This is supported not only in Pater's emotive study of the 'sorrowing' Dionysus exemplified by Simeon Solomon's canvases, in whom aesthetes could reflect upon their own marginalised position, but in the spread of a decadent, homoerotic culture through Dionysus's arrival among 'the delicate people of the city'. It is not merely Pater who may, with the benefit of hindsight, have been able to imaginatively project himself into the role of the conquering and effeminate Dionysus: Pater's portrait arguably also accounts for

¹⁸¹ Evangelista, *A Revolting Mistake*, 215.

¹⁸² Lene Østermark-Johansen, *Walter Pater and the Language of Sculpture* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2011), 227.

¹⁸³ Le Gallienne, *The Romantic Nineties*, 97, 161.

Brian Howard's casting of himself in this role in his 'Great Urban Dionysia' of 1929 with which we began.

It was not, in fact, Pater (or Brian Howard) who would be identified with this figure within aestheticist art, however; rather, and fittingly for the cultural image of the aesthetes of the 1920s, it was Oscar Wilde. It was to 'the Asiatic Bacchus' that André Gide remembered Wilde being compared, while Richard Le Gallienne recalled Wilde resembling 'a sort of caricature [of] Dionysus disguised as a rather heavy dandy of the Regency period' in 1925; we have equally seen later Pater scholars considering Pater's Dionysus to be a 'Willean deity' without elaborating upon this claim.¹⁸⁴ More memorably, Wilde appeared as Dionysus in an 1894 frontispiece by Aubrey Beardsley, an artist associated nearly as indelibly as Wilde with aestheticism in the cultural imaginary of the 1920s, which first appeared in the writer John Davidson's book *Plays* and recurred throughout the 1920s in books such as Robbie Ross's frequently reprinted appreciation of Beardsley (fig. 13).¹⁸⁵

Crowned with vine leaves— the aspect of Dionysus's costume singled out by Pater as the one of which 'the aesthetic value... is so great in the later imagery of Dionysus and his descendants'— and clad in a leopard skin, Wilde is immersed in a peculiar assortment of characters including a diminutive faun and a naked, leering woman in Beardsley's frontispiece.¹⁸⁶ Beardsley's conflation of Dionysus and Wilde, the figure who as we have seen potently represented the real 'prototype of the decadent aesthete' in the 1920s, can when taken at face value indicate the persistence of the effeminate, potentially queer, and culturally decadent Dionysus of Pater's essays. However, when interrogated further, Beardsley's frontispiece can arguably be said to represent a more intricate and thoroughgoing exploration of Pater's ideas. It is worth noting that Beardsley's casting of Wilde as Dionysus was unlikely to have been intended to flatter the writer. As is well known, Beardsley's caricatures of Wilde are often animated by a spirit of mockery. Matthew Sturgis, in a brief article exploring this fractious relationship between Beardsley and Wilde, argues that the conflation of Wilde with Dionysus was intended to satirise Wilde's heavy drinking.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ André Gide, *Oscar Wilde: A Study* (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1905), 22; Le Gallienne, *Romantic Nineties*, 243; Keefe, *Gods of Disorder*, 11.

¹⁸⁵ Robert Ross, *Aubrey Beardsley* (London: John Lane, 1921), 26.

¹⁸⁶ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 21.

¹⁸⁷ Matthew Sturgis, "Beardsley and Wilde". *The Willean*, 13, 1998, 19.

This too is Chris Snodgrass's view, who suggests that Wilde's vine leaves insinuate drunkenness and the leopard skin functions as 'an ironical sexual pun on the cliché that "a leopard cannot change its spots"' with reference to Wilde's seemingly ignoring the naked woman beside him.¹⁸⁸ Despite Snodgrass's obfuscation of the obvious classical allusions here, his suggestion that Beardsley's depiction has something to do with Wilde's sexuality is likely closer to the truth than Sturgis's reading. References to drunkenness are, perhaps, too simplistic. As with Pater's evocative and potentially allegorical account of the sorrowing Dionysus, whose natural desires transform him into the enemy of the world, such thirsts may not need to be read so literally.

As Sturgis points out, Beardsley's roughly contemporaneous caricature of Wilde as 'the woman in the moon' (fig. 14) in an illustration he provided for Wilde's play *Salome* traded not merely on commonplace associations between the moon and femininity but on the text of Wilde's play in which the moon is discussed as a 'mad, drunken woman'.¹⁸⁹ The reversal of Wilde's gender in this print clearly indicates Beardsley's willingness to satirise Wilde's suspicious effeminacy, as Snodgrass acknowledges, and it is thus possible to suggest that Beardsley is covering the same ground in his frontispiece.¹⁹⁰ A published letter between Beardsley and Robbie Ross which mentions that Beardsley was working on the frontispiece also finds the artist covertly expresses knowing reservations about Wilde's sexual activities. 'For one week', Beardsley wrote of Wilde's house, 'the number of telegraph and messenger boys who came to the door was simply scandalous'; the sexual subtext to this, as Sturgis observes, is thinly veiled in the extreme owing to the recency of a scandal over male prostitution in precisely the professions Beardsley identifies.¹⁹¹ Beardsley's caricature of Wilde as Dionysus may therefore function in the same manner, suggesting Wilde's suspicious effeminacy and queer sexual practices through depicting him as Dionysus. The reference would evince continuities not merely with the hungers of Pater's sorrowing Dionysus but also with Dionysus initiating the young men of Athens into decadent practices through 'the secrets of possession by a

¹⁸⁸ Chris Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley: Dandy of the Grotesque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 240.

¹⁸⁹ Sturgis, *Beardsley and Wilde*, 19.

¹⁹⁰ Snodgrass, *Dandy of the Grotesque*, 276-278.

¹⁹¹ Aubrey Beardsley to Robbie Ross, November 1893. *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley* (Cassell: London, 1970), 58; Matthew Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography* (New York: Overlook Press, 1995), 162.

higher and more energetic spirit than one's own'. Beardsley was almost certainly familiar with Solomon's depictions of Dionysus which feature in Pater's essays, as was made clear by a previously unpublished drawing which appeared in the 1925 book *The Uncollected Work of Aubrey Beardsley* (fig. 15); this drawing shows a figure with soft, sensual, and thoroughly androgynous features that Linda Gertler Zatlin records were likely copied from Solomon's paintings.¹⁹²

Acknowledging that Beardsley's *Plays* frontispiece was likely intended satirically can also, however, tacitly suggest another possibility in reading his identification of Wilde with Dionysus. Beardsley's drawing first appeared within a collection of plays written by John Davidson, including his pantomimic *Scaramouch in Naxos*.¹⁹³ Beardsley's letter to Ross would indicate that the artist was thinking in terms of this play, originally referring to his drawing as 'a really wonderful picture for *Scaramouch in Naxos*' rather than a frontispiece to the whole volume of *Plays*.¹⁹⁴ . Essentially a light-hearted farce, Davidson's plot concerns the unscrupulous Scaramouch's efforts to recruit mythological gods to exhibit in his circus shows in London. To this end, he despatches his servants Harlequin and Columbine to the Greek island of Naxos to capture Dionysus, where they also meet a collection of fauns and maenads who are accounted for in the left-hand side of Beardsley's composition. At the core of Davidson's farcical comedy is an audacious act of counterfeiting: Dionysus does not appear for much of the play and, in his absence, his role is instead unconvincingly assumed by the drunken, old, and buffoonish faun Silenus. One character who argues that Silenus may convincingly pass for Dionysus claims that 'this old wine-skin, Silenus, is just the idea... of what Bacchus must be after a supposed debauch extending from end to end of the Christian era'.¹⁹⁵ In other words, Dionysus is too youthful and beautiful to be believed; a god as old and as decadent as he would surely look as grotesque as Silenus.

The discrepancies between Beardsley's Solomonesque head reproduced in 1925 and his depiction of a bloated, leering Wilde would certainly support the notion that Beardsley is implying Wilde is a poor substitute for the god whose effeminacy

¹⁹² Charles Lewis Hind, *The Uncollected Work of Aubrey Beardsley* (London: John Lane, 1925); Linda Gertler Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 2016).

¹⁹³ John Davidson, "Scaramouch in Naxos". *Plays* (London: John Lane, 1894), 249-294.

¹⁹⁴ Beardsley to Ross, *Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, 58.

¹⁹⁵ Davidson, *Scaramouch in Naxos*, 216.

and decadence transform him into a cipher for and leader of the aesthetes in Pater's logic. Responding to Davidson's text, Wilde's 'Dionysus' is fit for exhibition in a tawdry circus, and it is Dionysus's lowly servant Silenus— a faun who is notably absent from aestheticist depictions of the creature, which unflinchingly favour more youthful and beautiful models— that he is closer to resembling. With some cruelty, Le Gallienne's book of 1925 repeated the disjuncture implied between Beardsley's frontispiece and his unpublished study of a head. Le Gallienne may too have referred to Wilde as Dionysus, but as a 'caricature' manifested in a 'rather heavy' body. Given it is to Dionysus he also turns to describe the poet William Sharp— 'probably the handsomest man in London... [with] the complexion of a girl... a veritable young Dionysus'— the reference seems, like Beardsley's, to suggest Wilde's failing to live up to an ideal constructed in works such as Solomon's *Bacchus*, Beardsley's study of a head, and Pater's writings which drew on the effeminate imaginings of the renaissance.¹⁹⁶

For later generations of aesthetes, Beardsley's much-reproduced frontispiece could thus serve two purposes. It could on one hand confirm links between Dionysus and the 'decadent aesthete' through its ostensible conflation of Wilde, the prototype of the 1920s aesthete, and the god. If the queerness of this identification relied on knowledge of Pater's writings in the 1890s, by the 1920s the invocation of Wilde would conversely and inevitably lead to an intensification of the suggestion that Dionysus represents queer sexual practices in Beardsley's frontispiece. Removed from the context of John Davidson's lesser-known plays when appearing in reproduction, the likelihood of later generations registering the possibility that Wilde may not be straightforwardly represented as Dionysus is significantly lessened. If this was Beardsley's intention, however, then the discrepancies between Wilde and the Dionysus imagined by Solomon and Pater alternatively suggest a further function for Dionysus beyond identification. Elizabeth Prettejohn observes that in Solomon's paintings, like his *Bacchus* canvases, 'the eroticised female figure is reinterpreted to produce compelling representations of beautiful men'.¹⁹⁷ In *Scaramouch in Naxos*, it is precisely the distance between the 'old wineskin' Silenus and the beautiful 'beardless boy' Dionysus that renders the substitution of one for the other comical.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Le Gallienne, *Romantic Nineties*, 148.

¹⁹⁷ Prettejohn, *Pre-Raphaelites*, 220.

¹⁹⁸ Davidson, *Scaramouch in Naxos*, 216.

The satire at the heart of Beardsley's frontispiece does more than simply enshrine the squabbles between the most pronounced influences within developments of aestheticist discourses into the 1920s; it can only function if, as Solomon's canvases, Pater's essays, and Beardsley's own unpublished drawing attest, its audience would have been accustomed to thinking of Dionysus as a beautiful, youthful figure. The role this implies— that of a homoerotic locus— would be more fully and consistently occupied by the faun within aestheticist discourses, but is evidenced in a modulated form in some depictions of Dionysus. Turning now to the work of Charles Ricketts, Charles Shannon, and the 'Ricketts [or] Shannon of the near future', Glyn Philpot, we shall see Dionysus cast in this alternate role by the aesthetes.

Dionysus and Homoeroticism: Shannon, Ricketts, Philpot

As Richard Dellamora notes, 'Dionysus, the beautiful young male god, bisexual and even hermaphroditic, was an attractive focus for fantasies of male-male desire'.¹⁹⁹ Dellamora's assertion is difficult to refute with recourse to Pater's writings. However, the evenness of his term 'male-male desire' perhaps requires addressing: that Dionysus was associated not merely with beauty, but with *youthful* beauty in the culture of the aesthetes, indicates that we can reconsider the homoeroticism surrounding the aesthetes' conception of Dionysus with greater specificity. As Linda Dowling establishes, at the heart of aestheticism's 'homosexual counterdiscourse' was what she termed 'the Oxford cult of "boy-worship"' and what Timothy D'Arch Smith and Matthew Michael Kaylor both term 'Uranianism', a revivification and idealisation of relationships between a man and a boy in antiquity which was sustained in texts such as Plato's *Phaedrus* and was in turn implicated in Pater's essays on Dionysus.²⁰⁰ This, equally, appears to be the structure of a relationship

¹⁹⁹ Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, 176.

²⁰⁰ Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 114; Timothy D'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets From 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge, 1970); Matthew Michael Kaylor, *Secreted Desires*.

inspired by Dionysian ‘enthusiasm’, with a greater spirit ‘possessing’ that of a younger initiate. It was also a relationship that Dionysus could inspire not merely through his ‘enthusiasm’ but through his appearance. Michael Jameson notes that classical depictions of the clothed Dionysus give way to a naked god when ‘Dionysus changes from a bearded adult to a beardless youth in the later fifth century’.²⁰¹ Jameson’s argument about representations of Dionysus, previously contrasting the clothed god with the heroically athletic physiques of his nude Olympian counterparts, morphs too to accommodate this change: ‘as if to compensate for the absence of the symbolism of dress’, Jameson records, ‘his whole image is now even less virile— a graceful, languid figure, a *pais kalos*’.²⁰² This Greek term equates to ‘beautiful boy’ and proliferated in *kalos* inscriptions on decorative objects, with these inscriptions imparting a homoerotic charge to the viewing of youthful figures by older male figures.

Dowling argues that ‘the most radical claim of the new Uranian poetry would always be that it sang the praises of a mode of spiritual and emotional attachment that was, at some ultimate level, innocent or asexual... it was able to represent itself as superior to the blind urgencies of a merely animal sexuality’.²⁰³ Kaylor, however, is clearer on the fact that an attachment to the ideal of ‘Uranian’ love did not always remain on a sexless and spiritual plane, suggesting that certain artworks and images circulated within the 1890s and beyond for the ‘private and masturbatory purposes’ of the aesthetes.²⁰⁴ Chief among the producers of such images was Wilhelm Von Gloeden, a German aristocrat living in the Sicilian village of Taormina who cast the local boys in homoerotic, classicised fantasies in his photography. Von Gloeden’s photographs began appearing in Britain via the artist’s magazine *Studio* as early as 1890 and were publicly exhibited in Britain from this point onwards, their erotic charge being somewhat dispelled by contemporary criticism choosing instead to present the photographs as continuances of the spirit of the Royal Academy. A journalist for the *Westminster Gazette*, encountering a von Gloeden picture in the Royal Photographic Society’s exhibition of 1908, considered his work to be ‘quite in the [Edward] Poynter spirit’ in reference to the current president of the Royal

²⁰¹ Jameson, *Asexuality of Dionysus*, 50.

²⁰² Jameson, *Asexuality of Dionysus*, 50.

²⁰³ Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 115.

²⁰⁴ Kaylor, *Secreted Desires*, 86.

Academy, while to *The Illustrated London News* he was ‘the [Lawrence] Alma-Tadema among photographers’.²⁰⁵ Despite this veneer, however, Kaylor is clear about the nature of the burgeoning British interest in von Gloeden’s work: his photographs were collected by the ‘pederastically inclined’ and valued for their explicitly homoerotic content.²⁰⁶ Von Gloeden’s photographs were not only circulated in a clandestine manner amongst the British aesthetes; no lesser an ambassador for aestheticism than Oscar Wilde travelled to Taormina to visit him, with the writer’s name appearing in von Gloeden’s guestbook.²⁰⁷

Von Gloeden’s pictures unambiguously encouraged viewers to understand them through the lens of ‘Uranian’ desire: one photograph shows an older, bearded male gazing fondly upon an adolescent boy who clings to him, a fantasy of the pederastic consummation which is the motor of Pater’s conception of Dionysian ‘enthusiasm’ (fig. 16). Von Gloeden’s imagery will recur in our explorations of the figure of the faun, but within his output one can find a depiction of a youth clearly in the role of Dionysus which is among von Gloeden’s most uncomfortably explicit photographs (fig. 17). The naked and frontally posed sitter in von Gloeden’s photograph wears a crown of ivy leaves and straddles a barrel which we are presumably intended to assume contains Dionysus’s sacred drink, wine. Depicting a young, naked male sitter atop a barrel, von Gloeden’s image evidently glories in the visual parallels between the sitter’s exposed penis and his makeshift seat, transforming the latter into either an outsized version of the former which is pointed squarely at the viewer or instead punning on the sexual connotations of a naked figure astride such an outsized and dominant phallic symbol.

Von Gloeden’s photograph makes crudely clear what persisted as a recurrent subtext in aestheticism’s engagements with Dionysian iconographies; namely, that the youthful Dionysus pictured by Pater, Solomon, and Beardsley could act as a locus for ‘Uranian’ desire. The photograph of the boy on the barrel is startling for its explicitness but is not unique in its iconography in von Gloeden’s oeuvre: still extant are several more photographs in which von Gloeden clads his young male models in crowns of vine leaves and little, if anything, else. A more chastened version shows a

²⁰⁵ Anon., “Picture Photos”. *Westminster Gazette*, Wednesday 16 September 1908, 8; Anon., “By ‘The Alma-Tadema Among Photographers’”. *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 24 September 1910, 465.

²⁰⁶ Kaylor, *Secreted Desires*, 86.

²⁰⁷ Kaylor, *Secreted Desires*, 86.

boy who holds a krater and a shallow bowl resembling a kylix with his genitals obscured by a vine leaf (fig. 18). Although the recollection is compositionally inexact, the act of raising a kylix-like object towards the viewer in the model's right hand, coupled with the boy's tilted head and the elaborate proliferation of fauna in his hair, suggest Caravaggio's famous Uffizi *Bacchus* as a model (fig. 19): the homoeroticism of this painting is well-known, with Evangelista terming its central figure 'a debauched molly' and Kaylor less colourfully a *pais kalos*.²⁰⁸ Another photograph purports to show the aftermath of a bout of drinking and is titled *Drunk Bacchus*, with the helpless boy passively reclining above a fallen krater with his legs splayed to uncover his genitals to the viewer (fig. 20). A further group of photographs features boys who do not wear the Dionysian crown but are instead placed next to a replica of the naked Dionysus sculpture excavated from Pompeii in 1862, as if to draw a further equivalence; in one of these, the younger of a pair of naked male sitters drapes his arm around the neck of his companion (fig. 21). These clandestinely circulated images, verging on the overtly pornographic, viscerally concretise the associations between the androgynous body of Dionysus imagined by Solomon, Pater, and Beardsley, and the queer male desire it invites.

The erotic potentialities of a young and beautiful god also suggested themselves to Charles Ricketts and particularly Charles Shannon who, as we have seen, exerted considerable influence over a later generation of aesthetes particularly through their friendship with and mentorship of the likes of Glyn Philpot and Thomas Lowinsky. Ricketts's biographer Joseph Darracott notes that, among 'the very few pieces of classical sculpture' owned by the pair, perhaps the most remarkable was a bust of Antinous in the guise of Dionysus.²⁰⁹ This was purchased at the very close of our period, acquired by Ricketts in 1930, and is replete with queer significance befitting a collection which John Potvin characterises as 'an extension of the couple's identity as aesthetes; a queer intimacy materialized'.²¹⁰ Antinous, as is well known, was the male favourite of the emperor Hadrian whose relationship came into vogue within literary aestheticism's coded intimations of queer desire: his figure 'positively haunts' the writings of Wilde, for example, as Sarah Waters argued in an essay in which she bestowed upon Antinous the title of 'the most famous fairy in

²⁰⁸ Evangelista, *A Revolting Mistake*, 211; Matthew Michael Kaylor, *Secreted Desires*, 358.

²⁰⁹ Joseph Darracott, *The World of Charles Ricketts* (New York: Methuen, 1980), 120.

²¹⁰ Darracott, *Ricketts*, 121; Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 85.

history'.²¹¹ At least one viewer– the poet Charles Algernon Swinburne, erstwhile friend of Pater and Solomon– even considered Solomon's *Bacchus* paintings to actually represent Antinous in his Dionysian guise, noted by Prettejohn as another point in the constellation of homoerotic references at play in Pater's writings on Dionysus.²¹² Antinous's casting as Dionysus in Ricketts and Shannon's bust is akin to Beardsley's conflation of Wilde and Dionysus. Just as this conflation marked the concretisation of links between Dionysus and the 'decadent aesthete', Shannon and Ricketts's bust arguably concretises links between the god and the *pais kalos*.²¹³ As Darracott's catalogue for an exhibition of Ricketts and Shannon's collection indicates, this bust could have taken pride of place amongst a small collection of other objects which attest to an interest in 'Uranian' discourses. Darracott records that the exhibition featured a cup and a krater which both bore *kalos* inscriptions and a pelike decorated with a scene showing '[a] man pursuing a youth who is warding him off with his lyre; [a] man and boy talking'.²¹⁴

Ricketts and Shannon's interest in Dionysus as a *pais kalos* can be traced far earlier in their careers than in the moment of Ricketts purchasing the bust of Antinous, first finding expression in a collaborative project pursued in 1893 to develop wood engravings for their own edition of Longus's text *Daphnis and Chloe*.²¹⁵ Richard Warren notes that this classical tale, concerning the romance of a goatherd and a shepherdess raised as brother and sister in a pastoral idyll, was a popular favourite among the generation of artists to which Ricketts and Shannon belonged beyond aestheticist circles because it enshrined 'the undeniable power of both Eros and Pan... favourite gods of Art Nouveau artists'.²¹⁶ In a 1920 letter explaining the premise to Cecil Lewis, an inquisitive younger friend, Ricketts glibly summarised its simple narrative: 'two foundlings brought up by shepherds fall in love, but, like the Young Lady of Slough, they found they didn't know how'.²¹⁷ 'The

²¹¹ Sarah Waters, "'The Most Famous Fairy in History': Antinous and Homosexual Fantasy." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6, no. 2, 1995, 194.

²¹² Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 46-7.

²¹³ Antinous's recurrent casting as a *pais kalos* is discussed in: Waters, *The Most Famous Fairy*, 203-204.

²¹⁴ Joseph Darracott, *All for Art: The Ricketts and Shannon Collection, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 9 October-3 December, 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 37-39.

²¹⁵ Darracott, *Ricketts*, 37.

²¹⁶ Richard Warren, *Art Nouveau and the Classical Inheritance* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 102.

²¹⁷ Charles Ricketts to Cecil Lewis, December 24 1920. *Self Portrait: Taken from the Letters and Journals of Charles Ricketts, R.A.* (London: Peter Davies, 1939), 324.

story is curiously silly, corrupt, fresh, and exquisite', Ricketts concluded, the second word referring perhaps to the eroticism of the narrative's premise; as Ricketts's pithy summary suggests, *Daphnis and Chloe* essentially follows the sexual awakening of its protagonists and culminates on their wedding night when they learn how to have sex.²¹⁸ In its pages, however, Ricketts and Shannon also found room for enshrining the erotic potential of Dionysus who, like Eros and Pan favoured by other illustrators, is not a character within Longus's narrative but is frequently invoked throughout Longus's narrative as a pastoral god.

When Ricketts and Shannon's works were first exhibited in America, the catalogue for the exhibition recorded that one wood engraving from *Daphnis and Chloe* was presented to the public under the title *The Temple of Bacchus*.²¹⁹ No such illustration occurs in *Daphnis and Chloe*, and assumedly this refers to a picture rather laboriously titled *Gnatho Taking Sanctuary in the House of Bacchus Overhears the Bitter Lamentations of Daphnis* (fig. 22). This is a perplexing image showing an elaborately robed male figure who has fallen to his knees before an altar, his face completely obscured as he presses it against the altar in what appears to be gesture of either extreme grief or devotion, and a further male figure framed in a doorway in the background who also weeps and is naked apart from his hat. The image is, indeed, more perplexing when it is compared with the text to which Shannon and Ricketts are allegedly responding.

The scene ostensibly rendered by the pair is a moment of sorrow for Gnatho, a character who according to the Elizabethan text of Shannon and Ricketts's version 'had learnt oneley to guttle and drink till he was drunk, and minded nothing but his belly and his lasciviousnesse'.²²⁰ He has overheard the woes of Daphnis, the male protagonist of the story who is in love with Chloe and who fears at this moment that she feels otherwise.²²¹ Daphnis is plainly the figure in the background, recognisable by his distinctive hat which features in other illustrations throughout the book. The cause for Gnatho's sorrowing, meanwhile, is Daphnis himself. Earlier in Longus's text, Daphnis attracts the attention of women preparing for a feast in honour of

²¹⁸ Ricketts, *Self Portrait*, 324.

²¹⁹ Martin Birnbaum, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings, Bronzes, and Graphic Works by Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon* (New York: Berlin Photographic Company, 1914), 17.

²²⁰ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* (London: John Lane, 1893), 87.

²²¹ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 100.

Dionysus who are struck by his beauty and ‘said he was like to Bacchus himself’ to articulate this.²²² Now, however, this sentiment is Gnatho’s, who ‘had taken a more curious view of Daphnis than others had’ upon first encountering him.²²³ This, the text informs us, is because he was ‘from the beginning... struck with Paederasty (the Love of boys)’, and ‘resolved to tempt Daphnis to the purpose’.²²⁴

Gnatho consequently makes overtures towards Daphnis in a passage which is not translated from the original Greek in Shannon and Ricketts’s version, perhaps in acknowledgement of its transgressive content, but is presented in English in subsequent translations. One such example was provided by the writer George Moore, a friend of Wilde’s whose *Daphnis and Chloe* appeared in 1924 with an introduction written as a dialogue between two characters, one of whom improbably manages to insert into a conversation about the difficulties of translation that ‘everything that Pater said was wise and true and more beautifully said than it ever was before or ever will be again’.²²⁵ Moore’s translation reveals that the passage obfuscated in Shannon and Ricketts’s version explains how Gnatho ‘told [Daphnis] that he wished to receive from him the kindness that the she-goat afforded to the buck’ and, when Daphnis does not relent, ‘laid his hand upon him as if he would take him by force’.²²⁶ Afterwards, Gnatho attempts to have Daphnis transferred to his employ as a ‘Pathic-boy’, but this too is refused by the adoptive father figure of Daphnis who ‘cannot endure to have [Daphnis] exposed, to be injuriously and baseley used by the drunken Glutton Gnatho... [who wishes] to make a wench of him’.²²⁷ As a result of his fraught attempts to have sex with Daphnis, Gnatho is to be found weeping at the feet of the lord who he belongs to the entourage of.²²⁸

The perplexities of the wood engraving begin with the fact that the scene Ricketts and Shannon focus upon is not merely a minor point in the story which had been rarely, if ever, depicted in previous treatments of the text, but includes instances of free invention which defy the text itself. This is all the more surprising

²²² Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 24.

²²³ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 87.

²²⁴ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 87.

²²⁵ George Moore, Introduction. *The Pastoral Loves of Daphnis and Chloe* (London: Heinemann, 1924), 20.

²²⁶ Longus, *Pastoral Loves*, 139.

²²⁷ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 91, 94.

²²⁸ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 91.

given, as Ricketts's biographer J. G. P. Delaney records, *Daphnis and Chloe* was not a commissioned work but was pursued by the artists solely because of their enthusiasm for the text.²²⁹ Departures from the text, which are in this case relatively pronounced, thus demand to be read as expressions of the artists' own interests.

The first departure can be sensed in the fact that Gnatho's outbursts of misery over Daphnis's rejection do not occur at the same time in the text as Daphnis's laments over his perceived loss of Chloe's affections: to be precise, they occur nine pages apart within the version of the text that Shannon and Ricketts illustrated. More importantly, however, there is no indication that either man's lamentations have anything to do with Dionysus, as Gnatho is said only to be 'sculking in the Garden' when he overhears Daphnis's sorrows as opposed to occupying the 'temple of Bacchus'.²³⁰ Secondly, there is no description of what was referred to in the 1914 exhibition as a 'temple of Bacchus' within the 1893 text; it is referred to, as Ricketts and Shannon's initial titling suggests, as a 'house of Bacchus', but its contents are never explained. Not only is Gnatho not to be found within this structure while he listens to Daphnis's laments in Longus's text, but the bizarre appearance of the building itself in this wood engraving is drawn from nowhere other than Ricketts and Shannon's imaginations.

Shannon and Rickett's wood engraving immediately makes clear why the curators of their 1914 exhibition thought it proper to refer to the image as the *Temple of Bacchus*. The figure who must be intended to be Gnatho does not weep at the feet of his master during his own lamentations, as he does in the text, but at the foot of an altar complete with two candles burning and a vassal of incense swinging beside it. Despite these anachronistically Catholic trappings, it is clearly devoted to Dionysus. Even without the erroneous titling of the wood engraving, this is indicated by the outsized wreath of vine leaves worn in Gnatho's hair in honour of the god and the discarded *thyrsus*, the ornamental spear common to representations and processional rites of Dionysus, lying beside the weeping figure. The *thyrsus* should also indicate to the viewer that the source of Gnatho's sorrows in this image is the same as that in Longus's text: the decorative pinecones atop the staff are blatantly phallic, transforming the discarded staff into a symbol of sexual advances which have

²²⁹ Delaney, *Charles Ricketts*, 73.

²³⁰ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 100.

been similarly cast aside. These associations are supported by the placement of the illustration within the book. While it is difficult to accurately place the moment Ricketts and Shannon are depicting here owing to their blurring of lines between Gnatho and Daphnis's lamentations, the illustrations throughout *Daphnis and Chloe* consistently depict events which occur in the text some pages later. As such, it is above the passage introducing Gnatho's passion for Daphnis, the moment at which he is 'struck by paederasty' (along with the translation's clarification over what this term means), that this image appears.

The conspicuous breaks with their source material that Ricketts and Shannon make in their wood engraving indicate their conception of Dionysus as essentially tied to the figure of the *pais kalos*. With the candles lit upon the altar, the incense perfuming the air with its curious odours, and the trappings of Dionysian garb either worn by Gnatho or brought into the House of Bacchus by him, he has evidently attempted to seek solace for or solutions to his unrequited and pederastic desire for Daphnis through worshipping Dionysus. Ricketts and Shannon transform Dionysus into a patron saint of pederasty, the god to whom one would plead for the consummation of such a relationship, perhaps through a divine visitation of the Dionysian 'enthusiasm' discussed with homoerotic fervour in Pater's writings. Equally of interest is the painting hung over the altar at which Gnatho grasps, assumedly a depiction of the god himself as indicated by the oversized crown of vine leaves that Gnatho also sports in tribute. This portrayal of Dionysus is, as Michael Jameson records of classical interpretations of the beardless Dionysus, a nude and youthful figure who again raises a kylix towards the viewer like Caravaggio's 'debauched molly'. As in the case of Solomon's *Bacchus* and Beardsley's 1891 study of a head, the portrait also reveals a figure who is effeminate to the point of androgyny. Despite the otherwise masculine body, Dionysus's one visible breast is fuller and fleshier than one would expect in a male figure, its fullness exaggerating the unathletic thinness of the raised arm that brushes against it. Just as Gnatho is charged with attempting to 'make a wench of' Daphnis, Ricketts and Shannon partially make a woman of their young, beautiful Dionysus, and partially do so to the figure of Daphnis visible in the background of the illustration too: Daphnis's weeping figure is slender, his hair as long as Dionysus's, and his genitals are obscured by his

legs to suggest an element of hermaphroditism. The effeminate Dionysus is invoked as the god most suitable to hear Gnatho's pleading for the effeminate boy.

Strikingly, the object of Gnatho's pederastic desire later appears garbed as Dionysus, the god to which his physical beauty had previously been compared by the women of the harvest. A subsequent engraving in *Daphnis and Chloe* entitled *The Epithalamium* shows Daphnis reclining upon a divan above a group of singers on the right and a young woman with a maid on the left (fig. 23). His long, curly hair, large crown of fauna, exposed torso and kylix dangling from one hand all clearly connect him to the painting of Dionysus in *The Temple of Bacchus*. It would be a mistake to suggest that the acquisition of this headgear immediately transforms Daphnis into a substitute for the god, as it appears to be worn by any figures engaged in activities related to the rites and rituals of Dionysus- in addition to Gnatho's wearing of one in his private ritual we see, for example, young men participating in the labours of the harvest ahead of the feast donning them (fig. 24). However, Daphnis's donning of the crown is notable in that it does not occur in connection to practices which are clearly tied to the veneration of Dionysus as a pastoral god, as in this preceding example, and the characters in the harvest scene do not physically resemble the portrait of Dionysus in the temple as Daphnis does here.

The resemblance collapses the line between the god Dionysus and the boy Daphnis, regarded in the text as a *pais kalos* in a scene that Ricketts and Shannon idiosyncratically chose to illustrate, and we are assumedly meant to view Daphnis as a prospective sexual partner in this later engraving. Its title, referencing an often bawdy poem performed outside the bridal chamber of a newly married couple, indicates that this scene occurs at the close of Longus's narrative, when Daphnis has learned how to have sex (and is about to); the gaining of this knowledge, like the possession of Dionysian 'enthusiasm' in Pater's writing, may indeed be itself the Dionysian activity that has necessitated the donning of the crown. The context in which we see Daphnis here is admittedly a heterosexual one, although Ricketts and Shannon mischievously fill their engraving with details which indicate that the marriage, or at least the sexual union, is ill-fated and poorly conceived. Daphnis himself appears despondent, his eyes downcast and his kylix no longer proffered as a suggestive invitation but allowed to droop limply. Moreover, his pose is evidently that of the reclining classical symposiast, associated by Pater with the 'sweet

decadence' of homoerotic encounter. Chloe, seated on the left while a maid combs her hair, appears to be tucking her hair behind her ears; this action also, however, visually doubles as the bride covering her ears as she averts her gaze, blocking out the sight of the decidedly decadent Daphnis and the sexually suggestive song of the wedding guests. The decorative panels of the wedding bed that Daphnis appropriates as a symposiast's couch also indicate disharmony. To the right we see a scene of a nymph beating a faun over the head, while on the left we see a unicorn standing proudly with four young male nudes tumbling over each other to caress its rather phallic horn. This latter image may suggest the pleasures of 'Uranian' love while the former the constraints of heterosexual marriage: reading the image in a narrative fashion from left to right, the latter ominously supplants the former. Again, these details are nowhere to be found in Longus's text, and indicate instead the personal interests of the artists. The *Daphnis and Chloe* engravings which conspicuously insert Dionysus into the narrative thus do so first to present the god as the deity most closely tied to Gnatho's pederastic passion for Daphnis and then reveal the object of this passion to be a close physical analogue for the god, collapsing the line between Dionysus and the *pais kalos*.

Ricketts and Shannon would both return to the figure of Dionysus in oils after their collaborative *Daphnis and Chloe*, Shannon with more consistency than Ricketts. Ricketts's later effort is his 1913 painting *Bacchus in India* (fig. 25), showing the god riding upon the back of an elephant above a procession of sleeping maenads and marching male worshippers as he triumphantly establishes his cult abroad. Ricketts's Dionysus here is certainly an epicene youth, as languid as Daphnis in *The Epithalamium*. He is certainly understandable too through the lens of Pater's conjectures over the development of Dionysus's character, pictured here not as 'the ruddy god of the vineyard' but as a youth 'of dazzling whiteness'.²³¹ There is no intimation of pederastic interest pertaining to either the god himself or his desires, however, and the possible reference to Caravaggio's *Bacchus* found in the brandished kylix has vanished. Similarly, Shannon would execute a 1919 painting, *The Childhood of Bacchus* (fig. 26), which was exhibited at the Royal Academy's annual exhibition in the following year.²³² This painting is also completely dislocated from any spirit of

²³¹ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 40.

²³² Anon., *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1920. The 152nd* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1920), 20.

homoeroticism. Shannon's painting shows the moment at which Hermes delivers the baby Dionysus to the nymphs at Nysa who raise him.²³³ As such, Dionysus does not figure as a *pais kalos* in this scene but as a rather plump child, and despite the picture's ostensible focal point indicated by its title Dionysus is little more than a relatively incidental figure in a haphazardly crowded composition. Technically the painting arguably confirms Delaney's observance of Shannon's 'increasingly frequent and obvious slips in draughtsmanship and more tired inspiration' in this period.²³⁴

The innocuous and unsuccessful depiction *Childhood of Bacchus* is particularly surprising as it is precisely the pairing of Dionysus with Hermes in which Shannon continued to negotiate the ground first explored in *Daphnis and Chloe*. It is possible that *The Childhood of Bacchus* was constrained not merely by Shannon's weakening powers and the fact that the story negates the presentation of Dionysus as a *pais kalos* but also by the weight of art history: the theme is well-worn, as Delaney's assertion that Shannon's inspiration became 'tired' would suggest, and the precedents to compete with are vast in number. Shannon's interpretation of an older, unaccompanied Dionysus— a genre which constitutes the 'rich tradition of homoerotic art' observed by Evangelista in relation to Pater's writings— would conversely indicate that Shannon was elsewhere willing to explore further an alternative tradition which encompasses Caravaggio's *Bacchus*, Solomon's *Bacchus*, von Gloeden's photographs, and Ricketts and Shannon's own *Daphnis and Chloe* engravings. An undated canvas titled *Young Bacchus* (fig. 27) shows Dionysus in a demure and submissive attitude, averting his gaze from the viewer's and with his face bathed in anonymising shadow. Shirtless and displaying a lithe physique, Shannon's youthful Dionysus here also invites erotic readings through his outstretched hand which is both extended at the level of, and covertly beckons towards through the curling of his fingers, the genitals. Here Dionysus unambiguously assumes the passive and inviting role of the *pais kalos*, beckoning the viewer towards his exposed body while demurely averting his gaze. In his other, raised hand, Dionysus has rediscovered the kylix that he lost in Ricketts's *Triumph of Bacchus*.

Hermes and Dionysus's journey to Nysa, however, remained even more obscure and uncodified territory which allowed Shannon to experiment further. The

²³³ Otto, *Myth and Cult*, 102.

²³⁴ Delaney, *Ricketts*, 331.

most important and immediately relevant artistic precedent for Shannon would likely have been the classical sculpture group *Hermes and the Infant Dionysus* (fig. 28), rediscovered with relative recency for Shannon in 1874, believed at the time to have been executed by Praxiteles, and represented in the British Museum's collection in the form of a cast purchased in 1881 as a contemporary journalist reported.²³⁵ As we shall see, Praxiteles's statuary was particularly important to Walter Pater, who referred to the sculptor's influence approvingly as the 'school of grace' and made much of Praxiteles's depictions of fauns.²³⁶ This sculpture certainly depicts Hermes as a graceful male nude, and Dionysus conversely as a diminutive child akin to his appearance in *The Childhood of Bacchus* who perches upon his protector Hermes's arm. Shannon's growing disinterest in the close, protective relationship evinced in this precedent makes his depictions all the more unusual, and the introduction of another figure into these portrayals of Dionysus marks a shift too from paintings such as *Young Bacchus* while retaining their homoerotic register. It is in Shannon's studies of Hermes and Dionysus that we find a return to the sexual politics of *The House of Bacchus*, in which an older and infatuated male lover is tormented by the *pais kalos* he desires.

On either side of *The Childhood of Bacchus*, Shannon produced a series of works comprising a lithograph, a drawing, and two paintings all titled *Hermes and the Infant Bacchus*. The earliest of these is the lithograph (fig. 29), appearing in 1897, and the latest is the second oil painting which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1927 (fig. 30).²³⁷ The drawing, a chalk study, appears to be no longer extant, and was exhibited at the same gallery in 1930.²³⁸ This later date may seem to indicate a later date of execution than the 1927 painting, but Shannon endured a debilitating brain injury in January 1929 which left him frequently unable to recognise his lifelong partner Ricketts, let alone produce artwork, until his death.²³⁹ As such, this drawing assumedly related to the 1927 painting at the latest. The earlier oil painting (fig. 31) is dated to between 1902 and 1906 and entered the Tate's

²³⁵ Anon., "Special Correspondence". *Aberdeen Free Press*, Saturday 27 August 1881, 4.

²³⁶ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 59.

²³⁷ Anon., *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1927. The 159th* (London: Clowes and Sons, 1927), 17.

²³⁸ Anon., *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1930. The 162nd* (London: Clowes and Sons, 1930), 67.

²³⁹ Delaney, *Ricketts*, 372.

collection in 1939.²⁴⁰ Prior to this point it had somewhat remarkably been owned by the father of Brian Howard, the queer, louche, and decadent Dionysus of 1929, from 1924 at the latest.²⁴¹

Shannon's subsequent Hermes and Dionysus pictures follow the fundamentals of the composition first evolved in the 1897 lithograph, although it is the differences between them that indicate a shifting of meaning and a growing clarification of their transgressive, queer sexual politics. Each of the three extant works depicts Hermes conveying Dionysus through harsh, stormy conditions before their safe arrival at Nysa but, despite their occurrence at an early point in the myth narrative, Dionysus appears older than he does in Shannon's 1919 painting. In the lithograph, taking the form of a roundel, Hermes is seen wading through an unruly sea, his naked and muscular body bent double to withstand the elements. In one raised hand he holds a staff resembling a thyrsus which perhaps belongs to Dionysus rather than the caduceus, with its distinctive winged point, common to depictions of Hermes, while the wings of his equally distinctive helmet are grasped by the diminutive god who rides on his back. The pair are surrounded by leaping dolphins which, as the Tate's records note, prefigure the narrative of Dionysus's revelation of his divine power to the Tyrrhenian pirates who kidnap him, an episode rarely depicted within oil painting but lighted upon by Glyn Philpot in a 1924 painting to which we shall return.²⁴² In this early depiction, Hermes wraps one protective arm around Dionysus and wears a sorrowful expression as he struggles against the harsh conditions around him. His features are soft and vaguely in the Solomon mode; his young passenger bears an expression of similar misery on his somewhat asymmetrical and rotund features. The relationship between the two figures has much in common with the Praxitelean depiction that had been recently acquired in reproduction by the British Museum.

The 1902-06 oil retains the lithograph's roundel format and the major points of its composition. The dolphins have disappeared in this iteration, focusing the viewer's attention solely on the two human figures who have undergone subtle but illuminating changes. Hermes's face is now almost entirely thrown into shadow,

²⁴⁰ Mary Chamot et al., *Tate Gallery Catalogues: The Modern British Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, Volume II* (London: Tate, 1964), 615.

²⁴¹ Chamot *Tate Gallery Catalogues*, 615.

²⁴² Chamot, *Tate Gallery Catalogues*, 615.

making his expression largely inscrutable and precluding the reprisal of his softly androgynous and elegantly sorrowful countenance in the 1897 version. The water around him has also grown more tempestuous, covering his frontmost leg almost to the knee. The greatest change, however, is in the representation of Dionysus himself. While Hermes's features have coarsened into a more typically masculine mould, Dionysus's have softened and lost their unappealing asymmetry. His expression too has shifted from the frowning face of a scared child to the arrogant, somewhat wild gaze of a young god; befitting of this shift is the crown of grapes and vines he now sports and his increasingly straightened posture, sitting on Hermes's back as if enthroned. Hermes's raised arm still encircles Dionysus's leg, but now holds a bunch of grapes that the god reaches out to taste, and Dionysus's grasp on Hermes's feathers seems to have tightened. The power dynamics of Shannon's Hermes and Dionysus depictions appear to have begun to shift. Dionysus seems to drive the older man before him as one would an animal, gripping his helmet like a set of reins; the hand that once secured Dionysus is now being used to feed him grapes despite the evidently adverse conditions of the journey in a servile gesture which shows Hermes desperately prioritising the god's hungers and whims. The appearance of the dolphins in the 1897 lithograph attested to Dionysus's power in the future; the brutality with which he dominates Hermes in the 1902-06 painting is indicative of the power he already possesses.

It is the third iteration and the second painting— 1927's *Hermes and the Infant Bacchus*— which translates the increasingly aggressive relationship between Hermes and Dionysus into more clearly homoerotic terms, and it is also this painting which breaks cohesively with the 1897 lithograph. Most immediately evident in this is Shannon's eventual rejection of the roundel format common to his two earlier interpretations of the scene; with the loss of the roundel comes the loss of the friezelike composition which held Hermes's body upright. Now, Hermes is no longer bent double but is almost fully prostrate, his body flailing diagonally towards the viewer. Hermes's face is therefore again revealed to the viewer and it has been clearly divested of both its Solomon-like androgyny and its heroic stoicism, bearing instead a meek and worried expression. The growth of Dionysus's power over him from the 1897 to the 1902-06 version has conversely continued. Dionysus is physically larger than before and appears notably older too, losing the last plumpness from his flushed

cheeks. Both hands now grip Hermes, one by the feathers of his helmet as before but now one by the hair, and Dionysus's raised foot seems menacingly poised over Hermes's cheek which is turned to receive it. Hermes has also exchanged the thyrsus he held in the 1897 version for his characteristic caduceus, meaning he has lost the only emblem that tied him to the god and attested to the close relationship rehearsed in the Praxitelean sculpture group. The loss of the earlier orderliness in Shannon's composition also means we see more of Dionysus himself, who is no longer partially concealed as both of Hermes's arms are stretched out before him as if to protect himself from a headlong tumble into the raging waters.

Dionysus is presented clothed for the first time in Shannon's scenes, but rather than chastening the image it is this change which indicates a growingly pronounced sexual undercurrent in the brutal relationship between Dionysus and Hermes. As we have noted, a far earlier intimation of a relationship between Dionysus and homoerotic interest can be found in Caravaggio's Uffizi *Bacchus*, likely evoked in Shannon and Ricketts's *Daphnis and Chloe* illustrations and in Wilhelm von Gloeden's ostentatiously erotic photographs. The white draperies of Caravaggio's figure, while not falling as low as they do in the original, are recalled with some precision in Shannon's canvas, again falling loosely around the boy to uncover a shoulder and part of his chest. While Caravaggio's *Bacchus* is closer in facial structure and flushed complexion to the 1902-06 Dionysus, it is to the 1927 version that he imparts the coquettish tilt of his head and his sultry expression, replacing the wildness of the 1902-06 Dionysus's stare. Indeed, even Caravaggio's pose is recalled in Shannon's painting, with the left arm curled around the body and the right arm extended towards the viewer: rather than proffering an invitingly full kylix, however, the right arm of Shannon's Dionysus is extended to drive Hermes's head down towards the waves.

The importation of details from Caravaggio's painting in Shannon's final reprisal of the theme helps to create, or perhaps merely clarify, the sexual dimensions to Shannon's portrayals of Hermes and Dionysus; they can feasibly be read in a more sublimated form into the 1902-06 painting too, given the stronger facial resemblance between Caravaggio's *Bacchus* and Shannon's Dionysus in this work. It is evident that this coquettish god is intended to be read through an erotic lens, and his placement atop a prostrate male figure whose hair he grasps (and who,

for the first time, seems to be turning to face him in pained bewilderment) cannot within this schema be ignored as a symbol of sexual dominance. That Shannon and Ricketts would go on to acquire the *Lansdowne Antinous*, picturing the popular *pais kalos* of the late nineteenth century imagination in the guise of Dionysus, would certainly indicate that their interest in this evidenced in their earlier Dionysian works and minor collection of decorative art bearing *kalos* inscriptions persisted into the period of this late flowering.

From *Daphnis and Chloe* onwards, we thus see Shannon depicting Dionysus as a *pais kalos* whose seductive pull is strong enough to conquer older men like Gnatho and Hermes. Within this schema there may indeed be a subtle note of danger injected into the inviting gesture of Shannon's *Young Bacchus*, tempting the viewer into the indulgence of an overpowering and intoxicating passion. It is possible, indeed, to detect echoes of the Wilde trial within these canvases: as in Beardsley's *Plays* frontispiece, in which Wilde was assumedly not meant to be identified literally with Dionysus but with an older and foolish figure, within Shannon's schemas it is the erotic pull of the younger Dionysus which threatens to plunge an older male figure into mortal danger as it did to Wilde. Certainly, this interpretation took root in one of the few depictions of Dionysus himself that joined Shannon's final *Hermes and the Infant Bacchus* in the 1920s, that of the 'Shannon [or] Ricketts of the near future' Glyn Philpot, who exhibited *The Transfiguration of Dionysus Before the Tyrrhenian Pirates* (fig. 32) at the Royal Academy's 1924 Annual Exhibition.²⁴³ As A. W. James's investigation into differing accounts of Dionysus's encounter with the Tyrrhenian pirates explains, the basic narrative of the myth hinges on the capture of Dionysus, disguised as a mortal, by a gang of pirates, his subsequent revelation of his divine self to his captors, and his act of vengeance by sending them into a frenzy in which they leap overboard and are transformed into dolphins as Shannon's *Hermes and Dionysus* lithograph foretells.²⁴⁴ Philpot's rendition of the scene perhaps bears Shannon's influence in its treatment of the stormy waters caused by Dionysus's revelation, and like Shannon's lithograph Philpot's painting features three dolphins; like Shannon's 1902-06 painting, Philpot's Dionysus also stares out to the viewer with a mesmeric and wild intensity. However, the sexual politics of Philpot's

²⁴³ Anon. *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts, 1924: The 156th*. (London: Clowes and Sons, 1924), 10.

²⁴⁴ A.W. James, "Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian Pirates." *Antichthon*, vol. 9, 1975, 18-22.

paintings seem more intimately related to, and indeed prefigure, those which are clarified in Shannon's subsequent 1927 painting. Dionysus appears here in his full power, the leaves encircling his head almost indistinguishable from his red hair in their dark autumn hues. Philpot's Dionysus is evidently the sorrowing Dionysus of the latter half of the year, the figure in whom Pater finds the stuff of metaphor in drawing on Simeon Solomon's painting. As Richard Dellamora speculates on Pater's treatment of this figure, Philpot's painting may entertain fantasies of revenge against those who persecute the god; however, just as Pater finds in this dark Dionysus the androgynous and beautiful countenance of Simeon Solomon's *Bacchus*, Philpot's figure is not merely vengeful but beautiful.

As in Shannon and Ricketts's decision to ignore artistic precedents and depict Gnatho in their *Daphnis and Chloe* engravings, Philpot's choice of narrative is peculiar. Simon Martin argues that the story Philpot depicts is 'incidental' to his focus on the nude torso of the young god, but this seems unlikely given he also notes that depictions of this story are highly unusual in art history.²⁴⁵ The revelation of Dionysus's naked body is certainly of importance to Philpot, dominating the composition and being rendered in fastidious and eroticising detail. Dionysus's lower regions are either obscured by a fluttering purple robe tied loosely around his waist or simply omitted from the composition altogether, and we see no more of what lies beneath the waist than the top of his exposed right thigh. Philpot does however pointedly render a small portion of the god's pubic hair emerging from the low-hanging robe, drawing the eye to this section of the canvas by framing it between the diagonals of the robe and the strip of material that holds it in place. However, as with Shannon and Ricketts's depiction of obscure moments in *Daphnis and Chloe* such as the lamentations of Gnatho, Philpot's choice of narrative begs to be read symbolically, allowing him to depict a moment at which the revelation of the god's naked form exercises great power over male spectators.

Delaney has argued that, in viewing *The Transfiguration of Dionysus*, it is 'tempting to think that [it] reflects the growing power that his own sexuality and these young men were gaining over [Philpot]', but this need not be expressed in such generalised terms and cannot be divorced from the mythological context of

²⁴⁵ Martin, *Philpot*, 111.

Dionysus's appearance here.²⁴⁶ Unlike paintings such as *Young Bacchus*, in which the figure averts his gaze from the viewer, the focal point of *The Transfiguration of Dionysus* is the god's staring eyes: it seems clear that Philpot is throwing his own lot, and that of the viewer, in with the pirates, to be driven mad and to be transformed by the mesmeric intensity of Dionysus in his revealed divinity. This reading is further supported by the unusually complex frame which houses the painting: beneath the vegetative forms of the metalwork lies a layer of blue paint which mirrors that of both the sea and sky within the painting. It is as if the forces Dionysus has unleashed cannot be contained within the canvas, spilling into the viewer's space in seething undercurrents that threaten to break the brittle bonds of their containment as embodied by the metalwork above them. This thematically unites the two metamorphoses that inform the myth narrative, the first being Dionysus's metamorphosis from mortal to deity and the second being his captors' metamorphosis from human to animal. On one hand, the elemental colour lying beneath the solid metalwork mirrors Dionysus's state as a captive mortal containing godly powers before his transfiguration, while on the other its expansion beyond the canvas metaphorically extends the metamorphosing potential of Dionysus's revelation from the pirates to the viewer.

As is most clearly the case in Shannon's final iteration of the Hermes and Dionysus theme, the power emanating from Dionysus in the transfiguration scene should evidently be read as erotic in nature. A. W. James notes that in the two dominant retellings of the myth, one being Homer's and the other Ovid's, Dionysus either metamorphoses into an animal himself or magically conjures a terrifying entourage of animals: Homer has Dionysus transform into a lion accompanied by a bear to drive his captors into a state of madness, while Ovid records that the god summoned leopards and panthers to do so.²⁴⁷ Pointedly, Philpot does away with the attendant creatures who attest to the god's power, and the madness and metamorphoses he inspires stem simply from the revelation of his true appearance which also, in Philpot's version, takes the form of a homoerotic disrobing. Martin is right to suggest that Philpot's primary focus is Dionysus's exposed body, but it is the specificities of the myth narrative he responds to that convey upon this exposure its

²⁴⁶ Delaney, *Philpot*, 90.

²⁴⁷ James, *Dionysus*, 19, 22.

symbolic power. As Walter Otto records, dolphins are ‘the favourite animals of Dionysus’, and form a minor part of his retinue.²⁴⁸ Thus, in Philpot’s painting, the revelation of the god’s beauty forces his previous enemies to worship him and subordinate themselves to him.

Philpot’s frame repeats and extends the logic of the physical metamorphosis which indicates this implicates the viewer within this, demanding of them the subordinate position of Gnatho in *The Temple of Bacchus* or Hermes in Shannon’s paintings. The transformation of man into animal is also likely significant in this, indicating as it does the eradication of reason in favour of the obedience of instinctual desires. The conflict between human and animal in this manner perhaps informs Pater’s portrait of the sorrowing Dionysus as a metaphor for the aesthete outcast for his hungers and thirsts, a figure he relates to the hybrid figure of the werewolf; the same conflict also lies at the heart of the faun’s recurrent role in the homoerotic discourses of the aesthetes. *Dionysus Transfigured Before the Tyrrhenian Pirates*, the lone representation of Dionysus himself in the work of a generation of aesthetes who looked back to the artists and writers we have primarily examined here—Ricketts, Shannon, Wilde, Beardsley, and Pater—therefore evinces clear continuities with the work of these figures while also prefiguring the analyses of the faun to which we shall shortly turn.

In this chapter we have examined how Pater’s foundational essays, lying at the heart of what Linda Dowling calls aestheticism’s ‘homosexual counterdiscourse’ encompassing Dionysus and his retinue, laid the foundation for patterns of identification and desire in depictions of the god. From Beardsley’s casting of Wilde as Dionysus in his *Plays* frontispiece, the covert importation to Britain of Wilhelm von Gloeden’s titillating photographs, and the tacit homoeroticism in the paintings and illustrations of Ricketts, Shannon, and their progeny Glyn Philpot, we have seen how the nascent tracing of queer contours in Pater’s writings on Dionysus found full visual expression by the 1920s.

Indeed, the notion that Dionysus was in some way related to both queer male desire and the culture of the aesthetes made itself felt in seemingly innocuous and surprising places. On one hand, we can imagine Brian Howard luxuriating in the role

²⁴⁸ Otto, *Dionysus*, 155.

of both conquering aesthete and *pais kalos* as he welcomed the cheers of his celebrants in 1929, clad in the garments of his ‘outraged beauty’. On the other, we began by examining the curious conflation of the ‘Order of Dionysus’ with the luxurious rooms of a Mayfair tailoring firm, Pope and Bradley, in an advertisement for the firm which appeared in 1927. The advertisement, we noted, was the latest in a series which championed the effeminacy of the aesthetes and promised to aid and abet the instigation of a renaissance in Mayfair; its presence is, we have seen, evidence that an association between aestheticism and Dionysus was sufficiently pronounced to be almost casually invoked. Hidden in the drawing’s details is, however, a further intimation that this relationship retained the transgressive sexual politics of earlier aestheticist engagements with Dionysus. Prominently placed above the fireplace before which a young man sits reading is a decorative figure mounted on a circular plaque that juts into the blank pictorial space of the upper left corner of Sykes’s composition. Its gender is difficult to ascertain— the slight curvature of its breasts, its rounded thighs, and lack of clearly delineated phallus would suggest it is female— and it bears a passing resemblance in its pose to Sykes’s iconic 1911 female nude *The Spirit of Ecstasy* (fig. 33), used as the hood ornament for Rolls Royce cars since it was first designed.²⁴⁹ What the figure is more immediately redolent of, however, is an erect phallus. This reading is legitimated by Sykes’s decision to include a prominent fig leaf from which the figure emerges. Without recourse to Dionysian imagery, this would suggest that the statue is a coded depiction of genitalia given the biblical resonances of the fig leaf as a cover for the genitals. Considered within the context of an image which invokes Dionysus in its title, however, the fig leaf signals that Sykes’s drawing does more than simply insert an ambiguous and vaguely obscene symbol into the lounge-rooms of Pope and Bradley: it draws attention to itself as a specific and transgressive reference to Dionysian myth and ritual.

In a general sense, Sykes’s phallic icon is entirely proper to any ‘Order of Dionysus’. Eric Csapo notes that phallic models consecrated in Dionysus’s name and intended for ceremonial parades were often designed as creatures with animal features, meaning Sykes’s anthropomorphised figure merely extends this logic to

²⁴⁹ Anon., “Motoring: By Land, Sea, and Sky”. *The Bystander*, Wednesday 22 March 1911, 622.

incorporate the human form.²⁵⁰ Pater himself obliquely acknowledged the presence of such emblems, recording that celebrants ‘carry in midnight procession such rough symbols of the productive force of nature as the women and children had best not look upon’, and that these ‘will be frowned upon, and refine themselves, or disappear, in the feasts of cultivated Athens’.²⁵¹ By not explicitly naming the distinctive shape of these devices, Pater allows himself a moment of sly insinuation. Women and children may not look upon this midnight procession of outsized phalluses, but there is nothing to stop men from doing so. Such emblems *may* disappear with the extension of Dionysus’s decadent influence to ‘cultivated Athens’, but they may instead simply ‘refine themselves’. Sykes’s refined phallic figure goes further than the actual shape of these processional artefacts, however, as Csapo does not suggest that the phallic symbols utilised in Dionysian processions reified the indeterminate gendering of the god himself. Thus the clearly indeterminate nature of the figure suggests a less straightforward interpretation of these rites just as it precludes the otherwise possible argument that this symbol is merely intended to remind us of Dionysus’s role as an agrarian fertility god; the phallus does not figure here as a symbol of male potency but rather as a feminised, eroticised object.

The answer to Sykes’s curious representation may lie in the materiality of the phallus implied by the fig leaf from which it emerges. The importance of this implied materiality lies in its recalling of Dionysus’s masturbation with a figwood phallus upon the grave of Prosymnus after being, according to Clement of Alexandria’s narrative, ‘overcome with a desire to be buggered’; this is the narrative, in which Dionysus trades sexual favours with the male Prosymnus for directions to the underworld, which we will recall Walter Otto giving as an example of what desires lurked beneath the god’s effeminate appearance.²⁵² This act, Csapo records, was symbolically recreated by participants in Dionysian rites, using phallic models made of figwood like Sykes’s in reference to the myth.²⁵³

What is being practiced beneath the figwood phallus of Sykes’s illustration arguably precedes such sexual activity. The covert drama unfolding at the bar between the seated young man and his companion gives us cause to wonder whether

²⁵⁰ Csapo, *Riding the Phallus*, 260.

²⁵¹ Pater, *Greek Studies*, 22.

²⁵² Quoted in: Csapo, *Riding the Phallus*, 275.

²⁵³ Csapo, *Riding the Phallus*, 286.

a spirit of Dionysian ‘enthusiasm’ in the Paterian mould is at work. Drawing so close to one another that they appear to be almost touching, it is worth noting the unusual positioning of the seated figure’s left hand: he is holding an illustrated paper like the copy of *The Tatler* lying on the table closest to us, but he has lowered it while leaving his thumb placed at the page he was presumably just reading. This would indicate that the appearance of the figure stood behind him has come as a surprise, and the introduction affected was unplanned; the ambiguous, unreadable smile playing around the lips of this seated figure would equally seem to confirm it is a welcome one. Occurring under the feminised phallus above the fireplace, itself a reference to Dionysus’s queer sexual activity, it is tempting and by no means impossible to read this surprise encounter as one man picking up another at the bar.

Charles Sykes’s *The Order of Dionysus* is a minor work. Equally, its comparative ubiquity as a reproducible advertisement and its commercial purpose, intended to attract audiences to a tailoring firm, make its propagation of one of the most blatantly transgressive myths related to Dionysus all the clearer a symbol of the entrenched connections between Dionysus and queerness within the culture of the aesthetes of the 1920s. *The Order of Dionysus* also reminds us, in the absence of Dionysus himself, of Albert Henrichs’s observation that the god was more typically represented by his envoys in visual art. In Sykes’s vision, the male followers of Dionysus are Mayfair sophisticates, passing their days reading the *Tatler*, smoking cigarettes, and drinking cocktails. Within the myths of classical antiquity, they are instead the goat-legged fauns, the ‘satyr circle’ of Dionysus’s ‘little Olympus outside the greater’ as Pater has it.²⁵⁴ In the subsequent chapters we will turn to these creatures and examine how they, like the god they follow, could become loci for identification and desire for men like those of Sykes’s drawing, more consistently and less ambiguously embodying the traits that we have found in depictions of Dionysus.

²⁵⁴ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 14.

Chapter 2

‘Between the Headship of the Vine and the
Mere Earth’: Hybridity, Queerness, and
the Faun

In July 1937, a man called Alan Bott went to Edinburgh to see a new play. Twenty years earlier, Bott had found fame as a decorated fighter pilot who wrote a popular book about his heroic deeds in the War which bore the bombastic title *The Cavalry of the Clouds*.²⁵⁵ Since the Armistice, he had continued to write. His most popular book during peacetime was 1931's *Our Fathers*, a fondly nostalgic picture-book which celebrated the morals, manners, and innovations of the late nineteenth century.²⁵⁶ In *Our Fathers*, Bott looked fondly back to a time in which a 'new athleticism... within the space of ten years ran across the land with the quickness of a gorse fire'.²⁵⁷ This happy picture was contrasted with the situation in the 1920s, when 'a host of twittering young hedonists stripped conversation of the last decencies, knocked down the ultimate ninepins of Victorian reticence... [and] even adopted perversion as a mode'.²⁵⁸ This was, perhaps, an uncanny replay of an earlier phase in which 'the pioneers of new... aestheticisms' appeared, 'Oscar Wilde and Whistler entered the salons', '*The Savoy* and *Yellow Book* band did their damndest to shock the bourgeois', and most egregiously of all 'the Oscar Wilde scandal drew horror upon the sins of society'.²⁵⁹ All of this, however, Bott gladly concluded, 'did not apply in much of England outside London'.²⁶⁰

Taking his seat in the King's Theatre, however, Bott was confronted by a spectacle that seemed to rebuke his faith in the fugacity of aestheticism's transgressive potentialities. That night saw the debut of *Satyr*, a play by the American dramatist Paul Leslie. Leslie's play concerned the gruesome fate of Peter de Meyer, a talented young musician who is periodically overcome by a strange power under the influence of which he commits terrible murders completely at odds with his gentle nature. The only sign that de Meyer may have something bestial in his nature is his fondness for playing Claude Debussy's *L'après-midi d'un faune*, inspired by the poem of the same name by Stéphane Mallarmé, on the piano.²⁶¹ This predilection is unsurprising because the reason for de Meyer's violent fits is, after all, that he is revealed to have been born with horns, an animalistic signifier of the

²⁵⁵ Alan Bott, *The Cavalry of the Clouds* (New York: Doubleday, 1917).

²⁵⁶ Alan Bott, *Our Fathers (1870-1900): Manners and Customs of the Ancient Victorians: A Survey in Pictures and Text of Their History, Morals, Wars, Sports, Inventions & Politics*. (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1931).

²⁵⁷ Bott, *Our Fathers*, 187.

²⁵⁸ Bott, *Our Fathers*, 4.

²⁵⁹ Bott, *Our Fathers*, 7-8.

²⁶⁰ Bott, *Our Fathers*, 7.

²⁶¹ Bott, Alan. "Entertainments A La Carte". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 07 July 1937, 21.

mythological creature which lent its name to both Leslie's play and Debussy's composition.²⁶² Bott took to the pages of the *Tatler* to express the frustration and disgust he felt towards Leslie's work which centred on a simple question: 'Why drag in satyrs?'.²⁶³ 'The honest-to-legend satyrs were no more habitual slayers of maidens than were their Roman cousins, the fauns', Bott pleaded.²⁶⁴ Now, he worried, 'some of the thousands who see *Satyr* [will] believe that... [these] creatures... were monstrous'.²⁶⁵ Really, he claimed, satyrs were followers of the god Pan; it was only 'in their identification with the Dionysiac orgies of humans' that satyrs could be held responsible for grave crimes and degenerate behaviour.²⁶⁶

As the classicist Andrew Stewart summarises, fauns and satyrs can be basically defined as 'human above the waist except for their horses' ears, and equine below it', although their horses' features were sometimes substituted for those of a donkey or a goat.²⁶⁷ Francois Lissargue has argued that this distinction between which animal their lower portions belong to marks a dividing line between fauns and satyrs, with fauns resembling goats and satyrs horses, but concludes that even if the two creatures are 'not identical, they were however very early assimilated by the Romans, who linked them together'.²⁶⁸ The art historian Richard Warren notes that, by the late nineteenth century, whatever distinctions that existed between the two had all but collapsed and the terms were used practically interchangeably in visual art. While fauns were, he argues, typically associated with male beauty and satyrs with male lust, these statements remain only generally true and the roles performed by fauns and satyrs in visual art remained indeterminate.²⁶⁹ Resultantly, I shall use the term 'faun' throughout these discussions because, as we shall see particularly in the subsequent chapter, this is the term that was consistently favoured in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to refer to these hybrid creatures; as the

²⁶² It is not my intention in these chapters to enter into debates about the specific meanings of the terms 'faun' and 'satyr', as it is the shared hybrid physiognomy of these creatures that constitutes my thematic focus. As shall be examined in my introductory remarks, these terms are used virtually interchangeably in both art and scholarship alike.

²⁶³ Bott, *Entertainments*, 20.

²⁶⁴ Bott, *Entertainments*, 21.

²⁶⁵ Bott, *Entertainments*, 21.

²⁶⁶ Bott, *Entertainments*, 21.

²⁶⁷ Andrew Stewart, *Art, Desire and the Body in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 187.

²⁶⁸ Francois Lissargue, "Fauns et Satyrs: Trivial Pursuits". *Faune, Fais-Moi Peur! Images du Faune de l'Antiquité à Picasso* (Milan: Silvano Editoriale, 2018), 308.

²⁶⁹ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 111.

symbolic potentialities of their shared hybrid physiognomy is the motor for this chapter's analyses, there is little use in exploring these distinctions.

It was indeed the physiognomic peculiarity of the fauns that exemplified their unruly character, and it was the animal half of the creature that governed its crude, violent, drunken behaviour and guaranteed its status as a creature that belonged on the margins of the Greek and Roman imaginations. Stewart provides a long list of the typical faun's pathologically perverse behaviours as imagined in myth narratives and early decorative art: 'they get drunk at any time and place; fight Giants not with spears but with phalluses; hunt animals in order to have sex with them; cook and keep house in a perpetual state of arousal; molest women at sacrifice; try to rape goddesses; masturbate openly; and occasionally even have oral and anal sex with each other'.²⁷⁰

For Alan Bott, these charges went too far. Fauns, at their worst, were 'guilty of no more than Arcadian rape, or deflowering in the forest' in their dealings with nymphs.²⁷¹ This did not, assumedly, constitute the horrors that he worried interventions like Paul Leslie's play would associate them with. While it was the murderous rampages of the faunlike Peter de Meyer that troubled Bott in *Satyr*, within persistent aestheticist discourses it was rather the 'sins of society' that were unleashed onto the public consciousness by the Wilde trial that fauns would be guilty of; it was the aberrant sexual desires signalled by 'the contrast between attractive youth and the beast within' which had so disturbed Bott that would transform the faun into a sexually deviant figure.²⁷² Fauns frequently frolic or rampage through artworks as incidental decoration or as players in comic or allegorical vignettes throughout the Western tradition, a tendency which still persisted throughout much late nineteenth century and early twentieth century art as Warren's investigation into Art Nouveau's classical inheritances attests.²⁷³ Within the classicised discourses of the aesthetes, however, the mythological creature shed its consistently peripheral nature and instead acquired a conspicuous centrality. The following chapters shall examine how the faun rose to prominence within the cultural imaginary of the aesthetes and what role it played within their sexual politics, exploring how the twin

²⁷⁰ Stewart, *Art, Desire*, 189.

²⁷¹ Bott, *Entertainments*, 21.

²⁷² Bott, *Entertainments*, 21.

²⁷³ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 113.

functions of identification and desire performed by Dionysus in a minor corpus of work revolving around depictions of the god found fuller flower in the faun. This chapter will examine the queer resonances of the faun's hybrid physiognomy, its status as a creature 'between the headship of the vine and the mere earth' in Walter Pater's lyrical phrase, and how artists and writers sought to make a metaphor of the faun's unnatural state which encouraged identification with the creatures.²⁷⁴ The second will examine the emergence of the faun as a *pais kalos*, reprising and clarifying the role fulfilled at times within aestheticist discourses by their god Dionysus.

'Some Puzzled Trouble of Youth': Pater's Queer Hybridity

As we explored in the preceding chapter, there is a relatively robust body of scholarship concerning Walter Pater's treatment of the god Dionysus and the shape this allowed the god to take in later aestheticist discourses. What has consistently escaped attention, however, is the fact that the conspicuous centrality of the faun within these discourses is also advanced in Pater's writings, which evince a fascination with the creature. Richard Dellamora only considers the myth of the faun Marsyas in his examination of Pater's writings on the Dionysian retinue, which he uses to argue that fauns are 'yet another phase of Dionysus' as opposed to being distinct creatures; Stefano Evangelista is likewise concerned with the allegorical potentialities of this myth in Wilde's writing, but not with the other fauns of Dionysus's retinue in Pater's work; there is no mention of fauns in either Kate Hext or Dustin Friedman's accounts of Pater's Dionysus essays either.²⁷⁵ As we shall see in the following chapter, Lene Østermark-Johansen has acknowledged a potentially queer function in Pater's treatment of pictures of fauns, but her account is brief and

²⁷⁴ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 14.

²⁷⁵ Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, 180; Evangelista, *British Aestheticism*, 139-143; Hext, *Walter Pater*; Friedman, *Before Queer Theory*.

the potential of this reading remains unelaborated.²⁷⁶ As with Pater's writings on Dionysus, fauns flit through ekphrastic passages of *The Renaissance* which we shall examine in the subsequent chapter, but it is in his 'Study of Dionysus' that his thought concerning the creatures reaches fullest flower. The 'satyr circle', as Pater introduces them to his reader in this essay, constitutes an important part of the arcadian 'little Olympus outside the greater' that Dionysus inhabits before his entry into Athens.²⁷⁷ In an unlikely point of continuity with Alan Bott's outrage at the apparent misrepresentation of fauns, Pater too seeks to deny the litany of crimes with which they are associated in classical myth and art. 'They give their names to insolence and mockery, and the finer sorts of malice, to unmeaning and ridiculous fear', in Pater's eyes; rather than sexual aggressors whose innate brutality would disrupt the prelapsarian nature of Dionysus's 'little Olympus', fauns are introduced in 'A Study of Dionysus' as mischievous but essentially benign creatures.²⁷⁸

Even this innocuous reading of the faun is somewhat eccentric by the standards of the classical cultures Pater examines. Owing to the behaviours he lists as typical of classical depictions of fauns, Andrew Stewart suggests that the main function of the faun in the Greek imagination was to exemplify the righteousness of the civilising boundaries of the *polis*: physically proximate enough to humanity to embody recognisable drives and desires, the exaggeratedly bestial creature was tasked with 'inverting and deforming the rules of culture... [to] help... to reaffirm its value'.²⁷⁹ J. Michael Padgett's study of the hybrid nature of fauns concurs with this, casting the creature as 'a cautionary model of antisocial irresponsibility, an Other to be opposed and resisted'.²⁸⁰ Padgett's analysis focuses chiefly on the relationship between the faun and male sexuality, characterising fauns as 'bizarre characters [who are] the personification of the male libido' gone awry, which would indicate a further stumbling block for their entry into the queer sexual politics of the aesthetes.²⁸¹

Stewart's list of faun activity admittedly includes occasional bouts of oral and anal sex between fauns, and Amanda Herring observes that depictions of deviant

²⁷⁶ Østermark-Johansen, *Language of Sculpture*, 224-225.

²⁷⁷ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 14.

²⁷⁸ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 16.

²⁷⁹ Stewart, *Art, Desire*, 191.

²⁸⁰ J. Michael Padgett, "The Stable Hands of Dionysos: Satyrs and Donkeys as Symbols of Social Marginalisation in Attic Vase Painting." *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, (Leiden: Leiden, 2000), 44.

²⁸¹ Padgett, *Stable Hands*, 44.

fauns represent depictions of ‘ithyphallic hypersexual aggressors, indifferent to gender or even species when pursuing objects of their desire’.²⁸² To these isolated observations we could add the sexual relationship between Dionysus and the faun Ampelus, from ‘the linked arms of [whom]... we learn of what sort was the sympathy of the Greeks for nature’, according to Pater’s colleague John Addington Symonds in his *Studies of the Greek Poets*.²⁸³ However, Symonds’s acknowledgement of this myth narrative remained idiosyncratic, and classical depictions of fauns overwhelmingly focused on the faun’s heterosexual conquests which principally took the form of the pursuit, molestation, or rape of the nymphs in Dionysus’s retinue. Examples of fauns which indicate the veracity of Stewart’s observations of their behaviour were easy to find within British collections, including examples of classical artefacts which were acquired in the period in which Pater was formulating his theories. A *pelike* depicting a hunched and balding ithyphallic faun attempting to pursue a maenad, who guards against its advances by brandishing a torch, was acquired by the British Museum in 1864 (fig. 34); it was joined three years later by a kylix, like that frequently brandished by Dionysus in many of the images we saw in the previous chapter, which showed similar scenes in its exterior decoration (fig. 35). A further red-figure *psykter* was acquired in 1868 which boasts a richly decorative scheme demonstrating the more generalised drunkenness and debauchery common to the creatures, including one faun who balances a *kantharos* on his erect penis (fig. 36). In the year of *The Renaissance*’s publication, the British Museum purchased another kylix which attests to Stewart’s observation that fauns were at times responsible for attempting to molest goddesses, with two grotesque and ithyphallic fauns attempting to rend the clothes of a figure identifiable as Hera (fig. 37). Even Amanda Herring’s contention that the species of a potential partner was of little concern for the faun is supported by an earlier acquisition of 1805, a small marble figure in which a goat-legged figure is having sex with a goat (fig. 38).

Furthermore, Richard Warren’s account of fauns in art nouveau decoration suggests that, just as any sustained sense of differentiation between fauns and satyrs all but vanished from iconographies surrounding them in much late nineteenth and early twentieth century art, so too did their propensity for nonheteronormative

²⁸² Amanda Herring, “Sexy Beast: The ‘Barberini Faun’ as an Object of Desire.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 25, 1, 2016, 32.

