

The Materials of Which I Am Made: Evelyn Waugh and Book Production

NAOMI MILTHORPE

In his autobiography *A Little Learning* (1964), Evelyn Waugh (1903–1966) narrates his early initiation at the age of sixteen into the arts of manuscript illumination and calligraphy under the mentorship of Francis Crease. The charm of Crease’s instruction, Waugh wrote, was chiefly due to the promise of “hot scones, Crown derby cups and conversation”—his pleasure, in other words, was material.¹ Waugh’s concomitant interest in the material aspects of fine books and book collecting has been discussed by scholars of his work including myself.² Against the context of the book’s increasing disposability in the twentieth century, facilitated by the mass production and mass marketing of the paperback and the dominance of periodical culture, Waugh built a library whose intention was solidity and permanence. Waugh collected fine books, particularly nineteenth-century volumes, and prized his books as “absolute possession[s],” tangible objects over which he could exercise order and control.³

Less widely known (although perhaps not surprising, given his youthful predilection for script and lettering), is Waugh’s professional interest in the material production of his own books, including trade editions, reprints, dedication copies, fine presentation copies, and éditions de luxe. Waugh’s role in the production of his books is revealed in the Huntington Library’s Evelyn Waugh Papers, given to the Library in 2013 by Loren and Frances Rothschild. Here, Waugh’s expertise and professional eye with regard to book production are evidenced in manuscript and typescript correspondence between Waugh and his publishers Chapman & Hall, discussing illustration, errata, typography, margins, and jacket design. Waugh’s respect for fine editions is further evidenced in the Huntington’s collection of Waugh association copies and first editions, which demonstrate his care for his books’ material appearance. Two particular clusters of archival material, dated in the years 1963–1965, provide clear evidence of Waugh’s role in the production of his books: those centred on the production of the édition de luxe of his final work of satire, 1963’s *Basil Seal Rides Again: or, The Rake’s Regress*, and those concerned

¹ Evelyn Waugh, *A Little Learning* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1964), 149.

² Richard Oram, “Evelyn Waugh: Bookman,” *A Handful of Mischief: New Essays on Evelyn Waugh*, edited by Donat Gallagher, Ann Pasternak Slater, and John Howard Wilson (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), 21–33. Naomi Milthorpe, “A Secret House: Evelyn Waugh’s Library,” *The Space Between: Literature and Culture, 1914–1945* 12 (2016), accessed 14 May 2017. http://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-space-between-literature-and-culture-1914-1945/vol12_2016_milthorpe?

³ Evelyn Waugh, 13 November 1943, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, edited by Michael Davie (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 555.

with the setting of the ordinary edition of his autobiography *A Little Learning*.⁴ In examining the Huntington's archival materials Waugh's professional interest in bibliographic matter is emphatically revealed. Moreover, both books' textual concern with self-fashioning—whether openly ironic, or apparently serious—is reflected in their material form, the flamboyant luxury of the one answered by the prim sobriety of the other.

The Huntington's Evelyn Waugh Papers particularly evidences Waugh's life as a working writer. The collection comprises nine boxes and one oversize folder, containing over three hundred pieces of archival material, including autograph and typed manuscripts, correspondence, and publishers' memos. There are very few private letters, saving those housed in the separate Kinross collection. The manuscript collection includes a corrected typescript of *Decline and Fall* (1928) and the autograph manuscript of *Ninety-Two Days* (1934), among other minor manuscripts and typescripts.⁵ Of relevance to this essay are the manuscript papers relating to *A Little Learning* and *Basil Seal Rides Again*: a corrected typescript extract of the autobiography; a corrected typescript preface to *The Rake's Regress*; and correspondence between Waugh and various figures at his publishing firm Chapman & Hall, including the firm's chairman John MacDougall and MacDougall's assistant, Gillon Aitken. Several letters from Waugh late in his career detail his significant input into the material elements of book production for *A Little Learning* and *Basil Seal Rides Again*, published within a year of each other.

Basil Seal Rides Again and *A Little Learning* represent together the last of Waugh's major original publications (although the *Sword of Honour* trilogy was yet to be substantially revised and reprinted in a standalone volume in 1965). Both in their way are valedictory works.⁶ As such, and given the coexistence of substantial material evidence in the Huntington collection as to their respective, parallel journeys through the editorial and production process (including various editions and association copies of each book, and overlapping correspondence), they together provide a distinctive case study of the mature Waugh's professional role in the production of his books, and reveal a program of ironic self-portraiture.⁷ In the

⁴ Waugh's memoir has recently been published in a scholarly volume, edited by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, no. 19 in the *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh*. Wilson and Cooke provide a rich and detailed account of its textual genesis and publication history, of immense value to readers of this book. While I was not able to consult their edition while preparing this essay, I have indicated in the notes where their edition provides further insight into an aspect of my argument. Waugh, Evelyn. *A Little Learning*, edited by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵ The full extent of the collection can be read in the Finding Aid, prepared by Gayle Richardson: <http://pdf.oac.cdlib.org/pdf/huntington/mss/waughe.pdf>.

