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A Secret House: Evelyn Waugh's Book Collection

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Abstract
This article examines Evelyn Waugh's private library, reading his habits of book collection as a particular mode of late modernist practice. In private and public writing particularly during the Second World War, Waugh the book collector is simultaneously consumer, producer, and cultural combatant. Indeed, Waugh's collection practices parallel his satiric practices: both satire and collection are guided by the impulse to discriminate, connoting both the pejorative and elitist senses of exclusion, but also selection, deliberation, and distinction. Waugh's careful assemblage of a library at odds with mainstream literary culture proffers a striking case study of the contested cultural landscape of England in the space between, and after, the two world wars.

Keywords: Evelyn Waugh / late modernism / reading culture / book history/satire

In October 1944, the English novelist Evelyn Waugh wrote to his wife Laura offering a plan for their lives following the end of the war, which would reconcile her domestic pursuits with his "collecting mania" and "need for a harmonious place to write" (*Letters* 190). Waugh—then a liaison officer stationed with Randolph Churchill in Topusko, Yugoslavia (Stannard 118)—proposed separate houses for himself and his young family. Laura and their children would live at one property, where Laura could farm and keep her beloved cows. The second house, located at Midsomer Norton and recently willed to Evelyn, his brother Alec, and their Tasmanian cousins from their aunts, would be Waugh's private residence (Stannard 123). Here he could write, read, and house his collections of books, bric-a-brac, and Victoriana, disturbed neither by his progeny nor the demands of the twentieth century: "I could then make the house into a museum of victorian [*sic*] art […]. I could keep my library there & write my novels there. It would be a secret house to which no guests would come. […] After my death if none of sons in law or spinster daughters want to live there, I could make it into a public museum & memorial to myself. It will by that time, supposing that I live until 1970, be a unique spectacle" (*Letters* 190).

In Waugh's plan, the private library house nurtures the body of the writer—and the body of work—in quiet repose, distanced from both twentieth-century culture and the daily pressures of family life. Following the author's death this private space would be transformed into a "splendid" public address (Waugh, *Letters* 190). As strange as the proposal reads, particularly in the context of a lengthy absence from home during wartime, this letter to Laura is by no means the only example of Waugh's bookish contrarian fantasizing during the period. In private and public writing particularly during the Second World War, Waugh the collector is simultaneously consumer, producer, and cultural combatant. Waugh's collection (both noun and verb) represents a particular kind of late-modernist practice, and an idiosyncratic mode of self-fashioning deeply opposed to and yet inherently informed by mainstream twentieth-century reading culture. Indeed, his collection practices parallel his satiric practices: both satire and collection are guided by the impulses to judge and discriminate, connoting both the pejorative and elitist senses of exclusion, but also selection, deliberation, and distinction. Waugh's acerbic criticism of interwar taste and culture offers the perspective of a mandarin antagonist whose chosen calling was to "correct popular sentiments and give a call to order in times of hysteria" (Waugh, *Essays* 200). Waugh's secret house confirms the idea of the archive as, in Janine Utell's words, "the resting place of the authority of the author […] the

site of origins, order, stability, history" (53–54), and proffers a striking case study of the contested cultural landscape of England in the space between, and after, the two world wars.[1]

During his lifetime Waugh collected over 3,500 volumes. Richard Oram has shown in his essay "Evelyn Waugh, Bookman" that Waugh's collection reflects a lifelong bibliomania that extended, in both interest and knowledge, to all aspects of the book trade: typesetting, bindings, papers, private presses, calligraphy, and rare books. As Oram has described, the Waugh library is particularly rich in architectural books and Victoriana ("Cultural Record Keepers" 327). Several archives in North America and England bear witness to what Waugh disingenuously referred to in a 1946 article for *Life* as his "inexpensive, desultory" habits of collection (*Essays* 301). The Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin houses the book collection along with most of Waugh's manuscripts and personal papers; this is the richest collection of Waviana extant, but there are other revealing archives. The Waugh-Buchanan Collection in the Georgetown Special Collections library comprises more than 100 postcards and notes from Waugh to his bookseller Handasyde Buchanan (partner in the London booksellers firm G. Heywood Hill) from the period 1946–1964, while the British Library Evelyn Waugh Papers contain responses from Buchanan to Waugh from the same period. Outside of the archive, Waugh's published letters, diaries, essays and novels demonstrate his abiding interest in books, not only as the stock-in-trade of the working novelist, but as a combative reader and book owner. Waugh's pugilistic opinions on prose style, ethical codes, and social mores are reflected in his writing about the physical book, and his views on book housing and care. In particular, his sense of "absolute possession" over his library parallels the controlling and regulating impulses of satire (Waugh, *Diaries* 555).

