

Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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P. G. Wodehouse *Globe* Reclamation Project: By the Way Redux

BY JOHN DAWSON

VOLUMES 1 & 2 of *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper*, published September 1, are the first products of the efforts of an international group of authors, collectors, and scholars who formed the P. G. Wodehouse *Globe* Reclamation Project in January 2013. The GRP collected the entire print run of Wodehouse's working days on the "By the Way" column, 1901–1908, consisting of 1,400 front pages of the *Globe*—some 21,000 prose paragraphs and eight hundred poems. In the past two years, GRP volunteers have spent endless hours transcribing, studying, discussing, and evaluating a vast amount of material. Our specific aim has been to attribute, where possible, as much of the newfound material to Wodehouse as can be evidenced. Paragraphs and poems that have met the group's collective, yet diverse, demanding standards have been selected for the books.

I would like to thank Sir Edward Cazalet for giving me permission in 2011 to obtain a complete copy of PGW's journal "Money Received for Literary Work," which resides at Wodehouse's beloved alma mater, Dulwich College. It was a stroke of luck for the GRP that Wodehouse listed all of the actual dates he worked in the By the Way room at the *Globe* from 1901 to early 1908, precisely 1,378 working days; this would have untold benefits 110 years later. We scanned each column from library microfilm. Since the column was written in the morning and published in the evening,

P. G. Wodehouse in the *Globe* Newspaper

Volume 1



By the Way, Day by Day

featuring the writings of P. G. Wodehouse
from his years at the *Globe*, 1901–1908

Selected and edited by John Dawson
Notes to the text by Neil Midkiff

The Globe Reclamation Project delivers!
See p. 24 for the cover of Volume 2.

the dates listed in the journal enabled the GRP to set forth with a defined goal. We salute Sir Edward for making the dream of finding and publishing new Wodehouse writings come true. PGW's best daily "work product" from his early years as a journalist are represented by the selections in *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper*, Volumes 1 & 2.

In Volume 1—*By the Way, Day by Day* (340 pages)—I’ve selected 1,300 humorous paragraphs and poems taken from “By the Way”: a daily dose of jokes, witty retellings of news events, and poems that, in my opinion, represent the best of the most identifiably Wodehousean work in the columns. There are perhaps 4,000 paragraphs and poems in the “By the Way” eight-year run that range from *could have been* written by Wodehouse to *must have been* written by Wodehouse. These are my favorites. In my introduction, I describe the complex process of attributing the unsigned columns, and how I believe I was able to identify Wodehouse’s writing in them. I’m very grateful to Norman Murphy for his enlightened preface and to Neil Midkiff for his amazing annotations, which nearly place the reader at ringside to the news events of the time that inspired the columns’ content.

Volume 2—*By the Way: 200 Verses* (271 pages)—features two hundred poems that have been confidently attributed to Wodehouse by an international panel of recognized authors and experts in his life and work. (Another hundred poems appear in Volume 1.) Edited by Tony Ring—in my view the world’s foremost authority on Wodehouse’s lyrics and poetry—the hilarious poems showcase Plum’s genius with the verse form, evident even in these early years. Tony’s elegant chapter introductions provide a thoroughly entertaining Edwardian perspective, and his well-placed notes bring to life once again the personalities, fads, and news events that inspired Wodehouse to compose these (often brilliant) lines. Consider that before these three hundred poems were found and authenticated, Wodehouse’s known body of poetry consisted of only about one hundred poems over his entire career. He wrote that in these early days he had a gift for “light verse,” and the evidence has now surfaced in abundance.

Many readers will ask: how can you possibly attribute unsigned work? It’s a fair question, and one that Norman Murphy, Tony Ring, Neil Midkiff, Karen Shottling, Ian Michaud, and I have labored to answer. We know that the people who will be judging our work are those who know Wodehouse’s work best—the members of The Wodehouse Society and its sister societies. With a commitment to transparency, we report, in near-exhaustive detail, the protocols we employed in our endeavors to identify and attribute Wodehouse’s writings. Like Adrian Mulliner, we had our methods, so to speak, and employed them. We tell you as much about the process in our introductions as space allows.

In his preface, Norman writes: “When a team of researchers, all of whom know their Wodehouse and

know precisely when Wodehouse was working at the *Globe*, undertake a slow, painstaking analysis of the column, then we should pay attention. And when they collectively can agree on when a paragraph has the indefinable unmistakable Wodehouse ‘touch,’ then I am confident we can accept their findings as conclusive.”

The brilliant craftsmanship and wit for which Wodehouse has always been known is on full display in *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper*, Volumes 1 & 2. The books are the result of hundreds of hours of study and research by the experts and authorities associated with the project. We’ve done our best to present work that we are confident enhances the cherished legacy of P. G. Wodehouse.

We’re content to stand back and let the paragraphs and poems in these books speak for themselves.

How to Order the Books

P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper, Volumes 1 & 2, is being sold only as a set. The list price of the set is US\$50, plus shipping; the books are available from the distributor, Seattle Book Company (<http://tinyurl.com/pgw-globe-books>) and from Amazon.com (<http://tinyurl.com/pgw-globe-amazon>). Links to Amazon.co.uk and other sites will be updated as they become available on our web page at Madame Eulalie (<http://tinyurl.com/grp2015>).

Members of TWS and of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) may receive a 20% discount by ordering directly from Seattle Book Company at the link above, and entering the coupon code GLOBE in the appropriate box on the Shopping Cart page. Discount codes aren’t available on Amazon.

Note. The P. G. Wodehouse Globe Reclamation Project is a fully volunteer, not-for-profit group. All donations and book receipts are 100% dedicated to research, expenses, and charity. We’re excited to be planning our first charitable project, which will be the donation of copies of Wodehouse’s best novels to selected American high-school libraries.

Facebook users can keep apprised of all the latest developments by going to our Facebook page: <http://tinyurl.com/pgwglobe>.

Sue perceived pottering towards them a long, stringy man of benevolent aspect. She was conscious of something of a shock. In Ronnie’s conversation, the Earl of Emsworth had always appeared in the light of a sort of latter-day ogre . . . She saw nothing formidable in this newcomer.

Summer Lightning (1929)

Ed Ratcliffe, 1924–2015: Remembering a Beloved O.M.

BY ELIN WOODGER



Ed and Missy Ratcliffe, October 1955

IT WAS A FEW months after the 1995 TWS convention in Boston that I received a call from the editor of *Plum Lines*, Ed Ratcliffe: would I be willing to join him as co-editor? It surprised me a bit: he lived in California, I was in Massachusetts, and though we had known each other since the 1993 San Francisco convention, I didn't feel we had bonded in any particular way. Yet clearly Ed saw something in me I hadn't seen in myself, and I knew I liked the chap—very much, in fact. So in spring 1996 I said yes, and for the next five years we were comrades in arms, in more ways than just editorially. We discussed submissions to the journal; we divvied up the workload between us; we talked about fonts endlessly (Ed was passionate about fonts); and we argued constantly, and with great humor, about points of grammar and punctuation (more often than not, Ed was right).

In the process, we became good friends, sharing many laughs together, whether by phone, email, or in person, as well as immensely enjoyable times whenever we got together. Ed never seemed to lose his sense of humor, which was key to his light touch in editing

Plum Lines. I could never match his unceasingly bright outlook on life, nor his quick and gentle wit, but I was certainly inspired by it. Which is why, when I received the news of his unexpected passing on May 16 this year—just thirteen days shy of his 91st birthday—I couldn't help but smile, in spite of my sadness. Because Ed *always* made me smile. And I know I'm not alone in that.

He was born Albert Edward Ratcliffe in Enid, Oklahoma, on May 29, 1924, and grew up in Evansville, Indiana. After graduating from the University of Evansville with a degree in physics, he moved on to the University of California, Berkeley, where he met Helen Gillespie, known to all as Missy; they married in June 1955 and went on to have two daughters, Catherine and Gene. Ed worked at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory as a physicist; among those he befriended in his years there were two who shared his interest in the works of P. G. Wodehouse, Len Lawson (later a president of TWS) and Tom Wainwright (a TWS treasurer for many years). Ed became a member of The Wodehouse Society in November 1983.