⁶ Wilson and Cooke note that Chapman & Hall wished to publish the memoir "alongside *Basil Seal Rides Again*" in the autumn of 1963. "Introduction," xxviii.

⁷ Waugh discusses both together in a handful of letters at points when the production process

opening chapter of *A Little Learning*, the author dutifully recounts his heredity, the “physical materials of which I am made.”⁸ His books should be counted as such: material artefacts of his own making, that in turn remake Waugh for posterity.

Farouche but Aristocratic: *Basil Seal Rides Again*

Subtitled *The Rake's Regress*, *Basil Seal Rides Again* attempts, as Waugh writes in his prefatory letter to Ann Fleming, “to recapture the manner of [his] youth.”⁹ Waugh revisits several of his Mayfair characters, including the titular Basil, Margot Metroland, Ambrose Silk, Parsnip and Pimpernell, and Sonia Trumpington, but it is the “rum modern world” which is his new concern. This world is embodied in the figure of the louche, shirt-stealing Charles Albright who, as the fiancé of his daughter Barbara, unsettles Basil’s “stately” elderly façade. Though not universally admired by critics (when it was first published V. S. Pritchett lamented that Waugh had “exposed his immortals to the thin and deadly air of time”), the story provides a fitting point of doubled return and conclusion to Waugh’s satiric practice.¹⁰ Importantly for this discussion, the story deploys a vocabulary of corporeality with which to target the moral failures of its characters. Basil, whose adaptation to “duty”¹¹ has led to the formation of a “crust”¹² of respectability as well as to a layer of “florid” body fat,¹³ must undergo bodily transformation before he can defeat his antagonist Albright in the story’s battle for rakish supremacy (he tells Barbara that he is Albright’s father, putting an end to their engagement). No wonder, then, that in presenting this final satire to his public Waugh was concerned with its material form. In this story, textual and human bodies are the index of moral qualities.

In addition to the typescript dedicatory letter, correspondence dealing with the production process, and several editions of the book (including a review

overlaps: to John MacDougall, 6.201 Feb 20 1963; to Gillon Aitken 4 November 1963; and again to Aitken on 10 January 1964. In the last example, Waugh discusses first *A Little Learning*, then “Basil Seal,” then makes another point about the autobiography, then moves back to the short story. Evelyn Waugh to John MacDougall (20 February 1963) San Marino, The Huntington Library, Evelyn Waugh Papers MS 6, fol. 201. Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (4 November 1963) Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 223. Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (10 January 1964) Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 227.

⁸ Waugh, *A Little Learning*, 25.

⁹ Evelyn Waugh, “Basil Seal Rides Again,” in *The Complete Short Stories*, edited by Ann Pasternak Slater (London: Everyman, 1998), 485.

¹⁰ V. S. Pritchett, Rev. of *Basil Seal Rides Again*, *New Statesman* 15 November 1963, in *Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage*, edited by Martin Stannard (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 453. For the story’s tropes of doubling and return see Naomi Milthorpe, *Evelyn Waugh's Satire: Texts and Contexts* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016), 157–62.

¹¹ Waugh, “Basil Seal Rides Again,” 493.

¹² Waugh, “Basil Seal Rides Again,” 503.

¹³ Waugh, “Basil Seal Rides Again,” 494.

copy owned by Kingsley Amis), the Huntington collection also holds a proof illustration included in the book.¹⁴ Waugh and his publishers were anxious about the slightness of the story they referred to as “B. S. Rides Again.”¹⁵ In their letters during the twelve months from the beginning of production in January 1963 to the end of the edition in December of the same year, Waugh and MacDougall devised numerous publication strategies to ensure customers got their penn’orth from the “little book,” as MacDougall wrote:

[It] will be very little in extent, so we have decided that it should be an enormous page, crown 4to, with well-ledged Walbaum 12pt type; very thick boards bound in buckram. We shall have to think more about your device of the old hack and the emergent hunter.¹⁶

The device, designed by the British artist Kathleen Hale (1898–2000), functioned as the jacket cover for the standard edition and a frontispiece for the *édition de luxe*, and was one such value-addition. Hale, a graduate of Reading University and the Central School of Art and Crafts, was commissioned several times through her career to design book illustrations and jackets.¹⁷ She was well known in Britain for her *Orlando* (*The Marmalade Cat*) series, first published in England in the thirties. The *Orlando* books are characterised by wry visual humour heightened by fancy, and executed with delicacy. Hale drew preliminary drawings for the *Orlando* books in watercolour and pencil, and then had these made into coloured lithographs, one plate per colour. After the retirement of her original lithographer, she made the plates herself. In her autobiography Hale described lithography as a time consuming and “nerve-wracking process,” which because of the demands of four-colour printing, could take more than a week to complete a single page of illustration.¹⁸