As Mary Hammond notes, since at least the 1880s reading has been linked to "self-construction" (85), a process deeply personal as well as social and economic. Collecting is likewise a practice of self-formation, as Jean Baudrillard suggests: "Our everyday objects are in fact objects of a passion—the passion for private property […] things of which I am the meaning" (91). A personal library is thus at once a mode of private subject-formation cloaked in "clandestineness and concealment" (Baudrillard 94), an idiosyncratic system of objects, and a public space whose meaning is determined by personal, physical, social, intellectual, and economic codes. Waugh's characters can certainly be read according to their book collections: in *A Handful of Dust*, for instance, Tony Last's spiritual vacuity is reflected in his personal library, listed as comprising "*Bevis*, *Woodwork at Home, Conjuring for All, The*

Young Visiters, The Law of Landlord and Tenant, Farewell to Arms" (Waugh, *Handful* 19). Charles Ryder recalls with embarrassment that his undergraduate books, prior to his aesthetic conversion, were "meagre and commonplace" Edwardian editions of Roger Fry and Lytton Strachey rather than "French novels of the second empire in Russia-leather and watered silk" (Waugh, *Brideshead* 36, 35). Ryder's concern here is not only with the types of books but also with their physical properties, precious things to be counterposed against a paltry modernity.

Waugh's bibliophilic practices articulate in interesting, sometimes diverse ways with the culture of the twenties, thirties and forties. At Oxford he often spent large sums on fine books, but was later forced to sell many of these off to pay his debts (an episode reflected in his first published story, "The Balance" [1926]). In the late twenties and thirties Waugh was largely itinerant, with extended periods of travel punctuated by intense writing bouts in country hotels. Apart from during his brief marriage to Evelyn Gardner, Waugh had no fixed abode from 1928 to 1935; his book collection, such as it was then, was housed at his club or his parents' house. In his peripatetic lifestyle, Waugh is like many writers of the early thirties, who as Paul Fussell argues, used travel to escape England during the slump (*Abroad*). Such early-thirties mobility is common, and echoed widely in the increasingly mobile, public, communal, and accessible reading practices of the interwar period (McAleer 50). Yet Waugh's rootless young adulthood, similar to other writers of the era, stands in stark contrast to his later performance as country gent enacted from the time of his marriage to Laura Herbert in 1936. From the late thirties, Waugh abandons himself not to escape but to settlement, buying his house, Piers Court, and dedicating himself to furnishing it with paintings, heavy Victorian furniture, and books.

Fig.1: Waugh in his library at Piers Court. Photography Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

In 1932 Waugh proclaimed his intention of "fighting *against*" (*Essays* 128) the social levelling and moral relativism of the interwar period; this is reflected in his satire as well as his bibliophilic practices and construction of his library space, which combines secrecy and militarist décor. Photographs of the library at Piers Court show flying buttress-like shelves, martial *trompe l'oeil* pedestals and heavy leather and mahogany furniture (Fig. 1). There is a

portrait of that notable royal bibliomaniac George III (Waugh wanted it adorned with the motto "scribble, scribble"); as Oram has noted, Waugh also collected stone eggs ("Evelyn Waugh, Bookman" 25). The types of books Waugh bought or kept were likewise substantial and anti-popular: rare books in fine bindings such as the multi-volume 1882 edition of the *Works* of John Ruskin, bound in morocco and with gorgeous marbled endpapers. Likewise common are association copies from friends such as Graham Greene, John Betjeman, and Anthony Powell; first editions; and large format fine books on art and architecture, such as William Holman Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism and the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (a source for Waugh's 1927 biography of Rossetti and closely annotated in green and black ink) or Charles Eastlake's *A History of the Gothic Revival*, both of which are so massive that they can only be read at a desk. Pamphlets, paperbacks and ephemera are frequently bound in groups in hard backs, and then emblazoned with one of the two Waugh bookplates (Fig.2).

