

Another World Waugh

The literature of wine tasting

Steve Tomashefsky

You already know the first world Waugh: Evelyn, the internationally known author of *Brideshead Revisited*, *Vile Bodies*, *The Loved One*, and almost 20 other novels. Then there is the second world Waugh: Evelyn's brother Alec, an author even more prolific than his younger sibling. But the Waugh story doesn't end there. Other authors in the family include Evelyn's son Auberon, Auberon's son Alexander, and Alexander's great-grandfather Arthur. Alexander has a son who, as far as I know, has yet to publish anything. I suppose he is an undeclared Waugh.

This essay has little to do with those Waughs. But I hesitate to jump right in to my real topic, which is wine, a subject of great interest to Evelyn, Alec, and Auberon Waugh, who all wrote books about it. Indeed, the first book on wine I ever read, the book that taught me much of what I know, was Alec Waugh's *Wines and Spirits*, published in 1968



Auberon, Evelyn, and Alec in one picture.

as a volume in the great Time-Life Foods of the World series. Auberon Waugh wrote on wine for several English periodicals and, in 1986, published *Waugh on Wine*, a collection of his somewhat quirky columns, which novelist Jay McInerney calls the "most pungent wine writing of the century" – by which he means the most sarcastic.¹ And Evelyn Waugh, it

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A shelf of Waughs.

may surprise you to know, wrote a lovely slim book titled *Wine in Peace and War*, privately published around 1947 by the London wine-selling firm of Saccone & Speed, whose history the book chronicles.

Wine is a subject that inspires strong reactions. People who know little about it feel the danger of being looked down on. People who know a lot feel the danger of being labeled snobs. In his little book, Evelyn Waugh put his finger on the fundamental dilemma:

The first and essential thing to be borne in mind about wine is that it is something made to be enjoyed. The pleasure it gives is the only ultimate test of any vintage. The corollary of

this is that like all good works of man, its pleasure is enormously enhanced by knowledge and experience. We cannot all be connoisseurs. For that special gifts and opportunities are required. Moreover it is quite possible to be a connoisseur and to lack at the same time all sense of enjoyment. Many literary critics have this sorry gift.²

Today's most widely followed wine critic, who freely describes himself as a hedonist, is Robert M. Parker Jr.; his books and bi-monthly publication, *The Wine Advocate*, are alleged to have the power to make or break a wine, and his opinions on wine-growing and

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winemaking techniques have gained an astonishing worldwide following.

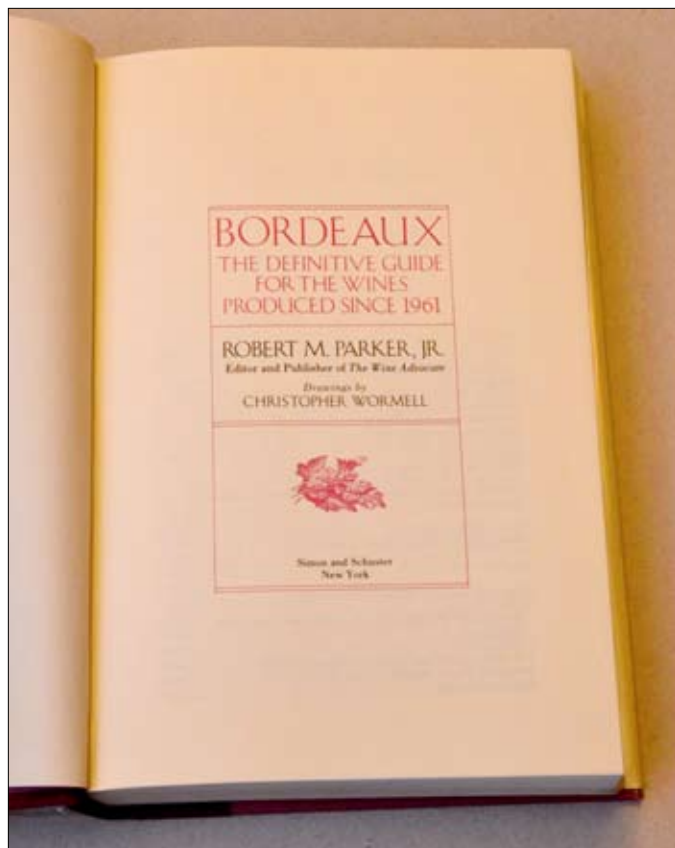
Parker rates wines on a 100-point scale, which is really a 50-point scale, since the worst swill rates at least 50. He has said he likes the 100-point scale because Americans are used to grading things that way. Another source of Parker's power is his apparent freedom from conflicts of interest. His publication, *The Wine Advocate*, runs no advertising, and though he accepts some freebies from winemakers, he buys a significant portion of the wines he reviews. Most critics in all fields convince themselves – rightly or not – that they can be objective despite friendships, feuds, favors, funding, and family. Parker seems to try hard to reduce their impact.

Deciding what wine to buy can be particularly difficult for several reasons. First, there are thousands of choices. For example, on the website of the local retailer Binny's Beverage Depot, I recently found 2,443 wines listed at under \$15 a bottle, 1,663 wines at \$15 to \$30, and 746 at \$30 to \$50. Without either knowledge or guidance from someone who has knowledge, choosing which bottle to buy can be a roll of the dice.

The second complicating factor for wine is its variability. Wine is a product of both nature and nurture, made in annual growing cycles. A wine's taste can be greatly influenced by the weather during the growing season, the farming and winemaking techniques used in a given year, and the length of time the wine has been in the bottle. So brand loyalty may mean little. If you tasted and liked the 2003 Château Lafite, that is no guarantee you'll also like the 2004.

Finally, wines change over time, occasionally for the better, often for the worse. Some wines simply turn to vinegar. Others, unattractive when young, in due course become perfumed and harmonious. That process can take a few years or, in some cases, several decades. So how do you know whether a bottle is likely to improve with age? And at what age should you pop the cork?

Those and other problems can make a *Consumer Reports* approach very useful. And that's exactly what Robert Parker set out to provide. Each issue of *The Wine Advocate* reviews several hundred wines, providing brief descriptions, a numerical rating, and, where applicable, a prediction of when the wine will be at its best to drink.



The first edition of Robert Parker's Bordeaux (1985).

Parker's marking system is controversial. He acknowledges that on the cover of every issue, where he states:

While some have suggested that scoring is not well suited to a beverage that has been romantically extolled for centuries, wine is no different from any consumer product. There are specific standards of quality that full-time wine professionals recognize, and there are benchmark wines against which others can be judged. . . . Scoring wines is simply taking a professional's opinion and applying some sort of numerical system to it on a consistent basis.

Among those who disagree with Parker's system is the English writer Hugh Johnson, these days the dean of Britain's wine press. Johnson's critique illustrates the divide between Parker and writers of the older school:

[Parker] thinks the wine industry needs its Ralph Nader. . . . "Wine," wrote Parker, "is no different from any other consumer product." Oh yes it is, I thought. . . . But this was America. There is no need to recount where Parker's scores took him. He had invented a system that supposedly took the mystery, the guesswork out of choosing wine. This guy will not only tell you if it's good, but exactly how good.³

Johnson himself uses a four-star rating system. The different approaches, it seems to me, reflect two philosophical premises. First, Parker believes

that he can make – and that consumers want him to make – fairly fine quality distinctions. Johnson apparently prefers to group wines in broader categories, with a four-star wine probably encompassing everything within Parker's range of, say 95 to 100. Is that because he is less sure of being able to distinguish a 95 from a 96-point wine? Or because he doesn't believe the distinction exists? He doesn't say.