Waugh was central to the *Basil Seal* commission: while he did not know Hale personally, he was fond of the *Orlando* books, having ordered several throughout the fifties from his bookseller Handasyde Buchanan, who worked at Heywood

¹⁴ Kingsley Amis’s copy included a manuscript of his review tipped in at the front. Evelyn Waugh, *Basil Seal Rides Again: or, The Rake’s Regress* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1963), Huntington Rare Books 620817. Kathleen Hale proof illustration included with letter, John MacDougall to Evelyn Waugh (18 June 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 4, fol. 74.

¹⁵ Waugh referred to the book as such on four occasions, in the latter stages of the book’s production and marketing: once to John MacDougall, on 30 August 1963 (Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 218); and three times in letters to Gillon Aitken, on 4 Nov 1963 (Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 223), 12 Nov 1963 (Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 224), and 10 Jan 1964 (Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 227).

¹⁶ John MacDougall to Evelyn Waugh (16 Jan 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 4, fol. 57.

¹⁷ Nick and Tessa Souter, *The Illustration Handbook: A Guide to the World’s Great Illustrators* (Edison: Chartwell, 2012), 213.

¹⁸ Kathleen Hale, *A Slender Reputation: An Autobiography* (London: Frederick Warne, 1994), 214.

Hill's Curzon Street bookshop, as presents for children and godchildren.¹⁹ Writing to Gillon Aitken confirming Hale's commission, Waugh suggested that "she had the right sense of humour, imagination & skill to make a coloured lithograph frontispiece for Basil Seal, if the story took her fancy at all."²⁰ Instructions and replies between Waugh and Hale during the first half of 1963 were sent through either MacDougall or Aitken (at one stage Waugh suggested he meet Hale but this never came to pass). On 14 March Aitken wrote to Waugh having made initial contact with Hale, describing Waugh's initial plan for the drawing:

I have mentioned the two ideas that you have had for the illustration – the "doppelgänger" [sic] group and "... a device of a ghost horse, fat and slow, trotting under the weight of a florid Seal, and emerging from it in another colour (light brown perhaps), under Seal, a mettlesome hunter in full gallop."²¹

On 16 March 1963, Waugh made further suggestions, imagining "a symbolic decorative page—perhaps something like the original paper covers of Dickens which had little groups suggestive of the story dispersed among foliage, architecture etc."²² On 1 April, Aitken forwarded Hale's rough design, along with an artist's justification: "Seal rides at night, as he was a night-lifer, leaving broken hearts behind him," writes Hale. "He carries a bottle of whisky. He is seen below, respectably married (see halo which is also a wedding ring) and rich, staying with his wife and daughter at the former's Venetian palace."²³ On 3 April Waugh replied, proclaiming Hale's work "delightful." He offered six suggestions for amendments, including the visual characterisation of Albright ("Young Basil looks too plebeian and modern. He was farouche but aristocratic") and Barbara ("more seductive"), and changes in colouration and clarity of particular details.²⁴ A week later Hale responded, fully prepared to undertake the lithography as soon as she had "evolved a young Basil Seal" in line with Waugh's comments.²⁵ The drawings for "young Basil" arrived a few days later, on 16 April, Hale explaining that "[h]is father will be the same only plump, pink and serene. His daughter a pretty version of himself."²⁶ On the 23rd a proof design was received by Waugh, who wrote to Aitken endorsing Hale's frontispiece as "all that could be hoped for."²⁷

¹⁹ Evelyn Waugh to Handasyde Buchanan, Georgetown, Georgetown University Special Collections, Waugh-Buchanan Collection, MS 36 (31 August 1955), and MS 41 (2 August 1956).

²⁰ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (16 March 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 6, fol. 205.

²¹ Gillon Aitken to Evelyn Waugh (14 March 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 4, fol. 61.

²² Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (16 March 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 6, fol. 205.

²³ Quoted in Gillon Aitken to Evelyn Waugh (1 April 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 4, fol. 64.

²⁴ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (3 April 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 6, fol. 209.

²⁵ Quoted in Gillon Aitken to Evelyn Waugh (11 April 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 4, fol. 67.

²⁶ Quoted in Gillon Aitken to Evelyn Waugh (16 April 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 4, fol. 68.

²⁷ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (23 April 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 6, fol. 211.