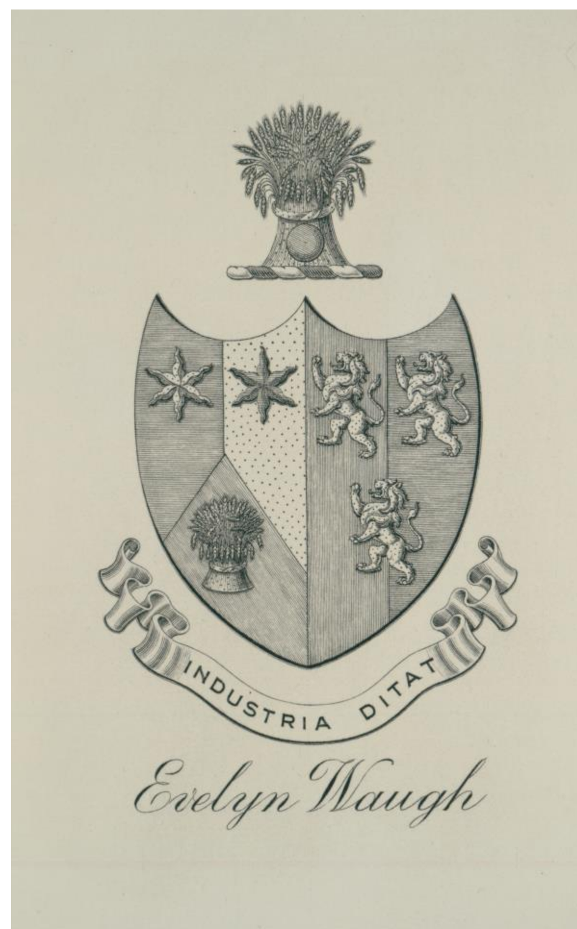
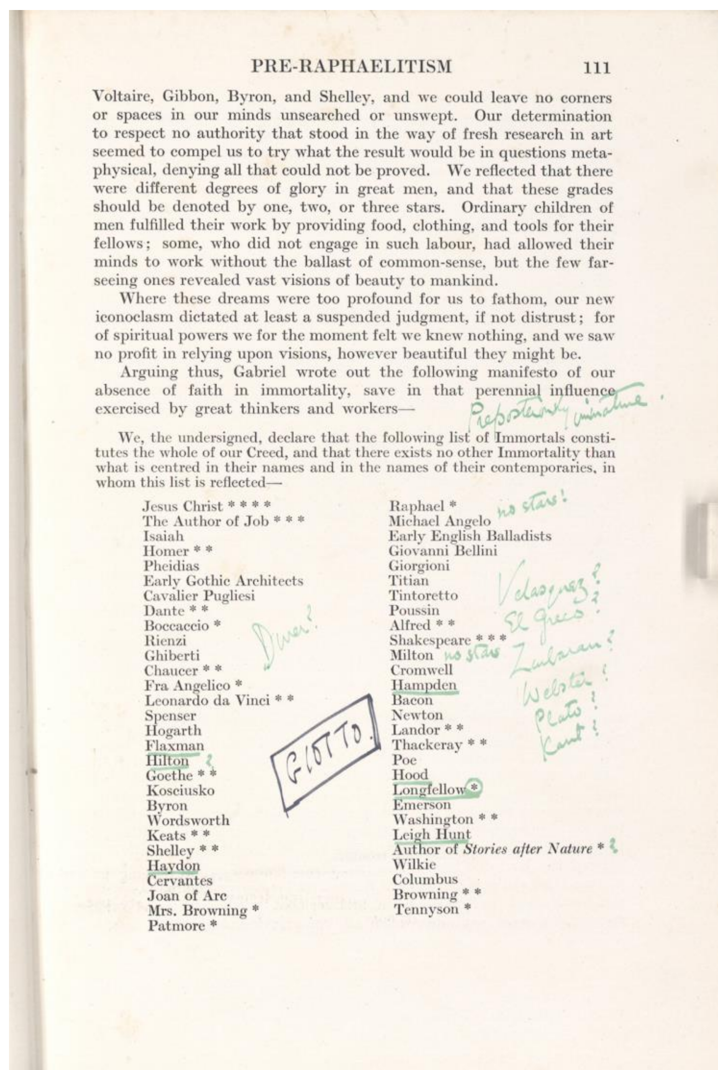


Fig. 2: June 1943: "My chief pleasure in the last few days has been having some bookplates engraved" (Diaries 539). Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

As Leah Price has noted, libraries and reading often provoke a tension between "commonality and distinction," implying a "choice between embedding the book within, or counterposing the text to, social structures" (*How To Do Things With Books* 13). Waugh's 1943 bookplate, its heraldic wheatsheaf crest and Latin motto ("Industry Enriches") working strenuously against the artistic regimes of the forties to denote a kind of Victorian bourgeois abundance, illustrates how the book object can be branded with markers of these structures: class, profession, gender, nation. Indeed there is something almost parodically Victorian about this bookplate, richly and ludicrously imitative of the English "connoisseur tradition" (Traue 82). By the nineteenth century fine book collecting was, as Seymour De Ricci, observed, "the favourite pastime of […] wealthy nobleman" (71), such as William Beckford, Sir Thomas Phillips, and the Earl of Ashburnham. J.E. Traue suggests that English collecting was carried out along "well-defined" lines of connoisseurship, favoring "illuminated manuscripts, first editions, incunables, Bibles, illustrated books, fine printing, fine binding, association copies, English literature, the products of particular presses, the works of particular authors" (82). The association of the library with a particular kind of English selfhood was, by the nineteenth century, firmly established: Andrew Lang described it as "a kind of shrine," where a gentleman could "be at home with himself" (*The Library* n.p). The sacral association of the library with its owner prefigures Waugh's plans for his secret house, and could furthermore be carried into the book object through the bookplate. By naming the book for its owner, the plate invests the object with a unique identity. This can be seen particularly in Waugh's "modernist" bookplate (Oram, "Cultural Record Keepers" 326). This plate is inscribed with phrases from the Anglican wedding service surrounding a central motto that includes Waugh's full Christian name. In this bookplate, Evelyn Waugh is bound in marriage to "His Book" (Milthorpe 223).