Upon his retirement, Ed and Missy moved to Felton, California, and they were far from idle. The couple went for long walks, played bocce, volunteered at the Monterey Aquarium for more than twenty years, and traveled extensively. They also joined Blandings Castle (then the only TWS chapter) and became staple attendees at conventions, starting with the fourth, held in San Francisco in August 1987. Somewhere along the



At the 1995 TWS convention in Boston, Ed portrayed Lord Emsworth and Tom Wainwright played Beach in a version of "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!"

line, the young society's founder, Bill Blood, persuaded Ed to take over editing the journal, which was then a simple mimeographed affair, stapled at the corner. This change was announced very quietly in volume VIII, no. 4, of *Plum Lines* (15 November 1987): "Effective 1 January 1988, the editorship of PLUM LINES will be assumed by Edward Ratcliffe, 420 Covellite Lane, Livermore, CA 94550 (capably assisted by Helen Ratcliffe, of course)." Thenceforward Ed would be known in Wodehousean circles as the Oldest Member (O.M.), taking over the title from Bill Blood.

He entered into his editing duties with his usual verve, and by the Summer 1994 issue, he had transformed *Plum Lines* into a proper journal, with staples in the folded center and the masthead we still have today. He also brought to it his delightful sense of humor, sometimes adding commentary to articles that gave them a lighthearted lift (he especially adored wordplay). Ed gathered, edited, formatted, and laid out everything that went into the journal entirely on his own for eight years, until he asked me to join him in 1996. When I married and moved to England in 2001, he professed himself heartbroken, but he carried on with the able assistance of David Landman for the next two years, finally stepping down as editor late in 2003.

When Ed gave up his editorial role, oh, *what* a fuss was made over him! Four pages of the Winter 2003 issue were filled with tributes from his friends and admirers. As I look through what was written about him then, I find myself nodding in recognition. For instance, both Phil Ayers and Jan Kaufman spoke of Ed's infectious laugh, and it was true: once Ed started laughing, you couldn't help but laugh along with him, sometimes to the point of helplessness. Marilyn MacGregor also spoke for many when she pointed out Ed's other outstanding qualities: "Kind, generous, witty, editorially talented, fun, literarily learned, friendly, the most wonderful Lord Emsworth there could ever be, a true Wodehouse fan, and absolutely one of the finest friends anyone can ever have."

Oh, did I mention Ed as Lord Emsworth? He took on the role in several Blandings Castle readings, as well as in a skit Norman wrote for the 1991 New York convention (repeated in Dearborn in 2011), and if ever a man was born to play a fuzzy-headed earl, it was Ed. I still remember falling apart in laughter when he and Tom Wainwright (as Beach) attempted to call the Empress to eat with their tortured "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" (That was the 1995 convention—good times!)

Ed's literary interests included an abiding love of Jane Austen; as a member of the Jane Austen Society he gave talks on aspects of her works that particularly

fascinated him. But of course it is for his devotion to Wodehouse and his years of editing *Plum Lines* that the members of TWS will chiefly remember him. Ed and Missy attended all but one convention between 1987 and 2011 (they were also unable to make it to Chicago in 2013), and we had been looking forward to seeing them in Seattle.

I am so glad to have many happy memories of occasions spent in Ed's company outside of conventions. He loved gallivanting around the English countryside, which he regarded as a giant amusement park built for his personal pleasure. Whenever he could, he stayed with Norman and me in London, one year doing so with his daughter Catherine, another year with Missy. In 2005 Ed and Missy hosted Jean Tillson and me at their house in Felton for a few fun-filled days prior to the convention in Los Angeles, and last year Norman and I were fortunate enough to see Ed and his daughter Gene when they came over for another session of gamboling around England. As ever, we joked and laughed and thoroughly enjoyed each other's company, parting with smiles.

How I wish I could have gone to Ed's memorial service, which was held on May 31. I would have dearly loved to have heard the accolades from his daughters and the readings given by his beautiful grandchildren: Alex, Elizabeth, and Peter. I still want to see Missy and give her a big hug. She was so lucky to be married to such a special man for almost sixty years, and he always knew how lucky he was to have had her by his side; he simply adored Missy.

The service was attended by current TWS president Karen Shottling, as well as Blandings Castle members Neil Midkiff, Bill Franklin, and Carl Wells. Karen and



*Elin Woodger and Ed Ratcliffe in August 2005
(photo by Jean Tillson)*

Neil both delivered tributes to Ed, citing his unique sense of humor, his stewardship of *Plum Lines*, and his acting abilities as Lord Emsworth. My thanks to Karen, who emailed me photographs of the program from the service. Appropriately, the back page has several Wodehouse quotes—Ed would have approved of that. But my favorite quote on the page is not from Wodehouse but from Dr. Seuss: “Don’t cry because it’s over. Smile because it happened.”

Ed, my dear old thing, I’m smiling. Oh, how I’m smiling.

Born to Play Emsworth

BY DAVID AND ELIZABETH LANDMAN

HAD THALIA, the muse of comedy, the good fortune to meet Ed Ratcliffe, she would have nudged Urania and said, “Sis, that man was born to play Lord Emsworth.” But the physical resemblance to the way we picture the dreamy peer is as far as it goes. Elegant in manner, generous by nature, scholarly, gregarious, possessed of a gentle wit and a keen mind—that’s the Ed that Elizabeth and I came to know. During my tenure as sub-editor of *Plum Lines*, Ed and Missy hosted us at their home in Felton, graciously over our protests giving us their own bedroom to ensure our comfort. We spoke of Plum, of course, but also of a scholarly talk he was soon to deliver on Jane Austen, and we ate lots of gourmet chocolates from Donnelly’s in Santa Cruz. Watching Ed and Missy luxuriously savoring truffles was a treat in itself. We’d hoped to see them in Seattle. We shall have to be content with savoring the sweet spirit of Ed Ratcliffe, the friend we sadly miss.

The O.M. Torch Passes

BY GARY HALL

BY THE 1990s, my wife Linda and I had been members of The Wodehouse Society for several years, enjoying *Plum Lines*, adding to our collection of Wodehouse material, and generally having a wonderful life. Having a spot open on our calendar, we decided to attend one TWS convention, and headed to Houston in 1999 for that purpose.

Suffice it to say that the Plummy vectors we encountered at that event altered the course of our lives. I could tell many stories about the Wodehousean luminaries we met at that convention, the terrific talks, the costumes, and even the breadroll controversy. But of importance here is that that gathering was the start of

an editorial flirtation with Ed Ratcliffe which continued in Philadelphia in 2001 and took another step in 2003 when Dan Cohen became editor as Ed retired from the role. In 2005, Dan passed the reins to me.

Ed was, simply, one of the most delightful, brilliant, gentle men I’d ever met. He and his sparkling wife, Missy, seemed perpetually cheerful. They were the epitome of the Wodehousean couple, demonstrating the graceful way to share one’s natural humor with the rest of the world.

In keeping with the tradition established by Bill Blood with the first issues of *Plum Lines*, and at the behest of those who know and keep the Wodehousean traditions, I am now expected, as editor in chief, to take the title of Oldest Member in that context. I am humbled by the honor and will continue to do my best to live up to the legacy that my predecessors established.

Treasurer’s Report for 2014

BY KRIS FOWLER

Balance as of December 31, 2013	\$32,804.40
Income:	
Membership dues	\$12,957.33
2015 Convention registration income	\$989.37
Drones Club ties	\$195.99
Donations	\$350.00
Interest	<u>\$2.97</u>
Total Income	\$14,495.66
Expenses:	
<i>Plum Lines</i> production and mailing	\$11,357.36
2015 convention deposit	\$500.00
Historical Marker	\$17.26
Correspondence, supplies, other	<u>\$166.95</u>
Total Expenses	\$12,041.57
<i>TWS Convention Reserve Fund</i> ¹ :	
Balance as of December 31, 2013	\$20,790.62
Balance as of December 31, 2014	\$20,790.62
Total Balance as of December 31, 2014:	\$35,258.49

¹ Included in the Total Balance

New Chapter Alert: The West Texas Wooster

FIREWORKS, PLEASE! We are very pleased to announce that there is a new chapter afoot, deep in the western heart of Texas. Troy Gregory, Ph.D., TWS, teaches in the West Texas A&M University Department of English, Philosophy, and Modern Languages (and at Wayland Baptist University).