²⁸³ John Addington Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1880), 289.

sexual activity. ‘Many artists found in the faun, satyr, nymph and bacchant/bacchante, readymade allegories of the sexual instincts of woman and man’, Warren comments, indicating the restriction of the faun’s sexual advances to human female (or nymph) targets.²⁸⁴ The dominance of this model has led Stefano Evangelista to argue that, in the main, ‘the brown-skinned satyr is an effective icon for the undesirable, anti-classical categories of ugliness and the grotesque’ within aestheticist discourses.²⁸⁵ Put simply, the faun is too masculine, too heterosexual, too ugly, and too uncivilised to figure prominently within discourses surrounding Dionysus which privileged the effeminacy and beauty of the god himself; its behaviour, reified in its animal portions, would seem to preclude it from the queer understanding of Dionysus and his ‘little Olympus’ we have so far traced.

However, Pater makes ingenious use of the sparse classical precedents he does find for his rereading of the faun which allow him to refute or negate these typical associations. Amanda Herring has noted that the transition from antique to classical to Hellenistic periods of artistic production brought about more varied treatments of the faun than the marauding figure at the heart of Stewart and Padgett’s analyses.²⁸⁶ Although Herring’s example is the *Barberini Faun*, a sculpture which she convincingly reads homoerotic resonances into but which is strangely absent from Pater’s analyses, in the bases of her observations she echoes Pater’s writings on the Dionysian retinue. ‘In the later school of Attic sculpture [fauns] are treated with more and more of refinement, till in some happy moment Praxiteles conceived a model, often repeated, which concentrates this sentiment of true humour concerning them’, Pater recorded; ‘little by little, the signs of brute nature are subordinated’.²⁸⁷ Praxiteles’s sculptures developed ‘a model of dainty natural ease in posture, but with the legs slightly crossed, as only lowly-bred gods are used to carry them’.²⁸⁸ It is only in ‘the school of Praxiteles, the school of grace’, as Pater refers to the artist’s influence in his *Bacchanals* essay, that the faun finds accurate expression.²⁸⁹ Before this, Pater implies, the artists and craftspeople who obscured the ‘dainty natural ease’

²⁸⁴ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 111.

²⁸⁵ Evangelista, *British Aestheticism*, 140.

²⁸⁶ Herring, *Sexy Beast*, 36.

²⁸⁷ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 16-17.

²⁸⁸ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 16.

²⁸⁹ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 59.

of fauns did so because they did not understand them and resultantly failed to treat them with the ‘true humour’ proper to them.

The extension of this Praxitelean ‘humour’ continued in the art of the Italian Renaissance, Pater argues, although the example he draws upon to prove this point is a minor work by his own admission- Pater praises the ‘puck-noses [which] have grown delicate’ in a pair of childish fauns in an engraving by Christofano Robetta, ‘a humble Italian engraver of the fifteenth century’ (fig. 39).²⁹⁰ Robetta’s engraving is indicative of a relatively minor tendency, identified and investigated by Lynn Frier Kaufmann, within the Italian Renaissance to disarticulate the figure of the faun from its disreputable past and instead show the creature engaged in civilised pursuits.²⁹¹ This tendency was, Kaufmann argues, the product of Northern Renaissance traditions with which Pater was less occupied, and remained largely confined to them as Italian audiences were too familiar with the marauding figures of the classical past to participate fully in such a reinvention.²⁹² In spite of the limited influence of this model, Pater’s decision to illustrate his point with such a minor work remains perplexing as more notable works belonging to the period, and to the oeuvres of painters that Pater admired, had been acquired by the National Gallery in the decade preceding Pater’s essays. Botticelli’s painting *Venus and Mars* (fig. 40) was acquired in 1874 and featured infant fauns who physically resemble those of Robetta’s engraving, leading Kaufmann to claim the painting as among the few works of the period which engaged fully with an understanding of the faun as a more civilised being divorced from Dionysus’s train.²⁹³ The acquisition generated considerable interest, with reportage on ‘important purchases of pictures for the nation’ appearing in newspapers as diverse and as disconnected from the London art world as the *Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter* and the *Forest of Dean Examiner*.²⁹⁴ Twelve years prior to this Piero di Cosimo’s painting *A Satyr Mourning Over A Nymph* (fig. 41), known as *The Death of Procris*, had also been acquired, which shows a bearded but youthful and handsome faun bending tenderly over the

²⁹⁰ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 9-10.

²⁹¹ Lynn Frier Kaufmann, *The Noble Savage: Satyrs and Satyr Families in Renaissance Art* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984), 75.

²⁹² Kaufmann, *Noble Savage*, 76.

²⁹³ Kaufmann, *Noble Savage*, 66-67.

²⁹⁴ Anon., “Important Purchases of Pictures for the Nation”. *Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter*, Friday 19 June 1874, 4; Anon., “Important Purchases of Pictures for the Nation”. *Forest of Dean Examiner*, Friday 19 June 1874, 7.

body of a fallen nymph: while the faun reaches out to stroke her hair, there is no erotic charge to the gesture.

Reporting on this latter purchase was largely limited to London newspapers such as the *Morning Herald* and the *Evening Standard*, although it remains unlikely that Pater would have been unaware of either acquisition.²⁹⁵ His enthusiasm for Botticelli is well-known, with Pater dedicating an essay to a study of the painter in *The Renaissance*. Piero Di Cosimo by contrast is only mentioned glancingly in Pater's writings, his name appearing briefly in an essay dedicated to the philosopher Pico Della Mirandola, but the poet William Sharp (who Richard le Gallienne later judged to be the most handsome man in London owing to his resemblance to the effeminate Dionysus) recorded in a set of personal reminiscences that Pater's 'interest in Piero di Cosimo... [was] singularly keen'.²⁹⁶ Piero Di Cosimo's reputation was, as Caroline Elam demonstrates, growing in Britain from the 1860s onwards, significantly aided by the judgements of the aesthetes: the culmination of this process was the bequeathing of his large painting *The Fight Between the Lapiths and the Centaurs* to the National Gallery in 1937 by Charles Shannon, who had owned the painting with Charles Ricketts since 1904.²⁹⁷ Like Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, however, Piero di Cosimo's visions remained isolated from the mainstream of the Italian Renaissance: Dennis Geronimus's authoritative study of the painter notes that the 'tenderness' of his fauns, such as the creature in *A Satyr Mourning Over a Nymph*, indicates that Piero di Cosimo was 'utterly independent of his Italian contemporaries'.²⁹⁸

On one hand these more significant examples of fauns treated with an approximation of the 'true humour' Pater sees in Praxiteles's sculptures render his selection of Robetta's engraving in 'A Study of Dionysus' somewhat unusual, while on the other their status as idiosyncratic works within persistent threads woven through the Italian Renaissance suggests that Pater's sympathetic and admiring treatment of the faun remained a marginal position. Their entry into public collections in the

²⁹⁵ Anon., "Theatrical, Musical, Fine Art, and Literary Jottings". *London Evening Standard*, Saturday 18 April 1863, 5; Anon., "The National Property of Pictures Bought and Bequeathed". *Morning Herald*, Saturday 11 April 1863, 6.

²⁹⁶ Pater, *Renaissance*, 30; William Sharp, *Papers Critical and Reminiscent* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1912), 217.

²⁹⁷ Caroline Elam, "Piero di Cosimo and Centaurophilia in Edwardian London". *The Burlington Magazine*, 151, 1278, 2009, 607-615.

²⁹⁸ Dennis Geronimus, *Piero di Cosimo: Visions Beautiful and Strange* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 2006), 131.

years surrounding Pater's essays also, however, demonstrates that his ideas were perhaps engaged with developments within contemporary culture as much as the myth and ritual of ancient cultures, something further indicated by Pater's analysis of Praxiteles's sculptures of fauns which is more thoroughgoing than his brief description of Robetta's engraving. Pater's specificity over the pose of the Praxitelean faun he is thinking of in 'A Study of Dionysus', its crossed legs indicating commonalities with 'low-bred gods', reveals the identity of the unnamed sculpture group to clearly be Praxiteles's *Resting Satyr* (fig. 42). Praxiteles's sculpture certainly does not resemble a sexually aggressive and physically ugly figure, being instead a young male nude pictured in a moment of repose that seems like a spiritual ancestor for Piero di Cosimo's sensitive creature. It was also an image which would have been immediately familiar to a significant portion of Pater's public owing to its starring role in Nathaniel Hawthorne's enormously popular novel *The Marble Faun*, first published in 1859. Much of the novel's popularity among British audiences rested upon its Italian setting and its evocation of the artistic marvels to be seen in the country's public galleries, particularly Praxiteles's sculpture in Florence from which the novel takes its name. As the literary scholar Gary Scrimgeour demonstrates, Hawthorne's novel functioned as something of a travel guide for English-speaking tourists in Italy and appeared in an illustrated version in 1860, sometimes sold to tourists in Italy as a souvenir, which reproduced the *Resting Satyr* as its opening full-page illustration.²⁹⁹ Crucially, Hawthorne's novel would have prepared Pater's audience for his caressing, indulgent prose to an even greater extent than Piero di Cosimo and Botticelli's paintings. *The Marble Faun*'s first chapter is largely given over to ekphrastic passages essaying the beauty of Praxiteles's sculpture, contrasting as Pater did the 'coarser representations of this class of mythological creatures' with the *Resting Satyr* which 'conveys the idea of an amiable and sensual creature... [and] comes very close to some of our pleasantest sympathies'.³⁰⁰ There is even, indeed, perhaps a hint of the effeminacy found in the aesthetes' representations of Dionysus in Hawthorne's description of the statue, its body described as 'marvellously graceful, but [with] a fuller and more rounded outline, more flesh, and less of heroic muscle, than the old sculptors were wont to assign to their types of masculine beauty'.³⁰¹ This

²⁹⁹ Gary Scrimgeour, "The Marble Faun: Hawthorne's Faery Land". *American Literature*, 36, 3, 1964, 271; Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1860).

³⁰⁰ Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 11, 10.

³⁰¹ Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 9-10.

certainly did not escape Pater's colleague Symonds's attention, who wrote approvingly of classical sculptors that, 'conscious of their own recent birth from the bosom of the divine in nature... they could carve the mystery of the Praxitelean Faun, whose subtle smile is a lure for souls'; these souls, it is tempting to assume, are the same 'feminine souls' who Pater presented as the followers of Dionysus.³⁰²

Explorations of fauns such as that represented by Praxiteles functioning as loci for queer desire, a possibility left hovering around the margins of Hawthorne's ekphrasis and more directly addressed in Symonds's writing, will be reserved for the subsequent chapter. What is important here is that the implication of effeminacy common to phobic reactions to queer aesthetes similarly indicates a potential queerness in the figure of the faun, legitimated by the appearance in Pater's contemporary visual culture of creatures whose appearance and behaviour is distinct from unappealing classical precedents. Pater's innovation in drawing this to the fore in his essays may be said to be his departure from the positive tone of Hawthorne's novel and Piero di Cosimo's paintings. Hawthorne's faun is described as 'neither man nor animal, and yet no monster, but a being in whom both races meet, on friendly ground!', while Dennis Geronimus notes that the fauns of Piero di Cosimo's paintings evidence an unproblematised and 'symbiotic relationship between man and creatures of hoof and horn'.³⁰³ Conversely, the defining hybridity of the creature which is breezily elided by Hawthorne and Piero di Cosimo constitutes the focus for Pater's most probing analyses of the queer potentialities of the Dionysian retinue. We have previously noted that his interest in the figure of the sorrowing Dionysus, examined through the implicit lens of the suffering of his persecuted friend Simeon Solomon, led Pater to intimate an interest in the sexually transgressive potentialities of hybridity through his idiosyncratic association of this figure with that of the werewolf, in whose form animal and human instincts coexist. Pater's treatment of the faun is tonally similar to his treatment of their god in his dark state, seeing the ground upon which animal and man meet in the faun not as 'friendly' nor as irrelevant to their dealings with men but as rife with anxiety and pathos. While Hawthorne's faun is commended as seeming to be 'true and honest, by dint of his simplicity', Pater's is invested with a degree of interiority and self-consciousness

³⁰² Symonds, *Greek Poets*, 289.

³⁰³ Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 11; Geronimus, *Piero di Cosimo*, 131.

alien to Hawthorne's primitivist fantasy.³⁰⁴ In the same sculpture as that which graced *The Marble Faun's* pages, Pater instead saw 'some puzzled trouble of youth' as the animating factor.³⁰⁵ Pater's model may seem superficially close to the similarly troubled faun of Piero di Cosimo's *Satyr Mourning Over a Nymph*, but in that canvas the cause of the creature's anguish is clearly legible as the mortal wounding of its fallen companion; in Pater's writings, the faun gazes inwards to locate the source of its trouble.

Despite Pater's observation that 'signs of brute nature are subordinated' in the 'school of grace', suggesting a suppression of the creature's physically animal qualities— and certainly the *Resting Satyr*, imagined by Praxiteles as an epicene youth, can only be discerned as a faun from his subtly elongated and pointed ears—we should perhaps read the faun's 'brute nature' in a metaphorical sense, as it is the physical conflation of man and animal in the faun that Pater's analyses depends upon. 'The best spirits have found in [fauns] also a certain human pathos', he argues, 'as in displaced beings, coming even nearer to most men, in their very roughness, than the noble and delicate person of the vine', Dionysus.³⁰⁶ Fauns, Pater continues, are 'dubious creatures, half-way between the animal and human kinds, speculating wistfully on their being, because not wholly understanding themselves and their place in nature'.³⁰⁷

This passage is brief and elusive, and yet it is a deceptively dense piece of invention on Pater's part. Pater's sympathetic interpretation of the faun allowed him to appreciate the innocent creatures like those of Robetta's engraving and Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, but when his attention turns to their older counterparts like Praxiteles's adolescent creature the picture irrevocably darkens. If the melancholia and isolation of Pater's troubled faun is redolent of his investment of Dionysus in his sorrow with similarly reflective characteristics, the faun equally allows Pater the opportunity to make more explicit what is relatively implicit in the later description of the god. The image of fauns 'not wholly understanding themselves and their place in nature' seems replete with queer significance. That the faun knows itself to be 'half-way between the animal and human kinds' and is left 'speculating wistfully on

³⁰⁴ Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 10.

³⁰⁵ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 9.

³⁰⁶ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 16.

³⁰⁷ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 16.

[its] being' because of this can also arguably be read in this spirit. The faun is, of course, primarily human above the waist and entirely a beast below, and it is this lower portion that dictates its sexually aberrant behaviour which, in Pater's view, is little more than harmless fun enjoyed within Dionysus's 'little Olympus'. Given the vilification of queer male desire at the time of Pater's writing, exemplified and brought uncomfortably close to the writer by the treatment of Simeon Solomon, the hybridity of the faun that dictates its behaviour appears analogous to the hungers and thirsts that both drive and torment Dionysus.

Further, and equally important, parallels abound with Pater's admiring writing of the maenads in his argument that only 'the best spirits' can find 'pathos' in the melancholy of the faun. Just as his statement that Dionysus's power fell on 'women and feminine souls' led Yopie Prins to question whether Pater imagined himself as part of the god's retinue, the 'best spirits' Pater speaks of here may be those attuned to the queer resonances of the classical past. While Nathaniel Hawthorne believed that 'it is impossible to gaze long at [Praxiteles's *Resting Satyr*] without conceiving a kindly sentiment towards it', in Pater's eyes this sympathy that he himself keenly felt was far from universal.³⁰⁸ Within Pater's analysis of the faun, focused primarily on Praxiteles's sculpture, we find the aesthetics of the 'school of grace' combined with the social role of the fauns untouched by 'true humour' which proceeded it. While 'the 'best spirits' may venerate them, Pater's gloomy and self-conscious conclusion suggests that these creatures remain fundamentally associated with an 'Other' regarded as undesirable, uncivilised, and grotesque to those who do not possess this temperament: it is merely the nature of the transgressions signalled by their animal features that has changed. The faun's hybridity is in Pater's hands an almost explicitly queer hybridity, finding in the mythological being which is not quite a man owing to what it is beneath the waist and belonging on the outermost margins of society for this reason the capacity for clandestine kinship. Indeed, this is felt more keenly than in Pater's explorations of Dionysus as the faun comes 'even nearer to most men... than the noble and delicate person of the vine', indicating the faun is a more universal and less ambiguous cipher for the queer aesthete.

Pater's location of the faun's queer potentialities within its characteristic and unnatural hybridity was to have far-reaching influence within aestheticist treatments

³⁰⁸ Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 9.

of the creature and, indeed, a reprisal of the melancholy and anxiety it engendered can be found within the pages of the first issue of *The Yellow Book*. We find within this publication Laurence Housman's *The Reflected Faun* (fig. 43), its author a friend of Wilde, Shannon, and Ricketts' and a founding member of what Timothy D'Arch Smith characterises as 'the only official organisation that the Uranians ever formed', the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, which spent much of its time investigating male homosexuality.³⁰⁹ Housman's faun appears as a handsome figure caught in a moment of brooding repose in a sylvan glade. In both appearance and pose, it may be said to bear a resemblance to the mournful faun of Piero di Cosimo's painting in the National Gallery: like this precedent, Housman's creature is bearded but youthful, crouches with its goat legs tucked beneath its body, cranes its torso over an object of interest, and extends both of its arms in front of it. Here the faun is crouched over a pool of water and inhales the scent of a flower which must, owing to its emanation from a lily pad, be a lily, the recurrent symbol of aesthetes that continued to function as a signifier of their identity into the 1920s. The strange perfumes of the flower appear to cause the faun to hallucinate, as its reflection in the pool beneath defies the laws of nature. Rather than smelling the flower, the faun's reflection is locked in a passionate embrace with a figure who rises up from the water to meet its lips and whose head has taken the place of the lily. The gender of the figure is difficult to ascertain, and like the Dionysus of the aesthetes' imagination it is thoroughly androgynous. Despite its flowing hair there is no obvious curvature of its breasts, and its body is muscular. Its relatively rugged features would also suggest that it is easier to view this figure as male, and its pronounced androgyny would seem to indicate that Housman is inviting the viewer to make, or at least entertain, this assumption.

On its surface, *The Reflected Faun* indicates that the notion of the faun as a queer figure incubated in Pater's Dionysus essay found visual expression within the work of the aesthetes; Housman's faun is clearly in the throes of what appears to be a moment of homoerotic fantasy. Its complexities equally, however, indicate a more thoroughgoing visualisation of the specificities of Pater's vision of the faun's hybrid physiognomy as a locus for queer anxieties. Housman's drawing is something of a hybrid creation in its own right, kaleidoscopically blending classical myth narratives

³⁰⁹ Delaney, *Ricketts*, 68; D'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest*, 137.

to both intensify the associations between fauns, aestheticism, and queerness and to clarify the thematic parameters in which these associations function. Most obviously, Housman's composition blends a potential reprisal of Piero di Cosimo's faun with typical depictions of Narcissus: the compositional device of a figure craning over a pool to study its own reflection, particularly when this figure is drawn from classical mythology, makes this inheritance immediately clear. This would indicate that Housman's faun has fallen in love with its reflection, a gesture that would become pathologically queer in the writings of Sigmund Freud sometime after the fact of Housman's drawing but was already, as Niclas Johansson's extensive study of the Narcissus myth in the late nineteenth century demonstrates, replete with queer resonances.³¹⁰ The myth narrative had also already been associated with aestheticism and queerness by the movement's detractors in a famous caricature of Oscar Wilde of 1882 produced by Thomas Nast (fig. 44). Nast's caricature casts Wilde as Narcissus and, intriguingly, sees the writer experience his own brush with the half-animal, half-man physiognomy of the faun, with Wilde's reflection being transmogrified into a sphinx-like blending of lion and human characteristics. In *The Reflected Faun*, however, it is plainly not simply itself that the faun has fallen in love with. By importing the conventional iconography of the Narcissus myth, Housman indicates that the faun's desires are revealed to it in the pool in the form of the embrace with the mysterious masculine figure who surges forth to meet its lips. Suggesting that this fantasy is brought on by the faun inhaling the odours of a lily, Housman's drawing encourages us to associate the proliferation of these desires with aestheticist discourses.

The danger attendant upon the indulgence of these desires, indicated by the existential torment of Pater's fauns, is intimated by Housman's blending of the twin iconographies of fauns and the Narcissus myth with a third classical point of reference. The embrace Housman's faun longs for seems to be both erotically stimulating and stiflingly dangerous. Depicting a body surging upwards from watery depths to embrace a male figure also calls to mind contemporaneously popular imagery of water-dwelling female creatures who ensnared their prey through similarly seductive methods. Such imagery typically revolved around the

³¹⁰ Niclas Johansson, *The Narcissus Theme From "Fin De Siècle" to Psychoanalysis: Crisis of the Modern Self*. (Lausanne: Peter Lang, 2017), 79.

mythological hybrid figure of the siren or, in interpretations which removed these classical trappings, the equally hybrid mermaid (with whom the siren was frequently confused).³¹¹ We may draw parallels with Frederic Leighton's early work *The Fisherman and the Syren* (fig. 45) in which the siren surges forth from the water to embrace her unconscious, or perhaps mesmerised, male target, her mermaid's tail coiled around his leg indicating entrapment and danger. A similar composition was reprised in a 1901-03 painting by Charles Shannon entitled *The Fisherman and the Mermaid* (fig. 46). In Shannon's rendition, a shirtless young man with a peacock feather in his hat, another typical aesthetic symbol, bends over the edge of his perilously tilting boat to grasp a mermaid afloat on waters as stormy as those traversed by Hermes and Dionysus. Although Shannon's mermaid seems more passive than Leighton's 'syren', turning her face away from the fisherman, the danger of the male figure (perhaps blinded by his pursuit of the beautiful as his peacock feather would indicate) toppling into the stormy sea as a result of the mermaid's charms seems close to hand. The importation of these iconographic attributes in Housman's *Reflected Faun* confirms the unstable gendering of the figure in the water who appears male but acts like a conventionally female figure, and also confirms that that which the faun desires— the consummation of its imagined embrace with this figure— poses a terrible danger to it. *The Reflected Faun* thus makes visible the contours of Pater's pen portrait of the faun as a queer actor tormented, like the sorrowing Dionysus of his imagination and of Simeon Solomon's canvas, by its vilified hungers, with Housman's invocation of the lily as the stimulus of its dangerous fantasy implicating the clandestine, corruptive lessons of aestheticism in the stimulation of these desires.

By the time Housman's drawing appeared, the association between fauns and aesthetes, and both figures with male queerness, was suitably entrenched within aestheticist discourses for the confluence to be invoked in what appears to be an almost flippant fashion. A striking early example of this identification can be found in the writings of Lionel Johnson, a poet and aesthete whose work was also published in *The Yellow Book*. In 1891, Johnson published an essay satirising the typical poses of his fellow aesthetes in which he branded the aesthete— 'he, or shall we say it... a

³¹¹ Bram Dijkstra identifies this trend in relation to sirens, mermaids, and nymphs, in: Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 269; for a specific examination of mermaids, see: Vaughn Scribner, *Merpeople: A Human History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2020), 174-178.

curious creature’ – the ‘cultured faun’.³¹² ‘Since we are scholars’, Johnson announced, ‘we throw in occasional doses of Hellenism [to our poems]: by which we mean the Ideal of the Cultured Faun’.³¹³ It is possible to argue that Johnson invoked the figure of the faun to indicate that the ‘cultured’ nature of the aesthete was an unconvincing pose, associating the creature with the base and uncivilised impulses attendant upon depictions of fauns proffered by those who lacked the ‘true humour’ Pater found in Praxiteles and could have sought in Botticelli and Piero di Cosimo. However, Johnson’s familiarity with Pater and the sexual politics of Pater’s writings – Johnson’s elegiac ode to the older man praised the ‘worthy Uranian song’ of his work – would suggest that his conception of the creature likely retained the influence of Pater’s imaginative reconceptualization.³¹⁴ Furthermore, the ‘Ideal of the Cultured Faun’ of which Johnson writes is ‘a flowery Paganism, such as no “Pagan” ever had’, a heady mixture involving “beautiful woodland natures” ... together with the elegant languors and favourite vices of... the *Stratonis Epigrammata*’.³¹⁵ This last reference, included for Johnson and the aesthete to ‘parade our “decadent” learning’, is to a collection of largely homosexual poetry from the writer Straton, intermingled seamlessly and slyly by Johnson with the ‘beautiful woodland natures’ so redolent of Pater’s ‘little Olympus’.³¹⁶

The flippancy of Johnson’s teasing identification between aesthete and faun, denuded of the anxieties attendant upon Pater’s writing and Housman’s subsequent drawing, is in danger of obfuscating both the audaciousness of Pater’s reinvention of the faun as a queer figure and the idiosyncrasy of the aesthete for accepting and propagating it. Johnson’s joke concerning the poetry of Straton may have amused the ‘best spirits’ who found kinship and beauty within the faun but would self-evidently have faced fierce censure from those beyond this coterie to whom the faun would likely still represent the unbridled indulgence of heterosexual appetites; as we have seen, counterexamples to this pervasive model, both within and beyond Pater’s writings, remained limited. As fauns proliferated through the pages of *The Yellow Book* and far beyond, into the canvases and journals of the 1920s, we find the faun of

³¹² Lionel Johnson, “The Cultured Faun”. *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s: An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981), 110.

³¹³ Johnson, *The Cultured Faun*, 112.

³¹⁴ Lionel Johnson, “Walter Pater”. *Poetical Works of Lionel Johnson* (London: Elkins Matthews, 1915), 288.

³¹⁵ Johnson, *The Cultured Faun*, 112.

³¹⁶ Johnson, *The Cultured Faun*, 112.

the aesthetes' imagination entering into implicit dialogue with the persistent model of the creature when it was not treated with Paterian 'true humour'. In these instances, the faun's hybrid body retains its centrality to the creature's potential queerness but the psychological nuances of Pater's troubled portrait begin to recede; in their place we equally find fauns whose distance from their heteronormative ancestors is consistently marked and whose appearances and behaviours further encourage an identification between faun and aesthete. The dominant artist in this tendency, both of his own age and of an epoch later than his own, was Aubrey Beardsley, whose work teems with fauns who appear to behave in precisely this fashion.

The Beardsley Line: Satire and Seduction

As we have noted in discussing the foundations of the faun's role in aestheticist discourses, Pater's focus on Praxiteles's *Resting Satyr* as the motor for his imaginative reconceptualization of the creature relied upon the exclusion of the commonplace depictions of fauns described by Andrew Stewart in his list of the typical faun's misbehaviour. It was not, however, merely these classical precedents that Pater obfuscates in his appreciation for the faun: Pater's contemporaries were equally interested in maintaining the fundamental link between fauns and heterosexuality which the interpretations of the aesthete sought to problematise or sever. Despite the well-publicised acquisitions of paintings such as Botticelli's *Venus and Mars* and Piero di Cosimo's *Satyr Mourning Over a Nymph*, in the late nineteenth century fauns could appear to be 'libidinous fantasies, lubricated by wine, who represent man's natural and healthy desire to be free of societal constraints'; this, J. Michael Padgett notes, was particularly the case in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, for whom the faun played an important role in exploring the Dionysian impulse within men.³¹⁷ As we saw in the previous chapter, the literary historian Jessica Wood's observation of the suppression of femininity in Nietzsche's culturally dominant understanding of Dionysian myth paralleled a suppression of effeminacy

³¹⁷ Padgett, *Stable Hands*, 44.

in the person of the god himself. This tendency is even more stringently pronounced in Nietzsche's conception of the faun, who is 'to the man of culture what Dionysian music is to civilisation', 'the archetype of man, the embodiment of his highest and strongest emotions', and 'the emblem of the sexual omnipotence of nature, which the Greek was wont to contemplate with reverential awe'.³¹⁸ Nietzsche's faun is 'the true man... Before him the cultured man shrank to a lying caricature', an object of fascination for the philosopher owing to its untrammelled and thoroughly anti-Apollonian indulgence of its instincts, impulses, and desires.³¹⁹ Indeed, *The Birth of Tragedy* reveals its author's ire to those who, like Pater, sought to minimise this aspect of the creature. Nietzsche critically contrasted the faun of classical antiquity, an authentic 'offspring of a longing after the Primitive and the Natural', with the figure to which it was degraded in later cultures, 'the idyllic shepherd of our more recent time'.³²⁰ He marvelled at the 'firmness and fearlessness [with which] the Greek embraced the man of the woods', thrown into sharp relief by 'how coyly and mawkishly the modern man dallied with the flattering picture of a tender, flute-playing, soft-natured shepherd'.³²¹

These conceptions retained their currency in the 1920s. In the previous chapter we saw that the dominant mouthpiece for British Nietzschean in the 1920s was the little magazine *The London Aphrodite*, primarily the project of the Australian expatriate writer Jack Lindsay and his artist father Norman, which sought to distance its virile 'Dionysianism' from the machinations of those that Lindsay branded 'fiddling aesthetes'. In like manner, Norman Lindsay's work which appeared in Britain throughout the decade presented the public with a vision of the faun in the full glory of its Nietzschean virility. Lindsay's work appeared at the 1923 exhibition of Australian art at the Royal Academy where it caused a sensation for the recurrence of eroticised female nudes; as a journalist for *The Sketch* noted, the exhibition was unusually popular because 'we all wanted to see for ourselves just *how* shocking [Lindsay's] pictures were'.³²²

³¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 60, 63.

³¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 63-64.

³²⁰ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 63.

³²¹ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 63.

³²² Anon., "Marigold Again: Society Still on the Move". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 17 October 1923, 117.

The publicity generated by this controversy resulted in a one-man exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in 1925 which was attacked by Alan Bott, who caricatured visitors' desire to see Lindsay's work because it was 'so imaginative and so improper!'.³²³ Among the works exhibited by Lindsay at the Royal Academy was *Man's Heaven* (fig. 47), showing an extravagantly dressed cavalier kissing a naked woman.³²⁴ Leaning on his shoulder and watching approvingly is a grotesque and curiously simian faun, delineated as such by its protruding horns. Lindsay's faun seems to figure in the composition as a morally inverted, pagan angel upon the man's shoulder, its apelike appearance suggestive of its belonging to his uncivilised and uncivilisable id which has encouraged his carnal embrace; Lindsay's drawing makes visible Stefano Evangelista's argument that, 'to Darwinian eyes, [the faun's] biological proximity to the animal world connotes a primitive stage of human development'.³²⁵ Norman Lindsay's first book to find a British publisher, 1927's *Etchings of Norman Lindsay*, reproduced a series of forty-five further etchings made between 1918 and 1925 which presented his public with more fauns largely cast in their conventional role. One print appears to show a legion of lecherously grinning fauns presenting another of Lindsay's nudes to another cavalier, assumedly her prospective lover (fig. 48); this work is titled *Adventure*, to dispel any misgivings about its sexual politics. Another, no less insinuatingly titled *Bargains*, shows a naked woman gazing into the eyes of a monstrous faun which kisses her expectant hand (fig. 49).

The importance of the figure to the project of Nietzschean 'Dionysianism' was sufficiently pronounced for *The London Aphrodite* to advertise itself to the public with an image in which a muscular and anarchic faun rides on the back of a winged horse which appeared on the cover of each issue, concretising and publicising the links between the Lindsays' 'Dionysianism' and the creature (fig. 50). The winged horse is clearly Pegasus, the mythological beast ridden by the classical hero Perseus after he has slain the gorgon Medusa and during his journey to rescue Andromeda from the sea monster Cetus. In Lindsay's version, however, it appears that the horse

³²³ Alan Bott, "Through a Londoner's Window". *The Sphere*, Saturday 28 March 1925, 358.

³²⁴ Anon., *Society of Artists, Sydney: Exhibition of Australian Art* (London: Clowes and Sons, 1923), 22.

³²⁵ Evangelista, *British Aestheticism*, 140.

has been hijacked, and its heroic rider resultantly deposed by the triumphant beast of the Dionysian retinue.

Visually, Lindsay's source material is redolent of the painter and Royal Academy President Frederick Leighton's 1896 roundel *Perseus on Pegasus, Hastening to the Rescue of Andromeda* (fig. 51). Like Lindsay's illustration, Leighton's painting shows Pegasus rearing slightly in midair and Leighton's Perseus raises one arm in a manner similar to that of the faun's two raised arms. Punning on the work of a famous Royal Academician would certainly seem in keeping with Norman Lindsay's scorn for academic convention, which he blasted in his 1920 book *Creative Effort: An Essay in Affirmation* for its 'sterile imagery' and its 'conviction that Art must never appeal to the emotions', a 'sexless utterance' which threatened to remove 'the effort to beautify sex... from art'.³²⁶ In Lindsay's formulation, painters like Leighton were the modern representatives of the Doric 'war-camp of the Apollonian' against Dionysian forces that Nietzsche wrote of in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and thus the unseating of the hero of Leighton's painting by a creature of the Dionysian retinue would seem to appeal to both Lindsay and his son's imagination. The iconography of a painting like *Perseus on Pegasus* would also perhaps have had special resonances for Nietzscheans like the Lindsays owing to the prominence in Leighton's composition of the gorgon's head, which is gripped in Perseus's lowered hand. While the narrative Leighton responded to was the freeing of Andromeda from Cetus, who Perseus vanquishes using Medusa's head, his painting may instead have suggested to Lindsay Nietzsche's striking image of 'the figure of Apollo himself rising here in full pride... [Holding] out the Gorgon's head to a... grotesquely uncouth Dionysian'.³²⁷ With this gesture, Nietzsche wrote, the 'majestically-rejecting attitude of Apollo perpetuated itself' in Doric art, and thus the removal of both the classical hero and the offending gorgon's head represents the overthrowing of the Apollonian by the Dionysian faun.³²⁸

The London Aphrodite thus announced its crusade against sexless utterances and 'fiddling aesthetes' with a figure of a triumphant faun. However, its compositional inheritances also obliquely reveal the enormity of the influence of such

³²⁶ Norman Lindsay, *Creative Effort: An Essay in Affirmation* (Sydney: Art in Australia, 1920), 54.

³²⁷ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 30.

³²⁸ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 30.

‘fiddling aesthetes’ over conceptions of the creature. Jack Lindsay irately recorded in his memoirs that he ‘didn’t consider Norman at all influenced by [Aubrey] Beardsley’ while recounting a conversation in which someone attempted to ‘belittle’ his father’s work through the comparison.³²⁹ Fellow *London Aphrodite* editor P. R. Stephenson allowed that ‘Lindsay’s Dionysianism of the 1920s had stemmed from the “Paganism” of the 1890s in England... with trimmings from the “Yellow Book”’, but also stated that he had ‘no patience with critics who say that Norman Lindsay’s art-work is merely “derivative” from Beardsley’.³³⁰ These denials stretch credulity where the *Aphrodite*’s logo is concerned. The *London Aphrodite* logo does suggest satirical commonalities with the ‘sexless utterance’ of painters like Frederic Leighton, but in medium, form, and function Lindsay’s illustration resembles more closely than Leighton’s painting the work of the very artist that his son and friends sought to separate his legacy from. Beardsley too provided a frontispiece for a little magazine, the year-long print run of which paralleled *The London Aphrodite*’s. This was *The Savoy*, Beardsley’s successor to *The Yellow Book* following his expulsion from that publication during the fallout of the Wilde trial because of perceived ties between himself and Wilde. For this subsequent venture, Beardsley provided a drawing of a mischievous Pierrot who has also taken control of Pegasus (fig. 52). While Beardsley’s horse remains grounded and its temperament perhaps more placid than in Lindsay’s version, the similarities between the two are at least as pronounced, if not more so, than those between Lindsay and Leighton’s works. Beardsley’s clown raises both arms over its head like Lindsay’s faun, the drawing’s central placement on the otherwise sparse page of *The Savoy* parallels the placement of Lindsay’s drawing on the equally sparse covers of the *Aphrodite*, and the two black-and-white drawings self-evidently have more in common with one another in technique and execution than Lindsay and Leighton’s works. More importantly, the deposition of a heroic figure by a minor, mischievous one that is the engine of Lindsay’s drawing is clearly rehearsed in Beardsley’s work some thirty years earlier, and the two drawings are obviously related in their shared function.

That Lindsay could not exorcise Beardsley’s influence, despite the fierce protestations of his circle, may be taken as a sign of its enormity and of the recurrent

³²⁹ Lindsay, *Fanfrolico*, 21.

³³⁰ P. R. Stephenson, *Kookaburras and Satyrs: Some Recollections of the Fanfrolico Press* (Melbourne: Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, 1983), 22, 19-20.

presence of Beardsley's designs throughout the 1920s. This is particularly the case in conceptions of fauns. From Beardsley's earliest published work, his illustrations for an edition of Malory's romance *Le Morte D'Arthur* in which fauns proliferate despite the text's profound lack of them, the creatures recur frequently in his drawings. Indeed, biographer and erstwhile friend of Beardsley's, Haldane Macfall, found cause to remind his readers that it was Beardsley's decision to 'boldly enter... into rivalry with the Greeks' which 'was to make him famous' in a 1927 biography: Macfall refers here to Beardsley's increasing engagement with classical art in his career, which he characterises as a vanquishing of an earlier 'Japanese erotic influence' by 'the Greek satyr' as the emblematic figure of the artist's interests.³³¹ Macfall further specifies that 'the violences of horrible lecherous old satyrs upon frail nymphs... appealed to the morbid and grotesque mind and mood of Beardsley', and that he made these discoveries when he was 'much at the British Museum' where, as we have seen, he could have encountered several recently acquired objects to satisfy this curiosity.³³² Analysis of Beardsley's images of fauns, and those that bear his influence, would however appear to cohesively refute this. What Beardsley's example would provide his imitators with was a visual language through which to divorce the faun from the heterosexual behaviour it exhibits in works such as Norman Lindsay's etchings.

As Linda Gertner Zatin has argued, a preoccupation with the limitations of masculine authority and heterosexual virility is a common thread running through many of Beardsley's drawings.³³³ Strangely, however, Beardsley's equal preoccupation with the figure of the faun does not feature in her argument despite its obvious potential to speak to this theme. Zatin notes that 'late Victorian artists' including Beardsley typically produced fauns which lack 'the vitality such Greek motifs had in art of earlier decades' and appear as 'domesticated' creatures in Beardsley's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, but balances these remarks by reasserting that 'for late Victorians, satyrs... continued to emblematised sexuality and male bravado'.³³⁴ Beardsley's typical taste for the erotic and his studies of the British Museum's collections would suggest to us that his work would indeed entertain these

³³¹ Haldane Macfall, *Aubrey Beardsley: The Clown, The Harlequin, the Pierrot of his Age* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1927), 114.

³³² Macfall, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 114.

³³³ Linda Gertler Zatin, *Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 35-79.

³³⁴ Zatin, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 242, 400.

resonances, but a striking aspect of his treatment of fauns is the absence of figures which would conform to Zatlin's casting of the late Victorian faun. We do not, for example, find a single ithyphallic faun in Beardsley's oeuvre, as we may reasonably expect to given his classical source material and the fact that he would endow later, human figures in his *Lysistrata* illustrations with this characteristic (fig. 53). The only faun which appears to exhibit similar properties is, in fact, invoked in a satirical portrait much like that of Wilde as Dionysus in Beardsley's *Plays* frontispiece. We find this character in Beardsley's title page design for Florence Farr's 1894 novel *The Dancing Faun* (fig. 54), in which a leering faun is perched upon an economically rendered and impossibly delicate sofa. The creature's features bear, as Chris Snodgrass notes, a conspicuous similarity to those of the aesthetic painter James Whistler, with whom Beardsley's personal relationship was fractious.³³⁵ The identification seems particularly likely as the 'dancing faun' of Farr's title is a character called Mr. Travers who talks in vaguely Wildean cadences and who the protagonist Geraldine initially falls in love with, resultantly rebuffing another potential suitor because for 'a woman who had taken it into her head to adore the type of man represented by the Dancing Faun, no Hercules, however laboriously devoted, need apply'.³³⁶

Beardsley's joke here appears to run along similar lines to the humour animating his *Plays* frontispiece. The Whistlerian faun may look like the classical ancestors that Pater ignores, appearing at first glance to grasp an ithyphallic appendage as it grins out at the viewer. However, closer inspection reveals that this outsized phallus is nothing more than an illusion: what the faun holds is instead its hairy shank as it primly tucks one raised leg into its body. Snodgrass reads the title page as a 'venomous attack... which caricatures Whistler's effeminate dandyism', and Matthew Sturgis (who also identifies Whistler's features in the faun) calls the creature 'mincing'.³³⁷ The connotations of these words would suggest a queer interpretation, but the drawing arguably does not support this (and neither would the facts of Whistler's sexuality); it does, however, evince continuities with the binary between a 'dancing faun' and a 'Hercules' found in Farr's text. It is this implied distance from the heterosexual potency of the classical faun, indicated by the

³³⁵ Snodgrass, *Dandy of the Grotesque*, 123.

³³⁶ Florence Farr, *The Dancing Faun* (London: John Lane, 1894), 68.

³³⁷ Snodgrass, *Dandy of the Grotesque*, 123; Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 200.

counterfeited phallus, the diminutive stature, and the placement of this thoroughly domesticated creature on a dainty sofa, that demonstrates Beardsley's willingness to make use of the faun's broader and continued associations with masculine virility in order to ridicule them. The object of Beardsley's satire is surely Whistler to a considerable extent, but its point is perhaps broader too: Beardsley's drawing appears to suggest the fundamental disharmony between Whistler's aestheticism and his manhood, the elegant drawing-rooms of the former cancelling out the potency of the latter. It is as if the marauding faun who enthralled Nietzsche as a symbol of male virility is immediately degraded upon impact with the culture of the aesthetes.

Beardsley's engagements with the figure of the faun that predate his satirical attack on Whistler would certainly indicate that, like Laurence Housman and Lionel Johnson, he understood the creature more consistently through the lens of Pater's aestheticist reinventions and less through those of Nietzsche's formulations and the classical artefacts and narratives which supported them. In an early and seemingly minor work dated to around 1893— which nonetheless will be of considerable significance to our explorations in the following chapter— the faun figures as a decorative, feminised creature with clear ties to the aestheticist iconographies that made Paterian metaphors of the faun's hybrid physiognomy (fig. 55). This drawing appeared in both *A Second Book of Fifty Drawings* (1899) and *The Later Work of Aubrey Beardsley* (1901) but was not initially intended for publication, instead illustrating the text of Beardsley's personal copy of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* which was implicated, via Debussy's musical response to it, in Paul Leslie's play *Satyr* as a sign of the pianist Peter De Meyer's deviant tendencies.³³⁸ A tangle of spidery linework that belies its earliness in Beardsley's career, it depicts a bust of Mallarmé's faun with long, flowing hair, erect donkey's ears, a sensuously pouting mouth and heavily lidded eyes. A long pen line straying from the thicket of the faun's chest hair resolves itself into Beardsley's initials beneath the bust. This detail has caused Linda Gertner Zatlin to wonder whether Beardsley is literally tying his identity to the figure of the faun, but it is arguably the form of the line itself that is the most compelling feature.³³⁹

³³⁸ Linda Gertner Zatlin. "Aubrey Beardsley and Stéphane Mallarmé: Pictures for a Poem." *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 76, 3, 2015, 458.

³³⁹ Zatlin, *Pictures for a Poem*, 468.

Flanked by small curls and curving gently upwards into the body of the faun, where it is met by a profusion of other pen lines that mirror its trajectory, the line resembles the stem of a peacock feather (which also feature, rendered in a similarly economical fashion, elsewhere in Beardsley's illustrations in the book).³⁴⁰ As we have seen in Shannon's *The Fisherman and the Mermaid*, the peacock feather persisted as a symbol of beauty within the collective imagination of the aesthetes. This in part owed to the influence of one of two events which, Robbie Ross recorded, provided Beardsley with 'a fresh impetus and stimulate his method of expression' at this point.³⁴¹ The first of these was 'a series of visits to the collection of Greek vases in the British Museum' that Haldane Macfall also recorded, while the second was a trip to see 'the famous Peacock Room of Mr Whistler' which, despite his personal antipathy to its creator, Beardsley was known to greatly admire.³⁴² Certainly, it appears to be the aestheticist influences of this latter visit which win out in his sketch not merely in the appearance of a peacock feather but also in its implicit artistic and cultural allegiances. The trailing peacock feather's stem transforms the faun's torso into the rich blooms of the feather and thus into a beautiful object fit for contemplation. Equally, the commingling of the faun's body with the shape of the feather is evidence of another, implicit transformation, that of earthy goat into noble peacock: the etiolated stem of the feather evidently replaces the equine portion of its hybrid physiognomy. While Beardsley's faun thus maintains its hybridity, still half-human and half-animal, its animality has been ennobled and brought into the fold of aestheticist iconographies. While Zatlin again associates the peacock feather in Beardsley's manuscript with 'the Victorian sign of male bravado and aggressiveness... refer[ring] to the faun and his lust' in her study of Beardsley's *L'après-midi d'un faune* drawings, this seems unconvincing given the androgynous, faintly Solomonesque appearance of the faun.³⁴³ Beardsley's substitution of the goat for the peacock rather makes a virtue of that which reifies the otherness of the faun, understood as a sexual otherness by the likes of Pater and Housman.

The conflation of faun and peacock also finds echo in Beardsley's own oeuvre, namely in a drawing from *Le Morte D'Arthur* which does not fully blur the line

³⁴⁰ Zatlin, *Pictures for a Poem*, 468.

³⁴¹ Ross, *Beardsley*, 45.

³⁴² Ross, *Beardsley*, 45.

³⁴³ Zatlin, *Pictures for a Poem*, 469.

between the two creatures but rather suggests the confluence through an illusionistic manipulation of pictorial depth (fig. 56). Titled *Satyr and Peacock* in Zatlin's catalogue raisonné, the drawing shows a slightly hermaphroditic faun at the edge of a cliff with a peacock, fanning its tail as in a mating ritual, behind it; the peacock's fanned tail at first appears to emerge from the faun's own lower back as if it is the prostrate faun on all fours, not the peacock, which is performing this act of sexual display. Zatlin summarises that the consensus among Beardsley scholars reckoning with Beardsley's seemingly random insertions of fauns into unrelated scenes of *Le Morte D'Arthur* is to view the creatures as pagan personifications of evil or temptation, in contrast to the angelic figures which appear elsewhere in the text.³⁴⁴ The faun here appears to embody this temptation in a surprising, overtly sexual way.

Beardsley's *Le Morte D'Arthur* illustrations were not merely celebrated upon their initial appearance but retained their presence within aestheticist discourses far beyond it, with the book being reproduced in its entirety first in 1909 and then again in 1927 by its publisher J. M. Dent.³⁴⁵ It is thus that the most persistently visible fauns of Beardsley's oeuvre included those who most overtly appear poised to engage in queer sexual activity, with several drawings accompanying Mallory's text depicting fauns seeming to act on the desires Pater inscribed into their hybrid physiognomies and that Laurence Housman's faun both dreamed of and dreaded. One drawing titled by Zatlin *Satyr and Young Boy* (fig. 57) shows a lascivious faun with pouting lips leerily eyeing a youthful male nude, whose consternation at the creature's unwanted attention is made clear from his scowling face. The faun features here as the *erastes* spurned, its desires frustrated, left to fantasise about the consummation of its pederastic passion like Housman's *Reflected Faun*. A similar image from later in the text, known as *Satyr Accosting a Knight* (fig. 58), represents a similar scene in which a youthful faun emerges from a bush to cast a heavy-lidded gaze in the direction of male knight who, this time more promisingly, turns back to meet its gaze over his shoulder. In another drawing, titled by Zatlin *Satyr Offering Fruit to a Seated Figure* (fig. 59), we witness what may be a seduction scene between a faun and another young and thoroughly androgynous boy to whom it proffers its intoxicating Dionysian bounty of grapes. Another, referred to in the catalogue raisonné as *Satyr*

³⁴⁴ Zatlin, *Catalogue*, 271.

³⁴⁵ Joseph Mallaby Dent, *The House of Dent, 1888-1938* (London: J. M. Dent, 1938), 283.

and Human Figure (fig. 60), shows the faun faring even better still. Zatlin remarks that *Satyr and Human Figure* is particularly interesting because it is ‘the only one of Beardsley’s drawings in which he depicts two figures in a reciprocal embrace... it is very rare that Beardsley’s figures touch each other’.³⁴⁶ This drawing has the human figure crawling into the awaiting arms of a grinning faun and placing one hand upon its hairy thigh. What Zatlin’s unassuming titling of the drawing does not indicate is that the ‘human figure’ is another male nude who plainly does not share the distaste of his equivalent figure in *Satyr and Young Boy*. It also obscures the fact that the relationship between the two figures is clearly more sexually charged than the phrase ‘reciprocal embrace’ would intimate: the human figure gazes at the faun’s lascivious grin with a mixture of boyish fear and coquettish pouting, and the boy’s genitals graze the faun’s shanks.

The notability of the interaction between the two figures in this final example, unique as Zatlin notes in Beardsley’s work for its depiction of a reciprocal embrace, is all the more remarkable when placed within the context of Beardsley’s interpretations of fauns throughout his oeuvre. Perusal of Zatlin’s authoritative catalogue raisonné reveals that, despite his familiarity with the Greek pots of the British Museum and his reputation for transgressively eroticised drawings, at no point does Beardsley entertain the model of the faun not treated with the ‘true humour’ Pater’s essays identify. None of Beardsley’s fauns are ithyphallic; the closest we find is the illusionistic phallus of the *Dancing Faun* title page. None of Beardsley’s fauns engage in, or even seem poised to engage in, heterosexual activity with female targets: the closest to this is an image which is among the most celebrated and widely reproduced of Beardsley’s fauns, a proposed frontispiece for the fifth issue of *The Yellow Book* (fig. 61). The drawing went ultimately unused owing to Beardsley’s removal from his position as art editor but, as Richard Warren notes, was reproduced elsewhere within the year.³⁴⁷ Beardsley’s cover design shows a woman and a faun at ease in an arcadian landscape. The faun is reading a book, while the woman reclines beside it and turns towards it. It is this drawing that Richard Warren singles out as ‘probably the most interesting use of the faun in all of his work’ because, ‘at the level of style and in its overall feel, it sits most naturally

³⁴⁶ Zatlin, *Catalogue*, 248.

³⁴⁷ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 117.

with the few non-satirical and non-sexual drawings that Beardsley made', echoing Zatlin's surprise at the *Morte D'Arthur* drawing *Satyr and Human Figure*.³⁴⁸ Matthew Sturgis argues that some evidence suggests that the drawing initially contained 'a concealed detail so obscene it could not even be mentioned' in an extant letter which discusses the drawing, and it is tempting to speculate as to what this could have been particularly in regard to the tense climate following the arrest of Oscar Wilde and the queer sexual behaviour of Beardsley's *Le Morte D'Arthur* fauns.³⁴⁹ However, in the manner in which it appeared to the public, the image is decidedly chaste. Warren entertains the notion that the scene may be a seduction scene, implicating the faun in a refined reprisal of its marauding heterosexual appetites in antiquity, but beyond commonplace associations of fauns with sexual aggression this does not seem to be readily suggested by the image itself.³⁵⁰ The young woman is clothed and the faun, its hair daintily decorated with vine leaves and grapes, does not appear to be as interested in her as she is in it. Warren may be right to conclude that Beardsley's faun represents the artist's 'personal ideal of the beautiful male youth', but it does not appear to be attempting to capitalise on its charms.³⁵¹ The idealised, civilised faun of Beardsley's *Yellow Book* cover seems instead to be a fitting inheritor of the dainty ease and grace that Pater found in Praxiteles's *Resting Satyr*, inspiring Pater's queer metaphors and John Addington Symonds's insinuating remark that the creature's 'subtle smile is a lure for souls'.

Beardsley's fauns, when considered in their entirety, are consistently legible as products of Pater's queer ekphrasis over Praxiteles's sculpture, only interacting with the classical model of the creature propagated influentially in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche in a blatantly satirical manner in the *Dancing Faun* frontispiece. Equally, many subsequent fauns executed by artists in the thrall of late nineteenth century aestheticism could conversely be said to be legible, belated products of Beardsley's imagination, something which appears to have been the case within Beardsley's lifetime. A further drawing of a faun in *Le Morte D'Arthur* does not show queer activity but is of importance for our purpose owing to its peculiar composition. This illustration, entitled *Satyr Gazing at a Face in a Rose* (fig. 62) in Zatlin's

³⁴⁸ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 118.

³⁴⁹ Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 239.

³⁵⁰ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 117.

³⁵¹ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 117.

catalogue, portrays a faun kneeling amongst the reeds surrounding a pool of water and staring at an androgynous profile revealed in the head of a flower. Given how unusual this compositional device is, its central conceit clearly foreshadows Housman's in *The Reflected Faun*. The likelihood that Housman's drawing is ultimately related to Beardsley's work seems incredibly strong given *The Reflected Faun* was reproduced in *The Yellow Book* under Beardsley's art editorship and Matthew Sturgis records that the decision to include it was Beardsley's alone, as the periodical's publisher had previously rejected it.³⁵²

Beardsley's drawings retained their influence far beyond the artist's life, however. It was not for nothing that Osbert Burdett, writing to satisfy the curiosity of 'the young of each generation of readers [who] catch the infection' of aestheticism in 1925, called his study of the movement *The Beardsley Period* and remarked that this period was 'not yet over'; Beardsley's influence over the graphic art of the later generation of aesthetes for whom Burdett was writing was remarkably pronounced and consistently observable.³⁵³ Resultantly, fauns whose actions and appearances connote possible queer proclivities continued to proliferate throughout the 1920s in the work of artists who sought to emulate Beardsley's aesthetic and recurrent iconographies.

Beardsley's Boys: The Faun in the 1920s

In some cases, approximations of Beardsley's style in the 1920s reflected a less intellectual goal than the revived propagation of aestheticist discourses, as was the case with a lavishly bound and printed 1920 publication entitled *Fifty Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley* which were, the book's subtitle suggested, held within the private collection of the publisher Harry Sidney Nichols.³⁵⁴ The entire contents of the book, as Mark Samuels Lasner's painstaking bibliography of Beardsley's publications records, was fraudulent and executed in reality by unknown hands, perhaps Nichols's

³⁵² Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 190.

³⁵³ Burdett, *Beardsley Period*, 5.

³⁵⁴ Harry Sidney Nichol, *Fifty Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley* (New York: H. S. Nichol, 1920).

own.³⁵⁵ As Lasner also notes, forgeries of Beardsley's work sometimes took the form of 'pastiche, in which elements from existing works are combined to make a "new" image'.³⁵⁶ One such image in Nichols's book is the forty-sixth, a 'hitherto unpublished' 'Beardsley' drawing entitled *The Satyr-Coiffeur and the Lady* (fig. 63).³⁵⁷

Despite the inclusion of details or technical errors which make it an unconvincing substitute for Beardsley's original work— the reflected face of the faun in the mirror is clumsily rendered in the extreme and the mouth of its client is far too small for an authentic 'Beardsley woman'— that Nichols evidently believed the drawing could pass muster as a 'hitherto unpublished' original is intriguing in terms of its iconography. Evidently, the drawing's mere existence indicates the strength of the association between Beardsley's work and fauns in the 1920s. Furthermore, the drawing indicates the strength of association between such creatures and their 'domesticated' appearance that Zatlin observes, which is made venomously clear in Beardsley's title page for *The Dancing Faun*, and to which none of Beardsley's otherwise unfailingly queer or seemingly asexual fauns present a challenge.

The faun of the unknown forger's hand appears engrossed in its task of cutting the hair of a lady whose opulent house it has entered, with the arcadian grounds visible through an open doorway in the background. The composition is evidently derived from Beardsley's drawing *The Coiffing* of 1896 (fig. 64), first appearing in *The Savoy* and subsequently in a collection of Beardsley's prose and verse published in 1904, with the forger even taking the trouble to replicate the flock of departing birds seen through the window in this legitimate work.³⁵⁸ *The Coiffing* was produced to illustrate Beardsley's short poem 'The Ballad of a Barber' which tells the story of a barber called Carrousel who wins fame for his skill with his scissors but then cuts the throat of a beautiful princess while cutting her hair. Carrousel services both men and women, and 'nobody had seen him show/ A preference for either sex', according to Beardsley's text: we are left to speculate as to whether this insinuates Carrousel's bisexuality or asexuality, but in either case the barber who constitutes the model for

³⁵⁵ Mark Samuels Lasner, *A Selective Checklist of the Published Work of Aubrey Beardsley* (Boston: Thomas G. Boss, 1995), 110.

³⁵⁶ Lasner, *Selective Checklist*, 108.

³⁵⁷ Nichol, *Fifty Drawings*, 193.

³⁵⁸ Aubrey Beardsley, *Under the Hill: And Other Essays in Prose and Verse* (London: John Lane, 1904), 51.

The Satyr-Coiffeur evidently stands at a considerable distance from the conventional faun's associations with heterosexual virility.³⁵⁹

Having decorated his premises fussily, with Beardsley showing them dominated by flowers, bows, and a sculpture of a goddess-like figure who presides over the scene, Carrousel is daintily attired in an apron and buckled shoes; he wears his long hair in elaborate curls redolent of the styles associated with the eighteenth century 'macaronis' who, Dominic Janes records, were regularly attacked for their perceived effeminacy by their contemporaries in a rehearsal of later attacks on the aesthetes.³⁶⁰ Given the close attention paid to this drawing in order to produce *The Satyr-Coiffeur*, we are invited to view the later faun in a similar light and, indeed, some of the effeminising aspects of Carrousel's appearance are reprised. While the interior the faun occupies is somewhat plainer and it no longer sports an apron, it too wears buckled shoes and black stockings which perhaps pointedly conceal and thus negate much of its animal portions. The mirror also reveals its sagging, rounded breasts which form a hermaphroditic parallel to those of its client, whose own breasts are inconceivably exposed. If this latter detail could be supposed to intimate a sexual charge to the relationship between the faun and the woman then everything about the faun— its effeminate and hermaphroditic body, its effeminate costume, its subservient position, its feminine pursuit, and its model being the somewhat queer Carrousel— would negate this. What the forger instead suggests is an essential commonality between faun and woman, owing perhaps to the faun's pronounced effeminacy. In this, the forgery may be considered a portmanteau of *The Coiffing* and the *Dancing Faun* title page. Despite its technical deficiencies, that *The Satyr-Coiffeur and the Lady's* was thought by its creators to approximate a genuine Beardsley for an audience in the 1920s indicates the persistence of the illustrator's effeminate fauns in the public consciousness. It also in its own right constitutes a furtherance of this model, extending the implicit degradation of the faun as a masculine ideal seen in Beardsley's title page for *The Dancing Faun* and relying upon the earlier artist's distinctive aesthetic to do so.

Beardsley's influence did not merely make itself felt through spurious forgeries, however. Among Beardsley's most faithful admirers was the artist John

³⁵⁹ Beardsley, *Under the Hill*, 50.

³⁶⁰ Janes, *Wilde Prefigured*, 25-54.

Kettelwell, whose illustrative work echoes Beardsley's strongly. His best-known works, illustrations for a 1928 edition of *The Story of Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*, parade their inheritance of Beardsley's stark forms, economical line, and late flair for baroque decoration (fig. 65). Kettelwell also had a penchant for producing designs for richly decorated silk fans, itself a gesture in the direction of the aesthetes of the late nineteenth century owing to the form's association with *Yellow Book* contributor Charles Conder. Conder's dominance over the medium's associations was maintained in the 1920s for those who wished to seek recourse to the aesthetics of the 1890s, with Bernard Muddiman telling his readers in 1920 that these works made Conder 'the colour comrade to Beardsley's black and white' and Osbert Burdett reminding his readers that they were 'delicious' in *The Beardsley Period*.³⁶¹ One such design appeared in a 1923 edition of *The Sketch* which focused on the faun (fig. 66) and although Kettelwell strayed from a strict adherence to Beardsley's technique on this occasion it was evidently intended to be read through the lens of late nineteenth century aestheticism owing to more than just its form.³⁶² The fan design appeared on a page of *The Sketch* which interrupts a story by Michael Arlen entitled *The Ghoul of Goulder's Green: A Tale of Chaps, Carnage, and Carnations*. Arlen's story not only features a character driven mad by his ability to genetically engineer green carnations but also two characters who are in the employ of a film studio named the 'Kettlewell Cinema Company'.³⁶³ The conspicuous insertion of the artist's name, thinly disguised by its slight misspelling, into Arlen's story indicates collusion between the two and attests to a shared and knowing enthusiasm for the aesthetes of an earlier generation just as clearly as Kettelwell's frequent emulations of Beardsley's aesthetic do.

Resultantly, Kettelwell's fan design takes cues from Beardsley in its composition as much as it references Beardsley's 'comrade in colour' through its distinctive form. In Kettelwell's design, a faun and a woman lie facing one another, their bodies positioned as exact mirror images of each other. They recline on a brightly coloured and gaudily patterned divan covered in cushions and fabrics; behind the faun we glimpse a placid sky, and behind its female companion a curtain of a similar material to the divan which is theatrically half-drawn to obscure the

³⁶¹ Muddiman, *Men of the Nineties*, 123; Burdett, *Beardsley Period*, 248.

³⁶² Anon., "The Fan Fantastic". *The Sketch*, Saturday 01 December 1923, 30.

³⁶³ Michael Arlen, "The Ghoul of Goulder's Green". *The Sketch*, Saturday 01 December 1923, 46.

outside world. The faun and its companion resemble each other in gesture— both brandish a cocktail glass containing a luridly green liquid, assumedly absinthe, and while the woman brandishes a cigarette in a long cigarette holder the faun is smoking its own cigarette— and there are some facial resemblances too. Both figures exhibit the pouting lips and heavy-lidded eyes which we have seen were frequently in evidence in contemporary, satirical depictions of aesthetes. Both figures also sport matching makeup, their drooping eyelids coloured with a purple hue, their lips a deep red, and their pale complexions enlivened by a blushing red upon their cheeks. They both equally wear large rings on their fingers; beyond this the faun is naked, revealing its spotted hide which accompanies its fleshy horns and exaggeratedly large ears as signs of its animality, while the woman wears an embroidered black dress.

Most obviously, Kettelwell's depiction of a languorous faun and woman is redolent of Beardsley's proposed *Yellow Book* cover. As in this Beardsley drawing, any element of sexual intimacy which we may expect of the faun appears to be suppressed— as too with *The Satyr Coiffeur*, in which the mirror reveals the faun's feminine breasts which echo those of its client, the visual commonalities between the woman and the faun in Kettelwell's fan design suggest an essential equivalence between the two which leaves little space for sexual desire. Observing the continuity between Beardsley and Kettelwell's designs also brings into sharper relief the important differences between the two. Firstly, Kettelwell's faun mirrors its companion exactly, in a way Beardsley's does not. Secondly, it is no longer seen reading in a moment of quiet repose but drinking, smoking, and gossiping with its companion. Thirdly, we no longer find the creature occupying an arcadian riverbank, the 'little Olympus' of Pater's writings. Its activities, coupled with the rich fabrics which it is surrounded by and on which it reclines, are more suggestive of a bohemian interior, perhaps some form of nightclub. This reading is particularly invited by the visual similarities between Kettelwell's female figure, with her striking red hair, black dress, and outsized black hat seen in profile, with the central figure of Henri Toulouse-Lautrec's poster advertising the evening entertainments of the Divan Japonais in Paris in the late nineteenth century (fig. 67). The reference point would be unsurprising as Toulouse-Lautrec's work was exhibited alongside Beardsley's graphic work in Britain, and Bernard Muddiman reminded his readers that Beardsley's works 'belong to the same world' as Toulouse-Lautrec's, which similarly

exemplified the ‘decadent’ atmosphere of the *fin de siècle*.³⁶⁴ Along with this shift from the exterior to the interior and the country to the city, the faun has changed its aspect too, no longer bearing any resemblance to ‘the handsome and healthy figure’ that Warren sees as ‘a personal ideal of the beautiful male youth’ in Beardsley’s *Yellow Book* cover.³⁶⁵ The only possible connection to a healthy outdoor environment is the sky visible behind the faun, but even this merely serves to exemplify the faun’s newfound debauchery: its light blue colour suggests that the scene we are witnessing is taking place during the daytime, with the faun obstinately drinking absinthe cocktails despite the inappropriate earliness of the hour.

In the thirty years between Beardsley’s bucolic arcadia and Kettelwell’s noisily decorated nightclub— which nonetheless insistently blends the stereotyped quintessence of the 1920s aesthetes with the nightclubs, drinks, artistic forms, and compositions of their forebears— the faun appears to have grown simultaneously more effeminate in its appearance and more decadent in its habits. Kettelwell’s faun is not pictured partaking in queer practices as in Beardsley’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* illustrations, nor dreaming of them as in the creature of Laurence Housman’s *The Reflected Faun*. However, its painted face— redolent of contemporary caricatures of aesthetes such as Anthony Wysard’s unflattering portraits of a made-up Cecil Beaton— its languorous posture, and its exact mimicry of its female companion all indicate its decadent effeminacy. Furthermore, Kettelwell appears to teasingly insist on the inherently aberrant nature of his creation in a manner which recalls Pater’s queer interpolations of the faun’s hybrid physiognomy and thus, arguably, indicates that this aberration should be read with regard to the faun’s sexuality. Kettelwell’s faun does not share with the creatures of Pater’s imagination the goat legs common to classical depictions of fauns. Its animality is rather demonstrated through its ears and its horns, but most conspicuously by its dappled skin which recalls the hide of a goat. As its animal qualities are diminished by its lack of goat legs, however, these dappled marks on its otherwise human body resemble unsightly blemishes as readily as they do the markings of an animal. The faun’s decadent behaviour appears, as in the case of the portrait of Wilde’s Dorian Gray, to have indelibly marked its body with the brand of some unnamed sickness. Owing to these marks doubling as a reminder

³⁶⁴ Sturgis, *Beardsley*, 225; Muddiman, *Men of the Nineties*, 26.

³⁶⁵ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 117.

of the faun's hybrid being, the locus of its status as a queer metaphor within aestheticist discourses, it is possible that the source of the faun's metaphorical sickness should be understood to be its unnamed but corrupt sexual proclivities which are nonetheless indicated by its effeminate appearance.

In the hands of Beardsley's emulators in the 1920s, the faun could also reassume the corruptive role it held as a symbol of queer temptation in *Le Morte D'Arthur*. As much is indicated in the cover of *The Heretick*, a short-lived magazine produced at Marlborough College in 1924 by a circle of dissident schoolboys surrounding the aesthete and poet John Betjeman (fig. 68). *The Heretick* and its creators were strongly and openly influenced by the iconographies and rhetoric of the late nineteenth century aesthetes. The magazine was suppressed by school authorities after its second issue carried a defence of Wildean theories about art and amorality penned by an adolescent Anthony Blunt, who later recorded that this piece was 'apparently regarded as so shocking that one parent threatened to remove his boy from the school'.³⁶⁶ 'One must... I think, use the word *aesthetes*, for we were extremely precious', Blunt recorded of his milieu, and the term clung to John Betjeman in particular, recalled by his Oxford tutor Maurice Bowra as part of a cohort of undergraduates who 'set out unashamedly to be aesthetes and to revive some glories of the nineties' after he left Marlborough.³⁶⁷ *The Heretick's* members trumpeted their oppositionality to the culture of the school athletes, whose games they disrupted and whose ethos were provocatively rejected in the magazine's motto— 'Upon Philistia I Will Triumph'— which was emblazoned upon the cover.³⁶⁸ To this strident message Betjeman and Blunt's friend John Bowle added a drawing of an athletic schoolboy, a hockey stick clenched in one hand, sat beneath a tree on a hill. Surrounding him, one crawling into the composition from the top of the tree, another playing some form of pipe at the extreme right, and a centrally placed figure standing on the shoulders of the schoolboy, are three fauns.

As in the case of Kettelwell's fan design, which is immediately redolent of Charles Conder's artworks of a previous century, *The Heretick* enshrines its debts to earlier aestheticist discourses in its very form. The magazine's stark palette, a black

³⁶⁶ Anthony Blunt, "From Bloomsbury to Marxism". *Art Monthly*, no. 32, 01 December 1979, 12.

³⁶⁷ Blunt, *Bloomsbury to Marxism*, 12.

³⁶⁸ Maurice Bowra, *Memories: 1898-1939* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 154.

design on a bright orange background, recalls nothing more vividly than the brilliant yellow of Beardsley's *Yellow Book* covers and perhaps also pays homage to the bright pink cover of Brian Howard and Harold Acton's famous 'ephemeral' *The Eton Candle* of 1922, a similar schoolboy attack on public school morality and taste emanating from the 'Cremorne Club' who counted Beardsley as an honorary member.³⁶⁹ Bowle's style, involving a thicker and less elegant line than Beardsley's and a cartoonish and caricatural treatment of the figures' faces, is perhaps an inexpertly rendered homage to the artist, but the influence is nonetheless clear and is moreover unsurprising. John Betjeman's biographer Bevis Hillier describes how Betjeman, while still at Marlborough, collected his juvenilia in a notebook sporting 'a cover design mimicking that of a slim 1890s volume published by Elkin Matthews and John Lane', the publishers of much of Beardsley's work including *The Dancing Faun*.³⁷⁰ Indeed, Betjeman was not only attracted to Wilde's work while at Marlborough but was in correspondence with Wilde's lover Lord Alfred Douglas until his father, in a fit of disgust over Douglas's reputation as 'a bugger', forcefully ended the episode.³⁷¹

The Heretick was clearly intended to be viewed in the spirit of this provocative and self-conscious cultivation of aesthetic and thematic lineages. That *The Heretick's* cover is orange, not the expected yellow, should not preclude it from exhibiting obvious influences in the direction of the *Yellow Book*; rather, the shifted colourway of *The Heretick* updates and directs the provocation of invoking the memory of its predecessor with greater precision. It can hardly have escaped the attention of the schoolboys that the orange and black palette dictating the cover design of *The Heretick* constitutes a precise inversion of Marlborough College's official colours, navy and white, which were worn most prominently by schoolboys during sporting fixtures.³⁷² *The Heretick* thus parades its influences to invoke the classicised discourses of the aesthetes and turns them forcefully towards repudiating the dichotomously opposed culture of the athletes, represented in Bowle's drawing by the central figure who constitutes the object of the fauns' attentions.

³⁶⁹ Brooke-Smith, *Gilded Youth*, 148.

³⁷⁰ Bevis Hillier, *John Betjeman: The Biography* (London: John Murray, 2007), 14.

³⁷¹ Hillier, *Betjeman*, 46.

³⁷² Arthur Granville Bradley, *A History of Marlborough College During Fifty Years: From Its Foundation to the Present Time* (London: John Murray, 1893), 240.

The athlete's pose and attitude, with his free hand tucked under his chin and his brow furrowed deeply, indicate that he believes himself to be deep in thought. This detail is presumably included satirically given both the magazine's brazenly stated opposition to such 'philistine' schoolboys and the brutish, faintly simian qualities Bowle suggests in his hunched posture, stout body, unkempt hair, and flat facial features. In the distance one can see the stark forms of what Bowle described in his diary as the school chapel and a 'Football goal', although the finished design features rugby posts, twin symbols of the public school morality underpinning 'athletic' culture.³⁷³ Bowle also recorded that he planned to show 'a Betjemanesque spirit tormenting a "bourgeois" under a tree', this spirit evidently being embodied by the fauns who clamber and crawl through the composition in an unruly diagonal line.³⁷⁴ The nature of the fauns' tormenting behaviour exemplifies continuities with the homoeroticism of the aesthetes as clearly as the magazine's distinctive colouring evidences continuities with their visual culture. The topmost figure reaches down towards the athlete with one outstretched hand, while the centrally placed faun perches upon the athlete's shoulder as it winds its body around the tree. Provocatively, one hand cups the athlete's head as the faun runs its fingers through his thinning hair. If Richard Warren argued that Beardsley's unused *Yellow Book* cover could possibly be read as a seduction scene, then all ambiguities are removed from this work which we may consider Beardsley's progeny; Bowle's fauns act in a manner more redolent of the seducers and would-be seducers of the *Morte D'Arthur* illustrations. The central faun evidently attempts to seduce the athlete whose stony gaze, directed away from the fauns themselves, indicates his discomfort.

The Heretick's cover extends the subtler inferences of the relationship between fauns, aestheticism, effeminacy, and queerness we have seen in Beardsley and Kettelwell's interpretations and returns to the openly depicted queer activity of *Le Morte D'Arthur*: the creature has regained its conventional status as a libidinous force, but the direction of its sexual interests is no longer what it more consistently was in classical antiquity. Signalling continuities with Beardsley and Kettelwell's fauns, it is notable that a return of the faun's libidinous drive has not resulted in the return of its masculine aggression. Although it is likely only an error of terminology,

³⁷³ Quoted in: Bevis Hillier, *Young Betjeman* (London: John Murray, 1988), 101.

³⁷⁴ Quoted in: Hillier, *Young Betjeman*, 101.

James Brooke-Smith's observance that Bowle's drawing shows 'a bewildered sportsman reeling from the attentions of a group of circling nymphs' does unintentionally shed valuable light over the behaviour of Bowle's creatures.³⁷⁵ Brooke-Smith's confusion as to the gender and mythological nature of the figures unwittingly draws attention to the fact that they do act like more like nymphs than fauns, seducing their pray through insinuating glances and touches rather than pursuing them aggressively.

The Heretick may have aimed to provocatively stoke fears concerning queer relationships between boys in public schools which had re-entered public discourse through a representation of precisely this in Alec Waugh's novel *The Loom of Youth* of 1917, the book that Osbert Burdett suggestively pointed to as an indication of aestheticism's hold over 'the more imaginative schoolboys' in the 1920s. They may equally have wished to teasingly suggest the morally and sexually corruptive threat of aestheticism as it began to reassert itself over Betjeman's generation in their youth, taking the form of the trio of fauns. Bowle's suggestion that the fauns represented a 'Betjemanesque spirit' would, given Betjeman's enthusiasm for the aesthetics and indeed the personalities of the 1890s, indicate that this spirit was very much the spirit of late nineteenth century aestheticism itself embodied by a new generation of young men who in turn saw themselves as disruptive, dainty fauns.