Victoria Rosner has shown that libraries and studies are identified with "authorship *and authority*" (92; my emphasis), suggesting the private library's status as a space of social, familial, and indeed authorial power, in which public and private functions coalesce. Control and judgment are implied in the act of collection, which begins in the regulation of books (cataloguing, care, buying and selling) and extends to what Lise Jaillant recognises as the specifically twentieth-century practice of policing social and moral values through "cultural categories" (7). Indeed, the book object is a space where the battles lines of personal, cultural, or national identity construction are drawn, in the pages of which, as H.J. Jackson argues, the reader launches acts of "self-assertion, if not aggression" against the actual author (90).

Waugh's annotation of Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism* demonstrates the power wielded by the owner-collector: here, both the subject of the book (the PRB) and the book object (the page itself) are "Preposterous" (Fig.3). Similarly, Waugh's marginalia in Cyril Connolly's 1945 *The Unquiet Grave* (Evelyn Waugh Collection 7.1.) establishes the terms by which Waugh can abuse as "H.G. Wells, Left Book Club" (EWC 7.1 9), "hack high-brow" (EWC 7.1 108), and "drivelling woman novelist" (EWC 7.1 108) the "elaborate 'self-dismantling'" (EWC 7.1 1) implied in Connolly's *pensées*. In these instances of marginal assertion, Waugh the reader is deeply aligned with Waugh the satirist, whose judgment ranges from light mockery to "bilious" abuse (Bell 31).



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Voltaire, Gibbon, Byron, and Shelley, and we could leave no corners or spaces in our minds unsearched or unswept. Our determination to respect no authority that stood in the way of fresh research in art seemed to compel us to try what the result would be in questions metaphysical, denying all that could not be proved. We reflected that there were different degrees of glory in great men, and that these grades should be denoted by one, two, or three stars. Ordinary children of men fulfilled their work by providing food, clothing, and tools for their fellows; some, who did not engage in such labour, had allowed their minds to work without the ballast of common-sense, but the few far-seeing ones revealed vast visions of beauty to mankind.

Where these dreams were too profound for us to fathom, our new iconoclasm dictated at least a suspended judgment, if not distrust; for of spiritual powers we for the moment felt we knew nothing, and we saw no profit in relying upon visions, however beautiful they might be.

Arguing thus, Gabriel wrote out the following manifesto of our absence of faith in immortality, save in that perennial influence exercised by great thinkers and workers—

We, the undersigned, declare that the following list of Immortals constitutes the whole of our Creed, and that there exists no other Immortality than what is centred in their names and in the names of their contemporaries, in whom this list is reflected—

Jesus Christ * * * *
The Author of Job * * *
Isaiah
Homer * *
Pheidias
Early Gothic Architects
Cavalier Pugliesi
Dante * *
Boccaccio *
Rienzi
Ghiberti
Chaucer * *
Fra Angelico *
Leonardo da Vinci * *
Spenser
Hogarth
Flaxman
Hilton
Goethe * *
Kosciusko
Byron
Wordsworth
Keats * *
Shelley * *
Haydon
Cervantes
Joan of Arc
Mrs. Browning *
Patmore *

Raphael *
Michael Angelo
Early English Balladists
Giovanni Bellini
Giorgioni
Titian
Tintoretto
Poussin
Alfred * *
Shakespeare * * *
Milton
Cromwell
Hampden
Bacon
Newton
Landor * *
Thackeray * *
Poe
Hood
Longfellow *
Emerson
Washington * *
Leigh Hunt
Author of *Stories after Nature* *
Wilkie
Columbus
Browning * *
Tennyson *

Fig. 3: The list of PRB Immortals in Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood by William Holman Hunt. Waugh: "Preposterously immature." (111) Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

Such acts of written self-assertion seek to transect the authority of the author (who cannot answer back) with the greater authority of the owner/reader/annotator (indeed, marking of the page can easily transgress and thus override the authority of ownership). A similar impulse occurs in the collection, which as Jeremy Braddock argues in the modernist period can be viewed as a "cultural and social intervention" (2). Though the evidence from the Waugh-Buchanan collection seems to indicate a slap-dash purchasing practice—requests for books are commonly dispatched on a postcard, in one or two curt sentences—Waugh's deliberate strategy is apparent in his repetition of certain orders, careful accounting for certain books, and in Buchanan's replies to Waugh. From the forties onward it appears that Waugh worked towards the goal of creating in his library the kind of "counterspace" described by Lawrence Rainey, in which the collection or institution offers "a momentary respite from a public realm increasingly degraded, even as it entail[s] a fatal compromise with precisely that degradation" (5). Certainly Waugh's library seems allied with a highbrow position, in which elite or arcane taste is, as Andreas Huyssen argues, positioned as subverting mainstream or mass culture. In formal portraits posed in his library, Waugh is shown surrounded by a phalanx of shelves and desk, protected by a barrier of solid reading matter. The fixed space of Waugh's private library becomes, as Rosner has argued of other modernist libraries, "the most secret place in the house" (124). Protected by silence, stability, and immobility, the collection, space, and reader are staged by Waugh as static and non-social. The physical collection and its presentation privilege an official, highly artificial self-construction and redact any hint of the mass, mobile, or middlebrow pleasures of reading in the twentieth century.