Second, Parker's system assumes that consumers will always want to buy the best available wine in a given price range. Johnson – and here is where he takes issue with the notion that wine is like any other consumer product – believes that the concept of "best" is misleading and that wines can differ widely in character without differing in quality. In a sense, the two approaches reflect their authors' backgrounds. Parker trained as a lawyer; a lawyer's job is to find and articulate fine distinctions. Johnson studied English literature, and although literary critics should be able to say that some of Shakespeare's plays are more successful than others, most would hesitate to say *Macbeth* is a 100 but *Julius Caesar* only a 97.

A recent entry into the anti-Parker camp is Alice Feiring, whose book title, *The Battle for Wine and Love or How I Saved the World from Parkerization*, wildly overstates her influence but captures the controversy Parker has inspired. Feiring, a blogger who occasionally writes for the *New York Times*, says she does not like the kind of wine Parker likes, and she blames him for what she sees as a global uniformity in winemaking style:

When a wine got a 94+ score, bottle prices climbed, the wine sold out, and money was made all around. Wine was traded on the NASDAQ; wines became "brands"; big brands gobbled up little ones. The style of wine I craved – authentic, reflective of its climate and soil – began to disappear.⁴

So while Feiring looks for "authentic" wines, whatever that means, Parker's highest praise is often reserved for what he inelegantly describes as "fruit bombs," whatever that means.

Parker's verbal descriptions are indeed controversial. He employs an original (though by now widely imitated) vocabulary almost bewildering in its specificity. For example in a recent issue he offers this description of a wine rated 98-100 points:

... an extraordinary blockbuster aromatic profile of lead pencil shavings, forest floor, black fruits, and a hint of unsmoked, high-class cigar tobacco.

Now I don't know about you, but I don't know what pencil shavings, forest floors, and unsmoked, high-class cigar tobacco taste like, and I'm fairly sure I don't want to know. An economist at Princeton has compiled a list of some 123 adjectives Parker has used to describe wine, including many terms one might recognize, such as "anise," "blackcurrant," "nutmeg," "prune," and "violets." Other terms – such as "angular," "scorched earth," "spicy earth," "refined fruit," "sweaty fruit," "zesty mineral," "crushed rocks," and "underbrush" – seem far less obvious, and not necessarily attractive, though I don't believe Parker uses those terms pejoratively.⁵ Above all, they comprise a highly personal taste vocabulary that very likely helps Parker to fix a wine's taste in his mind but probably is of little use to others.

Parker's writing style has had broad influence. Here, for example, is a tasting note I saw the other day on the wine-fan website Snooth.com:

This has classic notes of tobacco, leather and limestone on the nose, with a nuance of vanilla and lovely grace notes of smoke and slightly herbaceous/herbal sod. Displaying a wonderfully feminine and firmly mid-bodied mouthfeel, with fine acidity and rich flavors of leather, red currants, and just a touch of rust.

Sod, rust – perhaps such prose would persuade you to buy a wine. Perhaps it just confuses you, as it does me. On the other hand, Auberon Waugh (the "pungent" one, you'll recall) has written that our critics aren't half wild enough in their descriptions:

My own feeling, despite several unhappy experiences, is that wine-writing should be camped up... Bizarre and improbable side-tastes should be proclaimed: mushrooms, rotting wood, black treacle, burned pencils, condensed milk, sewage, the smell of French railway stations or ladies' underwear – anything to get away from the accepted list of fruit and flowers. As I say, I am not sure it helps much, but it is more amusing to read.⁶

And so it is. But what Auberon Waugh had proposed in jest has, it appears, become more or less the serious norm.

Writing about wine is an ancient profession. Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* describes many grape varieties and the locations where they produced the best wines. But the first half of the 20th century saw a remarkable output of British books on wine, many of which remain classics of their genre. Most were written by amateurs – English

professors, barristers, architects, essayists, and art critics. Other authors were in the "wine trade," gentlemen who sold wine for a living to a privileged clientele. Those books provided little guidance to the wine purchaser. Perhaps that was because their readers never wandered into wine "superstores" wondering what to bring home for dinner. Typically, they formed a relationship with a "gentleman wine merchant" and placed themselves in his hands.

Among that great outpouring of books was George Saintsbury's *Notes on a Cellar Book*, published in 1920. Saintsbury was an essayist and professor of English literature at the University of Edinburgh. He wrote the book in his retirement, when gout had ended his active drinking career, so it is necessarily a memoir of past glories. Other than to call a wine "good," "bad," "sound," or "excellent," Saintsbury rarely described what he had drunk.

P. Morton Shand, an English architect and architectural critic, published *A Book of French Wines* in 1928, and the next year, *A Book of Other Wines – Than French*. Shand provided a firm grounding in the geography and history of winemaking, but he did not describe specific wines.

In 1931, H. Warner Allen, an Oxford scholar, essayist, and sometime mystery novelist, published *The Romance of Wine*, a book that was part technical – describing in detail how wine is made – and, like Saintsbury's book, part reminiscence of great wines drunk in years past. Here he is on Château Latour (a leading Bordeaux vineyard of which I will have more to say) of the 1869 vintage:

Beautiful to the eye, this great wine breathed forth a perfume worthy of the gods... The palate recognized a heroic wine, such a drink as might refresh the warring archangels, and the perfection of its beauty called up the noble phrase "terrible as an army with banners". The full organ swell of a triumphal march might express its appeal in terms of music.⁷

I suppose I'd really want to drink that wine if I could find it, but even to Allen's readers in 1931, it was a long-gone historical curiosity.

The last of the great prewar British wine books was Maurice Healy's *Stay Me with Flagons*, published in 1940. Healy was a barrister, and it seems he drank a great deal. His book is a methodical review of the various French wine types and his experience of them, focusing on the most famous but including many of the less well-known. Healy was fairly free of snobbery and was prepared to recognize quality in affordable but obscure wines.

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Notably, Healy avoided almost any description of the wines he had drunk.

Alec Waugh's beautifully illustrated introductory guide in the Time-Life Foods of the World series was the beginning of my own wine education. As a teenager, I read it again and again, though I was too young to buy wine and only occasionally tasted it. My father's approach to buying wine tended to follow a brand-loyalty strategy. He bought a lot of Mateus and Lancers, two heavily marketed Portuguese rosé wines known for their consistency, slight sweetness, and, in Lancers' case, a bit of fizz. At some point my father found he liked a French white burgundy called Pouilly-Fuissé and a French red wine called beaujolais – at least in part because he liked saying the names.

One other wine briefly caught my father's fancy. Near our house was a winery called High Tor Vineyards, located on a promontory over the Hudson River. The High Tor vineyard was planted by a former radio script-writer named Everett Crosby, who harvested his first vintage in 1952 and in 1973 published a memoir imaginatively titled *The Vintage Years*. My father liked the idea that we had a local winery, and when he learned about it he bought one mixed case of their Rockland Red and Rockland White. Unfortunately, the wine was not even halfway decent.⁸

It wasn't until I had married and moved to Chicago that I began seriously to consider buying good wine. In those days, Gallo was what we could afford, though for an occasional splurge we bought Almadén, another California wine that was really not much better.

