

The Bookplates of Aubrey Beardsley by Mark Samuels Lasner. High Wycombe, Bucks: Rivendale Press, 2008. viii, 107 pp. + frontispiece, 41 b/w illus. ISBN 1-904201-10-5. \$25.00; £12.50 (paper).

A fascinating object within print culture, a bookplate presents the bibliographic face of its owner to the world. A miniature art of the book, the bookplate's combination of graphic design, typography, and lettering bears witness to the owner's aesthetic taste, social connections, and historical moment, even as it takes possession of the object in which it is placed. Conceptually and often materially attached to the codex form, the bookplate also exists as a stand-alone work of commercial art and a transferable, reproducible object. As such, it has its own multi-faceted histories to tell as it travels through time and space, passing through hands, countries, and centuries. Mark Samuels Lasner's *The Bookplates of Aubrey Beardsley* describes, in compelling detail, the bibliographic stories for some forty bookplates designed by, or adapted from the designs of, Aubrey Beardsley. An expanded version of an earlier essay by Lasner for the March 2000 issue of the *Bookplate Journal*, this descriptive catalogue is a much-needed replacement for its now outdated sources: A.E. Gallatin's "Aubrey Beardsley as a Designer of Bookplates" (*Reader*, December 1902) and R.A. Walker's "The Bookplates of Aubrey Beardsley" (*Bookplate Booklet*, October 1919).

A book artist extraordinaire whose bold disposition of black and white reimaged the graphics of the printed page, Beardsley designed only three bookplates: one in 1893 for John Lumsden Propert, one in 1897 for Herbert Charles Pollitt, and another for Olive Custance (uniquely in photogravure rather than line block). The first of these Beardsley published, together with a design by R. Anning Bell, in the inaugural volume of *The Yellow Book* (April 1894). As art editor of that avant-garde periodical, Beardsley positioned the commercial art of the bookplate on equal aesthetic footing with Sir Frederick Leighton's studies, Will Rothenstein's portrait drawings, and Joseph Pennell's landscapes. Beardsley's bookplate for Herbert Charles Pollitt similarly negotiates the boundaries of original design and adaptation, as he famously met his promise to make Pollitt a bookplate by hand-lettering "Mr. Pollitt's Bookplate" in his copy of *A Book of Fifty Drawings* (1897), where it appeared as "The Bookplate of the Artist."

Lasner tells many such stories of attribution, provenance, and adaptation. Divided in two sections, the study's first checklist itemizes the histories of the three bookplates that were purpose-designed by Beardsley, while the second provides details of some thirty-seven bookplates (from the fin de siècle to the present) adapted from Beardsley's designs for title pages, borders, chapter