The repeated themes of the 1930s—order/control versus freedom/chaos—are embodied in Waugh's reading and collecting practices: by gathering solid objects to him, Waugh the collector shores himself against the psychological or spiritual disintegration that threatens the modern subject. At the same time, the apparently auratic nature of these objects is undercut by what Alan Wilde terms the "uneasy self-consciousness" of late modernist selfhood (94), as in Waugh's 1945 admission that he collected "preposterous objects" precisely so could "keep them at arm's length" (*Diaries* 610). Waugh seems acutely aware of the frailty of both the book object and the failure of the humanist project it signified, as symbolized in Mr. Todd's mouldering set of Dickens in *A Handful of Dust*. In both Waugh's fiction and his collection, high modernism's psychological depth is replaced by a late modernist attention to matter, surface, and irony, which according to Tyrus Miller, "engaged with social realities less profoundly and offered no embracing vision in which the contradictions of modern life would

be resolved” (11). The “points of nonsynchronism” (Miller 12) that characterize late modernist practice parallel Waugh’s attempt to construct an apparently ironic library space at a remove from social, historical, and psychological reality.

Chosen at the height of the Great-great war

Waugh’s contrapuntal reading and book collecting practices are strongly marked during the Second World War, in which his roles as cultural and military combatant are allied. In 1942, returned from the British evacuation from Crete, Waugh transferred from the Royal Marines to the Royal Horse Guards and then again to Robert Laycock’s No. 8 Commando, and moved around various military bases in England and Scotland. As intelligence officer for the Royal Horse Guards, much of his work was administrative in nature, and Waugh repeatedly records being overwhelmed by boredom (Stannard 68–69). In September 1942, for instance, he writes in his diary that he “mainly open[s] the letters and send them on to [Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General]”: “One or two I address to myself, post them in the OUT tray; they disappear for about three hours into the ‘Central Registry’ and return to the IN tray” (*Diaries* 527). Experiencing army life as tedious, rather than heroic, was common to many soldiers; cyclical boredom here is embodied in uncannily returning paper. Yet in spite of the emptiness of the work, Waugh was in many ways in a superior position to his contemporaries. He had a decent independent income from sales of new and reprinted novels, and could afford various luxuries that were out of reach for many of his fellows: books, whisky, and cigars feature prominently in his catalogue of pleasures. Perhaps at least in part due to this material comfort, Waugh could describe 1942 as “a good year” (*Diaries* 530).

Reading was a popular leisure pursuit amongst soldiers, who used books to escape from the tedium and loneliness of soldiering. In 1943 Frank Buckland wrote in *John O’London’s Weekly* that “some read because it is life’s habit, others to forget the war” (qtd. in McAleer 77). Detective, thriller, and western novels were the most widely circulated among soldiers, although, as McAleer describes, romance novels were also popular (77). Among soldiers in particular, sharing books was common. In October 1942 the Penguin Forces Book Club was launched, distributing on a subscription basis packets of ten Penguin paperbacks per month, dispatched to fighting Units by the Services Central Book Depot (Pearson 25). Forces Club selections would “be balanced between […] Adventure and Travel, Humour, Biography,

Current Affairs, Fiction and Hobbies" and would cost 60/- for a yearly subscription of 120 books (Williams qtd. in Pearson 26). The Forces club books were only available on a group subscription—that is, a Unit or sub-Unit, rather than to an individual soldier—and, as the draft proposal for the club suggested, would be secured as the "absolute property of the group" (Williams qtd. in Pearson 25). Waugh's "absolute possession" of his books is antithetical to the community ownership at the heart of the Forces Book Club.