The frontispiece is indeed a key addition to Waugh's little book (see front cover). It does not illustrate a particular moment in the story. As per Hale's description, it shows a symbolic group inspired by a combination of Waugh's initial ideas for the drawing. Against the golden dome of the Santa Maria della Salute basilica in Venice, old Basil, flanked by his wife Angela and his daughter Barbara, reclines in a gondola. Florid, corpulent, nattily-suited, clutching a stick and smoking a cigar, old Basil looks a lot like old Waugh. (Given that Hale and Waugh never met, it is unclear how she came to this uncanny rendering.) In the middle ground above the Seal family group, a pair of winged putti hold the shining wedding ring-cum-halo. Given old Basil's regress from respectability and progress towards the "ethereal," it is surely an ironic one.²⁸ Above the gondola, a second figure rides a golden-winged dappled Pegasus (a development from the "mettlesome hunter" of Waugh's initial correspondence), surrounded by glittering stars and falling broken hearts: the "young Basil" described in the letters, the story's "rum" antihero Charles Albright.²⁹ Albright's lowering brow and the set of his jaw chomping on a pipe provide visual echoes of his elder doppelgänger sitting below.

Hale's charming frontispiece admirably enriches Waugh's story. In mirroring the two men's facial features Hale provides a visual cue for the story's dramatisation of old Basil's encounter with his "reflection."³⁰ She likewise links the two through her use of yellow in the Pegasus wings and old Basil's suit, and picks up Basil's suggestion of incest in the visual similarities between Barbara and Albright in their haircuts and colouration. The setting of the illustration in glamorous Venice rather than grey sixties London obliquely responds to the story's mourning of a world diminished by austerity, democracy, and duty. This is a narrative world in which Basil pays his taxes and has abandoned "farouche but aristocratic" misadventure for commonplace responsibility. The story as a whole enacts a return to Basil's wild ways: to racketeering and "riding." Hale's composition, echoing this sense of return, draws a continuous circle around the two Basils, the prow of the gondola and the hooves of the Pegasus pointing reciprocally at the two antiheroes. In his final letter endorsing the design, Waugh asked Aitken to see if Hale "could be induced to give (or sell) me the completed drawing after tracing so, so that I could bind it with the manuscript of the story?"³¹ In binding the illustration with his twenty foolscap manuscript pages, Waugh demonstrates the importance of Hale's frontispiece in the story's history.³²

²⁸ Waugh, "Basil Seal Rides Again," 502.

²⁹ Waugh, "Basil Seal Rides Again," 485.

³⁰ Waugh, "Basil Seal Rides Again," 512.

³¹ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (23 April 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 6, fol.211.

³² Austin, University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Evelyn Waugh Collection, MS 1, fol. 5, Basil Seal Rides Again Holograph with author revisions, bound, with an illustration by Kathleen Hale, 1962.

What did Waugh hope to achieve in publishing this *édition de luxe*? In reviewing the book upon its release, the *Listener*'s Jocelyn Brooke facetiously suggested that the book, "hardly more than a short story, bulked out by large print and thick paper, and charmingly produced" was published in *de luxe* "for the benefit, presumably, of people who collect expensive limited editions."³³ Waugh was by no means the only twentieth-century writer to publish his works in such a way. As Lawrence Rainey has shown, such editions were central to literary modernism, with James Joyce and Gertrude Stein among many modernists who published first editions of their work in *de luxe* issue, with an eye to the rare book trade.³⁴ Yet while *éditions de luxe* have an honoured place in French collecting, the modern Anglo-American taste for *de luxe* printings was described bluntly by John Carter, as "bait for suckers:" a phrase "used to dignify a large number of shoddily pretentious books published at fancy prices."³⁵ Waugh did not ordinarily indulge in sucker-baiting, and the letters to Chapman's are anxious about the charge of "cheat[ing] honest customers" by flooding the rare book market.³⁶ His creation of fine copies was usually a private affair, comprising dedication and presentation copies for family and friends, printed on handmade paper, lavishly bound, with *justification de tirage* pages signed by Waugh at home and sent back for binding. Waugh, who himself collected fine books, and owned several works on book collecting and book care including Holbrook Jackson's *Anatomy of Bibliomania* and Douglas Cockerell's *Bookbinding, and the Care of Books*, understood the appeal of high quality, limited editions.³⁷ Ten years prior to *The Rake's Regress*, the first edition of *Love Among the Ruins* was printed as such for private distribution; in an inscription to his friend Angela Laycock, Waugh refers to this as an edition "De Luxe."³⁸ At fifty-one pages with illustrations, *Love Among the Ruins* is a similarly slim tale, though at the time it merited its own trade publication.

Waugh's biographer Douglas Lane Patey described the publication of *Basil Seal Rides Again* as "an act of self-punishing irony." The old Basil is, Patey remarks, "transparently Waugh himself: prematurely aged at sixty, fat, deaf, short of breath."³⁹ Similarly, I have argued elsewhere that the story seems principally

³³ Jocelyn Brooke, Rev. of *Basil Seal Rides Again*, *Listener* 7 November 1963, in *Critical Heritage*, 451.