Troy says that he's about six hours from the nearest Wodehouse chapter's dominion, and that "it gets exceedingly lonely out here on the high plains, so our need is very real." He expects that this "chapter would mostly consist of students"—meaning that Professor Gregory is doing his proper duty by cultivating a love of Wodehouse in his encounters with students.

By way of this note and other methods, he's reaching out to the larger communities of Canyon, Plainview, Amarillo, and Lubbock—and any others who have interested fans and followers of Wodehouse.

Wooster on the Rocks?!

BETH CARROLL found this expression of angst in *Cook's Illustrated*, Number 136, September/October 2015, page 1, from editor Christopher Kimball's experience with rock-climbing: "I grew angry. This was supposed to be a Bertie Wooster-type outing: a pleasant day in a Utah canyon, a slap on the back, a good feed, and a bit of mild adventure, all perfectly posed like snapshots in the family album."

Collecting *Something New* (and *Fresh*)

BY JOHN GRAHAM

THIS YEAR marks not only the centennial of Jeeves and Bertie's magazine debut in "Extricating Young Gussie," but also the initial appearance in both magazine and book form of Wodehouse's first Blandings Castle novel. In 1915 the *Saturday Evening Post* published *Something New* in eight weekly installments, running from June 26 to August 14. On September 3 of that year, D. Appleton and Company published the book in the U.S., and thirteen days later Methuen published it in the U.K., with a revised text and renamed *Something*

Fresh. All three firsts, while elusive and pricey, are eagerly sought by Wodehouse collectors. And because the two versions of the story differ, even readers who do not usually consider themselves collectors might be interested in acquiring an early reprint edition.

Something New was Plum's very first story to be published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the weekly magazine that would remain his preferred publishing venue in America for the next 50 years. In a preface written for the 1969 UK reissue of *Something Fresh*, Wodehouse attributed the *Post's* initial interest in his work to the use of his full name, noting that "a writer in America at that time who went about without three names was practically going around naked." Sure enough, the June 26, 1915, *Saturday Evening Post* announced in big, bold print running along the bottom of its front cover: "Beginning Something New—By Pelham Grenville Wodehouse."

Post readers would not see Plum's name written as P. G. Wodehouse until *Leave It to Psmith* in February 1923.

In the *Post*, *Something New* was accompanied by black-and-white illustrations by F. R. Gruger, one of the most admired illustrators of the first half of the twentieth



The Appleton first edition of Something New, one of the rarest of Wodehouse's first editions

century. *Encyclopædia Britannica* (for younger readers, the Wikipedia of its day) chose him to write their entry on illustrations. Gruger's drawings were usually quite small in scale, but said to be monumental in scope, and this is certainly the case with the ones he created for *Something New*. Thanks to the website Madame Eulalie, all eight *Post* installments, along with Gruger's illustrations, can be viewed online. And thanks to eBay, collectors can often find copies of the magazines themselves. Fortunately, none of the eight covers was drawn by Norman Rockwell, so asking prices tend to be reasonable, often less than \$75 per issue. (Rockwell's first *Post* cover with a Wodehouse story was September 16, 1916, containing the opening chapters of *Piccadilly Jim*.) Three of the eight *Something New* covers were by J. C. Leyendecker, who drew the iconic Arrow shirt man; one was by Martin Justice, who would go on to illustrate "Extricating Young Gussie."

When D. Appleton and Company issued the book in September, they reprinted four of Gruger's drawings. Today, the Appleton first edition of *Something New* is one of Plum's rarest books. It is also one of the most beautiful. The cloth covers, with gold lettering for the title and Plum's three names, have two large scarabs in green and gold on the front and a single scarab in gold on the spine. The dust wrapper reproduces the cover design and adds a somewhat eerie illustration of Blandings Castle, an unsigned drawing by Gruger from the July 10 *Post*. Copies of the first-issue book without dust wrapper fetch \$500 to \$1,500, depending on condition. A copy in dust wrapper would cost you considerably more. (For \$22, a quality reproduction of the wrapper can be purchased at facsimiledustjackets.com.)

The first Appleton printing shows the number 1 in parentheses on the last page of the text. There was a second printing in 1915, identical to the first, except that (2) replaces (1) on the last page. A third Appleton printing with red covers from 1916, with the year stated on the title page and (3) on the last page, is not noted by McIlvaine, although she does list an Appleton third with blue covers. I think she may be confusing this with a 1930 reprint with blue covers by the publisher Dodd, Mead, borrowing the plates of the Appleton third. In 1931 and later, another publisher, A. L. Burt, using the same plates, issued the book in a new art deco wrapper. Neither publisher included the four plates with Gruger's illustrations. Appleton reprints can sell for several hundred dollars; the Dodd, Mead and the Burt reprints (without wrappers) sell for less than \$100.

Crossing the pond, Wodehouse's first Blandings Castle novel, which never appeared in a U.K. magazine,

was released in book form on September 16, 1915, by Methuen, who had already published *The Little Nugget* in 1913 and *The Man Upstairs and Other Stories* in 1914. The book was reworked for an English audience and retitled *Something Fresh*. The most significant textual difference between the U.S. and U.K. versions of the story is that the latter omits an extended scene from chapter 9 in which Baxter plays detective (more like Watson than Holmes) as he inspects the servants' dirty shoes for a telltale spot of red paint. Plum dropped this scene because several years earlier he had used the same incident (and much of the same wording) in *Mike*, a book not well known in America.

Wodehouse scholars Tony Ring (*Wooster Sauce*, Autumn 2015) and Robert McCrum (*Wodehouse: A Life*) have written that *Something Fresh* was in fact Plum's original title for the story. It was American editors who apparently changed the final word, alarmed that "fresh" had an unwelcome sexual connotation. To my mind, *Something New* is actually the better title, as it comes right out of the story. Near the end of chapter 1, Joan Valentine advises Ashe Marson, who has grown weary of writing Gridley Quayle detective stories, to look for "something new" by way of occupation and adventure. Heeding her advice, he becomes a valet to an American millionaire, and off they go to Blandings Castle. But, no matter which title was Plum's first choice, and no matter which I may prefer, it appears that Methuen originally planned to use the U.S. title: some early copies of *Something Fresh* have an ad supplement of new releases inserted at the back (dated 8/5/15) showing the forthcoming title as *Something New*.

Something Fresh, bound in blue-green boards, is also among Plum's rarest English first editions. According to Methuen's publishing records, which are housed at the Lilly Library at Indiana University, only 1,510 copies were printed, including 450 copies (many in red boards) intended for colonial sale. In a 1991 article called "Wodehouse a la Carte," published in *Firsts Magazine*, Charles Gould speculated that *Something Fresh* could be the most elusive of all of Plum's first-edition books. After 24 years of collecting and countless internet searches, I have found two other Methuen first editions (*Uneasy Money* and *The Man with Two Left Feet*) harder to locate. Even still, London book dealers routinely price first editions of *Something Fresh* at \$3,000 or more. I have never seen the dust wrapper.

In October 1915, Methuen issued a second printing (noted on the verso of the title page) in the same format as the first, save for one minor difference. On the first line of page 150 in the first and colonial editions, "Ashe" is printed "As he." This error has been corrected in the

second edition. The second may be as scarce as the first, but when copies appear, dealers seldom ask more than a few hundred dollars. Many collectors are likely to find this a reasonable substitute for a true first.

McIlvaine records a total of twenty printings by Methuen (in a revised and noticeably cheaper format after the second), with the last appearing in 1951. In 1969 the book was reissued by Herbert Jenkins/Barrie & Jenkins as one of a series of fourteen reissues, all containing new introductions by Wodehouse. If buying a first (or even second) edition is not in your immediate plans, this 1969 reissue is the one to look for. Expect to pay about \$30 for a copy in dust wrapper.