Waugh's reading is indicative of his idiosyncratic relationship with wartime literary culture. In 1942 Waugh wrote to Nancy Mitford to thank her for sending a "parcel" of books (*Letters* 161). A brief history of Mitford's role here is necessary: Mitford worked in Heywood Hill's shop at Curzon Street from 1942 to 1945 while Hill was enlisted as a soldier. Handasyde Buchanan, who handled Waugh's accounts after the war, sold books in Michael Williams's shop until it was bombed in 1940. He then worked as a censor for the duration of the war, returning to bookselling in 1945 when he and Mitford both became partners in Heywood Hill (Saumarez Smith 9). Waugh received Mitford's parcel of books while stationed with the Commandos in Ardrossan, Scotland. Waugh's thank-you letter to Mitford self-consciously demonstrates active involvement in, and productive response to, contemporary history: "I think these books will make an interesting shelf for my grand children (supposing they can read which is not likely). I will say they were the books chosen at the height of the Great-great war by a great novelist and an eminent critic. Well it would be jolly interesting to see the parcel of books chosen by Southey to send a captain of marines during Napoleonic wars, wouldn't it?" (*Letters* 162). The great novelist is Mitford; the eminent critic is Cyril Connolly. In September 1942 Waugh complained of the "[h]onesty of brother officers," who while he was attending a photography course at Matlock stole half of a "fine library of brand-new books chosen for me by Cyril" (*Diaries* 528). Recognizing the historical import of a selection of books sent by these important literary figures during a time of war, Waugh created a microscopic archive, inscribing each book with his signature, place and date of reading—either Ardrossan or Sherborne in Dorset.[2] As Traue suggests, times of "traumatic change" can provoke collection as "a means of preserving past experience, of preserving past values, or to justify the present to the future" (82). Waugh's letter and inscriptions suggest the rich significations of reading during wartime, as threatened private practice and memorial event.

While Waugh's "Great-great war" letter can broadly illuminate reading practices during the war, the books Mitford and Connolly chose for Waugh only vaguely reflect the reading and ownership practices typified by the Forces Book Club. Mitford's packet contains one work of fiction—Patrick Hamilton's gloomy novel *The Siege of Pleasure*—but many more idiosyncratic works revealing Waugh's specialized tastes: diaries, letters, biographies, and works of literary and cultural criticism dominate. Not only the types of books in the parcel, but their physical heft and price, mark their difference from popular wartime reading. Douglas Woodruff's *Talking at Random* was relatively cheap at 7/6-, but Mitford also sent several books worth more than 15 shillings, including the *Letters of T.E. Lawrence* (25/-) and the two-volume *Thraliana*—the diaries of eighteenth-century socialite Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi (42/-). By comparison, in 1943 an individual soldier could order a packet of 70 paperbacks for 35/- (Pearson 17). Mitford's expensive book packet, sent during intense austerity measures, marks Waugh's reading as unusual both in the immense expense incurred in purchasing and shipping these books, but also in transporting them from Ardrossan to Sherborne, then to London and eventually back to his home library at Combe Florey. Books are, as John Plotz has argued, portable property, and the demand for reading intensified during both the world wars because it was "the least expensive and most adaptable of leisure activities" (McAleer 43). But Waugh cancels the cheap and portable aspects of this pleasure, reimposing the "rare and distinctive value" formerly embodied in the possession of literary knowledge rather than literary objects (Hammond 106). His reading during wartime is thus a studied habit, part of the patina of highly cultivated tastes in Victoriana, cigars, and wines. The letters of Lawrence suggests a flavor of military romance appropriate to Waugh's feelings about the army at the time, but the others—in particular the Clarendon volumes of *Thraliana*—are books to add to a working library with strengths in history, literature, art, architecture, and fine books.

Officers and Gentlemen shows Guy Crouchback's unit sharing paperback romances like Caryl Brahms's and S.J. Simon's *Don't, Mr Disraeli!* (102). Waugh's own reading is very far from this soldierly communalism, although he did read Brahms and Simon, as evident in a letter to Laura (*Letters* 191). In 1944, Waugh wrote to Mitford describing a planned afternoon of escape: "A very sad thing has just happened. I had settled down to a luxurious day's solitude—Freddy [Birkenhead] & Randolph [Churchill] having driven off to the forests. I had a box of cigars, six new books (thanks to you), a deep sorrow […]—all the makings of profound self indulgence. F & R have just returned, their expedition postponed. Damn"

(Mosley 6). Waugh's active, self-conscious, and pleasurable experience of reading is both cathartic and performative—the books and cigars are props for the performance of a gentlemanly "melancholia." Leisure time offers the opportunity for both physical and affective luxuriation, with reading as the entrée to emotional reflection. That this individualist "self indulgence" was foiled by communal life is typical of Waugh's experience of the army. To borrow a phrase from 1942's *Put Out More Flags*, in which Cedric Lyne's epigrammatic manifesto is "divided we stand, united we fall," Waugh's "frustration with corporate life" here is embodied in the disruption of reading pleasure (*Put Out More Flags* 241). While the anticipation of escape in a good book comprises a pleasure shared with his fellow soldiers, Waugh consciously cancelled the democratic impulses of wartime reading, luxuriating in the book as a treasured and private aristocratic *objet*. While there is some evidence in the letters that Waugh did read Penguin paperbacks, he was not forced to rely on these exclusively or even predominantly. Instead, the bulk of Waugh's books came from Heywood Hill's Curzon Street firm, handsomely bound and expensive, and he kept them in his library until his death. Their continued presence in his library speaks of Waugh's self-conscious construction of their significance as relics of his wartime literary connoisseurship.