³⁴ Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

³⁵ John Carter, *ABC for Book Collectors* (London: Granada, 1978), 82–83.

³⁶ Evelyn Waugh to John MacDougall (30 August 1963), Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 218.

³⁷ Holbrook Jackson, *Anatomy of Bibliomania* (London: Soncino Press, 1932), HRC Waugh Z 992 J16 1932 WAU. Douglas Cockerell, *Bookbinding, and the Care of Books: A Text-Book for Bookbinders and Librarians* (London: Pitman, 1924), HRC Waugh Z 271 C64 1924 WAU.

³⁸ Evelyn Waugh to Angela Laycock, inscription in *Love Among the Ruins*, in *The Evelyn Waugh Papers of Sam Radin* (New York: Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 2006), 44–45.

³⁹ Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 359.

to be an act of self-conscious, ironic self-fashioning.⁴⁰ As Waugh's last original published work of fiction and an apparently self-directed satire, it is both ironic and appropriate that he should choose a mode of publication most commonly associated with vanity publishing. That Waugh in his letters dubs this self-portrait "B. S. Rides Again" is a crude reminder that we should not take his vanity edition too seriously. Satiric wildness—the "farouche" dimension of Basil Seal—rides alongside and gleefully destabilises this story's aristocratic pretensions.

No Representation of Myself: *A Little Learning*

A Little Learning provides a sombre riposte to *Basil Seal's* ironic material and textual posturing. Both as a self-portrait, and in terms of its materiality, the book is studiously anti-flamboyant, dealing rather fustily in Waugh's genealogy, paternal relationship, the small trials of childhood, and early maturation during his time as a schoolmaster in Wales. Several early critics, in reviewing *A Little Learning*, sought to set the autobiography within a dialectic of craftsmanship or artistic *Bildung*. Malcolm Bradbury noted its emphasis on "art, penmanship, and [...] personal style" and that in Waugh's writing "craftsmanship takes on a positive value."⁴¹ Bradbury also noted, perceptively, that Waugh's books had "suffered considerably" from misprints, a failing about which Waugh was deeply anxious.⁴² (*A Little Learning* was not spared this ignominy: Maurice Bowra wrote to Waugh with a list of corrections at Michaelmas 1964, to which Waugh replied with thanks, apologising for the "imperfect" first edition.)⁴³ Anthony Burgess thought that for Waugh, "style is a kind of morality."⁴⁴ V. S. Pritchett noted Waugh's "regard for craftsmanship as a moral duty," of which his interest in script and lettering was an early sign.⁴⁵

That *A Little Learning* details its subject's development as a master craftsman is hardly surprising: this, after all, is what a literary autobiography should do. That it is, in some sense, valedictory is also not unexpected, especially given the note struck by the first sentence: "Only when one has lost all curiosity about the future has one reached the age to write an autobiography."⁴⁶ However what is fascinating about *A Little Learning* is its refusal of the kinds of revelation—spiritual and

⁴⁰ Milthorpe, *Evelyn Waugh's Satire*, 157–62.

⁴¹ Malcolm Bradbury, Rev. of *A Little Learning*, *Spectator* 11 September 1964, in *Critical Heritage*, 458. D. Marcel DeCoste has recently expanded on the notion of craft as vocation in Waugh's novels. *The Vocation of Evelyn Waugh: Faith and Art in the Post-War Fiction* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

⁴² Bradbury, in *Critical Heritage*, 459.

⁴³ Evelyn Waugh to Sir Maurice Bowra, Michaelmas 1964, in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, edited by Mark Amory (London: Methuen, 1980), 625.

⁴⁴ Anthony Burgess, Rev. of *A Little Learning*, *Encounter* December 1964, in *Critical Heritage*, 473.

⁴⁵ V. S. Pritchett, Rev. of *A Little Learning*, *New Statesman* 25 September 1964, in *Critical Heritage*, 460.