Then one day at the public library I came across a book called *Diary of a Winetaster*, by Harry Waugh, published in 1972. That author, later described by Auberon Waugh as a "distant kinsman,"⁹ quickly became my tutor in all things vinous, as he was for a generation of wine drinkers around the world. He was widely regarded as the most gifted wine taster of the post-World War II generation, even by many in France. He was the single most important influence in making California wine – particularly Napa Valley wine – respectable outside California. He was a major force in gaining commercial and consumer acceptance for the lesser-known wines of Bordeaux that were still affordable, though at the same time he relentlessly promoted the first-growth Bordeaux wine Château Latour and in doing so appears to have influenced California wine-making styles in the direction Robert Parker

was later to champion.

Waugh's introduction to *Diary of a Winetaster* set his agenda:

There are two ways of writing about wine. The first, the usual one, is to narrate the history, the facts and figures of the various districts, which after all do not change much and, in a general sense, describe the wine. Far too many books have already been written in this category, especially on the wines of France, for this really means dressing up old material in a fresh guise. The second is to endeavour to write about the wines themselves, with the express object of assisting would-be purchasers as much as possible to make their selection.¹⁰

Waugh's book took the second path. His consumer-oriented approach was novel at the time, and the man himself was an entirely original figure on the wine scene.

Waugh was born in 1904. His father, a veterinarian, died four years later, leaving his family in a precarious financial position. Waugh attended a public school but dropped out at age 16 when his family could no longer afford the tuition.

He held and lost various jobs for almost 15 years. Then, as he tells us, "at the age of 30, I struggled into the wine trade in the humble guise of a day-book clerk in an ancient City firm, long since defunct, called H.B. Fearon & Sons."¹¹

Fearons had an affiliate called Block, Grey & Block in Mayfair, which catered to the carriage trade. After several years at Fearons, Waugh was called to Mayfair to interview for a sales job. He didn't get it. "Alas," he wrote, "because I had not been to Eton or Oxford, nor was I distinguished at any kind of sport such as a blue for cricket, away I was sent with my tail between my legs."¹² Eventually, however, he was posted to the Mayfair branch, where he achieved success despite his lack of pedigree.

There was a reason for his success. At his own expense, Waugh visited the French vineyards during his vacations to broaden his experience. Apparently that wasn't done much by wine merchants in those days, and it enabled Waugh to build relationships and train his tasting skills beyond those of his coworkers. His career at Block, Grey & Block was cut short by the war, but after serving six years he returned to the wine trade, joining John Harvey & Sons, distributors of "Bristol Cream" sherry. Waugh took over Harveys' table-wine program, significantly expanding its presence in that market. He regularly trav-



Harry Waugh

eled to France and Germany to taste new wine for Harveys to sell, frequently finding little-known wines of high quality that could be sold inexpensively.

In 1962, Harveys became part-owners of Château Latour, and Waugh was given a seat on Latour's board of directors. Located in the Pauillac commune of Bordeaux, Latour's vineyard was first planted in the 14th century though, like many Bordeaux vineyards, its fame dates to the 17th century. In 1855, when the French government undertook to rate Bordeaux vineyards according to their reputations for quality, Latour was one of only four rated as *grands crus*, or "first growths."

Waugh never explained exactly what his duties as a Latour director were. Seemingly his main job was to visit the Château frequently and drink as many of the old wines in its cellar as he could. But the position was an enormous source of pride, and for the rest of his life he rarely missed an opportunity to promote the wine. His connection to Latour was not exactly hidden in his books, though it wasn't always obvious either. But that gets a bit ahead of the story.

During his trips, Waugh picked up the habit of making notes on the wines he had tasted and people he had met. When he returned to the home office, he had the notes typed up and circulated them to his junior

colleagues for their education. Several of his friends, including the Cambridge historian J.H. Plumb, urged him to put the notes in book form, and in 1966, he published a slim volume called *Bacchus on the Wing*. As Professor Plumb's introduction rightly observes, Waugh's descriptions were "artfully artless – the elegant, casual, conversational style imparting, so effortlessly, great detail and deep understanding."¹³

Bacchus begins with a 1964 trip to Bordeaux arranged by Harveys to promote American sales. Waugh was accompanied by Poppy Cannon, an American who had published the authoritative *Can Opener Cook Book* in 1961. Their trip from London to Bordeaux was punctuated by visits to several Michelin-starred restaurants, presumably on Harveys' expense account.

Poppy Cannon was a friend of Josephine Baker, the expatriate dancer who lived nearby. So they stopped in to visit her and stayed the night. That caused some confusion, as Waugh explains:

Having lived in France for so many years, she took it for granted that I was Poppy's lover, and so had put us into a suite with adjoining rooms. She could not believe that ours was just an exceptionally nice but purely platonic friendship!¹⁴

Waugh himself can easily be described as a hedonist. He describes many meals on the trip in great detail, particularly enthusing over oysters whenever they were available. At a lunch stop in Burgundy, he and Poppy Cannon enjoyed *grives en brochette*. "In England I know we disapprove of shooting thrushes," he wrote, "and so do I, but golly they are good to eat!"¹⁵

The book also chronicles an April 1965 trip to America, beginning in New York, where Waugh made several sales calls on Harveys' behalf. With the sort of wide-eyed naiveté that marks much of his writing, he describes a visit to Harlem:

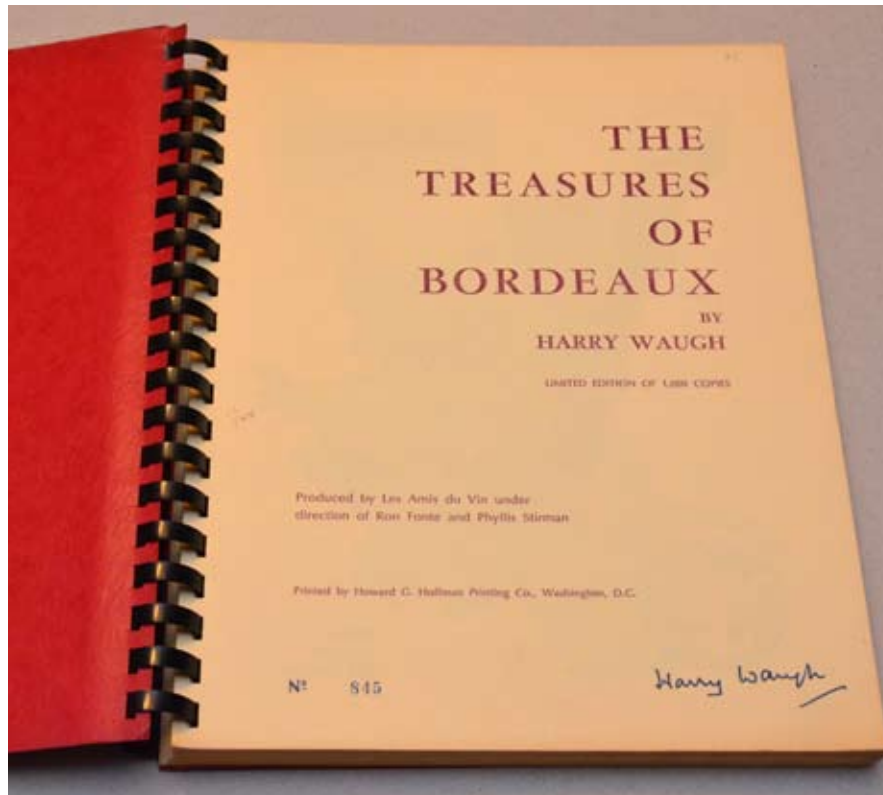
This has been a day of particular interest

because most of it has been spent in Harlem, my first visit there. On the way, the site where one of the scenes of 'West Side Story' was shot was pointed out to me. . . . After lunch we called on Roy Campanella, the proprietor of the leading Harlem liquor store at the corner of 134th Street and 7th Avenue. . . . He was a legendary sports hero of the Dodgers of Brooklyn before they moved to Los Angeles in 1958. . . . Roy told me of the growing interest among the negro population in table wines, whereas up to only a year or so ago, there

bonhomie, Waugh wrote Dickerson, a Marin County psychiatrist, and suggested they meet when Waugh was in California.