"'sumptuously' bound, 'mint' condition etc"

Waugh's book collection reflects anti-democratic, escapist, and anti-austerity tastes and habits developed during the interwar and wartime. As McAleer notes, the institutionalization of the paperback at the heart of fiction publishing highlights the increasingly democratic and egalitarian currents of twentieth-century culture. While imprints like Penguin were offering the opportunity for cheap and disposable book consumption, Waugh defiantly ordered first or early editions, coveting rare books and fine bindings. Against the "conventual" (Waugh, *Put Out More Flags* 205) force of what Waugh sneeringly referred to as the "Century of the Common Man" (*Essays* 304), Waugh creates a very uncommon private space. In 1946 Waugh wrote to Handasyde Buchanan that he wished to purchase a set of Digby Wyatt's 1852 work, *Industrial Arts of the XIX Century*. The postcard offered short, explicit instructions as to what would be acceptable: "Only first class, bound set required," Waugh wrote. "I have a poor set" (Waugh-Buchanan 1.4). Waugh's opposition of the two types of book object, "first class, bound" versus "poor," reflects the studied approach that marks his reading and book collection from the late thirties onwards, bound up in the pleasures of

luxurious consumption versus modern privation. Repeatedly, “first class,” and its synonyms “fine,” “sumptuous,” “mint” are troped against the pejoratives “poor” or “cheap,” and the book collection is deployed in his ongoing skirmish against the twentieth century. [3]

Waugh’s collection was explicitly a site of monetary as well as cultural capital, even in spite of his avowal of his “inexpensive” habits of collection. Postcards to Buchanan sometimes show prices Waugh pays for books, anywhere from the rather modest 7/6- to more usually around 30 shillings. In 1959, he writes to Buchanan to check up on a design book worth £17 (around £350 today), which he can’t find and can’t remember purchasing (Waugh-Buchanan 1.49). While many of the letters show Waugh quibbling over small sums, this kind of expenditure—apparently without an object to show for it—demonstrates the luxury status of Waugh’s collection. Waugh had Buchanan value the library; in 1952 it was worth £3200 and by 1962 had, Buchanan wrote, undergone a “colossal appreciation” thanks in part to Waugh’s bound manuscripts and presentation copies. At the time, Buchanan wrote to Waugh that “the whole library is worth perhaps 10% more on account of your bookplate […]. If the whole lot were to appear at Sotheby it would undoubtedly be at least that amount in your favour” (Evelyn Waugh Papers 81049.86). [4] This perhaps accounts for the presence of the bookplate in books that Waugh very clearly didn’t value, such as Lona Mosk Packer’s 1963 biography of *Christina Rossetti*, pronounced “worthless trash” in an irascible inscription on the book’s front fly-leaf (Evelyn Waugh Collection). Waugh applied strong systems of value in forming his collection; books are rejected from the library on moralistic terms. Books can be “absolutely awful” (Waugh-Buchanan 1.59), “trash” (Waugh-Buchanan 1.111) or “pornography” (Waugh-Buchanan 1.79), in content and also in physical properties. Waugh despised Cyril Connolly’s *Grave* for the writing but also for the “shocking” press-work (Evelyn Waugh Collection 7.1). In 1948 he wrote to Buchanan with “Grave Complaints” about some of the books he had been sent: "'Works of Early Martyrs” has come from binders in disgraceful state. Dirty. No attempt made to repair tattered fine-edges. Top edges all uneven. I would not think of putting it in my library. But why put me to the labour of repacking & forwarding? A glance would have shown you that the book stank" (Waugh-Buchanan 1.11). Did he mean it literally smelled, given that it takes a “glance” to establish this fact? Price notes the shift from literary to material methodologies: “Instead of “reading” sewer systems, critics now smell leather bindings” (“From *The History of A Book* to a ‘History of the Book’” 121). The extant books in the Evelyn Waugh Collection are clean and sensorily inoffensive; perhaps Waugh feared olfactory corruption from this stinking volume

as much as the moral corruption of the “awful” book he returned to Buchanan in 1961 (Waugh-Buchanan 1.59). Here, and in the slashing, red-inked marginalia from *The Unquiet Grave*, the satiric impulses to judgement, mockery, and corporal punishment dominate. In 1948 Waugh wrote to Buchanan that “it is madness ever to buy anything except perfect copies, ‘sumptuously’ bound, ‘mint’ condition etc” (Waugh-Buchanan 1.9). Waugh’s language, including quotation marks around each descriptor, suggests he is aware of the clichés that cluster around book collecting. Yet, of course, he is unwilling to move beyond the reassurance such clichés provide. As Alberto Manguel describes, rooms such as libraries, “determined by artificial categories,” suggest “a logical universe, a nursery universe in which everything has its place and is defined by it” (198). Outside of the ordered, predictable lexicon of the collector lies a space of dangerous disorder. Valuable objects and collectors’ argot alike work to shape the collection as a utopian cultural practice that affords respite from—or passes judgment upon—the disgraceful twentieth century.