⁴⁶ Waugh, *A Little Learning*, 1.

emotional—common to the genre. Subtitled *The First Volume of an Autobiography*, the final sentence hints at mooted further volumes: “I climbed the sharp hill that led to all the years ahead.”⁴⁷ The division of his life story into potential multiple volumes was in part due to Waugh’s anxiety about his ability to complete a full account. *A Little Learning* was originally planned for release in 1963, but in February of that year Waugh wrote to MacDougall to delay its publication:

I am afraid that we must decide that the autobiography can’t appear this year. I’m sorry. But I have come back to a \$5000 commissioned obituary of Pope John that will take a full fortnight. The alternative is to do the autobiography in slim volumes of about 80,000 words each. I can’t get a full volume finished before late summer at the earliest.⁴⁸

In January 1964, in the final stages of the book’s production, Waugh wrote to Aitken with instructions about the title page: “Do not specify on the title page ‘three volumes’. It may run to more or I may be stuck impotent at the second.”⁴⁹ As it happened, Waugh did not write more than a few pages of this second volume.⁵⁰ The Huntington correspondence shows that through 1964 and 1965 he was preoccupied with preparing errata slips for *A Little Learning*, and revising the three *Sword of Honour* books for publication in a standalone volume. In March 1966, Waugh wrote to his brother Alec that 1965 was an “idle and low-spirited” year: “I had foolishly contracted to write 4 books (not one) and could not face the task.”⁵¹ Waugh was reluctant to continue with the autobiography for financial and legal reasons too: learning in March 1965 that *A Little Learning* had not been selling well, Waugh wrote that there was therefore “no reason to hurry the second volume. [...] The more people die off, the fuller my second volume of autobiography can be.”⁵² In the end, it was the author himself—not his targets—who would die before the second volume could be filled.

Waugh’s ambivalence about the autobiography, and particularly about its potential to offer illumination or pleasure to the reader, emerges in *A Little Learning*. The opening pages are almost studiously leaden in tone, weighted by Waugh’s self-conscious boredom with the task of accounting for himself:

⁴⁷ Waugh, 230.

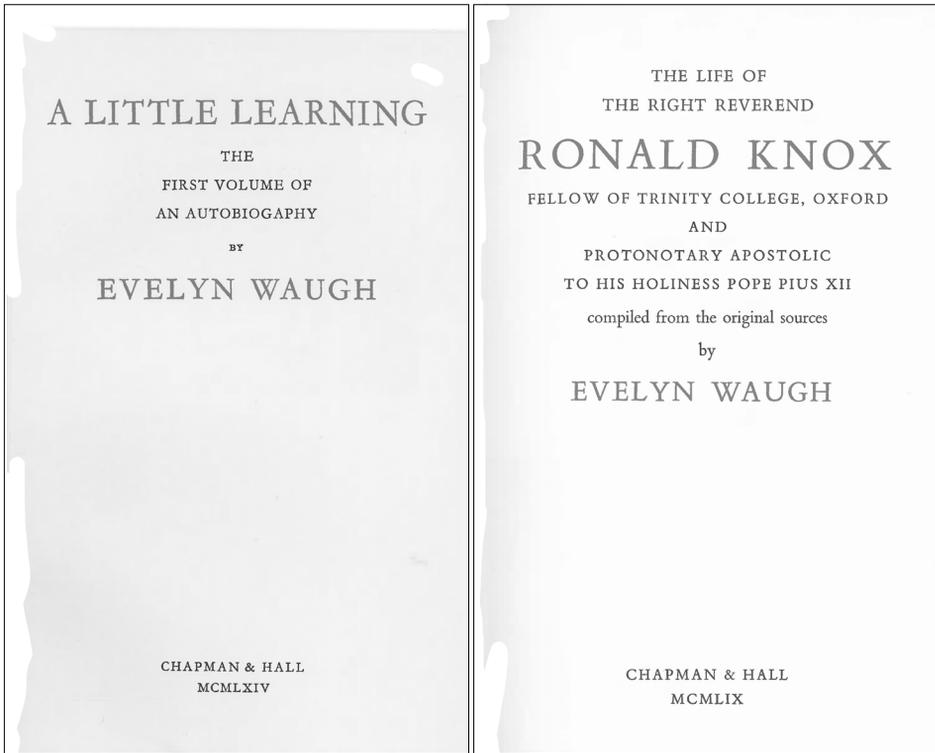
⁴⁸ Evelyn Waugh to John MacDougall (20 February 1963) Huntington MS Waugh 6, fol. 201. See Wilson and Cooke, “Introduction,” xlii–lii for an exhaustive narrative of the text’s production and publication as revealed in the Huntington letters.

⁴⁹ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (14 January 1964), Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 228.

⁵⁰ These are included as “A Little Hope,” Appendix D in *A Little Learning*, edited by Wilson and Cooke, 484–90.

⁵¹ These included books on the Crusades, the Popes, American history, and volume 2 of the autobiography. Evelyn Waugh to Alec Waugh, 6 March 1966, in *Letters*, 637.

⁵² Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (20 March 1965), Huntington MS Waugh 8, fol. 279.