On May 22, 1965, Dickerson drove Waugh to the Napa Valley for dinner at the home of Joe and Alice Heitz, owners of a small winery near St. Helena.

Toward the end [Waugh writes], one or two 1962 Pinot Chardonnays were produced. One of these bore Joe Heitz's label and was quite outstanding. It was so good in fact that I asked for a case to be sent to me in London.¹⁷



A 1977 Waugh limited edition for members of Les Amis du Vin.

was no interest at all. He tastes all his new wines himself and then tries them out on his family in order that he can gauge the public taste and later advise his customers. Hitherto, I have not come across this close attention during my visits to the smaller liquor stores in America.¹⁶

Journeying on to California, Waugh relates an event that, in retrospect, must be seen as one of the most important moments in the history of modern American wine. A year or two earlier, he had written a magazine article describing his tastings of many old vintages of Château Latour. In response, an American wine collector, William Dickerson, had organized a tasting of the same wines in San Francisco and had published an article comparing the results. With characteristic curiosity and

That may have been the first case of California wine ever purchased by an English connoisseur. And the dinner was the beginning of a long and close friendship with Joe Heitz, whose wines Waugh came to love and promote almost as much as Latour's.

Later that week, Waugh made another acquaintance that became, if anything, even more significant. On May 26, 1965, Dickerson's friends, Bernard and Belle Rhodes, picked him up and drove him to Dickerson's house for dinner. Bernard Rhodes, known as Barney, was a dermatologist who had become one of the Bay

Area's leading wine collectors. Like Dickerson, he and Belle were close friends of Joe Heitz. Waugh and the Rhodeses quickly bonded, and almost every year for the next 30 Waugh was a guest in their home. Barney Rhodes eventually became chief operating officer of the Kaiser Health System, but it seems he never lost an opportunity to interest people in California wine. Though Waugh maintained close friendships with many Californians over the years, meeting Barney and Belle Rhodes sealed Waugh's commitment to the California vineyards.

Waugh's account of his trip to California ends on a more baroque note, again reflecting his almost childlike wonder at new things and his penchant for saying what was on his mind

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regardless of the context:

There is plenty of night life in San Francisco and the rage at the moment is what they call the "topless deal," in fact toplessness began at a night club in San Francisco called the Condor. One of the waitresses wanted to get on in life and now Carol Doda is such a big attraction that people queue up in the street to see her. It appears she assists nature by injections of silicone and this is naturally a big topic of conversation!¹⁸

Waugh also visited Chicago, where he was equally wide-eyed, if not quite so racy:

Just imagine, opposite the Continental Plaza a new building has just been started, and when it is finished it will have 100 floors; what a country this is!¹⁹

Of course he meant the John Hancock building.

In 1966, Harveys was acquired in a hostile takeover. At 62, Waugh decided to retire. He was especially gratified, however, that the new owners asked him to continue as their representative on the Latour board. If promoting Latour was one of his jobs, he never let them down.

Waugh then embarked on the career that lasted the rest of his life: lecturer, traveler,

consultant, and *bon vivant*. His second book, *The Changing Face of Wine*, published in 1968, was largely a set of notes describing wines he had tasted from the early 1960s vintages. With his third book, *Pick of the Bunch* (1970), his routine was more or less set. As the book explains, Waugh's friends Barney and Belle Rhodes, together with San Francisco wine merchant Karl Petrowsky, had organized a series of lectures for him on the west coast. According to Waugh, that had never before been attempted.

The trip became Waugh's model for the future: a series of dinner parties, lectures, and marathon tastings, combined with visits to winemakers and tours of his hosts' enormous wine cellars. Part of his method was to reinforce his welcome by keeping up a constant stream of flattery, mentioning everyone he met by name and ceaselessly praising their discernment, their wine collections, their cooking skills, and the beauty of their homes. He had a gift for making friends and, for a man considered to be one of the world's greatest wine tasters, he was remarkably humble.

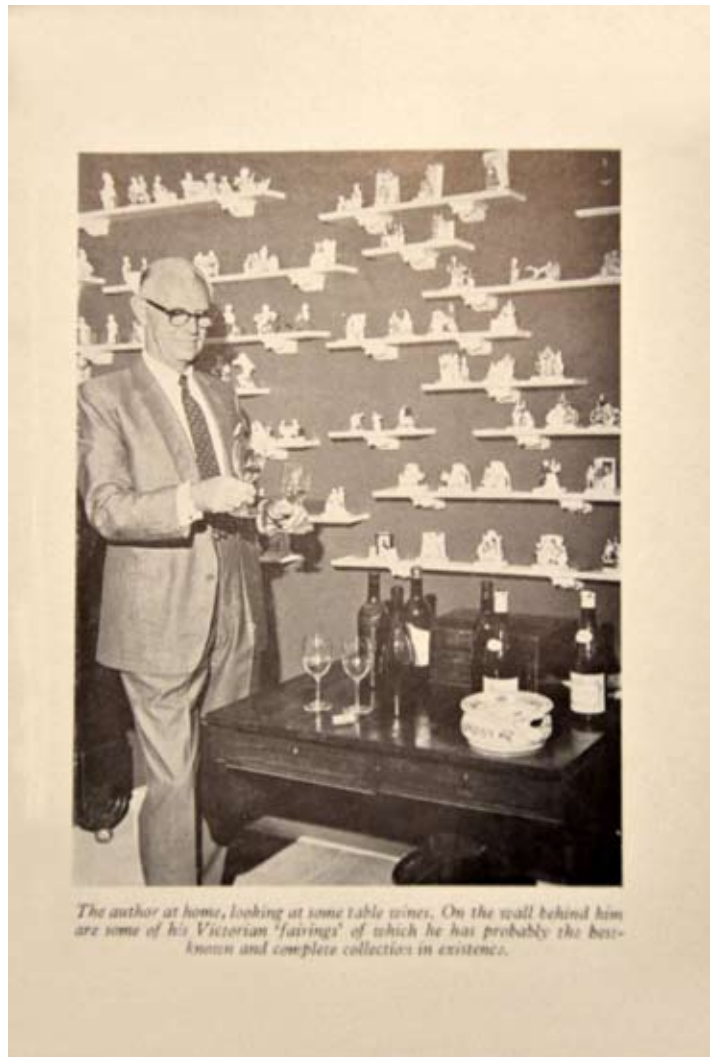
Waugh was greatly taken with the possibilities for wine in California. Recognizing that the best wines are often

expensive and rare, Waugh's consumer orientation is nowhere better shown than in his willingness to take even California jug wines seriously. He recounts a tasting of gallon bottles by such mass producers as Gallo, Italian Swiss Colony, Almadén, Paul Masson, and Franzia, finding many of them quite agreeable and, in a word he often employed, "useful."²⁰