Beardsley, as Osbert Burdett's titling of his book *The Beardsley Period* and the continued reproductions of works such as *Le Morte D'Arthur* would indicate, remained the preeminent visual artist within conceptions of aestheticism in the 1920s. Examining the unexpected nature of fauns within his oeuvre, unfailingly rejecting heteronormative understandings of the figure and consistently casting them instead in the surreptitious light of the aesthetes' implicitly queer reimaginings, indicates that his influence over conceptions of a figure with which he was evidently much associated functioned to propagate the queer resonances traced in Pater's essays. The 'Cultured Faun', Lionel Johnson's mysterious creature which menaced the public of the 1890s by spouting lines of Straton, continued to menace the public of the 1920s: we can imagine the creatures of Kettelwell and Bowle's imaginations parading their own decadent learning. Equally, however, the intervening years between Beardsley's death and the appearance of these creatures saw a further

³⁷⁵ Brooke-Smith, *Gilded Youth*, 149.

revivifying influence which would promote an alternative function for the faun in the 1920s. We catch a glimpse of this in a drawing by the design historian Osbert Lancaster, who we have previously encountered hymning the ‘fertilising stream of aestheticism’ flowing through the visual and literary cultures of the 1920s, which was intended to show a typical room in a fashionable house in the period (fig. 69).³⁷⁶ Lancaster’s drawing shows a female figure smoking a cigarette in a long holder, like that of Kettelwell’s drawing, and a man playing a piano. Behind the man is a large painting of a faun, its ears pointed and the top of one hairy shank just visible in the lower corner of the composition, carrying a basket of grapes above its head. It is a lithe, youthful, pouting creature, and is rendered in greater detail than any other aspect of Lancaster’s imagined room as if to denote its central importance. This sort of painting, Lancaster wrote, belonged in a room belying radically changed tastes in which ‘the pale pastel shades which had reigned supreme on the walls of Mayfair for almost two decades [were] replaced by a riot of barbaric hues... above all, orange’, meaning that the inversion of Marlborough College’s official colours in *The Heretick* also serendipitously brought John Bowle’s fauns into accord with these new tastes.³⁷⁷ The name he gave to this new style was ‘The First Russian Ballet Period’.³⁷⁸

In this chapter we have examined the roots of the faun as a queer figure in aestheticist discourses, tracing its emergence in the writings of Walter Pater through to the imitators of Aubrey Beardsley in the 1920s. We have seen how the faun’s hybrid physiognomy functioned as the engine for a process of imaginative identifications between fauns and aesthetes, from the sorrowing faun of Laurence Housman which behaves much like the sorrowing Dionysus of Pater’s essays to the modish, effeminate faun of John Kettelwell which resembles contemporary caricatures of aesthetes like Cecil Beaton. In the following chapter we shall follow the clue provided to us by Lancaster’s cartoon, his references to the Russian Ballet, to examine a major intervention in understandings of the faun in the 1920s that aided the revivification of aestheticism’s transgressive discourses surrounding the Dionysian retinue. Turning to the influence of a ballet entitled *L’après-midi d’un faune*- recalling in its name Aubrey Beardsley’s drawing and foreshadowing Paul Leslie’s play *Satyr* that we began with- we shall examine how the aesthetics of the

³⁷⁶ Osbert Lancaster *Here, of All Places* (London: John Murray, 1959), 126.

³⁷⁷ Lancaster, *Here of All Places*, 126.

³⁷⁸ Lancaster, *Here of All Places*, 126.

Russian Ballet both evinced continuities with the aesthetes of the late nineteenth century and served to revivify and refocus their discourses in the 1920s. We will be particularly concerned with the art of Glyn Philpot, considered to be ‘the Shannon [or] Ricketts of the near future’ by the original models of this formulation, upon whose iconographies the Russian Ballet in general and *L’après-midi d’un faune* in particular had an enormous impact. With the coming of the Russian Ballet we shall see how the faun began to consistently play the role problematically and idiosyncratically rehearsed in depictions of its god Dionysus: that of the *pais kalos*.

Chapter 3

‘With Plato’s Infatuated Lover, You May Call Them Winsome’: The Ballets Russes and The Faun as *Pais Kalos*

On February the seventeenth, 1913, a man called Cyril Beaumont went to the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden to watch the ballet. Beaumont owned a bookshop on the nearby Charing Cross Road which specialised in books about the history of ballet, but which also sold prints of Aubrey Beardsley's drawings and the works of Walter Pater.³⁷⁹ He had gone to watch the British premiere of a new ballet by the Ballets Russes, a company founded by the impresario Sergei Diaghilev who were to give their name in anglicised form to Osbert Lancaster's cartoon *The First Russian Ballet Period*.³⁸⁰ The Ballets Russes had been performing in London since 1909, and their coming changed the course of Beaumont's life. Until he watched these performances, Beaumont had intended to be a 'research chemist' who had little interest in the art form; from their first appearance onwards, however, 'the word Ballet had acquired a new significance... [audiences] were almost mystified by the discovery that ballet could attain such heights of aesthetic beauty'.³⁸¹

Beaumont had found, as many others were to do, an equivalent in the movement of the Russian dancers' bodies to the mellifluous prose of Pater and the nimble line of Beardsley. On that night in February 1913, he like many others also found a living, breathing equivalent to the fauns of Pater and his progenies' imaginings in the body of the dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky. Beaumont had sat down to watch Nijinsky's ballet *L'après-midi d'un faune*, its plot modelled loosely on Stéphane Mallarmé's poem of the same name and its dancers accompanied by Debussy's music which was equally derived from the poem. It was 'quite unlike any other ballet previously presented by the company', Beaumont later recorded, and it 'created a sensation... for the questionable character of Nijinsky's movements and poses immediately preceding the fall of the curtain'.³⁸² *L'après-midi* concerns the progress of a faun which is troubled by a series of nymphs who it rejects and steals a scarf from, which it then proceeds to lie on top of and thrust into in simulated orgasm at the ballet's climax; it is this final series of gestures to which Beaumont refers, and which he somewhat chastely argued constituted 'an intriguing study in erotic symbolism'.³⁸³

³⁷⁹ Penny Farfan, "Man As Beast: Nijinsky's Faun". *South Central Review*, 25, 1, 2008, 74.

³⁸⁰ Lancaster, *Here Of All Places*, 126 .

³⁸¹ Cyril Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet in London* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1940), 4-5.

³⁸² Beaumont, *Diaghilev Ballet*, 51.

³⁸³ Beaumont, *Diaghilev Ballet*, 54.

Like the fauns we have thus far considered, Nijinsky's creation evidently remained intrinsically linked to questions of sex and sexuality. Like the fauns of the aesthetes' imaginations, however, this appeared to have little to do with the heterosexual prowess typically associated with the creature. Indeed, Penny Farfan records that the faun's controversial final gesture amounted to 'an act of autoeroticism that was a queer departure from the heterosexual relations that the presence of a number of nymphs earlier in the ballet had seemed to set up'.³⁸⁴ Despite the fact Nijinsky's faun did not seek a male partner at the close of the ballet—perhaps simply because 'love between... men could not be represented on stage', as Nijinsky was later to record in his diary—the distance between its masturbatory act and heterosexual consummation with one of the nymphs indicated and invited queer interpretations of the figure.³⁸⁵ Furthermore, Katy Horowitz notes that Nijinsky's costume—consisting of 'cream-coloured fleshings splotched with brown... [and] a close-fitting cap of silver gilt hair, from the brow of which sprung a pair of horns' according to Beaumont (fig. 70)—accentuated the ambiguity of the ballet's sexual politics, recording that it was significantly more revealing than those sported by any of the nymphs.³⁸⁶ The performance seemed to exhibit the male body, sublimated into the form of the mythological faun, as the object of an ambiguously gendered erotic gaze.

Ultimately, Beaumont judged Nijinsky's faun 'a curious conception, a strange being... There was little of the sprightliness, lasciviousness, and gaiety which legend has ascribed to such beings'; elsewhere, he concluded from watching the dancer's performances that Nijinsky was 'not a man in the true sense of the word'.³⁸⁷ The books of images of Nijinsky Beaumont was to publish in the aftermath of *L'après-midi*'s premiere, alongside the work of others who were also in the audience that night, were to cement this view of Nijinsky's faun within the British public consciousness. In doing so, they were to propagate and revivify what Linda Dowling calls the 'homosexual counterdiscourse' of aestheticism that, as we have seen, began with Pater whose texts Beaumont stocked and whose considerations of the faun he

³⁸⁴ Penny Farfan, *Performing Queer Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 42.

³⁸⁵ Vaslav Nijinsky, *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), 141.

³⁸⁶ Katie Horowitz, "Satyriasis: The Pornographic Afterlife of Vaslav Nijinsky." *Porn Studies*, 3, 1, 2015, 5.

³⁸⁷ Cyril Beaumont, *Vaslav Nijinsky: An Artistic Appreciation of His Work in Black, White and Gold* (London: C.W Beaumont, 1913), iv.

echoed in his writings on Nijinsky. However, as the ballet's climactic spectacle would indicate, the discourses into which *L'après-midi* entered were those which sought less to conceptualise the faun as a dominant sexual partner, as in many of Beardsley's *Le Morte D'Arthur* illustrations, or as a vehicle for examining anxieties over the revelation of queer sexuality as in Pater's most thoughtful writings and Laurence Housman's *Reflected Faun*. Instead, Nijinsky's faun functioned as a locus for the aesthete's own queer desire. This chapter will examine the relationship between the Ballets Russes' *L'après-midi d'un faune* and these aestheticist discourses, both those preceding and succeeding its performance, to argue that the ballet constituted a major point in the codification of the faun as a *pais kalos*.

L'après-midi d'un faune and the Aesthetic Inheritance

Writing of the Ballets Russes' chief set designer Leon Bakst, who provided the stage designs for *L'après-midi*, Richard Warren argues that the visual spectacle of the Ballet Russes' performances embodied '[the] transition from nineteenth-century to modernist classical traditions'.³⁸⁸ Warren's comment is indicative of the broader tendencies within art history to view nineteenth-century classical traditions as fundamentally divorced from those of the 1920s and as such contributes to the marginalisation of aestheticist discourses throughout the early twentieth century. In reality, the work of the Ballets Russes in general and arguably *L'après-midi* in particular are not representative of an irreparable fault line but participated within the transmission of late nineteenth century aestheticism's conceptions of the Dionysian retinue into the 1920s. They both responded to, and were then embraced by, British aesthetes. The veracity of this latter point is indicated by the strength of feeling for the Ballets Russes found not merely within Cyril Beaumont's writings. Glyn Philpot, as we shall see, was fascinated by the iconographic and erotic potentialities of *L'après-midi*, while Beaton provided a rhapsodic account of his

³⁸⁸ Warren, *Art Nouveau*, 120.

discovery of Nijinsky's performances in Beaumont's bookshop; the composer Constant Lambert, who would later provide music for the Ballets Russes, was first exposed to their work as a young man by an enthusiastic Charles Ricketts.³⁸⁹ The former claim has been investigated by critics who have noted that, before the Ballets Russes' founding in 1907, its impresario Sergei Diaghilev had spent the later years of the 1890s attempting to seek out the luminaries of British aestheticism. Annabel Rutherford records that Diaghilev went to France in 1897 to meet Beardsley and Wilde, proudly proclaiming himself to be 'one of [Beardsley's] greatest admirers' and echoing the cadences of Wilde's style in his own writings on art.³⁹⁰ The Beardsley scholar Sacha Dovzhyk has likewise elucidated, in her study of the artist's influence on a contemporary generation of Russian aesthetes, that Beardsley's star was ascendant in Russia in the late nineteenth century owing to the 'World of Art' group which included Sergei Diaghilev and Leon Bakst.³⁹¹ Diaghilev used two of Beardsley's drawings to accompany his own manifesto on art that he published in *Mir iskusstva*, the journal of his 'World of Art' group: one of these was Beardsley's ultimately unused cover design for the fifth volume of *The Yellow Book* which featured a faun reading to a woman in an arcadian landscape.³⁹²

Despite this final and conspicuous detail, little has been made of the possible continuities between the early influences at work on the imaginations of the Ballets Russes' most instrumental members and the later ballet *L'après-midi d'un faune*. As we saw in the previous chapter, Beardsley had indeed executed a drawing of a faun bearing precisely this title in its later reproductions which directly responded, like the Ballets Russes' performance, to the writings of Stéphane Mallarmé. Although it was Nijinsky, not Diaghilev, who choreographed *L'après-midi*, Nijinsky's published diary indicates that the influence of the 'World of Art' group remained a persistent presence over the design and development of the piece. Written in 1919 at the height of the dancer's psychosis, much of Nijinsky's diary is concerned with explaining the corrupting and deleterious influence of Diaghilev over his life during their sexual

³⁸⁹ Cecil Beaton, *Ballet* (London: Allan Wingate, 1951), 24; Stephen Lloyd, *Constant Lambert: Beyond the Rio Grande* (Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2014), 29.

³⁹⁰ Annabel Rutherford, "The Triumph of the Veiled Dance: The Influence of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley on Serge Diaghilev's Creation of the Ballets Russes". *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 27, 1, 2009, 94.

³⁹¹ Dovzhyk, Sasha. "Aubrey Beardsley in the Russian "World of Art"". *British Art Studies*, 18, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-18/sdovzhyk>.

³⁹² Dovzhyk, *World of Art*.

relationship which extended across the period of the choreographing and realisation of *L'après-midi*. While Nijinsky pleaded that he 'was not thinking of perversity' in planning the ballet, he also noted that he '[did] not mind if Diaghilev says that he composed [*L'après-midi*]... because when I created [it] I was under the influence of "my life" with Diaghilev'; similarly, he notes that his own ideas for sets were sidelined by Diaghilev's World of Art ally Leon Bakst.³⁹³ Given that these figures shared with the British aesthetes a devotion to the art of Beardsley and to late nineteenth century British aestheticism more generally, the notion that *L'après-midi* can be read as a further entry into these discourses seems pertinent and is moreover borne out by the ambiguously oriented sexual display of the ballet's controversial and climactic gestures.

In the previous chapter we noted that the roots of the faun's conspicuous centrality within such discourses can be found in Walter Pater's essay 'A Study of Dionysus', in which Pater approvingly traced the 'true humour' in depictions of fauns from Praxiteles's *Resting Satyr* through to the art of the Italian Renaissance. The same passage which reveals Pater's interest in the queer potentialities of the faun's hybrid physiognomy also reveals his erotic interest in the figure. Insisted upon as clearly as the anxious interiority of the creature is its physical appeal to the observer and its invitation of the viewer's touch. In response to the 'puzzled trouble of youth' which animates Praxiteles's *Resting Satyr* in Pater's eyes, 'you might wish for a moment to smoothe... the forehead a little, between the pointed ears, on which the goodly hair of his animal strength grows low' when appraising the sculpture.³⁹⁴ As 'signs of brute nature are subordinated, or disappear' in depictions of fauns in the Renaissance, 'the puck-noses... [grow] delicate, so that, with Plato's infatuated lover, you may call them winsome, if you please'.³⁹⁵ The tactility of Praxiteles's sculpture has roused the suspicion of Lene Østermark-Johansen, who characterises these passages as Pater 'toy[ing] with the idea of touching some of the most distinctly animal parts of the statue', but the queer possibilities of this passage are inscribed at the level of Pater's veiled references too.³⁹⁶ Pater's vantage point in this passage bypasses that of the disinterested critic and veers instead between the paternalistic

³⁹³ Nijinsky, *Diary*, 137, 140.

³⁹⁴ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 9.

³⁹⁵ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 10.

³⁹⁶ Østermark-Johansen, *The Language of Sculpture*, 224.

and the pederastic; his invocation of ‘Plato’s infatuated lover’ would indicate, however, that it is this latter impulse which is being intimated to the knowing reader. Østermark-Johansen reads Pater’s invocation of the ‘infatuated lover’ as an invocation of Socrates, although notes that these creatures can only be ‘curiously related’ to the philosopher.³⁹⁷ It appears instead more feasible to suggest that Pater’s somewhat tangled syntax is implying a reference not to a specific individual but to a type discussed in Plato’s writings. As we noted in relation to Pater’s writing on Dionysus himself, Stefano Evangelista has drawn attention to the idiosyncratic blending of Dionysian myth with the text of Plato’s *Phaedrus* in which pederastic relationships between men and boys is openly discussed. Much of this text is concerned with the figure of the ‘lover’ as the older party in this pairing: as translations of the *Phaedrus* executed by Pater’s Oxford contemporary Benjamin Jowett elucidate, the lengthiest speeches in the text do not obfuscate the gender of either party and directly compare the situation of the lover and the beloved to the relationship between the ‘lover’ Zeus and his younger male ‘beloved’ Ganymede.³⁹⁸ Indeed, much of the *Phaedrus* is concerned with the deleterious effects of the lover’s position brought upon by the madness of passion, meaning Pater’s qualifying term ‘infatuated’ would suggest that he is continuing to think in terms of the text which equally informs his analysis of Dionysian ‘inspiration’ in the same essay. Placing himself in the position of ‘Pater’s infatuated lover’ and inviting his reader to do likewise when confronted with the fauns of the Italian Renaissance, Pater thus occupies and beckons his reader to occupy an openly queer position when appraising the physical charms of the mythological creature.

As we have seen, Pater’s position was paralleled by another Oxford contemporary, John Addington Symonds, who considered Praxiteles’s *Resting Satyr* ‘a lure for souls’. The subordination of the faun’s animalistic physical properties, paralleling its civilised appearance and activity in Praxiteles’s depiction, has also led some classicists to concur with Symonds’s explicit and Pater’s implicit analysis. In terminology redolent of Symonds’s and Pater’s, Andrew Stewart considers Praxiteles’s depictions of fauns to represent ‘lissom adolescents with an air of

³⁹⁷ Østermark-Johansen, *The Language of Sculpture*. 225.

³⁹⁸ Plato, “Phaedrus”. Trans. Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato, Volume III: The Death and Trial of Socrates* (New York: National Library Company, 1900), 415.

pastoral reverie'.³⁹⁹ Making explicit what is implicit in Pater's coded writing, Stewart further argues that Praxiteles was merely being 'brilliantly and roguishly logical' in depicting the faun as a physically attractive adolescent: 'since the satyr is possessed of inexhaustible sexual prowess after puberty, he must therefore be the *eromenos* to end all *eromenoi* before it', he argues.⁴⁰⁰ A comparable argument has also been extended to the Hellenistic *Barberini Faun* (fig. 71), a large sculpture which Jean Sorabella records constitutes 'an anomaly, larger, grander, less active, and more seductive than any other satyr represented'.⁴⁰¹ While the art historian John Onians argues that the sculpted figure's pose— its head falling back in sleep and its legs provocatively splayed to foreground the genitals— was designed to scare 'body-conscious males' who would recognise in it 'the antithesis of the erect and disciplined alertness that Greek athletic exercise was designed to produce', others have disputed that the *Barberini Faun* represents a depiction of the creature in its conventional role as the undesirable 'Other'.⁴⁰² Sorabella's acknowledgement of the faun's seductive qualities has been expanded upon by Amanda Herring, who pithily calls the *Barberini Faun* a 'sexy beast': 'the Hellenistic Barberini Faun shows an overtly sexual object', Herring writes, 'with his heavily muscled torso... splayed legs, draw[ing] attention to his genitalia, while his closed eyes cast the viewer as voyeur'.⁴⁰³ For Herring, the faun's sleeping posture resembles the posture of sexually vulnerable female figures in classical art.⁴⁰⁴ The *Barberini Faun* is surprisingly absent from Pater's analyses, its muscularity and heroic scale perhaps diverging too greatly from the 'winsome' model of the faun conjured in Pater's eroticised fantasies, but it must have been familiar to him: as Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny record, the *Barberini Faun's* physical beauty was remarked upon by Joachim Winkelman, the classicist whose life constitutes the focus for Pater's first essay in *The Renaissance*.⁴⁰⁵ Its existence provides further impetus for the assumption of the

³⁹⁹ Stewart, *Art, Desire and the Body*, 231.

⁴⁰⁰ Stewart, *Art, Desire and the Body*, 202.

⁴⁰¹ Jean Sorabella, "A Satyr for Midas: The Barberini Faun and Hellenistic Royal Patronage." *Classical Antiquity*, 26, 2, 2007, 220.

⁴⁰² John Onians, *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1999), 140.

⁴⁰³ Amanda Herring, *Sexy Beast*, 32.

⁴⁰⁴ Herring, *Sexy Beast*, 43-44.

⁴⁰⁵ Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1998), 202.

‘infatuated’ gaze when viewing classical fauns and their descendants, presenting the creature as a submissive and sexually inviting figure.

The position Pater advances in ‘A Study of Dionysus’ is also predated in his own writing, with the earliest appearances of the faun coming in his *Renaissance* in which the creature capers fleetingly through Pater’s ekphrases. Its brief appearances barring Pater’s more thorough and reflective conceptualisation of the faun’s existential questionings found in ‘A Study of Dionysus’, the creature figures in *The Renaissance* more readily as a receptacle for the queer desires evidenced in the imagined, caressing prose of the ‘infatuated lover’. The faun appears twice in *The Renaissance*, both times in relation to the paintings of Michelangelo. This should indicate to the reader as clearly as Pater’s veiled reference to the *Phaedrus* that he is navigating queer territory, as Elizabeth Prettejohn records Michelangelo as being among the homoerotic reference points Pater employs in his consideration of the figure of Dionysus.⁴⁰⁶ To my knowledge, these references have gone unelucidated in Pater scholarship. Lene Østermark-Johansen’s account of Pater’s fantasies surrounding Praxiteles’s *Resting Satyr* is perhaps the fullest account of the relationship between the faun and queer desire in Pater’s work, but Østermark-Johansen reads the sculpture retrospectively through the lens of Solomon’s *Bacchus* and treats it as a forerunner for this representation of the god, reversing Richard Dellamora’s suggestion that the faun represents simply ‘another phase’ of Dionysus himself.⁴⁰⁷

The first mention of fauns in Pater’s writings occurs in an essay concerning the philosopher Pico della Mirandola which concludes by discussing the ‘reconciliation of Christian sentiment with the imagery, the legends, the theories about the world, of pagan poetry and philosophy’ during the Renaissance, resulting in ‘a strange flower... which grew up from the mixture of two traditions, two sentiments, the sacred and the profane’.⁴⁰⁸ The foremost strange bloom Pater finds to illustrate his point is Michelangelo’s *Doni Tondo* (fig. 72), in which ‘Michelangelo actually brings the pagan religion, and with it the unveiled human form, the sleepy-looking fauns of a Dionysiac revel, into the presence of the Madonna’.⁴⁰⁹ What Pater

⁴⁰⁶ Prettejohn, *Pater and Painting*, 46.

⁴⁰⁷ Lene Østermark-Johansen, *The Language of Sculpture*, 230.

⁴⁰⁸ Pater, *Renaissance*, 38.

⁴⁰⁹ Pater, *Renaissance*, 39.

sees as ‘fauns of a Dionysiac revel’ are seemingly nothing of the sort: they are in reality a group of adolescent male nudes bereft of any animal features who are positioned in a friezelike arrangement behind the centrally placed depiction of the Holy Family. The reason for Pater’s identification of these figures as fauns may be the crossed legs of a standing figure to the right of the composition, redolent of the pose Pater observes in Praxitelean depictions of fauns, but this is uncommon to the other figures who are also referred to by this name. Rather, Pater’s identification suggests a direct relationship between fauns and ‘the unveiled human form’. Indeed, the appearance of the most potentially faunlike figure who exhibits continuities with Praxiteles’s sculptures suggests a note of palpable homoeroticism in Pater’s conflation of the faun with the ‘unveiled human form’. This figure is embraced by a male figure seated behind him, with the faunlike figure resting between his companion’s legs, while another figure reaches over to loosen his classical draperies and literally unveil his body to the viewer.

Pater saw a further faun when looking at the figure of Adam in Michelangelo’s *Creation of Man* (fig. 73), who is described as ‘that languid figure [in which] there is something rude and satyr-like’.⁴¹⁰ Self-evidently, Adam lacks any animal characteristics, and Pater’s identification of the figure with the faun once more appears to be a product of his eroticising gaze. Adam’s ‘whole form is gathered into an expression of mere expectancy and reception; he has hardly strength enough to lift his finger to touch the finger of the creator; yet a touch of the finger-tips will suffice’, Pater writes.⁴¹¹ In this passage, Pater anticipates his later compulsion to caress Praxiteles’s sculpture and its Renaissance progenies, with the figure of Adam not only inviting a fleeting but satisfying touch but doing so through his submissiveness and propensity for ‘mere expectancy and reception’: in looking upon *The Creation of Man* Pater is evidently inviting his reader to occupy the position of the ‘infatuated lover’ that he would clarify in ‘A Study of Dionysus’. The possibility of an asexual, paternalistic approach plausibly entertained by a cursory glance at this later essay is foreclosed in Pater’s earlier associations between the faun and the ‘unveiled human form’ and his erotic delight in the fleeting thrill of touching the submissive, receptive body of the faunlike male nude of Michelangelo’s fresco.

⁴¹⁰ Pater, *Renaissance*, 62.

⁴¹¹ Pater, *Renaissance*, 62.

The erotic spectacle of the concluding gestures of *L'après-midi d'un faune* was thus rehearsed in the foundational texts of aestheticism's queer engagements with Dionysus; it also found expression in the art and writing of Pater's immediate descendants who would in turn inspire the Ballets Russes. The faun recurs in the work of the figure most central to subsequent conceptions of aestheticism and central too to Diaghilev's early influences, Oscar Wilde. In Wilde's published oeuvre, Matthew Michael Kaylor draws attention to his characterisation of the eponymous king in the fairytale 'The Young King' who is 'only a lad, being but sixteen years of age... wild-eyed and open-mouthed, like a brown woodland Faun, or some young animal of the forest newly snared by the hunters'.⁴¹² The tacit eroticism Kaylor identifies here in the figure of the captured, dominated youth is only one of several such instances. Wilde's poem 'Panthea', an ornate paean to pagan life, calls its readers to 'inform ourselves/ Into all sensuous life, [of] the goat-foot Faun'; his long, early poem 'The Burden of Itys', a heady outpouring of Dionysian imagery, hymns the beauty of 'faun-loved Heliconian glades'; the substantially briefer 'In The Forest' pulses with further fantasies of capture that focus on 'my faun' in all its 'ivory limbed and brown eyed' glory.⁴¹³ Wilde's poetic invocations of the figure oscillate between casting the faun as an idealised representation of an arcadian past and viewing the creature as something which can, like Michelangelo's Adam in Pater's ekphrasis, be not merely touched but dominated and possessed.

The subtle eroticism in Wilde's presentation of the faun is clarified in his private writings in which the distance between the faun and adolescent male objects of sexual desire collapses entirely. To Reginald Turner, Wilde recalled a 'young Corsican' called Giorgio whose 'position was menial, but eyes like the night and a scarlet flower of a mouth made one forget that'; 'I am great friends with him', Wilde gloated, concluding that he was 'a most passionate faun'.⁴¹⁴ To the publisher Leonard Smithers two years later he wrote that he missed an unnamed youth who, like Giorgio, was 'a brown faun with his woodland eyes and his sensuous grace of limb'; the attractions of other men could 'not console me for the loss of that wanton sylvan boy from Italy'.⁴¹⁵ In an earlier letter to Robert Ross, Wilde rhapsodised about his

⁴¹² Quoted in: Kaylor, *Secreted Desires*, 362.

⁴¹³ Wilde, *Complete Oscar Wilde*, 765, 717, 792.

⁴¹⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), 1104

⁴¹⁵ Wilde, *Letters*, 1196.

travels through Morocco with Lord Alfred Douglas, where the ‘villages [were] peopled by fauns... beggars [who] have profiles, so the problem of poverty is easily solved’; writing again to Smithers from the south of France in 1899, Wilde complained that he was ‘leading a very good life’ which ‘does not agree with me’ because of ‘a sad lack of fauns’ in the vicinity.⁴¹⁶

While fauns drift more or less poetically through Wilde’s elegiac, arcadian verses, the relative prurience of his letters and the fact that they refer obliquely to Wilde’s real conquests rather than imagined fantasies indicates the veracity of Cyril Connolly’s formulation that ‘in the preaching of the careful Pater beckon the practices of Wilde’; the transgressive, queer lure of what lurks between the lines of Paterian aestheticism appears to erupt in Wilde’s language and life.⁴¹⁷ Connolly’s insight is particularly apt as he himself would characterise ‘a type [of boy] that has recurred through my life and which gets me into trouble’, boys who ‘well know their fatal power which a series of conquests have made obvious’ but to whom ‘age is often unkind’, as ‘The Fauns’ in his reminiscences.⁴¹⁸ Wilde’s erotic interest in the faun, invoked to refer to sexually attractive younger men in a manner redolent of Pater’s conception of Michelangelo’s supposed ‘fauns’, was also reflected in the work of artists Wilde favoured and whose oeuvres intersect with late nineteenth century aestheticism. In examining the casting of Dionysus himself as a *pais kalos* we have briefly encountered the photography of Wilhelm von Gloeden, a German expatriate living in the Italian village of Taormina who cast the local boys in homoerotic, classicised fantasies which were then circulated in Britain through clandestine networks of queer aesthetes. Von Gloeden’s photographs, we have noted, explicitly encouraged their viewers to enjoy the revelation of young male bodies through the lens of ‘Uranian’ desire, and a sizeable body of these photographs further encouraged the continued extension of this gaze to the body of the faun. At least one surviving image, in which a standing naked boy surveys another seated boy, seems to quote the posture of the former figure from Praxiteles’s *Resting Satyr*: the standing boy mimics the sculpture’s crossed legs and its placement of one hand upon the hip and the other leaning against a nearby support with some precision (fig. 74).

⁴¹⁶ Wilde, *Letters*, 629, 1117.

⁴¹⁷ Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*, 228.

⁴¹⁸ Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*, 169.

Von Gloeden also produced a series of ten surviving portraits of the same unnamed sitter which all bear the title *Il Fauno*. The sitter, a shirtless and muscular youth, assumes a series of coquettish poses with his hair twisted into makeshift horns to denote the mythological status of the creature he is portraying. In one, he stares with mesmeric intensity at the viewer while resting his chin upon his hands, his lips slightly parted in a sensuous pout (fig. 75); in another he has gained larger horns and a tail which suggestively peeks into the composition while the model places both arms behind his head to better display his torso (fig. 76). This series of portraits does not display the sitter's entire body, but further photographs taken in the Sicilian countryside accommodate for this. Two further such images, both titled *Il Grande Fauno*, show the same boy perched upon a rock. In the first of these he is sat upright with one thigh concealing his genitalia (fig. 77) while the other, showing the boy sprawled with his legs apart, displays his penis prominently (fig. 78). Another photograph, in which the boy's pose is similar to that of the first *Il Grande Fauno* pictures, sees the sitter posed picturesquely in front of a waterfall and carrying a set of pipes (fig. 79).

Von Gloeden's images correlate to Wilde's insinuating prose in the letters he sent back to Smithers, Ross, and Turner while traveling through Europe and beyond, observing and promoting equivalences between the 'unveiled human form' discussed by Pater in his *Doni Tondo* ekphrasis and the mythological creature of the faun. As we have seen, von Gloeden's images were publicly discussed in the British press in sanitised terms, with contemporary journalists comparing his images to those of respectable and popular Royal Academicians such as Edward Poynter or Lawrence Alma-Tadema. A closer equivalent amongst British painters for von Gloeden than Poynter or Alma-Tadema may be Henry Scott Tuke, another favourite artist of Wilde's and one whose work also fleetingly engaged with concretising the homoerotic links expressed openly in Wilde's letters. Jongwoo Jeremy Kim considers Tuke's oeuvre to manifest the painter's desire to 'revitalise Greek ideals by recapturing the beauty of Greek youths in the images of young men from his own time', and notes that 'in a poem attributed to Tuke, he confesses yearnings for the erotic freedom of Greece'.⁴¹⁹ Catherine Wallace points out that Tuke's travels in Italy in the early 1890s

⁴¹⁹ Jongwoo Jeremy Kim, "Naturalism, Labour and Homoerotic Desire: Henry Scott Tuke". *British Queer History: New Approaches and Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2013), 39.

exposed him to classical statuary which in turn informed his art, but the idiosyncrasy of Tuke's revivification of antiquity's 'erotic freedom' was his refusal or inability to embroider his paintings with obvious classical trappings like von Gloeden's; it was indeed John Addington Symonds who advised him to abandon his early attempts to do so.⁴²⁰ Symonds's advice was to 'develop studies in the nude without pretending to make them "subject pictures"' because Tuke was not sufficiently 'inflamed with the *mythus*'.⁴²¹ Instead, Tuke's 'own inspiration [was] derived from nature's beauty' in Symonds's estimation, reflected in Tuke's consistent interest in depicting bathing, diving, and sailing boys in varying states of undress on the shores of Cornwall. Despite their lack of overtly classicising accoutrements like those found in Von Gloeden's photographs, which Emmanuel Cooper notes he would undoubtedly have known through his friendships with men like Symonds, the tacit homoeroticism of Tuke's depictions of adolescent boys associates his work more clearly with Von Gloeden's than either Edward Poynter or Alma-Tadema.⁴²² As Cooper also records, recourse to Tuke's diaries indicates that he understood this homoeroticism in terms intimately related to aestheticism's classicising code. An entry discussing the merits of a young model named Bert White finds Tuke disguising his erotic interest in the boy through an idiosyncratic employment of Greek lettering to describe him as *kalos*.⁴²³ It is perhaps therefore unsurprising that Tuke, breaking his own otherwise consistently observed rules as to his avoidance of 'subject pictures', produced a painting in 1914 which bore the name *Faun* (fig. 80).

Tuke's faun is, like other examples we have seen in aestheticist discourses, devoid of animal features: his ears lack the equine elongation we may expect to find, although the concealment of the model's lower legs by some strategically placed fauna teasingly entertains the possibility of a hybrid physiognomy beneath the waist. Tuke's model for the painting was Nicola Lucciani, a professional model who also appeared in his painting *A Bathing Group* (fig. 81) in a pose which Andrew Stephenson argues is 'undoubtedly indebted to classical sources, with Tuke referencing the Greek ephebe'.⁴²⁴ This reference point remains in evidence in *Faun*,

⁴²⁰ Catherine Wallace, *Catching the Light: The Art and Life of Henry Scott Tuke, 1858-1929*. (London: Atelier Books, 2008), 66, 69.

⁴²¹ Quoted in: Wallace, *Catching the Light*, 69.

⁴²² Emmanuel Cooper, *The Life and Work of Henry Scott Tuke* (London: GP, 1987), 31.

⁴²³ Cooper, *Tuke*, 33.

⁴²⁴ Andrew Stephenson, "'Par Excellence the Painter of Youth: Henry Scott Tuke's Adolescent Male Nudes". *Henry Scott Tuke* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 2021), 89.

in which Tuke replaces his typical coastal backgrounds for a densely wooded grove more proper to the creature's mythological role. A painting of ten years earlier, Tuke's *In The Morning Sun* (fig. 82), has been singled out in his oeuvre as an unusual effort for 'showing a single figure frontally', a rare occurrence in Tuke's work, but the same can be said of *Faun* in which the nude Lucciani faces the viewer.⁴²⁵ The erotic potential of this frontal positioning is, however, far more immediate in *Faun* than in *In The Morning Sun*. In the earlier painting, the boy does not meet the viewer's gaze and appears instead solely concentrated on his pagan salutation to the break of day. The faun by contrast appears to advance directly towards the viewer, pulling apart the branches of the foliage which conceals its naked body. The faun also fixes the viewer with a smouldering gaze, another departure from Tuke's more consistently repeated compositional devices: typically, his nudes are lost in moments of repose (as in *In The Morning Sun*), seen from behind (as in the seated figure in *A Bathing Group*), or busy in action or conversation (as in the standing figure in the same painting). Tuke's *Faun* breaks not merely with his decision to abandon overtly classical subject matter but also with his compositional conventions and the reticence of the homoeroticism attendant upon his depictions of male adolescents, generally differing in this from the comparable work of Wilhelm Von Gloeden with whose 'explicit photographs of naked Sicilian youths', Emmanuel Cooper suggests, Tuke 'did [not] identify'.⁴²⁶ In *Faun*, one such youthful nude advances towards the viewer while pushing away the foliage that is all that stops Tuke's reticence disintegrating into the explicitness of Von Gloeden. Once more, Tuke's *Faun* evinces thematic continuities with its aestheticist forebears, promising to reward the gaze of 'Plato's infatuated lover' first turned upon the faun by Walter Pater.

Tuke's bathing boys attained popularity amongst the aesthetes in the 1890s, some twenty years before he returned to the classical iconographies he had been counselled to reject by John Addington Symonds. His decision to turn to the figure of the faun at such a comparatively late juncture is therefore puzzling, although a prosaic explanation may account for the sudden appearance of the mythological creature. In the first biography written of the artist, his sister Maria's memoir of

⁴²⁵ Nicholas Tromans, "Artist and Alienist: A Study of Two Silences". *Henry Scott Tuke*, 104.

⁴²⁶ Cooper, *Tuke*, 31.

1933, Maria Scott Tuke notes that her brother's visits to London often involved trips to the theatre. In 1912, this included a visit to the ballet to see the Ballets Russes' *Le Spectre de la Rose*, with Nijinsky dancing as the titular spirit.⁴²⁷ This performance Tuke judged to be 'one of the most beautiful things ever seen' and 'the most beautiful thing in the world', and the object of his focus was clarified by his subsequent naming of his new boat 'Nijinsky'.⁴²⁸ Maria does not record whether her brother attended the subsequent season of the Ballets Russes' performances in February 1913, but it is very possible he did given his evident enthusiasm for their performances and his appointment as a visiting tutor at the Royal Academy Schools in January 1913, necessitating a greater amount of time being spent in the capital.⁴²⁹ If this is the case then he, like Cyril Beaumont, would have found himself watching the British premiere of *L'après-midi d'un faune*, in which Tuke's favourite dancer Nijinsky presented himself as a homoerotic spectacle in the guise of the mythological creature of Tuke's later painting.

The possibility that Nijinsky's *Faune* inspired the homoeroticism of Tuke's *Faun* illuminates the continuities that the ballet evinced with the prior aestheticist discourses admired by Sergei Diaghilev and Leon Bakst: Tuke's *Faun* can be simultaneously understood as a product of Pater, Wilde, Symonds, Beardsley, and Von Gloeden's thought and art and equally as a product of their revivification through the Ballets Russes' performance. We have so far traced the intellectual and artistic lineages which arguably informed the sexual spectacle of *L'après-midi d'un faune* and particularly its queer, masturbatory climax, examining here how the faun became not only associated with queerness and effeminacy as we saw in the previous chapter but also a locus for queer male desire as a *pais kalos*. Certainly, Nijinsky's own interpretation of his ballet as the product of "my life" with Diaghilev would suggest direct continuities with this model: his comment evidently refers to their sexual relationship, during which Nijinsky was in his early twenties and Diaghilev his early forties. Although Nijinsky was therefore older than the adolescent boys of Tuke's paintings or Von Gloeden's photographs— or those of Pater's fantasies and Wilde's sexual conquests— his relationship with Diaghilev was predicated upon the influence of an older, dominant man and a younger, receptive partner: Nijinsky's

⁴²⁷ Maria Scott Tuke, *Henry Scott Tuke: A Memoir* (London: Martin Secker, 1933), 150.

⁴²⁸ Tuke, *A Memoir*, 150.

⁴²⁹ Wallace, *Catching the Light*, 111.

diary contains an admittance of this dynamic, specifying that during this period he felt ‘all of my life was in [Diaghilev’s] hands’.⁴³⁰

Furthermore, Nijinsky characterised Diaghilev as ‘a bad man who loves boys’ and recorded that *Jeux*, Nijinsky’s second foray into choreography which was performed in the June of the same year as *L’après-midi*, is the other ballet he considered a product of his life with Diaghilev which illustrated ‘the life of which Diaghilev dreamed’.⁴³¹ This was Diaghilev’s ‘want[ing] to make love to two boys at the same time, and want[ing] these boys to make love to him’, represented according to Nijinsky in the relations between two girls and one man in *Jeux* because ‘love between three men could not be represented on stage’.⁴³² His recollection of *Jeux* specifies the sexual registers being negotiated within these ballets, and within these schemas Nijinsky stated bluntly that the faun in *L’après-midi* ‘was me’: that is, an eroticised spectacle of a boy for a man who loved boys, dressed up as the mythological creature of the faun.⁴³³ Penny Farfan has ventured that ‘for some spectators at least... knowledge of his sexual relationship with Ballets Russes impresario Sergei Diaghilev, undoubtedly contributed to Nijinsky’s appeal for an emerging gay... spectatorship’ in discussing the British and French reception of *L’après-midi*.⁴³⁴ If some spectators were indeed aware of the relationship informing *L’après-midi*, then to the aesthetes among them the ballet must have appeared to show the Pygmalionesque vivification of a sculpture like Praxiteles’s *Resting Satyr*, with Nijinsky’s choreography inviting the gaze of the ‘infatuated lover’ onto the figure of the faun just as the dancer himself was enmeshed in an approximation of a pederastic relationship. As Kate Hext records, the writer George Moore posited that if Pater ‘had lived to hear [Debussy’s] *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*, he could not have done else but think that he was listening to his own prose changed into music by some sorceri or sorcerers malign or benevolent’.⁴³⁵ If Pater had lived to see Nijinsky’s *L’après-midi d’un faune*, he may have experienced quite the same thrill, seeing his ekphrastic passages transformed into the movement of an elegant male body lost in a moment of erotic abandonment.

⁴³⁰ Nijinsky, *Diary*, 46.

⁴³¹ Nijinsky, *Diary*, 140.

⁴³² Nijinsky, *Diary*, 140-141.

⁴³³ Nijinsky, *Diary*, 141.

⁴³⁴ Farfan, *Performing Queer Modernism*, 49.

⁴³⁵ Quoted in: Hext, *Walter Pater*, 159.

The Faun in the Bookshop

It is tempting, therefore, to see *L'après-midi* as the physicalising of the aesthetes' words and images, translating their fantasies into reality through the lithe, sexualised body of the Ballets Russes' star dancer. Certainly, the response to ballet within British visual culture emphasised the ballet's links to the nineteenth century aestheticist discourses to which its own conception of the faun appears intimately related, a response organised and choreographed chiefly by Cyril Beaumont. The novelist Beverley Nichols, writing for *The Sketch* in 1927, enthused about 'Mr. Beaumont... printing pretty books in bright yellows... and selling those queer silhouettes of Russian ballet dancers which Oxford aesthetes used to place upon their mantelpieces'.⁴³⁶ This referred to one of the more unusual offerings in Beaumont's Charing Cross bookshop, a series of plywood figures depicting the dancers of the Ballets Russes which were designed during wartime and produced in the early 1920s. 'Oxford aesthetes' particularly attuned to the Dionysiac strain within their forebears' discourses could furnish their rooms with a miniature representation of Nijinsky's faun designed by Adrian Allinson, an extant pen design enlivened with luxurious notes of gold paint for this figure showing the heavy-lidded gaze and sensuous pout we may expect to find in such an object (fig. 83).

Beaumont's more concerted efforts to commit the spectacle of Nijinsky's faun to posterity came, however, in his work as a book publisher. While the most celebrated images of Nijinsky as the faun are now Baron de Meyer's photographic records of rehearsals for *L'après-midi*, it is unclear as to how familiar these images would have been to British audiences in the 1910s and 1920s: the initial book containing them was published in extremely limited numbers, intended for sale in France, and the vast majority of copies appear to have been mysteriously lost before they could be purchased anyway.⁴³⁷ Beaumont records having seen them on the wall of the illustrator Paul Iribe's bookshop, but the sight was evidently rare enough to be worthy of note and Iribe was located in Paris, not London.⁴³⁸ Filling the gap for

⁴³⁶ Beverley Nichols, "The Metropolitan". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 27 April 1927, 178.

⁴³⁷ Richard Buckle, "In Lieu of an Introduction." *L'Après-Midi D'un Faune: Vaslav Nijinsky, 1912*, (London: Dance Books, 1983), 7.

⁴³⁸ Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet*, 68.

British audiences, Beaumont published two of his own books in 1913. Both focused on Nijinsky, with one boasting illustrations by the Mexican painter Roberto Montenegro and the other by the French fashion illustrator Georges Barbier, and both contained images of Nijinsky's faun.⁴³⁹

Of the two artists, Montenegro's interpretation of the faun is less conceptually daring than Barbier's and more immediately related to its obvious influences. In Montenegro's plate (fig. 84) the faun is seen carrying the nymphs' scarf through a barren landscape populated only by a series of economically rendered boulders in the background, placing the creature in a setting unrecognisable from Leon Bakst's lavish set design (fig. 85) which was recollected by Cyril Beaumont as 'a verdant hillside relieved with the yellow and reddish-orange foliage of the trees which scored its surface'.⁴⁴⁰ Montenegro's extreme simplification of the scene, coupled with the minimal colour palette advertised by the subtitle of Beaumont's book- 'an artistic interpretation of [Nijinsky's] work in black, white, and gold'- indicates that Bakst's influence was overpowered by an influence that was indeed at work on Bakst's imagination too. The art historian K. Mitchell Snow notes that Montenegro's engagements with the riotously colourful designs of the Ballets Russes failed to 'transform [Montenegro's] style, which was heavily influenced by English illustrator Aubrey Beardsley', and instead merely 'provided him with an expanded subject matter' to treat in this manner; Farfan too sees Beardsley's ghostly hand hovering over Montenegro's plates.⁴⁴¹

Montenegro's design strengthens associations between the Ballets Russes and the aesthetes of a previous generation, and its compositional particularities arguably entertain some continuities with their conceptions of the faun too. The placement of the faun's free hand upon its own dappled flank is not repeated in Baron de Meyer's photographic records of Nijinsky's faun, and the curvature of the hand to accommodate the curvature of the flesh it rests upon would appear to be a subtle work of free invention given the rigidity of Nijinsky's friezelike movements in the ballet. Given it is carrying the scarf it is shortly to masturbate upon and its nipples

⁴³⁹ Beaumont, *Vaslav Nijinsky*; Cyril Beaumont. *Designs on the Dances of Vaslav Nijinsky* (London: C. W. Beaumont and Co., 1913).

⁴⁴⁰ Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet*, 53.

⁴⁴¹ K. Mitchell Snow, *Revolution in Movement: Dancers, Painters, and the Image of Modern Mexico*. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2020), 42; Farfan, *Performing Queer Modernism*, 41.

are visibly erect to denote its sexual excitement, the gesture may be intended to titillate, but it is an admittedly minor intervention. Similarly, the golden clouds in the sky rhyme with the black patches of the faun's hide, transforming the animal qualities of the faun into the very thing that conveys upon the picture its aesthetic satisfaction; again, however, Montenegro's work is decidedly chaste despite its stylistic associations between Nijinsky and the eroticised fauns of the aesthetes' fantasies.

George Barbier's illustrations for Beaumont's second Nijinsky book are more forthright in their sexual politics. Barbier was also an ardent follower of Beardsley's, and Arthur M. Smith notes that Barbier owned some of the illustrator's correspondence and speculates that he may have met surviving members of Beardsley's circle while visiting London.⁴⁴² Furthermore, Smith identifies Beardsley as exerting a particularly pronounced influence over Barbier's pen in his treatment of the Ballets Russes, to whose performances Barbier frequently returned in art and life.⁴⁴³ While Montenegro focuses on the faun carrying the nymph's scarf back to its lair, the first of Barbier's interpretations depicts the act of queered congress itself (fig. 86). A black and white illustration, its spidery linework and fine detailing in the faun's polka-dotted scarf redolent of Beardsley's work, Barbier's drawing breaks not merely with Bakst's set designs but with Nijinsky's own choreography in his reimagining of this controversial act. Beaumont's own account of Nijinsky's performance specifies that Nijinsky 'proceeded slowly to recline, face downwards, on the scarf' at the ballet's climax.⁴⁴⁴ In Barbier's drawing, Nijinsky's choreography has been inverted: it is, in *L'après-midi*, the faun that lies on top of the scarf, not the scarf on top of the faun.

Barbier's inversion of the climactic action of *L'après-midi* strips from Nijinsky's faun its last vestiges of dominant, masculine action. Writhing beneath the scarf which it drapes between its legs and wearing a satisfied smile upon its face which is turned to Beaumont's readers, it is the faun that is now dominated, with the scarf seeming to double as a net which has snared the creature. The sparse vegetation surrounding the faun furthers a sense of erotic abandonment and a sense of capture

⁴⁴² Arthur M. Smith, "*Chevalier Du Bracelet*": *George Barbier and His Illustrated Works* (Toronto: University of Toronto Library, 2013), 9.

⁴⁴³ Smith, *George Barbier*, 15.

⁴⁴⁴ Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet*, 54.

and containment, with the hanging leaves of a bower above it seeming to push the scarf down upon the faun's body while small blooms on the ground beside it seem to push its body upwards. The interplay between the faun's body and the scarf, which thinly conceals its naked body, also introduces a note of titillation into the image far more readily than Montenegro's subtler reworkings of Nijinsky's choreography. Barbier's faun is closer in spirit to those of Wilde's published writings, the fauns and faunlike figures of his poem 'In the Forest' and his fairytale 'The Young Prince', both of whom are presented to the reader as figures who invite not merely touch but to capture and possess. It is closer too to Pater's 'satyr-like' Adam in Michelangelo's *Creation of Man*, exuding the same receptiveness and submissiveness that drew Pater to characterise this figure as faunlike.

Barbier's second depiction of the faun in Beaumont's book, an engraving known as *Faun With Grapes* (fig. 87), further seeks to present the faun as a submissive and seductive figure. In this image, Barbier presents the faun kneeling in profile while raising a bunch of grapes from a basket on the ground before it. This pose is also nowhere in evidence in Baron de Meyer's photographs of Nijinsky's performances. Rather, its composition appears to be an imaginative combination of two separate moments captured by de Meyer. One of these shows the faun in profile with a bunch of grapes before it and its spare hand in a pose analogous to that of Barbier's creation (fig. 88), while the other shows the faun kneeling to contemplate the scarf (fig. 89). Barbier's engraving does not correspond precisely to either, however. In the former photograph Nijinsky appears upright, his expression imperious and his eyes fixed upon the grapes, while in the latter he does not hold any grapes and fixes his gaze upon the scarf on the ground. Barbier's faun, meanwhile, tilts its face upwards, smiles mysteriously, and closes its eyes: its action is not one of solitary contemplation but of subservient offering.

This gesture can easily be read as a seduction scene in which the intended recipient of the faun's bounty remains concealed from the viewer. Barbier's great favourite, Aubrey Beardsley, had himself navigated this territory, as we saw in the previous chapter in which his *Le Morte D'Arthur* illustration *Satyr Offering Fruit to Seated Figure* was understood to picture a faun attempting to seduce a young man through the same strategy employed by the creature in Barbier's engraving. In Barbier's case, the faun's smile would indicate its willingness to please, and the

creature appears perhaps more effeminate than Barbier's previous depiction, with its almond-shaped eyes being fringed with exaggeratedly long lashes. The unseen nature of the recipient of the faun's intoxicating gift further encourages the reader to imaginatively occupy this implied space as the ballet itself offers no answers which would indicate the faun's interests are heterosexual: the only other figures involved in the dance are the nymphs which the faun pointedly rejects, meaning they are unlikely to figure in Barbier's scheme as the implied recipients of the grapes. In this second iteration too, Barbier's faun appears to be indebted to the submissive, receptive creatures which interested Pater and his progenies within the late nineteenth century.

The entrance of Nijinsky's faun into the visual culture of the British aesthetes through the work of Montenegro, Barbier, and possibly even Henry Scott Tuke, therefore continually evinced and indeed foregrounded the continuities between the 'homosexual counterdiscourse' of late nineteenth century aestheticism and the Ballets Russes' performance. This can be found in both the stylistic elements of these works, particularly clear in Montenegro's illustrations, and in the sexual undercurrents at work within them which largely continued to present the faun as an erotic locus and a *pais kalos*. Beaumont would continue to publish books on the dancers of the Ballets Russes for many years after these two books, including a 1917 publication which boasted a frontispiece in the form of a portrait of the dancer Lydia Lopokova. For this he turned to 'the Shannon [or] Ricketts of the near future', Glyn Philpot.⁴⁴⁵ It was, however, not Lopokova but the electrifying appearance of Nijinsky as the faun which would remain a constant presence in Philpot's imagination. Philpot had been, like Beaumont, in the audience for the premiere of *L'après-midi*, and its iconography recurs throughout Philpot's subsequent oil paintings from this point onwards. Turning now to Philpot's interactions with the figure of the faun as an erotic locus, we see how the impact of Nijinsky's ballet permeated aestheticist visions far beyond the year of its London premiere.

⁴⁴⁵ Martin, *Flesh and Spirit*, 68.

Mr. Philpot's Fauns

Glyn Philpot's time at the Royal Opera House for the ballet season of 1913 was auspicious not merely for Philpot as an artist but also for Philpot as a man. It was, as Simon Martin's catalogue notes, almost certainly here that he met Robert Allerton, a wealthy American patron and aesthete who was to exert an influence over Philpot's life that paralleled and intersected with Nijinsky's influence over Philpot's painting.⁴⁴⁶ Allerton had spent much of his time in London and also knew Ricketts and Shannon, acquiring a vaguely homoerotic sketch of three male nudes from the latter artist in 1917; this drawing was bequeathed to the Chicago Institute of Art by Allerton where it joined Allerton's other gifts, including two illustrations of an Oscar Wilde story by Charles Ricketts and a print of Beardsley's *Virgilius the Sorcerer*.⁴⁴⁷ As biographer J. G. P. Delaney notes, Philpot's letters to his sister during his subsequent and prolonged visit to Allerton's Illinois home, a sprawling estate called The Farms, in 1913 mark the first time he provided a written 'acknowledgement of his homosexuality' prompted by a 'vivid expression of his attraction to Allerton'.⁴⁴⁸ The exact nature of Allerton and Philpot's relationship remains contested, with Allerton's biographer Nicholas Syrett suggesting that they did not become lovers, but the strength of Philpot's feeling is beyond dispute and the direction of Allerton's sexual interests is similarly a matter of historical record. The chief focus of Syrett's biography is Allerton's lifelong relationship with John Gregg, the age difference between them substantial enough for them to shield the nature of their relationship by legally becoming father and son.⁴⁴⁹

Owing to their shared love of the ballet and the importance of *L'après-midi* to their relationship in particular, Philpot's second visit to Allerton's Chicago mansion in 1921 saw Philpot produce two works for display in The Farms which evidently made reference to the ballet's iconography. These are the portrait *Robert Allerton as a Faun* (fig. 90) and the decorative overmantel painting *Faun and Satyr* (fig. 91).

⁴⁴⁶ Martin, *Flesh and Spirit*, 61.

⁴⁴⁷ Nicholas Syrett, *An Open Secret: The Family Story of Robert and John Gregg Allerton* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 69.

⁴⁴⁸ Delaney, *Philpot*, 37.

⁴⁴⁹ Syrett, *An Open Secret*, 68.

Before this, however, Philpot's first engagement with the iconography of the Ballets Russes took the form of a painting which appeared in a small exhibition of depictions of Nijinsky held in 1914, in which Montenegro's illustrations were also shown. While, as K. Mitchell Snow records, Montenegro's work was singled out for abuse in certain parts of the British press— the *Daily Telegraph* considered his illustrations to be 'repulsive'— a critic for the *Globe* singled out Philpot's contribution as 'perhaps the best thing in the show'.⁴⁵⁰ This referred to the oil painting *Nijinsky Before the Curtain* (fig. 92), a view from the audience of Nijinsky taking the stage after performing *L'après-midi* to receive the public's adulation. Depicting a seemingly incidental moment onstage, with Nijinsky having only just emerged from the curtain and holding the hand of an unknown figure in the wings to lead them, Philpot's painting initially appears to evince a documentarian's veracity in its recreation of the final moments of the evening. Its composition is asymmetrical and its brushwork loose to convey both the fleeting nature of the scene and a realistic approximation of the balletgoer's view, with the stage seen from a slightly raised perspective and the distant Nijinsky's features rendered impressionistically and indistinctly. Despite these gestures towards the authenticity of Philpot's representation of *L'après-midi's* premiere, *Nijinsky Before the Curtain* entertains several peculiar details which indicate a spirit of invention at work in the canvas akin to that found in Montenegro and Barbier's reinventions of Nijinsky's choreography. As in these previous cases, Philpot's interventions impart to Nijinsky's faun a queer lure which appears related to his acceptance of his own desire in this period and in the space depicted in his canvas.

Firstly, and despite the fact the performance is over, Nijinsky appears to still act as the faun. Nijinsky's free hand is positioned as it is in Baron De Meyer's photograph of the faun contemplating a bunch of grapes, with its four fingers held together and the thumb extended upwards with an unnatural rigidity. Nijinsky is also suspended on *demi-pointe*, the balls of his feet lifted high into the air. This step is similar to those that constitute elements of *L'après-midi's* choreography, as Baron de Meyer's photographs of the faun performing an awkward *pas de deux* with a nymph attest to (fig. 93), but the angling of the feet in Philpot's painting is considerably sharper than in Nijinsky's actual movements during the ballet. If this movement was

⁴⁵⁰ Snow, *Revolution in Movement*, 43; Anon., "Nijinsky". *Globe*, Wednesday 25 March 1914, 11.

absent from the choreography of the ballet itself, it was obviously absent from Nijinsky's movements once he had concluded his performance. Beaumont dedicated a paragraph of his book on the Ballets Russes 'to record how Nijinsky took applause', acknowledging that the dancer 'was unusual in this as in all things'.⁴⁵¹ At no point in Beaumont's description does he mention Nijinsky employing demi-pointe as he did so, something that may seem even more implausible given that Beaumont notes he 'went quickly forward towards the footlights', suggesting free and unencumbered movement.⁴⁵²

Secondly, the space Nijinsky occupies is a strangely ambiguous one. Martin characterises *Nijinsky Before the Curtain* as 'an exercise in sumptuous tonality' in which, 'ethereal and spectral, the star glides into view, his arm outstretched as he leads a nymph (only their hand is visible) on to the stage to take the applause'.⁴⁵³ Yet, while the suffusion of reds and golds may indeed be sumptuous, it is also stifling in its intensity. The note of unease animating Philpot's painting is further sounded by the fact that the space beneath the stage is rendered in an impenetrable black, a void engulfing the painting's lower regions, and the fact that Nijinsky seems to be in danger of plunging into it. The swell of the stage curtain, ballooning towards us at the far right, dominates the space and transforms the act of walking across the stage into the act of walking a perilous tightrope. There is only a vanishingly thin distance between the dancer's front foot and the encroaching abyss which dominates the southernmost portions of the painting.

Thirdly, Martin assumes that the figure Nijinsky is about to lead onstage is one of the nymphs of the ballet. Certainly, if we accept Philpot's painting as an accurate depiction of the end of the performance, this would appear to be incontrovertible. But if we accept instead that the painting is rife with invented detail then we need not follow Martin in this assumption. The gesture is arrestingly ambiguous, and serves no obvious purpose: indeed, it detracts from sustaining the viewer's focus on Nijinsky himself who we may otherwise have expected to find standing at the centre of the stage. The identity of the figure who the faun leads onto the stage remains tantalisingly mysterious, like the imagined receiver of the grapes

⁴⁵¹ Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet*, 28.

⁴⁵² Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet*, 28.

⁴⁵³ Martin, *Flesh and Spirit*, 67.

offered by Barbier's faun, and their inclusion despite the fact that their presence disrupts Philpot's ability to pursue a more conventional composition indicates the importance of their relationship to the faun.

All three of these idiosyncrasies would intimate that Philpot is navigating territory which is intimately related to his own queer desires. The first, the extension of the ballet's choreography to the moments after its conclusion, serves two purposes, both of which structure our understanding of Philpot's other imagined details. On one hand, showing Nijinsky continue to represent the faun of his ballet through his mannered and unnatural movements suggests to the viewer that the painting should be read symbolically rather than as a documentary record of the moment depicted. In a word, Philpot's painting evidently depicts the faun which has somehow outlived its own narrative, not merely the dancer who portrayed it. On the other, the exaggerated angling of Nijinsky's feet, seeing the dancer move on demi-pointe, subtly effeminises him. Demi-pointe is not typically associated with, nor employed by, male dancers, although despite the fact that it was reserved for female dancers Nijinsky's sister records that he was capable of performing the movement.⁴⁵⁴ While it was therefore technically possible for Nijinsky to have walked onstage in this manner, it remains incredibly unlikely that he did. Just as Barbier's reversal of Nijinsky's final movements in his illustration does, Philpot's exaggeration of Nijinsky's footwork places the faun at a greater distance from a masculine role, associating it instead with a conventionally passive feminine role.

The vivid colours and loose handling of paint in *Nijinsky Before the Curtain*, meanwhile, indicate that Philpot sought to impart a sexual undercurrent to the scene and thus to eroticise the effeminised body of the faun onstage. Negating the brilliant colour of Bakst's sets in favour of the deep reds and striking golds of the ornately decorated stage curtain arguably demonstrates Philpot exhibiting continuities not with the Russian designer but with the British painter Walter Sickert, an influence over Philpot's painting at this time that Martin also registers.⁴⁵⁵ *Nijinsky Before the Curtain* suggests particular continuities with Sickert's depictions of music-hall entertainments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His 1906-07

⁴⁵⁴ Bronislava Nijinska. *Bronislava Nijinska: Early Memoirs* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1950), 186.

⁴⁵⁵ Martin, *Flesh and Spirit*, 63.

depiction of the gallery of the Old Mogul music-hall on Drury Lane anticipates the profusion of gold in Philpot's painting (fig. 94). The presentation of a single figure on a darkened stage dominated by shadowy passages and, above all, more burnished golds and bloody reds also recalls Sickert's depictions of the music-hall performer Katie Lawrence, both an early iteration of the theme dating from 1888 (fig. 95) and more readily a return to the theme dated to around 1903 which is coarser in its handling of paint and darker in its colouring (fig. 96). Sickert's depictions of music-halls generated considerable controversy owing to recurrent fears over the purported immorality of music-hall audiences and performers, as Anna Gruetzner Robins's essay on the subject elucidates.⁴⁵⁶ As Robins further demonstrates, attacks on music-halls often focused upon the ribaldry of female performers' acts and the perceived sexual promiscuity in their personal lives that this was felt to emanate from, with Robins noting that reactions to Sickert's depictions of Katie Lawrence veered between prurient sexual fantasy and violently misogynistic condemnation.⁴⁵⁷ There is perhaps a note of sly humour in Philpot's importation of Sickert's characteristic colouring in *Nijinsky Before the Curtain*, mischievously slurring the rarefied Royal Opera House into the dens of vice that Sickert was purported to paint. It also, however, reorientates the viewer's gaze as they survey the faun's body. Philpot's invocation of Sickert's scenes encourages us to view the faun through a heady haze of sexual lasciviousness, casting the creature which has already been associated with a transgressive femininity through its movements in the role of the sexually available music-hall performer. The moment in the evening's proceedings that Philpot lights on is also important in this, as the curtain call is immediately preceded by Nijinsky's simulation of sexual activity in the ballet which was considerably more explicit than the comparatively restrained innuendo of music-hall performances.

Finally, the mysterious identity of the implied figure holding the faun's hand functions within Philpot's intimation of queer desire in a manner analogous to the similar staging of seduction in Barbier's *Faun With Grapes*. The hand, if we accept that the painting should be read as a symbolic portrait of a faun and not a literal portrait of Nijinsky, need not belong to a nymph from the *corps de ballet*. Given that the painting parallels Philpot's awakened sexual desires through meeting Robert

⁴⁵⁶ Anna Gruetzner Robins, 'Sickert: "Painter-in-Ordinary" to the Music-Hall'. *Sickert: Paintings* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1992), 13.

⁴⁵⁷ Robins, *Painter-in-Ordinary*, 15.

Allerton, who he would later portray as a faun in the portrait *Robert Allerton as a Faun*, the intimate gesture of physical contact is rife with metaphorical possibilities. Most evidently, the figure who is being led out into the open by the faun may represent Philpot's acceptance of his own homosexuality, with the faun acting as the figure which ushers in Philpot's understanding of himself. Certainly, this would explain the sinister chasm that Nijinsky's faun is in danger of plunging into: this acceptance brings with it the threat of public exposure, the fatal risks of which were exemplified in the culturally traumatic Wilde trial less than twenty years before *Nijinsky Before the Curtain* was executed. It would also explain the headiness of the reds imported from Sickert's paintings, as the touch of the faun initiates its follower into a space in which sexual congress of the sort simulated in the ballet is possible. If *L'après-midi* can be viewed as the physicalising of faun's erotic potentialities traced in the art and writing of a generation of aesthetes upon whom the Ballets Russes relied, its seductive touch in Philpot's painting can be viewed as an echoed answer to Pater's straining towards touching both Praxiteles's *Resting Satyr* and Michelangelo's 'satyr-like' Adam.

Philpot's *Nijinsky Before the Curtain*, therefore, both demonstrates Philpot's understanding of the erotic potential of Nijinsky's performance and the broader aestheticist discourses which informed it, and Philpot's fauns of the 1920s continue to engage with these influences. Beyond the two paintings Philpot made for Robert Allerton, the faun portrait and the overmantel painting *Faun and Satyr*, Philpot also produced 1922's *Repose on the Flight Into Egypt* (fig. 97) in which the faun appears in a similar role to that rehearsed in *Nijinsky Before the Curtain*; *Repose on the Flight Into Egypt* also evinces Philpot's continued blending of the Ballets Russes' iconography with late nineteenth century conceptions of the faun. One isolated example in Philpot's oeuvre, his sculpture *Mask of a Dead Faun* (fig. 98) which his early biographer Robin Gibson counts as 'among his most sensuous creations', predates his attendance at the Royal Opera House by a year, indicating that his interest in the creature was evidently propelled by the Ballets Russes but also by an earlier shared inheritance of late nineteenth century thought.⁴⁵⁸ It is this which is perhaps more clearly in operation in the *Repose* painting, which depicts the Holy Family sleeping beside an enormous fallen statue in an eerily moonlit desert

⁴⁵⁸ Gibson, *Glyn Philpot*, 119.

landscape as they flee the infanticidal wrath of Herod. *Repose* has been read as a symbol of a confrontation between Christian and pagan moralities in which the pagan is ultimately vanquished.⁴⁵⁹ The representatives of this classical past are an assortment of mythological creatures, most of whom are united through their hybridity: at the left is a triad of a human boy, a kneeling faun, and a centaur, while climbing down towards the sleeping family is a sphinx. More recently, Martin has read the painting as an image in which ‘Philpot [attempts] to reconcile his deeply held Catholic faith and his sexual attraction to other men’ where ‘Greek antiquity and mythology come to stand in as both an apologia and decoy for homosexuality’.⁴⁶⁰ This certainly seems closer to the truth given there is little in *Repose* which suggests the triumph of the Holy Family over the pagan past. On the contrary, the strange figures who join the sleepers in the landscape seem more like apparitions, perhaps the externalisations of the troubled mind of Joseph who sits apart from his wife and child in a hunched position which exudes torment more readily than exhaustion. As Martin records, Philpot was widely read and familiar with Freudian theories of the unconscious; it is possible that he attempts something of a Freudian schema here, with these hallucinogenic apparitions representing what is repressed beneath the veneer of Christian morality and heterosexuality.⁴⁶¹

Martin suggests Piero di Cosimo’s *The Battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs*, the painting owned by Shannon and Ricketts, as a possible point of reference for the centaur, to which we may also add Ricketts’s association with the figure of the sphinx through his illustrations for Wilde’s 1894 text *The Sphinx*.⁴⁶² These identifications suggest that what may be threatening Philpot’s Christian morality is less Greek antiquity itself and more correctly the aesthetes’ late nineteenth century reconceptualization of its myths and customs. The introduction of the faun into the scene, which strays closer to the Holy Family than its compatriots, is arguably the cornerstone in this reading. As we have noted, Philpot was known to own works by Pater’s lesser-known colleague John Addington Symonds concerning classicism and homosexuality. *Repose* strongly suggests that contained within Philpot’s wide reading was also the work of Walter Pater, particularly his most celebrated book *The*

⁴⁵⁹ Delaney, *Philpot*, 82.

⁴⁶⁰ Martin, *Flesh and Spirit*, 108.

⁴⁶¹ Martin, *Flesh and Spirit*, 121.

⁴⁶² Martin, *Flesh and Spirit*, 108; Oscar Wilde, *The Sphinx* (London: John Lane, 1894).

Renaissance, which was significantly better known and more widely available than Symonds's vanishingly small print run of *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. The echoes of late nineteenth century aestheticism in Philpot's *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* which seem clearest, and more readily clarify the sexual parameters of the confrontation between pagan and Christian imageries observed by Martin, are those of Pater on Michelangelo.

Pater's first invocation of the faun, we have seen, came in his ekphrasis on Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* which was considered by Pater to be a 'strange flower' owing to its commingling of the Christian Holy Family and the 'sleepy fauns of a Dionysiac revel', the 'unveiled human form[s]' who occupy the painting's background. The *Doni Tondo* thus staged the same conflict between pagan and Christian narratives as Philpot's *Rest*, and it would not be a surprising choice of model for Philpot: as Martin demonstrates with regard to Philpot's 1919 canvas *Melampus and the Centaur* (fig. 99), which anticipates the profusion of hybrid creatures in *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, Philpot had already made use of visual quotations from Michelangelo's paintings.⁴⁶³ Furthermore, Philpot painted *Rest* during a visit to Florence, meaning the example of the *Doni Tondo* would have been close to hand in the Uffizi Gallery.⁴⁶⁴ That it was Pater's conceptualisation of the painting in particular that Philpot was thinking of in painting *Rest* is suggested by the fact that Michelangelo's male nudes are not fauns, and are only considered as such by Pater. In *Rest*, Pater's imagined version of the *Doni Tondo* is realised, with an actual faun foremost among the cast of intruding mythological hybrids.

The likelihood of this point of reference is also indicated by the ease with which we can again detect Pater's hand in another of Philpot's paintings covering ground previously explored by Michelangelo and then Pater, his later painting *The Creation of Man* (fig. 100). Pater saw 'satyr-like' qualities in Michelangelo's Adam owing to his invitation of male touch which is tantalisingly close in the fresco. In Philpot's rendition of the subject, the figure of Adam is not only touched but caressed, a pair of burning hands extending down from a cloud to hold the swooning head of Philpot's Adam. Adam's body parallels the rocky outcrop upon which he kneels with precision, the diagonal line of his torso mirroring that of a cliff face in the

⁴⁶³ Martin, *Philpot*, 105.

⁴⁶⁴ Alex Pilcher, *A Queer Little History of Art* (London: Tate, 2017), 82.

background and the further diagonal of his bent leg mirroring that of the rock he rests upon. Philpot's Adam thus invites touch, seems as weak and receptive in his swooning posture as Pater's Adam, and is literally 'akin to the rugged hillside on which [he] lies' as Pater writes of Michelangelo's figure.⁴⁶⁵ Philpot's *Creation of Man* and his *Repose* appear to respond to the coded homoeroticism of Pater's treatment of both of the Michelangelo paintings from which they borrow their themes and in which Pater sees fauns: their debt to Pater's writings as much as Michelangelo's paintings is indicated by the ways in which they compositionally differ from these paintings. In the case of *The Creation of Man*, this is the consummation of the touch of the 'satyr-like' figure Pater seeks, as in *Nijinsky Before the Curtain*; in *Repose* this comes in Philpot's insertion of a literal faun into a compositional scheme in which Pater can only find metaphorical ones. Philpot's more substantial alterations to the composition of the *Doni Tondo* in his *Repose* also indicate the growing strength of his queer desires, reified in the hybrid creatures of classical antiquity and most prominently in that of the faun which comes closest to encroaching upon the space occupied by the Holy Family. *Repose* not merely disrupts but disregards the orderly distance between the Holy Family and their pagan precedents in the *Doni Tondo*, and the Holy Family do not form the orderly and solid triangular composition they do in Michelangelo's painting but are strewn across the desert floor. The pagan figures led by the faun, appearing like the machinations of a dreamlike vision engineered by the subconscious bursting forth, dwarf and marginalise the representatives of Philpot's Christian faith. *Repose* and *The Creation of Man* not merely demonstrate Philpot's debts to Pater's foundational reconceptualizations of fauns or faunlike figures, employing them again as figures who either embody or invite queer desire, but also the power they exerted over Philpot's imagination in the wake of the Ballets Russes' 1913 season.

It is in Philpot's two paintings intended to hang privately in Robert Allerton's Illinois mansion, The Farms, that the homoeroticism attendant upon the figure of the faun could reach full flower. Philpot's portrait *Robert Allerton as a Faun* collapses the line between the faun and the object of Philpot's desire entirely. The background, a flurry of brushstrokes in the earthy greens and browns of a wooded glade, may lead us to suspect that we will encounter a faun in the mould of Henry Scott Tuke's

⁴⁶⁵ Pater, *Renaissance*, 62.

carefully covered rendition, but Philpot's portrayal of Allerton is far closer to the overt homoeroticism of Wilhelm Von Gloeden's photographs. Allerton appears shirtless, muscular, and young, his gaze penetrating and his lips curling in an enigmatic and seductive smile. The markers of his identity as a faun are a small pair of horns which curl backwards from the temple, not unlike those of Nijinsky's faun. The horns, however, which are rendered in shades very close to those of Allerton's hair, could equally be simply locks of hair which have been tousled into shape and are catching the light. In this detail, the confluences between Philpot's paintings and Von Gloeden's photographs are remarkably pronounced as this is precisely the manner in which the photographer approximated the appearance of the mythological creature in his *Il Fauno* portraits, which also share with Philpot's painting their intimately close cropping, facial expression, and (lack of) costume. This is not to suggest that Philpot was definitely aware of the precedent, although this is certainly by no means impossible. Rather, the fact that Philpot's portrait so readily recalls the work of a photographer whose images were collected and transmitted for 'masturbatory purposes' by British aesthetes suggests that the queer eroticism of Philpot's fauns was sublimated in his other works perhaps largely only for reasons of personal safety.

Faun and Satyr, a decorative overmantel painting which has since been accidentally destroyed, effectively internalises the implied gaze on the faun's body in *Robert Allerton as a Faun* by introducing the figure of the satyr. *Faun and Satyr* collapses the composition of *Melampus and the Centaur*, abolishing the decorative landscape which once occupied the space between the two figures to draw the faun and the satyr close together. The two are seated upon the same rock. The faun pouts at the satyr, looking over its shoulder to meet its eyes while the imposing, bearded figure of the satyr, its goat legs in evidence, thrusts its face in turn towards the expectant faun. The hands of the two figures which are both placed upon the rock are so close together as to appear to graze against one another. Much like in Allerton's portrait, a remarkably close analogue of this composition can be found in von Gloeden's oeuvre, in this case a photograph of two naked boys placed upon a rock and gazing sensuously at one another over their shoulders as their hands meet (fig. 101). There is indeed even perhaps the suggestion of horns on the head of the figure who turns his body towards the viewer in the photograph, a cowlick in his hair blending in an illusory manner with the unfocused foliage of the background. Philpot's painting certainly shares with this photograph, and with his portrait of

Allerton, an unabashed note of queer eroticism. Philpot's one idiosyncrasy is his observance here of a line between fauns and satyrs, with Richard Warren's generalised observance that the former tend to represent male beauty and the latter male lust appearing to be borne out in *Faun and Satyr*, and with it the sense that the evidently younger and less assertive faun is being seduced by the older and more dominant satyr is difficult to ignore. It is not merely the casting of the figure on the right in a submissive and receptive role which confirms that it is this figure that is intended to be the faun, however. The creature's small horns, curled hair, distinctive tail, and even the positioning of its raised hand— its four fingers together and its thumb extended— all belong to Nijinsky's costume and choreography. The relationship between this older and younger figure may be intended to please Robert Allerton who, as we have noted, was soon to engage in his lifelong relationship with the much younger John Gregg. It may also, however, revisit the territory first traversed by Philpot in *Nijinsky Taking the Curtain*. In this first painting, Nijinsky's faun welcomes into the open a mysterious figure who it takes by the hand and who we have posited may be a symbolic representation of Philpot himself. In this final depiction, a faun which is clearly modelled on Nijinsky's creation seductively touches the hand of an older figure who thrusts irresistibly towards it: it is as if we are seeing Philpot, nearly a decade older than he was when he first took his seat in Covent Garden, still straining to touch the ideal cipher of youthful male beauty that Nijinsky's faun came to represent for him.