Wodehouse's School Days

REVIEWED BY NEIL MIDKIFF

DR. JAN PIGGOTT, formerly Head of English and Keeper of the Archives at Dulwich College, has written a remarkable book which will be of interest to anyone interested in Wodehouse's early life as well as to all readers of the school stories. *Wodehouse's School Days: Dulwich College and the School Stories* is the first of a series of volumes published in celebration of the quatercentenary of Dulwich College in 2019. The text is revised and expanded from Dr. Piggott's introductory essays in *Wodehouse Goes to School* (volume 3 of the Millennium Wodehouse Concordance by Tony Ring and Geoffrey Jaggard), but even those collectors who already have the Concordance will want to own this book, especially for its many fascinating illustrations.

The first section reviews Wodehouse's relationship with Dulwich College, not only giving a detailed account of his time there but also telling how his school experiences and his bond with the institution continued to influence his later life. The second section describes the novels and short stories for schoolboys; very much in the spirit of Norman Murphy's *In Search of Blandings*, it illustrates how Wodehouse's descriptions of Wrykyn, St. Austin's, Sedleigh, and the rest were influenced by the setting and organization of Dulwich. Details of schoolboy life in the fiction are compared to Plum's own experiences, and we get more information on Wodehouse's schoolmasters and the works studied in his classes than is available anywhere else. Non-academic pursuits, both the organized ones like school sports and dramatics as well as individual interests, are well covered.

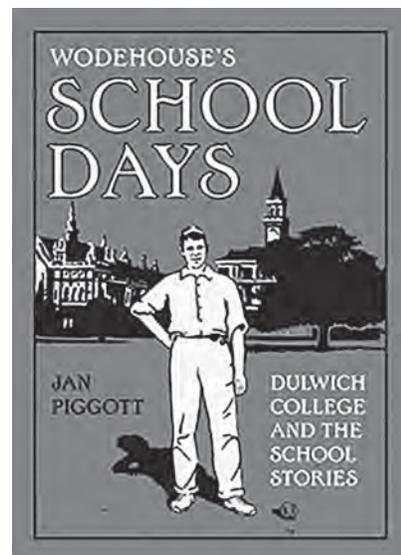
Illustrations appear on more than half the pages of the book, it appears from a quick survey. Many well-reproduced period photos from the College archives

and from the Wodehouse family collection are included, as well as images of documents in the Dulwich archive. Just to list a few:

- Plum at age 13, up a tree on holiday, along with his two older brothers standing below
- Wodehouse's fateful 1902 entry in his account book *Money Received for Literary Work*: "On September 9th, having to choose between the 'Globe' and the Bank, I chucked the latter & started out on my wild lone as a freelance. PGW."
- Plum at age 16 in costume for an Aristophanes play
- Excerpts from typed letters to Bill Townend
- A nice selection of illustrations from the original magazine appearances of the school stories
- Covers of early books

Although scholarly in detail, the text is written deftly and engagingly. The handsome layout and generous use of illustrations makes for a most attractive volume that will, I suspect, be enjoyed by many in a single sitting, just as I did when I received my copy.

The Dulwich College store's website sells the book directly only within the U.K., but by the time you read this, international orders should be possible through Amazon.co.uk.



Lord Emsworth did not speak. It was not so much the shock of this revelation that kept him dumb as the astounding discovery that any man could really want to marry Gertrude, and any girl this Popjoy. Like many a thinker before him he was feeling that there is really no limit to the eccentricity of human tastes.

"Company for Gertrude" (1935)

Getting to the Psmith in Pseattle Convention and the Fairmont Olympic Hotel

SEATTLE IS accessible by ship, plane, train, and car. Since the likelihood of arriving by ship is small, here are directions for arrival by plane, train, and (for a short distance) foot. For directions by car, see the hotel's website at <http://bit.ly/1LeZVII>.

By Plane

MOST LIKELY, you are going to come by air and land at Seattle-Tacoma Airport (known to locals as SeaTac). If you do not plan to rent a car, we recommend Link Light Rail from the airport to downtown. To find it, head toward baggage carousel 16, then take the escalator up to Skybridge 6 to the parking garage. Once in the garage, take a left and follow the signs to the Link Light Rail station. You will enter the Link Station and see a number of ticket kiosks, where you can buy a ticket for downtown—specifically, University Street Station. Then take the escalator, elevator, or stairs up to the train platform. Look for the train that is headed downtown. Once aboard, no matter how tempting it may be, do not get off the train until you arrive at University Street Station. See directions below for walking to the hotel from there.

For other options to downtown from the airport, you can take the Downtown Airporter, limos, taxis, and other shuttles. To find these, make your way from the baggage area to any of the skybridges and head to the parking garage. Once there, take the elevator or escalator to the third floor to the Ground Transportation Center. Haggle with the taxi and limo drivers or buy a ticket on the Downtown Airporter or other shuttle.

By Train

IF YOU ARE coming to Seattle by train, you will arrive at King Street Station. From there you have two options: leaving the station and hailing a taxi to go to the Fairmont Olympic, or taking Link Light Rail to University Street Station. Resist the temptation to walk to the hotel. That route will take you through the original Skid Road area. It is just as bad now as when it earned its name around 1865, so just don't go there.

To catch a taxi, leave the station through the doors on the west side of the building. Turn left and walk toward the row of taxis. Negotiate a deal with one of the taxi drivers.

If you want to take Link Light Rail, take the same direction but continue past the taxis, going south toward the stairs and elevator. Go up to the skybridge

and follow it across the tracks to Fourth Avenue; cross the street and continue between the two tall buildings to the plaza. Turn left and find the Link Light Rail kiosks. Purchase a ticket, then find the escalator or elevator down to Bays A & B. Look for the sign that shows you where Link Light Rail boards and stand there. (Don't get on one of the buses in the tunnel.) Get on Link Light Rail and get off at the second stop: University Street. From there, follow the directions below.

Walking from University Street Station

Once you are off the train, find the escalator or elevator up to the mezzanine. When you get up to the mezzanine, find your way to the escalator or elevators that take you to Third Avenue and University Street. Once on University, walk uphill toward the Fairmont Olympic, in the next block and across the street. If you are going downhill, you are headed in the wrong direction. If you are on flat ground, you are lost. Be forewarned: while the walk from the station to the hotel is not far, the hill is very steep.



The Famous Powell's City of Books

SO, YOU'RE coming to Psmith in Pseattle in October, and you've heard rumors of an incredible magical bookstore in Portland, Oregon, that covers an entire city block. Well, the rumors are true! And you could do a day trip to visit Powell's City of Books, even without a car! Add on a day to your Psmith in Pseattle trip and see Powell's and Portland via Amtrak! (Be aware that the round-trip train ride takes about seven hours.) If you take the earliest train down (leaves Seattle at 7:25 AM) and latest train up (leaves Portland at 6:50 PM), you will have seven hours in Portland. (Check the latest TriMet train schedules at <http://trimet.org/index.htm>.) You could fit in a trip to Powell's and then hit some of the other famous spots in town on your way back to the train station! Powell's City of Books is about half a mile from Union Station.

Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? We welcome you to use this column to tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities. Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page). If you're not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member, please get in touch with the contact person listed.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott



Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)
Contact: Caralyn McDaniel



Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
Contact: Neil Midkiff



The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)
Contact: Amy Plofker



THE SPECIAL has been luxuriating in summer's warm embrace, and we have ignored our usual bimonthly symposiums. One might surmise that we were all readying ourselves for the upcoming Bacchanalia in Seattle, limbering up the larynx by gargling with vodka, puttin' on our top hats, urging the silkworms to step up production, or even buckling our knickerbockers below the knee. But the simple fact is that our usual rendezvous was rendered void due to The Players on Gramercy Park undergoing a summer-long redecoration; thus it closed for both July and August this year. But we are resourceful sorts and we have our calendar set for the last Saturday in August, when you'll find us navigating Central Park with a "yo ho ho" in rowboats or languidly attempting Gershwin in the

gondola (don't forget the vodka, ladies). For purists we suggest a stroll to the Conservatory Pond, humming "Go Little Boat" as a mini-regatta of radio-controlled sailboats skitters round invisible mini-markers. We'll be back in the Burman Room for another annual event on October 15—a very merry Plum birthday and bon voyage for our westbound Specialists.

On a different but also celebratory front, we must educate the Wodehousean masses with a reference from *Food and Wine* magazine. This esteemed publication reported that a swizzle, any swizzle, is deemed a swizzle if, and only if, one is equipped with a twig from the Caribbean Swizzlestick tree. This shrub provides a sort of helicopter array at its top which twirls together crushed ice and rum when spun frantically between the steward's palms.