After his first lecture tour success in California, Waugh had the good fortune to meet several wine merchants from Washington, D.C. who had started a wine-of-the-month club called Les Amis du Vin to promote wine education and increase their customer base. By the early 1970s, Waugh was coming regularly to the U.S. for lecture and tasting tours sponsored by LADV and its growing number of chapters across the country. The usual routine was for him to fly to a city and be met at the airport by his hosts, who would put him up for the night, inevitably providing him with a perfectly cooked meal and an interesting bottle or two of wine. The lecture and tasting would

Waugh was also noted as a collector of Victorian "fairings," which are porcelain ornaments, historic or amusing. He's shown here with them.

Christie's published four volumes of Waugh's Wine Diary.



The author at home, looking at some table wines. On the wall behind him are some of his Victorian 'fairings' of which he has probably the best-known and complete collection in existence.

follow, sometimes attended by several hundred people.

In the early 1970s, Robert Parker, who lived near Baltimore, began attending LADV tastings in Washington to learn more about wine. He has said he “fondly” recalls Waugh’s LADV lectures.²¹

Waugh’s routine usually involved a few weeks’ stay in California after his LADV duties ended. Nearly every day featured a mammoth tasting of rare wines provided from his friends’ cellars, accompanied by a perfect meal. Many of those tastings were with Barney Rhodes, whom Waugh regarded as one of the most discerning wine tasters he had ever met.

Earlier I made the claim that Waugh was almost single-handedly responsible for putting California wine on the world scene. You may know of the famous 1976 Paris wine tasting at which California wines were rated first over French wines by experienced French tasters.²² As a public relations coup, that certainly grabbed headlines. But Waugh had been conducting and writing about similar comparative tastings for years before that, pushing open the door that made the 1976 tasting possible. Indeed, Robert Mondavi, probably the Napa Valley’s best-known winemaker, once called Waugh’s arrival in the Napa Valley “almost like the second coming of Christ” for California wine.²³

At one tasting in 1972, Waugh presented several American wines to some of England’s leading experts, among them Hugh Johnson. Included were a California chardonnay, an upstate New York chardonnay, and a white burgundy from a respected producer, also made from the chardonnay grape. As Waugh reports, “everyone without exception chose the [California] Chardonnay as the best of the three. . . . It was comforting to have my own opinion so amply confirmed.”²⁴ If the event was a eureka moment for Johnson, he neglects to mention it in his autobiography.

In May 1974, on a trip to the Napa Valley, Waugh visited a new winery called Chateau Montelena and tasted its 1973 chardonnay, which was still aging in barrels. His tasting note: “One of the best I have so far come across.” Two years later, that wine placed first in the Paris tasting. Though Waugh barely mentions the Paris tasting in his books, he does take credit for having discovered the 1973 Montelena chardonnay: “Before that tasting I had been the only person who had recognised its special quality.”²⁵



Joe Heitz, Barney Rhodes, Prue Waugh, and Harry Waugh, ca. 1971.

Waugh’s sojourns among well-heeled west coast wine collectors gave him the opportunity to taste many spectacular wines that he couldn’t afford himself. At one such tasting, he drank the 1961 Château Pétrus, a wine from the Pomerol region of Bordeaux. Waugh’s note of the tasting is short but gushing:

Very deep color, tremendously rich bouquet, round and rich, and a whole cornucopia of flavours – well nigh perfection. Still some tannin to lose. 20+/20²⁶

For comparison, here is Robert Parker’s opinion on the same wine:

100. The fully mature 1961 Pétrus possesses a Port-like richness. . . . The color reveals considerable amber and garnet, but the wine is crammed with viscous, thick, overripe black cherry, mocha-tinged fruit flavors. Extremely full-bodied, with huge amounts of glycerin and alcohol, this unctuously textured, thick wine makes for an awesome mouthful. Imagine a Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup laced with layers of coffee and cherries and encased in a shell of Valrhona chocolate! This is vinous immortality.²⁷

And here is a review by Michael Broadbent, former director of Christie’s wine department and one of Waugh’s pupils at Harveys:

Colour “black as Egypt’s night”, opulent, “rich, rich, rich”, spicy, even peppery (alcohol), chunky yet velvety, with soft ripe mulberry-like fruit, fleshy, “almost cloying”, a “railroad chairman’s wine” – which sounded a rather old-fashioned expression: well, an oil-rich potentate or tycoon’s wine, for the reason that you do not have to be an expert to appreciate the wine, you wallow in it; and you have to have that sort of wealth to have it in your

cellar, let alone to order it in a restaurant. But I must stop being condescending. It is a superb, almost unbearable mouthful. . . . ***** and no end in sight.²⁸

Well might you ask what Parker’s or Broadbent’s ornate descriptions – very different but equally over-the-top – add that Waugh hadn’t already said.

Broadbent has positioned himself as a leader of the anti-Parker party, so it is odd that they both gave this particular wine the highest rating possible. Indeed, Broadbent has written that Château Pétrus – clearly one of Waugh’s favorites – represents all that is wrong with modern, Parker-influenced winemaking:

[T]he North American palate, with notable exceptions like Dr. Bernard Rhodes, has a built-in preference for the obvious, which accounts for the appeal of. . . Latour of almost any vintage, and leaving aside supply and price, that arch flesh-pot Pétrus. All the foregoing have a readily noticeable depth of colour, a positive – sometimes overwhelming – bouquet, loads of fruit, and fairly blatant component parts. . . . It is much for the same reason that at comparative tastings, much to the irritation of the Bordelaise[sic], California Cabernet Sauvignons do so well.²⁹

So it might be said that the lush style that Parker is said to favor, which winemakers across the world are now said to imitate in hope of receiving his highest rating, is not far off from the Latour-Pétrus style Waugh himself ardently championed and urged on his California friends.

And so Waugh’s life went on, following the same annual rounds of LADV chapters, massive dinners and wine tastings with his California friends, and visits to the French vineyards to taste the new wines – followed every year or two by a book describing his experiences and the wines he had tasted. Only a few changes intervened. At the age of 70, after many years as a bachelor, he married his assistant, Prue Waters, who was 33 years his junior. A year after the marriage, the couple had twins, but that did not seem to interfere with their travels.

Waugh’s new family arrangements did have other ramifications. To raise cash, he auctioned off his prized collection of Victorian “fairings,” little porcelain figures something like

See *WAUGHS ON WINE*, page 8

Hummels. Because his bachelor apartment had become too small for his family, Waugh was also forced to sell much of his wine cellar at Christie's, including irreplaceable bottles from the great 1928, 1929, and 1961 vintages, to finance the purchase of a new home.