Curtain Call: Fauns Beyond Philpot

In the work of the 'Shannon [or] Ricketts of the near future', we see that late nineteenth century interpolations of the nature of the faun were sustained in the aestheticist discourses of the 1920s and that an interest in these interpolations was revived to a considerable degree by the iconography of *L'après-midi d'un faune*. The division Philpot observes between satyrs and fauns perhaps indicates the strength and depth of this influence, with Philpot appearing to suggest that the 'faun' could only mean a creature in Nijinsky's mould. The memory of Nijinsky retained its power in Philpot's imagination beyond the early 1920s, as Martin records that the

writer Gerald Heard talked to Philpot about another (presumably lost or unfinished) painting of Nijinsky he was working on in the early 1930s.⁴⁶⁶ It was not merely Philpot, for whom the spectacle of *L'après-midi* possessed a personal and direct importance, that this memory persisted and continued to shape the faun in the public consciousness along the lines rehearsed in late nineteenth century aestheticist discourses. As the inclusion of a portrait of a faun in Osbert Lancaster's cartoon *The First Russian Ballet Period* would indicate, conceptions of the faun in Britain frequently depended upon Nijinsky's precedent. In the previous chapter we encountered John Kettelwell's fan design which appeared in *The Sketch* in 1923 and depicted a decadent, effeminate faun in a composition redolent of Aubrey Beardsley's proposed *Yellow Book* cover. In addition to this point of reference, however, Kettelwell's faun is as clearly modelled on Nijinsky's as Philpot's: the visual debt evidenced by its dappled hide (and Kettelwell's approximation of Bakst's noisy colouring) is so pronounced that *The Sketch* reproduced the fan design under the same title as Nijinsky's ballet and teasingly claimed that Kettelwell's effeminate, debauched faun had no connection to the ballet.⁴⁶⁷ Kettelwell's creature was evidently, like those in Beaumont's publicly available books and Philpot's private paintings, a queer creation that perpetuated the image of Nijinsky's sexualised spectacle in the cultural imaginary of the 1920s, even obliquely revising the ballet's controversial climactic moments in positioning the faun lying on its front on a length of cloth.

Kettelwell's faun was joined in the pages of *The Sketch* by a reproduced painting from the theatre designer Reginald Leefe, a surprisingly grotesque image entitled *The Faun Who Found an English Summer Perfect* (fig. 102). Leefe depicts a faun, its cloven hooves approximating the demi-pointe step evidenced in Philpot's *Nijinsky Taking the Curtain*, gazing out at the viewer with heavy-lidded eyes and an enigmatic smile which are equally perverse reprisals of those found in *Robert Allerton as a Faun*. While Philpot's portrait is evidently flattering, Leefe's faun is an emaciated and leering creature with discoloured and sallow skin. It is, however, as effeminate as its predecessors and equally as sexualised. The enormous length of foliage that the faun is in the process of either draping around its neck or removing

⁴⁶⁶ Martin, *Flesh and Spirit*, 86.

⁴⁶⁷ Anon., *The Fan Fantastic*, 30.

resembles a primitive form of feather boa, an accessory that *The Sketch* had noted was becoming popular again in the previous year and was growing in length: this, of course, was only the case for women.⁴⁶⁸ Its expression clearly aims at seduction while its floral garments— an anklet, a necklace, the boa, and a brief loincloth— seem less designed to cover its body than to prettify it. Despite the obvious lack of reference to Nijinsky's costume or choreography, the debt to *L'après-midi* is elucidated than more than just the faun's balletic posing. The landscape in which the faun stands, itself taking the shape of a pair of horns, is depicted in flat, acrid tones that are immediately redolent of Leon Bakst's stage sets for the ballet. Leefe, himself a set and costume designer, would assumedly have been aware of this precedent.⁴⁶⁹

Furthermore, Leefe also provided a fashion illustration for *The Sketch* two months after the appearance of his faun in which he depicted a woman dressed in a Bakst-like costume (fig. 103) to exemplify the vogue of a style he referred to as 'Russian Salad', a satirical swipe at what Osbert Lancaster later called the 'First Russian Ballet Period'.⁴⁷⁰ The grotesquery of Leefe's creature indicates a weariness with the persistence of the fashion and perhaps a phobic uneasiness concerning the faun's increasingly pronounced queer implications, and the title— *The Faun Who Found an English Summer Perfect*—indicates the pervasiveness of Nijinsky's ballet over both of these aspects, suggesting that the creature was here to stay in British visual culture.

While Leefe associated the queerness of the faun in the wake of *L'après-midi* with grotesquery, a reproduced image which shares Leefe's satirical bent but not his phobic reaction to the Ballets Russes' influence can be found in the illustrator Frank Marsden Lea's painting *L'après-midi d'un Faun!* which appeared in *The Bystander* in the same year (fig. 104).⁴⁷¹ Lea's painting depicts a bearded and slightly corpulent faun dozing beneath a tree, having evidently overindulged in the open bottle of champagne placed in front of it. A young maid, naked but for her apron which flutters revealingly in the wind, stands nearby and assumedly constitutes the potential focus of the faun's sexual attention: Lea's titling subtly masculinises the faun, omitting the feminine 'e' of Nijinsky's *faune*. The humour animating the image is twofold. On one level Lea mocks the faun's lack of self-control, its excessive

⁴⁶⁸ Anon., "Literally in Fine Feathers: Social Celebrities at Ascot". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 22 June 1927, 573.

⁴⁶⁹ Anon., "The Passing Shows". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 05 August 1931, 231.

⁴⁷⁰ Reginald Leefe, "Our Fashion Pages". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 14 November 1928, 332.

⁴⁷¹ Anon., "L'après-midi d'un Faun!". *The Bystander*, Wednesday 21 March 1928, 561.

drinking curtailing its ability to act as a heterosexual aggressor as its ancestors in antiquity may have done. The invocation of Nijinsky's ballet in the image's title also, however, holds the faun to a different standard against which it also performs poorly: drunken, bloated, and notably older than the fauns of the aesthetes' imaginations, Lea's faun is an unconvincing substitute for Nijinsky's which is evoked in the title. Lea's image arguably illustrates how substantially the previously covert discourses of the aesthetes had taken hold of the public imagination by the late 1920s. His faun is on trial for acting like a conventional faun would, overindulging in drink and lusting unsuccessfully after women, because this no longer conformed to the image of the faun which had been reinvented as a *pais kalos*.

The attendant revocation of the faun's once-assumed status as a heterosexual male figure in the 1920s is also perhaps symbolised by the remarkable recurrence of female fauns upon the British stage and beyond in the period. The actress Florence Desmond, photographed in a costume which appears to be closely modelled on Nijinsky's, appeared in C. B. Cochran's revue show *Bon-Ton* in 1925 (fig. 105); the dancer Penelope Spencer, similarly attired, danced the role of the faun in a 1926 production of Moliere's *The Would-Be Gentleman* (fig. 106); Blanche Ostrehan appeared in *The Tatler* in 1928 to promote her dance piece *La Fille D'un Faune*, posed amidst the branches of a tree and tilting her head to emphasise the prominent goat's ears that formed part of her costume (fig. 107).⁴⁷² The appearance of female fauns is, although unusual, not unique to the 1920s: precedents can be found within a minor Northern Renaissance lineage of 'satyr family' prints, as Lynn Frier Kaufmann's research into this tendency elucidates, and Erwin Panofsky identifies examples (albeit without further comment) in his study of Piero di Cosimo's paintings.⁴⁷³ However, the clear influence of Nijinsky's ballet over the appearance of these onstage female fauns suggests that the proliferation of these creatures was a result of this significantly more recent and sensational intervention into the iconography and meaning of the faun.

⁴⁷² Anon., "The Newest 'Supper-Show': Cochran's 'Bon Ton'." *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, Saturday 29 August 1925, 489; Anon., "Moliere Adapted and Adorned: 'The Would-Be Gentleman'." *The Sketch*, Wednesday 24 November 1926, 387; Anon., "Miss Blanche Ostrehan". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 27 June 1928, 611.

⁴⁷³ Kaufmann, *The Noble Savage*; Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 60.

There are certainly few similarities between the bacchanalian creatures of Piero di Cosimo's canvases and a photograph by John Everard of a woman boasting one of 'two new coiffures' for 1934 in *The Bystander* (fig. 108).⁴⁷⁴ Everard's photography and accounts of women's fashions were a constant presence in *The Bystander* and *The Sketch* throughout the 1930s, and intermingled into his pictures of the newest developments in dress were elegantly posed nudes with classical trappings: a 1939 edition of the latter reproduced his 'beautiful camera-study' of Ariadne on Naxos, waiting to be discovered by 'Dionysius [sic]... in the guise of a beautiful youth'.⁴⁷⁵ To confirm the particularities of the fashionable haircut photographed by Everard in 1934, *The Bystander* included two unsigned line drawings and a short description. 'The hair is brushed up tightly without a wave, all round the head and flattened down on either side of the left-hand parting', recorded the anonymous journalist, 'then the ends are swirled into loose, large curls and half-curls'; 'the full-face effect is pointed, faun-like, charming on the right person'.⁴⁷⁶ The creature who had been hymned by the likes of Friedrich Nietzsche and his followers for its virile masculinity had become a source of inspiration for the beauty regimes of the most fashionable women of the day.

In these two chapters we have investigated the aesthetes' conception of the faun, first as a figure whose hybridity allowed for the transformation of its body into queer metaphor and as a figure to be identified with and secondly as a *pais kalos*, the role more ambiguously navigated by its god Dionysus. We have seen that it emerged in Pater's essays at a point where images of the faun as a heterosexual aggressor were on one hand being strengthened from Nietzsche and his followers but on the other being challenged by more sensitive displays of 'true humour' in the work of artists such as Praxiteles, Botticelli, and Piero di Cosimo, all of which were of public interest in the period owing to recent acquisitions or publications. Following the influence of Aubrey Beardsley, for whom the faun was a particularly recurrent symbol, into the 1920s, we have then seen how later generations of artists accepted the queer model of the faun provided in the foundational texts of aestheticism's engagements with the Dionysian retinue. In this chapter, we have turned to the specific influence of Vaslav Nijinsky's ballet *L'après-midi d'un faune*—itself indebted to the culture and thought

⁴⁷⁴ Anon., "Two New Coiffures". *The Bystander*, Tuesday 21 August 1934, 350.

⁴⁷⁵ Anon., "Ariadne on Naxos". *The Sketch* - Wednesday 13 September 1939, 499.

⁴⁷⁶ Anon., *Two New Coiffures*, 350.

of late nineteenth century aestheticism— to demonstrate how this furthered the reimagining of the faun as an erotic locus within these continuing discourses. Finally, we have seen how the dislocation of the faun from its conventional role proliferated unassumingly in the broader visual culture of the 1920s, with the creature eventually appearing as a beauty standard for the fashionable women of John Everard’s lens in an echo of Nijinsky’s performance and a yet more distant and distorted echo of Pater’s writings.

A further female faun, this time appearing in the same print publications in which Reginald Leefe, John Kettelwell, Marsden Lea, and John Everard’s fauns appeared, equally highlights the sociopolitical machinations that arguably lie at the root of Desmond, Spencer, and Ostrehan’s assumption of the role in their dance pieces. The 1926 Christmas edition of *The Bystander* dedicated a page to reproducing Harry Woolley’s watercolour painting *The Young Faun* (fig. 109).⁴⁷⁷ Woolley’s faun is a young woman, her bobbed hair and painted lips as quintessential of the age as the horns (which invert and mirror the curls of her bob), leopard skin, and surrounding grapes are of her status as a member of Dionysus’s retinue. Half-concealing her grin behind a set of panpipes, Woolley’s *Young Faun* is as coyly seductive as the male counterparts we have seen within the paintings, prints, drawings, writings, and imaginations of the aesthetes. Woolley had, in fact, previously intimated the danger of such figures in *The Bystander*, with a 1921 edition including a reproduction of his work bearing the title *A Sum-Mer Maid* (fig. 110).⁴⁷⁸ The laboured wordplay of the title is not the only aspect of Woolley’s work which was evidently unoriginal. In the image, a male sailor leans across the edge of his boat to kiss a female figure with hair styled like the faun’s who rises up to meet his lips and throw her arms around him; one of his hands is caught in the ropes of the sail, and the scene is decidedly and ominously overcast despite the punning title. In these details, the mermaid-like woman clearly acts in line with those that we explored as precedents for the compositional peculiarities of Laurence Housman’s *The Reflected Faun*, endangering and entrapping her foolish lover like the mythological creature of Charles Shannon’s *The Fisherman and the Mermaid*.

⁴⁷⁷ Anon., “The Young Faun”. *The Bystander*, Saturday 25 December 1926, 53.

⁴⁷⁸ Anon., “A Sum-Mer Maid”. *The Bystander*, Wednesday 08 June 1921, 608.

In the case of Woolley's *Young Faun*, the danger she poses to male viewers is of a more existential nature, as the accompanying text elucidates. 'We are fully aware that fauns are popularly supposed to have been males', the passage reads.⁴⁷⁹ 'However, as Woman has so successfully managed to take over many of man's jobs to-day, it is quite probable that even in the days of the Ancients she occasionally turned her hand to callings usually the prerogative of mere man'.⁴⁸⁰ We have so far examined the treatment of the male figures of Dionysus's retinue amongst the aesthetes, those of Dionysus himself and his goat-legged attendants. But, as Pater's interest in the retinue being formed of 'women *and* feminine souls' and his acceptance that the group is 'almost exclusively formed of women' would indicate, the female counterparts to the fauns occupied a similarly important place within aestheticist discourses. It is to these figure that we will now turn, figures whose distance from and danger to men (as the *Bystander's* journalist teasingly suggested) constituted tools for the queer male aesthetes to either attack or simply negate the heteronormative masculine culture against which their aestheticism was defined in the public consciousness. We shall first elucidate the meanings of the aesthetes' terminology in discussing these figures in the 1920s, and how this drew upon the literary, scholarly, and artistic work of their precedents. We shall then examine interpretations of the women of the thiasus in the collaborative work of the artist Thomas Esmond Lowinsky, a friend of Philpot, Ricketts, and Shannon's, and Raymond Mortimer, a younger writer whose essays evince an attachment to and belief in the culturally combative potentialities of aestheticism. The following chapter will then examine the early photography, graphic work, and writings of Cecil Beaton to alternately demonstrate the lure of the thiasus— the name given to the rampaging Dionysian processions dominated by maenads— for queer aesthetes as an imaginative space which excluded heterosexual men.

⁴⁷⁹ Anon., *Young Faun*, 53.

⁴⁸⁰ Anon., *Young Faun*, 53.

Chapter 4

‘The Red Streams and Torn Flesh’:
Maenads and *Modern Nymphs*

On the twentieth of October 1926, another advertisement for the tailoring firm Pope and Bradley appeared in *The Sketch*. Pope and Bradley, as we saw in our investigations into Dionysus and the raucous rites performed to celebrate his influence, attempted to sell clothes to aesthetes throughout the 1920s by combining illustrations by the artist Charles Sykes with short essays by the playwright and proprietor Herbert Dennis Bradley. Bradley complained, in an advertisement accompanied by the illustration *The Order of Dionysus*, that young men were not as interested in shopping as women were, and that this resulted in the stultification of standards of dress. In 1926, he expanded further upon this state of affairs in an advertisement titled ‘The Nymph and the Herd’.⁴⁸¹

Man, Bradley argued, ‘is a far less subtle animal than woman’ who has ‘lost the art of individuality... They instinctively fly to the mediocrity of the million’.⁴⁸² By contrast, he recorded, ‘an amazing phenomenon of the twentieth century is the modern nymph’.⁴⁸³ ‘She faces the world fearlessly, determined to create the goddess within herself and, casting aside the hideously hypocritical modesty of the past, glories in the freedom of her limbs and of her mind’.⁴⁸⁴ Modulated through Bradley’s dandyish eye for adventurous tailoring, his essay revisits the ground we observed in Harry Woolley’s *The Young Faun*; namely, that masculine authority was being eroded in the early twentieth century by women who could increasingly usurp or negate their roles. Bradley’s text was accompanied by a drawing from Charles Sykes entitled *The Velvet Grip* (fig. 111) in which a young man in evening dress appears to be arriving home late at night, his tread daintily balletic in its evident cautiousness and his furrowed brow attesting to his unease as he turns out the lights. Above him is an extravagantly framed portrait of a young and opulently attired woman whose unimpressed gaze appears to be turned upon him. At his feet, in front of a closed door and a doormat which is so richly textured as to appear like the hide of an animal, is an obscure object which is perhaps suggestive in its shape of female genitalia.

Sykes’s drawing appears to depict a young man who has stayed too late at his club and is afraid of the repercussions from his partner, whose disapproval is

⁴⁸¹ Herbert Dennis Bradley, ‘The Nymph and the Herd’. *The Sketch*, Wednesday 26 October, viii.

⁴⁸² Bradley, *Nymph and Herd*, viii.

⁴⁸³ Bradley, *Nymph and Herd*, viii.

⁴⁸⁴ Bradley, *Nymph and Herd*, viii.

foreshadowed by the dismissive glare of the portrait. Sykes's title *A Velvet Grip* both literally refers to the quietude of the male figure's stealthy handling of the light switch and also to the grip that the 'modern nymph', who 'adorns her body with the silken fabrics of considered choice' according to Bradley's essay, holds him in.⁴⁸⁵ It is at once feminised, with 'velvet' connoting softness, and stiflingly powerful, curtailing the pleasures of his erstwhile bachelor's existence as the portrait's gaze would suggest. The mysterious, discarded object at his feet and the animalistic mat by which it lies suggest that, in the man's absence, his home has been taken over by a force which is at once feminine and animalistic, at once related to a threatening primal violence and to the lure of sexual congress for the man who figures in Sykes's drawing as a nervous intruder.

Pope and Bradley's invocation of the nymph in this manner, as a fundamentally destabilising, emasculating figure whose power appears to be connected to her sexuality, reflected the interests and anxieties of their intended audience just as *The Order of Dionysus* did. Throughout the visual culture of the 1920s, figures referred to as 'nymphs' proliferated. In doing so, they blended iconographies associated not merely with the mythical figures who nursed Dionysus in his infancy and joined his wild revels in his maturity but with those pertaining to the maenads, the maddened mortal followers of the god who were responsible for the bloody violence of Dionysus's retributive attacks on those who resisted him. While heterosexual viewers of Pope and Bradley's advertisement may be tempted to flee to the homosocial safety of London's clubland, upon which the tailoring firm proudly claimed to model its rooms in *The Order of Dionysus*, at the sign of such a figure, queer male viewers may have detected a more profound lure in the 'modern nymph' whose implied powers are attested to by Sykes's *The Velvet Grip*. This chapter will trace the inheritances from late nineteenth century aestheticism that informed their interest in nymphs, as we have done with the figures of the faun and of Dionysus himself, to demonstrate that the power of the nymphs became in the hands of the aesthetes a tool for attacking heterosexual male authority just as it did for Dionysus.

At the core of our investigations is the book *Modern Nymphs*, a 1930 collaborative project from the writer Raymond Mortimer and the artist Thomas Esmond Lowinsky which featured an essay by the former and fourteen 'fashion

⁴⁸⁵ Bradley, *Nymph and Herd*, viii.

plates' depicting figures referred to as nymphs and drawn from the annals of classical mythology by the latter.⁴⁸⁶ According to surviving notes relating to the project, Lowinsky saw *Modern Nymphs* as an opportunity to depict 'rich and naughty woman' through the figure of the nymph, and in doing so he drew upon precedents drawn from the oeuvres of artists who represented his most consistent sources of inspiration.⁴⁸⁷ Lowinsky was another younger friend of Ricketts and Shannon, the former of whom exercised a great influence over Lowinsky; through these connections Lowinsky also belonged to the circle of Glyn Philpot, whose entry in the Oxford National Biography Lowinsky wrote just as he would add an introductory note to Ricketts's book about Wilde after Ricketts's death.⁴⁸⁸ His oil paintings were rarely exhibited, and as Monica Bohm-Duchen observes in her catalogue for a 1990 exhibition of Lowinsky's work, evinced continuities with nineteenth century symbolist and late Pre-Raphaelite painting in addition to their Renaissance precedents, particularly pronounced in the classical subjects to which Lowinsky frequently returned.⁴⁸⁹ Among the artists Lowinsky particularly revered was Edward Burne-Jones, examples of whose drawings Lowinsky owned and whose residence in the Kensington area inspired Lowinsky to buy a house there.⁴⁹⁰ He was also an enthusiastic supporter of Beardsley's work which, if the attribution to Lowinsky of a drawing in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection is correct, he was willing to emulate with the fidelity of contemporaries like John Kettelwell or John Bowle (fig. 112).⁴⁹¹

The style is not in evidence in the Art Deco-inspired, economically coloured illustrations of *Modern Nymphs*, but conceptual and thematic echoes of late nineteenth century aestheticism are arguably detectable beneath the sleek and modish surfaces. These echoes were almost certainly reinforced by Lowinsky's artistic partnership with Raymond Mortimer, a writer, journalist, and aesthete whose essays reveal a consistent and combative faith in an idiosyncratically interpreted version of late nineteenth century aestheticism as embodied particularly for

⁴⁸⁶ Raymond Mortimer and Thomas Lowinsky, *Modern Nymphs: Being a Series of Fourteen Fashion Plates by Thomas Lowinsky, with an Introductory Essay on Clothes by Raymond Mortimer* (London: Etchells and Macdonald, 1930).

⁴⁸⁷ Quoted in: Bohm-Duchen, *Lowinsky*, 62.

⁴⁸⁸ Bohm-Duchen, *Lowinsky*, 15-16; Delaney, *Philpot*, 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Bohm-Duchen, *Lowinsky*, 15.

⁴⁹⁰ Bohm-Duchen, *Lowinsky*, 24.

⁴⁹¹ Bohm-Duchen, *Lowinsky*, 12.

Mortimer by Pater and Wilde. Mortimer's writings on aestheticism and its relationship to its detractors provide clarification over the meaning of his and Lowinsky's titular terms, with his conception of the movement both inviting Lowinsky's 'nymphs' to be read as products of aestheticist discourses and indicating that it is this that makes them 'modern'. In Mortimer's writings, 'aestheticism' is consistently opposed to what he terms 'Victorianism', a somewhat nebulous term representing for Mortimer a cocktail of aesthetic and social mores anathema to the aesthete which was defeated by the modernising tide of aestheticism. Resultantly, *Modern Nymphs* peoples its fashion plates with figures doing battle with emblems of 'Victorianism', largely through Lowinsky's subversions of 'Victorian' compositional conventions common to the myths he occupied himself with. In doing so, Lowinsky's images reinscribe into the figures referred to as 'nymphs' a propensity for violence against, and ultimately the negation of, heterosexual male attention in the manner indicated by Charles Sykes's *The Velvet Grip*. We will first examine precisely what was meant by the term 'nymph' in this project, before turning to the construction of aestheticism in the writings of Raymond Mortimer through which Lowinsky's plates are plainly legible.

Nymphs and Maenads

When viewed through the lens of aestheticism's legacies, *Modern Nymphs* is unusual for its titular terminology. Indeed, when viewed more generally as a project which evidently engaged with classical iconographies, its terminology is unusual for its obvious inaccuracies. Mortimer's introductory essay makes no attempt to define the term 'nymph', and indeed has relatively little to say about any definition we may glean from Lowinsky's illustrations. Instead, Mortimer insists that his is 'not a learned essay' but one that is 'concerned only with that I see in the street, at the opera, in shops, churches and desirable residences'; his only direct comment concerning Lowinsky's pictures is that 'in his witty use of classical legends Mr. Lowinsky has been particularly happy'.⁴⁹² This reticence somewhat obfuscates the

⁴⁹² Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 7, 16.

oddity at the heart of Lowinsky's pictures: while some do concern figures who it is correct to apply the term 'nymph' to according to Greek mythological narratives such as Syrinx and Daphne, the vast majority of the plates do not. It is, for example, clearly inaccurate to refer to a figure such as Aphrodite, who appears in Lowinsky's opening plate, as a nymph, to say nothing of the brothers Castor and Pollux who appear in the final plate. Mortimer and Lowinsky's use of the term 'nymph' to classify a diverse cast of characters, who are united by little more than their origination in classical mythology, indicates that the term possessed special resonances by 1930 far beyond the specific myth narratives of the individual figures.

Clarifying these resonances through recourse to late nineteenth century aestheticism, and the writings of Pater in particular, initially seems counterproductive as the significance of the term 'nymph' in Mortimer and Lowinsky's project is equalled by its relative insignificance in Pater's essays. The word does not occur at all in Pater's 'Bacchanals' essay, and appears infrequently in his 'Study of Dionysus'. When Pater does discuss nymphs in this latter essay, it is without the thoughtful and sustained focus found in his reconceptualization of the faun: nymphs are instead glancingly mentioned in their role as the infant Dionysus's nurses, or as 'the more graceful inhabitants of woodland'.⁴⁹³ Their grace, the same characteristic Pater valued in Praxiteles's sculptures, will be of interest to us when we examine Cecil Beaton's interpretation of such women, but it has little to say to the terrifying 'modern nymph' implicated in the Pope and Bradley advertisement we began with. Pater's interest in the female figures associated with Dionysus is reserved instead for the maenads of Euripides's *Bacchae*, written about so admiringly in the 'Bacchanals' essay that the classicist Robert Fowler has noted Pater 'seems almost to wish he himself were a maenad'.⁴⁹⁴

The question as to whether or not Pater's thought, and that of the subsequent aestheticist discourses it engendered, can be considered to be of relevance to understanding *Modern Nymphs* and nymphs in the 1920s more generally is the question of the relationship between nymphs and maenads. If we are to view the two figures as completely distinct from one another, occupying different spaces and roles

⁴⁹³ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 14.

⁴⁹⁴ Robert Fowler, "Pater and Greek Religion". *Pater the Classicist: Classical Scholarship, Reception, and Aestheticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 248.

within the cultural imaginary, then the terminological distinction between Pater's interests and those of the 1920s forecloses the possibility of observing confluences and influences. However, this does not appear to have been the case in the 1920s, nor indeed at any point in time. Scholars who have interrogated the interplay between the terms 'nymph' and 'maenad' (or its Latin synonym 'bacchante') have consistently found the dividing line between the two terms unstable and, indeed, for some writers almost non-existent, paralleling the situation we have observed between the terms 'faun' and 'satyr'. Sheila McNally's study of maenads in Greek art notes that, in academic considerations, whether figures are referred to as 'nymphs' or 'maenads' is often a matter of periodisation, with the term 'maenad' gradually supplanting the term 'nymph'.⁴⁹⁵ As Guy Hedreen has observed, it has often been assumed that maenads could be identified as such in Greek art by their sporting of the regalia associated with Dionysian rites, listed by Hedreen as 'the *nebris* [fawn-skin], *pardalis* [leopard or panther], snake, [and] thyrsos'.⁴⁹⁶ However, Hedreen equally notes that these attributes are not specific to figures who are definitely maenads.⁴⁹⁷ Moreover, Hedreen records that 'the collective name "maenads" is not inscribed on any surviving Athenian vase', pointing out that 'it is known from poetry and transferred by scholars from literature to the visual arts'.⁴⁹⁸ Jennifer Larson's book-length study of nymphs further rejects the notion that female figures with these attributes should exclusively be termed maenads. Drawing attention to the relationships evidenced in much Greek decorative art between fauns and these female figures, Larson argues that they must be mythological in nature too and concludes that, 'whatever amount of Dionysiac paraphernalia they may boast, [they] should in general be considered nymphs'.⁴⁹⁹

As Hedreen also observes, the terms 'nymph' and 'maenad' were to an extent reliant on one another to gain their meaning in visual art and beyond. Maenads, he demonstrates, assume the behavioural characteristics of nymphs when under the thrall of Dionysian madness: the presence of Dionysus inspires them to temporarily transcend their mortal womanhood and act as mythological nymphs, taking to the wilds beyond the *polis* where nymphs permanently reside and reenacting their

⁴⁹⁵ Sheila McNally, "The Maenad in Early Greek Art." *Arethusa*, 11,1/2, 1978, 104.

⁴⁹⁶ Guy Hedreen. "Silens, Nymphs, and Maenads." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 114, 1994, 51.

⁴⁹⁷ Hedreen, *Silens, Nymphs, and Maenads*, 51.

⁴⁹⁸ Hedreen, *Silens, Nymphs, and Maenads*, 48.

⁴⁹⁹ Jennifer Larson, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 95.

religious practices in service of Dionysus.⁵⁰⁰ This, indeed, is implicitly acknowledged within Pater's writings, who casts the nymphs who raise the god as 'those first leaping maenads' in one of his glancing references to them.⁵⁰¹ Furthermore, Pater's visual reference points for elucidating the appeal of maenads indicate his application of a loose, expansive definition of the term. Pater praises 'the beautiful wind-touched draperies, the rhythm, the heads suddenly thrown back, of many a Pompeian wall painting and sarcophagus-frieze', a description which has been convincingly traced in the Oxford University Press's annotated edition of Pater's writings to Pater's reading of an article concerning the Pompeii frescoes of maenads by the French historian Henry Houssaye.⁵⁰² He equally, however, praises 'that melting languor, that perfectly composed lassitude of the fallen Maenad, [which] became a fixed type in the school of grace, the school of Praxiteles'.⁵⁰³ The 'grace' of the maenad will constitute an important area of focus in our subsequent chapter; what is important here is the vagueness of this reference point. As in Pater's ekphrasis on Praxiteles's *Resting Satyr*, the Praxitelean sculpture group he is thinking of here remains unnamed. Unlike his discussion of the *Resting Satyr*, however, the identity of the figure Pater is discussing is unclear, and a definite single model is not suggested in Potolsky's commentary.⁵⁰⁴ It is possible that his description encompasses the frequently copied poses of either the *Sleeping Ariadne* (fig. 113) or the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* (fig. 114) despite these sculptures not being associated with Praxiteles, both being perhaps likely points of reference as Frances Haskell and Nicholas Penny note they were sometimes referred to by scholars as depictions of nymphs and were considered to possess Dionysian resonances by scholars writing before Pater.⁵⁰⁵ In any case, the absence of a Praxitelean sculpture group which definitely depicts a maenad indicates that Pater too saw the term 'maenad' as a flexible one.

Recourse to the same publications which featured popular depictions of fauns, largely tied to the memory of Nijinsky's ballet, indicates that these scholarly disagreements and imprecisions were replicated in the visual culture of the 1920s.

⁵⁰⁰ Hedreen, *Silens, Nymphs, and Maenads*, 50.

⁵⁰¹ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 27.

⁵⁰² Pater, *Bacchanals*, 58; Matthew Potolsky, *The Collected Works of Walter Pater, Vol. 8: Classical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 174.

⁵⁰³ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 58-59.

⁵⁰⁴ Potolsky, *Classical Studies*, 174.

⁵⁰⁵ Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 185, 235.

We find, for example, *The Bystander* reproducing Jean Hardy's drypoint etching *Bacchante* (fig. 115) on a front cover of 1928, a depiction of a young woman with fashionably bobbed hair carrying a basket of grapes through a grey, windswept landscape. The grapes in the basket and those entwined in her hair indicate participation in Dionysiac activity as, given the landscape's barrenness, the scene potentially occurs during the harvest period and Hardy's bacchante may thus be gathering the ripe fruits of the vine. Hardy's *Bacchante*, however, possesses none of the typical attributes identified in ancient depictions of bacchantes by Guy Hedreen.

Conversely, Raoul Serres's *Nymph* (fig. 116), appearing two years earlier in *The Tatler*, anticipates many aspects of Hardy's iconography while eschewing the term 'bacchante'. Serres's nymph, like Hardy's bacchante, occupies the foreground of a forested landscape of the sort nymphs live in and maenads escape to. Like Hardy's bacchante, Serres's nymph has vegetation elegantly woven into her hair, this time crowned by fallen vine leaves. The dead leaves and russet colouring of the landscape indicate that this scene also occurs during the harvest months, appropriate to the picture's appearance in an issue of *The Tatler* dated to the first of September.⁵⁰⁶ The actions of Serres's nymph and Hardy's bacchante are, furthermore, clearly related to one another. Both are occupied with the harvesting of grapes and both pursue their task in a state of undress: Serres's nymph is naked while Hardy's bacchante bares one breast to the viewer. Serres's 'nymph' also bears considerable visual similarities to a *Bacchante* provided by the fashionable painter William Barribal which had appeared in reproduction in a 1922 December issue of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* (fig. 117).⁵⁰⁷ Like Serres's nymph, Barribal's 'bacchante' appears with autumn foliage haloing her face, although is a demurer figure, not sharing the nakedness of Serres's later figure.

The striking red hair of Barribal's 'bacchante' is in turn redolent of a fourth example, a reproduction of a chalk drawing by the French artist Suzanne Meunier in a 1928 issue of *The Sketch*, which further compounds this sense of confusion over specific identities in depictions of Dionysian women. Meunier's drawing (fig. 118) portrays the only one of these four figures to sport any maenadic regalia, wearing an

⁵⁰⁶ Raoul Serres, "A Nymph", *The Tatler*, Wednesday 01 September 1926, 379.

⁵⁰⁷ William Barribal, "Bacchante". *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, Friday 01 December 1922, 30.

armlet in the shape of a snake on her left arm, but its title refers to neither nymph nor the mortal counterpart thereof- rather, Meunier's drawing is simply referred to as a study of a 'classical dancer'.⁵⁰⁸ More generally, Meunier's figure also sports the generically Dionysian attributes that accompany Serres's nymph and Hardy and Barribal's bacchantes, with vine leaves and grapes woven into her hair and clutched to her exposed breasts; the nakedness of Meunier's dancer, in fact, associates her more closely with Serres's nymph than Barribal and Hardy's bacchantes despite her maenadic armlet. Meunier's drawing also bears a striking resemblance to that of a 1922 drawing, also by Meunier and also appearing in *The Sketch*, that took the name of Nijinsky's ballet *L'après-midi d'un faune* as its title (fig. 119). Despite the softer handling of the chalk in this earlier work, the female subject of *L'après-midi* shares with the 'classical dancer' her cropped red hair, anachronistic makeup, and proclivity for exposing her body: like the classical dancer, the star of *L'après-midi* bears one breast while gripping a herm depicting a wickedly grinning faun. The faun represented in Meunier's herm in no way resembles Nijinsky's creation, nor does its pairing with a female figure reflect the pronounced queer potentialities of the performance or the artistic responses it inspired; rather, the creature seems more to function in its traditional role as a symbol of the heterosexual lust engendered by the provocative display of the female figure. Meunier's invocation of *L'après-midi* does, however, still indicate that we should consider this figure a nymph, the only characters beyond the faun present in Nijinsky's ballet. Her obvious similarities to the classical dancer, both in terms of physical resemblance and attitude struck, further complicate the maenadic identity of the later figure as much as her armlet should clarify it.

Before examining the shared thematic ground that unites depictions of 'nymphs' or 'maenads' in the 1920s, the shared iconographies and physical resemblances between these reproduced works is indicative of the fact that, as debates within scholarly accounts of classical art would suggest, confusion and confluence continued to characterise conceptions of the figures in the 1920s. This would in turn indicate that late nineteenth century discourses surrounding maenads as much as those surrounding nymphs could retain their importance in the

⁵⁰⁸ Suzanne Meunier, "Studies in Femininity: By Suzanne Meunier". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 22 February 1928, 341.

resonances of Dionysus's female followers regardless of their titling. Within the work of the aesthetes, this could evidently include Pater's conception of the maenads of the *Bacchae*, the text which occasions Pater's fullest explorations of maenadic activity and its appeal.

Pater's Maenads, Mortimer's Aestheticism

Describing the climactic moments of Euripides's *Bacchae*, in which the death of Dionysus's enemy Pentheus is revealed after he has been torn to pieces in an act of sparagmos by the maddened maenads, Walter Pater lights upon the twin functions of the maenad and her mythological equivalent within ensuing aestheticist discourses. The 'curious narrative [which] sets forth the manner of his death', Pater writes, presents the audience with a paradoxical spectacle.⁵⁰⁹ On one hand, it is 'full of wild, coarse, revolting details', like an earlier description of maenadic activity which foreshadows Pentheus's killing in providing 'a hard, coarse picture of animals cruelly rent' and which Pater judged to be 'one of the special curiosities which distinguish this play'.⁵¹⁰ Equally, however, even in this moment of bloodshed 'the loveliness of the serving Maenads, and of their mountain solitudes— their trees and water— [is] never quite forgotten', reprising his enthusiasm for 'that melting languor, that perfectly composed lassitude of the fallen Maenad' that he traced to an unelucidated Praxitelean model.⁵¹¹

Pater's appreciation of the maenads' 'loveliness' is shared, albeit in corrupted and prurient form, by Pentheus, and it is this that brings about their retributive violence through which Dionysus emerges triumphant. Pentheus has come into contact with the maenads at the close of the play only because, despite his loathing of their practices, a 'sudden desire seizes [Pentheus] to witness them in their encampment upon the mountains'.⁵¹² This 'sudden desire' is assumedly related to Pentheus's uncomprehending interpretation of maenadic activity. 'Like the

⁵⁰⁹ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 76.

⁵¹⁰ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 76, 71.

⁵¹¹ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 76.

⁵¹² Pater, *Bacchanals*, 74.

exaggerated diabolical figures in some of the religious plays and imageries of the Middle Age, he is an impersonation of stupid impiety, one of those whom the gods willing to destroy first infatuate', Pater records.⁵¹³ 'Alternating between glib unwisdom and coarse mockery, between violence and a pretence of moral austerity, he understands only the sorriest motives', Pater continues, noting that Pentheus believes 'the real motive of the Bacchic women [to be] the indulgence of their lust'.⁵¹⁴ Wrongly believing the maenads to be engaging in sexual activity and 'infatuated' by the promise of the spectacle, it is in a spirit of voyeurism that Pentheus allows himself to be tricked by Dionysus and ultimately led to his death at the hands of the god's servants; he is like the man of Charles Sykes's *The Velvet Grip*, who is both inexorably drawn to the promise of sexual congress in the bedroom of the 'modern nymph' and plainly terrified by her animalistic power.

Pater's focus on the *Bacchae*, as we have noted, provides him with the opportunity to demonstrate the aggressive rejection and ultimate persecution with which Dionysus's suspicious effeminacy is met by those beyond the 'women and feminine souls' who constitute his true followers. It also, however, provides him with the chance to glory in the 'outraged beauty' of the god and his vindication, vanquishing Pentheus and his 'stupid impiety'. Richard Dellamora has speculated, in his writing on Pater's interest in the vengeful Dionysus exemplified in Euripides's drama, that 'Dionysus's ability to triumph over his antagonists satisfies subliminal fantasies of revenge against a hostile society'.⁵¹⁵ Certainly, Pater observes a recurrence of this form of the god in the *Bacchae*, in which Dionysus 'becomes more and more discernible as the hunter, a wily hunger, and man the prey he hunts for'.⁵¹⁶ However, Dellamora's point is slightly blunted by Pater's earlier observance, made in the 'Study of Dionysus' as he lays the foundations of the 'Bacchanals' essay, that Euripides 'keeps the red streams and torn flesh away from the delicate body of the god, in his long vesture of white and gold' in the *Bacchae*.⁵¹⁷ Despite the bloodthirsty wishes of the vengeful god, Pater recognises that it is only the actions of his female followers which embody these drives. It is to the maenads, rather than to the god himself, that aesthetes such as Pater could turn to picture 'fantasies of revenge'

⁵¹³ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 66.

⁵¹⁴ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 67.

⁵¹⁵ Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, 177.

⁵¹⁶ Pater, *Bacchanals*, 77-78.

⁵¹⁷ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 49.

against a dominant heterosexual culture embodied in the prurient voyeurism and philistine ignorance of Pentheus, surely the opposite of the ‘best spirits’ who could see beauty and pathos in the Dionysian retinue where others saw only bestial, degenerate practices.

Certainly, women active in aestheticist circles could find within the figure of the maenad a liberatory spirit with which to self-consciously identify; in doing so, it was the ‘wild, coarse’ aspects of maenadic activity that they focused upon. Yopie Prins has convincingly argued that the maenad, living in a state of self-imposed and violently defended isolation from the company of men, was envisioned as ‘an imaginary alternative to the Victorian spinster’ by female writers in the late nineteenth century.⁵¹⁸ Pater, in fact, appeared to make precisely this observation in what may be a knowing, punning reference to the nymphs of Nysa’s occupation of weaving ‘the subtlest, many-coloured threads’: this makes them, he mentions, either ‘weavers or spinsters’.⁵¹⁹ Prins’s analysis focuses on the emergence of university-educated female classicists in the late nineteenth century, particularly Jane Harrison, who was both instrumental in the dissemination of Nietzsche’s ideas in Britain and also influenced by her erstwhile friend Walter Pater.⁵²⁰ Harrison’s popular 1903 work *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* indicates not merely a sustained interest in nymphs and maenads but an awareness of their contemporary importance in the cultural imaginary. For Harrison, the relevance of the maenad to the contemporary reader is her fundamental independence from and resistance to masculine authority beyond that of the effeminate Dionysus, as brutally realised in the conclusive action of the *Bacchae* and, according to Harrison, in reality too. ‘That any woman might at any moment assume the liberty of a Maenad is certainly unlikely, but much is borne even by husbands and brothers when sanctioned by religious tradition’, Harrison recorded; ‘however much the Macedonian men disliked these orgies, they were clearly too frightened to put a stop to them’.⁵²¹ When they became maenads, ‘women were possessed, magical... dangerous to handle’ and liable to facing ineffective protestations from male authority figures.⁵²² It is just such

⁵¹⁸ Yopie Prins, *Greek Maenads*, 46.

⁵¹⁹ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 4-5.

⁵²⁰ Fowler, *Pater and Greek Religion*, 250.

⁵²¹ Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), 397-398.

⁵²² Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 398.

resistance that Harrison identifies as the ‘characteristically modern touch’ of Euripides’s *Bacchae*, namely societal anxieties over women ‘going out at night [which] Pentheus could not bear’.⁵²³ Prins also identifies ‘Michael Field’, the pseudonym under which the couple Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper published their poetry, as figures who were similarly drawn to the figure of the maenad in Pater’s wake; Stefano Evangelista likewise considers them to be figures for whom “Bacchic” and “aesthetic” came to be almost synonymous in their private papers’, and notes that they were particularly interested in the maenads’ ‘tearing to pieces... men who happen to pass by, interrupting the female homosocial ritual’.⁵²⁴

For male aesthetes, who Pater invited to view themselves as brothers to the maenads in Dionysus’s train of ‘women and feminine souls’, the maenads’ assaults on heterosexual men and their establishment of rigorously defended encampments beyond their authority could offer an equivalent appeal which Richard Dellamora incompletely suggests in his statement of their affinity for Dionysus. This certainly appears to be the spirit in which Raymond Mortimer and Thomas Lowinsky engaged with the figure of the nymph in *Modern Nymphs*, a work which arguably functions as a late flowering of this intellectual activity at the close of the preceding century and which, as we shall see, entertains the notion that its ‘nymphs’ are capable of acts of maenadic sparagmos against male interlopers. Mortimer’s essays, both his introductory piece for *Modern Nymphs* and other writings which were collected in the 1942 book *Channel Packet*, evince a strong personal belief in aestheticism and its transgressive potentialities; Mortimer was equally aware of the persecution and marginalisation of its architects, particularly Pater and Wilde, which appeared to catalyse his fervour. Mortimer’s conception of aestheticism’s social role was decidedly idiosyncratic in its terminology and in its aggression, seeing the movement as the triumphant scourge of what he termed ‘Victorianism’. In an essay collected in *Channel Packet*, Mortimer mused that the year 1866 represented ‘the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries joining hands, as it were, in the very heart of the Nineteenth’, referring to the fact that it was in this year that ‘Swinburne published his *Poems and Ballads*, and Pater his essay, at least equally shocking, on Winckelmann’.⁵²⁵ ‘It was, in fact, the aesthetes... who did most to break up the Victorian nexus’, Mortimer

⁵²³ Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 400.

⁵²⁴ Prins, *Greek Maenads*, 46; Evangelista, *British Aestheticism*, 121.

⁵²⁵ Raymond Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 26.

continued.⁵²⁶ However, the victory was somewhat pyrrhic. ‘Oscar Wilde was brought down by Victorianism, but not till he had gravely wounded it’, he claimed, and elsewhere reiterated that ‘when the forts of that folly [of Victorianism] fell, the bodies by the wall were Pater and Wilde’.⁵²⁷ The aesthetes of the late nineteenth century, persecuted within their own lifetimes, required avenging, and although Mortimer does not specifically raise the issue of their sexuality in these passages the repeated references to the fall of Wilde are strongly suggestive of the notion that this is how we are to understand them. That among Mortimer’s grievances directed towards nineteenth century academic painting we find a complaint about the ‘neat accounts by [Lawrence] Alma Tadema or [Edward] Poynter’ of the classical past which falsely obfuscated the fact that ancient civilisations ‘had a natural taste for what is politely known as unnatural vice’ would also indicate that the divide between aestheticism and Victorianism was implicitly a sexual one.⁵²⁸

Mortimer’s conception of aestheticism and its antecedent, ‘Victorianism’, is presented in terms of periodisation throughout his essays, with the modernising force of ‘aestheticism’ disrupting and then driving out the unmodern ‘Victorianism’, and from the perspective of the art historian it may be said to be idiosyncratic to the point of absurdity. In *Modern Nymphs* Mortimer rejoiced over how ‘Philistia [was] appalled’ by the ‘cult of beauty’ at the turn of the nineteenth century, which detractors felt to be ‘immoral’.⁵²⁹ ‘There has never been a place, I fancy, when men derived less sensuous pleasure from what they saw than mid-Victorian England... visual art was dead’, he continued, arguing that it took the popularisation of aestheticism in the 1880s to teach the public ‘once more to use their eyes’.⁵³⁰ Before this point, he flatly stated, ‘visual art was dead’.⁵³¹ Mortimer did not modulate his beliefs on this front: reviewing William Gaunt’s 1942 book *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy*, Mortimer wished ‘that Mr. Gaunt would give us a book rescuing from deserved oblivion the idols of the Royal Academy... [Daniel] Maclise and [Robert] Martineau, [John] Phillip and [Augustus] Egg, [Frederic] Leighton and [Lawrence Alma-] Tadema’.⁵³² He wished for such a book not to reinstate the

⁵²⁶ Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 26, 126.

⁵²⁷ Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 126.

⁵²⁸ Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 82-83.

⁵²⁹ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 14.

⁵³⁰ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 14.

⁵³¹ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 14.

⁵³² Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 32.

contemporaneously ailing reputations of such painters, whose ‘pictures, it is true, retain only a period interest, a dusty, pathetic appeal’, but to reconstruct a vision of an artistic milieu ‘in which the painters toadied and bargained and swaggered [that is] beautifully comical’.⁵³³ The Pre-Raphaelites too differed little from these staid academicians despite what Mortimer viewed as their protestations to the contrary. While academic painters Edwin Landseer and William Powell Frith may have been ‘the two chief butts of the Pre-Raphaelites... today, when one compares [Frith’s] *Derby Day* with [Ford Madox Brown’s] *Farewell to England*, the similarities seem more striking than the differences’.⁵³⁴ This was a milder reprisal of Mortimer’s stance in his 1929 book *The New Interior Decoration*, co-authored with erstwhile *Vogue* editor Dorothy Todd, in which he again argued that there was little meaningful difference between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Academicians and lambasted the movement as ‘pitiably in its achievements’.⁵³⁵

Mortimer’s vision of both academic painting and Pre-Raphaelitism as fundamentally disconnected from aestheticism obscures the reality of the interplay between these forces in the late nineteenth century; his suggestion for instance that Pater belonged to a ‘modern’ age and Frederic Leighton, who was influenced by Pater’s own writings, belonged to a ‘Victorian’ one erects false boundaries. However, the distinct binary Mortimer draws is enlightening as to the thematic and conceptual contours of his ‘aestheticism’ beyond matters of artistic style and historical periodisation. The social and economic success of ‘Victorian painters’ – ‘talents that in any other age would, one suspects, have brought only a modest living’ – was explicable to Mortimer only because of the coarsening of understandings of visual art and the supplantation of a legitimate aristocracy by *arriviste* industrialists who ‘understood nothing of art’.⁵³⁶ Their desire to ape the decorating habits of the aristocracy led to the purchase of what Mortimer pejoratively called ‘objects in gilt frames’, artworks which were not artworks in the aesthetes’ appraisal at all.⁵³⁷ The erosion of a legitimate aristocracy disturbed Mortimer while writing his *Modern Nymphs* essay too, complaining that ‘the nineteenth century accepted the doctrine of

⁵³³ Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 32.

⁵³⁴ Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 32.

⁵³⁵ Raymond Mortimer and Dorothy Todd, *The New Interior Decoration. An Introduction To Its Principles, And International Survey Of Its Methods* (London: Batsford, 1929), 30.

⁵³⁶ Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 36.

⁵³⁷ Mortimer, *Channel Packet*, 36.

the nobility of work, a servile doctrine... Idleness became a scandal instead of a privilege and a goal, and all the minor fruits of leisure withered... Aristocrats grew as drab as operatives, shamelessly wearing clothes designed not to show the dirt'.⁵³⁸ *Modern Nymphs* saw Mortimer trace this failing of 'Victorianism' into a coming world in which 'we are all employees of the State... any idiosyncrasy with which we may try to vary the drabness of our State attire will... suggest that we think ourselves different from our neighbours. And in the coming, the complete, democracy, that will be a capital offence'.⁵³⁹ This situation posed an existential threat to all the aesthete held dear, threatening to do away with the arts altogether in favour of 'objects in gilt frames'.

Yet it was not to a revived aristocracy that Mortimer looked for the salvation of aestheticism, but to the new 'leisured class': 'women... [who] paraded their superiority over men, floating like galleons with streamers waving'.⁵⁴⁰ Mortimer's aestheticism becomes in *Modern Nymphs* something of a maenadic encampment in its own right, fiercely resistant to the mainstream of philistine thought and emphatically gendered as female, and many of Lowinsky's plates do indeed dramatise the confrontation between invading male figures and nymphs who outwit, best, and sometimes actively threaten them. That it was Pater and Wilde whose 'bodies [were] by the wall' when 'Victorianism' was vanquished equally suggests that, like Pater, Mortimer saw space for 'feminine souls' within the nexus of his aestheticism and no space for them within 'Victorianism', and that the victory of the nymphs in this manner was equally a victory for the aesthetes. Certainly, Mortimer's writings suggest that his aestheticism was both well-informed by a careful study of the late nineteenth century movement and explicitly aware of its queer sexual politics, as his glancing reference to the 'unnatural vice' of classical antiquity obfuscated in paintings by 'Victorian' artists indicates. His first public success was the publication of his novel *The Oxford Circus* (1922), a satire of contemporaneously popular 'Oxford novels' which was illustrated by John Kettelwell.⁵⁴¹ *The Oxford Circus* concerns the undergraduate career of its protagonist Gaveston, an old Etonian who enters a prolonged 'aesthetic' phase while at Oxford in passages which allow

⁵³⁸ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 13.

⁵³⁹ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 8.

⁵⁴⁰ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 13.

⁵⁴¹ Raymond Mortimer and Hamish Miles, *The Oxford Circus; A Novel of Oxford and Youth* (London: John Lane, 1922).

Mortimer to parade his knowledge of the movement. Gaveston is initially excited to enter Oxford because of his appreciation for Walter Pater, who he later quotes in conversation: ‘Life, as they say at Brasenose, must burn with a hard gem-like flame’, he counsels a fellow old Etonian.⁵⁴² When he provides this advice, Gaveston’s walls are decorated with the works of Beardsley, Barribal, and Bakst, while his bookshelves are ‘bent beneath the crowding volumes of... [Ernest] Dowson and the rarer reprints of the *Yellow Book*’ and he is reading *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.⁵⁴³ Alongside visits to the ‘Café Regale’, a glaring reference to Wilde’s preferred haunt the Café Royal, and the cultivation of his rooms ‘that an S. Diaghilev... might well have envied’, Gaveston also passes his evenings reading ‘the invaluable histories of... [Bernard] Muddiman’, surely a reference to Muddiman’s *Men of the Nineties* which had been published only two years earlier.⁵⁴⁴ Eventually, ‘all the erudition of the Symonses (John Addington and Arthur) [sic], was mastered by the young neophyte’.⁵⁴⁵

The presence of more explicit queer subtexts in the classical iconographies of *Modern Nymphs* is also ghosted in Mortimer’s *The Oxford Circus*. Given our explorations of Dionysus’s goat-footed attendants, Gaveston’s exhortation to his Etonian friend to be ‘savage faun-like creatures, lithe and blithe and primitive’ when they are together should raise an eyebrow.⁵⁴⁶ That becoming so involves explorative punts on the Cherwell during which Gaveston savours the palpably eroticised sight, ‘day in, day out, [of] his friend standing sculptured above him... athletically wielding the long, dripping oar’ blatantly rewards such suspicions, as should the fact that Gaveston is enthralled by ‘the exquisite nakedness of his friend iridescent against the palpitating hornbeams’ when they bathe together.⁵⁴⁷ Indeed, when Gaveston attends a fancy dress ball shortly after this episode at which ‘all eyes sparkled to behold his young upstanding body’, he does so as a ‘nympholept’, a male figure spiritually possessed by nymphs described by Pater as ‘those who seem oddly in love with nature, and strange among their fellows’.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴² Mortimer and Miles, *The Oxford Circus*, 115.

⁵⁴³ Mortimer and Miles, *The Oxford Circus*, 107, 104.

⁵⁴⁴ Mortimer and Miles, *The Oxford Circus*, 70, 104, 116.

⁵⁴⁵ Mortimer and Miles, *The Oxford Circus*, 110.

⁵⁴⁶ Mortimer and Miles, *The Oxford Circus*, 140.

⁵⁴⁷ Mortimer and Miles, *The Oxford Circus*, 142-143.

⁵⁴⁸ Mortimer and Miles, *The Oxford Circus*, 149; Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 12.

When *Modern Nymphs* appeared in 1930 it was in a vanishingly small print run, limited to one hundred and fifty copies, and the exclusivity of Mortimer's audience perhaps enabled a greater blatancy in his coded intimations of his own sexuality. His introductory essay featured witty conceits directed against the hypocrisy of modesty in dress, arguing that if 'we really had modesty, it is our faces that we should conceal... written on our faces are our ruling passions and our pasts, our shameful failures and our more shameful successes'.⁵⁴⁹ It is tempting to wonder what constituted 'ruling passions' or 'shameful successes' for Mortimer, not least owing to his subsequent musings over the relative values of nudity in the modern world. 'No one who has been to a Turkish bath can wish for nakedness to become generally fashionable', Mortimer argued, because 'the human body loses its beauty all too soon'.⁵⁵⁰ Even if the spectacle of elderly bathers offended Mortimer's eye, this type of bathing should be considered in the same spirit as Gaveston's in *The Oxford Circus*. As Matt Houlbrook's scholarship has demonstrated, Turkish baths were already infamous for the permissiveness of homosexual encounters they engendered by 1930.⁵⁵¹ Mortimer's indication that he was familiar with such a space is an unmistakable intimation of his own desires, and his address to others who were familiar with Turkish baths indicates his understanding of *Modern Nymph's* intended audience; namely, 'feminine souls' who could revel in the nymphs' assault on heterosexual male authority.

Examination of Raymond Mortimer's writings, both on either side of *Modern Nymphs* and within its own pages, thus demonstrates that he was keenly aware of his inheritances from late nineteenth century aestheticism, their sexual politics, and the persecution which they engendered for figures like Pater and Wilde, akin to that faced by Dionysus in Euripides's *Bacchae*. Indeed, as in the *Bacchae*, the mythological women of *Modern Nymphs* do vanquish, terrorise, or simply negate the authority of male figures; to do so Lowinsky's images also extend the battle between 'aestheticism' and 'Victorianism' to the level of composition, inverting or subverting conventional depictions of nymphs and other classical female figures to reinscribe a sense of danger and violence into them.

⁵⁴⁹ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 7.

⁵⁵⁰ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 8.

⁵⁵¹ Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 93-109.

Modern Nymphs, Victorian Maenads

Modern Nymphs, combining classical figures grouped together under the Dionysian term ‘nymph’ and Mortimer’s overt references to clandestine sexual practices, evidently suggests itself as a further entry into the annals of the aesthetes’ engagements with the Dionysian retinue. The modernity of its title is understandable through Mortimer’s belief that aestheticism ushered in the ‘modern’ age, with its treatment of its central characters in line with Pater’s writings on Euripides’s *Bacchae* and in discord with treatments of nymphs in the canvases of ‘Victorian’ painters Mortimer condemned to ‘deserved oblivion’. The maenads’ capacity for violence, particularly towards heterosexual male intruders such as Pentheus, admittedly did find occasional expression in the visual culture of the late nineteenth century. A likely object of interest for the female writers like Jane Harrison and Michael Field who identified with maenads would have been a wall painting in Pompeii, the same sight Pater bid his followers look to for beautiful representations of maenads, depicting the climactic act of sparagmos of the *Bacchae* (fig. 120) in which Pentheus has been disarmed, stripped naked, and forced to his knees by marauding maenads who are poised to strike a fatal blow with a raised thyrsus. The painting was rediscovered in 1895 and was dutifully photographed for the London-based *English Illustrated Magazine*, where it was reproduced in an article by the anthropologist H. P. Fitzgerald Marriott who, like Pater, paradoxically praised both its ‘very delicate’ colouring and its ‘wonderful’ ‘massing of the figures and their energy’.⁵⁵²

Before this, the painter John Collier— whose residence on Tite Street placed him at least geographically within the locus of late nineteenth century aestheticist activity, with Shannon, Ricketts, and Whistler all nearby— exhibited his painting *Maenads* (fig. 121) at the Royal Academy in 1886. The painting shows a cascade of divinely maddened maenads, androgynous in their athletic thinness and partially covered by torn fawnskins, chasing an animal in a frenzied hunt like that which presages their killing of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*. Collier’s maenads are shown

⁵⁵² Herbert Philip Fitzgerald Marriott, “The New House in Pompei”. *English Illustrated Magazine*, January 1896, 455.

‘*swarming* [which] was the essence of that strange dance of the Bacchic women’, in Pater’s words, and engaged in the prelude to recreating the ‘hard, coarse picture of animals cruelly rent’ of their activity in the *Bacchae*.⁵⁵³ Critical responses were mixed, with the *Pall Mall Gazette*’s writer calling it a ‘notable work’ which ‘successfully depicts the wild gaiety of the hunting Maenads’, while the *Globe* suggested Collier ‘has been rather less successful in his large picture “Maenads” than in his “Circe” last year’, complaining that ‘the figures are for the most part well designed and full of movement, but the composition is scattered, and the general effect of the picture distracting’.⁵⁵⁴ Without further explanation, the *Illustrated London News* characterised it as ‘a noisy scene [which] offers but little in common with classical conceptions of these maidens’ revels’.⁵⁵⁵

As the *Globe*’s reference to Collier’s *Circe* of the preceding year (fig. 122) would indicate, Collier frequently returned to figures from classical mythology who exhibited the same invitation of voyeuristic male attention and ability to violently negate it that Pater saw in the maenads of the *Bacchae*. Indeed, Collier’s work in the vein would continue to invite controversy into the 1920s, with his 1914 reprisal of the theme of the vengeful, murderous Clytemnestra (fig. 123) being described as ‘nauseous and wicked’ by the local authorities in Blackpool who tried to ban its exhibition in 1922: somewhat gleefully, *The Sketch* magnified the disagreement by placing a full-page reproduction of the offending painting on its front cover.⁵⁵⁶ The varying fortunes of Collier’s paintings on these themes perhaps indicates the fraught nature of the late nineteenth century inheritance of the likes of Thomas Lowinsky and Raymond Mortimer in conceiving of Dionysian women. While the noise and the disarray of *Maenads* was criticised, paintings on similar themes which tended more towards the appearance of Collier’s earlier *Circe* were better received. *Circe* shows its central figure reclining naked in a glade. The lions which attend upon her indicate the danger she poses, as do the pigs in the background which remind us of the fate of Odysseus’s transmogrified crewmates, but the danger is implied and intangible; Circe herself does not share with Collier’s *Maenads* their contorted expressions and decidedly ungraceful movements which mirror the chaotic, disordered composition,

⁵⁵³ Pater, ‘Bacchanals’, 57.

⁵⁵⁴ Anon., “Round the Royal Academy”. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Saturday 01 May 1886, 4; Anon., “The Royal Academy”. *Globe*, Thursday 20 May 1886, 6.

⁵⁵⁵ Anon., “The Royal Academy”. *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 22 May 1886, 525.

⁵⁵⁶ Anon., “On Blackpool’s Blacklist?”. *The Sketch*, Wednesday 01 November 1922, 1.

and her languid composure can be more unambiguously enjoyed. Indeed, the painting was praised in terms which highlighted its fundamental difference from *Maenads*. *The Graphic* thought it the best work Collier had produced because ‘the attitude of the finely-formed figure is extremely graceful’, a critic for *Globe* praised Collier’s ‘beautiful sorceress... the finely-formed figure is easy and very graceful’, while *The Weekly Dispatch* praised it as a ‘very delicate’ painting of ‘a nude female figure, fondling and fondled by friendly wild beasts’.⁵⁵⁷ The tempting tactility of Collier’s *Circe* intimated by this last critic’s lingering over her ‘fondling’ was also identified by other critics: the *Morning Post* considered the tiger upon which Circe leans to be ‘like the “lion amoureux” [who] has yielded to the blandishments of [Circe’s] female fascination’ and a writer for the *St. James Gazette* indulged himself in and a writer for the *St. James Gazette* indulged himself in describing the ‘skin of that creamy softness’ in Collier’s ‘nude... of the human animal’.⁵⁵⁸ Indeed, the *London Evening Standard*’s critic regretted that Circe was ‘rather more meanly seductive in countenance than one would like to imagine’, implying Collier’s passive nude should be yet more erotically enticing.⁵⁵⁹

Similarly, Collier was to fare better with a depiction of another maenad in 1887, this time exhibiting *An Incantation* (fig. 124) at the Royal Academy. The maenad of *An Incantation* is, like *Circe*, a lone, naked, and elegantly poised figure complete with a serpentine armlet and discarded leopard skin upon which she reclines. The activity she is engaged in, apparently brewing some form of potion in a cauldron over a fire, is not typical of maenads. The motif is instead quite possibly derived from John William Waterhouse’s *The Magic Circle* (fig. 125), exhibited at the Royal Academy to great acclaim in the previous year and immediately purchased by the Royal Academy under the Chantrey Bequest; *An Incantation* also shares with *The Magic Circle* its mysterious barren landscape, and it seems likely that Collier was attempting to capitalise on and replicate Waterhouse’s success.⁵⁶⁰ This time the *Globe* praised Collier’s ‘fantastic picture’ as ‘one of the few works in which the nude

⁵⁵⁷ Anon., “The Royal Academy”. *The Graphic*, Saturday 30 May 1885, 551; Anon., “The Royal Academy”. *Globe*, Monday 18 May 1885, 6; Anon., “The Art: Royal Academy”. *Weekly Dispatch*, Sunday 10 May 1885, 6.

⁵⁵⁸ Anon., “The Royal Academy”. *Morning Post*, Tuesday 26 May 1885, 3; Anon., “The Royal Academy”. *St James’s Gazette*, Saturday 30 May 1885, 6.

⁵⁵⁹ Anon., “The Royal Academy”. *London Evening Standard*, Friday 15 May 1885, 2.

⁵⁶⁰ Anthony Hobson, *The Art and Life of J.W. Waterhouse, RA, 1849-1917* (London: Vista Books, 1980), 61.

figure is adequately represented', and although the *Illustrated London News* heavily caveated its praise for the 'excellent' 'modelling of the figure' by adding that 'beyond that, the picture has few elements of interest' perhaps owing to its derivative iconography, it escaped the accusations of noisiness and classical illiteracy that plagued *Maenads*.⁵⁶¹

Indeed, *Maenads* would suffer from an even more damning comparison than with Collier's own *Circe* when it was exhibited again in 1889, this time as part of the British fine art delegation at the Paris Exhibition. *Maenads* was exhibited alongside Lawrence Alma-Tadema's *The Women of Amphissa* (fig. 126), a painting showing a troupe of exhausted maenads resting after an evening of frenzied activity painted by Collier's own teacher.⁵⁶² Alma-Tadema's painting, showing maenads clad in flowing white gowns which rhyme with the pristine marble floor in which they lie, features figures at a significant remove from the 'swarming' women of Collier's *Maenads* and even less seemingly capable of the hinted dangers of the languidly posed women in *An Incantation* and *Circe*. The point of comparison was too much to resist for one critic, who wrote of *The Women of Amphissa* that 'the countenances of these girls are of the purest type of English beauty, and the only fault that could be found is that the expression of weariness, such as must have resulted from the wild gambolling of these devotees of Bacchus, has been rendered with much more artistic reserve than realistic faithfulness'.⁵⁶³ This the critic contrasted with 'a large canvas in the same room, by Mr. John Collier, entitled "Maenades" [sic], representing the furious maidens coursing through a forest glade, [which] is in open contradiction to the treatment adopted by Mr. Alma Tadema in his beautiful production'.⁵⁶⁴ In contrast to the earlier attack on *Maenads* for allegedly failing to accurately portray the activities of the 'maidens' who constituted its subject, the *Morning Post* detected 'realistic faithfulness' in Collier's depiction of maenadic activity: rather than praising the painting for this, however, Collier was instead castigated for failing to employ sufficient 'artistic reserve' to make the scene as pleasingly attractive as Alma-Tadema's.

⁵⁶¹ Anon., "The Royal Academy". *Globe*, Monday 16 May 1887, 6; Anon., "The Royal Academy". *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 28 May 1887, 605.

⁵⁶² Walter Herries Pollock, *The Art of the Hon. John Collier* (London: Virtue, 1914), 2.

⁵⁶³ Anon., "The Paris Exhibition". *Morning Post*, Friday 07 June 1889, 2.

⁵⁶⁴ Anon., *The Paris Exhibition*, 2.

The lack of public sympathy for the ‘swarming’ women of *Maenads* in comparison to the languid imaginings of Alma-Tadema indicates a straining of Pater’s paradoxical terms in conceiving of the women of Dionysus’s train. The fearsome and androgynous women of *Maenads* are evidently the women to whom those in Pater’s wake such as Michael Field and Jane Harrison looked in their accounts of untrammelled female power and its undoing of impotent male authority. Equally, the other figures are clearly redolent of Pater’s hymning of ‘that melting languor, that perfectly composed lassitude of the fallen Maenad’; indeed, it is Alma-Tadema’s *Women of Amphissa* that Matthew Potolsky notes as a close analogue to the pose Pater is describing in this passage, in lieu of a precise Praxitelean precedent.⁵⁶⁵ While these commingle for Pater even during the most bloodthirsty acts in the *Bacchae*— the killing of Pentheus is described in terms which, for Pater, include equally ‘wild, coarse, revolting details’ and ‘the loveliness of the serving Maenads’— they appeared to be in danger of becoming fundamentally dislocated from one another in the visual art of the late nineteenth century and its reception, negating the ability of Dionysian women to exhibit their retributive aggression that constituted a central part of their appeal for male aesthetes. As Jessica Wood records, also in reference to *The Women of Amphissa*, popular late nineteenth century depictions of maenads often involved ‘languid, pale-limbed women draped in white cloth, engaging in only the tamest of revelry... Any threat to masculine identity, such as that posed by the maenads to Euripides’ Pentheus, is safely neutralised by the civilised settings of these paintings’.⁵⁶⁶

The dominance of this model of Dionysian women in the late nineteenth century has subsequently attracted considerable criticism, with no voice more strident than Bram Dijkstra’s *Idols of Perversity* which examines the art and literature of the period through the lens of the misogynistic tendencies Dijkstra argues it exhibits. Central to Dijkstra’s account of Dionysian figures in late nineteenth century painting is what he pithily terms ‘the nymph with the broken back’ in reference to the unnatural, seemingly boneless contortions of such figures in order to display as much of their naked, supine bodies as possible to the implicitly heterosexual male observer.⁵⁶⁷ Dijkstra argues that the French academic painter

⁵⁶⁵ Potolsky, *Classical Studies*, 174.

⁵⁶⁶ Jessica Wood, *Portraits of the Artist*, 61-62.

⁵⁶⁷ Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 105-107.

Alexandre Cabanel's sensational *Birth of Venus* (fig. 127) of 1863 ushered in a period in which 'nymphs with apparently self-inflicted broken backs became a staple of the Paris salon exhibitions', although examples that are visually related to his contention are easily discoverable in late nineteenth century British depictions of nymphs or maenads.⁵⁶⁸ We may consider, for example, Edward Poynter's *Cave of the Storm Nymphs* of 1902 (fig. 128) to be an emblematic example, in which the exaggerated curvature of the central nymph's spine is most certainly unnatural; Poynter's canvas is a favourite target of the classicist Richard Jenkyns, who branded it 'entirely ridiculous' because it counterfeited any legitimate classical reference points in favour of entertaining a lucrative 'titillating theme' in reference to its naked figures.⁵⁶⁹ Equally, the critic who unfavourably contrasted *Maenads* to *The Women of Amphissa* praised as a 'work of great power' William Stott of Oldham's painting *The Nymph* (fig. 129), a depiction of a naked female figure prostrate in an autumnal glade which may also be said to exemplify the tendency.⁵⁷⁰ In modulated form we could indeed suggest *Circe* and *An Invocation* themselves, as although their protagonists avoid an entirely supine posture they retain a degree of languor and share the nudity of figures like Poynter's and Stott's. Indeed, the conservative newspaper *John Bull's* 'protest' against this latter canvas branded its central figure 'a ballet-girl attitudinising in front of an artificial red light, having previously divested herself of every rag even of her scant ballet-costume', a review in tune with Pentheus's alternation 'between violence and a pretence of moral austerity' as he is simultaneously revolted by and voyeuristically drawn to the maenads.⁵⁷¹

Dismissive critical appraisals from Dijkstra and Jenkyns would insinuate that the dominant and perhaps even default position of the late nineteenth century artist interested in the women of Dionysus's retinue was that of Pentheus, expressions of both misogynistic degradation and heterosexual voyeurism. Certainly, the public preference for Collier's *Circe* or *An Invocation* over *Maenads* would suggest that depictions of the 'wild, coarse' behaviour that fascinated Pater in the *Bacchae* were not met with the same enthusiasm, and it is equally possible that some artists depicted nymphs and maenads because 'the classical... lends respectability to what is

⁵⁶⁸ Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 105.

⁵⁶⁹ Richard Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence*, 28.

⁵⁷⁰ Anon., *The Paris Exhibition*, 2.

⁵⁷¹ Anon., "Royal Academy". *John Bull*, Saturday 02 July 1887, 481.

essentially a picture of a pretty girl taking her clothes off', as Jenkyns wrote in relation to Alma-Tadema.⁵⁷² It is certainly true too that associations between nymphs and sexual desirability shorn of any sense of danger persisted within the popular imagination, at times with direct recourse to the inventions of late nineteenth century painters who inspired Mortimer's ire. Pope and Bradley were not the only firm in the 1920s to invoke the figure of the nymph to sell products to readers of magazines like *The Sketch*. The textile manufacture Horrockses enticed audiences with the prospect of lingerie made out of a fabric they called 'nymphalene' which promised to be 'so dainty, so nymph-like in texture', recalling the tempting tactility of figures like Collier's *Circe*.⁵⁷³ The cosmetics firm Heppells also promised that its products would transform their users into 'figures of entrancing loveliness', arguing that 'to possess a figure of entrancing loveliness, with svelte lines and alluring curves, is every woman's birthright'.⁵⁷⁴ 'The greatest creative artists of a classic period have left a legacy to posterity enshrining woman's beauty of figure', the advertisement continued; rather than classical antiquity, this 'classic period' was evidently the age of Mortimer's 'Victorianism', as the full-page advertisement is dominated by a reproduction of John William Waterhouse's painting *Hylas and the Nymphs* to epitomise its visions of svelte lines and alluring curves.⁵⁷⁵

Dijkstra and Jenkyns's assumption that the languid female figures of many late nineteenth century interpretations of nymphs and maenads could only serve the purpose of heterosexual titillation is, however, limited— it cannot account, most obviously, for Pater's evidently desexualised enthusiasm for the 'melting languor' of figures such as the maenads in Alma-Tadema's *The Women of Amphissa*— but its dismissive approach was rehearsed by writers and artists in the 1920s, including Raymond Mortimer. It is no surprise that Alma-Tadema and Edward Poynter recur in his attacks on 'Victorianism' in art, and notable that these two artists are singled out for abuse owing to their obfuscation of classical antiquity's 'natural taste for what is politely known as unnatural vice': *Modern Nymphs* is legible as an attempt to reimburse the women of Dionysus's train with the transgressive threat to male authority they lose in paintings like *The Women of Amphissa* which, Mortimer

⁵⁷² Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence*, 241.

⁵⁷³ Anon., "Undies". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 25 April 1928, 94.

⁵⁷⁴ Anon., "Figures of Entrancing Loveliness". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 16 February 1927, ix.

⁵⁷⁵ Anon., *Entrancing Loveliness*, ix.

implies, attempt to straighten the classical past with their attractive and appealingly docile women.

At times, opinions like Mortimer's registered in comic prints which gently satirised the outmoded nature of the naked, supine figures from the close of the previous century. 1923 saw *The Sketch* reproducing a painting by Charles Robinson under the title 'How the Fashions Came to Fairyland: The Return of the Prodigal Nymph' (fig. 130).⁵⁷⁶ Robinson's graphic, depicting a crowd of nymphs in various states of undress, focuses on the reappearance of one of their number who has 'made an excursion into Mayfair... and was so fascinated by 1923 fashions that she has curled her hair, pulled on silk stockings and dainty shoes, and decked herself out in an Ascot frock'.⁵⁷⁷ Standing against a nocturnal cityscape from which she has returned to a mossy, overgrown glade of classical columns, the brilliant primary colours of the modernised nymph's ensemble contrast favourably with the faded, jewel-like tonalities of the other nymphs' draperies. The effect of her reappearance, according to the accompanying text, is that 'all her sister nymphs are dressed in styles of the moment by now'.⁵⁷⁸ In the previous year, *The Tatler* reproduced a painting entitled *The Wounded Nymph* (fig. 131) by the recently deceased *Punch* cartoonist Claude Shepperson, eulogised in the *London Daily Chronicle* that year as 'an artist who followed the mode from week to week... The women who inhabit these modish clothes are tall and slim and graceful and sweet as any nymph in Arcady'.⁵⁷⁹ Shepperson's drawing shows a nude nymph lying in an arcadian glade in a posture immediately redolent of the 'broken back' observed by Dijkstra, while two further nymphs flee in the distance. In the foreground are three foppishly dressed individuals identified as the likes of Harlequin and Pantaloon in the image's caption, the hapless clowns of the pantomime.⁵⁸⁰ Here, the caption reads, they have 'gone a-shooting' and caused a 'terrible catastrophe', presumably the possibly fatal wounding of the nymph which has led to her reprising her well-worn pose.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁶ Anon., "How The Fashions Came to Fairyland: The Return of the Prodigal Nymph". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 23 May 1923, 380-1.

⁵⁷⁷ Anon., *Prodigal Nymph*, 380-1.

⁵⁷⁸ Anon., *Prodigal Nymph*, 380-1.

⁵⁷⁹ Anon., "The Wounded Nymph". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 05 July 1922, 28-29; Anon., "The Modern Nymph". *London Daily Chronicle*, Tuesday 21 March 1922, 8.

⁵⁸⁰ Anon., *Wounded Nymph*, 28-29.

⁵⁸¹ Anon., *Wounded Nymph*, 28-29.