Finally, there is an astonishing discovery in the family history of a Broadway Special co-president who shall not be named; his enterprising sister was researching their mother's Iowan childhood and found the following item from the *Standard Poland-China Record* (which details information about the Poland-China breed of swine, a cross between Berkshire and Hampshire swine). The *Record* reports: "Superior Leader Farrowed April 18, 1913. Litter 8; raised boars 2, sows 6. Sold to Ross Downing."

Ross Downing—pig farmer, pig fancier, and the Broadway Specialist's grandfather in question—purchased a handsome young piglet and headed home to Hacklebarney. While the remaining litter must have been sold in turn, we can only speculate as to where they ended up. There is no reason not to suspect that one of the little gilts (females less than one year old) might have been transported abroad to improve the quality of piggy progeny, to wit, a glorious black Berkshire beauty, Empress of Blandings. Stranger things have happened. Some people may trace their roots back to the *Mayflower*, or carry the DNA of Genghis Khan, but very few can claim the coveted royal connection. This pedigree is mostly incontrovertible. You could look it up.

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Scott Daniels



ON FATHER'S DAY, we CapCappers met for our quarterly session of sluicing and dinner-roll tossing. The unquestionable highlight of the evening, though, was a multimedia presentation by colleague Bruce Montgomery, aptly entitled "The Lyrics of P. G. Wodehouse." Fortunately, there were no adolescent boys in attendance to gum up the works, and Bruce's machinery worked perfectly—no Blumbo-Jumbo catastrophes at a CapCap Meeting! Our unrestrained enthusiasm for the show will undoubtedly induce Bruce to make encore appearances.

Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Herb Moskowitz



THE CHAPS of Chapter One met on a sunny Sunday at the usual sluicing site, Cavanaugh's. Several members had interesting news. Bob Rains reported that on a recent trip to Gay Paree he managed to purchase a 1944 copy of *Sous Pression (Hot Water)* for the measly sum of €5. It was, of course, in *Hot Water* that Bob's nom de Plum, Oily Carlisle, made his first appearance.

Bob Nissenbaum (5th Earl of Droitwich) suggested a group tour to the Philadelphia Zoo in September to visit Gussie, the Mandarin newt who is sponsored by Chapter One. Janet Nickerson (Nobby Hopwood) passed out stickers with a picture of a newt to be worn by members when touring the zoo.

Jake Blumgart, the freelance reporter/researcher/editor who first wrote about Chapter One and Plum in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* back in 2013, gave a presentation about his first time reading Wodehouse. He fondly remembers finding a copy of *The Code of the Woosters* in his parents' attic and being hooked by the eloquence, wit, and pure unadulterated escapism—"no death, war, poverty, or disease."

Mr. Blumgart also mentioned several authors who are not known for light fiction and yet who counted Wodehouse among their favorite writers: George Orwell, George Will, Alexander Cockburn, and Christopher Hitchens. It's Wodehouse's brilliance as a writer that captures readers, and "everybody needs a break from the doldrums, anxiety, and pure existential terror that the world too often offers us . . . even the author of 1984."

He ended his talk with a suggestion by Anthony Lane, who wrote in the *New Yorker* in 2004 that every hotel room should have a Wodehouse novel in the drawer next to a Gideon Bible.

Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison



[Your editor inadvertently managed to squirrel away a couple of Chicago Accident Syndicate chapter reports from Will Saddler for several months. Here, edited a bit due to some events that have come and gone, are Will's sparkling reports—Ed.]

LAST DECEMBER 13, we gathered at the spacious digs of Susan Diamond and her spouse, Allan Devitt, in lovely Bensenville. The browsing and sluicing more than met the exacting standards of our syndicate. In addition to graciousness in abundance, Susan wields a mean ladle. Beverages to satisfy all palates flowed freely. Plum would definitely have appreciated the way the canine members of the household—Jenna and Lily—adroitly cadged the odd nibble.

The conversation moved between a discussion of the relative hierarchical importance of things Wodehouse and remembrances of departed members. One of our newer members, Mary-Carol Riehs, shared a 1915 story penned by Plum. Not for the first time, we marveled at how Plum's work seems so effortless. In a brief nod to the conducting of "business," the presidential triune informally agreed to host future gatherings in a rotating cycle for now. A date sometime in February was briefly, vaguely noised about.

OUR SPRING gathering returned us to the home of Dan and Tina Garrison. We gathered in February (as is our custom) in remembrance of Plum's passing, and the occasion saw a surge in attendance that would have warmed the beloved Master's heart. Amid murmurs of appreciation for the promise of surcease from the ravages of a particularly unkind winter, the assembled souls soon turned their attention to matters Wodehouse.

The browsing and sluicing was yeoman-like; Lord Emsworth would have been gratified if he'd seen the Empress exert herself similarly. We of the Accident Syndicate are nothing if not dedicated trenchermen and women.

There were readings in good number: some clearly Wodehouse in nature and others more tangentially connected. Tina Woelke shared an article from *The Guardian* sent to her by a member of Capital! Capital! The article, by David Marche, extols the benefits of what he calls "centireading"—reading a book 100 times or

more. He mentions two such books in his life, *Hamlet* and *The Inimitable Jeeves*. Dan Garrison shared a reading sent along by Bob Molumby (who was unable to join us) from Robert McCrum's *Wodehouse: A Life*. The piece was titled "Epilogue: The Afterlife of P. G. Wodehouse" and struck all assembled as entirely appropriate given the overarching theme of our February gatherings.

Finally, Daniel Love Glazer provided support for his argument that sex is not absent in Wodehouse's work. Daniel pointed to what he refers to as a rather graphic sex scene in *Right Ho, Jeeves*. I'll spare the details but point courageous souls to a scene which takes place between Bertie and Gussie in Bertie's chambers. One last, simple clue and reminder: sex is pervasive throughout the animal kingdom.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Elaine Coppola



A SENIOR BLOODSTAIN will be held at the Psmith in Pseattle Convention on Friday, October 30. We plan on a reading of "The Defective Detective," a playlet based on the writings of Stephen Leacock. Time and place will be sent out via email as soon as possible and should also be in your convention schedule.

The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine

(Denver and vicinity)

Contact: Jennifer Petkus



SUMMER CAST its stultifying spell on the Mile High City, and our meetings were attended erratically while members pursue various family vacations. At our June meeting, we discussed *A Damsel in Distress*, which seemed to us some sort of alternative reality where Lord Emsworth becomes Lord Marshmoreton with a concomitant amount of controversy surrounding the pronunciation of that earl's name. Nevertheless, we praised the book, even in comparison to our previous assigned reading, *Something Fresh*.

We expect to meet on September 13 to discuss our next book, *Carry On, Jeeves*, but our venue is yet to be determined. Yet again, the wholly fictional South American Independence Day festivities in Denver (actually Mexican Independence Day/Grito de Dolores) will fall on our meeting date, and Pints Pub,

our local haunt, will be closed because business drops off dramatically on that day due to competition for parking. So please check our website or Facebook page for the fallback meeting place.

Fortunately, summertime also means cricket, and we're getting ready for our second outing, attracting members from Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients (the Sherlock Holmes scion society in Denver) and the Jane Austen Society of North America Denver-Boulder region.

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Carey Tynan



The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw



Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr



The Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society

(Tennessee)

Contact: Ken Clevenger



IT WAS A long, hot summer in Melonsquashville, good for the crops but hard on Wodehousians. Still, Harry and Joyce Hall and Joan and Ken Clevenger helped bring Plum's lyrics to a local musical event in June. Following a lovely harp and violin music performance, Harry sang (with friend Linda Walsh) as Ann Jackson played Jerome Kern's piano scores for seven songs from four Wodehouse musical comedies. Ken's musical contribution came when he offered commentary on the shows and some biographical details about the lyricist and composer.

On August 5 we were to have met in the Old City section of Knoxville for some fine browsing and sluicing at the Crown & Goose gastropub. This is our annual summer get-together to plot the 2015-2016 Wodehouse season. Look for dramatic readings, reports on TWS's Psmith in Pseattle convention, and a holiday gala as fall turns into winter.