Waugh published his wine diaries more or less yearly until 1987. But his tasting activity was severely altered in 1983, when he had a bad car accident in France. His main injury was horrendous for someone in his profession, as he explains: "Owing to a hit on the head, my loss of sense of smell ever since has been total, a grievous thing to happen to someone in the wine business. However, it does seem that since then I may have been developing other faculties with my sense of taste."³⁰ Waugh mentions the accident off-handedly in the middle of his last book, never explaining how he was able to provide notes on the bouquets of wines he had written up.

A combination of factors reduced Waugh's travels in the 1990s: his accident, the collapse of Les Amis du Vin, and a stroke suffered by Barney Rhodes. In 1990, his friends Albert Givton, Barney Rhodes, and several others held a fund-raiser in San Francisco and presented \$28,000 to Harry and Prue to assist in educating their children.³¹ In 1993, Givton visited the Waughs in London, observing that "Harry has little wine left, as he sold most of it to finance the studies of his twin children, Harriet and Jamie. . . . Harry said that he may never come to North America again, as he has little money left."³² Perhaps his last trip to California was in 1994, when his friends hosted a 90th birthday party at the Stanford Court Hotel in San Francisco and drank a dozen old burgundies.³³

Harry Waugh lived on another seven years. Among many honors, he was made an MBE in 1994. He died after a short illness in 2001.

Reflecting in 2003 on his first 25 years' work, Robert Parker asserted that his reviews, and those of his American colleagues, had revolutionized wine criticism.

Prior to 1978, wine writing was dominated by the British, who rarely published a negative review – very different from today's candid, pro-consumer writing. This is not to denigrate the enormous contributions of contemporary British writers like Hugh Johnson, Jancis Robinson, Michael Broadbent, Serena Sutcliffe, David Peppercorn, or the late Harry Waugh. . . . But none of those writers, singularly or

cumulatively, have had the impact that American wine publications have.³⁴

Objectively speaking, Parker is probably right. His reviews substantially impact what large numbers of people buy and even – many people claim – the styles of wines wineries produce. But I don't think his influence comes from his willingness to publish negative reviews. Waugh gave plenty of them too. We often think of critics as people who enjoy running things down, exposing the awful where the deluded public sees only the good. But Harry Waugh realized that people want to *buy* and *drink* wine, not find reasons to leave it on the store shelves. Apart from ceaselessly hawking Château Latour, which people already knew was good, Harry Waugh really made his critical reputation by telling his readers about worthy wines others had neglected or not yet discovered, like the wines of Pomerol, Beaujolais, and California.

Despite their frequently overripe flattery of his hosts, Waugh's diaries convey his deep love of wine and food as social lubricants that cemented friendships and made life more interesting. Waugh was, and Parker is, a consumers' advocate. I might use Parker to assist me in choosing what to buy, though reading Waugh. His books make me want to open a bottle and drink it with family and friends. And that's what wine is really for.

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Photos are of books in the author's collection, photographed by Robert McCamant.

NOTES

¹ Jay McInerney, *A Hedonist in the Cellar* (New York: Vintage Books 2007), page 115.

² Evelyn Waugh, *Wine in Peace and War* (London: Saccone & Speed Limited, n.d.), pages 38-39.

³ Hugh Johnson, *A Life Uncorked*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), page 41.

⁴ Alice Feiring, *The Battle for Wine and Love or How I saved the World from Parkerization* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2008), page 26. Elsewhere, Feiring describes Parker as "my own personal Kurtz" and, to drive her point home, adds that "his hair was as matted as a Brillo pad." *Id.*, page 182.

⁵ Richard E. Quandt, "On Wine Bullshit: Some New Software?" *Journal of Wine Economics*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 2007), page 129. Can there be a better name for an economist who counts things than "Quandt"?

⁶ Auberon Waugh, *Waugh on Wine* (London: Fourth Estate, 1986), page 18.

⁷ H. Warner Allen, *The Romance of Wine* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1931), page 45.

⁸ Crosby was in the thrall of a former *Baltimore Sun* editor named Philip M. Wagner, whose highly influential books, *American Wines*, and *How to Make Them* (New York: Knopf, 1933) and *Wine Grapes: Their Selection, Cultivation and Enjoyment* (New

York: Harcourt Brace, 1937), vigorously promoted cultivation of hybrid grape varieties that were crosses between the European wine grape species (*vitis vinifera*) and wild American species (*vitis labrusca*, *vitis rupestris*, *vitis riparia*, and others). Wagner's thesis was that the pure European varieties could not ripen and survive in the eastern U.S. But for the most part the hybrid grapes (for example, Vidal blanc, Seyval blanc, and Baco noir) made poor wine. In any event Wagner's thesis proved wrong; many wineries in Michigan, Ohio, New York, and other eastern states now successfully grow European varieties.

⁹ Auberon Waugh, *op. cit.*, page 148.

¹⁰ Harry Waugh, *Diary of a Winetaster: Recent Tastings of French and California Wines* (New York: Quadrangle, 1972), page xiii.

¹¹ Harry Waugh, *Wine Diary Volume Six* (London: Christie Wine Publications, 1975), page 96.

¹² *Id.*, page 98.

¹³ Harry Waugh, *Bacchus on the Wing: A Wine Merchant's Travelogue* (London: Wine & Spirit Publications, 1966), page 9.

¹⁴ *Id.*, page 25.

¹⁵ *Id.*, page 32.

¹⁶ *Id.*, pages 87-88.

¹⁷ *Id.*, page 121.

¹⁸ *Id.*, page 135.

¹⁹ *Id.*, page 162.

²⁰ Waugh, *Diary of a Winetaster*, *op. cit.*, pages 113-117.

²¹ Robert M. Parker, Jr., *Parker's Wine Buying Guide, Seventh Edition*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), page 37.

²² A detailed account of that tasting is in George M. Taber, *Judgment of Paris: California vs. France and the Historic 1976 Paris Tasting That Revolutionized Wine* (New York: Scribner, 2005)

²³ Cyril Ray, *Robert Mondavi of the Napa Valley* (London: Heinemann/Peter Davies, 1984), page 6.

²⁴ Harry Waugh, *Winetaster's Choice: The Years of Hysteria: Tastings of French, California and German Wines* (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), page 133.

²⁵ Harry Waugh, *Wine Diary Volume Nine: 1978-1981* (London: Christie's Wine Publications, 1981), page 45.

²⁶ Harry Waugh, *Diary of a Winetaster*, *op. cit.*, page 72.

²⁷ Robert M. Parker, Jr., *Bordeaux: A Consumer's Guide to the World's Finest Wines* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 4th ed. 2003), page 708. The first edition of Parker's book on Bordeaux, published in 1985, contained a similar, but slightly less florid, review.

Robert M. Parker, Jr., *Bordeaux: The Definitive Guide for the Wines Produced Since 1961* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), page 314.

²⁸ Michael Broadbent, *Vintage Wine: Fifty Years of Tasting Three Centuries of Wine* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), page 65.

²⁹ Michael Broadbent, letter to the editor, *Decanter Magazine*, May 1987, quoted in Albert Givton, *Carte Blanche: A Quarter Century of Wine Tasting Diaries and Cellar Notes: 1974-1999* (Vancouver: Turnagain Enterprises, 1999), page 185.

³⁰ Harry Waugh, *Wine Diary 1982-1986* (San Francisco: Wine Appreciation Guild, 1987), page 216.

³¹ Albert Givton, *op. cit.*, page 309.

³² *Id.*, page 373.