In his 1961 memoir *A Little Learning*, Waugh remembers the house at Midsomer Norton as the scene of a “richly indulged” (44) childhood taste for the curiosities of the Victorian age. The house was filled with the stuff of Victorian cliché—collections of fossils, oil paintings, and darkness achieved through his aunts’ commitment to candles over electric light. For Waugh, this space is charming both in its copybook fustiness and its unique aesthetic association of subject and object, collection and display: "My Waugh aunts had a way of investing all their possessions with an individual character and importance […]. The bric-à-brac in the cabinets, the Sheffield plate, the portraits by nameless artists quickened my childish aesthetic appetite as keenly as would have done any world-famous collection and the narrow corridors stretched before me like ancient galleries" (*Learning* 48). The imagined vista of “ancient galleries” echoes Waugh’s earlier vision of the transformation of this private house into a “public museum and memorial.” In particular, the plangent contrast of “nameless artists” with “world-famous collection” suggests Waugh’s heightened awareness, in the years before his death, of the construction of memory, whether personal and private, or official and collective.

As Price suggests, books possessing a bookplate, stamped with the imprimatur of ownership, can serve as memorials to an owner’s life—but they also signify the limits of that life. “Borrowing the logic of the saint’s relic,” association copies and bookplates “invest the object with value borrowed” from its former owner. “And like the saint, the previous owner

must be dead" (Price *How To Do Things With Books,* 229). The secret house described to Laura in his wartime letter presages historical plans by the Harry Ransom Center to assemble such a monument to Waugh: as Oram notes, following Waugh's death in 1966, Waugh's widow Laura negotiated with Harry Ransom, librarian at the University of Texas's Humanities Research Center, to sell the contents of Waugh's private library: "[T]he manuscripts of most of the novels as well as the library, desk, bookshelves, pedestals, paintings, and some miscellaneous furniture and decorative objects. The probable intention was to reconstruct the Combe Florey library in a special room in the HRC's new building, but this in fact never came to pass" ("Evelyn Waugh, Bookman" 30). That neither Waugh's imagined library-house-museum, nor the HRC's archival "domicile," to use Derrida's term (2), were constructed only serves to heighten the utopian flavour of the "unique spectacle" of Waugh's private and public subject formation in combat against the mass-produced and egalitarian currents of interwar literary culture. Waugh envisioned his collections fixed in the static privacy of the "secret house," but his death ironically became the means for his books to be "set […] into motion" as mobile memorials (Price, *How To Do Things With Books* 229). Visitors to the Harry Ransom Center can read Waugh's books in the airy space of the HRC Reading Room; most recently, Waugh's library has been given digital life, with thanks to the Legacy Library Project administered by LibraryThing. Both the artificial order constructed in the private library space, and Waugh's dream of a private house museum, were dismantled after his death. Paradoxically, the democratic, portable, and egalitarian spirit of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries has proffered, in the form of the research archive, an alternative means to memorial.

Notes

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[2] From May to June/July he was in Ardrossan, where he received Mitford's parcel of books, broken by a five-week photographic interpretation course at Matlock. He returned to

Ardrossan in August, and then, in October, was moved to Sherborne, serving as intelligence officer at brigade headquarters. His inscriptions are roughly divided between Ardrossan in June and Sherborne in November.

[3] “First class” appears three times in the Waugh-Buchanan archive: in the card quoted above and later, twice on the same card, in Autumn 1961 (folder 113 undated [Autumn 1961?]). "Sumptuous" appears once, in a letter dated 20 Mar 1948. “Mint” appears twice: Folder 9 1 ALS 20 Mar 1948; Folder 103 1 ALS [c.1950]. “Fine” is the most common synonym, appearing in ten separate cards to Buchanan from c.1946-65: Folder 5 1 ACS 25 May 1947; Folder 7 1ACS c.a. Nov 1947; Folder 13 1ACS 23 Sept 1948; Folder 19 1ACS 30 Mar 1950; Folder 29 1ACS 20 Mar 1953; Folder 96 1 ALS 9 Feb [n.d.: c1946]; Folder 98 1ALS 18 Dec [n.d.: c1954]; Folder 100 1ACS 9 Sep [1965]; Folder 103 1ALS [c1950]; Folder 112 1ACS [n.d.].

[4] The whole lot was eventually sold, to Texas. Accounts of the sum paid to the Waugh family differ: Alexander Waugh suggests the HRC fleeced the family to the tune of $8500 for the library, shelves and all. Recalculating for RPI makes this around $50000 in today’s money (*Fathers and Sons* 429). Robert Murray Davis suggests £90,000—a more rational figure, but a bargain nevertheless (See Davis, “The First Scholar: Review of *Fathers and Sons*” n.p.).

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