By the time Shepperson and Robinson's images appeared, the Royal Academy had recently held its 1922 winter exhibition of works by 'recently deceased members' which ran from the ninth of January to the fourth of March that year.⁵⁸² This exhibition featured works such as Poynter's *Cave of the Storm Nymphs* alongside Waterhouse's celebrated *Hylas and the Nymphs* (fig. 132) in which a troupe of water-dwelling nymphs attempt to lure the beautiful boy Hylas to both the promise of sexual consummation and a watery grave.⁵⁸³ Robinson's nymphs, aside from the figure who has been to Mayfair and returns resplendent in her modern garb, resemble the willowy, nude figures of Waterhouse's canvas, sharing with them their flowing auburn locks, tangled flowers, and pale complexions; the misty jewel tones that dominate their arcadian glade are likewise redolent of Waterhouse's palette. Shepperson's, meanwhile, resembles the central nymph of Poynter's canvas in posture, embodying the conventions of what Dijkstra sees as an outpouring of nymphs with broken backs. The two works appear to constitute running commentaries on the outdated and misguided aesthetics and iconographies of a previous century, which had reappeared in the Royal Academy's 1922 winter exhibition. Robinson's contrasts the fashions of the 1920s with the aesthetics of the late nineteenth century, implying that Waterhouse's nymphs seem ridiculous within the visual culture of the 1920s. More forcefully, although still playfully, Shepperson's cartoon draws attention to the lifelessness of nymphs like Poynter's central figure, implying that to create the pose one must drain the nymph of vitality and associating those who did so with pantomime clowns.

Others, however, responded to the 1922 exhibition with bile. *The Graphic* ran a review from Hannen Schwaffer which accused the Royal Academy of disinterring 'the ghosts of dead art' that appealed only to those who 'knew little of Art', mounting an exhibition which was 'like visiting your maiden aunt', and pointlessly displaying canvases 'that made Victorians simper and weep'.⁵⁸⁴ The *Pall Mall Gazette* ran another by Charles Lewis Hind, shortly to publish his 1925 book of hitherto unpublished drawings by Aubrey Beardsley, who caricatured the exhibition's public in the figure of 'a nice clean Englishman [and] obviously a Philistine' who 'does not

⁵⁸² Anon., *Exhibition of Works by Recently Deceased Members of the Royal Academy* (London: Clowes and Sons, 1922).

⁵⁸³ Anon., *Recently Deceased Members*, 42, 25.

⁵⁸⁴ Hannen Schwaffer, "The Ghosts of a Dead Art". *Graphic*, Saturday 21 January 1922, 66.

want art; he wants picture making' and who 'would not understand the mystical thrill' that the aesthete Hind received in looking at superior pictures.⁵⁸⁵ Raymond Mortimer's remarks on the exhibition, if he saw it, are not recorded, but his published essays and reviews collected together in the 1942 book *Channel Packet* would indicate he would have agreed with these aggressive judgements.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that the nymphs of *Modern Nymphs* regain the dangerous potentialities excised in popular late nineteenth century paintings by artists who, according to Mortimer's aggressive binaries, produced confected visions of the classical past which should be swept into 'deserved oblivion' by the engulfing tide of aestheticism; *Modern Nymphs* appeared in a period in which this imagery was already facing criticism. Having observed the parodic stance towards such imagery in the 1920s, we will see that the 'fashion plates' of *Modern Nymphs* conveyed upon their protagonists a gendered antagonism which related intimately to Mortimer's polarised narrative of British culture, revisiting well-worn subjects in order to subvert their conventional iconographies and compositions and alternatively assert through their difference the latent violence of the 'modern nymph'.

Mortimer and Lowinsky's Nymphs

From its opening 'fashion plate', *Modern Nymphs* clarifies its thematic ground. The first plate is titled *Aphrodite Leaving Her Temple* (fig. 133) and shows a modishly dressed Aphrodite drifting serenely forth from what we are to assume is the titular temple. In the background, the elegant curves and brilliant white marble of these classical forms are contrasted with a distant and stereotypically 'modern' skyline dominated by rigid, towering skyscrapers and cast in deep shadow. There is little vegetation surrounding Aphrodite; beyond occasional patches of green fauna the ground appears barren and arid, and the only other vegetative form in the vicinity is a bare, etiolated branch. Beyond this Aphrodite's temple is decorated with a damaged

⁵⁸⁵ Anon., "Old Friends at the Academy". *The Sphere*, Saturday 14 January 1922, 72; Charles Lewis Hind, "The R.A. and Whistler". *Pall Mall Gazette*, Wednesday 18 January 1922, 8.

frieze decorated with striving, muscular figures whose limbs have largely been lost, above which sits the bust of a matriarchal figure wearing an elaborate crown. Tangled into the sparse grass and leaves are two further pieces of damaged classical sculpture, a muscular male torso in the background and a bearded head with wide, pupilless eyes in the foreground.

As we mentioned at the outset of the chapter, Lowinsky's identification of Aphrodite as a nymph is self-evidently and glaringly incorrect by the standards of classical mythology. It is, however, explicable if we accept that Lowinsky was responding to the model of Dionysian women promulgated in Pater's texts. Aphrodite is glancingly referenced in 'A Study of Dionysus', as it is from the Homeric hymn to the goddess that Pater draws his description of the nymphs who nurse Dionysus.⁵⁸⁶ We may indeed see some vague similarities between the surroundings of Lowinsky's Aphrodite and Pater's maenads, with both being figures who have evidently absconded from the metropole in favour of the wastelands that lie beyond: in Lowinsky's 'modern' case, this is suggested by the distant city skyline. Equally, the relationship between Aphrodite's temple and this city in Lowinsky's plate indicates a similarly gendered divide between the two spaces. Aphrodite is the lone inhabitant of the temple, which is therefore presented without male presences, and its statuary is dominated by the commanding bust of a further female figure. The city, meanwhile, is a mass of upwardly thrusting buildings: although it may overstate the case to argue that the form of a skyscraper in general gains phallic connotations in Lowinsky's plate, it seems equally plausible to point to the centrally placed skyscraper, the third towering building from the left of the image, as one such form which does appear to entertain these resonances. This is, however, arguably not where a detection of fraught sexual relations between men and women necessarily ends; rather, it is possible to view Lowinsky's Aphrodite far more clearly as a figure as dangerous to heterosexual interest as Pater's maenads, and in a similar manner to these figures.

Lowinsky's plate suggests, without literally depicting, a violent rejection of male authority. We have noted that the foreground of the print is enlivened by the presence of mysterious, ruined fragments of classical statuary, one a head and the other a torso. The head is distinctly suggestive of a Roman marble head of Hercules housed in the British Museum (fig. 134): Lowinsky's drawn head replicates the curled

⁵⁸⁶ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 12.

hair, abundant and curly beard, wide nose, pupilless and almond-shaped eyes, and heavy eyelids of this bust with some accuracy. Similarly, the torso strongly recalls the famous *Belvedere Torso* (fig. 135), sharing its fragmentation (particularly in its replication of the point of breakage in the one visible leg) and its muscular physique. It may alternately be said to suggest the Metropolitan Museum of Art's sculpture group *Hercules Seated on a Rock* (fig. 136) with which it shares the lesser fragmentation of its arms, with the upper portion of the arm intact in both this sculpture group and Lowinsky's torso. The likeness of this lesser-known sculpture had been reproduced in at least one British publication by 1930, appearing in the archaeologist A. W. Lawrence's *Later Greek Sculpture and its Influence on East and West* of 1927.⁵⁸⁷ Either reference point would implicate the same figure as the head as the *Belvedere Torso* too was typically believed to depict Hercules, who is not connected by any major myth narratives to Aphrodite as Lowinsky's plate would imply: rather, Lowinsky appears to invoke Hercules and Aphrodite as representations of their genders, with the heroic Hercules functioning as a cipher of ostentatious masculinity and the beautiful and seductive Aphrodite functioning as a female equivalent.

The fragmentary classical forms that lie discarded outside Aphrodite's temple appear no more unified and complete in reality than they do in Lowinsky's plate. However, their bringing together in *Aphrodite Leaves Her Temple* implies their recent dislocation from one another and in turn suggests similar violence as the cause of the torso's lack of limbs, repeated in the muscular but limbless male figures on the frieze above the torso. In this we are returned more properly to the fundamentals of the Dionysian woman as explained by Pater. Hercules appears to have been torn apart and left to rot in Aphrodite's garden, the weeds growing over these representations of his rent body. There are obvious parallels in this schema with Pentheus in the *Bacchae*: the decaying forms of the broken Hercules may serve as a warning to the inhabitants of the city, with its phallic skyline, to remain apart from the temple of Aphrodite. There is equally a sexual charge to the violence too, completing the transformation of Aphrodite into a figure who exhibits maenadic attributes. Aphrodite's mythological role would obviously indicate she is physically

⁵⁸⁷ Arnold Walter Lawrence, *Later Greek Sculpture and its Influence on East and West* (London: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927), 18.

beautiful, and late nineteenth century Venuses such as Cabanel's influential painting of 1863 would indicate that this could be translated into the stimulation of sexual desire. The location of Lowinsky's illustration is important in establishing a sexual undercurrent to the image too, depicting a scene taking place outside the temple of Aphrodite where sexual activity in general and prostitution more specifically were popularly believed to have been rife (although subsequent scholarship has discounted this).⁵⁸⁸ The space inhabited by the Aphrodite of Lowinsky's plate could thus have been understood as an overtly sexual one which may excite the imagination of heterosexual men, whose avatar here is the brutally demolished Hercules; it is equally, as we observed, a curiously deathlike one, with the land appearing barren and infertile, commingling sexual desire and deathly danger in the image as Pater does in his study of the *Bacchae*.

Aphrodite Leaving Her Temple transforms its goddess not merely into a nymph but into a raging maenad whose violent impulses towards heterosexual men lurk beneath her demure exterior, her willingness to commit 'wild, coarse' acts of sparagmos signalled to the readership of *Modern Nymphs* via Lowinsky's visual quotations. It also, however, relies upon its obvious distance between Lowinsky's figure and the late nineteenth century figures ghosted, ironised, and subverted in the 'nymph' Aphrodite and vehemently opposed as examples of an anti-aestheticist 'Victorianism' by Raymond Mortimer: the supine positions and nudity of oft-imitated works such as Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* are notably absent here, and with them any touch of heterosexual eroticism. In this way the *Aphrodite* plate sets the tone for Lowinsky's subsequent images which also rely on conspicuous additions and subtractions to late nineteenth century precedents.

Two consecutive plates, for example, both depict artistically well-worn events from Homer's *Odyssey* and both appear to reference the paintings of John William Waterhouse, whose *Hylas and the Nymphs* retained its currency as a signifier of the nymphs' feminine beauty in the 1920s. Given the intertwining of sexual desirability and danger at the heart of the aesthete's 'nymph', it is unsurprising that we find the sorceress Circe appearing in the book in a plate entitled *Circe and Cocktails Prepared for the Fleet* (fig. 137). Waterhouse painted Circe twice, once in the context of the story which is suggested by Lowinsky's title (fig. 138). In this narrative,

⁵⁸⁸ Monica Cyrino, *Aphrodite* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 42.

Odysseus's men are tempted into consuming a magical poison by the sorceress which transforms them into swine of the type found in the background of John Collier's depiction of a languid Circe and Waterhouse's later depiction of the goddess enthroned. Waterhouse's painting shows Odysseus himself, reflected in a mirror behind the triumphant Circe, while in Lowinsky's plate the arrival of Odysseus and his crewmates is merely imminent: they are assumedly arriving by a seaplane hovering above the water or by a large, black ship which resembles a warship and which follows the seaplane. In their modernised craft, Odysseus's men approach Circe's abode in the manner of an attacking army, and there is indeed a degree of consternation in Circe's expression as she stares out to sea.

Circe and Cocktails Prepared for the Fleet does not necessarily subvert artistic precedents on its own. Indeed, it is close in conception to Edward Burne-Jones's watercolour *The Wine of Circe* (fig. 139) of the mid-1860s, which equally shows ships approaching in the distance while Circe prepares a poisoned drink: had Lowinsky been aware of this precedent in the work of his favourite artist he may well have appreciated its profusion of sunflowers which were to become, like the lily, markers of aestheticism as Walter Hamilton's 1882 account of the movement records.⁵⁸⁹ Rather, the *Circe* plate prepares the reader of *Modern Nymphs* for the thematic ground explored in the immediately subsequent illustration's interventions into the iconographies from which it draws. Lowinsky's *Circe* plate seems to indicate what is at stake in the battle between the army of male interlopers and Circe, a figure who like Lowinsky's Aphrodite occupies a space devoid of male figures in the plate just as she does in the *Odyssey*. Circe's modernised abode, with its elegantly contemporary furnishings and its vaguely cubist artwork displayed on an otherwise blank white wall, stands for refined taste and individual sophistication, an updated version of the aesthetic sunflowers in Burne-Jones's watercolour. The encroaching male figures stand, it appears, for the converse. Notable within the plate's reserved colouring is a bright red flag protruding from the rear of a boat which is otherwise obscured from view, so close is it to landing on Circe's island. The red flag may well be read politically, a symbol of anti-individualist ideologies responding to Mortimer's patrician and dystopian nightmare of a coming world in which 'we are all employees of the State', the inevitable product of 'Victorianism' wherein as 'the nineteenth

⁵⁸⁹ Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 35.

century accepted the doctrine of the nobility of work, a servile doctrine' which was only resisted by women. In Mortimer's schema, 'Victorianism' and its progeny, 'the coming, the complete, democracy', threatened everything the aesthete held dear, which was conversely protected chiefly by the taste of women; as Burne-Jones's Circe prepares her poison in a room filled with the flower that was later to become legible as a symbol of aestheticism, the modish interior furnishings of Lowinsky's Circe stand for the tastes and freedoms of his contemporary aesthetes.

Lowinsky's *Circe* plate therefore appears to respond to Mortimer's gloomy predictions, showing an invading male force flying the Bolshevik colours of an anti-aestheticist 'complete democracy' contrasted with the refined elegance of Circe herself. Luckily Circe, as the plate's titling suggests, is ready to dispatch the attackers in the most raffish manner imaginable: her weapon is clearly her cocktail shaker, laced with the poisonous potion that will transform the invading into the swine that, Mortimer's tone would suggest, the aesthete ought to regard them as even in human form.

As they do in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus and his crew evidently survive their brush with the modish Circe as Lowinsky's subsequent plate depicts another adventure from their voyage, this time making fuller use of the artistic examples it draws on to subvert their meanings and imply the victory of Lowinsky's nymphs. *Harpies* (fig. 140) shows a group of grotesque hybrid creatures with the heads of women and the bodies of birds inhabiting a curiously sterile, flat environment detached from another distant outpost of civilisation in the background. In the foreground, one hybrid creature sails through the air while two others sit upon the ground, seemingly in concert. In the background, another harpy cranes its neck menacingly around a mysterious staircase and a small male figure— one of the only two male presences actually depicted in *Modern Nymphs*— staggers across the clay to avoid the attack of a wheeling harpy flying directly towards him.

If its setting is distinctly modern, these central creatures are not, and if Lowinsky's titling ostensibly divorces these creatures from those who appear in the *Odyssey* to attack Odysseus's crew then their physical appearance works overwhelmingly to the contrary. It is possible to argue that Lowinsky is quoting directly from classical precedents, namely the well-known *Siren Vase* in the British Museum (fig. 141), depicting an episode in which Odysseus and his crew are menaced

by sirens who share with Lowinsky's harpies their hybrid physiognomy: the movement from sea to land in Lowinsky's plate may explain the title *Harpies*, not *Sirens*, but Lowinsky's creatures are unmistakably similar. The vase's iconography quarrels with and corrects the persistent later conceit that the murderous sirens of classical antiquity were attractive figures who resembled mermaids more than harpies, as we saw in paintings such as Frederic Leighton's *The Fisherman and the Syren*, and to this extent Lowinsky's furtherance of its iconography may suggest a supplanting of the sexually attractive figures of late nineteenth century painting so unacceptable to critics like Dijkstra or Jenkyns. This supplantation had, however, already happened within late nineteenth century painting itself, with Waterhouse's 1891 *Ulysses and the Sirens* (fig. 142) depicting sirens who clearly resemble Lowinsky's *Harpies* attempting to run Odysseus and his crew aground with their mesmeric singing (as in the *Siren Vase*). Lowinsky's quotation is immediately evident, although qualified by a series of interpolations.

Lowinsky's depiction of the interaction between these dangerous, violent female figures and the lone male figure in the composition differs considerably from the Waterhouse painting from whence they came. Waterhouse lights upon the moment at which Odysseus is lashed to the mast by his crew on his own orders so that he cannot respond to the tempting song of the sirens, while his men— their ears stuffed to block out the singing— row stoically onwards to safety. Lowinsky's figure, by contrast, is alone and profoundly unanchored in the economical composition's empty space. Odysseus and his men, through Odysseus's cunning and sheer willpower, withstand and defeat the sirens, with one of Waterhouse's figures meeting the gaze of a siren which has perched upon the boat in a display of bravery; Lowinsky's figure staggers helplessly as one harpy begins, or perhaps renews, its assault. Waterhouse's sirens, although perching or hovering unnervingly close to Odysseus and his crew, attempt to lead them to ruin through their beautiful singing; Lowinsky's harpy appears instead to simply divebomb the tormented male figure, its violence of an immediate and physical nature. Waterhouse's *Ulysses and the Sirens* depicts a scene of heroic willpower and exertion resulting in the safe passage of the sailors through the treacherous lands of the monstrous female beings who assail them, while Lowinsky's shows the indignity of a man being attacked by a fearsome and physically violent bird. That Mortimer and Lowinsky's small audience should support the harpies against the man is perhaps indicated by the fact that, although

the harpies physically resemble little more than pigeons, their green and blue feathers and headcaps bestow upon them the colouring of peacocks, an old aesthetic marker that we have encountered in the work of Aubrey Beardsley. In this they exhibit a further contrast with the male figure who, we may assume, was one of the passengers onboard the warlike vessels which threatened Circe's beautified abode: as we may expect from his raising of the red flag, he is dully clad in a grey suit, representative of 'the drabness of our State attire' that Mortimer wrote it would become illegal to deviate from in the 'complete democracy'.⁵⁹⁰

Harpies, like *Aphrodite Leaving Her Temple*, shows a male figure in danger of being torn apart by female figures whose territory he has intruded upon, like Pentheus in the *Bacchae*. The subsequent plate, shifting away from Homeric narratives, presents a third iteration of this theme which features the only other male figure depicted in *Modern Nymphs* and the first legitimate nymph we have thus far encountered. *Syrinx in Hyde Park* (fig. 143) transposes the story of Pan and Syrinx to a park adjoining Mayfair, where Charles Robinson's fashionable nymph has visited to educate her fellow nymphs about the fineries of modern dress. Lowinsky here includes Pan whose amorous pursuit of Syrinx concludes with the nymph transforming herself into a reed to escape his advances, from which Pan then makes his eponymous musical instrument. Lurching into view from the left of the composition, Pan shares none of the attributes that we have seen were common to his fellow goat-legged creatures— the fauns from whom he is 'quite different from in origin and intent, but confused with... in form' according to Pater's 'Study of Dionysus'— in the work of Pater and later generations of aesthetes.⁵⁹¹ He is neither young nor beautiful: his rough-hewn facial features, his ears and nose, are grotesquely exaggerated to convey his goatlike nature while his white beard and hairy, wispy shanks indicate his advanced years. Furthermore, he does not suggest himself as a passive object of erotic and aesthetic contemplation, nor as a creature with whom the aesthetes could identify, but rather as a (hetero)sexual aggressor like the beasts of antiquity. Stretching his arms out to grip Syrinx, who looks down upon his stooped form with a coolly patronising smirk, the lascivious grin of the goat-legged god seems ill-advised and ill-fated.

⁵⁹⁰ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 14.

⁵⁹¹ Pater, *Study of Dionysus*, 15.

Lowinsky's imagining of the meeting of Pan and Syrinx owes little to previous depictions of this well-worn theme which would have been available to both Lowinsky and his public by 1930. These include François Boucher's rendering of 1759 (fig. 144), housed in the National Gallery since 1880, and a painting initially attributed to Hendricks van Balen's *Pan Pursuing Syrinx* (fig. 145), acquired by the same institution twenty years earlier; a temporarily visible iteration could be found in the Royal Academy's 1922 exhibition of deceased members' works in the form of Arthur Hacker's *Syrinx* (fig. 146).⁵⁹² Hacker's 1892 canvas that deviates from the conventional pairing of figures seen throughout these examples, focusing instead solely on the nude Syrinx in a manner which would incite censure amongst later critics and likely would have found little favour in Mortimer's aestheticism- 'Victorianism' dichotomy. Showing her hiding beneath the reeds she will merge with to finally confound Pan's advances and casting a furtive glance towards what we assume to be signs of the deity's nearby presence, the fearful nature of Hacker's nude is as conventional as his exclusion of Pan is unusual. The perverse interplay between coverage and exposure, with Syrinx's gesture of shielding herself from Pan unwittingly revealing her nudity to the viewer, combines the bodily display of Boucher's supine, fleshy figures and the imperilled weakness of van Balen's fearful fleeing versions.

Lowinsky's Syrinx, meanwhile, physically dominates the figure of Pan, who stoops and cranes towards her upright body. Nor does she flee his touch— her high heels would seem to preclude any ability to do so, and the coldly dismissive look upon her face indicates little desire or need to retreat. Rather, Lowinsky's drawing implies, it is Pan who should flee from the nymph: the luxurious fur trimmings of her overcoat which Pan unwittingly handles suggest a covert threat towards Syrinx's pursuer, half-animal as he is. In the nymph's opulent costuming, concealing what may be taken from comparisons with earlier interpretations of the myth to be Syrinx's customary nakedness, lies once again a veiled and threatening invocation of a maenadic taste for violence, the rending asunder of animals and foes alike. Just as Pan, in the conventional myth narrative, uses the inanimate form of the transformed Syrinx for his own ends by making from the reeds a set of pipes, Syrinx appears to be contemplating the possibility of using Pan's inanimate body to adorn her clothes.

⁵⁹² Anon., *Recently Deceased Members*, 18.

Threaded through *Modern Nymphs* are thus plates in which Lowinsky comprehensively breaks with established iconographies, particularly those of the late nineteenth century which represented ‘Victorianism’ to Raymond Mortimer, to picture the female figures of diverse classical mythologies designated as ‘nymphs’ within the book acting like the descendants of Pater’s maenads. In doing so, they resist not only the prurient male voyeurism embodied by Pentheus in the *Bacchae* but also the stultification of the aesthete’s mode of life, attacking or keeping at bay the philistine male hordes who trouble Mortimer in his introductory essay. Equally notable in Lowinsky’s fashion plates, however— and also expressed through conspicuous deviations from established iconographies— are the plates in which no male figures figure at all, and in which this absence consistently represents not an attack upon male figures but a simple negation of their necessity. While the plates we have thus far examined show the realms of Dionysian women menaced by male intruding forces, there is an equal number within the publication which shows female figures unencumbered by the male presences with which they are typically associated. In another depiction of a figure who is a nymph by the standards of classical mythology, for example, we find *Daphne* (fig. 147). In this plate, Lowinsky focuses on the culmination of the myth narrative revolving around Apollo’s romantic pursuit of the nymph, the moment at which Daphne is transformed into a laurel tree to avoid the god’s advances as Apollo grasps her. The parallels with the relationship between Pan and Syrinx are foregrounded by the fact that these plates are placed next to one another in *Modern Nymphs*. This episode is among the few myth narratives described in Mortimer’s introductory essay, referred to as ‘a daily fact as well as a miracle’ because, ‘if by long pursuit we finally importune a person into acquiescence, we are likely to find not the warmth we long for but a creature cold as a statue, wooden as a tree’.⁵⁹³

Mortimer’s description of Daphne’s fate is more than simply a pithy comment upon the fate of an unlucky lover; contained within its logic is a subtle reinvention of the myth to which Lowinsky’s illustration readily corresponds. In Mortimer’s brief retelling Daphne is not transformed into a laurel tree in a desperate attempt to escape Apollo, nor with the magical assistance of her father, as is the case in some versions of the myth. Her metamorphosis is instead simply the externalisation of her

⁵⁹³ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 16.

extant internal state as an inaccessible object of attraction. Pointedly in Lowinsky's sparse and orderly image Daphne's body, forming a dramatic and bifurcating diagonal line against a minimal backdrop, constitutes the fashion plate's clear focal point because the composition is uncluttered by the presence of Apollo himself. The removal of Apollo puts Lowinsky's *Daphne* at odds with the overwhelming majority of depictions of the nymph in the recent history of British art and far beyond it. To consider examples which would have been easily accessible to Lowinsky's audience throughout the 1920s, we can turn to Waterhouse's 1908 canvas *Apollo and Daphne* (fig. 148), exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1922; Phillip Connard's diploma work for the Royal Academy of the same title (fig. 149), exhibited in 1925; or Piero del Pollaiuolo's celebrated rendition dating from the late fifteenth century and housed in the National Gallery since 1876 (fig. 150).⁵⁹⁴ Stylistically and temporally disparate from one another, the iconographic continuities between these counterexamples indicate the concretised nature of the iconography surrounding interpretations of Daphne. Daphne's metamorphosis is engendered by Apollo's embrace in Piero del Pollaiuolo and Connard's renderings or by the infinitesimal distance between the pair's hands in Waterhouse's, as all three artists focus on the dramatic tension between the male and female figure and the grasping of Apollo which drives the nymph from consciousness. Lowinsky's departure from this established convention can be interpreted as a gesture of reinvention as much as Mortimer's alteration of Daphne's myth narrative can be, and both writer and illustrator appear to aim at a similar point.

The Daphne of *Modern Nymphs* does not undergo her mythical metamorphosis under duress, a fact indicated not merely by the physical absence of Apollo but by her languid, balletic grace. There is significant thematic water between Daphne's theatrical swoon in Lowinsky's version, her transformation only being marked by her subtle fusion with the leafy ground and a single etiolated branch emerging from her arm, and the writhing, menaced bodies of Waterhouse and Connard's imaginings or the grotesque vegetal limbs of Piero del Pollaiuolo's. Similarly, although we cannot glimpse the entirety of Daphne's face in Lowinsky's version (covered as it is by her raised arm), the shutting of her only visible eye

⁵⁹⁴ Anon., *Recently Deceased Members*, 35; Anon., *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1925. The 157th* (London: W. M. Clowes and Sons, 1925), 9.

indicates a calmness, or perhaps even a pleasure, entirely absent from the anguished and fearful faces of Waterhouse and Connard's nymphs. The Daphne of Lowinsky's *Daphne* appears to undergo her transformation from possessable subject into static object with whom congress is impossible willingly. The absence of Apollo both removes the necessity of doing so and universalises Daphne's position to extend beyond the logic of a specific moment in one romantic entanglement and to speak instead to relations with all men, as Mortimer's essay suggests Daphne's myth speaks to. Although Daphne poses no direct danger to male authority as the frightening maenads do, she physicalises their immersion in an alternative society in which male power is either irrelevant or literally absent.

Later plates in *Modern Nymphs* develop the theme further, featuring female characters who have harnessed the technological fruits of the modernity they represent in order to curtail the sexual male power which dominates their conventional myth narratives. *Danae Waiting For the Weather Report on the Wireless* (fig. 151) reinterprets the story of Danae, a princess imprisoned in the dungeon of her father's palace to escape the attentions of Zeus after her father hears a prophecy that any son of Danae's is fated to kill him. Conventionally, Zeus gains entry to her chamber by assuming the form of a golden shower and impregnating her in a narrative that, like those of Daphne and Syrinx, revolves around male erotic desires and their engendering of metamorphoses. Like these other stories, the theme is well-worn and informed in art history by a relatively concretised iconography: convention dictates that artists focus upon the moment of conception itself, peopling their canvases with the god in his dematerialised form and Danae as a supine, receptive, and naked young woman. Of interest to Lowinsky may have been the copy of Titian's *Danae with Cupid* (fig. 152), housed in the Wallace Collection since its opening in 1897, which evinces the hallmarks of typical treatments of the myth. Danae's reclines, legs parted and hand gripping the tangled bedsheets in anticipation, while a shower of gold coins in which the contours of a male face are faintly discernible descend upon her. The theme was also treated by Burne-Jones, whose painting *Danae and the Brazen Tower* (fig. 153) breaks with convention by focusing on an earlier moment in the narrative to show Danae secretly and apprehensively watching the construction of the tower she is to be imprisoned in: certainly, the reference would explain the peculiar appearance of the tower in Lowinsky's plate, constructed from brass panels as in Burne-Jones's version.

Burne-Jones's idiosyncratic focus on this earlier moment, and his depiction of Danae as a clothed and upright figure like Lowinsky's, still does not rescue the titular figure from her subordination to both her father and an intruding Zeus: her fear, legible from the raising of her hand to cover her mouth, presages the conventional conclusion of the myth. Lowinsky's figure, meanwhile, has evidently managed to escape this fate. Lowinsky's Danae has escaped her chamber, clearly standing at the top of a tall structure in the open air with an aeroplane passing beneath her to clarify this. The wireless radio broadcasting a weather report, at which she glances with a brazen confidence, should evidently be read as a reference to Zeus's coming in the form of a 'shower' which can no longer taken Danae by surprise. Equipped with this new technology, Danae has escaped before the god can arrive and it is now Zeus who is in danger of being entrapped within Danae's chamber. Her wrongfooting of Zeus also contains within it a latent violence against the authority of her father too, allowing her to act freely and perhaps to produce an heir who will eventually kill him.

Similar territory is traversed in Lowinsky's *Clyte [sic] Abandons the Old Sun For the New* (fig. 154), the titling alone of which indicates that Lowinsky once more insists upon the modernity of his nymph's actions and that this embrace of the new comes at the expense not merely of the old, but of the male. The 'old sun' who suffers Clytie's abandonment here is, according to the traditional myth, the sun god—sometimes referred to as Helios and sometimes Apollo—who spurns her affections. Clytie is subsequently doomed to mourn her lost love, shunning the company of her fellow nymphs for a lonely, lifelong vigil watching the sun until her position becomes so fixed that she is transformed into a static flower which continues to turn its face skywards. This detail may have superficially appealed to Lowinsky and Mortimer, the former owing to his appreciation for Pre-Raphaelitism and the latter owing to his aggressive championing of late nineteenth century aestheticism, as it is the aesthetic sunflower that Clytie metamorphoses into: Evelyn de Morgan's 1886 rendition (fig. 155), for example, glories in the profusion of sunflowers which cluster around the willowy form of her Burne-Jones-like nude. The suffering of Morgan's figure is evident, her eyes downcast as she allows her sorrow to transform her like Daphne into an inanimate object, and it is in this attitude that the nymph is typically pictured. Lowinsky's most significant precedent is Frederic Leighton's late painting of the scene (fig. 156) in which Clytie, throwing her head and arms back to offer her body to the darkening sky, is pictured in a gesture of self-effacement and grief. The

final indignity dealt to Leighton's figure is that she must compete for the viewer's attention with a theatrical and virtuosic depiction of the evening sky, signifying the departure of Clytie's lover.

While it is the invasive presence of a male force in an interior that is subverted in Lowinsky's rendition of the Danae story, it is the power of a male absence in the natural world that informs the subordination of Clytie within the myth. Resultantly, Lowinsky's interpretation inverts his *Danae*, transporting his nymph from exterior to interior to subvert the original narrative. In Lowinsky's rendering Clytie is seen indoors, standing beneath the glare of an artificial tanning lamp which constitutes the 'new sun'. Evidently Lowinsky's decision to shut any natural light out of Clytie's surroundings, made clear by the shadowy darkness beyond the stark light of the tanning lamp, confounds the possibility of a symbolic relationship with the sun god evidenced in comparatively traditional renderings of the narrative like Morgan or Leighton's. Furthermore, however, the tanning lamp is a distinctly modern inclusion as it was a uniquely post-War innovation: historians have recorded that the first advertisements for commercially available tanning equipment appeared in Britain in the pages of a 1923 issue of *Vogue*, while noting that Coco Chanel's apocryphal but much-quoted pronouncement that 'the 1929 girl must be tanned' solidified the relationship between tanned skin and fashionable modernity later in the decade.⁵⁹⁵ Both Chanel and tanned skin appear in Mortimer's essay as symbols of a new, confrontational understanding of femininity: Chanel had 'done more than Mrs. Pankhurst for [women's] emancipation' in Mortimer's estimate, while 'wear[ing] their skins brown' connoted that modern women were no longer 'half idols, half slaves... [but are] ready to share and to compete in every activity'.⁵⁹⁶

Thus the 'new' sun in Lowinsky's adaptation of the myth is not merely new in a literal, technological sense but is presented to the reader of *Modern Nymphs* as an audacious symbol of disruptive femininity, while the 'old sun' that is shut out of the picture represents precisely the same spent force that is wilfully excluded from the Daphne and Danae plates. While the nymphs of Leighton and Morgan's canvases are

⁵⁹⁵ Phillip Vannini and Aaron M. McCright. "To Die For: The Semiotic Seductive Power of the Tanned Body." *Symbolic Interaction* 27, 3, 2004, 310-311.

⁵⁹⁶ Mortimer, *Modern Nymphs*, 10, 15.

driven to a self-negating transformation by their maddening sorrow at the sun god's abandonment, Lowinsky's instead abandons the sun god to cultivate her own beauty. Strikingly, Clytie's tanning parallels and parodies her metamorphosis into the recurrent aesthetic symbol, the sunflower: in Lowinsky's plate Clytie, assuming the appearance of the 'girl of 1929' and shedding the unnecessary presence of a male lover, is herself the equivalent for this aesthetic symbol.

Throughout *Modern Nymphs*, we consistently see Lowinsky blending his appreciation for his late nineteenth century artistic precedents with Raymond Mortimer's faith in aestheticism as an aggressive and transgressive force which replaced 'Victorianism' with the modernity trumpeted in the book's title. By punning on, subverting, or inverting the concretised compositional conventions of the diverse myth narratives the fashion plates respond to, Lowinsky's images gather together female figures who triumph over male pursuers and authorities under the banner of the mythological women sacred to Dionysian myth and ritual. As they do so, they signal the triumph of aestheticism and the survival of the arts, clearly gendered as feminine in Mortimer's introductory essay. To assure this survival they act as the maenads who fascinated Walter Pater in Euripides's *Bacchae* do: many of them escape, outwit, or simply ignore male influences, while some figures—Aphrodite, the harpies, and Syrinx— even contemplate the men who trouble them as possible targets for outbursts of maenadic violence. The men (or implied male presences) of *Modern Nymphs* largely act as Pentheus does, overcome with a 'sudden desire... to witness' Lowinsky's attractive but dangerous nymphs; resultantly, they are threatened with the same fate.

Indeed, *Modern Nymph's* closing plate suggests that the triumph of the nymphs is complete and the masculine heroes of classical myth have been displaced. Lowinsky's final image is *The Twin Sisters of Castor and Pollux* (fig. 157), invoking the mythological twin brothers who, as Amber Gartrell's study of their worship in antiquity elucidates, were typically associated with masculine athletic prowess and with victories in battle which their epiphanic appearances amongst mortals presaged.⁵⁹⁷ Lowinsky's sisters are imposing, frontally posed figures, elegantly dressed and brandishing cigarette holders on the balcony of a modern apartment

⁵⁹⁷ Amber Gartrell, *The Cult of Castor and Pollux in Ancient Rome: Myth, Ritual, and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 132-135, 82-94.

building. The drawing is completely devoid of male presences unless we count the blatantly phallic cactus replete with a pointedly drooping flower and kept in a pot beside them as a decorative object, and the titling of the image suggests various possible identities for the two women. They could be Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra, who according to myth were the legitimate twins of Castor and Pollux: in this case we have a figure whose beauty proved incredibly destructive and another who, as we have seen, was capable of murderous violence towards men, although they possess no specific attributes to support this identification.⁵⁹⁸ They could equally be figures drawn from Lowinsky's imagination with no specific mythic resonances beyond their relation to Castor and Pollux, which would account for the lack of mythological specificities in their appearance. In either case, their supplanting of their famous brothers is indicative of the overthrowing of male power and its supplantation by an aggressive, defensive, feminine: it may not be for nothing that Castor and Pollux's appearances signalled a coming victory in a battle, as if the appearance here of their female equivalents signals the ascendancy of the nymphs.

Modern Nymphs is a publication which revels in the 'wild, coarse' aspects of Dionysian women and in the aggressive charge of Mortimer's revolutionary and clearly gendered aestheticism. However, there are also aspects of Lowinsky's plates which reveal a nascent appreciation for the other aspect of Pater's paradoxical fascination with maenadic activity; namely, the 'grace' and the 'loveliness' of the maenads in the *Bacchae*. Lowinsky's *Daphne* falls with a balletic grace; the murderous Aphrodite appears positively demure and reserved; the interior design of Circe's house is impeccably elegant. As we have noted, condemnatory accounts of the late nineteenth century painters who Mortimer condemned as idols of 'Victorianism', such as the polemical writings of Richard Jenkyns and Bram Dijkstra, find little room within their schemas for any lens other than that of male heterosexuality when examining figures who exhibit 'that melting languor, that perfectly composed lassitude of the fallen Maenad' which Pater also valued. In the following chapter, we shall examine how this aspect of Dionysian women too could assume central importance for queer male aesthetes, exemplifying the beauty and the glamour of a feminine world into which they could escape like the 'feminine souls' who composed part of Dionysus's train. To explore this possibility we shall examine the role of

⁵⁹⁸ Gartrell, *Castor and Pollux*, 4.

Dionysian women in the imagination of a young Cecil Beaton, exploring his early writings, photographs, and illustrative work to demonstrate how Beaton's understanding of Dionysian women conflated them with the queer, feminised world of the theatre into which Beaton inserted himself.

Chapter 5

‘The Strange Malady of the Women, The Dancings’: Cecil Beaton’s Theatrical Thiasus

One afternoon in 1908, as he recalled in his 1951 book *Photobiography*, Cecil Beaton's mother took him to the studio of the photographer Lallie Charles to have his picture taken. Beaton was, he later wrote, already familiar with Charles's work because of his enthusiasm for a picture-postcard she had taken of the stage actress Lily Elsie. He had found this picture one morning when he was 'allowed to scramble into my mother's large bed... my eyes fell upon a postcard lying in front of me on the pink silk eiderdown, and the beauty of it caused my heart to leap'.⁵⁹⁹ 'My passion for Miss Lily Elsie and my interest in photography were thus engendered at the same moment', he concluded, presenting the episode as the event that would define the course of his future career.⁶⁰⁰

After being 'given an extra washing and combing', Beaton was presented to Lallie Charles, 'the very same lady who taken photographs of a number of my stage goddesses'.⁶⁰¹ The sitting was, however, to acquire a similar importance in Beaton's retelling of his formative years not because of its thrilling glamour but because of a moment of acute embarrassment. Beaton recounted how his mother was 'presented with a large bunch of roses' which, upon discovering they were artificial, he immediately recognised: 'bursting out of my shyness, [I] shouted: "They're the same roses that Lily Elsie held!"'.⁶⁰² 'At once I grabbed hold of them', he continued, 'but after a certain amount of simpering on the part of Miss Charles, who explained it would not be suitable for a little boy to hold a bunch of roses, relinquished them with regret'.⁶⁰³ Beaton was to recall these events in slightly modulated forms several times in his published writings, and there is good reason to assume there is an element of mythmaking at play in these retellings. The photograph that survives of this sitting shows Beaton with his mother but also his younger brother, Reggie, who is carefully edited out of Beaton's reminiscences, and there are no roses at all in the picture (fig. 158). Moreover, Beaton would have been four years old during the sitting, and the precociousness he claims to have exhibited seems unlikely at such a young age.

Even though the narrative is likely confected— or certainly at least embroidered— the series of events it depicts, and Beaton's evident desire to portray

⁵⁹⁹ Cecil Beaton, *Photobiography* (London: Odhams Press, 1951), 13.

⁶⁰⁰ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 14.

⁶⁰¹ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 14.

⁶⁰² Beaton, *Photobiography*, 14.

⁶⁰³ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 14.

them as the foundational moments of his life's work, is highly illuminating. David Mellor has argued in connection to this origin myth that Beaton's subsequent photography allowed him to construct 'a phantasy... which links Beaton to a pleasurable and scenic universe of "Beauties" from theatre and society... And this, arguably, defined Beaton's photographic project until the close of his life'.⁶⁰⁴ It was this world—the world he called the 'much publicised galaxy of feminine beauty' that he found in the pages of society magazines such as *The Sketch* and *The Tatler*, which he avidly read from childhood onwards— that Beaton was denied entry to in Charles's studio, because it 'would not be suitable for a little boy' to partake in its rituals.⁶⁰⁵

In the previous chapter, we examined how the homosocial maenadic encampments of Euripides's *Bacchae* enthralled Walter Pater, who the classicist Robert Fowler argues 'seems almost to wish he himself were a maenad' and who wrote of a kinship within the train of Dionysus between 'women and feminine souls'.⁶⁰⁶ We saw how Pater's position was reprised by aesthetes of Beaton's generation who found in the retributory, wild violence of the maenads against heterosexual men the promise of imagining 'subliminal fantasies of revenge against a hostile society', a function which Richard Dellamora initially attributed to Dionysus himself. In *Modern Nymphs*, we noted that this aggressive function paralleled its writer Raymond Mortimer's equally aggressive conception of aestheticism as a culturally revolutionary motor, sweeping away the 'Victorianism' which allegedly lied about the classical past, bankrupted art, and destroyed Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. We equally noted, however, that some compositional aspects of Lowinsky's 'fashion plates' evinced an interest in the other half of Pater's somewhat paradoxical formulation of the maenad's appeal, not their 'wild, coarse behaviour' but their 'grace' and 'loveliness'. It is this aspect of the thiasus, the train of female celebrants attendant upon Dionysus, that shall concern us here: in this chapter we shall examine the early work of Cecil Beaton to argue that his 'galaxy of feminine beauty' bore more than a superficial relationship to the lovely and graceful encampments of

⁶⁰⁴ David Mellor, "Beaton's Beauties: Self-Representation, Authority, and British Culture". *Cecil Beaton* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 9.

⁶⁰⁵ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 15.

⁶⁰⁶ Robert Fowler, *Pater and Greek Religion*, 248.

Pater's maenads and his delight in it more than a superficial relationship to Pater's delight in maenadic activity.

Beaton is not conventionally associated with either the legacies of late nineteenth century aestheticism or classical iconographies: owing perhaps to the modernity of his most successful endeavour, that of the fashion photographer, his appreciation for and interest in the images and writings of the century before his own have been somewhat obfuscated. However, we find recurrent references to figures Beaton alternately terms 'nymphs' and 'bacchantes' throughout his early graphic art, photography, and published writings, texts and images in which these figures exist in a symbiotic relationship with the women of the stage that Beaton attempted to emulate at four years old. We shall first examine the nature of Beaton's engagements with aestheticism before turning to his construction of the women of the Dionysian thiasus, the 'nymphs' and 'bacchantes' who recur throughout his early oeuvre, as representatives of a feminine world of the theatre to which he sought to escape.

Cecil the Aesthete

Eight years younger than Raymond Mortimer, twelve years younger than Thomas Lowinsky, and almost twenty years younger than Glyn Philpot, Beaton represents the furthest point of continuity with the legacies of aestheticism we have traced throughout this thesis. Indeed, in the 1920s Beaton was taken by contemporary commentators to be the exemplary man of his generation, his interests, appearance, and lifestyle providing inspiration for others who came of age after the war and represented a glamorous modernity. In an article describing 'The Puppet Show of Mayfair' in 1928, *The Sphere* wrote of Beaton that he was 'one of the models' on whom 'the young men of to-day... are bidden to mould their personalities'.⁶⁰⁷ This involved somehow emulating his age ('very early twenties'), his physical appearance ('slender'), and his 'knowledge of clothes that embraces the feminine wardrobe... a most definite artistic sense which [his] predecessors in the rough old days may

⁶⁰⁷ Anon., "The Puppet Show of Mayfair". *The Sphere*, Saturday 16 June 1928, 556.

envy'.⁶⁰⁸ Despite his unquestionable modernity, however, the article still referred to him as 'one of the cleverest young men of the new *aesthetic* school' and accompanied the article with a caricature of Beaton provided by Anthony Wysard to illustrate his imitable appearance (fig. 159).⁶⁰⁹

Wysard, as we noted in our introductory discussions concerning the figure of the aesthete in the 1920s, had a particular penchant for caricaturing Beaton in a manner which regularly but covertly suggested his homosexuality, variously presenting him hand in hand with the queer artist Oliver Messel or with conspicuous bunches of lilies by his side. He was feeling no kinder towards Beaton in the summer of 1928, nor less convinced of Beaton's suspicious belonging in the lineages of nineteenth century aestheticism. Wysard embroidered his *Sphere* caricature with yet another lily in Beaton's buttonhole, and repeated the trick of his 1930 caricature which we considered, along with Dominic Janes, to draw grotesque equivalences 'between a vase of calla lilies and Beaton's flowery head and curving, stem-like body'.⁶¹⁰ On this occasion the confluences between man and bloom are even more pronounced: Beaton is so effeminately wasp-waisted as to actually vanish at the point of his waist, allowing his upper body to repeat the curving lines of the blooming lily affixed to his lapel. His facial features, meanwhile, are evidently painted, his cheeks and lips rouged and his eyelashes thick with mascara. To compound the point in the public consciousness, Wysard took to the pages of the *Tatler* a little over a month later to write of Beaton's dominance in the 'merry-go-round of Mayfair', characterising him as 'the photographer who photographs his friends dripping in lilies'.⁶¹¹ Wysard's caricatures, making recourse to the 'aesthetic' symbol of the late nineteenth century aesthetes to both caricature Beaton's art and intimate his deviant sexuality, suggest that Beaton was already understood in the 1920s as Beverley Nichols would recall him from the vantage point of the 1950s: that is, as one of 'the aesthetes of the twenties... [who] seemed to have mistaken his decade, to have retreated, quite deliberately, into the nineties'.⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁸ Anon., *Puppet Show*, 556.

⁶⁰⁹ Anon., *Puppet Show*, 556.

⁶¹⁰ Janes, *Freak to Chic*, 154.

⁶¹¹ Anthony Wysard, "The Merry-Go-Round of Mayfair". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 01 August 1928, 237. My italics.

⁶¹² Nichols, *The Sweet and Twenties*, 210.

Beaton's early self-portraits and interests would certainly have provided the ammunition a caricaturist like Anthony Wysard needed to present Beaton as a suspiciously effete product of the old 'aesthetic school' as much as a representative of the 'new' one. As a student at Cambridge, Beaton read Pater and was 'enlightened... about the decadence of the naughty Nineties' by one of his teachers, an interest which persisted throughout the 1920s: a 1929 diary entry records his disappointment that he could not corner Elisabeth Marbury, hosting a party Beaton was invited to, to hear 'the whole story of Wilde and his trial'.⁶¹³ Beaton also took several photographs of himself as an undergraduate in which he appears alongside bunches of lilies like those of Wysard's caricatures.⁶¹⁴ In one such example, he poses before a wall of his bedroom which he painted with blooming lilies (fig. 160); in another which was published in *The Bystander* in 1924, an early success for Beaton owing to his bravura theatrical designs for the university's Amateur Dramatic Club, he is flanked by a vase from which three enormous lilies protrude (fig. 161).⁶¹⁵ As he would record in an introduction to his published diaries, Beaton spent these years becoming a 'whole-hearted aesthete', building on an adolescence 'full of inner yearnings, growing my hair "like a piano-tuner", and developing other ridiculous aspects of aestheticism'.⁶¹⁶ This, like the events in Lallie Charles's studio which constitute the ur-text of Beaton's infatuation with the 'galaxy of feminine beauty', was also an oft-repeated line in his writings, reappearing in *Photobiography*. In this instance, Beaton records that he 'set about becoming a rabid aesthete with a scarlet tie, gauntlet gloves and hair grown to a flowing length'; to mirror these external changes, he 'took a passionate interest in the Italian Renaissance, Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, and, of course, in the Theatre and in Photography'.⁶¹⁷ These first two interests were, as we have seen, common to a great many of the figures whose work we have explored throughout previous chapters; Beaton's insertion of 'Theatre' and 'Photography' into what he presents as the typical interests of an aesthete presages his conflation of the maenadic encampments of the late nineteenth century imagination and the glamorous world of the contemporary stage and society magazines.

⁶¹³ Cecil Beaton, *The Wandering Years: Diaries*, 179.

⁶¹⁴ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 12, 14.

⁶¹⁵ Anon., "Mr. Cecil Beaton". *The Bystander*, Wednesday 03 December 1924, 754.

⁶¹⁶ Quoted in: Hugo Vickers, *Cecil Beaton* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1986), 27; Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 2.

⁶¹⁷ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 33.

Despite Beaton's public flirtations with the iconographic trappings of aestheticism in his self-portraits and reminiscences, the resonances they acquire in the insinuating caricatures of Anthony Wysard would have likely been painful. Many years after the fact, while reflecting on the publications of the Wolfenden Report, Beaton recorded that 'I wish that this marvellous step forward could have been taken at an earlier age... to feel that one was not a felon and an outcast could have helped enormously during those difficult early years'.⁶¹⁸ Diary entries penned forty-four years prior to this 1966 entry, when Beaton was travelling to Cambridge for the first time, lay bare the anxieties engendered by his status as an outcast. The opening entry in his first volume of published diaries records his fears over 'terrible things' such as 'having to live among awful heartiness'.⁶¹⁹ The entry gives way to deeper anxieties beyond a fear of the boorish masculinity of Beaton's imagined fellow undergraduates, prompted by Beaton observing a stranger who was 'ugly, but he looked as though *he* had grit'.⁶²⁰ This nebulous characteristic is one Beaton found himself lacking, and subsequently desiring, as the sight of the man triggered a series of existential concerns. 'Could I, in the event of another war, go in the trenches and fight as others have done before me?', he asked rhetorically: 'I wanted to do that and more. I wanted to ride bikes and fight. I often despise people who do these things, but I wanted to be *able* to do them'.⁶²¹ More directly, Beaton's unpublished diary entries during this period reflected upon the extent of the difficulties Beaton's sexuality engendered for him in his early years: a Cambridge entry recorded his frustration that he had 'never been in love with women and I don't think I ever shall in the way that I have been in love with men', concluding that he was 'really a terrible, terrible homosexualist and try so hard not to be'.⁶²²

Modern Nymphs, with its violently assertive women and its knowing intimations of visits to Turkish baths, obfuscated the considerable danger and internal suffering of the position of queer aesthetes which had been inscribed into their interactions with the Dionysian retinue from Pater's consideration of Simeon Solomon's *Bacchus* paintings onwards. If Beaton's private diaries remind us of this reality, his published writings during the early years of his career instead seek solace

⁶¹⁸ Quoted in: Vickers, *Cecil Beaton*, 41.

⁶¹⁹ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 4.

⁶²⁰ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 4. Italics in original.

⁶²¹ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 4. Italics in original.

⁶²² Quoted in: Vickers, *Beaton*, 40.

in rhetoric similar to the ground traversed in *Modern Nymphs*. A revisionist account of Beaton's struggle with heteronormative standards of masculinity was presented to readers of Beaton's 1930 publication *The Book of Beauty*, an 'attempt at an up-to-date version of the old books of beauty, in which early Victorian belles, possessors of proud names, were engraved in steel'; Beaton may also have been aware of the photographer Emil Otto Hoppé's 1922 *The Book of Fair Women* which also focused on female beauty, shared some of the same sitters as Beaton's book, and included an introductory essay like Beaton's on the nature of beauty, but this more recently precedent is conveniently elided in Beaton's reminiscences.⁶²³ *The Book of Beauty*, featuring Beaton's photographs and illustrations of socialites, dancers, actresses, and writers whom he admired alongside accompanying essays providing rhapsodic analyses of their physical characteristics, provides the clearest statement of Beaton's aestheticism in the period in terms of its iconographic attachments, its inspirations, and its targets. In the case of the latter, it is against the oppressive masculine culture that lay at the heart of his youthful fears that Beaton's aestheticism is defined. His introductory essay provides another retelling of his trip to Lallie Charles's studio, but lacks the humiliating detail of the roses being taken from him. In this account, Beaton's trip occurred 'when the time came for me to be photographed by Miss Charles', implicitly suggesting that the preservation of his image by 'the very same lady who taken photographs of a number of my stage goddesses' was an inevitability.⁶²⁴ The roses recur in this story, but only for Beaton to convey 'the thrill of finding that [they] were artificial', and the revelation of his intimate knowledge of Charles's work meets no censure: "'So this is the piece of chiffon that you draped Lily Elsie in'", Beaton allegedly 'shrieked with triumph', at the age of four.⁶²⁵

This moment is also displaced as being one of Beaton's earliest forays into the intertwined worlds of photography and theatre, as Beaton records an earlier engagement with these worlds in *The Book of Beauty*. His essay begins by recording what is ostensibly his earliest memory, the sight of 'a lady dancing on a table at Maxim's... in [the operetta] *The Merry Widow*, to which I had been taken after an eternity of entreaties'.⁶²⁶ 'From that thrilling moment,' Beaton continued, 'I no longer

⁶²³ Emil Otto Hoppé, *The Book of Fair Women* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1922); Cecil Beaton, *The Book of Beauty* (London: Duckworth, 1930), 4.

⁶²⁴ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 1.

⁶²⁵ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 1.

⁶²⁶ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 1.

considered engine drivers or soldiers to be figures of importance'.⁶²⁷ What follows is a self-consciously hysterical account of perusing *The Sketch* and *The Tatler* for photographs of actresses and socialites every week, an obsessively observed ritual that was interrupted— 'oh, horror!'— by the outbreak of the War when 'the *Sketch* and *Tatler* stopped for a week, after which a very thin ghost of these magazines appeared filled with photographs of – soldiers'.⁶²⁸ It was only after Beaton 'prayed very hard' that 'the photographs that I wanted reappeared', displacing the soldiers he did not care about for the 'galaxy of feminine beauty' that entranced him once more.⁶²⁹

This narrative of Beaton's pursuit of beauty is, as his diaries indicate, a work of considerable revisionism, alchemically transforming the self-doubt engendered by Beaton's sexuality and his failure to conform to masculine expectations into an insouciant and audacious rejection of those very standards. According to *The Book of Beauty*, Beaton had no need to 'ride bikes and fight', much less 'go in the trenches': such matters were superfluous in and anathema to the aesthete's life Beaton established. Despite the irony and playfulness of *The Book of Beauty's* conceit and the general levity of its tone, the combative aggression of Beaton's aestheticism is strongly pronounced in this introductory fable. Given the immense cultural trauma and personal loss engendered by a conflict that had ended only twelve years prior to the book's publication, the flippant disregard with which the First World War and the men who fought in it are treated is blatantly provocative. *The Book of Beauty* also makes a virtue of what caused Lallie Charles to take Lily Elsie's false roses away from him as a child. Charles's reasoning was that it was improper for a male figure to enter into the exclusively feminine world represented to Beaton by the likes of Elsie. Here, Beaton glories in its exclusion of men, with whom it is explicitly compared and who are subordinated to its beauty and glamour: it is only Beaton, photographed by Charles 'when the time came', who is initiated into the 'galaxy of feminine beauty' to which he implies he always belonged.

We see in *The Book of Beauty* the world of female celebrity functioning like a modish and idiosyncratic update of Pater's maenadic encampments: it admits no men other than 'feminine souls' like Beaton's, it is defined specifically *against*

⁶²⁷ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 1.

⁶²⁸ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 2.

⁶²⁹ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 2.

societies dominated by heterosexual men exemplified for Beaton in the figure of the soldier as they were for Pater in the figure of Pentheus, and it provides a space in which old codes of normativity are cohesively negated. *The Book of Beauty* is also the point in Beaton's writing in which we see these two diverse points of reference most consistently converge. Beaton's descriptions of glamorous women, later recalled as 'purple' by Beaton himself, abound with a kaleidoscopic range of reference points: the socialites Zita and Baby Jungman are 'a pair of decadent 18th-century angels made of wax, exhibited at Madame Tussaud's before the fire', the actress Lillian Gish is 'a divinely pretty little toy, an expensive doll made of the best-quality porcelain', and the famously fashionable Mona Von Bismarck is easily 'mistaken... for an Aubrey Beardsley angel with spiral curls'.⁶³⁰ This final point of reference, in keeping with the taste of the aesthetes of the 1920s, should intimate that Beaton's cultivated aestheticism informed his purple prose. Indeed, Beaton's description of Greta Garbo is curiously and playfully redolent of Pater's famous ekphrasis in *The Renaissance*, as Garbo 'with her slightly insane look, eyes that are thinking strange thoughts, and weary smile... is Leonardo's Gioconda, a clairvoyant who, possessed of a secret wisdom, knows and sees all'.⁶³¹ Revisiting another of Pater's sources, this time from his 'Study of Dionysus', Beaton also compares a Lady Eleanour Smith to 'Leonardo's John the Baptist', a reference to the androgynous figure whose appearance Pater conflated with Dionysus's.⁶³² That Smith possesses the 'dark eyes of wild animals' also suggests possible, vague echoes of Pater's accounts of the 'fair wild creature' Dionysus; his reference too to 'the strange and tragic beauty of a tamed wild animal' in his subsequent description of Alice de Janzé, recently arrested for shooting herself and her husband in an internationally reported scandal, similarly seems curiously redolent of Pater's description of Dionysus as 'some fair wild creature in the snare of the hunter'.⁶³³

It is, however, far more persistently and less ambiguously the women of the thiasus who occupy Beaton's attention in *The Book of Beauty*. Garbo, 'the most glamorous figure in the whole world' in Beaton's estimation, may have resembled a Paterian *Giaconda* but also 'looked like some pale being that belongs beneath the

⁶³⁰ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 57; Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 35, 43, 55.

⁶³¹ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 48.

⁶³² Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 51.

⁶³³ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 51, 54; Pater, *Bacchanals*, 68.

water... [a] naiad to be seen for one fleeting glimpse'.⁶³⁴ Alongside her are the artist and model Hazel Lavery, 'a dryad of the wood' and a 'Greek nymph', the actress Marion Davies, 'nymph-like in her long-legged grace', a 'Mrs. Gordon Beckles Wilson' who is 'Undine dressed by Chanel', and the socialite Wanda Holden who is 'a bacchante'.⁶³⁵ In nearly all of these cases, the Dionysian qualities of these women are related to something sinister, threatening, or otherwise unnerving about their beauty. Thus Lady Lavery is 'a wild animal from the woods', an 'elusive, rather crazy-looking soul', an 'eerie' apparition possessing a 'rather pagan beauty'; Beckles Wilson is in possession of 'mischievous eyes, treacherous smile, and lank gold hair'; Wanda Holden is 'wild-eyed', and Garbo 'possessed a rare, eerie quality'.⁶³⁶ Just as Lowinsky's aggressive figures in *Modern Nymphs* were shaded with fleeting intimations of their latent grace, the loveliness of Beaton's naiads, dryads, bacchantes, and nymphs is shadowed by their capacity for unnerving, terrifying acts of treachery or violence.

Beaton's *Book of Beauty*, in which an unassailable dichotomy between the 'galaxy of feminine beauty' and the world of heterosexual male authority which engendered deep anxieties in Beaton is drawn, thus presents the 'galaxy' to which Beaton longed to escape in terms that evince continuities with the nymphs and maenads of Pater and his followers. A conflation of the glamorous women of Beaton's 'galaxy' and the women of the thiasus is, indeed, not unique to Beaton's writing but rather recurs in his early photography and graphic art, two fields in which these two spheres of reference continue to inform one another in a symbiotic manner.

Women: Beaton's Theatrical Thiasus

The outpouring of Dionysian imagery in *The Book of Beauty* belies Beaton's interest in the women of the thiasus that originated long before 1930, occurring in some cases so early in his development as to nearly parallel his investment in the leading ladies of the stage. In the case of Beaton's graphic art, we find biographer Hugo Vickers

⁶³⁴ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 46.

⁶³⁵ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 39, 44, 55, 65.

⁶³⁶ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 39, 55, 65, 46.

recording Beaton's childhood habit of embellishing landscapes executed in the art department of his school with bacchantes; this detail appears to be only gleaned from accounts provided by Beaton's contemporaries, however, as these paintings do not appear to be extant.⁶³⁷ In the case of his photography we find in Beaton's *Photobiography* that among his earliest efforts—designed, staged, and executed around the age of twelve—were portraits of his sisters as 'very respectable nymphs and bacchantes'.⁶³⁸ Unlike Beaton's maenad-laden landscapes, one such example featuring his sister Nancy while on a family holiday and precociously titled *A Norfolk Bacchante* (fig. 162), survives, showing Beaton's sitter sat pensively on a forest floor. The background, vague through a haze of soft focus, is ethereal in its indistinctness, as is the face of the 'bacchante' and the distant expression it bears. The fallen leaves and twigs that constitute the photograph's foreground, meanwhile, are crisply rendered. In setting and treatment, *A Norfolk Bacchante* perhaps belongs most obviously to what Richard Jenkyns views as a vogue for 'whimsical Hellenic Englishry' within late nineteenth and early twentieth century British art and literature, lingering on the fallen, autumnal foliage upon which Beaton's maenad sits.⁶³⁹ Aesthetically too, *A Norfolk Bacchante* belongs to the contemporary vogue for pictorialism, recalled by Beaton as a tendency in which 'photographs were made to look like "old paintings" or engravings'.⁶⁴⁰ There is perhaps not much separating Beaton's *Norfolk Bacchante* and a painting like William Stott of Oldham's *The Nymph*, which we encountered in the previous chapter as a representative example of popular late nineteenth century depictions of Dionysian women, beyond the medium of the works and the nudity of Oldham's mildly erotic image.

Certainly, Beaton's own likely reference points for *A Norfolk Bacchante's* tone and composition would indicate that he too would come to regard the photograph as essentially a period piece. Beaton's introductory essay to *The Magic Image*, his history of photography, makes reference to the little-known photographer Kate Smith who, as Beaton records, 'used draped figures of naiads, Bacchantes and Greek goddesses to express her peculiarly Edwardian idiom' and placed such characters in landscapes illuminated by 'sun through the low-hanging branches of beech-trees and

⁶³⁷ Vickers, *Cecil Beaton*, 21.

⁶³⁸ Cecil Beaton, *Photobiography*, 20.

⁶³⁹ Richard Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence*, 288.

⁶⁴⁰ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 11.

the like'.⁶⁴¹ *A Norfolk Bacchante* has clear similarities to this approach in general, and Beaton's ability to recall the work of a relatively obscure photographer some forty years later would suggest that her work had impacted him at some stage of his career. Furthermore, Smith's photographs would have been available to Beaton through the pages of *The Sketch* and *The Tatler* around the time he composed and shot *A Norfolk Bacchante*, a particularly relevant example perhaps being a study of a 'nymph of the stream' reproduced in a 1912 issue of the former publication (fig. 163).⁶⁴² Sharing with Smith's photograph the extreme youth of its sitter, their solitary repose, and the dreaminess of their expression which is answered in Beaton's photograph by his soft focus and low light, this expression of a 'peculiarly Edwardian idiom' appears to stand at a considerable remove from the nymphs rapturously described in *The Book of Beauty*.

Equally, however, shifting our analysis from composition to costume reveals that even this early photograph demonstrates the consistent equivocation between theatre and thiasus in Beaton's work. In *A Norfolk Bacchante*, Beaton's sister appears in a white dress with bunches of grapes woven into her hair and embroidered on the front of her gown at the chest to denote her Dionysian identity. This costume was assumedly designed by Beaton as he recorded that his practice at this age was to attempt to recreate the regalia of the fashionable dancers, actresses, or socialites he found in illustrated magazines; their poses too were often imitated in Beaton's portraits of his sisters.⁶⁴³ This would indicate that *A Norfolk Bacchante* can be read in this manner, namely, through a specific reference point drawn from the contemporaneous visual culture of the 'galaxy of feminine beauty' that Beaton loyally consumed. This reading is indicated equally by the mere fact of the photograph's thematic precociousness: that the figure of the bacchante was one whose iconography Beaton was familiar with at the age of twelve should prompt us to ponder from whence this knowledge came. While the photography of Kate Smith may provide one answer, another is perhaps covertly provided in *Photobiography* in which Beaton clarifies his particular interests when he first began experimenting with photography. Beaton recorded that in this period he became 'enamoured with

⁶⁴¹ Cecil Beaton, *The Magic Image: The Genius of Photography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 21.

⁶⁴² Anon., "When the Brook is Low: The Nymph of the Stream". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 19 June 1912, vi.

⁶⁴³ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 20.

[Anna] Pavlova', the prima ballerina, and would pose his sister Nancy in her image; in his book on ballet, Beaton also notes that he 'collected every picture of Pavlova I could lay my hands on' throughout his early adolescence.⁶⁴⁴ It seems likely that within Beaton's collection of pictures of Pavlova was a depiction of the dancer performing her piece 'Autumn Bacchanal', or costumed as if about to perform it, of which several iterations would have been available to him. Possibly available and certainly of interest to Beaton would have been a postcard print of Pavlova and her fellow dancer Laurent Novikoff (fig. 164), taken in 1911 by E. O. Hoppé whose *Book of Fair Women* may have informed Beaton's *Book of Beauty*. Equally, reproductions of portraits by the husband of the 'wild nymph' Hazel Lavery, the painter John Lavery, may have interested Beaton and also depicted Pavlova in her role as a bacchante. One oil painting by Lavery which shows Pavlova engaged in her performance was specifically named *Anna Pavlova as a Bacchante* (fig. 165) and was exhibited in London in 1911, perhaps explaining Beaton's awareness of the term which is not accounted for in Kate Smith's photography, while another 1911 impression 'specially painted from life for "The Illustrated London News"' appeared as a collectable, full-page colour supplement (fig. 166) for the publication. Given Beaton's particular enthusiasm for a much-publicised series of photographs of Pavlova in her London house and garden, he may also have taken inspiration from the photographer Claude Harris's 1912 depiction of the ballerina in precisely this setting which is redolent of the interplay between soft and hard focus and the profusion of foliage in *A Norfolk Bacchante* (fig. 167), or Harris's elegant study of Pavlova dancing in her garden from the same sitting (fig. 168).⁶⁴⁵ Harris and Hoppé's contributions to photography are both acknowledged in Beaton's *The Magic Image*, attesting to Beaton's interest in their work as much as his likely debt to the latter photographer's precursor to his own *Book of Beauty* does.⁶⁴⁶

Although only two of these depictions specifically refer to Pavlova as a bacchante— Lavery's oil painting and Hoppé's postcard— common to these images is a costume that Nancy Beaton's approximates in *A Norfolk Bacchante*. In each of these portraits and photographs, Pavlova sports a white dress and wears her hair evenly parted with some form of fauna or fruit— grapes in all depictions beyond

⁶⁴⁴ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 19; Beaton, *Ballet*, 9.

⁶⁴⁵ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 20.

⁶⁴⁶ Beaton, *The Magic Image*, 274, 138.

Harris's photographs, in which she wears flowers—entwined, held in place by a ribbon worn across her forehead. In Harris's portraits, Pavlova's gown is accessorised with a clutch of flowers at the breast; in all other depictions these flowers are replaced again by grapes befitting her Dionysian role. While Nancy Beaton's gown features longer sleeves than Pavlova's, which was sleeveless for her bacchante costume and reaching barely further than the shoulder in Harris's garden photographs, Beaton replicates its colour and its central clutch of grapes in addition to the hairstyle and headband common to these depictions of Pavlova. Despite the trappings of 'whimsical Hellenic Englishry' that recur in the forested glade of *A Norfolk Bacchante* and the photograph's appropriation of Kate Fox's 'peculiarly Edwardian idiom', its iconography was seemingly brought about through engagements with altogether more exotic and glamorous source materials than the woodlands of Norfolk. From this early appearance of a Dionysian figure in Beaton's work, we see the conflation of the maenadic encampments which fascinated Pater with the 'galaxy of feminine beauty' that Beaton sought to replace the masculine world with, with the classical figure intrinsically tied to the image of a glamorous ballerina.

Beaton's subsequent engagements with the Dionysian retinue came some time after his adolescent dalliances, although it still occurred when his career as both a photographer and graphic artist was in its nascency. A rare foray into the masculine counterparts to the nymphs and maenads is recorded in a 1926 diary entry in which Beaton's father threatened to send him to work in a clerical position at a family friend's London office, a fate Beaton abhorred but could not avoid after his failed attempts to design for the theatre. When the threat of forced assumption of the responsibilities of manhood was made, Beaton was fruitlessly designing another curtain decoration, 'a family of Marie-Laurencin [sic] fauns leaping about, pale pink with dark, liquid eyes'.⁶⁴⁷ 'I refused to contemplate such a fate', Beaton recorded, 'and went back to my pink fauns'.⁶⁴⁸ This work appears to be no longer extant, although the reference to Marie Laurencin's modish, decorative paintings would suggest that Beaton's leaping fauns were likely closer to the 'true humour' Pater appreciated in depictions of the creatures than to the model of marauding sexual

⁶⁴⁷ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 74.

⁶⁴⁸ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 74.

aggressors favoured by Nietzsche and legitimated by many classical precedents. Laurencin's work was first exhibited in Britain in the Leicester Galleries in 1924 where it was praised for its 'queer insistent grace and charm' by one critic who also noted that 'no men are allowed in [Laurencin's] pictures'; it is also likely relevant to Beaton's fauns that Laurencin had designed stage sets for the Ballets Russes for their 1925 season in London.⁶⁴⁹

In the same period, Beaton also returned to the women of the thiasus in a series of illustrations which survive but which have gone virtually unacknowledged in accounts of Beaton's life and work. In *Photobiography*, he records that he was tasked with 'translating Pierre Louÿs' and being asked whether he would 'care to do photographic illustrations' to accompany this project while working at the office to which his father succeeded in sending him.⁶⁵⁰ It is easy to date this offer with relative accuracy as Beaton was only employed in an office for around three months in the summer of 1926.⁶⁵¹ This would suggest that, although Beaton did not translate the text for the book, his recollections here can only refer to a commission to illustrate the Fortune Press's 1928 edition of *Twilight of the Nymphs*, a collection of mildly erotic retellings of classical myths originally penned between 1892 and 1898.⁶⁵² Pierre Louÿs's writings may have been a tempting prospect for Beaton because, as a journalist for the film magazine *The Bioscope* recorded in 1920, the writer 'seems to be all the rage at the present'.⁶⁵³ This referred to a film adaptation of Louÿs's story *The Woman and the Puppet* but could equally have referred to a widely publicised staging of a ballet based on his novel *Aphrodite* in the same year, choreographed by Michel Fokine—formerly of Beaton's beloved Ballets Russes and a former choreographer for Anna Pavlova—and duly photographed for Beaton's equally beloved *The Sketch*.⁶⁵⁴ The commission also provided Beaton with the opportunity to interact directly with the texts of the 'naughty Nineties' to which he had been exposed at university: Louÿs was a sometime friend of Wilde's, whose downfall still fascinated Beaton in 1929, and was the dedicatee of Wilde's *Salome*.⁶⁵⁵ The legacy ensured that

⁶⁴⁹ Anon., "New Woman in Art". *London Daily Chronicle*, Friday 28 November 1924, 7; Anon., "The Gossip of London". *London Daily Chronicle*, Friday 15 May 1925, 9.

⁶⁵⁰ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 40.

⁶⁵¹ Vickers, *Cecil Beaton*, 79-83.

⁶⁵² Pierre Louÿs, *The Twilight of the Nymphs*. (London: Fortune Press, 1928).

⁶⁵³ Anon., "Criticisms of the Films". *The Bioscope*, Thursday 01 July 1920, 39.

⁶⁵⁴ Anon., "Still Treading Classic Ground!". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 07 January 1920, 49.

⁶⁵⁵ H. P. Clive, *Pierre Louÿs: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 91.

Louÿs remained a controversial figure, and the importation of his novels and stories remained banned in Britain in 1928.⁶⁵⁶

The most immediately noticeable shift in Beaton's treatment of Dionysian women between *A Norfolk Bacchante* and his *Twilight of the Nymphs* illustrations is a formal and stylistic one. In the place of the hazy aesthetic of *A Norfolk Bacchante*, mimicking the contemporary vogue for photographic pictorialism exemplified by the likes of Kate Smith, Beaton's 'photographic illustrations' indicate a sudden burst of experimentalism resulting in compositions as technically modern as they are perhaps aesthetically decadent. Beaton recorded in his diary that he spent a night in December 1926 'in an experimental mood... [making] dada-like compositions designs by placing various objects on sensitised paper... At five o'clock I went to bed. My brain buzzed with new ways to employ this method'.⁶⁵⁷ *Twilight of the Nymphs* appears to be among the few professionally produced flowerings of this frenzied activity, composed of torn sheets of paper laid over one another and placed on photographic paper to create angular and kaleidoscopic black-and-white plates. While the Fortune Press's edition of *Twilight of the Nymphs* sports an introduction by Shane Leslie which praised Louÿs's 'moulding [of] the coarse substance of mythology into the warm curves of sensuous softness', no such softness can be found in Beaton's illustrations.⁶⁵⁸ Instead, if Beaton draws on Louÿs's text at all for direction he appears to respond to a speech Dionysus gives to Ariadne in which he describes his kingdom as 'a country of eternal twilight, without colour, indefinable... the light mysterious as a day in winter, or a night in summer', a speech befitting the countenance of the sorrowing Dionysus who fascinated Pater.⁶⁵⁹ The eerie, deathlike pallor of Dionysus's kingdom finds a striking visual parallel in Beaton's equally eerie, monochromatic illustrations.

This is, however, perhaps the only aspect of Louÿs's text to which these images could be said to correspond directly. Beyond this, Beaton's depictions of Louÿs's mythological characters have little to do with their actions within the stories themselves. Of Beaton's five illustrations only two depict figures who are nymphs or maenads according to the logic of Louÿs's retellings, these being his interpretation of

⁶⁵⁶ Anon., "Ban on French Novels in Britain". *London Daily Chronicle*, Thursday 03 May 1928, 3.

⁶⁵⁷ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 147.

⁶⁵⁸ Shane Leslie, "Introduction". *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 7.

⁶⁵⁹ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 43.

Leda (fig. 169) who is recast as a blue-skinned naiad in Louÿs's retelling and his depiction of a group of rampaging maenads who tear a helpless Ariadne to pieces in Louÿs's text (fig. 170).⁶⁶⁰ Neither of these illustrations conforms to Louÿs's descriptions of the scenes they superficially correspond to, just as Louÿs's narratives approximate the conventional myth narratives they draw inspiration from. Louÿs's retelling of the Leda myth features a long and relatively explicit description of the sexual congress of nymph and swan in which the latter dominates the former, while Beaton's image shows Leda coolly sailing upon its back; Louÿs's maenads are bestial, barbarous creatures clad in fox skins who bear little obvious resemblance to Beaton's, a group of leaping, twirling, elegant figures wearing economically rendered leopard skins. Beaton's illustrations appear to reject both the sexual and violent activities of Louÿs's women, these ruling and disfiguring passions seemingly stripped away with the colours that we may expect to find animating depictions of such behaviour. As in *Modern Nymphs*, in which we noted Lowinsky's consistent habit of breaking with established iconographic treatments of the myths he depicted, we find Beaton's illustrations seemingly obeying little more than the tastes of their designer: as in Lowinsky's case too, it is through the differences between these illustrations and our expectations of them that we most immediately grasp the thrust of Beaton's understanding of the figures he depicts. Although *Twilight of the Nymphs* visually belongs to a different epoch to *A Norfolk Bacchante*, disentangling Beaton's points of references and examining how these are brought to bear on the illustrations themselves suggests to us that Beaton continued to associate the thiasus with the 'galaxy of feminine beauty'.