The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels
(San Antonio and South Texas)
Contact: Lynette Poss



The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)
(Boston and New England)
Contact: John Fahey



BIRDS AMBLED through the air. Flowers swayed in soft breezes. The country estate of David and Elizabeth Landman basked in gentle sun for our mid-July Nottle.

Dedicated readers may recall that your intrepid reporter previously documented that the Arctic furies had only recently receded from the land. There has been a great metamorphosis in the ensuing months. The change has not been limited to the land. The NEWTS have shed their cocoon. They are not so much embracing Wodehouse as becoming Wodehouse or, more precisely, becoming Wodehouse characters.

The Reverend Wendell Verrill, taking the role of curate a bit too seriously, was off in another part of the country performing good deeds. Too late he realized one can't be at point A when already present at point B.

A chapter photo was taken, with the Landmans' majestic gardens as backdrop. Those who viewed the digital image were startled to see that Elizabeth was missing. If they looked closer they would have seen her reclining among the flowers. I recall her remarking to no one in particular, "Don't the coreopsis remind you of God's daisy chain?"

At one point I observed David Landman off by himself, staring intently at a corner of the property. He told me he was observing a woodpecker he had never seen before, wondering what kind it was. I looked where he was pointing and saw a gray squirrel. I left him to his ornithological endeavors, remarking to myself it is a good thing he is a professor of English.

We had a group reading of "The Metropolitan Touch," an entertaining and concise dissection of the Bingo Little character. The assembled Newts dug into their characters with gusto, providing as much entertainment as the story itself. However, before the reading began, one aunt remarked that the chosen reading was seasonally inappropriate, reinforcing my firm belief that aunts aren't gentlemen.

A good time was had by all.

The Northwodes
(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)
Contact: Kristine Fowler



The Orange Plums
(Orange County, California)
Contact: Lia Hansen



IN JUNE, two of our members took our mascot, our "silver" cow creamer, on a field trip. We met with members of the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation at The Huntington Library to take tea and wander the gardens.

This spring, to honor the upcoming Psmith in Pseattle event, the O. Plums decided to read about Psmith. We've been working our way through *Mike and Psmith*. It took us a while because we kept stopping to reread favorite passages. Our cheerful and dedicated leader came up with a brilliant idea: we should have a commonplace book! That is, a book in which we copy down our favorite passages. "Yes!" we said, "we need a Club Book." Our Cheerful Leader went out and purchased a journal that had (in an echo of Wodehouse's "slim volume of poetry bound in limp purple leather") a soft purple cover.

In taking note of the proceedings, we felt that documenting the action as the "Limp Purple Leather Club Book" could give the wrong impression. We'll just stick with "the Club Book" when referring to our commonplace book.

The Pale Parabolites
(Toronto and vicinity)
Contact: George Vanderburgh



ILEARNED recently that there is a small community by the name of Wodehouse on the west ridge of the Beaver Valley in Euphrasia Township, Ontario. Was there a connection to Plum? According to the history books of the area, the first community in the vicinity to have a post office (opened in 1868) was named Kimberley, after John Wodehouse, 1st Earl of Kimberley. He was Lord of the Privy Seal at the time, having earlier served as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. An adjacent community was named Wodehouse when the second post office opened in 1890. So these small rural communities were named for the head of Plum's family

long before PGW became a landmark for humor in the English-speaking world.

[Note: This same topic arose on PGWnet, and Ian Michaud stated that “Wodehouse, Ontario, and Pelham, Ontario, are separated by about 150 miles of country roads. If you don’t get distracted by any neighborhood pubs en route, it should take you about three hours to make the journey. On the other hand, it’s about a 350-mile drive from Wodehouse, Ontario, to Grenville County, Ontario. And about 320 miles from Pelham to Grenville County.]

Canada Post recently unveiled five new stamps designed to showcase one of Canada’s most popular topics: the weather. The five stamps were issued to coincide with the 175th anniversary of continuous weather observation in Canada. From brilliant flashes of lightning to crystal-clear ice veneers, the images on these stamps showcase the incredible variety of Canadian weather. And yes, that is all good and fine, but they forgot the most important sixth stamp—“A Pale Parabolite,” which occurs as a natural optical illusion in the sky on a cold pristine prairie morning.

The new master of Massey College, the Honorable Hugh Segal, has demonstrated his expert knowledge on Winston Churchill this past year but is “not a fan of P. G. Wodehouse” because of World War II radio broadcasts. However our group still meets in the college’s puffy lounge on an irregular basis.

Please get in touch if you are in the area. Note that my email has changed as listed above.

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation
(Los Angeles and vicinity)
Contact: Karen Shotting



THE NODDERS of Perfecto-Zizzbaum continue to hold their regular meetings on the second Sunday of the month. June and July were short-story months. In August, we read *A Damsel in Distress*—with a butler named Keggs and betting in the servants’ hall on which young man at Belpheer Castle would become engaged to the young lady of the house, a character and a plot device that Wodehouse also used in our July reading, *The Good Angel*.

Autumn will find us back at Blandings Castle as we take a look at *Sunset at Blandings*.

We generally meet at 12:30 PM at Book Alley, 1252 East Colorado Blvd, Pasadena, California. Join our Yahoo! or Facebook Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PZMPCo/> and <https://www.facebook.com/>

groups/373160529399825/ for more information on upcoming readings and changes of schedule and venue.

The Pickering Motor Company
(Detroit and vicinity)
Contact: Elliott Milstein



THE PICKERING MOTOR Co. gathered at the Mahakians’ house on May 31. Sue and Dicron were gracious hosts. The book for the meeting was *Something Fishy*, aka *The Butler Did It*. The book involves a tontine, with the winner being the last to marry. This led to a discussion of the other great book about a tontine, *The Wrong Box* by Robert Louis Stevenson. We then discussed the reappearance in *Something Fishy* of some of the characters from other Wodehouse stories: Battling Billson (from the Ukridge stories), Percy Pilbeam (the gossip editor and private detective), and Keggs the butler.

The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club
(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)



The Plum Crazyes
(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)
Contact: Betty Hooker



The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)
(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)
Contact: Carol James



The Right Honourable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney
(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Contact: Jelle Otten



As you may know, the Knights of Sir Philip Sidney are also members of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society. One of the Knights also happens to be president of that society. That would be Peter Nieuwenhuizen, well known for his talk at the TWS convention in 2013. At our meeting on Saturday, June 7, Peter was honored

for his second term as president of the Dutch Society. Peter was given an eighty-year-old copy of *Sam the Sudden* ("Sam the Sudden" is Peter's nom de Plum) and a certificate of appreciation which also mentioned that Peter is appointed as a member of the Order of the Golden Gavel, our hall of fame for dutiful service.

Another highlight of the meeting was the presentation of a comic book entitled *De Grote Match* (*The Great Match*). The book is a free interpretation of *Psmith, Journalist*. *De Grote Match* was drawn and written by Leen Spierenburg in 1948. His son Leon Spierenburg was presented with the copy of the book.



Peter Nieuwenhuizen is presented with an antique copy of Sam the Sudden in honor of his work as president of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society.



De Grote Match (The Great Match), written and drawn by Leen Spierenburg

One of the characters in the book is Kid Brady. His appearance inspired the Knights to organize the first Wodehouse Boxing Tournament. Have no fear: This tournament was not a real boxing match between the Knights. Instead, the contest involved reading aloud from a Wodehouse story. The handicap was that the reader had to wear boxing gloves to turn the pages

during the reading. Any assistance from others was forbidden.

There was great hilarity as many coulda-been contenders tried to read from *Ukridge*, *The Adventures of Sally*, *The Coming of Bill*, or other stories. In fact, our sister chapter, the Orange Plums, were meeting at virtually the same time in Orange County, California, and participated by reading chapter 6 of *The Lost Lambs*, called "Unpleasantness in the Small Hours." We must thank the Orange Plums for their good-natured participation in our tournament!



Champion "boxer" Hans Schrijver

Anne-Sophie Andela, chairwoman of the jury, proclaimed Han Schrijver as the best "page boxer" of the contest. The meeting ended on this jolly note and Hans was awarded his prize.