Figures 1a and 1b: Title pages for *A Little Learning* and *The Life of Ronald Knox*.

the future is the “dreariest of prospects,” his ancestors are “None of [them] illustrious.”⁵³ As Muireann Leach has argued, Waugh seems to be engaging in “anti-autobiography,” presenting his self as unremarkable.⁵⁴ In so doing, Leach argues, Waugh “eschew[s] individuality,” in effect, mocking the autobiographical form.⁵⁵ Leach’s argument seems vindicated by the book’s production and design, in which Waugh emphasised nothing so much as uniformity. For example, in setting the book Waugh instructed that it “should closely resemble my *Life* of Ronald Knox.”⁵⁶ The title pages of each shows their generic identity (Figures 1a & 1b). Both are set in capitals with the main title and author line in sanguine, and

⁵³ Waugh, 1–2.

⁵⁴ Muireann Leach, “Do Not Analyse the Self: *A Little Learning* as Evelyn Waugh’s Catholic Anti-Autobiography,” *Prose Studies* 37 no. 2 (2015): 112–27, accessed 10 March 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01440357.2015.1084708>.

⁵⁵ Leach, 114–15.

⁵⁶ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (10 January 64) Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 227. Wilson and Cooke support this reading: “In form, he was clearly influenced by [...] *Knox*” (Wilson and Cooke, “Introduction,” xxix).

subtitles and publication details in black (the standard editions of his novels were always set in plain black).

When galley proofs were sent, Waugh was deeply critical of the printer's work: "I notice the title page which he was instructed to make uniform with Ronald Knox. Was he ever shown a copy of that book? Does he understand the distinction between Roman & Arabic numerals?"⁵⁷ Evidently these errors were fixed in the latter stages of production, for the two title pages are almost identical. Nor can this simply be attributed to a standard design for Waugh titles: the *Basil Seal* title page, for instance, features petrol-blue lettering for the main title, with the subtitle in black Gothic. As well as the title page, the verso also suggests identity with *Knox*. In both, the subject appears in photographic reproduction, though in each case the representation is something of a deflection: *Knox's* is a photograph of his terracotta portrait bust by Arthur Pollen, while Waugh, captioned as "The Author" appears in photographs from 1913 and 1923 (many years prior, that is, to Waugh becoming either an author or this author). In its paratextual apparatus, therefore, *A Little Learning* materially mimics *Ronald Knox*, as though Waugh is parodying any possibility of individuality that might be suggested by the genre and form of life-writing.

However, and in spite of this seeming ambivalence towards the self-revelation required of the autobiography, Waugh was very much concerned with the book's physical properties, sending explicit instructions about the preparation of its wrapper and illustrations. He was particularly exercised about the illustrations, which, as with *Basil Seal*, he saw as a value addition for customers paying a premium price (thirty shillings) for a reasonably short book. He gave directions about the placement of eight backed plates (which he argued should be placed through the book rather than in an "illustrated supplement").⁵⁸ Waugh sought and arranged for reproductions of all the illustrations, including stills from his Oxford film *The Scarlet Woman*, and a self-portrait of his great-great-grandfather Thomas Gosse of which he had only a half-tone reproduction in his possession, requiring several letters of enquiry to surviving Gosse family members to get an original photograph made. He also gave directives about the image planned for the frontispiece, a reproduction of his juvenile "My History" (Figure 2): "It should be given to the sort of specialized photographer who reproduces ancient manuscripts for the British Museum."⁵⁹

This illustrated sheet was drawn by young Evelyn while in the fifth form at Heath Mount prep school, just prior to his eighth birthday. On the left a master points at a French lesson; his students, significantly, face away from the lesson. On the right, the text—with initial letters decorated as in illuminated script—relates

⁵⁷ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (8 June 1964), Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 249.

⁵⁸ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (10 January 1964), Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 227.

⁵⁹ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (19 February 1964), Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 231.

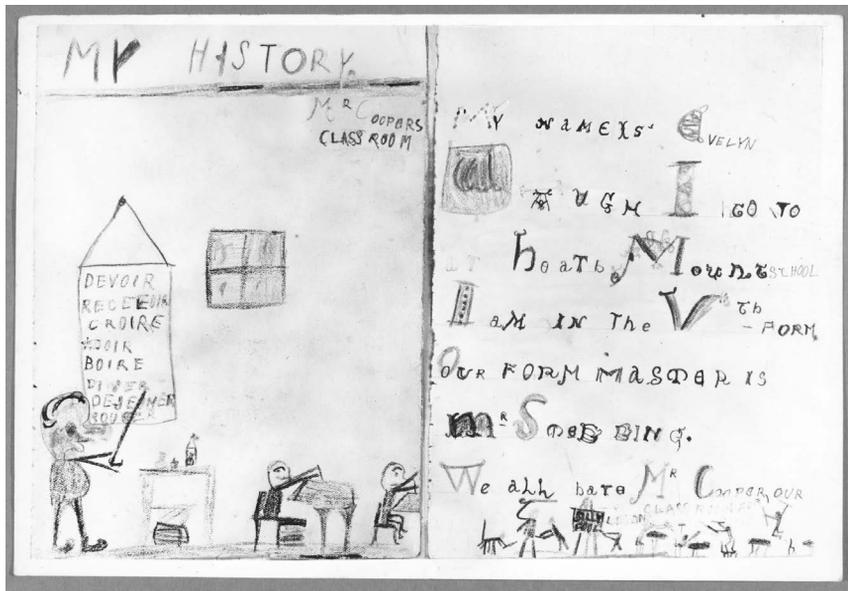


Figure 2: "First Draft of This Work, September 1911." Photographic print reproduced in *A Little Learning*. Huntington MS Waugh 9, fol. 10.