Beaton's *Twilight of the Nymphs* illustrations, evincing a formal experimentalism uncommon to much of his oeuvre and seemingly not derived with any consistency from Louÿs's stories, present the viewer with something of a conundrum. From whence did Beaton's compositions come, and to what extent did they interact with his interest in the theatrical women of the thiasus evidenced in *A Norfolk Bacchante* before *Twilight of the Nymphs* and *The Book of Beauty* two years after its publication? The reference to 'dada-like' experiments in Beaton's diary appears to present an answer, albeit one which would indicate little sense of continuity between *Twilight of the Nymphs* and Beaton's preceding and succeeding

⁶⁶⁰ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 40.

interpretations of the thiasus. The confrontational, chaotic aesthetics and strident politics of continental dadaism would seem to have little place in the theatrical, feminine world of Beaton's thiasus nor in his aesthete's worldview more generally. *Photobiography* again, however, perhaps provides a clearer and more coherent picture of Beaton's interest in what he terms 'dada-like' photographic techniques and their appropriateness to *Twilight of the Nymphs*. In the period between Beaton's acceptance of the Fortune Press's commission and the book's publication, he notes that he dined regularly at the Eiffel Tower restaurant in Mayfair where he met 'all sorts of people who encouraged my photography', with two names being claimed as particular influences over his own work.⁶⁶¹ These were two American émigré photographers, Curtis Moffat and Francis Bruguière, the former of whom Beaton valued for his 'abstract photographs... [which] were extremely fashionable at this time' and the latter for his experiments in which 'by using lights on strips of metal and paper he created an abstract world'.⁶⁶² Under their influence, Beaton records his habit of visiting publishing houses and 'inquiring incidentally whether they were interested in publishing fairy stories with photographic illustrations', equipped with a portfolio consisting of 'imitation Bruguière abstract photographs and the pseudo Curtis Moffat heads' along with 'some stage designs'.⁶⁶³

Twilight of the Nymphs conforms almost entirely to this brief sketch of the the projects Beaton remembered, and the hand of both Bruguière and Moffat is detectable in the 'photographic illustrations' he provided. Certainly, Beaton's abstract backgrounds are reminiscent of Bruguière's contemporaneous cut paper abstractions. The billowing, overlapping forms found in extant examples dated to between 1925 and 1927 (figs. 171-172) find an answer in compositions such as Beaton's *Leda*, the background of which echoes the curving, ascending contours created by Bruguière's paper cuttings and reprises them with greater angularity. The eerie lighting of Beaton's twilit scenes also appears to respond to Bruguière's work, echoing the dramatic interplay between 'lights of varying intensity' that Beaton valued in Bruguière's photographs but replacing their purely abstract shapes with the flora, fauna, and water proper to a nymph's mountainous dwellings.⁶⁶⁴ Equally, the

⁶⁶¹ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 37.

⁶⁶² Beaton, *Photobiography*, 37-38.

⁶⁶³ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 40.

⁶⁶⁴ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 38.

illustrations in *Twilight of the Nymphs* seem to be technically influenced by Moffat, to whom Beaton was assumedly looking during his experiments. Moffat, as his biographer notes, had closely observed the methods of Man Ray while in Paris and exhibited his own versions of Ray's photograms, the results of a form of cameraless photography producing the effect sought by Beaton, in his first solo exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in 1925.⁶⁶⁵ Beaton's illustrations are 'photograms with ink additions', as a catalogue from a 1986 exhibition that included his maenads scene elucidates (and is, indeed, the only text in which Beaton's contributions to this book have been so much as acknowledged).⁶⁶⁶ Although such illustrational additions adulterate the medium employed by Moffat somewhat, their basis as photograms demonstrates that Beaton was working primarily within the medium most obviously represented to him by the American photographer who encouraged his work.

Registering the influence of Bruguière and Moffat's contemporaneous productions in Beaton's *Twilight of the Nymphs* illustrations indicates that Beaton's term 'dada-like' is something of a misnomer, suggesting as it does that the origins of Beaton's artistic direction in *Twilight of the Nymphs* lay further afield than the Eiffel Tower restaurant where Beaton met Moffat or the 'world of London in the 1920s' where Bruguière, as Beaton recorded, 'was a celebrity'.⁶⁶⁷ Equally, Beaton's appreciation for Bruguière and Moffat implies that it would also be a mistake to suppose, based upon the stark disjuncture in their appearances, that *Twilight of the Nymphs* navigates thematic territory at any significant remove from *A Norfolk Bacchante*. Beaton's statement that Moffat's 'abstract photographs' were 'extremely fashionable' would indicate that it was this aspect of Moffat's practice— the receptibility of cosmopolitan audiences to its equally cosmopolitan sensibility— that drew Beaton towards employing Moffat's methods. More directly, Bruguière's boldly abstract experiments with cut paper did not interest Beaton primarily because of any pronounced similarities they may have had with dadaism. Instead, Beaton appreciated Bruguière's photographs because their 'abstract world... had, for me, a similarity with designs of the Russian Ballet', reminding him of the work of Leon

⁶⁶⁵ Mark Howarth-Booth, "Curtis Moffat: When Modern Was New". *Curtis Moffat: Silver Society: Experimental Photography and Design, 1923-1935* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2016), 16.

⁶⁶⁶ David Mellor, *Cecil Beaton*, 152.

⁶⁶⁷ Beaton, *The Magic Image*, 143.

Bakst 'by whom [Beaton] was now influenced' at this point, as he recalled in *Photobiography*.⁶⁶⁸

As Beaton also carried stage designs in his portfolio to garner prospective commissions such as the Fortune Press's offer, Beaton's points of reference for constructing images revolving around the thiasus would not seem to have moved far beyond his childhood recreation of Anna Pavlova's costume in *A Norfolk Bacchante*. Rather, Beaton viewed the abstract shapes and textures of his *Twilight of the Nymphs* illustrations through the lens of the stage, conceiving of these designs as backgrounds befitting the women of the imaginary thiasus he constructed *The Book of Beauty*. This certainly appears to be the case in his largely superfluous illustration accompanying Louÿs's story 'The House on the Nile' (fig. 173) which features no human characters whatsoever, concentrating instead on a passage from the story's narrator in which he describes the exotic beasts of Egypt; even within Louÿs's narrative, a character interrupts the tale's speaker to complain that this descriptive passage 'has nothing to do with the rest of the story'.⁶⁶⁹ The illustration is thus the closest in the text to resembling the sort of stage scenery that drew Beaton to Bruguière's work and, indeed, was seemingly conceived of by Beaton primarily as such a background. Its iconography, dominated by a herd of antelopes leaping balletically, would recur in Beaton's portrait of the writer Inez Holden from a 1929 issue of *The Sketch* (fig. 174) in which it was referred to as 'the "fresco" background for beauty', with Beaton placing Holden decoratively in front of an enlarged and amended version of the *Twilight of the Nymphs* design.⁶⁷⁰

Bruguière's photographs, or rather Beaton's idiosyncratic conception of their associations, indicates that the crepuscular dreamscapes Beaton conjures in his illustrations were at least implicitly theatricalised spaces that we can imagine the nymphs and maenads of the *Book of Beauty* inhabiting. Moffat's influence may indeed have provided Beaton with a further reference point for picturing the figures themselves which would again suggest that Beaton continued to conflate the maenadic encampments of the thiasus with the 'galaxy of feminine beauty'. Dated to around 1925, Moffat created a series of images depicting a figure with bobbed hair

⁶⁶⁸ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 38, 35.

⁶⁶⁹ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 55.

⁶⁷⁰ Anon., "The 'Fresco' Background for Beauty". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 14 August 1929, 317.

dancing for the camera, clad in the unmistakable and unmistakably classicising leopard skin of the maenad that Beaton's maenads in *Twilight of the Nymphs* also sport (figs. 175-177). Moffat's model is almost certainly Margot Greville, recognisable from Moffat's other works around this time including a diptych in which she lies upon glittering draperies (fig. 178). Greville was indeed a dancer and, as a contemporary journalist noted, a popular artist's model, prized in this role by painters such as Augustus John for the elegance of her pose.⁶⁷¹ By the time she was photographed by Moffat, however, she had also appeared in a starring role in the 1924 film *Moonbeam Magic* and her photograph featured prominently in an article for *The Bystander* to publicise the achievement.⁶⁷²

Moffat's own maenadic figure, photographed when Beaton was under Moffat's influence and sporting the same costume as that of Beaton's women— which, as we have noted, directly contradict Louÿs's description of the maenads wearing fox skins— thus belonged to the glamorous and feminised worlds that Beaton hymned in *The Book of Beauty*. There are, indeed, further similarities between Moffat's photographs and Beaton's illustration of the charging maenads which illustrates Louÿs's 'Ariadne' story. In one photograph Greville assumes a contorted pose on the floor, grasping one foot behind her head while her free leg stretches straight in front of her; in another, she is seen performing a handstand-like movement while resting on her forearms and smiling at the viewer. The third photograph features the sitter in a comparatively restrained and demure pose, her gaze haughty and her right foot pointed balletically. Of the three, it is this last photograph that most strongly suggests Moffat's influence over Beaton's illustrations as the work combines something of Moffat's penchant for abstract experimentalism with his more conventional portraiture; in doing so, it therefore combines this experimentalism with a depiction of Dionysian women just as Beaton's *Twilight of the Nymphs* does. Moffat's work is admittedly not a photogram but is instead a double exposure, and manipulates the translucent layers created by employing the technique to imbue Greville's background with a similar sense of abstraction. The figure of the maenadic dancer has been overlaid onto another photograph of a separate dancer in an opulently sequined skirt which appears to have been taken in the same room as the

⁶⁷¹ Anon., "Moonbeam Magic". *Picturegoer*, Saturday 01 March 1924, 38.

⁶⁷² Anon., "The Importance of Being Miriam in Filmiland". *The Bystander*, Wednesday 02 April 1924, 35.

overlaid one, evidenced by the recurrence of a domed alcove and straight ridge on the wall in the background. The photograph appearing beneath Greville has, however, been turned on its side to allow the lines of these two artificially repeated shapes to overlap and create an unnatural, kaleidoscopic background in which the sequined skirt of one dancer becomes an abstract oblong backdrop for the portrayal of the other. While Moffat's untitled studies of this dancing figure are less complex than Beaton's compositions and less boldly experimental than Bruguière's, there are possible direct comparisons between Moffat's photographs and Beaton's illustrations. The abstracted background of the print showing two overlaid dancers is the clearest intimation of this, but the blurring of the dancer's raised feet in the photograph taken when she is performing a modified handstand perhaps finds a visual parallel too in Beaton's depiction of dancing maenads whose feet are similarly blurred to indicate their energetic movement. In a general sense, the fact that a photographer whom Beaton acknowledged as a significant influence over his own nascent career was making images of the same figures who populate *Twilight of the Nymphs* and posing them against unnatural, abstracted backgrounds created through manipulating photographic plates would certainly suggest a likely debt to Moffat in this direction.

Bruguière's influence saw Beaton transforming the backgrounds in his drawings into what he conceived of as stage sets; Moffat's may see them inhabited by figures derived from the glamorous world represented to Beaton by actresses and dancers like Margot Greville. The image with which we have compared Moffat's portraits of Greville, Beaton's depiction of the maenads of Louÿs's 'Ariadne' story, abounds with further and more general details which also seem to suggest that Beaton's maenads are at home in the Ballets Russes stage sets he saw in Bruguière's photographs. While the blurring of the figures' legs connotes rapid or energetic movement and the hair of the third leftmost figure in the composition flies wildly behind her, the movements they perform often seem curiously mannered. The leftmost figure is engaged in a balletic leap, her toes pointed and her long limbs stretching elegantly into the foliage above her; the figure with the streaming hair walks *en pointe* like a ballerina and crosses her arms over her body in a gesture reminiscent of the pose affected by Greville in Moffat's double exposure portrait. Indeed, even the blurring of their lower limbs conveys upon the maenads a balletic grace as the figure between these two, whose right foot is also pointed in the manner

of her neighbour, appears to sport ballet pumps, an illusionistic detail or visual pun created by the overlapping lighter and darker renderings of her feet in movement. Beaton's maenads picture may be said to evince similarities with John Collier's *Maenads* which we encountered in the previous chapter, sharing with the painting its dynamic and asymmetrical composition, its basic conceit, and even perhaps modulated forms of some poses- Beaton's central figure raises both arms aloft, like Collier's, and the leaping figure is casually redolent of Collier's leftmost figure. While Collier's painting demonstrated an interest in the ferocious nature of the maenads, however, Beaton's transforms their chaotic 'swarming' movement into the rhythmic, balletic dancing of the women who represented an alternative world beyond the normative strictures of masculine authority.

Curiously theatrical gestures are indeed common to Beaton's other leading ladies in *Twilight of the Nymphs*. Among these subjects one finds Byblis, whose incestuous desire for her brother causes her downfall, also posed with pointed toes and brandishing a neat bouquet of flowers like a dancer taking a curtain call (fig. 179). Beaton's Danae- who, as we encountered in *Modern Nymphs*, would typically be depicted during the rape she suffers at the hands of Zeus- appears alone, elegantly dressed, and brandishing another enormous bouquet to resemble, like Byblis, a feted performer (fig. 180). Indeed, we can perhaps detect elements of this at play in Beaton's *Leda* illustration which arguably show the reemergence of the same points of reference at play as in *A Norfolk Bacchante*. Beaton's illustration blatantly ignores Louÿs's prurient description of the climactic rape of Leda by Zeus in the guise of a swan. Beaton's Leda, idly fingering the neck of a slender swan which is so fragile as to be actually translucent, is clearly unrelated to the nymph who Louÿs wrote 'tore the grass with her fingers, and twisted her little feet compulsively' during the rape and then 'tried to stand, [but] the swan stopped her' in its aftermath.⁶⁷³ In this reimagining of Louÿs's story, the swan is a domesticated accomplice at the service of an elegant nymph, not a threat to her.

A precedent for this alternative iconography could, perhaps, be found within Beaton's youthful collection of photographs of the women he idolised and who he associated with nymphs and maenads both before and after *Twilight of the Nymphs*. Portraits of Anna Pavlova accompanied by her tamed and affectionate pet swans

⁶⁷³ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 20.

appeared in the *Tatler* as early as 1912, when Beaton's passion for photographs of the dancer (particularly those taken in the grounds of her house) was at its height (fig. 181).⁶⁷⁴ This iconography persisted into the period during which Beaton was working on *Twilight of the Nymphs*, with a front cover of a 1927 edition of the *Tatler* displaying a photograph of Pavlova embracing a tamed swan in her garden to celebrate the dancer's return to London (fig. 182): this was captioned 'Madame Anna Pavlova and a Faithful Adherent!'.⁶⁷⁵ Beaton's illustration boasts a more fanciful composition than these photographs, depicting a swan which is large enough to accommodate the elegantly poised Leda on its back. However, given the transposition of the 'nymphs' of Louÿs's book into conspicuously theatricalised scenes— scenes based on approximations of stage designs from the Ballets Russes, with whom Anna Pavlova had danced— the reference point would certainly not seem to be beyond the bounds of credibility, particularly in light of pictures of Pavlova with her swans recurring within the broader visual culture Beaton consumed in the late 1920s.

Despite outward appearances and the confusing reference to dadaism in Beaton's diaries, the women of Beaton's *Twilight of the Nymphs* do not disrupt the logic of *A Norfolk Bacchante*, placed in stage-like settings, posing and moving like actresses and dancers, and perhaps even recalling the likenesses of the real actresses and dancers whose images assumed a central role in Beaton's artistic and personal development. As we have seen, however, particularly with regard to the discrepancies between Beaton's *Leda* and Louÿs's 'Leda' upon which the former is allegedly based, the maintenance of this vision of the thiasus necessarily comes at the expense of the text to which Beaton theoretically responded. *Leda* ignores the prurient description of Leda's rape and is akin to Lowinsky's *Modern Nymphs* compositions insofar as it reverses established iconographies pertinent to its myth, showing the swan in a servile position and the nymph triumphant. While in *Modern Nymphs* these reversals would however be often used to suggest a violent disposition, even one capable of leading to maenadic acts of sparagmos, this is completely absent from Beaton's consideration of his comparable figures: what is excluded from Beaton's 'photographic illustrations' reveals much about Beaton's conception of the

⁶⁷⁴ Anon., "Swans: Real and Ideal". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 03 July 1912, 27.

⁶⁷⁵ Anon., "Madame Anna Pavlova and a Faithful Adherent!". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 10 August 1927, 1.

parameters of his thiasus, just as his visual references reveal much about its iconographic nature.

Beaton's illustrations are contextualised throughout *Twilight of the Nymphs* with quotations from Louÿs's text, and in each case Beaton appears to perversely light upon a moment of vanishingly little narrative importance or simply ignore the specificities of his source material. The design for 'The House on the Nile', which he later used as a backdrop for his fashion photography, was as we have seen a response to a section of Louÿs's text decried as irrelevant within the narrative itself. Elsewhere, Beaton rehearses Lowinsky's position by assiduously removing any references to (hetero)sexual activity in his illustrations. Accompanying Beaton's Danae is a quotation from the text which states that this scene represents Danae when her life is governed by three tasks— bringing up her son, weaving wool, and plucking roses— but it is only the last of these three that Beaton concerns himself with, eschewing all notions of staid domesticity in his illustrations as assiduously as he does the rape of Danae.⁶⁷⁶ His depiction of Byblis, whose incestuous desire for her brother consumes and destroys her, follows suit. Byblis's brother Caunos appears with her, the only male figure admitted entry to Beaton's illustrations and pointedly appearing almost as effeminate as his sister with whom he shares sensuously pouting lips, a lithe physique, and pointed toes, but Beaton avoids any impropriety between them just as he studiously avoids the grotesquery of Louÿs's maenads. Instead, his image is paired with an innocuous and inconsequential extract from Louÿs's text explaining the siblings' habit of searching for 'the largest and best scented flowers'.⁶⁷⁷ His *Leda* obviously functions in the same spirit and, as if in acknowledgement of this, is not accompanied by any text.

Beaton's depiction of the maenads of the 'Ariadne' story also demonstrates an unwillingness to depict the 'wild, coarse behaviour' that Pater found in the *Bacchae*. Beaton's maenads— 'pouring out from the mountain... [wearing] the skins of foxes' whose 'howlings mingled with the slaver of their mouths' and are accompanied by 'the Satyrs and the Pans' according to Louÿs's account— have far more in common with Moffat's portraits of Greville, or with the ballerinas of the Ballets Russes, than

⁶⁷⁶ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 87.

⁶⁷⁷ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 66.

they do with this grisly description.⁶⁷⁸ Firstly, as we have noted, Beaton's figures do not sport fox skins but leopard skins. Secondly, there is no sign of 'the Satyrs and the Pans' who Louÿs includes in the rampaging thiasus. As in *The Book of Beauty*, where the glamorous world of stage beauties necessarily displaces and excludes the soldiers whose arrival briefly spoiled the *Sketch* and the *Tatler* for Beaton, no male figures are allowed to intrude into the world of the Dionysian women in Beaton's imagination. Thirdly, the grotesque details of the maenads' behaviour— their howling, their slavering, and their 'streams of sweat'— are nowhere to be found in Beaton's illustration.⁶⁷⁹ Indeed, the quotation from Louÿs's text appearing on the opposite page to Beaton's illustration to contextualise it is a quotation of this passage which conspicuously removes these details too, indicating Beaton's unwillingness to respond to such aspects of maenadic activity. Instead, Beaton maintains Louÿs's remark that 'their hair was so laden with flowers that their necks were bent back', a decadent and glamorous image of excess at odds with the maenads' brutality in the text.⁶⁸⁰

This substitution indicates clear water between Beaton and Lowinsky's interpretations of figures they refer to as nymphs or maenads, particularly when understood through their shared aestheticist inheritances. In Lowinsky's 'fashion plates', the 'wild, coarse behaviour' of the maenads in Pater's account of the *Bacchae*, their capacity for retributive violence against interloping heterosexual men, is continually emphasised. In Beaton's illustrations it is repudiated, in favour of the alternate side of Pater's paradoxical equation which explains for him the appeal of the maenads: their 'grace' and 'loveliness'. Beaton's conflation of the thiasus which fascinated Pater with the 'galaxy of feminine beauty' which he hymned most fully in his *Book of Beauty* appears to necessitate the almost complete foreclosure of the wildness of the maenads, too disruptive as it is of Beaton's imagined feminine world free from the interpolations of heterosexual men. With this came Beaton's equal willingness to find in his circle, at the same time as he was developing his *Twilight of the Nymphs* illustrations, 'feminine souls' who could not only act as spiritual brothers to nymphs and maenads but act as nymphs and maenads in their own right. We find in Beaton's contemporaneous photography examples in which Pater's 'wish

⁶⁷⁸ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 39.

⁶⁷⁹ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 39.

⁶⁸⁰ Louÿs, *Twilight of the Nymphs*, 39.

[that] he himself were a maenad' that Robert Fowler identified comes close to being realised, depicting male sitters through the lens of the 'grace', 'loveliness', and 'melting languor' of the maenads.

Feminine Souls: Beaton's Male Maenads

At the beginning of this chapter we examined the story of one of Beaton's earliest memories, presented to the readers of *Photobiography* and *The Book of Beauty* as a foundational moment in his life. Taken to the studio of the photographer Lallie Charles, Beaton attempted to pose with the roses that Lily Elsie had held in the same studio, but was barred from doing so by the photographer on the grounds that his gender rendered the ostentatious self-display inappropriate. Strikingly, when Beaton went to Cambridge, the same period in which he 'set about becoming a rabid aesthete', he reprised these efforts with significantly more success. As an undergraduate, Beaton succeeded in emulating his heroines by appearing sporadically in the pages of the same publications that he had discovered them in owing to his acting and set designs for the university Dramatic Society. He consistently did so while dressed as a female lead in their latest production, like his 'stage goddesses'. Among Beaton's earliest appearances is a 1923 photograph in *The Sketch* in which he is garbed as the 'exquisite heroine' of a musical comedy, wearing a shimmering gown, wig, and tiara, and exhibiting none of the irony or self-consciousness one may expect from a male undergraduate in female dress (fig. 183).⁶⁸¹ The trick was repeated in *The Sketch* twice in the following year, firstly with a picture of Beaton dressed as a princess to 'show what admirable leading ladies and members of a beauty chorus men can make' in a January issue and later as a marchioness in an adaptation of Luigi Pirandello's *Henry IV* in a June issue.⁶⁸² Beaton's own youthful experiences of taking to the stage, as his biographer records, were intertwined with his earliest queer experiences, the darkness of the stage wings

⁶⁸¹ Anon., "The Exquisite Heroine". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 12 December 1923, 552.

⁶⁸² Anon., "Why Doesn't Charlot Send These to America?". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 09 January 1924, 63; Anon., "Pirandello's 'Henry IV'. Produced by Undergraduates". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 18 June 1924, 584.

providing safety for indulging in illicit and clandestine flirtations with fellow undergraduates at Cambridge.⁶⁸³

As Beaton's biographer also records, the appearance of these photographs in illustrated magazines was carefully and continually orchestrated by Beaton himself.⁶⁸⁴ In doing so Beaton was attempting to bolster his social standing, but the nature of these photographs also perhaps reveals the nature of the social identity Beaton was attempting to craft, one that collapsed the boundary between Beaton as a nascent male aesthete and the theatrical beauties of illustrated magazines who he had been forbidden from emulating as a child. Indeed, John Potvin points to a particularly revealing diary entry from 1926, when Beaton had left Cambridge and the relative safety of being able to perform as a woman onstage in an essentially comic setting, which reveals that this tendency did not leave his mind. Writing after attending a party at which the choreographer Frederick Ashton was also present, Beaton wincingly recorded watching Ashton's 'shy-making imitations of various ballet dancers... the sort of thing one is ashamed of'.⁶⁸⁵ Despite the return of the tone used in Beaton's private diaries which, as we have seen, is completely at odds with the aggressively blasé and suffocatingly ornamental writing of published works like *The Book of Beauty*, Beaton nonetheless confided that Ashton's 'shy-making' performances were still uncomfortably legible to him as what one 'does in one's bedroom in front of large mirrors when one is rather excited and worked up'.⁶⁸⁶ Although Beaton evidently felt it was beyond him to take on such roles himself by this point, it was Beaton's friendships with the painter Rex Whistler and the artistically inclined aristocrat Stephen Tennant— the other young man named as an exemplary model to be emulated in the *Sphere's* 'Puppet Show of Mayfair'— in which this repressed tendency found expression through a series of photographs Beaton took of the pair in the same period as he was developing his *Twilight of the Nymphs* illustrations.⁶⁸⁷

Beaton explicitly presented Tennant as a nymph in what appears to be a photograph taken in July 1927 which evinces, in its reference points and its

⁶⁸³ Vickers, *Cecil Beaton*, 42.

⁶⁸⁴ Vickers, *Beaton*, 43-44.

⁶⁸⁵ Quoted in: Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 258.

⁶⁸⁶ Quoted in: Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 258.

⁶⁸⁷ Anon., *Puppet Show*, 556.

composition, clear continuities with the construction of the women of the thiasus as equivalents for the women of the stage in *A Norfolk Bacchante* and *Twilight of the Nymphs* (fig. 184). Although undated and appearing only eventually in a commercial role to advertise a New York exhibition of works by (and seemingly about) Tennant staged in 1955, the clear similarities in the appearance of both sitter and foil background with accurately dated photographs from a session at this time, principally another portrait displaying Tennant's thin, naked torso (fig. 185), strongly suggest this date.⁶⁸⁸ Accompanying the photograph is a legend in Beaton's hand that proclaims the photograph to show 'Stephen Tennant, as Echo, in his ballet, *The Mirage and the Echo*'. The ballet never existed, but if it had Tennant would apparently have danced the part of the female nymph who falls in love with Narcissus whose presence in the ballet's narrative is in turn perhaps implied by the shimmering, reflective foil that constitutes Tennant's backdrop.

The generality of the imaginary ballet's title, not naming Narcissus and referring to '*the Echo*', could cast doubt over whether Beaton's reference is specifically classical here, as the portrait lacks any form of maenadic or nymphlike attributes. However, given Beaton's earlier equations of the world of the ballet (and the stage more generally) with the thiasus, the reference to the artform here would suggest that Beaton was once again thinking in terms of nymphs. Furthermore, the identification is supported by the fact that the role had been danced relatively shortly before Beaton produced his portrait in a revival of the Ballets Russes' *Narcisse*, performed at the London Coliseum in the spring of 1925.⁶⁸⁹ Tennant shared Beaton's enthusiasm for the Ballets Russes that was attested to by Beaton's utilisation of Francis Bruguière's designs in *Twilight of the Nymphs*, and they also shared a particular appreciation for the ballerina Lubov Tchernicheva who Philip Hoare records as Tennant's favourite dancer and who Beaton considered another 'boyhood heroine'.⁶⁹⁰ It was Tchernicheva who danced the role of Echo in 1925, the most recent performance of *Narcisse* by 1927 and the only version thus far performed at a point when Tennant and Beaton, aged five and seven at the ballet's premiere respectively, would have been cognizant of its appearance.

⁶⁸⁸ Philip Hoare, *Serious Pleasures: The Life of Stephen Tennant* (London: Penguin, 1992), 324, 83.

⁶⁸⁹ Anon., "Russian Ballet". *Westminster Gazette*, Friday 22 May 1925, 7.

⁶⁹⁰ Hoare, *Serious Pleasures*, 61; Beaton, *Ballet*, 62.

The reference point would likely have proved irresistible for Beaton and Tennant, and yet it is not the most immediately evident one in Beaton's photograph. The transformation of Tennant into a nymph was likely informed by the recent performances of the Ballets Russes, allowing Tennant to imaginatively cast himself as both nymph and prima ballerina, but the photograph's iconography is derived with relative clarity from a distinct though related source. Tennant's pose in the photograph is unusual, spreading his fingers across his face to partially conceal his features. Hoare describes the portrait in general terms as showing Tennant 'with his hands posed aesthetically across his face', but this aesthetic posing can be traced specifically to a precedent that Beaton was clearly aware of and consciously invoking. In *The Book of Beauty* Beaton provides an illustrational interpretation of 'a fascinating portrait of Miss Gladys Cooper' (fig. 186), another actress who made a great impression on the childhood imaginations of both Beaton and Tennant.⁶⁹¹ Beaton's illustration shows the actress posed less dynamically than Tennant, viewed frontally and with her hands more evenly placed over her face, but similarities in the splayed fingers and placement of the hands are detectable. The 'fascinating portrait' from which Beaton derives the placement of Cooper's— and Tennant's— hands, however, significantly predates both Beaton's portrait of Tennant as Echo and his illustration of Cooper. The picture Beaton refers to is almost certainly Anna Alma-Tadema's *Dawn: Miss Gladys Cooper When a Girl*, reproduced on the front cover of *The Sketch* in 1915 (fig. 187) and showing the actress with her fingers once more spread to frame her features.⁶⁹² While the fingers of Cooper's left hand are splayed over her eye, her right hand is splayed over her forehead, as in Tennant's portrait where the fingers of the left hand frame an eye and those of the other do not. Given Beaton's willingness to invoke and amend this portrait in his illustration of Gladys Cooper fifteen years later, coupled with his and Tennant's shared enthusiasm for Cooper during their youth, the spreading of Tennant's hands across his face is not merely 'aesthetic' as Hoare suggests but a conscious attempt to infer similarities between Tennant and his stage heroines. Beaton's reference points in this portrait of Tennant are as kaleidoscopic as his compositions for *Twilight of the Nymphs*, folding references to two 'stage goddesses' into the figure of the nymph that Tennant is cast as. As in *Twilight of the Nymphs*, the mythological figure whose role Tennant

⁶⁹¹ Beaton, *Book of Beauty*, 31; Hoare, *Serious Pleasures*, 14.

⁶⁹² Anon., "Lot 673 in the Red Cross Sale". *The Sketch*, Wednesday 14 April 1915, 1.

assumes is also the role of the figures in Beaton's personal mythology outlined in *The Book of Beauty*.

The overt casting of Tennant as a nymph was presaged in Beaton's photography in February 1927 when he travelled to Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, France, in the company of Tennant and their mutual friends the painter Rex Whistler and the writer Edith Olivier. Over thirty years older than the young men, Olivier had spent an earlier holiday in 1925 introducing Tennant and Whistler to Walter Pater, the essays of whom she recorded in her diary they 'revel in every word' of.⁶⁹³ While staying at the coastal resort, Beaton produced another portrait of Tennant and an accompanying portrait of Whistler. The portrait of Tennant depicts him, eyes averted, arms folded, and legs spread out before him, perched upon a rocky outcrop above the waves (fig. 188). The other shows Whistler, almost naked and seemingly unconscious, splayed on the rocks beneath (fig. 189). Tennant is pictured wearing a garment described by biographer Stephen Hoare as a 'leopardskin twisted into a sort of halter-neck toga' while Whistler, Hoare states, has his 'costume tied heroically about him', although this 'costume' is nothing more than an incredibly brief length of material twisted haphazardly about Whistler's waist.⁶⁹⁴

Tennant's costume, closely connected to those worn by the balletically leaping maenads of *Twilight of the Nymphs*, is immediately suggestive of Dionysian iconographies. If there is any doubt as to Beaton's intention to invoke maenadic imagery in this portrait, comparison between Beaton's photograph and a contemporaneous ink self-portrait by Tennant (fig. 190) arguably confirms it. In the drawing, Tennant imagines himself once again sporting a leopard skin garment that fastens across the shoulder in a manner akin to a toga but considerably lengthens his hair, seemingly bedraggled by contact with the waves, to emphasise the androgyny of his appearance. The lengthening of Tennant's hair also allows for it to accommodate tangled vine leaves and bunches of grapes which frame his pouting, heavy-lidded face. Extrapolating from the maenadic associations of Beaton's costuming, Tennant's imaginary vision of himself reprises the attributes common to many of the Dionysian figures we have encountered throughout our investigations.

⁶⁹³ Quoted in: Anna Thomasson, *A Curious Friendship: The Story of a Bluestocking and a Bright Young Thing* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2015), 41.

⁶⁹⁴ Philip Hoare, *Serious Pleasures*, 74.

That we are intended to understand Tennant as a beautiful figure in his maenadic garb is indicated by Beaton's placement of his sitter upon a rocky outcrop overlooking the sea. While Tennant's isolation in a far-flung, wild space would superficially strengthen the maenadic associations of his appearance, the figure who is more readily recalled in Beaton's composition is that of the siren. As we have seen through works such as Laurence Housman's *The Reflected Faun*, Frederic Leighton's *The Fisherman and the Siren*, and Charles Shannon's *The Fisherman and the Mermaid*, the siren was typically pictured throughout late nineteenth century British art as a physically attractive and dangerously seductive figure. In this interrelated compositions we have focused on the siren in a supine position, clinging to a male figure to drag him down to a watery grave, but compositions showing sirens perched upon rocks and gazing out to sea were also commonplace. Within Beaton's immediate culture, parallels for Beaton's composition can be found in the *Tatler* and *The Bystander* throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s. Wilmot Lunt recast three shingled women in contemporary bathing costumes as sirens for *The Bystander* in 1927, tempting a dandyish sailor towards their rocks in a speedboat emblazoned with the legend 'Ulysses': the siren closest to the sailor, dangling her legs over the edge of a rock, is a close parallel to Tennant (fig. 191).⁶⁹⁵ John Yunge-Bateman provided for a 1929 edition of the same publication an illustration showing a naked siren, her fishtail draped over the edge of the rock on which she sits, coolly watching a boat retreat in fear as she stares like Tennant out to sea. The illustration was accompanied by a poem describing the terror of such creatures (fig. 192).⁶⁹⁶ Charles Robinson, returning to the theme of seductive and dangerous mythological women ten years after his *How The Fashions Came to Fairyland*, appeared in a 1932 edition of the *Tatler* with his painting *The Song of the Siren* (fig. 193).⁶⁹⁷ Here two sirens are elegantly dressed in bohemian raiment and playing equally exotic instruments, Chinese sanxians, to bewitch sailors more foolish than Yunge-Bateman's fleeing equivalents: the siren towards whom the boat is steering also drapes her uncovered legs over her perch which is, this time, not rock but a wooden beam trimmed with autumnal fauna and a decorative lantern.

⁶⁹⁵ Wilmot Lunt, "Ulysses and the Sirens". *The Bystander*, Wednesday 29 June 1927, 620-621.

⁶⁹⁶ John Yunge-Bateman, "The Siren". *The Bystander*, Wednesday 01 May 1929, 243.

⁶⁹⁷ Charles Robinson, "Song of the Siren". *The Tatler*, Wednesday 04 May 1932, 206-207.

Despite the orientalisising trappings of Robinson's sirens, they remind the viewer of distinctly British precedents. The inclusion of musical instruments in a depiction of sirens perched upon rocks and waiting for their bewitched prey suggests the influence of an iconography codified in earlier paintings such as Waterhouse's 1900 canvas *A Siren* (fig. 194) or Edward Poynter's early work *The Siren* (fig. 195), both of which depict sirens as beautiful young women capable of luring their prey towards them with the music of their lyres. Waterhouse's composition is, arguably, particularly illuminating in analysing Beaton's as it differs from Poynter, Lunt, Yunge-Bateman, and Robinson by also depicting a sailor who, staring at the siren with a mixture of enchantment and fear, has swam into view and rests in the water at her feet. The interaction between the delicate but ultimately devious siren and her young male prey is, perhaps, tacitly recalled in Beaton's portraits if we recall Whistler's portrait: the fault in the rockface upon which Tennant sits and stretches his legs over is also visible in this photograph as a shadow crevice that Whistler extends his arm into, indicating that Whistler was positioned directly below Tennant. Anna Thomasson's identification of Tennant as 'a delicate nereid' and her description of Whistler, 'his muscular physique spreadeagled like a shipwrecked sailor', could perhaps be close to uncovering the erotic charge in the interplay between these two photographs.⁶⁹⁸ Read in this manner, Whistler appears as Tennant's prey, enchanted into a deathlike slumber after having been tempted to the rock by the display of Tennant's body which works upon him like the music of a lyre.

It is tempting, therefore, to treat Whistler's portrait as an adjunct to Tennant's, transforming the two into a fragmented reprisal of compositions like Waterhouse's *A Siren*. Philip Hoare's brief assessment of these photographs, acknowledging that they are 'classical' in some unelaborated sense and suggesting that Whistler resembles Hercules, also encourages this, emphasising the implicitly gendered nature of Tennant and Whistler's contrasting appearances also suggested in Thomasson's analysis.⁶⁹⁹ Doing so certainly clarifies the implicit coding of Tennant's body as desirable and beautiful in Beaton's photograph, although given several iterations of the siren theme which preceded or narrowly succeeded Beaton's did not include a male figure this would likely have been clear regardless. Indeed,

⁶⁹⁸ Thomasson, *A Curious Friendship*, 41.

⁶⁹⁹ Hoare, *Serious Pleasures*, 74.

treating Whistler's portrait as an extension of Tennant's, in which Whistler occupies a typically male role, perhaps negates the richer potentialities of Whistler's portrait when viewed apart from Tennant's; in this case, it appears to aim at similar ends, casting its sitter in a maenadic role to convey upon them an enviable grace and aesthetic appeal.

Hoare and Thomasson's readings of Whistler as either a shipwrecked sailor or Hercules are perhaps superficially supported by the muscularity of Whistler's openly displayed body, but the striking, contorted pose Beaton's sitter assumes is indicative of a specific reference point which problematises these arguments. The placement of Whistler's arms, one tucked behind his head and the other thrown high above it, does not appear to be accidental, and yet there is no precedent in depictions of Hercules for its assumption. Rather, Whistler's is immediately suggestive of the nymphs of the previous century who we examined in canvases such as Edward Poynter's *Cave of the Storm Nymphs*, William Stott of Oldham's *Nymph*, and their French precedent, Alexandre Cabanel's sensational *Birth of Venus*. Assuming this pose on a rocky outcrop by the sea, Whistler perhaps reminds us specifically of the foremost figure of Poynter's *Cave of the Storm Nymphs*, represented at the Royal Academy with relative recency for Beaton in 1922. This was indeed during a period in which Beaton recalled he 'rather vaguely wished to become a Royal Academician' before "'Art" had a different connotation for me [and] I could not imagine Picasso, Marie Laurencin, or even Bakst, by whom I was now influenced, entertaining on "varnishing day"', and 'visions of the Luke Fildes, de Laszlo, Frank Dicksee life vanished from my mind'.⁷⁰⁰ As such, the notion that Whistler's positioning is meant to do little more than further imply the siren-like attraction of Tennant seems doubtful. Viewed as a pair, Whistler's portrait certainly can provide clarify and intensify the beautification of Tennant in Beaton's depiction of him in maenadic dress, but if it is viewed apart from its companion piece the notion that Whistler is cast in a male role becomes increasingly untenable. His body may be closer to a conventionally athletic ideal, lacking Tennant's delicate androgyny, but this hardly precludes it from sustaining the same charge as Tennant's portrait. The precision of Whistler's aping of this distinctive posture is as clear an invitation for us to understand Whistler as a nymph

⁷⁰⁰ Beaton, *Photobiography*, 35.

as Tennant's maenadic robe, grape-strewn self-portrait, or casting as Echo later in the same year.

As we have seen, the pose approximated in Beaton's photograph occupies a contested place within our analyses. It has on one hand attracted considerable critical disdain for its apparent enshrinement of misogynistic attitudes, demoting the figure of the nymph to the role of a passive and sexually appealing object. Equally, however, it is possibly this pose which is described or at least accounted for within Pater's enthusiasm for 'that melting languor, that perfectly composed lassitude of the fallen Maenad', an argument absent from critical accounts of its recurrence owing to their rigid gendering of both artist and audience as heterosexual and male. Indeed, Beaton himself was evidently happy to make use of variations on this pose in manners which are clearly divorced from the charges of implicit sexual violence and virulent misogyny ascribed to them by critics such as Bram Dijkstra, who took issue with the contortions of the 'nymph with the broken back' in the late nineteenth century.

Beyond the bounds of classical iconographies, Dijkstra sees similar politics at play in the vogue for depictions of Ophelia in the period, whose fate he argues fulfilled 'the nineteenth-century male's fondest fantasies of feminine dependency'.⁷⁰¹ Dijkstra further suggested that her supine pose in two British canvases— John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* of 1851-2 (fig. 196) and John William Waterhouse's *Ophelia* of 1889 (fig. 197)— functioned to signify her placement within fantasies of gendered subjugation, with the former showing her 'floating prettily but uselessly' and the latter with her 'rolling madly in a field'.⁷⁰² However, Beaton utilised both canvases as reference points in depictions of his own sisters which seem to have been unlikely to do much more than flatter their sitters. Baba Beaton seemingly posed as Waterhouse's *Ophelia* in the 1925 portrait *Baba Beaton as Ophelia* (fig. 198) in which Beaton's sister replicates the turned head and languorous posture of Waterhouse's figure; Nancy Beaton is clearly posed as Millais's version in a 1929 photograph in which she floats placidly in a river of cellophane flanked with flowers, as in Millais's composition (fig. 199). The Millais version Beaton recorded his

⁷⁰¹ Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 42.

⁷⁰² Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 43.

appreciation of in an early diary entry; the Waterhouse version, like *Cave of the Storm Nymphs*, appeared in the 1922 Royal Academy winter exhibition.⁷⁰³

It does not seem credible to suggest that Beaton interpreted these late nineteenth century compositions as vehicles for expressing the subjugation of their sitters; rather, given his promotion of his sisters as society beauties within *The Book of Beauty* and beyond, it would seem more likely that Beaton saw grace, beauty, and an appealingly elegant languor in these conceptions of women. His conveyance of such a posture on Whistler, this time referencing the iconographies of late nineteenth century nymphs and maenads who he more consistently associated like Pater with these attributes, therefore need not be read as an explicitly erotic image despite Whistler's near-total disrobing: rather, it conveys upon Beaton's friend the elegance and grace he consistently sought in the blurred lines between his theatrical imagination and the classical imagination of his artistic and aesthetic predecessors. In casting Tennant and Whistler as nymphs and maenads, Beaton's portraits allow his male figures to glory in the attributes Beaton associated with the Dionysian thiasus, existing in a symbiotic relationship with the world of the stage that Beaton presented to his readers as specifically removed from masculine authority. Tennant and Whistler appear like answers to the wishes of Walter Pater in Robert Fowler's consideration, no longer longing to be maenads but appearing to be so; they equally perform for Beaton the dances before the mirror he guiltily admitted to while watching Frederick Ashton perform the roles of his 'stage goddesses', becoming the 'feminine souls' of the Dionysian retinue we have concerned ourselves with throughout this thesis.

Cecil Beaton, the only artist or writer whose work is examined at length throughout these chapters to live to see the Wolfenden Report— an opportunity for him to reflect upon the suffering of his own youth and that of other queer aesthetes before its publication— may thus have found in the imagery of the Dionysian retinue exactly that which Walter Pater had also sought in his foundational essays some fifty years earlier: namely, an aesthetic language in which to search for an otherwise repressed identification engendered by his sexuality and its criminalisation. Beaton's thiasus, an idiosyncratic visualisation of Pater's desire to join the 'women and feminine souls' of Dionysus's train, was borne of the same desires and dangers that

⁷⁰³ Beaton, *The Wandering Years*, 36; Anon., *Recently Deceased Artist*, 19.

were indelibly linked in the public consciousness since the traumatic scandal of the Wilde trials only thirty years before. The Wilde trials have often, as we have seen, been considered to symbolise the death knell for aestheticism in general and its classicised interpretations of queer desire and identification in particular. However, the continued interest in Dionysian iconographies in the 1920s amongst a later generation of aesthetes who understood their position through the images, ideas, and lives of their predecessors appears to contradict this narrative, with figures such as Beaton, Raymond Mortimer, and Glyn Philpot returning to and revivifying the reimaginings of these iconographies which can be traced to the writings of Walter Pater. Having now traced these lineages and reinventions through the god Dionysus, the goat-footed fauns, and the dangerous and graceful maenads of his retinue, it is time for us to review our findings.

**‘A Peculiar Message for a Certain Number
of Refined Minds’: Conclusions and
Afterlives**

We began our explorations of the Dionysian retinue with the spectacle of a birthday party held in Mayfair at the close of the 1920s in which its host, the twenty-four-year-old Brian Howard, appeared enthroned as the god Dionysus in the evening's climactic moments. Howard's 'Great Urban Dionysia' gave us cause to reflect on how the myth, ritual, and iconography of a chthonic Greek deity assumed a conspicuous centrality in the world inhabited by the likes of Howard, a world inhabited by the presences of artists like Cecil Beaton, Glyn Philpot, and Thomas Lowinsky and by the ghostly presences of the honorary members of the club Howard established as a schoolboy at Eton such as Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. At the close of our investigations, we arguably have our answer. The lineages of late nineteenth century aestheticism, encompassing transgressive interpretations of the myths of Dionysus owing to Walter Pater's recurrent interest in the god, persisted far beyond Pater's lifetime and beyond even the culturally traumatic scandal that followed shortly after and appeared to signal the ultimate implosion of a movement instigated in large part by Pater himself. In the figures of Dionysus and his followers, Pater found covert ways to express and explore the desires, dangers, and anxieties attendant upon his position as a queer aesthete, extrapolating from these mythological creatures sites of identification, longing, kinship, freedom, and even perhaps revenge. As we have seen throughout the preceding chapters, successive generations—reaching down to that of which Brian Howard was a part—sought and found the same things Pater's veiled references and intricate prose gestured to the possibilities of within the Dionysian retinue.

This thesis has examined the role of images of the Dionysian retinue within the art of British aestheticism and its lineages. It has sought to demonstrate that the conceptions of Dionysian myth explored by Pater persisted into the 1920s and that successive generations of queer aesthetes found, in the form of Pater's essays, compendia of images through which to explore issues of identification, desire, and dissent. Its first chapter examined the role of the god Dionysus himself, situating aestheticist discourses concerning the deity within their broader intellectual and artistic culture and demonstrating that depictions of Dionysus rehearsed the twin functions more fully and frequently performed by the faun: namely, acting as a figure who could both encourage identification in his suffering, sorrowing state and encourage desire in his appearances as a *pais kalos*. Its major case study was the work of Charles Shannon and Charles Ricketts, pursuing the development of such

themes from their earliest forays in the 1890s to Shannon's final works in the 1920s. The second chapter explored how the first of these functions was idiosyncratically associated with the faun by aesthetes from Pater onwards, arguing that the enormous influence of the illustrator Aubrey Beardsley played an instrumental part in concretising links between aesthetes, queerness, and the hybrid physiognomy of fauns in the 1920s. The third then explored the particular importance of the Ballets Russes' 1913 ballet *L'après-midi d'un faune*, itself legible as a product of British aestheticist discourses, to Glyn Philpot, considered to be 'the Shannon [or] Ricketts of the near future' by the originals of this model. Philpot's images of the faun from 1913 onwards pointed to a rich seam of homoerotic art in which the mythological creature appears continually as a *pais kalos* until its effeminate role grew so pronounced that it became a common role for women. Turning to the female members of Dionysus's retinue in our fourth and fifth chapters, we saw how the maenads and the nymphs they resemble represented loci for dissent or distance from heterosexual male authority, uniting within themselves an imitable 'grace' and 'loveliness' with the ability to perform acts of retributory violence. In the fourth chapter we saw the latter half of this equation foregrounded in *Modern Nymphs*, the joint project of Thomas Lowinsky and Raymond Mortimer whose writings reflected a lifelong faith in the aggressive, transgressive potentialities of aestheticist discourses. In the fifth chapter we finally saw how, in the work of Cecil Beaton, the graceful and lovely maenads of the aestheticist imagination could find equivalents in the feminised world of the stage which Beaton conceived of as a liberatory space removed from and dichotomously opposed to heterosexual male authority.

In its approach to the material it discusses, this thesis is aligned with growing scholarly tendencies to question and disrupt the binary erected between the 'aestheticism' or 'decadence' of the late nineteenth century and the 'modernism' of the early twentieth, the product in part of an embarrassment felt by modernist scholars towards the notion that any aspect of the serious project of modernism could constitute the legacy of its ostensibly frivolous, fugacious, feminine forebear. This has led to an acceptance of the narrative that aestheticism 'ended' with the trials of Oscar Wilde, a narrative which focuses upon the public revelation and ensuing discreditation of aestheticism and its queer investigations into classical antiquity in these events (along with the temporally proximate deaths of Walter Pater and Aubrey Beardsley) as evidence of its thesis. Consistent challenges to this periodisation have

emerged in the past ten years in the work of scholars such as Kate Hext, Alex Murray, Vincent Sherry, and Kristin Mahoney, all working within the field of English literature.

The situation in art historical scholarship has been further complicated by the growing codification since the late 1980s of a stable meaning for classical iconographies in the 1920s which dictates that such art must belong to the orderly, normative, and socially conservative ‘return to order’; with a growth of interest in modern British art over the past fifteen years, particularly that of the interwar period, has come the importation of this concept from studies of European modernism into the emergent field. This ignores the fact that classical iconographies still bore the taint of aestheticism owing to their centrality to the ideas, images, and ideologies of the movement’s adherents by the 1920s, as the revivification of Dionysian iconographies to explore queer desire would suggest. My explorations of these lineages, in which artworks produced in the 1920s still adhere thematically and conceptually to the writings of Walter Pater some fifty years before, seek to point to this lacuna and demonstrate that the interventions of literary scholars can find equal footing within the discipline of art history. I have also aimed to break new ground in conceptions of the artists and writers I have here examined, elucidating through my focus on the figures of the Dionysian retinue and the lineages of British aestheticism aspects of their oeuvres that have previously escaped critical attention but which are illuminated by studying and uniting them through this lens.

The field of art history seems ripe for the development of the ideas I have traced here. As we observed in our introduction, a broader revival of interest in modern British art has been underway for around fifteen years. Since the publication of Alexandra Harris’s *Romantic Moderns* (2010), we have seen the appearance of specialised studies such as Jane Stevenson’s *Baroque Between the Wars: Alternative Style in the Arts, 1918-1939*, a major biography of Beaton’s nymphlike sitter Rex Whistler in Anna Thomasson’s *A Curious Friendship: The Story of a Bluestocking and a Bright Young Thing* (2015), and the first cohesive exploration of British art between the wars, Frances Spalding’s 2022 book *The Real and the Romantic*. Exhibitions in the past ten years have also demonstrated an appetite for further explorations of the art of this period and, indeed, of the figures considered within this thesis. This includes broad studies such as the Tate’s 2018 *Aftermath*, its *Queer*

British Art of the previous year, and the National Galleries of Scotland's *True to Life: British Realist Painting in the 1920s and 1930s*. It also includes the National Portrait Gallery's 2020 exhibition *Cecil Beaton's Bright Young Things*, concentrating upon Beaton's work in the 1920s and 1930s, although this show was curtailed after less than a week owing to the Covid-19 pandemic; Simon Martin's *Glyn Philpot: Flesh and Spirit* (2022), staged at Pallant House, fared better, and broke substantial ground in reestablishing the reputation and complexity of Philpot's art. If this thesis relies on the work of literary historians and the earlier findings of queer theorists and historians, it equally comports with this outbreak of interest as much as it serves to problematise some of its assumptions in its tracing of aestheticist survivals into the 1920s.

The notion that aestheticist considerations of the Dionysian retinue survived the watermark of 1895 is perhaps covertly indicated by the fact that, in unexpected places, the curious perfumes of aestheticism still appear to cling to the classical draperies of the god and his followers: indeed, they often appear to do so in a manner which is so implicit as to suggest that the associations are all but expected. One such example is the pervasive, enduring popularity of Donna Tartt's novel *The Secret History*, first published in 1992 and recently reissued in a hardback edition for its thirtieth anniversary.⁷⁰⁴ Tartt's novel tells the story of a glamorously patrician coterie of undergraduate classicists at a suitably picturesque college in Vermont who fall under the thrall of their charismatic, elusive, and vaguely Pater-like teacher, Julian Morrow. (Morrow certainly shares with Pater an enthusiasm for Euripides's *Bacchae* and, as Robert Fowler wrote of Pater, 'seems almost to wish he himself were a maenad', dreaming of being able to 'throw off our chains of being' and 'be absolutely free' as he rhapsodises about Euripides's drama in an early passage).⁷⁰⁵ With Morrow's tacit encouragement, Tartt's classicists endeavour to recreate a Dionysian rite one evening, resulting in bloodthirsty carnage and the dissolution of their charmed circle. The narrator, Richard Papen, is initially seduced by the group's 'swarm of cigarettes and dark sophistication'; one of their number, the queer and

⁷⁰⁴ Donna Tartt, *The Secret History* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

⁷⁰⁵ Tartt, *The Secret History*, 40.

‘exotic’ Francis Abernathy, he ‘thought... dressed like Alfred Douglas’ in a reference to Oscar Wilde’s lover which begs the reader to acknowledge the novel’s debts.⁷⁰⁶

In an uneasy article about the impact on the study of classics at university that *The Secret History*’s portrait of quasi-aristocratic, hedonistic, beautiful young people was likely to have, the classicist Sophie Mills is right to describe its characters as ‘decadents’ and its conception of Dionysus as one that privileges a ‘heavy emphasis on... sexual deviance’ alongside violence and alcohol.⁷⁰⁷ That the circle’s ringleader, Henry Winter, oscillates quickly between recounting his killing of an innocent bystander when under the spell of Dionysus to complaining that his ‘nice little Oriental rug’ was ruined in the aftermath certainly indicates that Tartt’s figures are legible as caricatural, pantomimic aesthetes.⁷⁰⁸ The fact that *The Secret History* draws an easy equivalence between characters like Henry Winter or Francis Abernathy and a deep interest in Dionysus— one which involves participation in transgressive sexual rites— suggests that, on a subconscious level, these links are to an extent simply assumed to exist, and this thesis may help to answer why this could possibly be the case. Conversely, I cannot imagine I would have encountered the figure of Dionysus before I read *The Secret History* as a teenager, and although I could not say with certainty it is entirely possible that the germ of this thesis is distantly located within the ‘dark sophistication’ of Tartt’s circle of exaggeratedly decadent aesthetes.

In visual art too, the issues, iconographies, and lineages explored throughout this thesis have proved themselves capable of recurring in recent years. The women of Dionysus’s retinue found themselves at the forefront of contemporary discussions surrounding sexuality, eroticism, and agency with Manchester Art Gallery’s decision to temporarily remove John William Waterhouse’s painting *Hylas and the Nymphs* from its walls. The removal was coordinated by the artist Sonia Boyce who, in a measured article for the *Guardian* discussing the controversy that ensued, recorded that her aim had been to stimulate conversation about the presence within public collections of paintings featuring young female figures who function as, apparently,

⁷⁰⁶ Tartt, *The Secret History*, 17-18.

⁷⁰⁷ Sophie Mills, “What Does She Think of Us?: Donna Tartt, *The Secret History*, and the Image of Classicists”. *The Classical Outlook*, 83, 1, 2005, 14-16.

⁷⁰⁸ Tartt, *The Secret History*, 169.

little more than ‘submissive object[s] to be looked at’.⁷⁰⁹ The act prompted the vaguely surreal appearance of headlines in the same newspaper including ‘Removing nymphs from a gallery is provocative— but does not merit contempt?’ and ‘Why have mildly erotic nymphs been removed from a Manchester gallery? Is Picasso next?’, articles which broadly summarised the two opposing points about the removal.⁷¹⁰ Both points of view coalesced at a traditional position of doing down late nineteenth century British art, with the article supporting Manchester Art Gallery calling *Hylas and the Nymphs* ‘a mediocre, semi-pornographic Victorian painting’ and even the article opposing it concurring that the painting was ‘no masterpiece... and if we were in front of it now I’d be poking fun’.⁷¹¹ It was, in fact, largely classicists and queer viewers who provided the most thoughtful interpretations of the decision. In the case of the former, Helen Lovatt provided a blogpost for Nottingham University which questioned whether it was the nymphs who were the objects of desire in the painting at all as, in the myth narrative, it is the *pais kalos* Hylas who constitutes the erotic locus.⁷¹² Lovatt questioned whether the decision to remove *Hylas and the Nymphs* presupposed a heterosexual male gaze in viewing the painting, and Adrian Rifkin provided anecdotal evidence that this need not be the case in a letter to the *Guardian* protesting the removal: ‘as a young gay man growing up in 50s and 60s Manchester – and queer art historian to-be’, Rifkin wrote, ‘Hylas was one of my lifelines to an imaginary world of desire found in images of men’.⁷¹³

The debacle surrounding the temporary fate of *Hylas and the Nymphs* is indicative of more than simply the assumed dismissal of late nineteenth and early twentieth century British artworks which focus upon unfashionable classical themes. Rather, it indicates that the sexuality of the same figures who Thomas Lowinsky,

⁷⁰⁹ Sonia Boyce, “Our Removal of Waterhouse’s Naked Nymphs Painting was Art in Action”. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/06/takedown-waterhouse-naked-nymphs-art-action-manchester-art-gallery-sonia-boyce>.

⁷¹⁰ Gilane Tawadros, “Removing Nymphs From a Gallery is Provocative – But Does Not Merit Contempt”. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/02/nymphs-manchester-art-gallery-perspective-censorship>; Jonathan Jones, “Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed From a Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?”. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jan/31/hylas-and-the-nymphs-jw--waterhouse-why-have-mildly-erotic-nymphs-been-removed-from-a-manchester-gallery-is-picasso-next>.

⁷¹¹ Tawadros, *Removing Nymphs*; Jones, *Mildly Erotic Nymphs*.

⁷¹² Helen Lovatt, “Removing Waterhouse: Perfect for the Hylas Myth”. *University of Nottingham Blogs*, <https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/argonautsandemperors/2018/02/01/removing-waterhouse-perfect-hylas-myth/>.

⁷¹³ Adrian Rifkin, Letter to the *Guardian*, Tuesday 06 February 2018. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/feb/06/hylas-and-the-nymphs-and-sexual-awakening>.

Raymond Mortimer, and Cecil Beaton concerned themselves with remains a contested matter. What the debate also reveals is that lessons could be learned from the queer positionality of Pater, his progenies, and (in his letter) Adrian Rifkin, to whom representations of nymphs represented more than rampant misogyny. While the decision to remove *Hylas and the Nymphs* from the wall clearly resisted, like the maenads of the *Bacchae* in whose retributive actions Pater gloried, the prurience of an eroticised male gaze like that of Pentheus, Pater's equal admiration for the grace and loveliness of these figures (which also provided the motor of Beaton's explorations) is perhaps yet to be accommodated for.

Even more recently, the faun that fascinated the aesthetes of the late nineteenth century and their descendants recurred in the interdisciplinary artist Gideon Horváth's 2021 installation work *Faun Realness*. *Faun Realness* aimed, according to its press release, to 'deconstruct... a binary worldview, questioning heteronormativity as a normalcy, overwriting the dichotomic worldview of nature-culture, human-nonhuman [which] becomes crucial through the figure of the faun'.⁷¹⁴ Within this schema, curator Flóra Gadó states that 'the faun's persona... is a marginalized, exiled figure because of his queerness'.⁷¹⁵ These readings are borne out in Horváth's tactile, fluid sculptures, constructed from beeswax into which quotations from *Paris is Burning*, the famous documentary concerning the queer scene of downtown New York in the 1970s, were inscribed. One sculpture depicting a landscape with a faun is titled *Faun with a hard on looking into the advanced future* (fig. 200), showing the mythological creature gazing longingly out towards an implied land of the sexual freedoms enjoyed in classical antiquity. Another, *Mutilated faun* (fig. 201), resembles a fragmented version of the *Barberini Faun* rendered in Horváth's luscious and amorphous materials, with its legs splayed like its classical precedent; into this flesh-like substance is cut the phrase *touch this skin, honey!*

Horváth's sculptures, from their invitingly tactile and yet fragile materiality onwards, invite both identification (as in *Faun with a hard on*) and desire (as in *Mutilated faun*); furthermore, as Gadó's press release demonstrates, an important element in constructing these aspects of the faun was its hybridity. Horváth's

⁷¹⁴ Flóra Gadó, "Faun Realness". <https://kubaparis.com/archive/gideon-horvath-faun-realness>.

⁷¹⁵ Gadó, *Faun Realness*.

reimagining of the faun would seem remarkable, audacious, and perhaps eccentric to contemporary audiences. However, to those familiar with aestheticist discourses— and cognisant of their survivals— Horváth’s work is instead remarkable for its fidelity to the ideas, images, and iconographies of artists and writers of over a century ago. Horváth’s modernising interpolations of *Paris is Burning* are but equivalents for Glyn Philpot’s revivification of aestheticist conceptions of fauns though recourse to the strikingly modern performances of the Ballets Russes, and if Dionysus’s message is ‘a peculiar message for a certain number of refined minds’, as Pater wrote, then we may consider Horváth to belong to this group.⁷¹⁶

As for the progenitor of this peculiar message, the god Dionysus himself, there exists a lasting testament to his importance as a queer figure amongst the aesthetes. In 1997, the sculptor Danny Osborne unveiled his memorial to Oscar Wilde in Dublin, the writer’s home city. The dominant aspect of this sculpture group is its depiction of Wilde himself, a monumental, reclining figure, the face animated by an uneven, inscrutable, knowing grin (fig. 202). We realise, upon following the figure’s gaze, that its eyes are fixed forever on a diminutive, nubile, male classical torso hewn from granite and placed upon a plinth decorated with quotations from Wilde’s work (fig. 203). Here, in the monument to the man who did most to colour understandings of aestheticism, who audaciously and publicly blended classicism with aestheticism and both with the sexual desires for which he would be vilified, he gazes out at the figure who fascinated both his teacher Walter Pater and the aesthetes who followed in his footsteps: Osborne’s torso bears the name *Dionysus*.

⁷¹⁶ Pater, *Greek Studies*, 49.

Figures

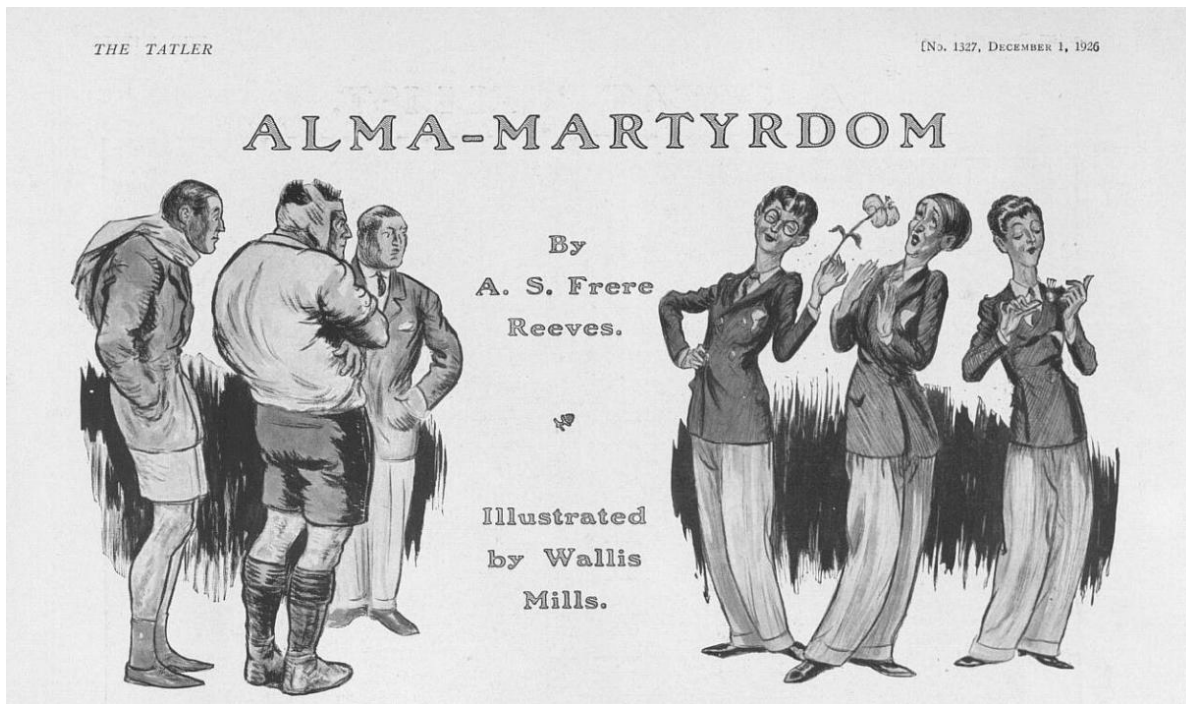


Fig. 1. Arthur Wallis Mills, illustration for *Alma-Martyrdom*, 1926. Print. British Newspaper Archive.

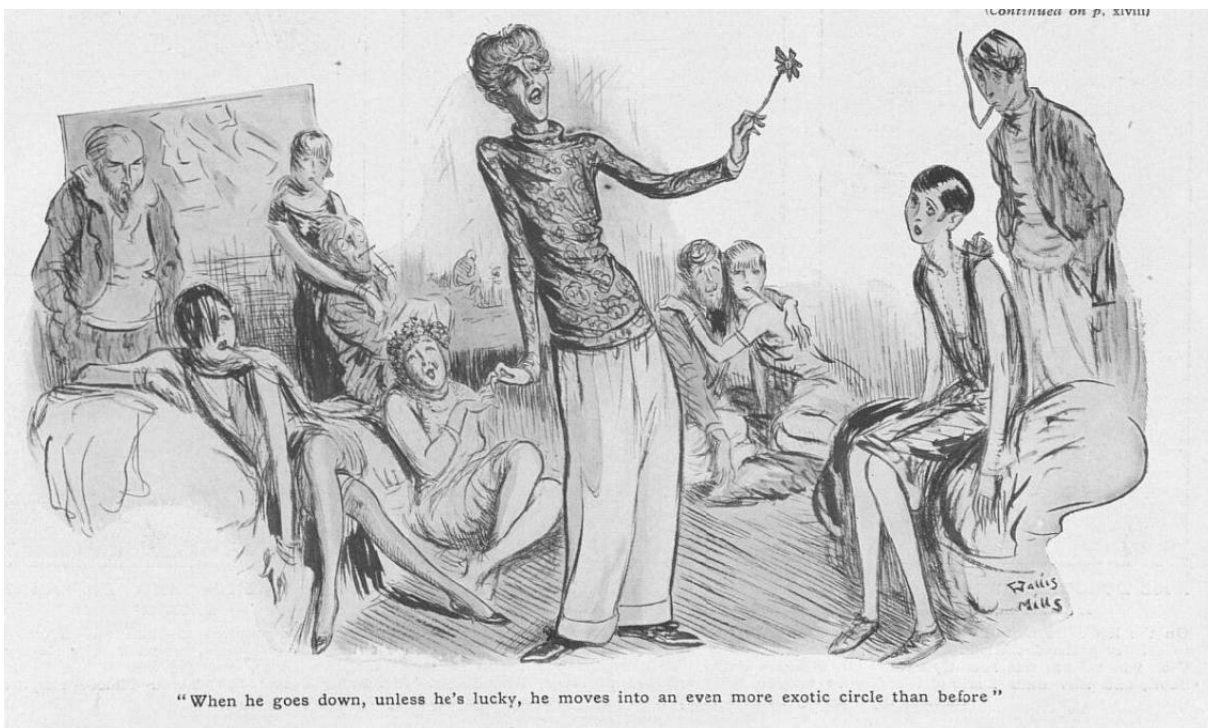


Fig. 2. Arthur Wallis Mills, illustration for *Alma-Martyrdom*, 1926. Print. British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 3. Anthony Wysard, *Cecil Beaton*, 1930. Pen, ink, and wash on board. National Portrait Gallery, London.



Fig. 6. Charles Sykes, *The Order of Dionysus*, 1927. Print, *The Bystander*. British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 7. Michelangelo, *Bacchus*, 1496-1497. Marble. Museo Nazionale de Bargello, Florence.



Fig. 8. Workshop of Leonardo, *Bacchus*, 1510-1515. Oil on panel. Louvre, Paris



Fig. 9. Leonardo da Vinci, *Saint John the Baptist*, 1513-1516. Oil on wood. Louvre, Paris.



Fig. 10. Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus*, 1867. Oil on paper. Birmingham Museums, Birmingham.

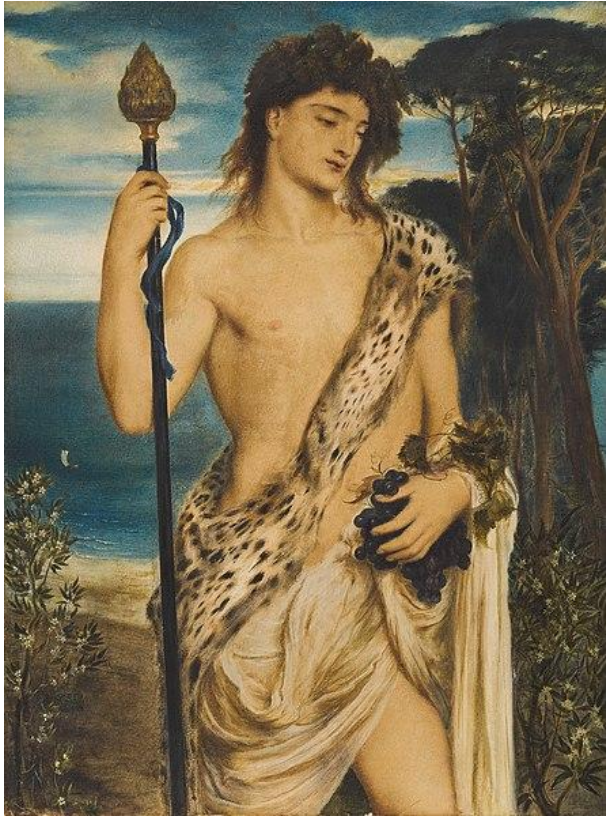


Fig. 11. Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus*, 1867. Watercolour and gouache. Private collection.



Fig. 12. Girolamo Mocetta, *Bacchus*, 1490-1530. Engraving. British Museum, London.



Fig. 13. Aubrey Beardsley, *Frontispiece Design for John Davidson's "Plays"*, 1894. Ink and graphite on paper. Tate, London.



Fig. 14. Aubrey Beardsley, *The Woman in the Moon*. Line block print on vellum. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 15. Aubrey Beardsley, *Study of a Head*, c.1891. Pencil on paper. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

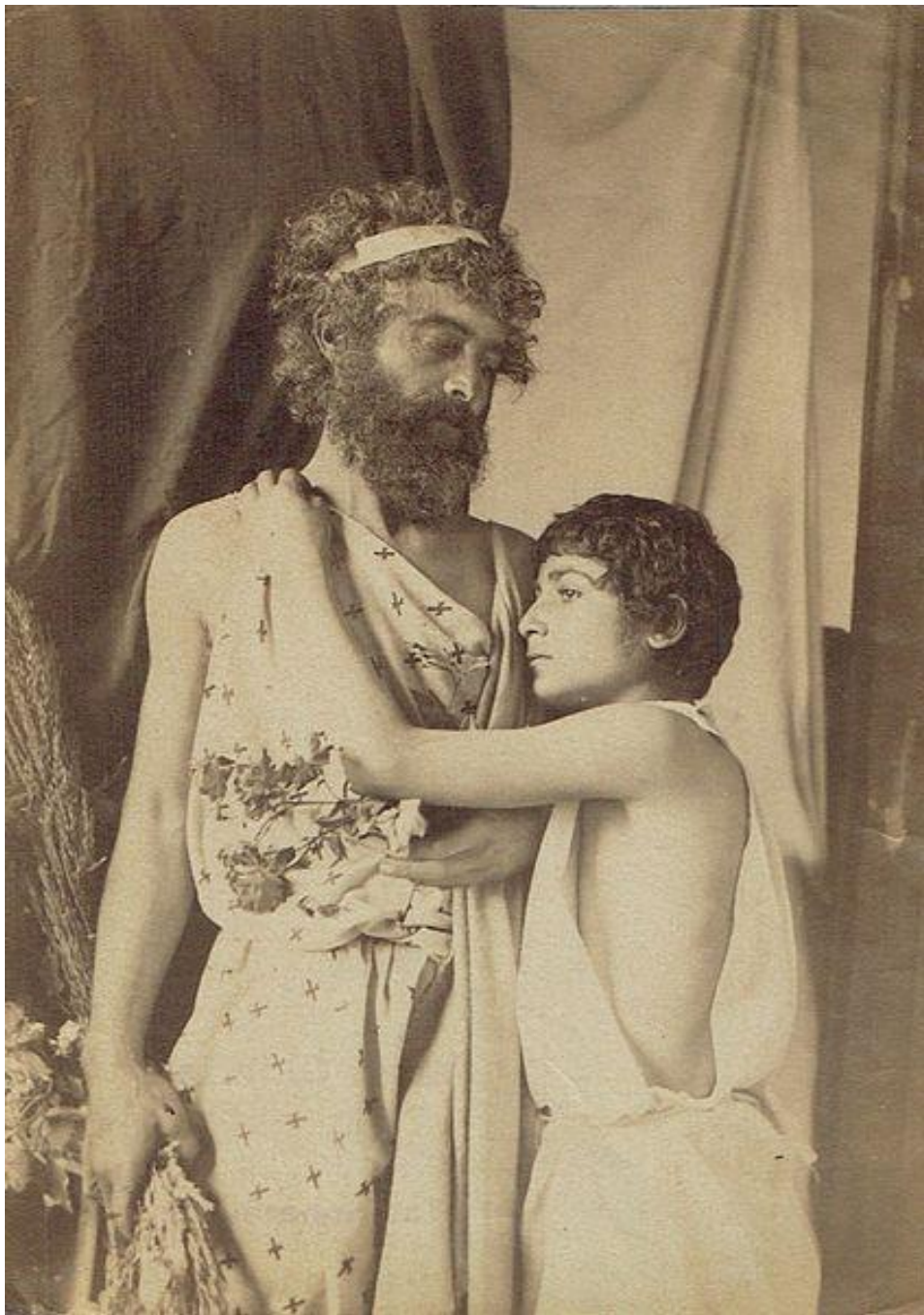


Fig. 16. Wilhelm von Gloeden, Untitled photograph, 1899. Photograph. Fondazione Alinari, Florence.