The next meeting of the Knights is scheduled for October 17 at 1 PM, at our usual spot at Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266-267 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. If you happen to be in the neighborhood of The Netherlands, we very much enjoy having visitors from anywhere in the world.

The Size 14 Hat Club
(Halifax, Nova Scotia)
Contact: Jill Robinson



Glanders and Bots

BY CHRIS DUEKER, M.D.

P. G. WODEHOUSE did not spread only sweetness and light in his tales. He used infectious diseases in plots (ex., mumps) and as condiments (glanders and bots). I briefly looked at glanders and bots in my early millennial investigation of Wodehouse and fish. Bots is a parasitical disease of animals. Glanders is a bacterial disease similar to anthrax. It can be spread to humans through consumption of the flesh of affected animals. Wodehouse had written of this unhealthy meat. Glanders can be used as a biological weapon like anthrax. Apparently, it is difficult to weaponize the bacterium to enable respiratory transmission among humans. This was heady stuff, but it did not involve fish. I moved on.

Recently, I read the new book by Dwight Messimer, *The Baltimore Sabotage Cell* (2015, Naval Institute Press). The book is about the German World War I cargo submarine program and about sabotage in the United States before the USA declared war. I was pleased that the book discussed the transport of anthrax and glanders cultures from Germany that were intended for introduction into horse and mule herds in the United States and South America. These animals were important for war equipment transport and the cavalry troops. Sadly, the book lacked editorial guidance (which is a curse of our times). We are not told if the scheme worked. Were herds decimated? No mention is made of transmission to people. The subject of historical biological warfare remains a fertile field for eager graduate students.

Neuroscientists know that the consumption of Wodehouse tales causes seeding of the brain with delayed-release gems. Subsequent exposure to trigger words, like glanders, invokes pleasant memories of times spent with the masterful Wodehouse.

Letters to the Editor

FROM Major Thomas L. R. Smith, Ph. D. (Retired): I appreciate the bit you put in *Plum Lines* from *The Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report*. However, there are two small issues. (1) You referred to the report later in the article as *The Fuels Report*. The official short title listed in the ISSN registry is *The Hybrid Report*. *The Fuel Report* is the short title for another report, *The Fuel and Vehicle Trends Report*. (2) You referred to my nom de Plum as Colonel Plug Basham. Both Plug and I are Majors.

FROM Nick Townend: I enjoyed Jeff Porteous's "My First Time" in the Summer 2015 *Plum Lines*, particularly his description of his college roommate, Todd Parkhurst: "He would, in the bunk below mine, regularly ditch his studies to contentedly devour page after page of Wodehouse instead. [H]e'd be down there, snickering unabashedly while I remained perched in the top bunk unsuccessfully trying to stay awake through such dreaded assignments as *Madame Bovary* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." This reminded me of a couple of similar scenes of study life from *Tales of St Austin's*. Firstly, from "Bradshaw's Little Story," the night before a Euripides exam: "We were working under forced draught, and it was distinctly annoying to see the wretched Bradshaw lounging in our only armchair with one of Rider Haggard's best, seemingly quite unmoved at the prospect of Euripides examinations." Secondly, from "A Shocking Affair," the night before a Thucydides exam: "Bradshaw looked up from his book. He was attempting to get a general idea of Thucydides's style by reading Pickwick."

FROM John Koenig, Jr.: Thank you for dubbing me the oldest member of The Wodehouse Society. I am indeed honored. "Oldest member" is a term of high regard among Wodehouseans.

The Oldest Member who narrates Wodehouse's golf stories introduced me to PGW. I was fourteen when I found those stories at a branch of the Philadelphia Public Library. At the book department in the great Wanamaker's store, I found Wodehouse galore. Jeeves, Bertie Wooster, Mr. Mulliner—still my favorites after all these years. My Wodehouse collection is at about eighty volumes. To all litterateurs and that sort, I say: Hop in the old two-seater, with or without Jeeves, and pick up another volume or ten of P. G. Wodehouse!

I know that the grand title of "Official O.M." that you've applied to me is open to question, but I'm happy to hold it until someone older turns up. I will turn 100 on June 12, 2016. Surviving is an important aspect of getting older. For example, surviving looms large in the incident where Bertie, in full dress, plunges into the pool ("swimming bath") at the Drones Club.

Incidentally, I contributed three stories to *Plum Lines* when Ed Ratcliffe was editor. One was about finding the Wodehouse home at Remsenburg, another about a visit to Dulwich College, and another about PGW's one-time home in Le Touquet. And once I visited Buck's Club in London, said to be the model for the Drones Club.

Keep up the great work with *Plum Lines*. Cheers to all Wodehouseans everywhere!

Comedy Among the Modernists: P. G. Wodehouse and the Anachronism of Comic Form (Part Two)

BY LAURA MOONEYHAM

Part One of this article appeared in the Summer 2015 Plum Lines issue. The article was originally published in 1994 in the academic journal Twentieth Century Literature. Professor Mooneyham White is now at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and has graciously granted permission to reprint.

AGAINST THIS “vapid and frivolous wastrel” (Aunt Agatha’s term for Bertie) is arrayed a platoon of aunts (in *The Mating Season* no less than six, a “surging sea of aunts,” who naturally characterize Bertie’s activities as “vulgar foolery.”⁵ If an aunt is lacking to block the happy ending, Wodehouse has an enduring substitute in the *senex* figure, usually a tyrannical captain of industry or bad-tempered justice of the peace. Or the killjoy may operate out of general principle, like the Efficient Baxter, who harbors suspicions of all others indiscriminately and who moves to squelch pleasure as completely as did his predecessor Malvolio. Because we must feel secure to enjoy the chaos of comedy, the bad characters are always drawn from stock, whenceforth issues a guarantee of their eventual comeuppance.

This guarantee of poetic justice (pleasure lovers win, killjoys lose) issues from the uniform morality of this world. This consistent moral vision in turn bars any naturalistic invokings of sex or violence such as characterize the works of Lawrence or Joyce. Wodehouse found such explicit content in modern literature embarrassing. After reading Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*, he exclaimed “These Southerners!” and though he appreciated the artistry of Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*, he was appalled by the novel’s obscene language (Voorhees “Jolly” 217). Wodehouse’s own fictions are chaste in the extreme. In *The Code of the Woosters* Bertie is embarrassed even by what he believes are Madeline’s references to the medieval practice of loving a married woman from afar: “[Madeline:] ‘The Seigneur Geoffrey Rudel, Prince of Blaye-en-Saintonge . . . fell in love with the wife of the Lord of Tripoli.’ I stirred uneasily. I hoped she was going to keep it clean.” (ch. 3) There is no sex or obscenity, adultery or guilty love, in Wodehouse at all. Wodehouse knew his limitations. In a letter written in 1960 he called attention to the very sort of subject which could be fatal to his fiction: “I’ve just finished my new novel. Fairly good, I think, but what does it *prove*? I sometimes

wish I wrote that powerful stuff the reviewers like so much, all about incest and homosexuality” (*Yours* 161). His narrative sexual exchanges are of a different order altogether. The tempestuous romantic climaxes which come close to the end of each plot are among the most conventional of Wodehouse’s effects. Successful wooing, as any Wodehouse aficionado knows, consists of grasping the female in one’s arms, waggling her about a bit, raining kisses on her upturned face, and saying “My mate!” Though this formula’s insufficiency as an all-purpose courting procedure *outside* of a Wodehouse fiction is perhaps self-evident, it never fails to succeed *in* one.