³³ *Id.*, page 392.

³⁴ Robert M. Parker, Jr., "25 Years in Wine: The Parker Report," *Food & Wine*, September 2003, available at <http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/25-years-in-wine-the-parker-report> .

French Artists' Books 2000-2015

An exhibition at the Grolier Club

Michael Thompson

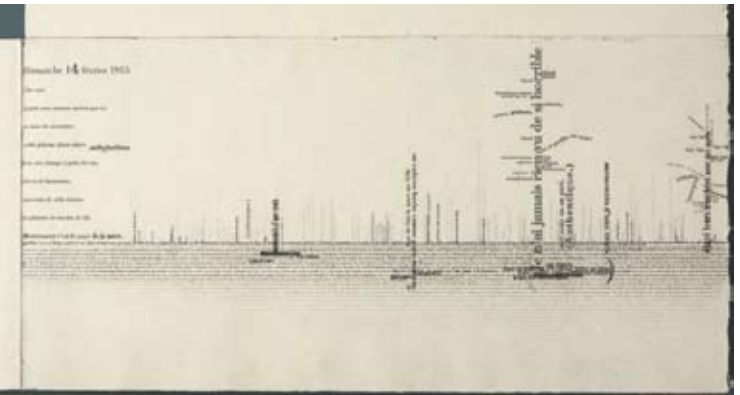
The Grolier Club in New York is now hosting an exhibition entitled "Artists & Others: The Imaginative French Book in the 21st Century" which runs through July 30. The club is the sole American venue for the show, curated by Paul van Capelleveen and Sophie Ham, and contains approximately 70 artists' books made in the last 15 years and drawn exclusively from the Koopman Collection at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, or National Library of the Netherlands, located in The Hague.

The presence of French books in the Dutch national library may seem anomalous. The library is the national copyright library for the Netherlands and has as its primary charge preserving the literary patrimony of the Dutch. Its collections include significant holdings of medieval manuscripts, incunabula, bibliophile editions, and bookbindings. But they also include many foreign publications such as the Koopman Collection of French 20th- and 21st-century literature.

Louis Koopman was an engineer by training but grew up in a household in Amsterdam where the French language was well known. His mother taught French and the family belonged to a Walloon church (a sect founded by expatriate French Protestants, also known as Huguenots). The first tranche of books, numbering 3,000, was given to the National Library in 1940, on the eve of World War

II, with a view to providing greater protection to the collection from the Nazi invasion. After Koopman's death in 1968, the rest of the collection came to the National Library along with a fund that was to be used to expand it. Currently, it comprises over 10,000 volumes, and about 50 new titles are added every year.

Since 2000, which is when this show begins (though really from 1972, with the appointment of J.K.F. van Berkel as curator), the purchasing of new books shifted away from literature towards artists' books. This was due, in part, to the view that the international nature of artists' books made them a better fit for a Dutch library. And in pursuing this area of collecting, the library's notion of Frenchness has been broad: it includes books published in France, books published elsewhere but printed in France, books involving work by a French artist or author, books with French subject matter, books written originally in French although translated into another language, and books written in another language but translated into French. Included are works by artists, printers, authors, and publishers from the United States, Germany, Italy, Australia, Argentina, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Russia, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Morocco.



L'Encre des Tranchées. Correspondences. Design and etchings by Pierre Walusinski. Paris: Walusinski. 2001.

The artist owns the bookstore Librairie Nicaise, which sells limited editions and artists' books on the Left Bank in Paris. He is also an artist trained at the École Estienne in etching, relief engraving, lithography, screenprinting, and typography. This book, whose name in English means "ink in the trenches," is a reference both to etching and the book's content: excerpts from letters written by soldiers in the World War I trenches, including some charged with treason and some being held as prisoners of war.



Les Cahiers du Trait. 1: Tension. Paris: Trait-Graveurs d'Aujourd'hui, 2008. Printed by La Zone Opaque.

La Zone Opaque is an anarchist commune with a print shop: electrically powered presses, a hand press for relief illustrations, an etching press, and a collection of 19th- and 20th-century typefaces. It follows formalist principles and seek to produce books carefully crafted as an objet d'art but are free of bibliophilic fetishes.

four traditions that serve as a foundation for the body of work represented in the show. They are William Morris and the English fine press tradition, the French traditional *livre d'artiste*, the avant-garde books of the early 20th century (Russian and Italian primarily, but throughout Europe), and the democratic multiples that began in the 1960s (United States). From this, the exhibition shows how in the 21st century the genre of the artist's book has forged a set of diverse syntheses of these and other fine art traditions in order to move forward in different and more complex directions.

Globalism is one of two primary themes. Books produced by publishers from one country who have invited an artist from another country to illustrate texts written in yet a third country, thus eliciting more cosmopolitan attitudes toward graphic design, exemplify a frequently seen example of international collaboration. Political issues associated with globalism are also covered: three exhibition cases in the show display French books dealing with war (Walusinski), anarchy (La Zone Opaque), and gender identity (Deblé).

Another important theme is the fluidity of traditions. In the 21st century the digital revolution has increased the methods available for making books and as a consequence has allowed artists to experiment with different

The excellent catalog that accompanies the exhibition identifies

See *ARTISTS' BOOKS*, page 12

Book- and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Lisa Pevtzow

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: **"Of What Use Are These Old Antiquated Things?: Antiquaries of England"** (exhibition features 17th- through 19th-century publications celebrating ancient relics, artifacts, architecture, and costume), through July 18. **"The Shogun's World: Japanese Maps from the 18th and 19th Centuries"** (a range of maps depicting both known and spiritual lands), through November 6.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **"Language of Flowers: Floral Art and Poetry"** (an assortment of small-sized books containing poetic floral lexicons), through August 7.

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., Chicago, (312) 744-6630: **"Stand Up for Landmarks! Protests, Posters & Pictures"** (images, artifacts, and ephemera relating to saving Chicago landmarks), ongoing.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: **"Chicago Authored"** (works by writers that define the character of Chicago), ongoing.

DePaul University Museum, 935 W. Fullerton, Chicago, 773-325-7506: **"Birds"** (Tony Fitzpatrick draws and layers images, poetry, and found materials onto the page), through August 21.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: **"Called to the Challenge: The Legacy of Harold Washington"** (an overview of Washington's life and projects as mayor) Harold Washington Exhibit Hall, ninth floor, ongoing.

Northwestern University Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: **"Charlotte's Scene"** (archives of the avant-garde including works by visual artist Jim McWilliams and experimental scores by the students of composer John Cage), through July 17. **"Page & Stage: Shakespeare at Northwestern"** (items including facsimiles of rare books, designs from student productions, archives of the theater faculty like Frank Galati and artifacts from the archive of Ireland's Dublin Gate Theatre), through September 2. **"Dawes Delivers the Vote: A Libraries Exhibit"** (political correspondence, speeches, two original *Chicago Tribune* editorial cartoons and ephemera from the presidential campaign trail of 1924 in exhibit about U.S. vice president and Evanston resident Charles Dawes), Deering Library third floor, through November 11.

Northwestern University Block Museum, 40 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston, 847-491-4000: **"Don't Throw Anything Out: Charlotte Moorman's Archive"** (papers of performance art pioneer and avant-garde impresario Charlotte Moorman), through July 17.