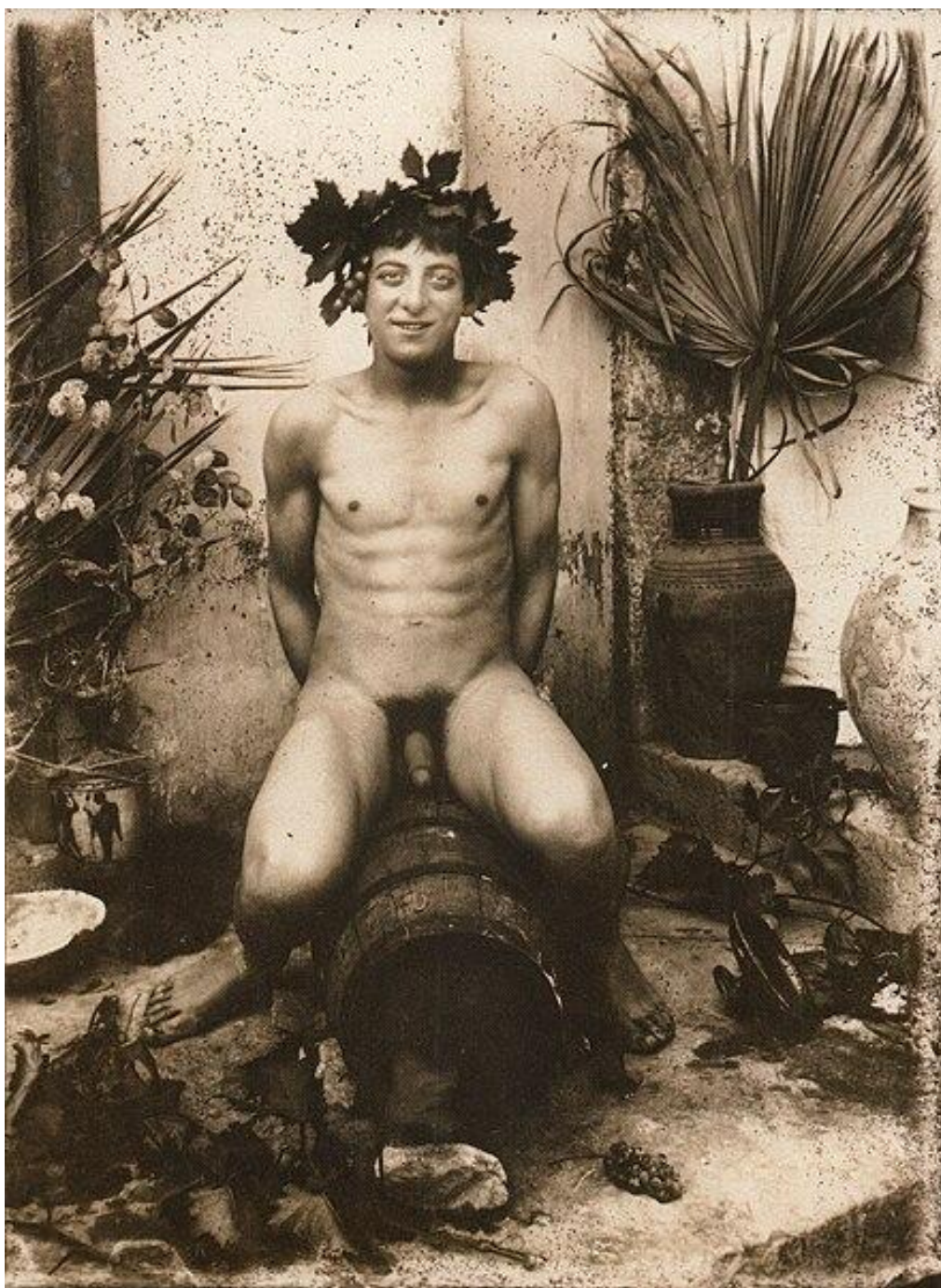


Fig. 17. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Bacco*, c.1900. Photograph. Fondazione Alinari, Florence.



Fig. 18. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Bacco*, c.1890-1900. Photograph. Fondazione Alinari, Florence.



Fig. 19. Caravaggio, *Bacchus*, c.1596. Oil on canvas. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



Fig. 20. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Drunk Bacchus*, c.1890-1900. Photograph. Fondazione Alinari, Florence.



Fig. 21. Wilhelm von Gloeden, Untitled photograph, c.1900-1903. Photograph. Fondazione Alinari, Florence.

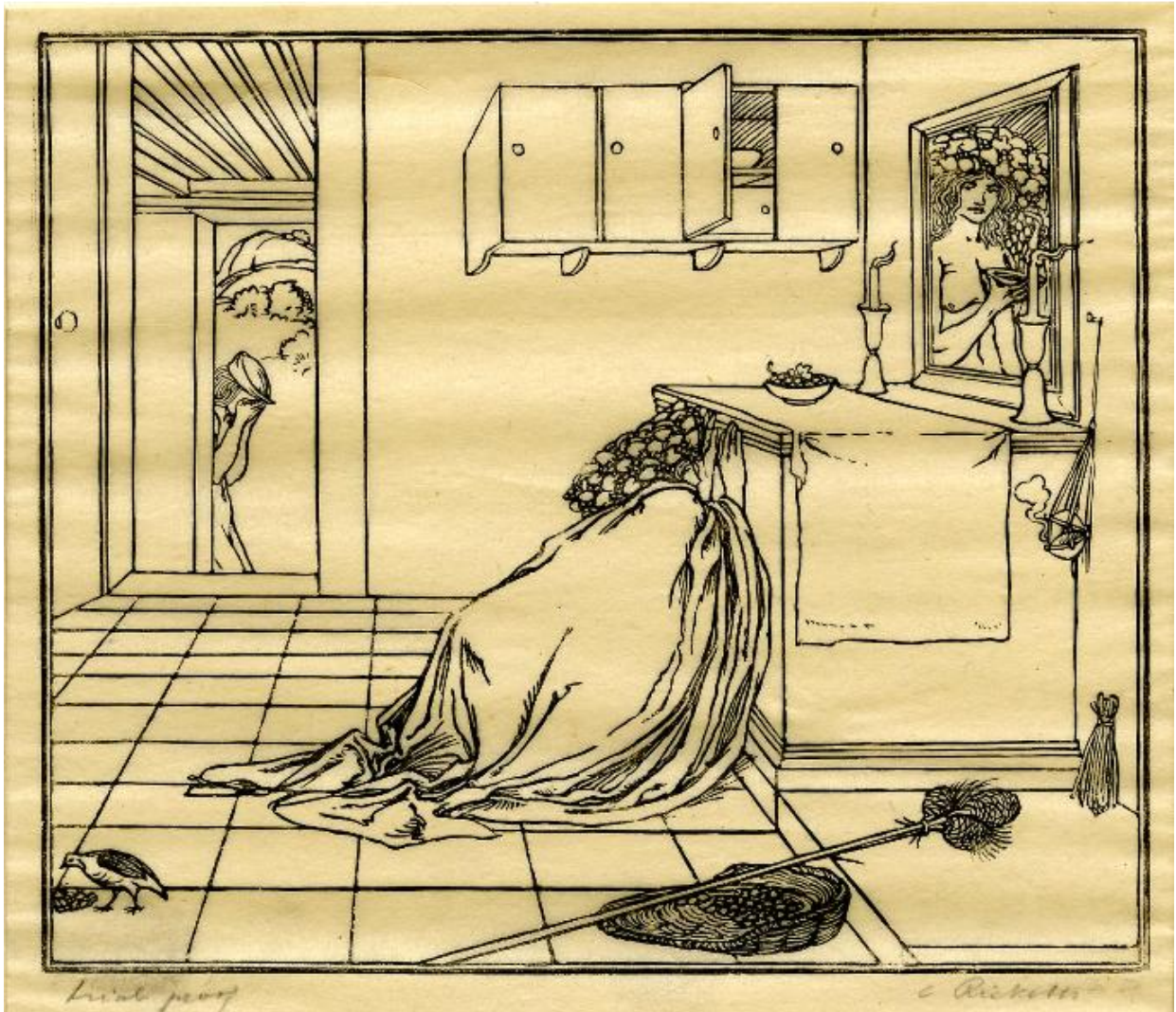


Fig. 22. Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, *Gnatho Taking Sanctuary in the House of Bacchus Overhears the Bitter Lamentations of Daphnis*, 1893. Wood engraving. British Museum, London.



Fig. 23. Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, *The Epithalamium*, 1893. Wood engraving. British Museum, London.

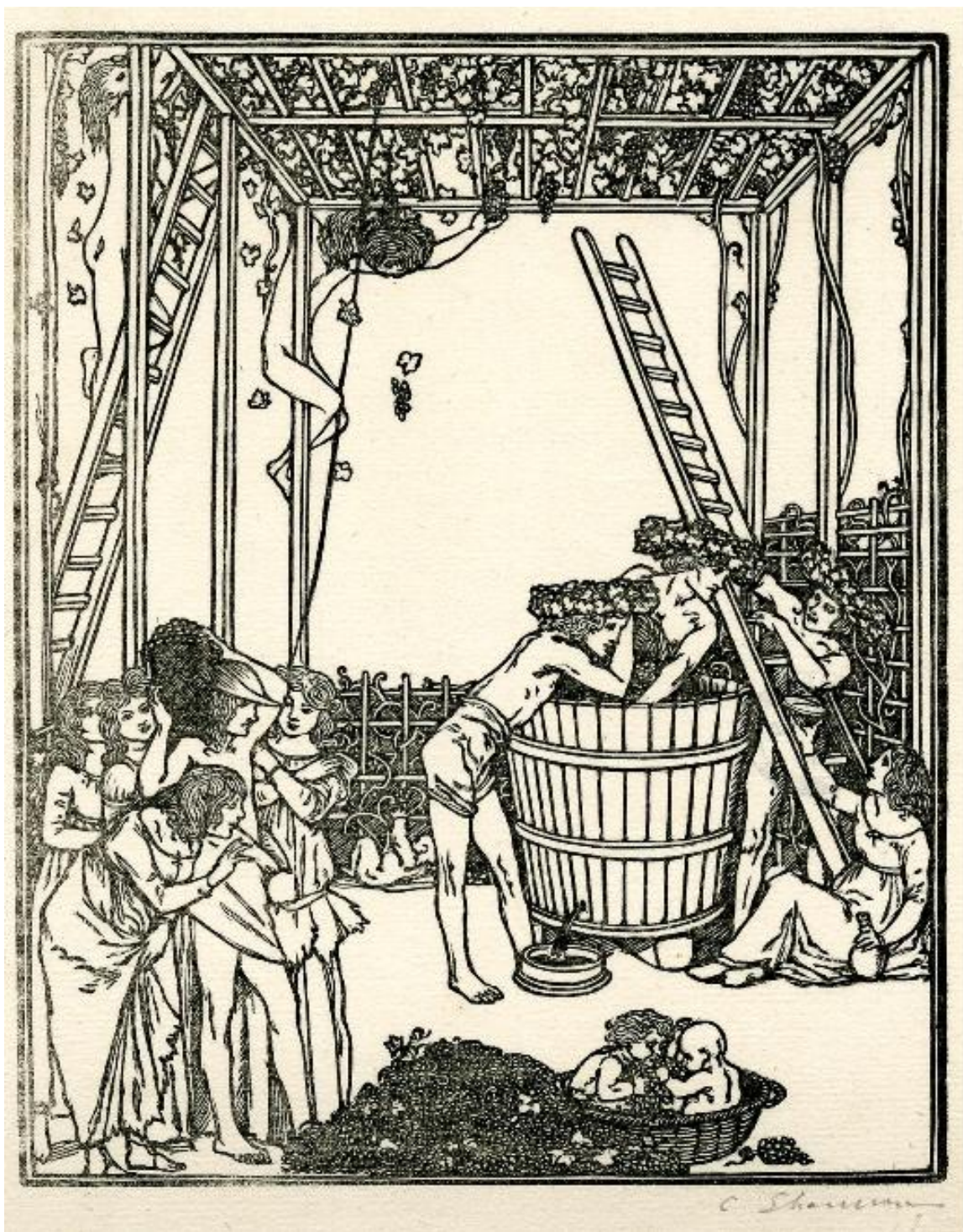


Fig. 24. Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, *The Harvest*, 1893. Wood engraving. British Museum, London.



Fig. 25. Charles Ricketts, *Bacchus in India*, 1913. Oil on canvas. Atkinson Art Gallery, Southport.



Fig. 26. Charles Shannon, *The Childhood of Bacchus*, 1919. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 27. Charles Shannon, *Young Bacchus*, undated. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 28. Attributed to Praxiteles, *Hermes and the Infant Dionysus*, c.400 BCE. Marble. Archaeological Museum of Olympia, Olympia.



Fig. 29. Charles Shannon, *Hermes and the Infant Bacchus*, 1897. Lithograph. British Museum, London.



Fig. 30. Charles Shannon, *Hermes and the Infant Bacchus*, 1927. Oil on canvas. Cecil French Bequest, London.



Fig. 31. Charles Shannon, *Hermes and the Infant Bacchus*, 1902-06. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.



Fig. 32. Glyn Philpot, *The Transfiguration of Dionysus Before the Tyrrhenian Pirates*, 1924. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 33. Charles Ricketts, *Spirit of Ecstasy*, 1911. Bronze. Private collection.



Fig. 34. Artist unknown, Red-figured pelike, c.450BC. Pottery. British Museum, London. Museum number: 1864,1007.127.



Fig. 35. Attributed to the Caylus Painter, Black-figure kylix (detail), c.540-480BC. Pottery. British Museum, London. Museum number: 1814,0704.1602.



Fig. 36. Douris, Red-figure psykter, c.490BC. Pottery. British Museum, London. Museum Number: 1868,0606.7.



Fig. 37. The Brygos Painter, Red-figured kylix, c.480BC. Pottery. British Museum, London. Museum number: 1873,0820.376.



Fig. 38. Artist unknown, Marble figure, c.50BC-50AD. Marble. British Museum, London. Museum number: 1805,0703.280.



Fig. 39. Christofano Robetta, *Ceres and Infant Satyrs*, c.1500-1520. Engraving. British Museum, London.



Fig. 40. Sandro Botticelli, *Venus and Mars*, c.1485. Tempera and oil on panel. National Gallery, London.



Fig. 41. Piero di Cosimo, *Satyr Mourning Over a Nymph*, c.1495. Oil on panel. National Gallery, London.



Fig. 42. After Praxiteles, *Resting Satyr*, c.117-138AD. Marble. Capitoline Museum, Rome.



Fig. 43. Laurence Housman, *The Reflected Faun*, 1894. Pen-and-ink drawing. University of Heidelberg Library, Heidelberg.

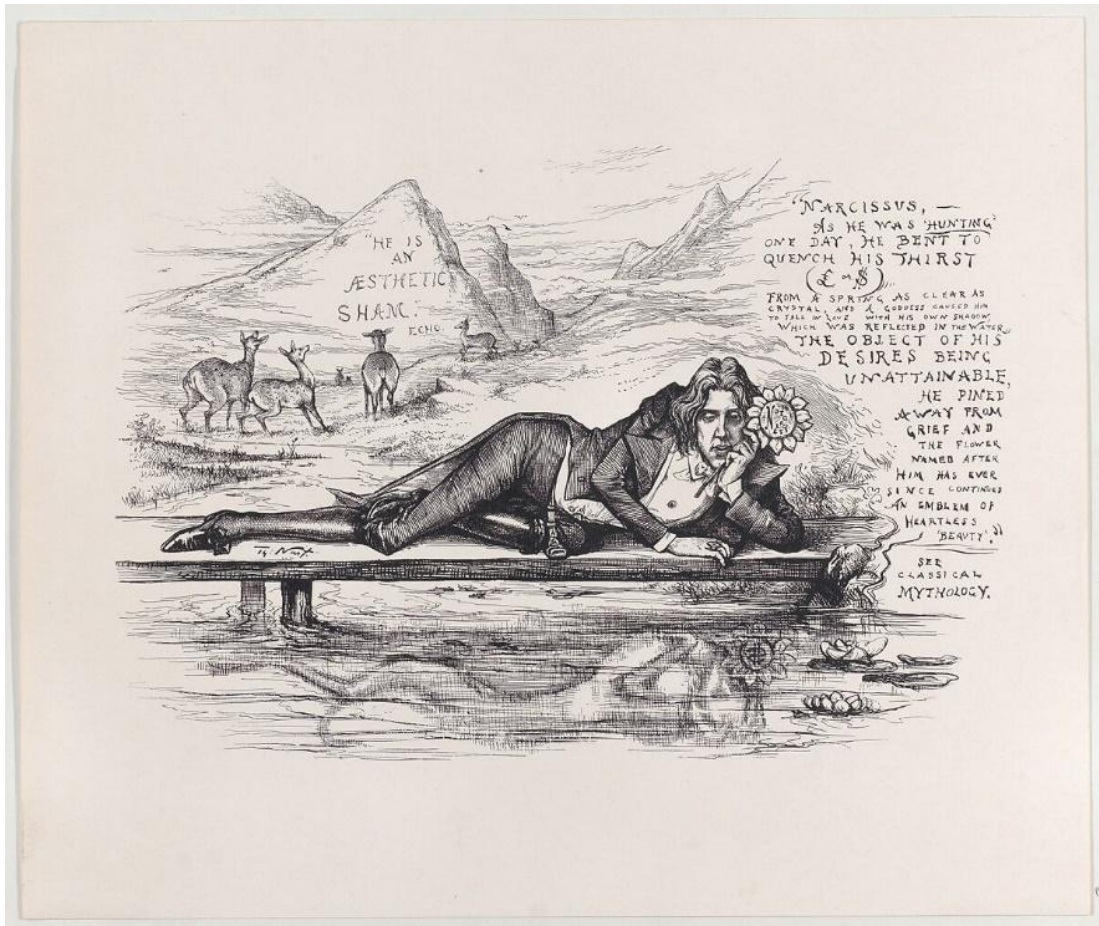


Fig. 44. Thomas Nast, *Mr. O'Wilde, You are not the first one that has grasped at a Shadow*, 1882. Relief print. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 45. Frederic Leighton, *The Fisherman and the Syren*, 1856-1858. Oil on canvas. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol.



Fig. 46. Charles Shannon, *The Fisherman and the Mermaid*, 1901. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 47. Norman Lindsay, *Man's Heaven*, c.1914. Pen drawing. Private collection.



Fig. 48. Norman Lindsay, *Adventure*, 1921. Etching. Private collection.



Fig. 49. Norman Lindsay, *Bargains*, 1922. Etching. Private collection.

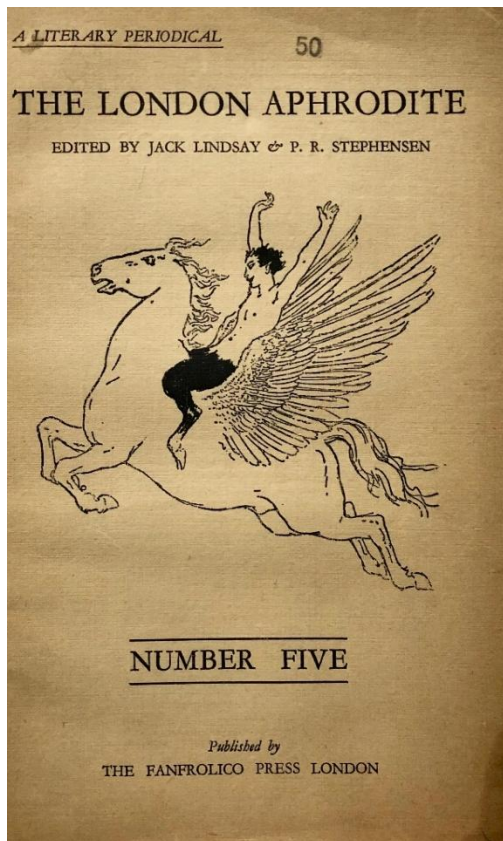


Fig. 50. Norman Lindsay, cover design for *The London Aphrodite*, 1928. Print. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.



Fig. 51. Frederic Leighton, *Perseus, on Pegasus, Hastening to the Rescue of Andromeda*, c.1896. Oil on canvas. Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester.

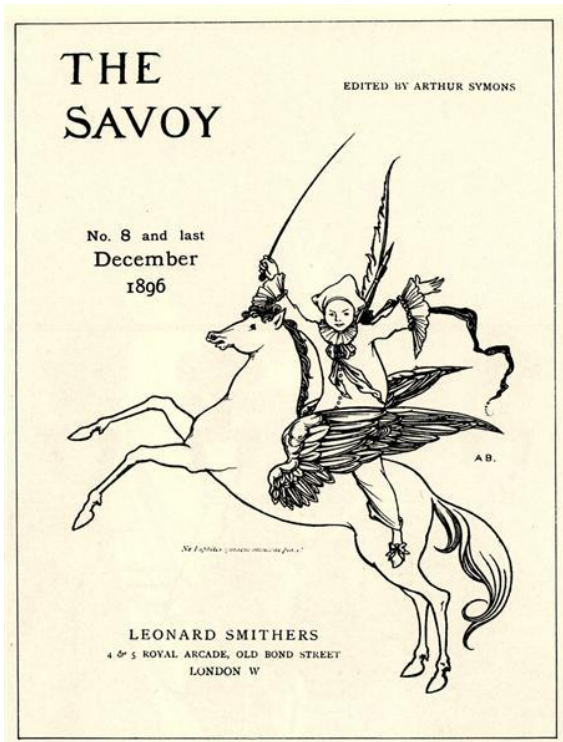


Fig. 52. Aubrey Beardsley, cover design for *The Savoy*, 1896. Print. Philadelphia Museum of Art Library, Philadelphia.

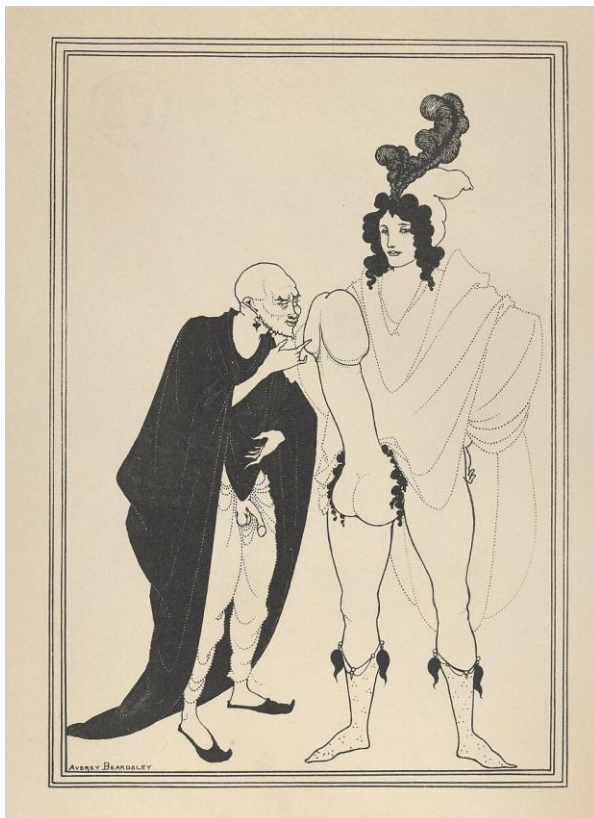


Fig. 53. Aubrey Beardsley, *The Examination of the Herald*, designed 1896. Collotype. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

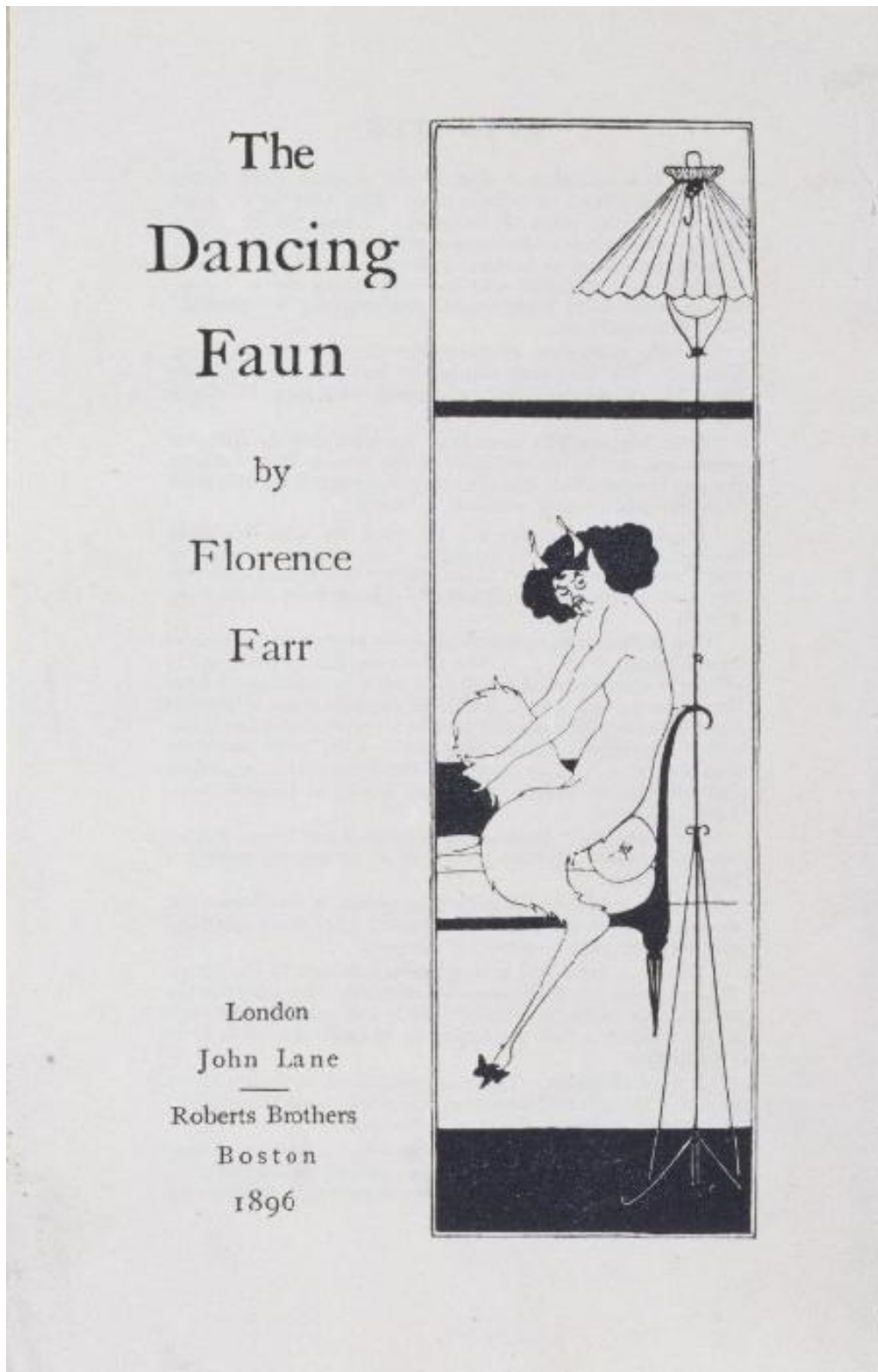


Fig. 54. Aubrey Beardsley, Title-page for *The Dancing Faun*, 1896. Process engraving and letterpress on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 55. Aubrey Bearsley, drawing in *L'après-midi d'un faune*, c.1893 Pencil on paper. Princeton University Library, Princeton.



Fig. 56. Aubrey Beardsley, *Satyr and Peacock*, c.1893-1894. Pen and ink on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 57. Aubrey Beardsley, *Satyr and Young Boy*, c.1893-1894. Pen and ink on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 58. Aubrey Beardsley, *Satyr Accosting a Knight*, c.1893-1894. Pen and ink on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 59. Aubrey Beardsley, *Satyr Offering Fruit to a Seated Figure*, c.1893-1894. Pen and ink on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 60. Aubrey Beardsley, *Satyr and Human Figure*, c.1893-1894. Pen and ink on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 61. Aubrey Beardsley, cover design for the fifth volume of *The Yellow Book*, 1895. Pen and ink on paper. Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Brighton.



Fig. 62. Aubrey Beardsley, *Satyr Gazing at a Face in a Rose*, 1893-1894. Pen and ink on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

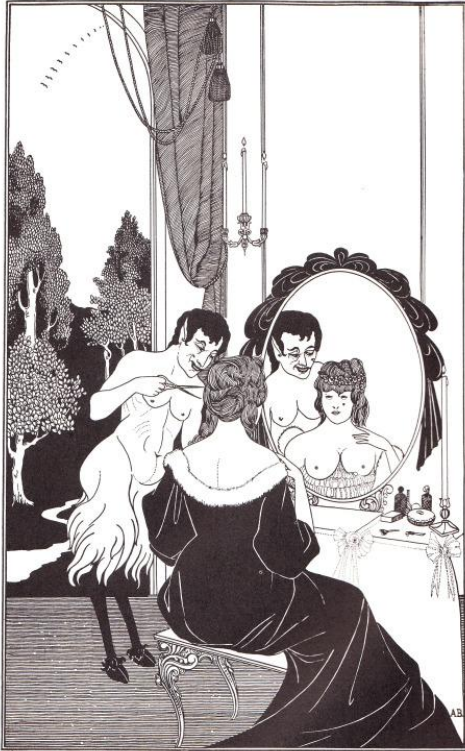


Fig. 63. Unknown artist, *A Satyr-Coiffeur and a Lady*, c.1920. Pen and ink on paper. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.



Fig. 64. Aubrey Beardsley, *The Coiffing*, 1896. Pen and ink on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Fig. 65. John Kettelwell, illustration for *The Story of Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*, 1928. Pen and ink on paper. Private collection.



Fig. 66. John Kettelwell, *L'après-midi d'un faune*, 1923. Print, *The Sketch*. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.



Fig. 67. Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, poster for Le Divan Japonais, 1893-1894. Lithograph. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

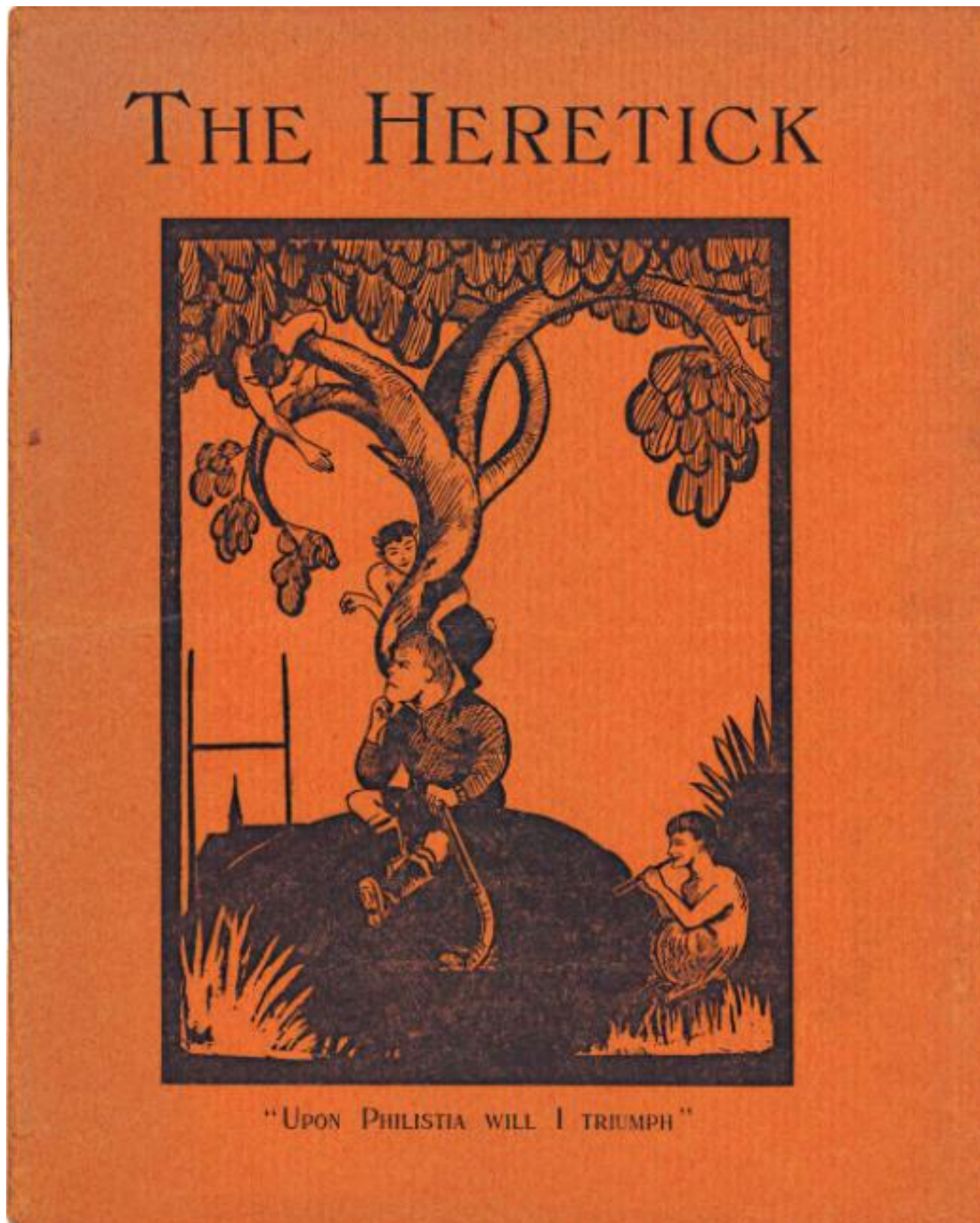


Fig. 68. John Bowle, front cover for *The Heretick*, vol, 1, 1924. Print. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.



Fig. 69. Osbert Lancaster, *The First Russian Ballet Period*, 1959. Pen and ink. Private collection.



Fig. 70. Baron de Meyer, photograph of Nijinsky performing, 1912. Photograph. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 71. Artist unknown, *Barberini Faun*, c.2 BC. Marble. Glyptothek, Munich.



Fig. 72. Michelangelo, *Doni Tondo*, c.1508. Oil on canvas. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

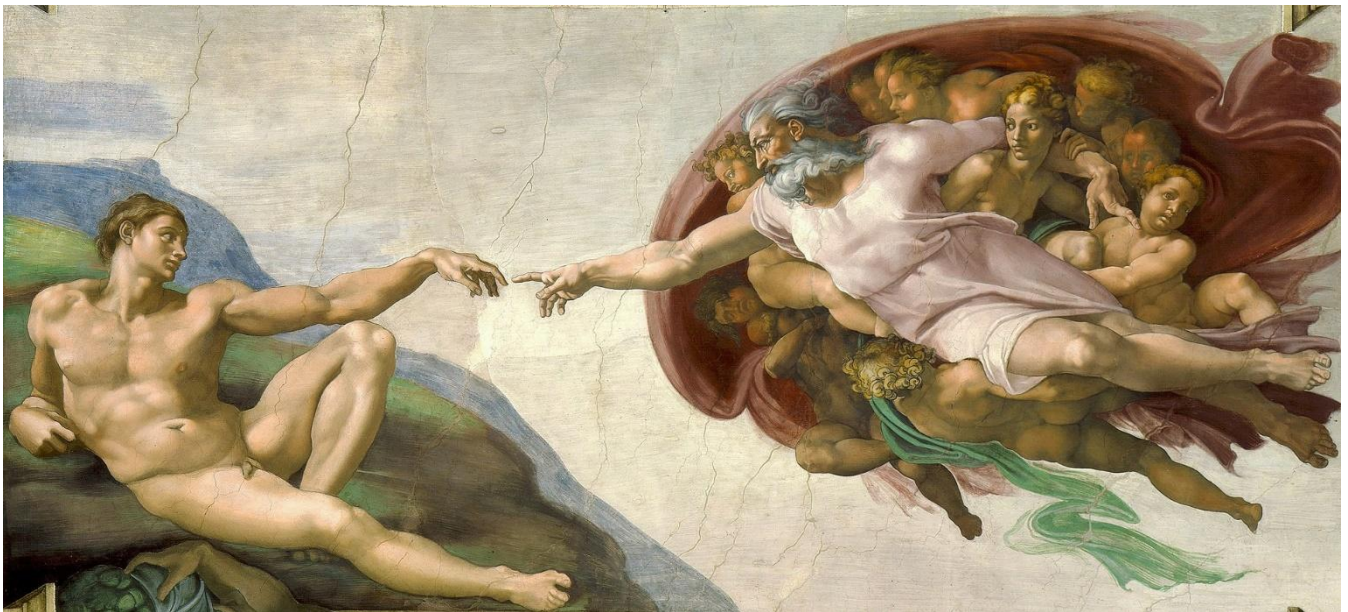


Fig. 73. Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*, c. 1511. Fresco. Vatican Chapel, Vatican City.



Fig. 74. Wilhelm von Gloeden, photograph of two boys, c.1890s. Photograph. Private collection.



Fig. 75. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Il Fauno*, c.1898. Photograph. Private collection.

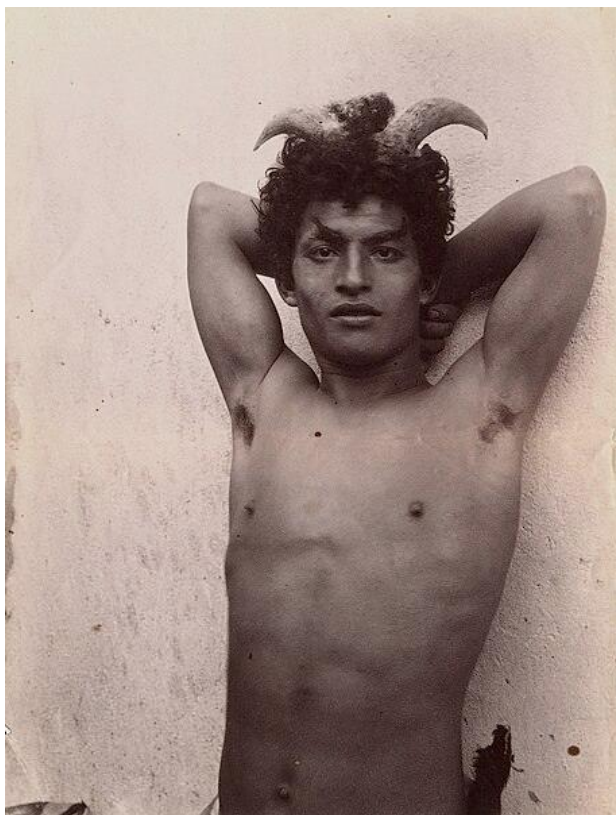


Fig. 76. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Il Fauno*, c.1898. Photograph. Wellcome Collection, London.

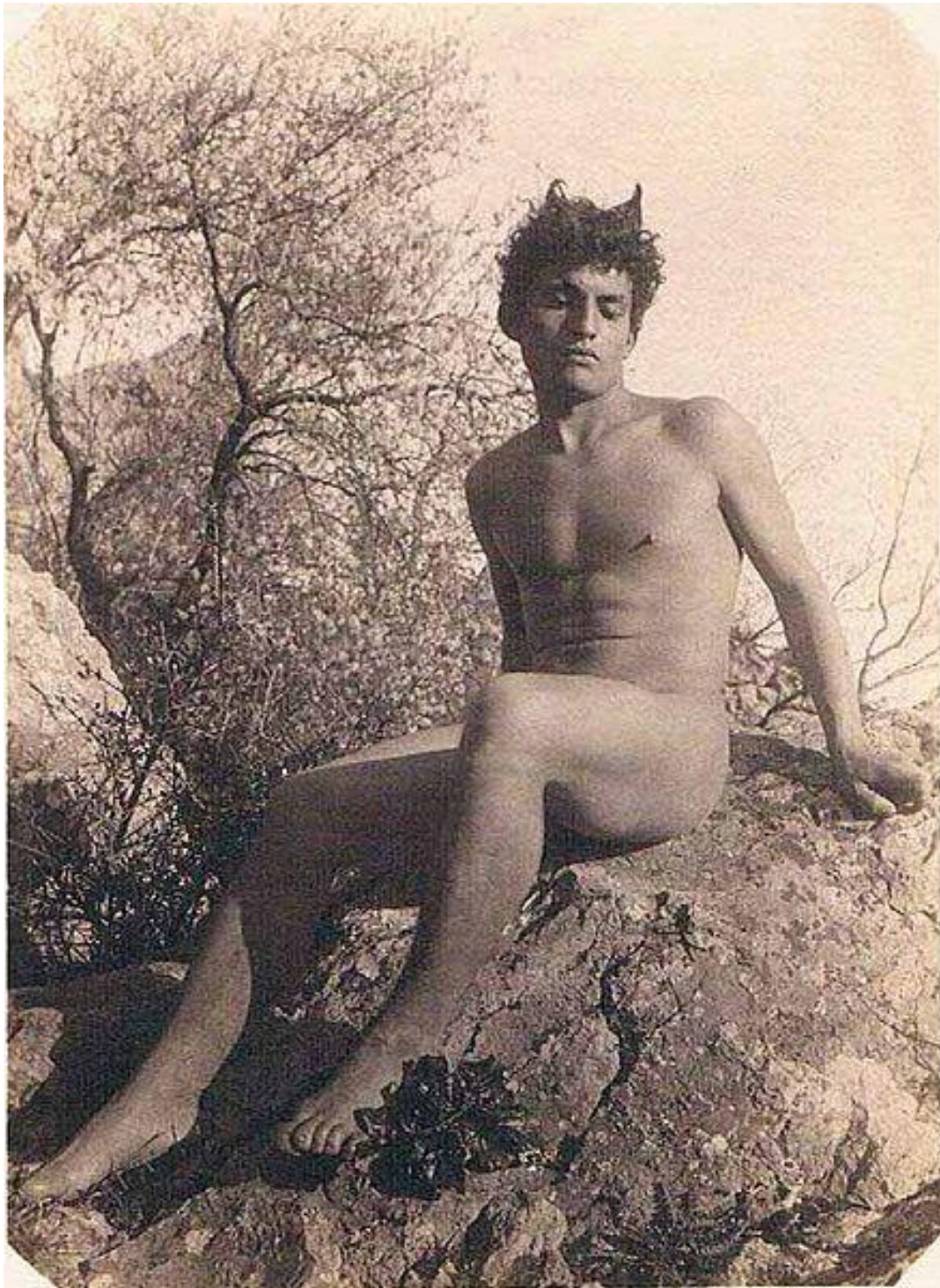


Fig. 77. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Il Fauno Gigante*, c.1900. Photograph. Getty Centre, Los Angeles.

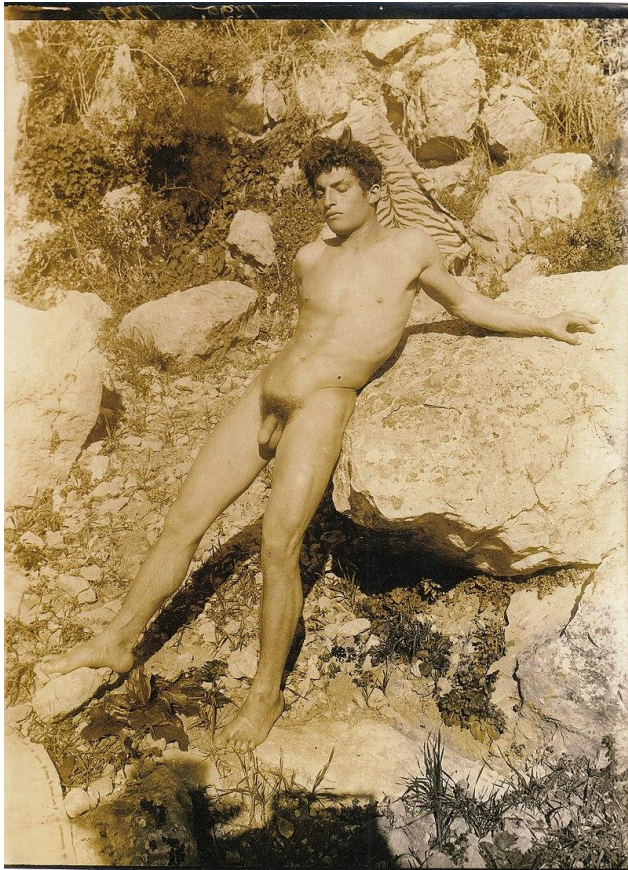


Fig. 78. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Il Fauno Gigante*, c.1900. Photograph. Private collection.

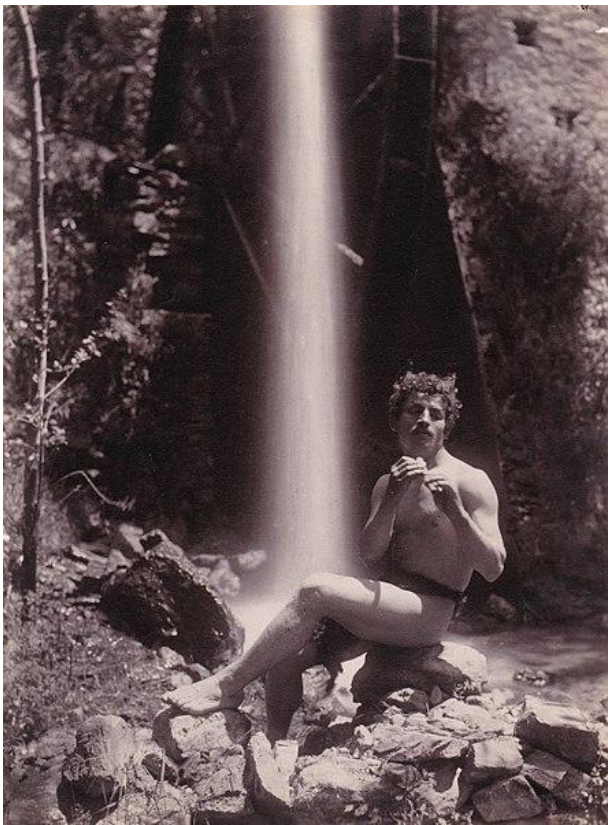


Fig. 79. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Il Fauno*, c.1898. Photograph. Private collection.

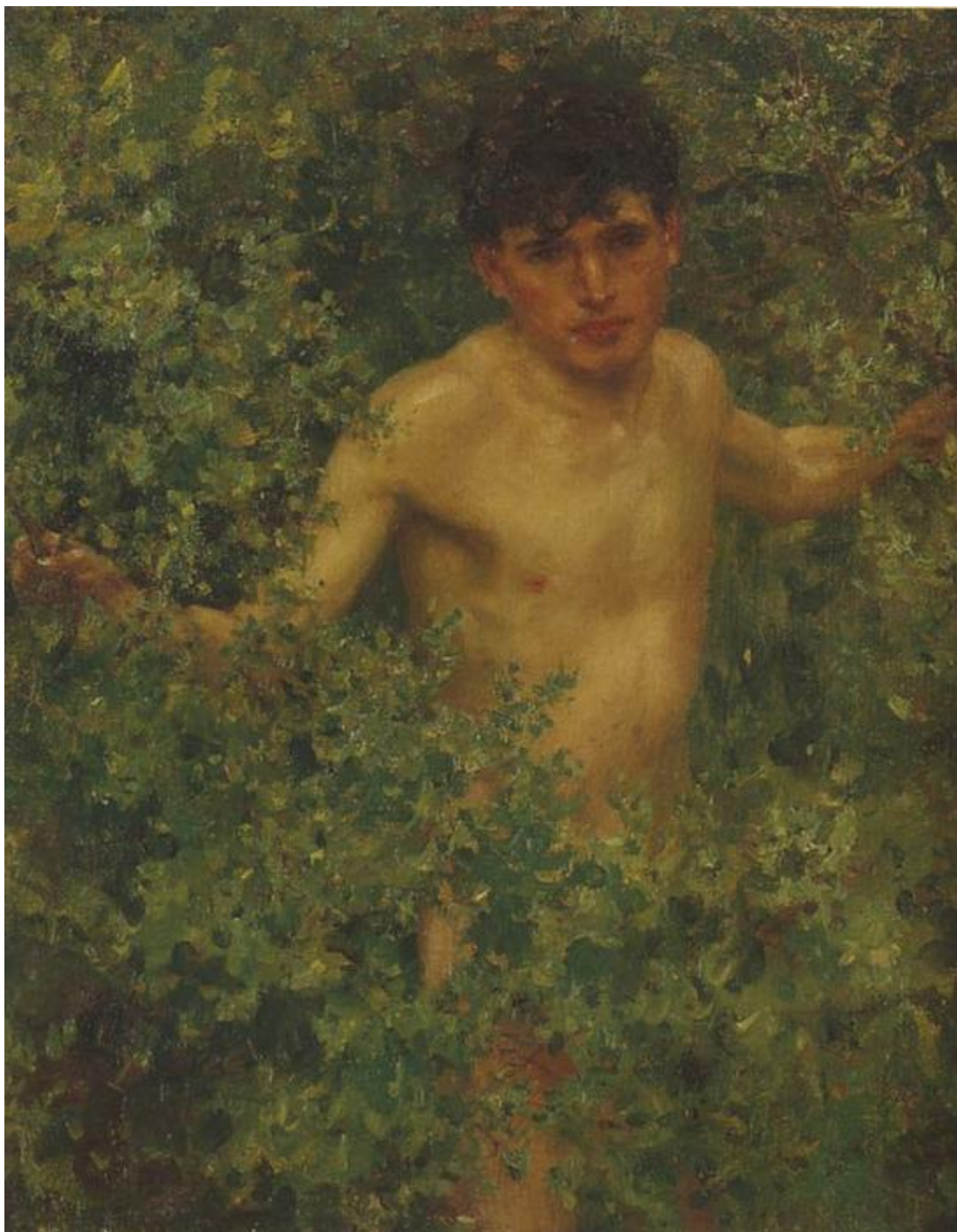


Fig. 80. Henry Scott Tuke, *Faun*, 1914. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 81. Henry Scott Tuke, *A Bathing Group*, 1914. Oil on canvas. Royal Academy of Arts, London.

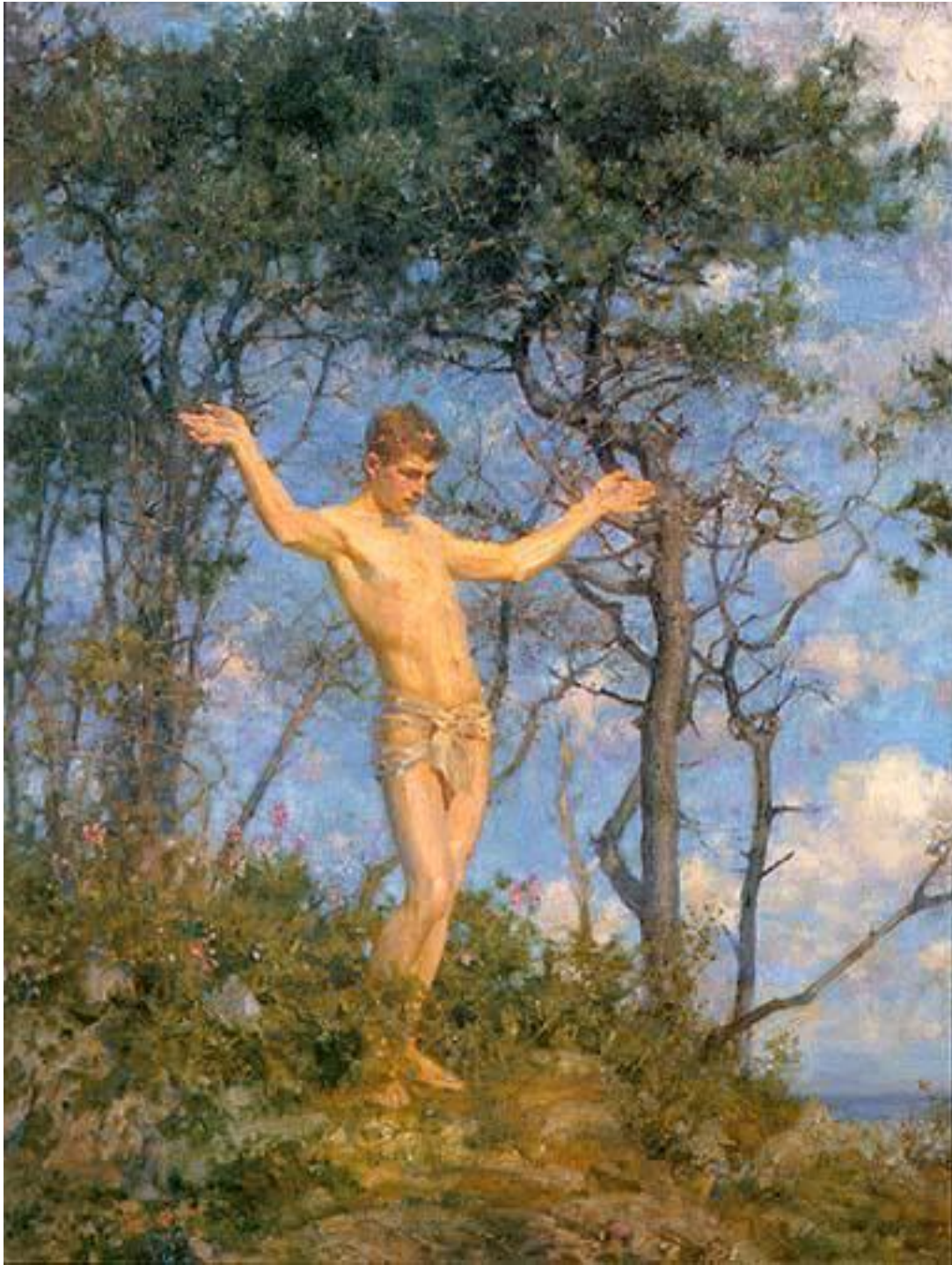


Fig. 82. Henry Scott Tuke, *To the Morning Sun*, 1904. Oil on canvas. Dublin City Gallery, Dublin.

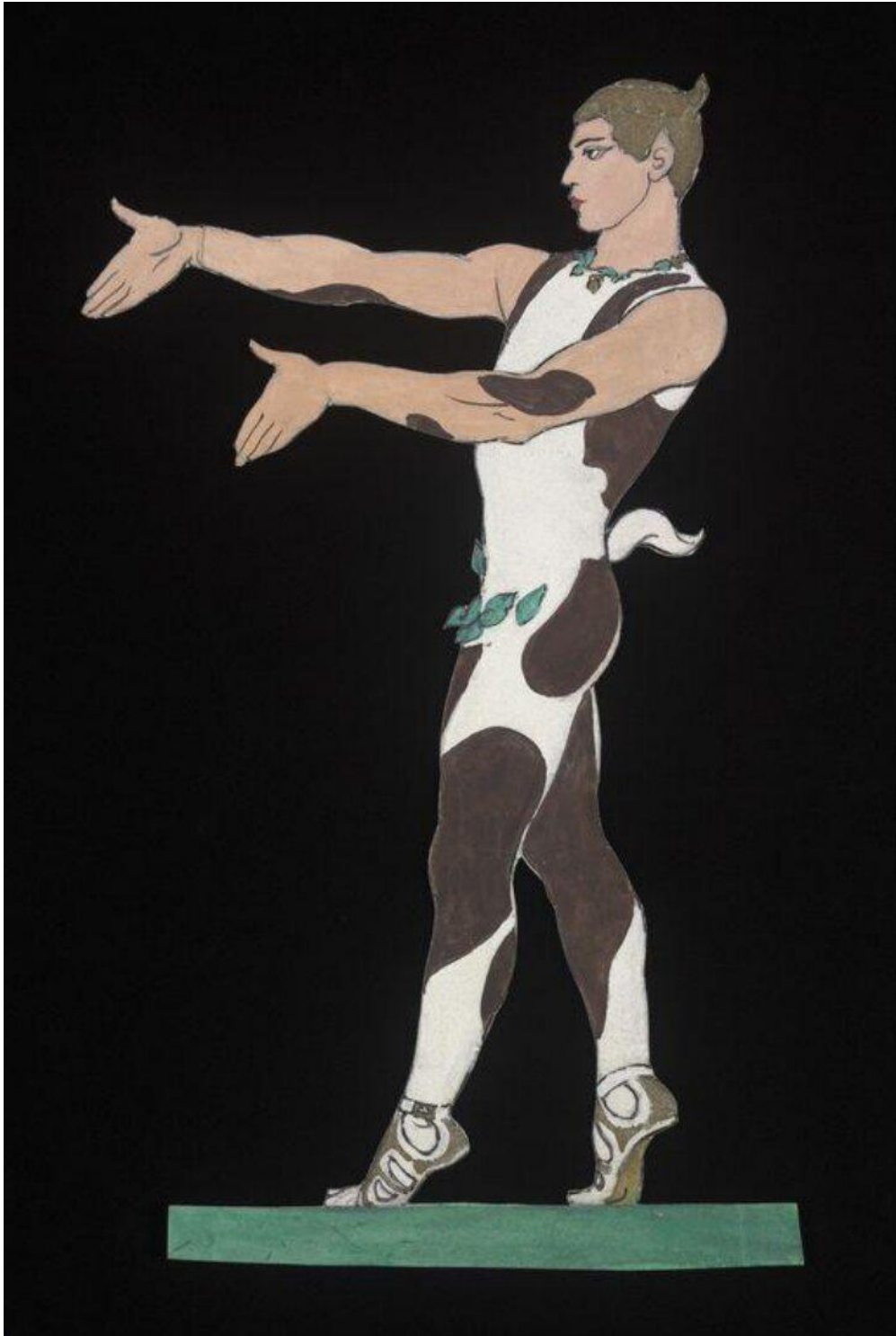


Fig. 83. Adrian Allinson, design for figure of Vaslav Nijinsky, 1915. Gouache, pen and ink, gold paint on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 84. Roberto Montenegro, *Nijinsky as a Faun*, 1913. Pen and ink with gold paint. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.



Fig. 85. Leon Bakst, stage design for *L'après-midi d'un faune*, 1912. Gouache on paper. Private collection.



Fig. 86. Georges Barbier, *Nijinsky as a Faun*, 1913. Pen and ink on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 87. Georges Barbier, *Nijinsky (Faun with Grapes)*, 1913. Engraving. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

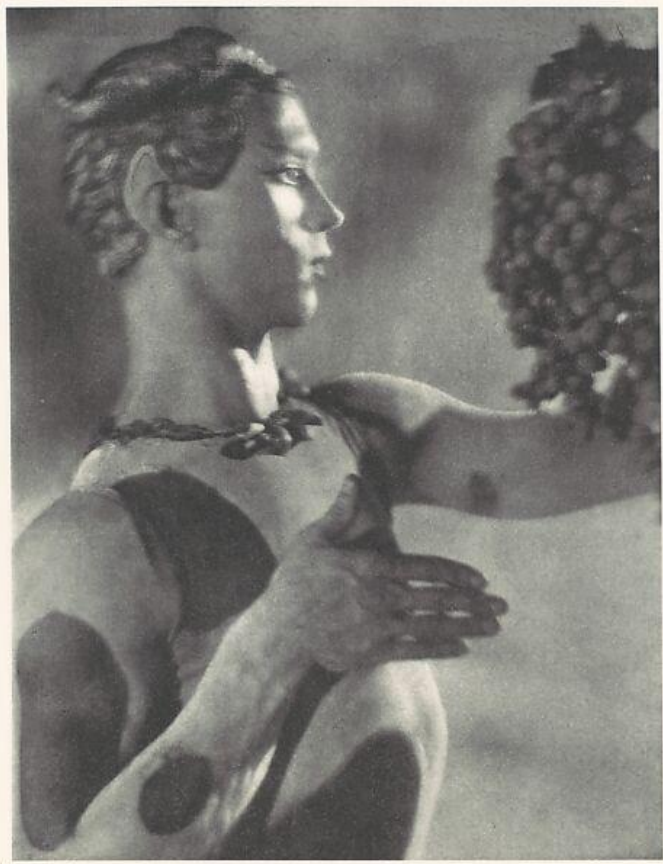


Fig. 88. Baron de Meyer, photograph of Nijinsky performing, 1912. Photograph. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

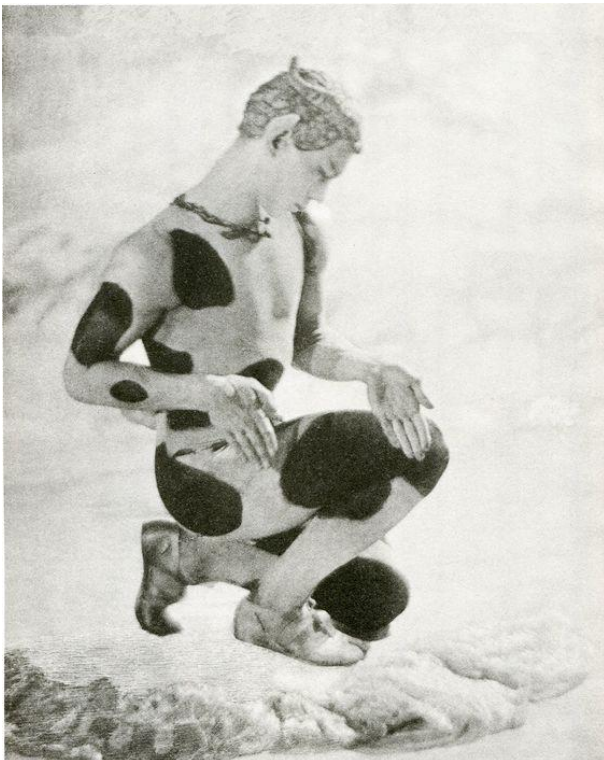


Fig. 89. Baron de Meyer, photograph of Nijinsky performing, 1912. Photograph. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

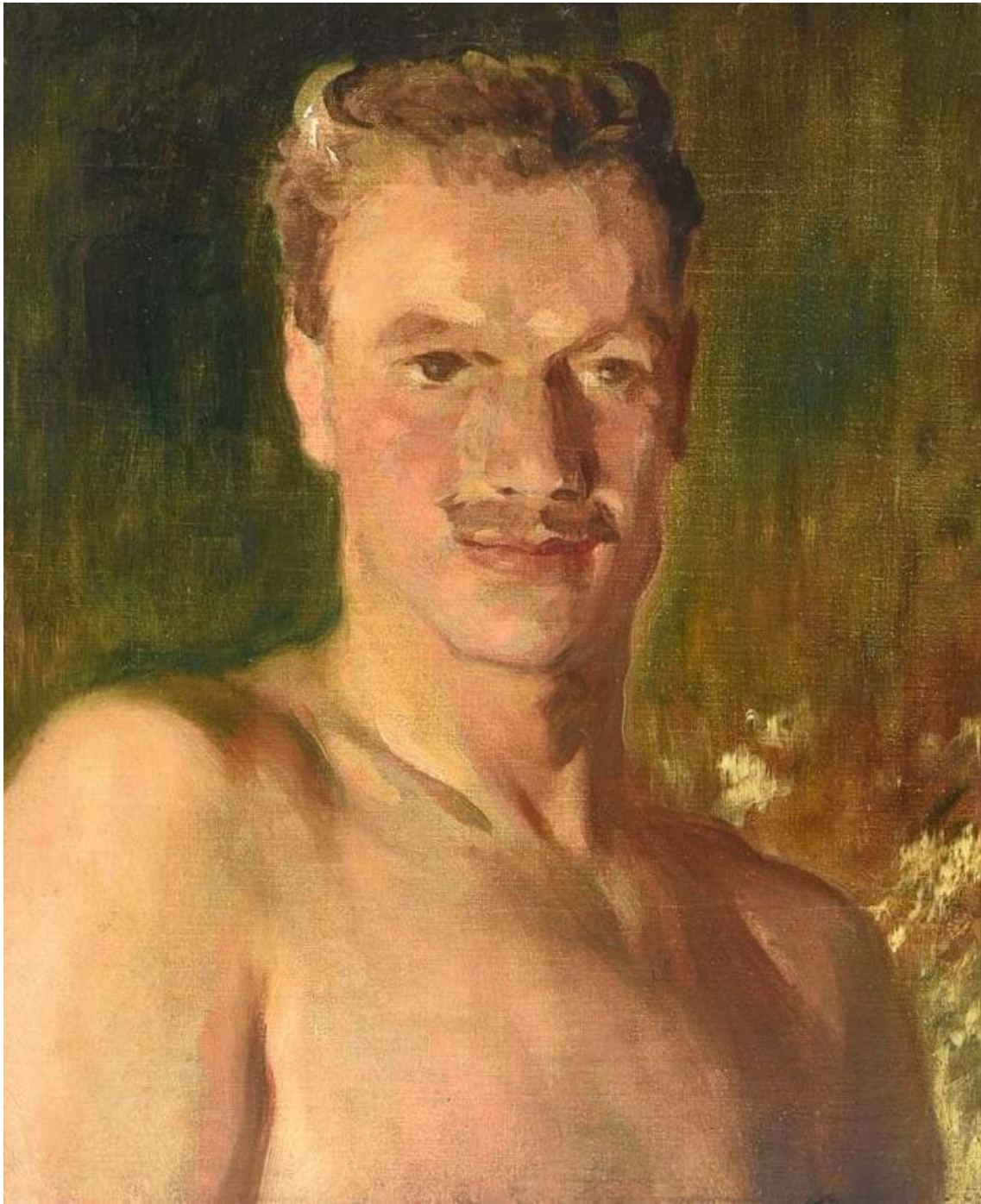


Fig. 90. Glyn Philpot, *Robert Allerton as a Faun*, 1921. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 91. Unknown photographer, photograph showing Glyn Philpot's *Faun and Satyr*, undated. Photograph. Allerton Park and Retreat Centre, Illinois.

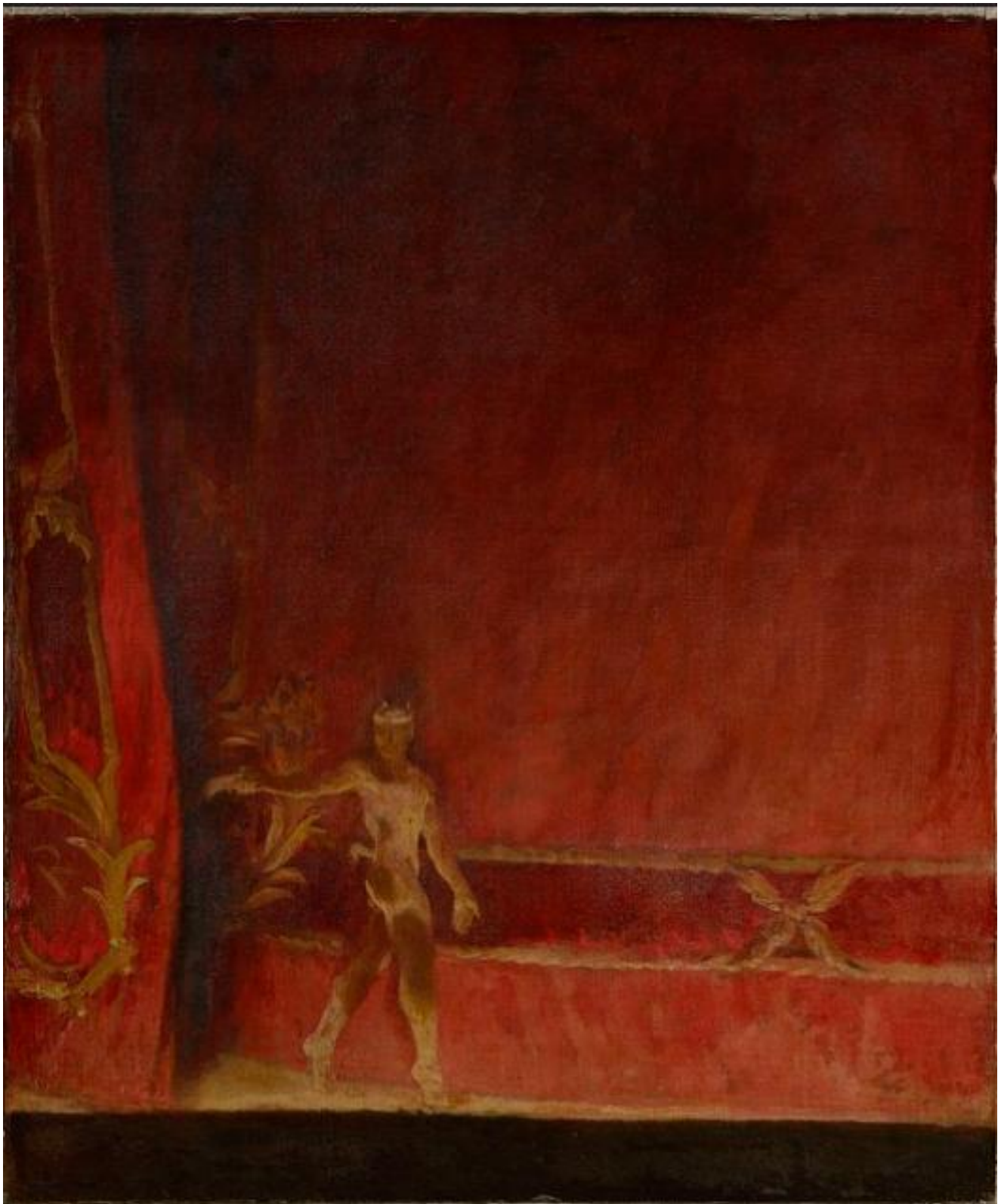


Fig. 92. Glyn Philpot, *Nijinsky Before the Curtain*, 1913. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 93. Baron de Meyer, photograph of Nijinsky performing, 1912. Photograph. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 94. Walter Sickert, *Noctes Ambrosianae*, Gallery of the Old Mogul, 1906-1907. Oil on canvas. Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham.



Fig. 95. Walter Sickert, *Gatti's Hungerford Palace of Varieties. Second Turn of Katie Lawrence*, 1888. Oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery, Newhaven.

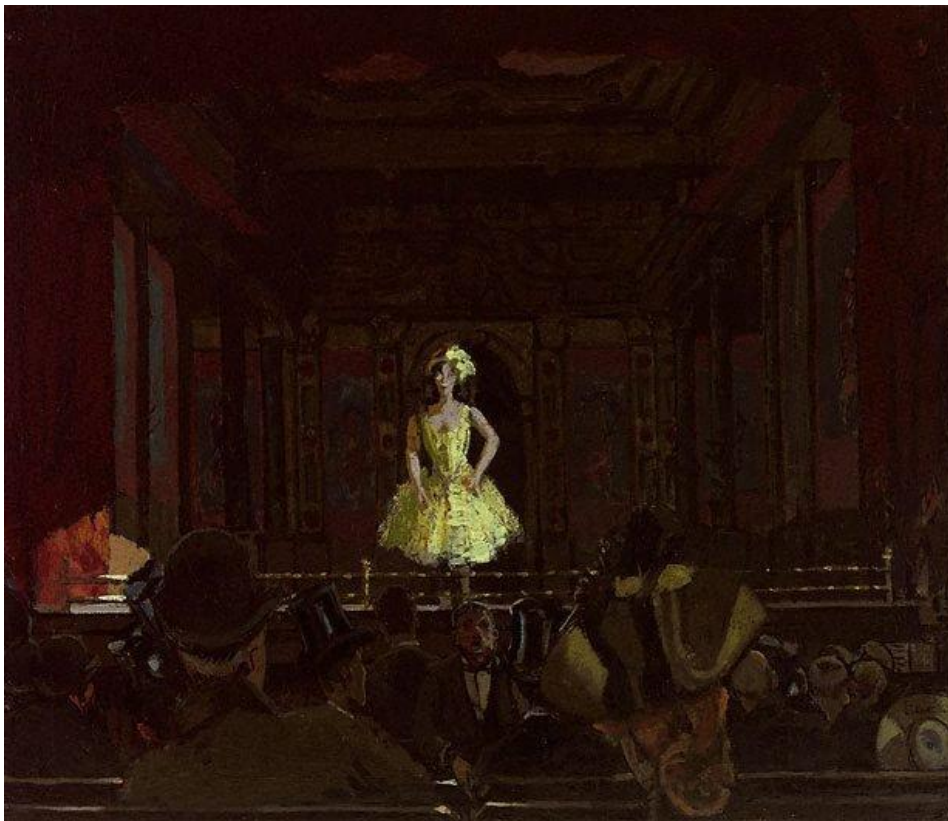


Fig. 96. Walter Sickert, *Katie Lawrence at Gatti's*, c.1903. Oil on canvas. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.



Fig. 97. Glyn Philpot, *Repose on the Flight Into Egypt*, 1922. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.



Fig. 98. Glyn Philpot, *Mask of a Dead Faun*, 1912 (cast 1923). Bronze cast. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 99. Glyn Philpot, *Melampus and the Centaur*, 1919. Oil on canvas. Glasgow Museums Centre, Glasgow.



Fig. 100. Glyn Philpot, *The Creation of Man*, 1930. Oil on canvas. Original lost.



Fig. 101. Wilhelm Von Gloeden, photograph of two boys, c.1900. Photograph. Private collection.

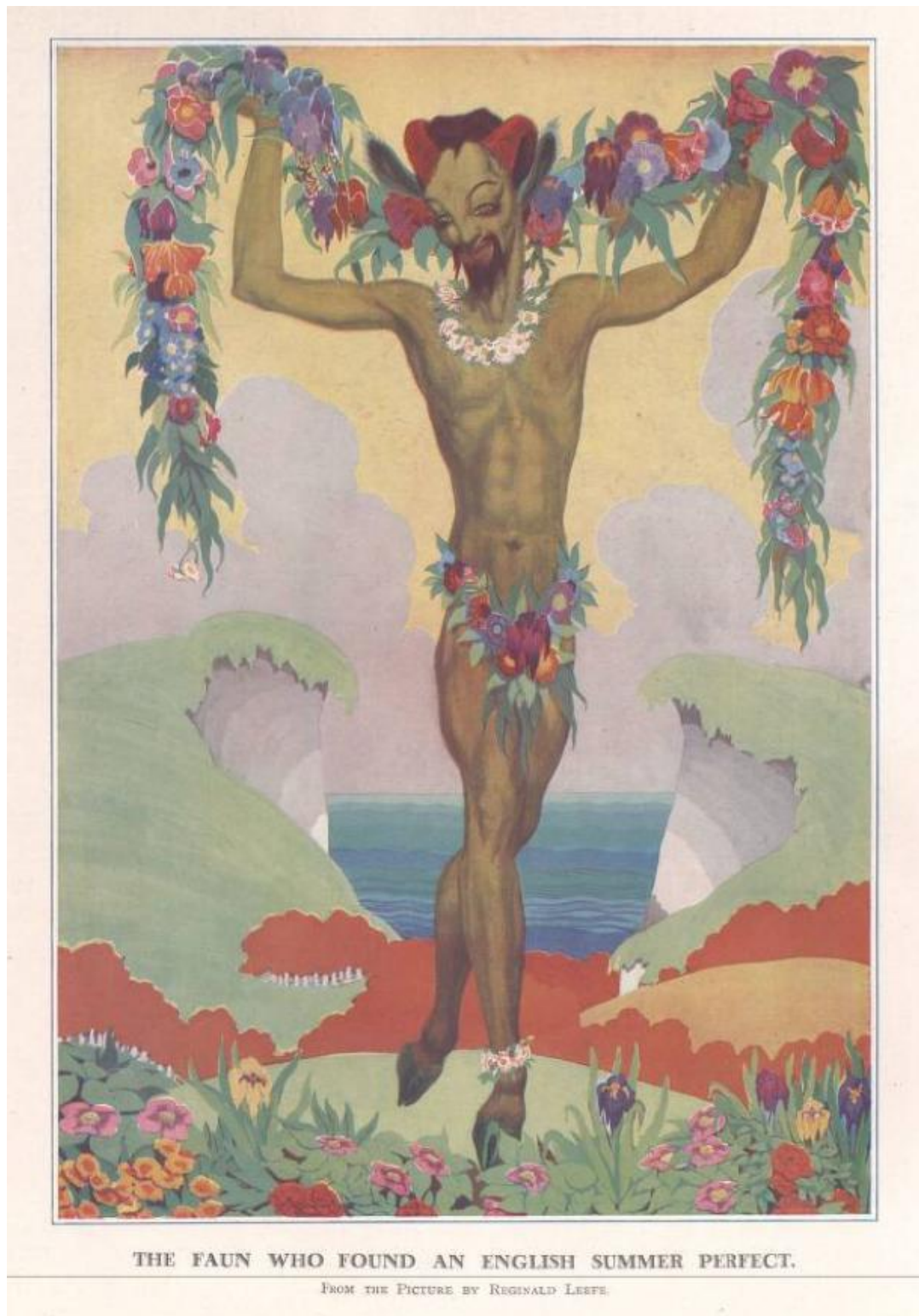


Fig. 102. Reginald Leefe, *The Faun Who Found an English Summer Perfect*, 1928. Print. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 103. Reginald Leefe, *Russian Salad*, 1928. Print. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 104. Frank M. Lea, *L'après-midi d'un Faun!*, 1928. Print. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 105. Photographer unknown, photograph of Florence Desmond in *Bon-Ton!*, 1925. Photograph. *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 106. Bertram Park, photograph of *The Would-Be Gentleman*, 1926. Photograph. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 107. Fred Daniels, *Blanche Ostrehan*, 1928. Photograph. *The Tatler*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 108. John Everard, photographic study for *Two New Coiffures*, 1934. Print. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.