the young Evelyn's life story: "My Name Is Evelyn Waugh I Go To Heath Mount School." The elder Waugh has captioned the piece "First Draft of This Work, September 1911." In the first edition, this image became Plate 2, placed between the four great-grandfathers and a reproduction of Waugh's first piece of fiction, 1910's "The Curse of the Horse Race." In the sequence of the plates, heredity turns to life story, turns to fiction.

In planning the wrapper, Waugh wrote that "no representation of myself would be suitable for all three volumes," instead that if a pictorial wrapper was used at all (which he by no means felt "essential or desirable"), Aitken should seek out:

a drawing by Rowlandson (or a contemporary in the same style) of a grammar-schoolroom with a leery looking master with a brick & a huddle of urchins round his desk saying their lesson. Something like that in monochrome (sanguine) overprinted with bold type might be suitable.⁶⁰

This Augustan fantasy-wrapper did not eventuate, but in place of an explicit nod to caricature, the wrapper makes a more oblique move: it is entirely devoid of individual qualities. Aitken pitched to Waugh instead a plain letter wrapper, "carrot coloured, French, hand-made paper." The dark grey binding of the book would go well with the dusty orange of the wrapper, "well, in fact," as Aitken

⁶⁰ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (14 January 1964), Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 228.

observed, “with most colours.” Chapman & Hall would produce all three volumes of the autobiography in the same grey binding, “varying the colour but not the style of the wrapper with each volume.”⁶¹ Aitken as well as Waugh would know that most buyers, in particular libraries, would dispose of the wrapper as soon as they bought the book. As such, each volume of the autobiography would appear physically identical as soon as they were placed on the shelf. In emphasising uniformity in the production of these volumes Waugh seems to be purposefully evading any sense of his autobiography as individually revealing or distinctive. As Pritchett commented in his review of the book, Waugh appeared to have “many selves, deeply embedded;” the air of sobriety and conventionality with which Waugh approached his self-portrait should be taken as a “genuine impersonation [... a] trying out his own funeral in advance.”⁶²

Throughout his career Waugh demonstrated his interest in the book arts. As a student he earned money designing dustjackets for Chapman & Hall,⁶³ later in life he prized fine papers and bindings, collecting Victorian volumes in mint condition.⁶⁴ As a reader he noted physical defects in his contemporaries’ work (of Cyril Connolly’s wartime limited edition *The Unquiet Grave*, Waugh approved of its handmade paper but thought the typesetting “shocking”).⁶⁵ In directing the physical production of both *Basil Seal Rides Again* and *A Little Learning*, Waugh seems acutely self-aware of the ways in which his books could be taken, both textually and materially: as self-portraits and as evidence of devotion to craft. That both books were flawed with numerous misprints is testament to his “wretched proof read[ing]”,⁶⁶ but his bitter unhappiness with the mistakes points to his sense that physical imperfections were an index of greater moral failings. Indeed, Waugh requested that “defective copies” of *Basil Seal* be sought out and destroyed, and their numbers “repeated” for signing.⁶⁷ In attending to what might seem to be the minor details of these final works, Waugh inscribes a material valediction to his life as a professional writer, at once stylish, serious, and ironic.

University of Tasmania

⁶¹ Gillon Aitken to Evelyn Waugh (11 May 1964), Huntington MS Waugh 4, fol. 92.

⁶² Pritchett, in *Critical Heritage*, 464.

⁶³ The 1919 diary records, for example, his work designing the cover for Chapman & Hall’s publication of *Invisible Tides* by Beatrice Seymour (Davie, *Diaries*, 26–30).

⁶⁴ See Oram, “Evelyn Waugh, Bookman,” and Milthorpe, “A Secret House,” for discussions of Waugh’s collecting habits.

⁶⁵ Evelyn Waugh, marginal note in *The Unquiet Grave* by Palinurus [Cyril Connolly], HRC MS Waugh 7, fol. 1.

⁶⁶ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (7 June 1963) Huntington MS Waugh 6, fol. 212.

⁶⁷ Evelyn Waugh to Gillon Aitken (12 November 1963) Huntington MS Waugh 7, fol. 224.