Pritzker Military Museum and Library, 104 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 312-374-9333: **"SEAL The Unspoken Sacrifice"** (features photographs from Stephanie Freid-Perenchio and Jennifer Walton's 2009 book and artifacts on loan from the Navy SEAL Museum), ongoing.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **"Cyrus Leroy Baldridge: Illustrator, Explorer, Activist"** (explores Baldridge's life and art, showing many of his illustrations for the first time), through September 9.

Send your listings to Lisa Pevtzow at lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net

Art Institute / Shogun's World

REVISED COMPLETE MAP OF JAPANESE ROADS AND LANDS, 1840. MACLEAN COLLECTION.



Chicago History Museum / Chicago Authored
MUSEUM GRAPHIC



Northwestern Library / Charlotte's Scene

CHARLOTTE MOORMAN, "NEON CELLO," 8/16, 1989.



Caxtonians Collect: Melissa Potter

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Where to begin with Melissa Potter? You could begin at the beginning. She was raised in New Jersey, got her BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University and her MFA from Rutgers. But if you scratch the beginning a little bit more, you discover that her grandmother was an artist, her aunt was a letterpress printer, her mother a crafter, her father a weaver. When that is understood, her becoming a teacher and researcher in the world of papermaking, bookmaking, and politically inflected book arts comes better into focus.

Or you could begin with her first trip to do book arts in a foreign country: 1996, in Moscow, working with artists from the former Soviet republics on a special “wallpaper” project for an exhibit at the Corcoran in Washington. That would lead you to discover her in Quebec in 2004, then towns and cities of Serbia – Nis, Kragujevac, Belgrade, Sicevo, Novi Sad – in 2006 and 2007. Which would make her Fulbright year in Bosnia in 2014 seem sensible. Or would it? I thought the Bosnians and Serbs were suspicious of one another. How did she get along with both? Could book arts transcend politics?

Or you could begin in 2008, when she hesitantly moved to Chicago to teach at Columbia College in the Book and Paper program. Which ended well: she came to love Chicago, love the South Loop, get along with her fellow faculty, and she even says “I love this place and what we do. The students are extraordinary – so passionate and unusual.” She elaborates: “Columbia is an odd duck. There’s nothing like us in the book arts. We’re a part of the Interdisciplinary Arts department, so people can work on electronic books or handmade paper books, or combinations.”

She is something of a theoretician. She trades analysis with Michael Thompson, advises graduate students at Columbia on wise choices for their careers, published an article called “Pulp Feminism: Radical Social

Histories in Hand Papermaking” in the *MidAmerica Print Council Journal*, and in her spare time crafts an ongoing Tumblr blog, Gender Assignment (www.genderassignment.tumblr.com) exploring different issues in gender. She recently read Arlene Raven’s book, *Crossing Over*. “Wow, so much passion!” she says. “The artists’ book has a special sig-



nificance for feminists, because it furnishes an intimate means of communicating with an audience of any number, one at a time. The capacity to reproduce this one-to-one experience many times over in many places at once makes the artists’ book an accessible medium for a social art which can raise consciousness as well as express beauty. And artists writing is a version of feminist ‘speaking,’ which itself was the basis of the consciousness-raising process,” she quotes.

At Columbia, her broad experience has meant that she has done just about everything at one time or another. Right now she divides her energy between advising graduate students, teaching three classes per semester, curating the occasional exhibition, keeping an eye on the strategic plan, and writing grant applications.

She loves to garden, but not just puttering in the dirt: another blog, called Seeds in Service, talks about the intersections of hand papermaking, gardening, social practice, community engagement, and creative pedagogy. She gave me a seed packet of black and Aztec

corn (packet hand-printed by Maggie Puckett, also at Columbia, who is equally excited about gardening). Caxtonians who visited it with Nick Basbanes will remember the “Papermaker’s Garden,” which is intended to grow experimental-size patches of various plants that might be useful in papermaking. The available quarter block has the advantage of long-day

sun, but has more wind than would be ideal. When we checked together as our interview ended, seedlings of some species were appearing... but no stinging nettles!

The several raised beds are devoted to specialties. Gourds have been spectacular in prior years. Groups have specialized in medicinal plants, planting

both men’s and women’s health beds. Others are growing out endangered Iraqi plant species, made necessary by the destruction of a seed bank there.

But there are also plans afoot for indoor plants: they’re looking for an antique bathtub to fill with Kombucha SCOBY. To quote Wikipedia: “Kombucha is produced by fermenting tea using a ‘Symbiotic ‘Colony’ of Bacteria and Yeast.” What interests papermakers is that the culture, when dried, forms a strong but flexible “textile” that suggests leather, but that does not involve loss of animal life. Imagine Kombucha bindings! The one problem is that the textile reverts to near-jelly when moistened. The hunt is on for a way to waterproof it without spoiling its desirable qualities.

Potter’s husband, Rene Aranzamendez, is a photo editor for Getty Images, which luckily has a Chicago office out of which he can work. They have a two-year-old adopted son. She joined the Club in 2016.

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CAXTONIAN

Caxton Club
60 West Walton Street
Chicago, IL 60610
USA

Address Correction Requested

ARTISTS' BOOKS, from page 9

modes of expression, such as printing from polymer plates and using inkjet printers for color illustration, thus enhancing the value of collaboration by blurring the lines between the various skills required for book production: text, illustration, design, paper, printing, and binding.

In pursuing this theme the exhibition includes many books that demonstrate unusual combinations of technique, subject, and genre, all of which reflect the interest among contemporary artists in both analog and digital techniques. The variations shown include digitally set texts, scans, elements of chance, typographic juxtapositions, cartoons reproduced as etchings, and carefully crafted letterpress printing. Stylistically, the exhibition reveals how the combining of genres has become commonplace: conventions taken from conceptual art appear alongside materials and graphic design drawn from the world of the private press or from the traditions of the *livre d'artiste*.

In a sense both the notions of globalism and fluidity of traditions can be combined under the broader rubric of collaboration and its combining of people from other countries and other disciplines. To the point that collaboration may compromise an artist's autonomy or reduce the impact of his or her hand in the

fabrication of an art object, curator van Capelleveen suggests in the catalog that many artists view it as liberating. It allows them to exit their own specialist terrain and incorporate another, without reducing the overall quality of the object, at least to the extent that some level of craftsmanship is needed so as not to detract from the artistic statement.

In general I found this show to be an informative and insightful look at

what book artists in France and elsewhere throughout the world have been doing over the last 15 years. I would recommend trying to get to New York to see it before the closing at the end of July. If that's not possible, a trip to the National Library in The Hague seems a good alternative; there in all likelihood



Louis Dire. *Quand Bien Même*. Lithographs by Colette Deblé. Paris: Les Éditions Écarts, 2005.

Colette Deblé is an artist who explores female stereotypes in art by extracting the figures of women from their positioning in an historical painting and reproducing them in grey images devoid of the original context. She has been making artist books since 1973. This book, *Quand Bien Même*, was designed and printed as a lithograph. It is a succession of isosceles triangles with no apparent order. The text is written by poet Louis Dire and the title is taken from a poem by Stéphane Mallarmé. Deblé has chosen to depict three women: Mallarmé's wife, daughter, and mistress.

you can have any of the books shown in the display cases at the Grolier Club handed to you directly for closer and more careful examination.

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