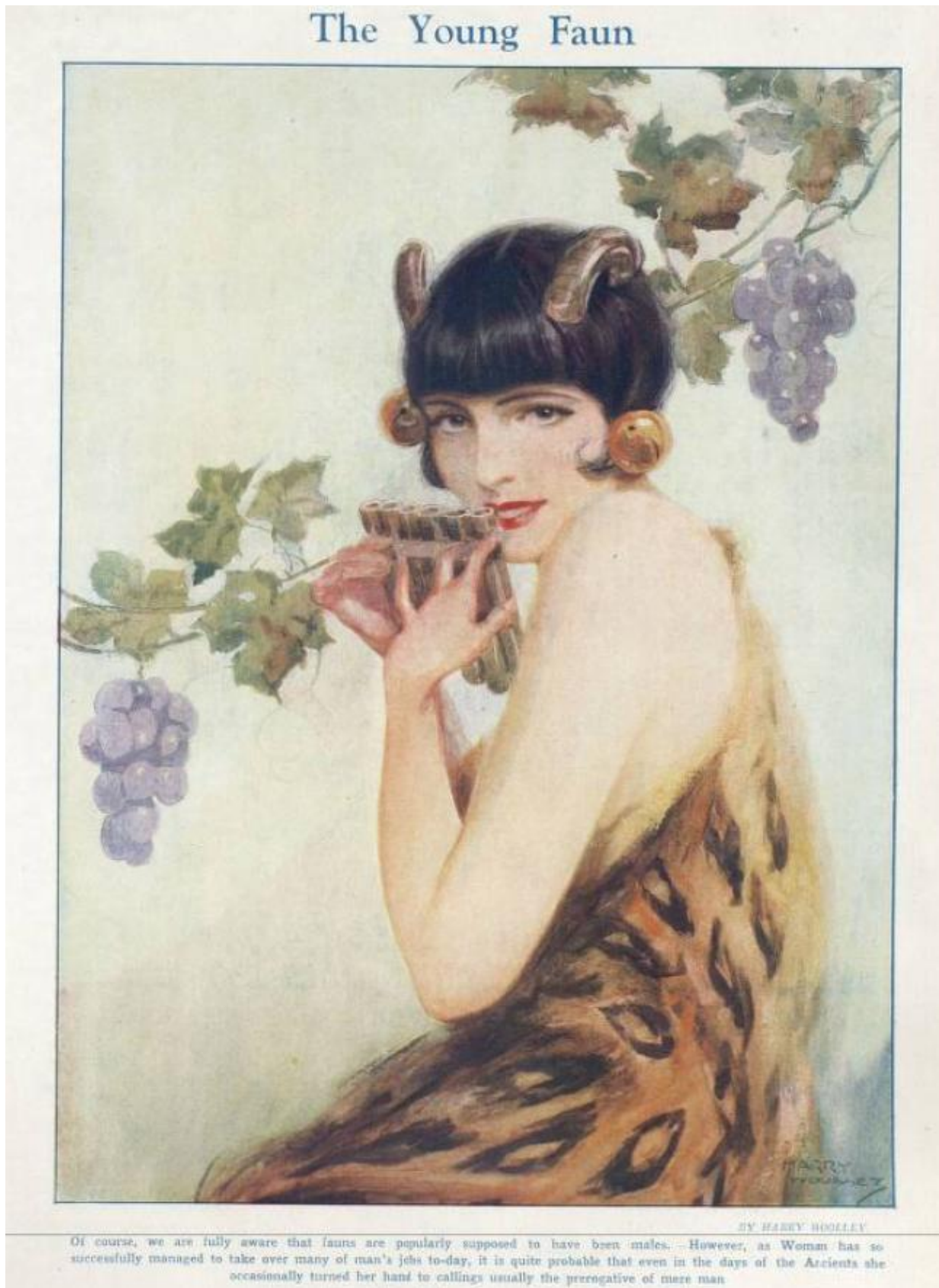


Fig. 109. Harry Wooley, *The Young Faun*, 1926. Print. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.

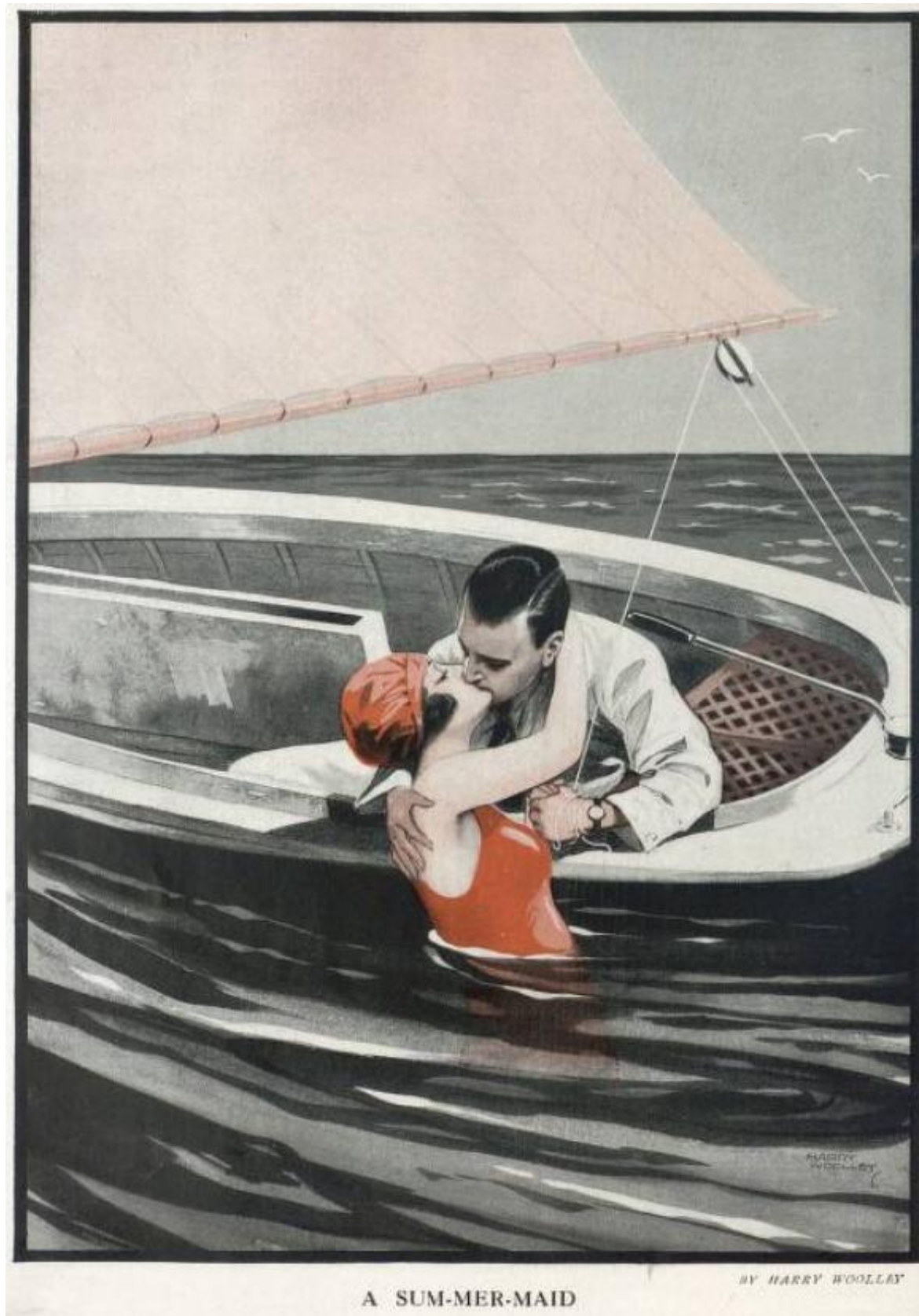


Fig. 110. Harry Wooley, *A Sum-Mer-Maid*, 1921. Print. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 111. Charles Sykes, *The Velvet Grip*, 1926. Print. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 112. Attributed to Thomas Lowinsky, *Man With a Mask*, 1910-1929. Pen and ink on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 113. Artist unknown, *Sleeping Ariadne*, c2B.C. Marble. Vatican Museums, Vatican City.



Fig. 114. Unknown artist, *Sleeping Hermaphroditus*, date unknown. Marble. Louvre, Paris.

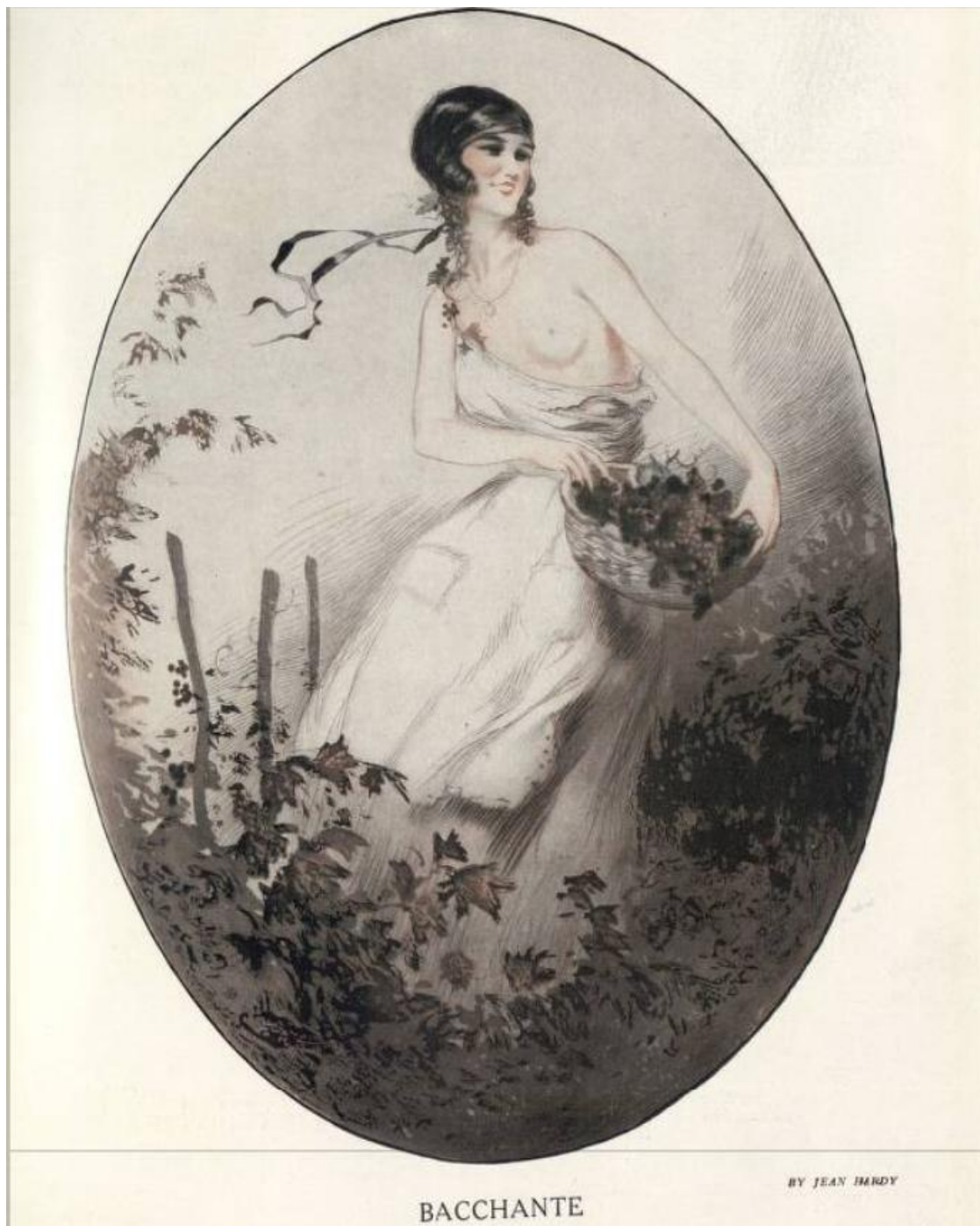


Fig. 115. Jean Hardy, *Bacchante*, 1928. Print. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.



A NYMPH

Drawn by Raoul Serres

Fig. 116. Raoul Serres, *A Nymph*, 1926. Print. *The Tatler*. British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 117. William Barribal, *Bacchante*, 1922. Print. *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, British Newspaper Archive.

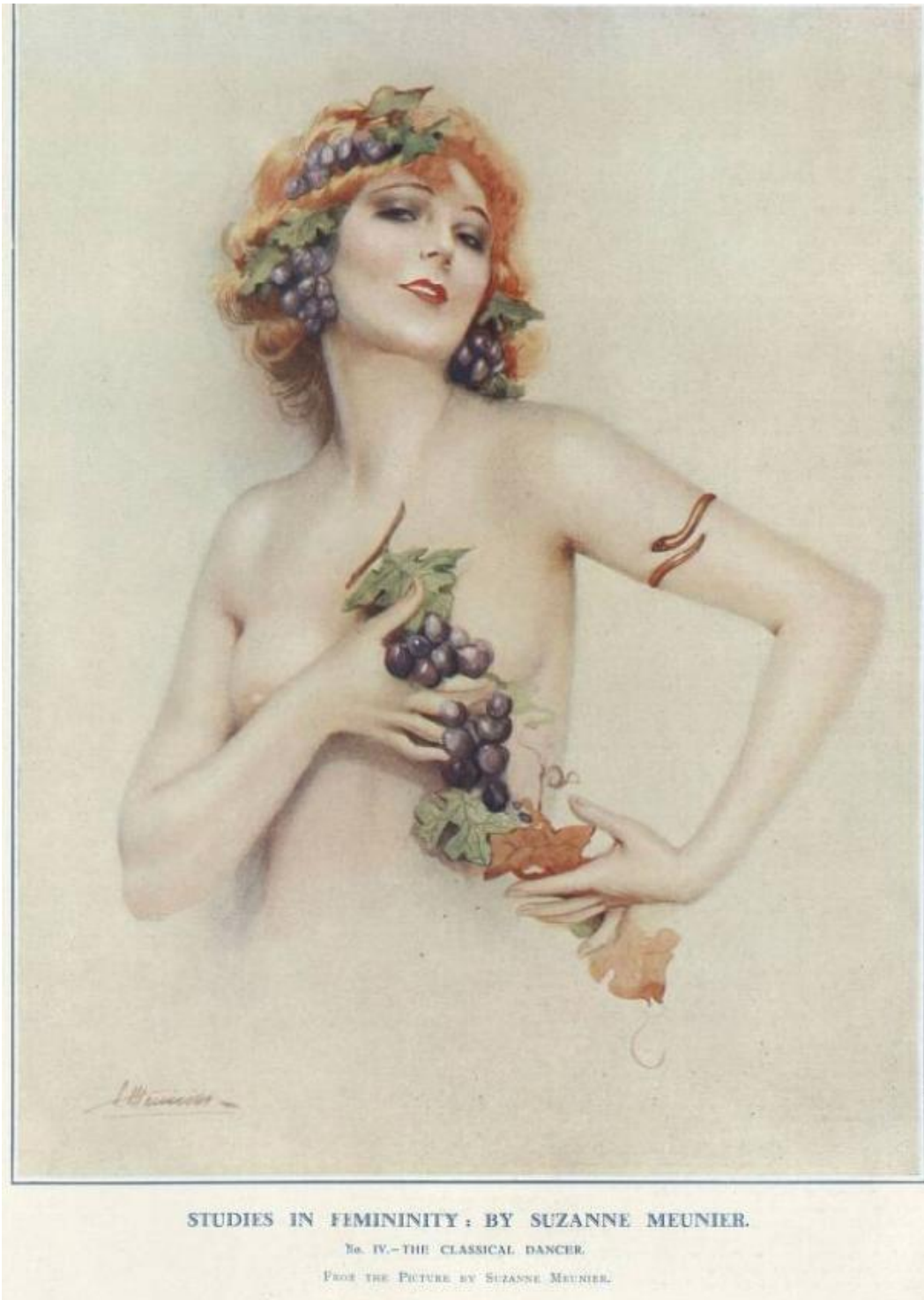


Fig. 118. Suzanne Meunier, *The Classical Dancer*, 1928. Print. *The Sketch*. British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 119. Suzanne Meunier, *L'après-midi d'un faune*, 1922. Print. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 120. Artist unknown, *The Death of Pentheus*, c.62 A.D. Fresco. House of the Vettii, Pompeii.



Fig. 121. John Collier, *Maenads*, 1886. Oil on canvas. Southwark Heritage Centre, London.



Fig. 122. John Collier, *Circe*, 1885. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 123. John Collier, *Clytemnestra*, 1914. Oil on canvas. Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum, Worcester.



Fig. 124. John Collier, *An Incantation*, 1887. Oil on canvas. Russell-Cotes Museum, Bournemouth.



Fig. 125. John William Waterhouse, *The Magic Circle*, 1886. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.



Fig. 126. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Women of Amphissa*, 1887. Oil on canvas. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown.



Fig. 127. Alexandre Cabanel, *The Birth of Venus*. 1863. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

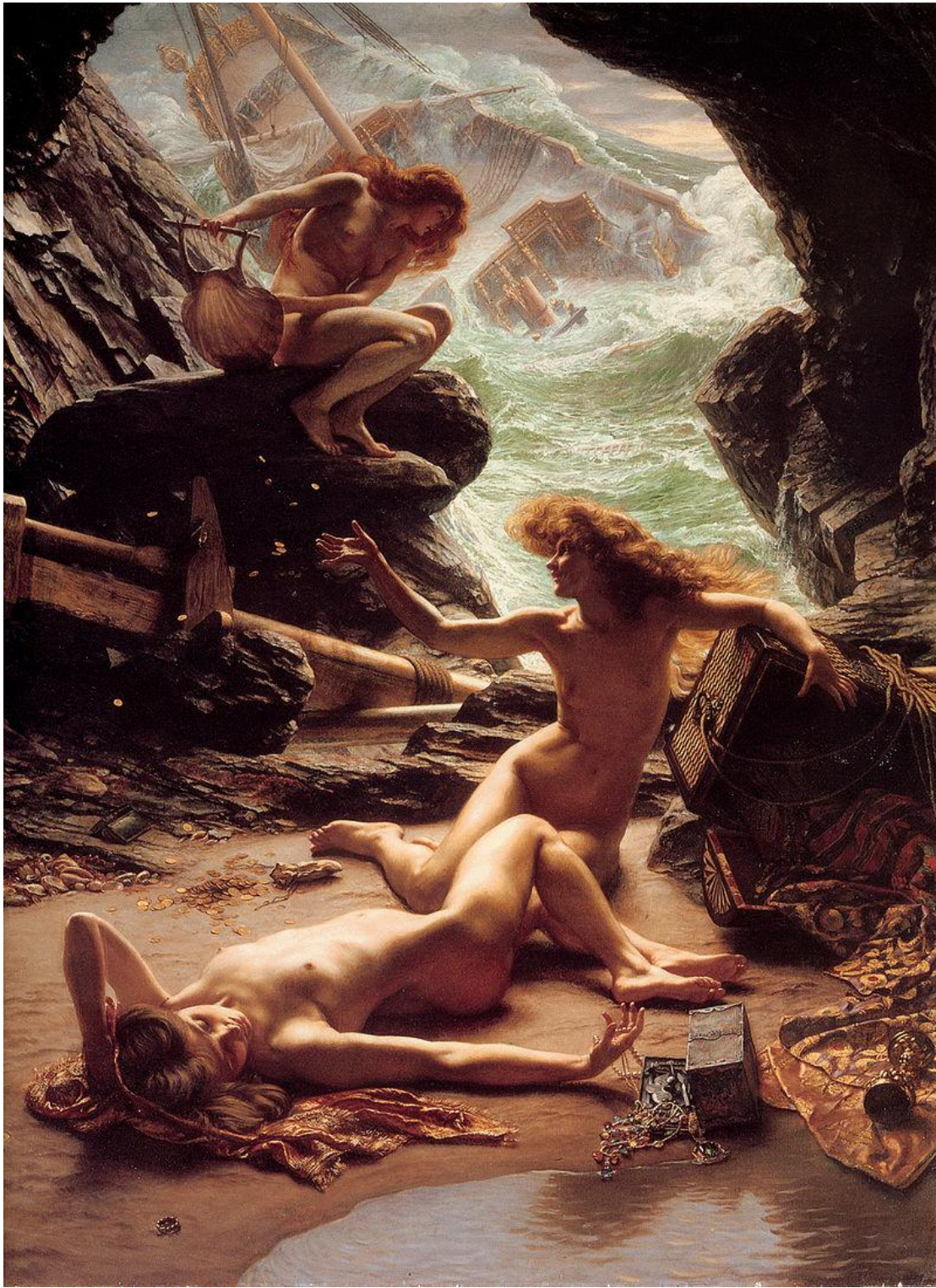


Fig. 128. Edward Poynter, *Cave of the Storm Nymphs*. 1903. Oil on canvas. Norfolk Heritage Museum, Virginia.



Fig. 129. William Stott of Oldham, *A Nymph*, 1886. Oil on canvas. Glasgow Museums Resource Centre, Glasgow.



Fig. 130. Charles Robinson, *How the Fashions Came to Fairyland*, 1923. Print. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 131. Claude Shepperson, *The Wound Nymph*. 1922. Print. *The Tatler*, National Library of Scotland.



Fig. 132. John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, 1896. Oil on canvas. Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.

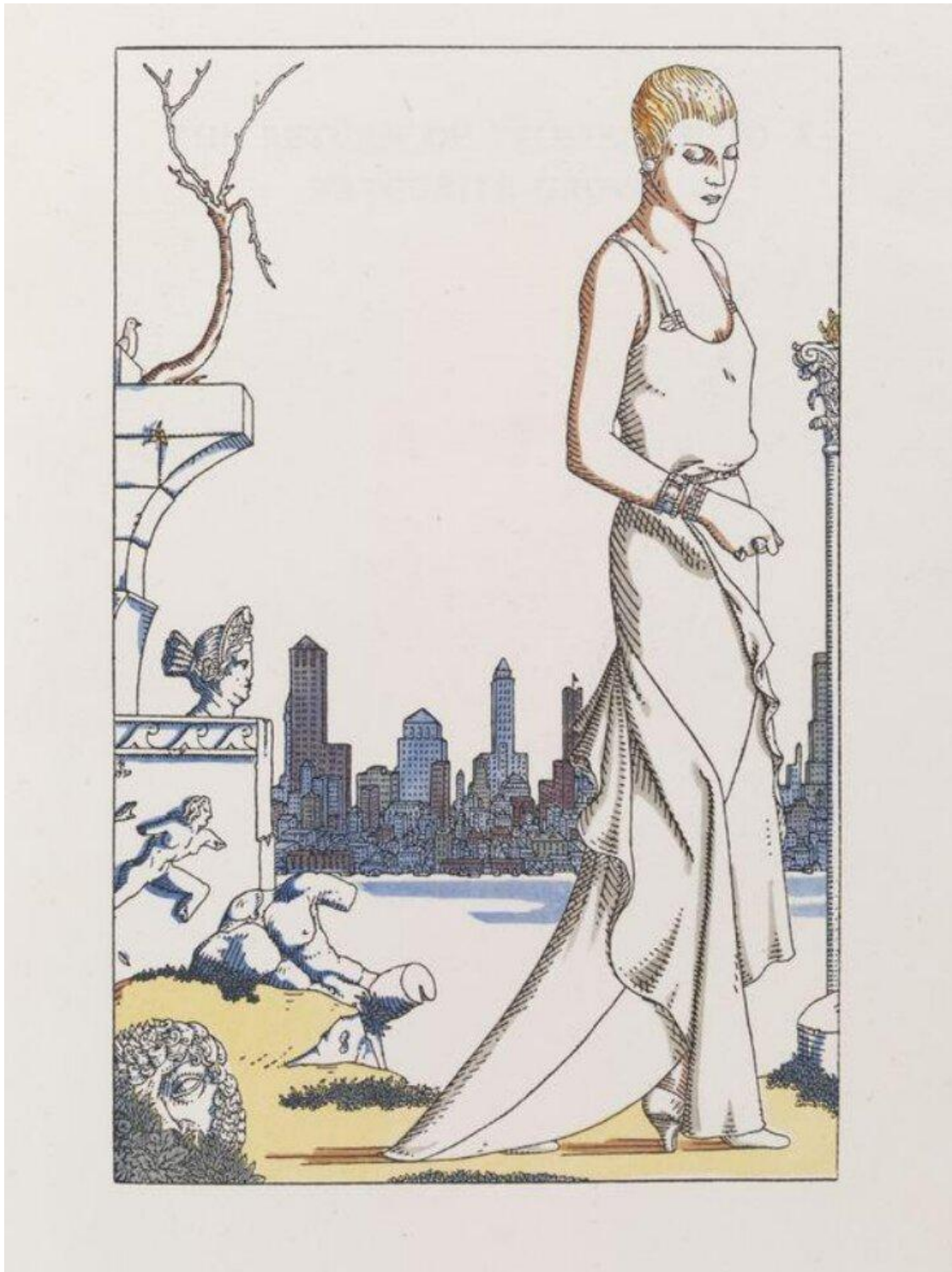


Fig. 133. Thomas Lowinsky, *Aphrodite Leaving Her Temple*, 1930. Hand-coloured print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

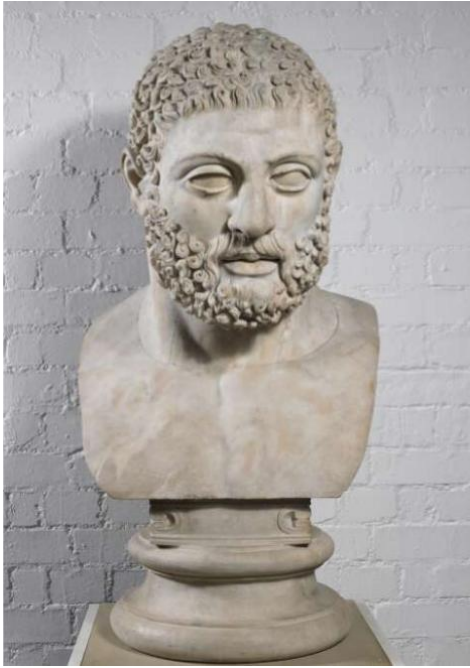


Fig. 134. Artist unknown, *Head of Hercules*, date unknown. Marble. British Museum, London. Museum number: 1805,0703.75.



Fig. 135. Artist unknown, *Belvedere Torso*, c.1 B.C. Marble. Vatican Museum, Vatican City.



Fig. 136. Artist unknown, *Hercules Seated on a Rock*, c.1-2 B.C. Marble. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

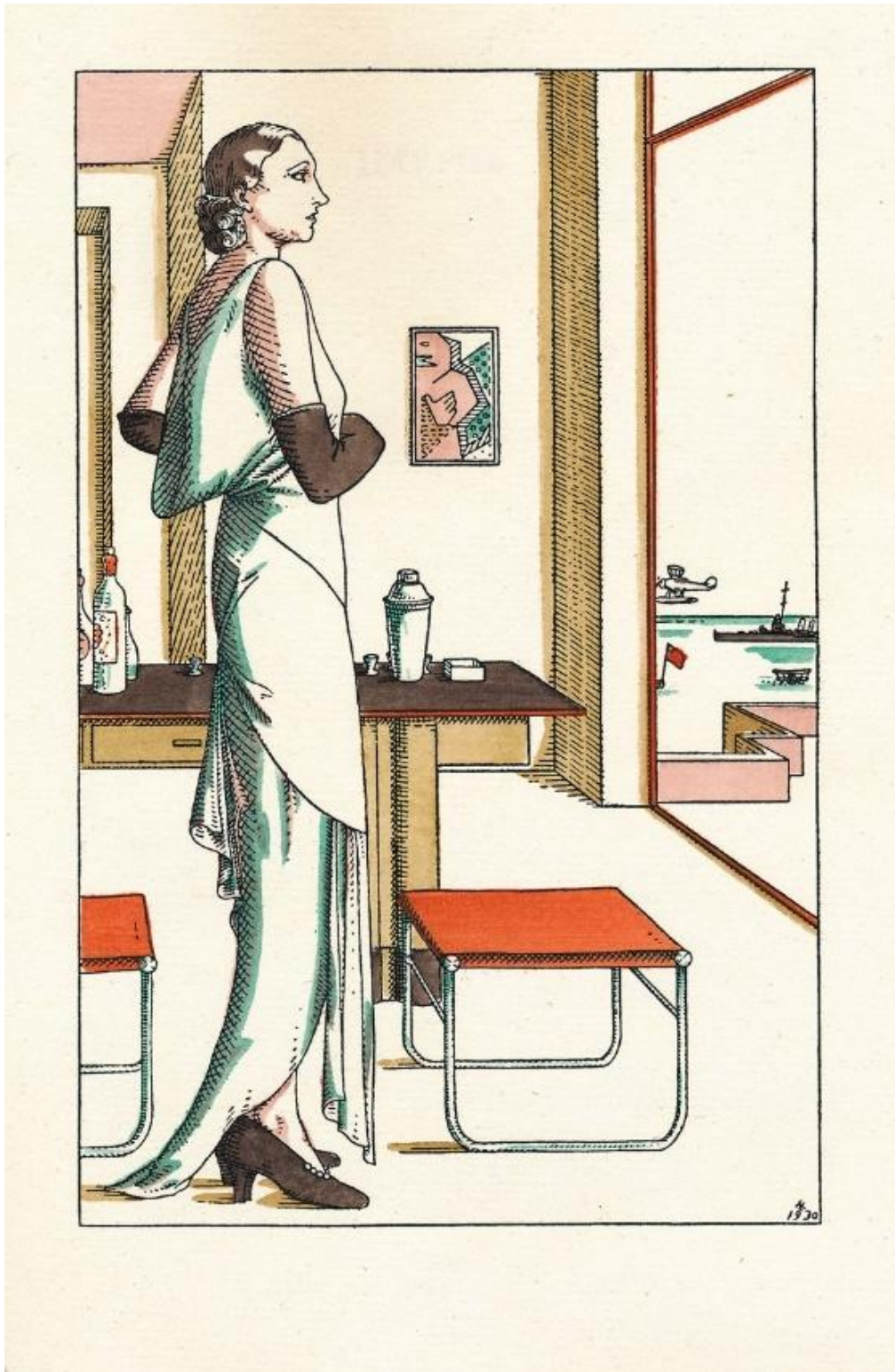


Fig. 137. Thomas Lowinsky, *Circe and Cocktails Prepared for the Fleet*, 1930. Hand-coloured print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 138. John William Waterhouse, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*, 1891. Oil on canvas. Gallery Oldham, Oldham.



Fig. 139. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Wine of Circe*, 1863-1869. Watercolour, gouache, and gold paint on vellum. Private collection.

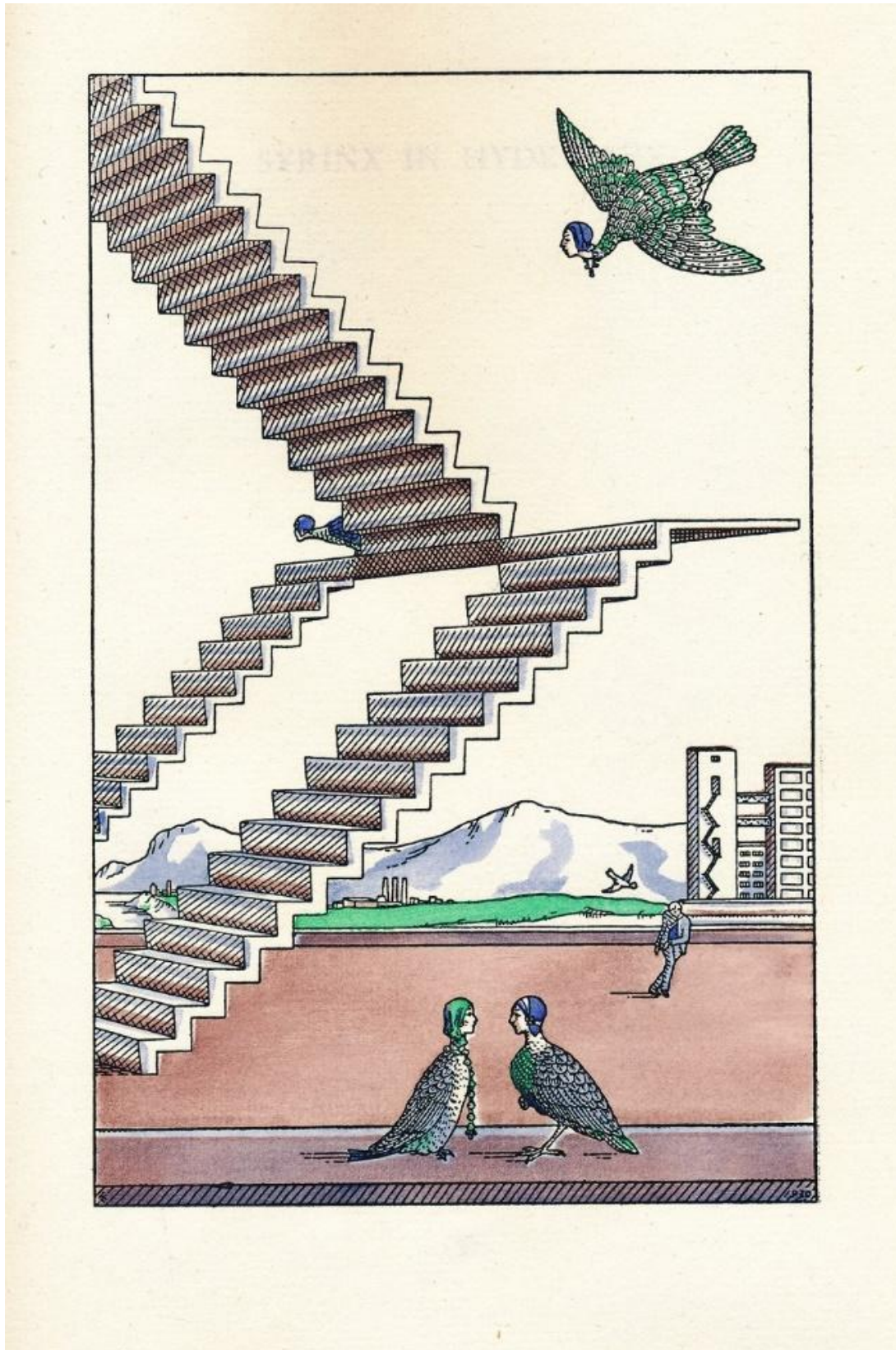


Fig. 140. Thomas Lowinsky, *Harpies*, 1930. Hand-coloured print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 141. Unknown artist, *The Siren Vase*, c.480-470 B.C. Pottery. British Museum, London. Museum number: 1843,1103.31.



Fig. 142. John William Waterhouse, *Ulysses and the Sirens*, 1891. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.



Fig. 143. Thomas Esmond Lowinsky, *Syrinx in Hyde Park*. 1930 Hand-coloured print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 144. Francois Boucher, *Pan and Syrinx*, 1759. Oil on canvas. National Gallery, London.



Fig. 145. Hendrick van Balen and follower of Brueghel, *Pan Pursuing Syrinx*, 1615. Oil on copper. National Gallery, London.



Fig. 146. Arthur Hacker, *Syrinx*, 1892. Oil on canvas. Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.

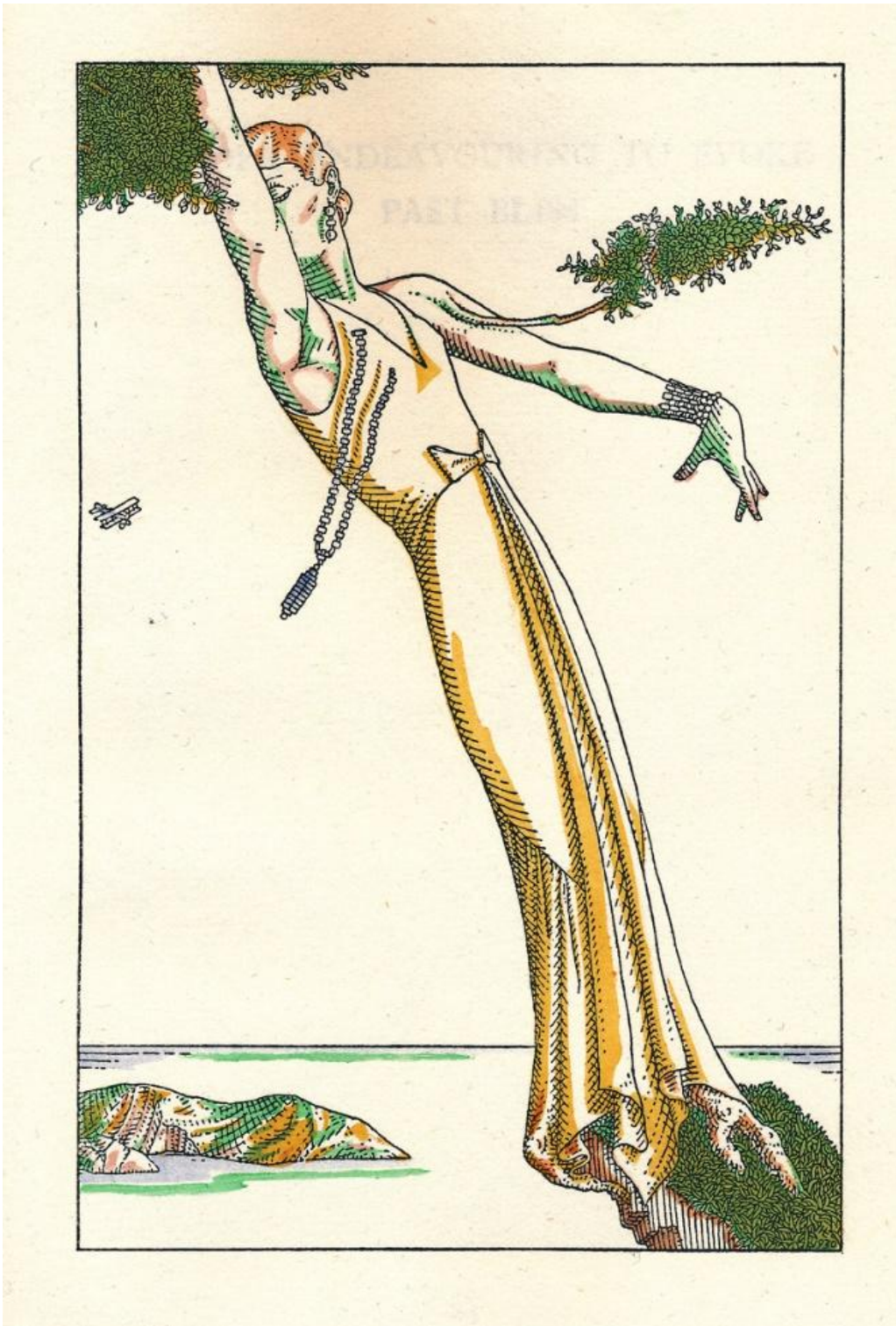


Fig. 147. Thomas Lowinsky, *Daphne*. Hand-coloured print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 148. John William Waterhouse, *Apollo and Daphne*, 1908. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 149. Philip Connard, *Apollo and Daphne*, 1925. Oil on canvas. Royal Academy, London.



Fig. 150. Piero del Pollaiuolo, *Apollo and Daphne*, c.1470-1480. Oil on wood. National Gallery, London.

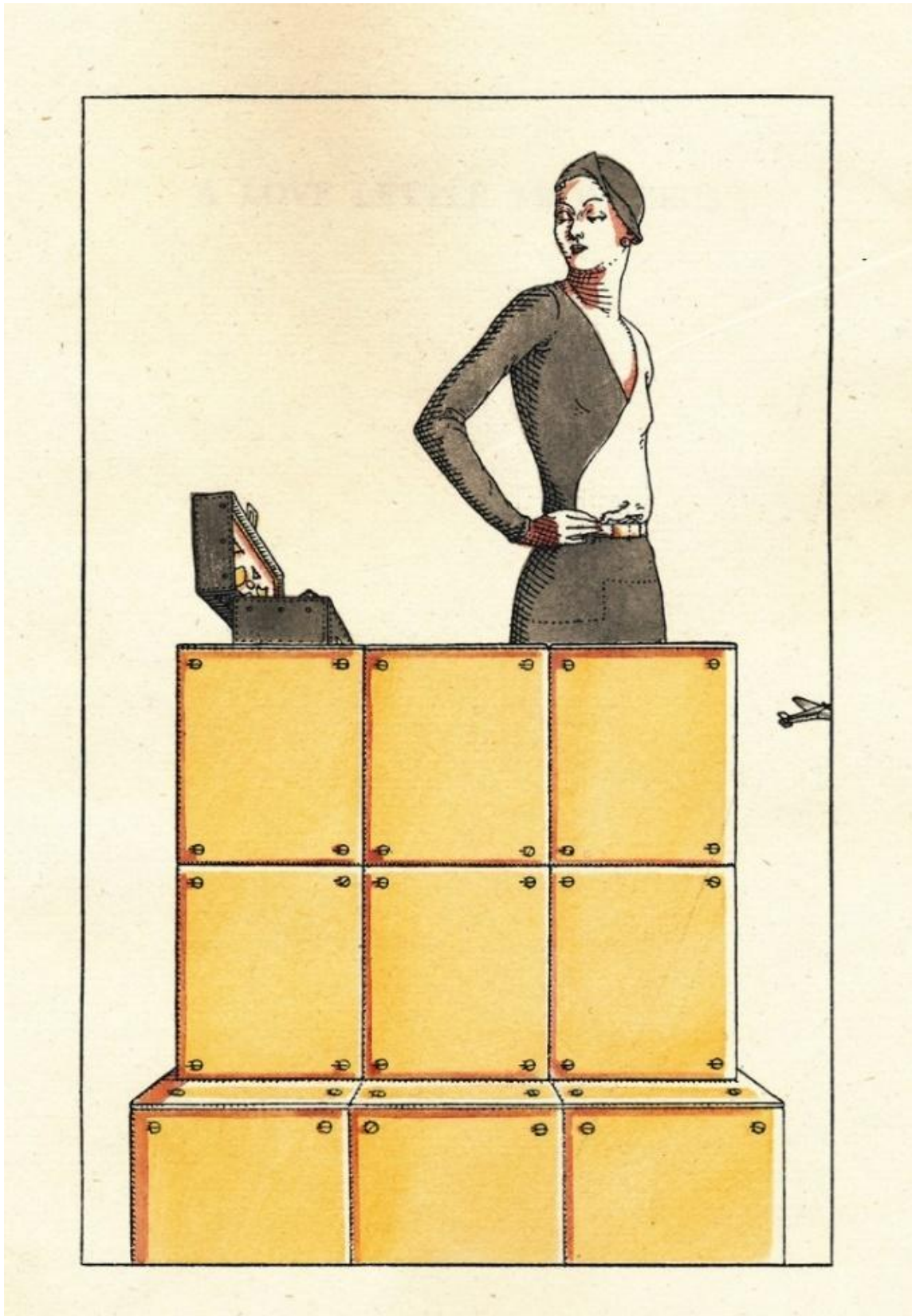


Fig. 151. Thomas Lowinsky, *Danae Waiting for the Weather Report on the Wireless*. 1930. Hand-coloured print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 152. Follower of Titian, *Danae with Cupid*, c.1750-1800. Oil on canvas. Wallace Collection, London.



Fig. 153. Edward Burne-Jones, *Danae and the Brazen Tower*, 1872. Oil on panel. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 154. Thomas Esmond Lowinsky, *Clyte Abandons the Old Sun for the New*. 1930
Hand-coloured print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 155. Evelyn de Morgan, *Clytie*, 1886. Oil on canvas. Private collection



Fig. 156. Frederic Leighton, *Clytie*, 1895. Oil on canvas. Leighton House, London.



Fig. 157. Thomas Lowinsky, *The Twin Sisters of Castor and Pollux*, 1930. Hand-coloured print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 158. Lallie Charles, *The Beaton Family*, 1908. Photogravure reproduction. National Portrait Gallery, London.



Fig. 159. Anthony Wysard, *Mr. Cecil Beaton*, 1928. Print. *The Sphere*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 160. Cecil Beaton, *Self-Portrait*, c.1924. Photograph. Cecil Beaton Studio Archive, London.



Fig. 161. Unknown photographer, *Mr. Cecil Beaton*, 1924. Photograph. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 162. Cecil Beaton, *A Norfolk Bacchante*, c. 1912. Photograph. Private collection.



Fig. 163. Kate Smith, *When the Brook is Low; The Nymph of the Stream*, 1912. Photograph. *The Tatler*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 164. E. O. Hoppé, *Anna Pavlova and Laurent Novikoff in 'Autumn Bacchanal'*, 1911. Bromide postcard print. National Portrait Gallery, London.



Fig. 165. John Lavery, *Anna Pavlova as a Bacchante*, 1910. Oil on canvas. Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow.

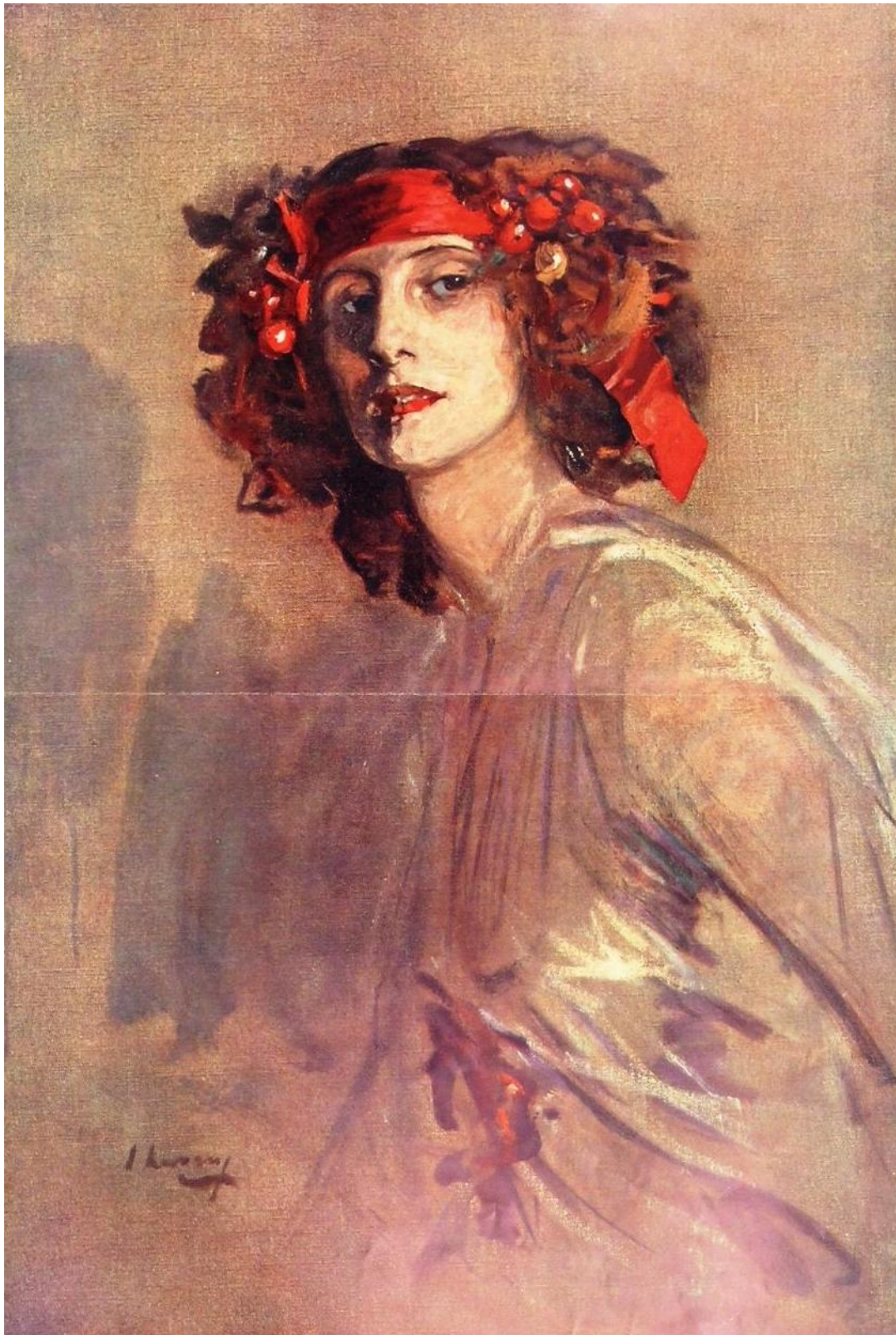


Fig. 166. John Lavery, *Anna Pavlova as a Bacchante*, 1911. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 167. Claude Harris, *Anna Pavlova*, 1912. Carbon print. National Portrait Gallery, London.



Fig. 168. Claude Harris, *Anna Pavlova*, 1912. Bromide postcard print. Private collection.



Fig. 169. Cecil Beaton, *Leda*, 1928. Photogram with ink additions. Private collection.



Fig. 170. Cecil Beaton, *Maenads*, 1928. Photogram with ink additions. Private collection.



Fig. 171. Francis Bruguière, *Cut Paper Abstraction*, c.1927. Gelatin silver print. Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



Fig. 172. Francis Bruguière, *Cut Paper Abstraction*, c.1927. Gelatin silver print. Getty Museum, Los Angeles

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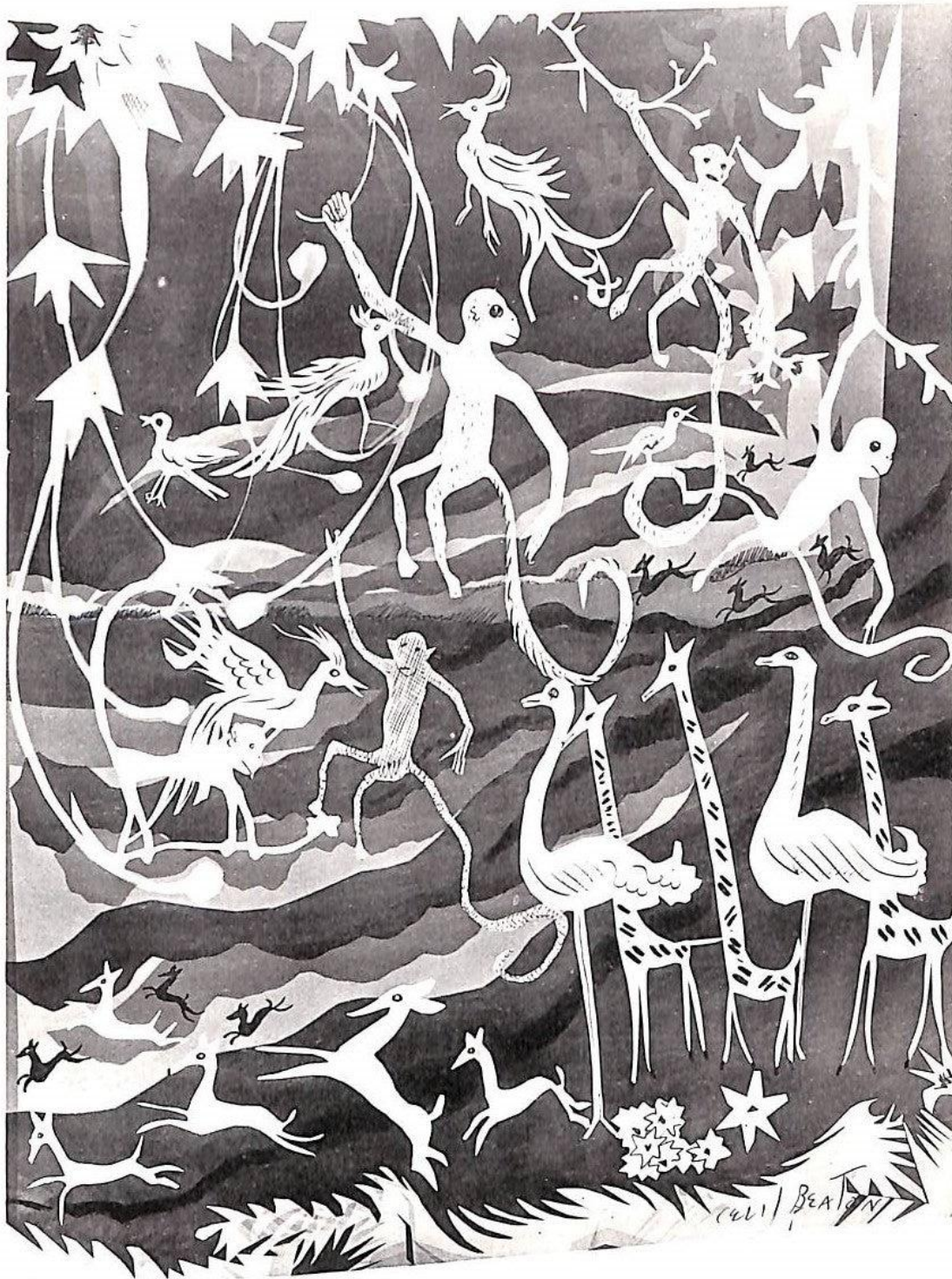


Fig. 173. Cecil Beaton, *The House on the Nile*, 1928. Photogram with ink additions. Private collection.



Fig. 174. Cecil Beaton, *Inez Holden*, 1929. Print. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 175. Curtis Moffat, untitled photograph, c.1925. Gelatin silver print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 176. Curtis Moffat, untitled photograph, c.1925. Gelatin silver print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 177. Curtis Moffat, untitled photograph, c.1925. Gelatin silver print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 178. Curtis Moffat, *Ms. Greville*, 1925. Gelatin silver print. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 179. Cecil Beaton, *Caunos and Byblis*, 1928. Photogram with ink additions. Private collection.



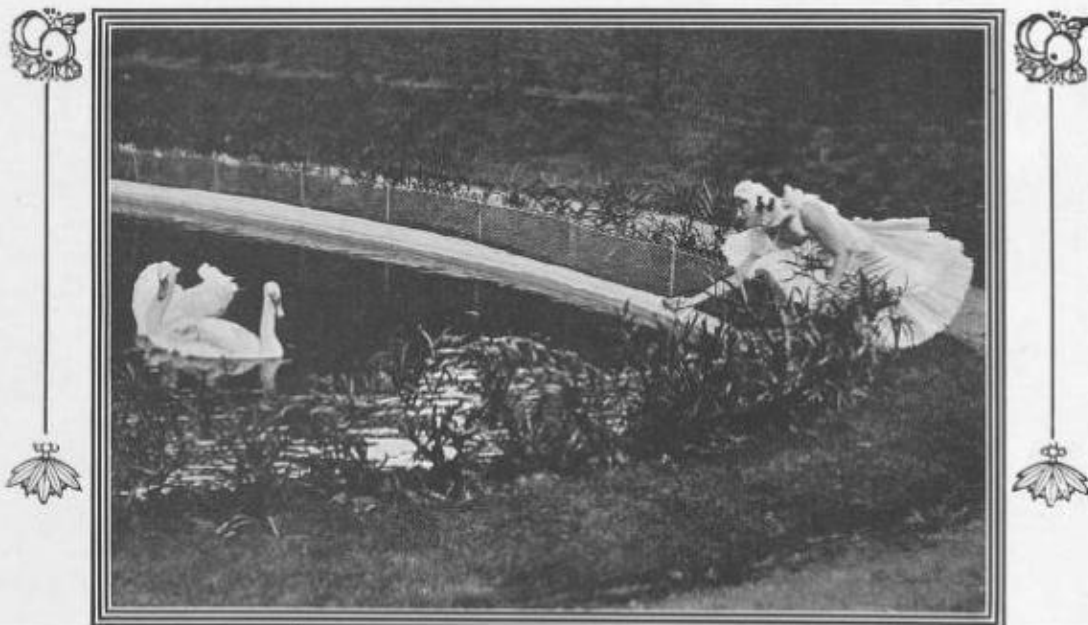
Fig. 180. Cecil Beaton, *Danae*, 1928. Photogram with ink additions. Private collection.

SWANS REAL—AND IDEAL

How the Immortal Dancer Overcame the Jealousy of the Birds whose Proverbial Grace she has Eclipsed.



THE DANCER CAJOLING HER SULKY RIVALS



PAVLOVA CONQUERS AGAIN—THE RECONCILIATION

Madame Pavlova is here seen in the grounds of her London residence with the swans which probably formed the unconscious models of her wonderful dance, "Le Cygne"

Fig. 181. Unknown photographer, photographs of Anna Pavlova at home, 1912. Print. *The Tatler*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 182. Lafayette, *Madame Anna Pavlova and a Faithful Adherent*, 1927. Print. *The Tatler*, British Newspaper Archive.



THE EXQUISITE "HEROINE" OF THE RECENT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AMATEUR DRAMATIC CLUB'S PRODUCTION: MR. CECIL BEATON AS PRINCESS TECLA.

Fig. 183. Unknown photographer, *The Exquisite 'Heroine'*, 1923. Print. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.

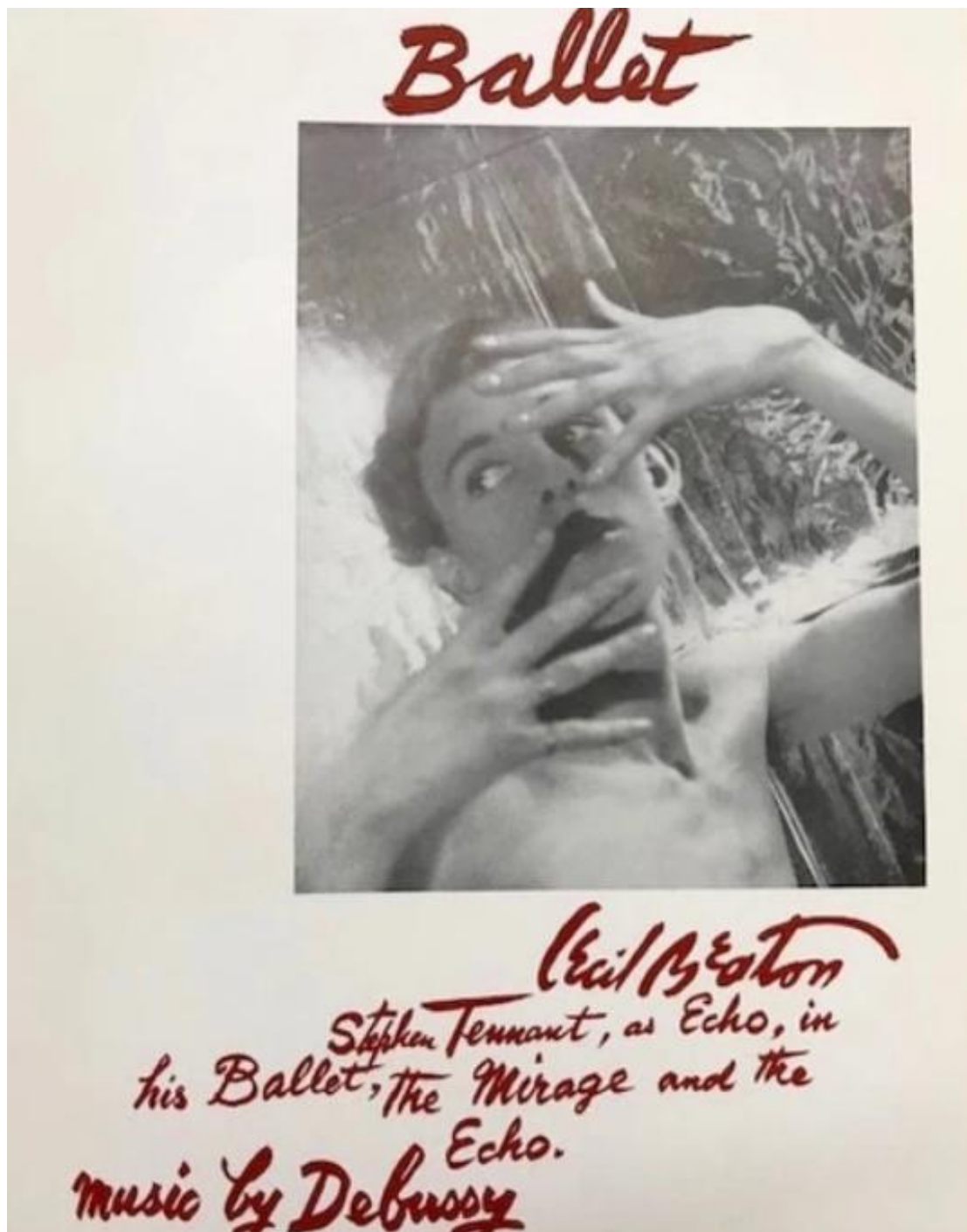


Fig. 184. Cecil Beaton, *Stephen Tennant as Echo*, c. 1927. Gelatin silver print. Private collection.



Fig. 185. Cecil Beaton, *Stephen Tennant*, 1927. Gelatin silver print. Private collection.



"Eye, Eye, Sir,
A-peering through her fingers."
A FASCINATING PORTRAIT OF MISS GLADYS
COOPER.

Fig. 186. Cecil Beaton, *A Fascinating Portrait of Miss Gladys Cooper*, 1930. Pen and ink illustration. Private collection.



Fig. 187. After Anna Alma-Tadema, *Miss Gladys Cooper as Girl*, 1915. Print. *The Sketch*, British Newspaper Archive.

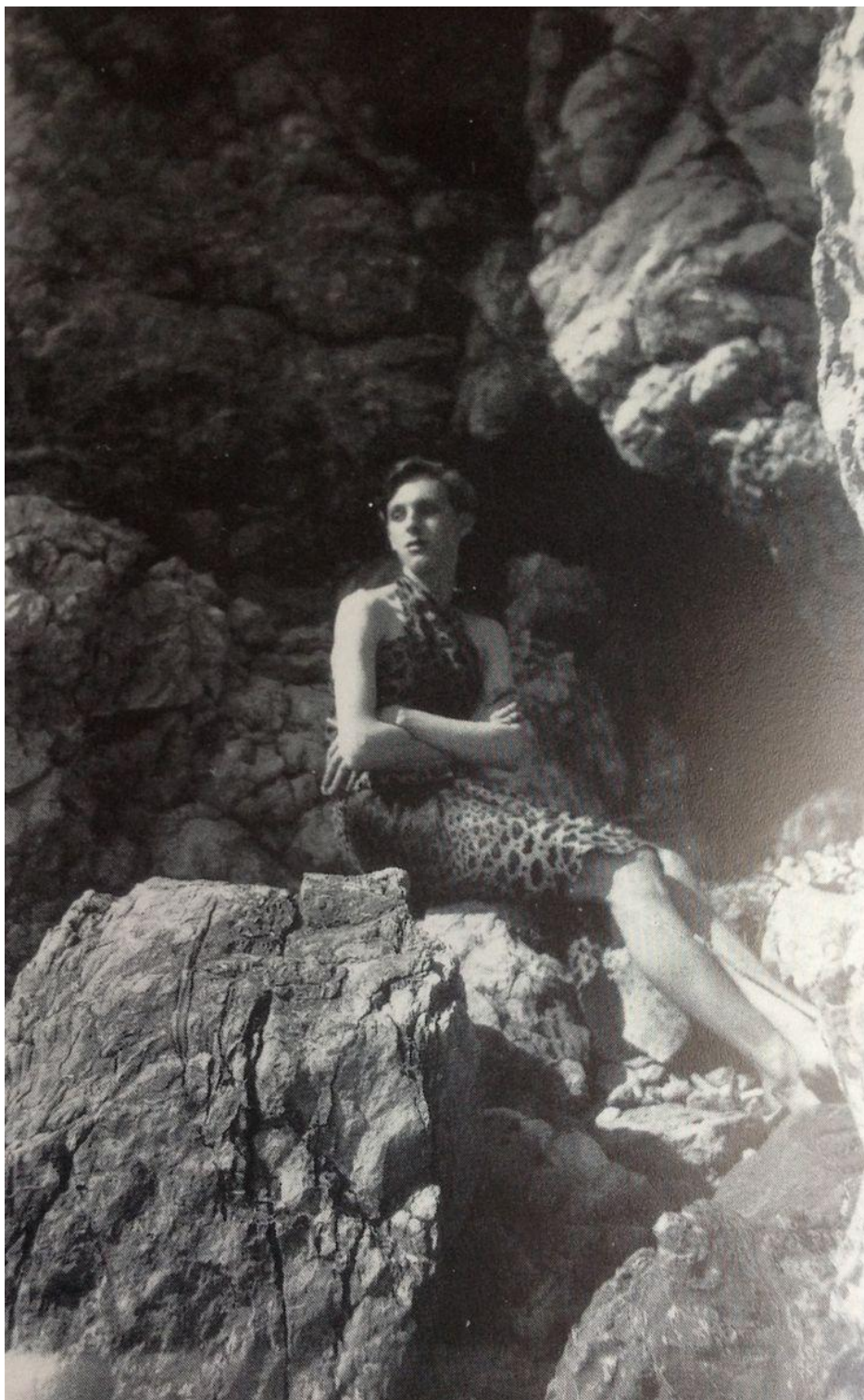


Fig. 188. Cecil Beaton, *Stephen Tennant*, 1927. Gelatin silver print. Private collection.



Fig. 189. Cecil Beaton, *Rex Whistler*, 1927. Gelatin silver print. Redfern Gallery, London.



Fig. 190. Stephen Tennant, *Self-portrait*, c.1927. Pen and ink drawing. Private collection.



Fig. 191. Wilmot Lunt, *Ulysses and the Sirens*, 1927. Print. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.

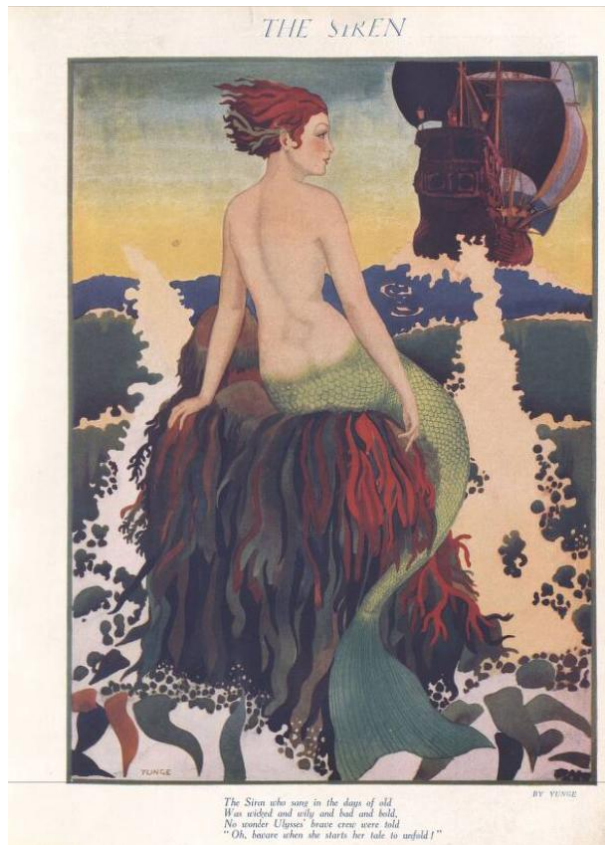


Fig. 192. John Yunge-Bateman, *The Siren*, 1929. Print. *The Bystander*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 193. Charles Robinson, *Song of the Siren*, 1932. Print. *The Tatler*, British Newspaper Archive.



Fig. 194. John William Waterhouse, *The Siren*, 1900. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 195. Edward Poynter, *The Siren*, 1864. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 196. John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-1852. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.



Fig. 197. John William Waterhouse, *Ophelia*, 1889. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 198. Cecil Beaton, *Baba Beaton as Ophelia*, 1925. Vintage bromide print. National Portrait Gallery, London.



Fig. 199. Cecil Beaton, *Nancy Beaton*, 1929. Gelatin print. Private collection.



Fig. 200. Gideon Horváth, *Faun with a hard-on looks into the advanced future*, 2021. Beeswax, glass, chains, macrame. ISBN Könyv+galéria, Budapest.

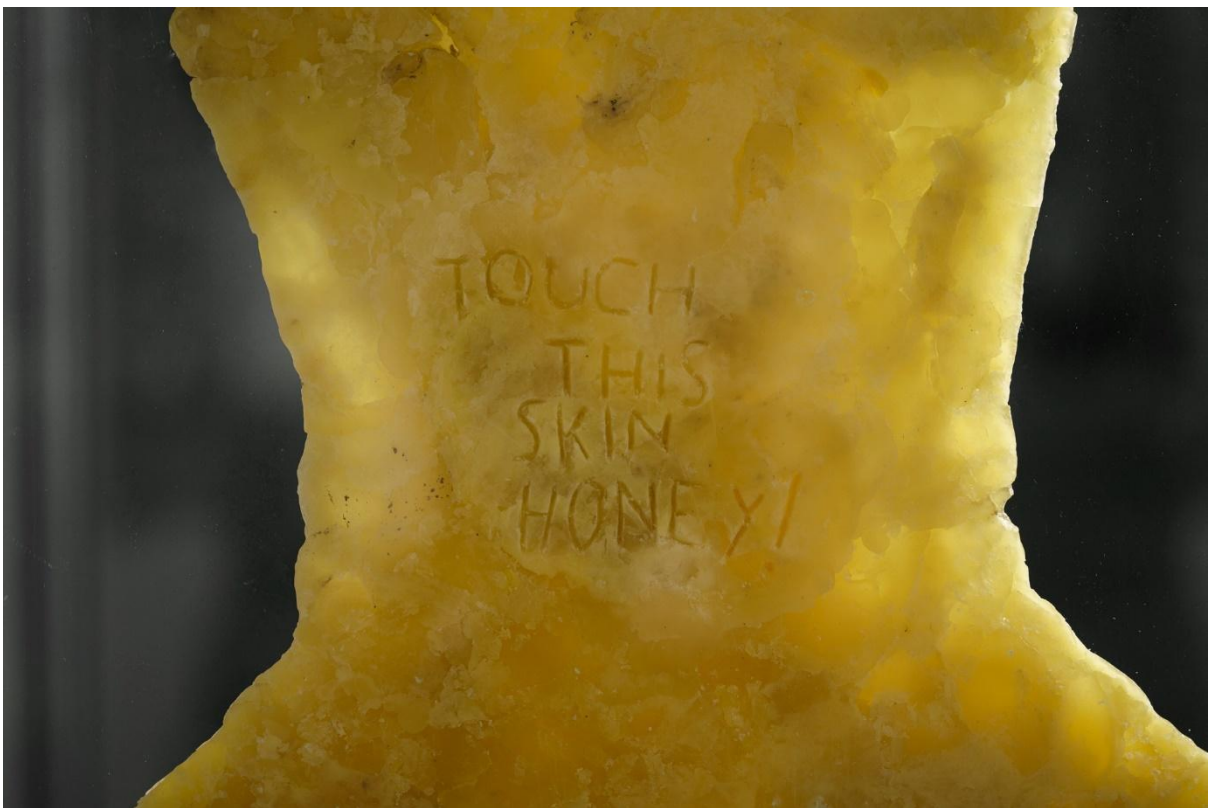


Fig. 201. Gideon Horváth, *Mutilated Faun*, 2021. Beeswax, glass, chains, macrame. ISBN Könyv+galéria, Budapest.



Fig. 202. Danny Osborne, *Oscar Wilde Memorial Sculpture* (detail), 1997. Jadeite, nephrite jade, porcelain, quartz, and thulite. Merrion Gardens, Dublin.

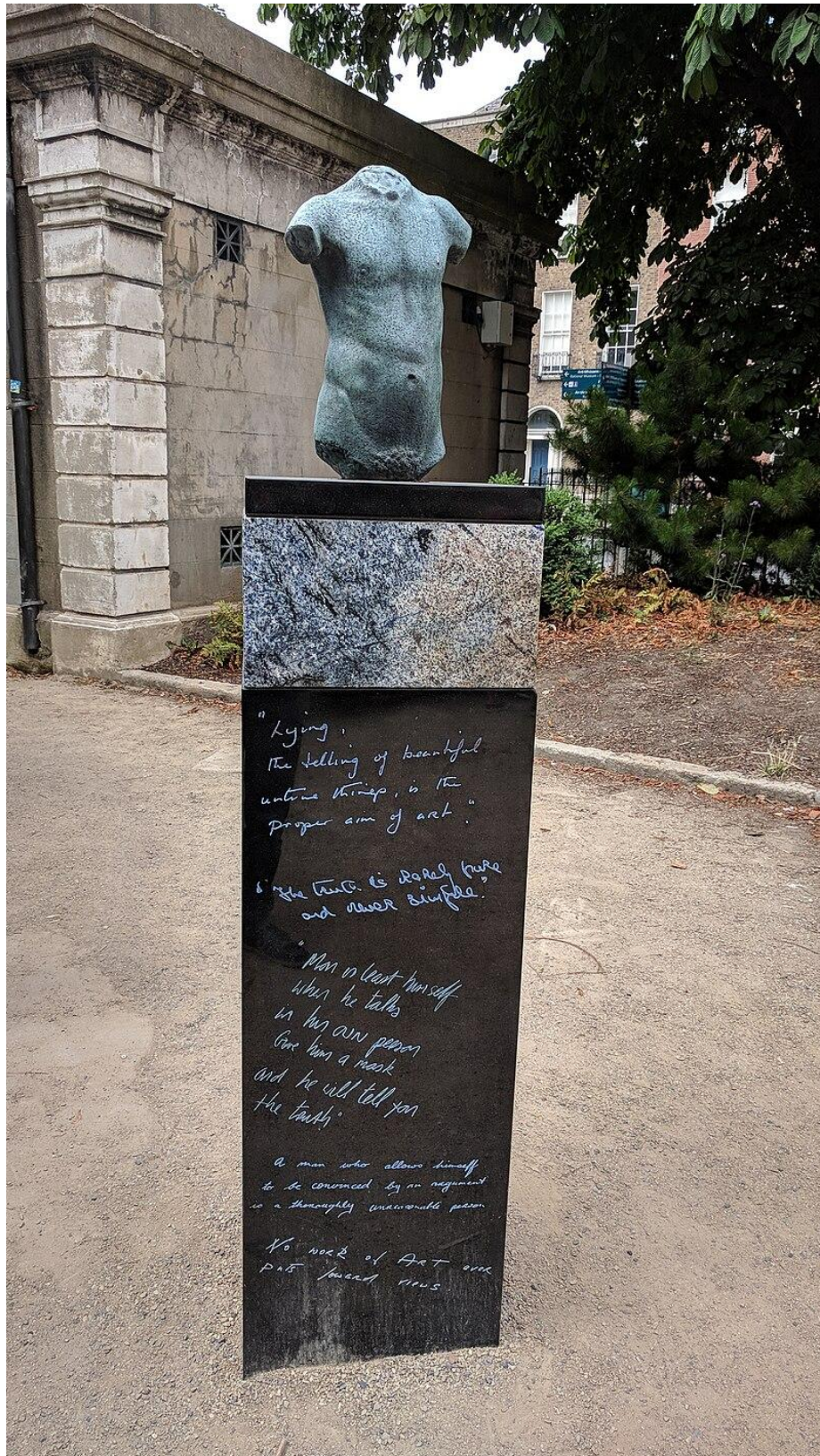


Fig. 203. Danny Osborne, *Oscar Wilde Memorial Statue* (detail), 1997. Bronze and granite. Merrion Gardens, Dublin.

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