Nor does blood flow, at least not to much account. The explicit violence which modernism requires to represent the ordinary sordidness and horror of modern experience Wodehouse found intensely uncongenial. His favorite readings beyond Shakespeare were British mysteries, particularly those by Agatha Christie and Patricia Wentworth, in whose books violence occurs only genteelly.⁶ It is not, however, that Wodehouse’s work excludes violence; in fact, violence is both a dominant force in the figurative language as well as an important part of every plot. Robert Hall has pointed out that Wodehouse’s fiction contains an enormous violence of both action and imagery (*Comic* 108–09). Many of his novels have a reference to Jael, the wife of Heber, and her athletic propensity to drive spikes through the brain (Jael is most often alluded to to make vivid the aches of a hangover), and Jezebel’s fate—stomped by horses and eaten by dogs—is equally ubiquitous for comic effect. Characters commonly say horribly crushing things to each other and indulge in darkly sadistic fantasies (Hall 108). In *Joy in the Morning* (ch. 28), Lord Worplesdon, locked in a garage by Boko, thinks of skinning him alive, “lingeringly and with a blunt knife.” Of the young Edwin, Bertie muses, “There’s a boy who makes you feel that what this country wants is something like King Herod.” (ch. 11)

But such violence poses no real threat, because we know we are in Arcadia. In fact, as Robert Kiernan notes, it is exactly because their world carries no real risk that Wodehouse’s characters can speak and think in such murderous terms (108). Colin Maclnnes has pointed out the prelapsarian invulnerability of life in Wodehouse’s world: “His world . . . is that of mankind

before the Fall. There are multitudinous serpents in this Eden, but, like the English grass snake, without venom. There are accidents innumerable (watch out, in his stories, for any swan-decked lake, or stately stairway, or drainpipe descending from a mullioned window). But no one gets more than a chill or a sprained ankle, and nobody ever dies” (32). The most common weapons in Wodehouse’s world, as Voorhees noted, are the weapons of slapstick, the eggs and vases which “make the most commotion and do the least harm.” The projectile of choice in moments of high emotion is the not particularly murderous statuette of the Infant Samuel at Prayer. How can we worry when we begin a novel with a spectacle such as Bertie in his bath playing with his rubber duckie? No one is hurt, at least never seriously or permanently, though Jeeves might cosh a policeman or the Earl of Emsworth might shoot his male secretary in the buttocks with an air gun. This comic world in which ordinary dangers pose no risk carries so much authority in Wodehouse that what we most fear are events that in ordinary experience would seem negligible dangers. As Voorhees puts it, in Wodehouse the reversal of values is so complete that “baby contests are the most fearful of events and dangerous and criminal activities become domesticated” (134–35). It is perhaps in this capacity, as determined domesticator of all contemporary trauma, that Wodehouse most saliently demonstrates his rejection of modernist values.

There are only two arenas in which one might claim the title of modernist for Wodehouse: his use of language and his employment of narrative self-consciousness. Wodehouse’s ease with language, his extraordinary linguistic inventiveness, shares that modernist inwardness and freedom we relish in Joyce, so much so that one critic has claimed that Wodehouse’s “lordship of language” displays “more true Shakespearian buoyancy . . . than Joyce” (Bayley 285). Wodehouse, like Joyce, writes “right out of the act and moment of linguistic creation” (Medcalf 192). This joyousness of linguistic discovery, however, unlike Joyce’s, is not revolutionary. It is instead accompanied by a complete acceptance of the multitudinous tags and idioms that the culture has provided, not the rejection of tradition’s storehouse that Joyce represents. (Joyce once wrote in a letter, “It is my revolt against the English conventions, literary and otherwise, that is the main source of my talent” [Eagleton 1].) Because Wodehouse’s art “centers on his ability to bring a cliché just enough to life to kill it” (Medcalf 190), it is vital that those original clichés crowd in. In *Right Ho, Jeeves* (ch. 16), for example, when Bertie offers for Jeeves’s inspection the words “the imagination boggles,” we cannot go more than a

line further without this improvisation: “I suspected my imagination. He was right. It boggled.” Medcalf is right to insist that such verbal play demonstrates that “Wodehouse delights in his original quotations and clichés and does not discredit them” (192). His sort of discovery is not antagonistic toward English literary traditions, since these very traditions supply the language that Wodehouse refurbishes for comic effect. His is a recombinatory genius, in which the modernist love of linguistic innovation is yoked to a love of language’s traditions.

If, then, Wodehouse’s use of language does not follow the modernist path completely, one might argue that perhaps it is Wodehouse’s self-consciousness as an artist which allies him with modernism. After all, Wodehouse’s attention to the demands of the paying customer and his or her interpretation of events, expectations, and frustrations may parallel modernist self-consciousness, the sort of thing André Gide does when he provides a blank space on the last page of his *Paludes* for writing down “*les phrases les plus remarquables de Paludes*” (149). I would argue, however, that Wodehouse’s self-reflexivity has more links to the nineteenth-century practice of the intrusive author than to modernism. Such effects are very largely nothing more than a comic expansion on the intrusive narrator, extending the possibilities inherent in such moments as Trollope’s assurance to the reader in *Barchester Towers* that Eleanor will not marry Mr. Slope or Thackeray’s reference to the puppet box of his characters at the close of *Vanity Fair*.

Wodehouse’s self-consciousness, moreover, has a peculiar and anti-modernist cast; it focuses on the customer’s right to a coherent presentation and implicitly criticizes narratives which lack order. All Wodehousian apologies for disorganization are, of course, organizing tools themselves. For instance, Bertie’s exposition about Gussie Fink-Nottle in *The Mating Season* (ch. 1) constitutes a brilliant précis of previous action:

“I wonder, by the way, if you recall this Augustus, on whose activities I have had occasion to touch once or twice before now? Throw the mind back. Goofy to the gills, face like a fish, horn-rimmed spectacles, drank orange juice, collected newts, engaged to England’s premier pill, a girl called Madeline Bassett. . . . Ah, you’ve got him? Fine.”

That Wodehouse commonly refers to his readers as “customers” also indicts the modernist disdain for market realities, a point of view which places Wodehouse as the purveyor of goods. “Poets,” after all, as Wodehouse argues in *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*

(ch. 13), despite their pretensions, “as a class are business men. Shakespeare describes the poet’s eye as rolling in a fine frenzy from heaven to earth, and giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name, but in practice you will find that one corner of that eye is generally glued on the royalty returns.”

Wodehouse’s antagonism to modernism, however, extends far beyond his general refusal to employ modernist conventions for himself. His is not a purely negative or passive position. Rather, Wodehouse perpetually wages a literary class war against the literati, the modernist elite. At one level, this hostility against modernist sensibility manifests itself in the presiding anti-intellectualism of his fiction. The common or garden variety of this anti-intellectualism punctures literary pretentiousness through the pervasive yet loving skewering of the English classics. Typical of Wodehouse’s technique is this fracturing of *Hamlet* in *Bertie Wooster Sees It Through* (ch. 21):

It is pretty generally recognized in the circles in which he moves that Bertie Wooster is not a man who lightly throws in the towel and admits defeat. Beneath the thingummies of what-d’you-call-it his head, wind and weather permitting, is as a rule bloody but unbowed, and if the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune want to crush his proud spirit, they have to pull their socks up and make a special effort.

But Wodehouse’s inability to take “Literature” with due seriousness and his ridicule of literary beauties sharpen into unsparing abuse when the literature in question is that of recent origin. Almost every fiction features a representative of self-conscious high culture as the enemy of the hero. In Wodehouse, as Edward Galligan points out, “with one exception [Jeeves], the intellectually competent people are monstrous” (“P. G. Wodehouse” 616), a statement which rings with particular force for the gallery of poets, editors of the better critical reviews, and novelists in the fiction who represent the modernist elite.

Wodehouse’s mockery of aesthetes and high-caste litterateurs began with the character of Psmith, who punctuates artistic pretensions with what Wilfrid Sheed terms “brutal philistinism” (xiv). In *Leave It to Psmith* (ch. 6), a novel which also indulges the author’s fantasy that modernists be hit by bricks (“In these modern days . . . poets are so plentiful that it is almost impossible to fling a brick in any public place without damaging some stern young singer”), Psmith impersonates the

modern poet Ralston McTodd. The ersatz McTodd must explain to the Blandings Castle inmates the meaning of an obscure line, presumably of his authorship—“across the pale parabola of Joy.” In chapter 7, Psmith admits, “Perhaps I did put a bit of topspin on that one.” When Psmith is tapped to give a reading of what he terms a “scuttleful of modern poetry” (ch. 10), the entire household is shocked to learn that Psmith “concealed anything up his sleeve as lethal as *Songs of Squalor*”: “The stout hearts argued that while this latest blister was probably going to be bad, he could hardly be worse than the chappie who had lectured on Theosophy last November, and must almost of necessity be better than the bird who during the Shiffley race-week had attempted in a two-hour discourse to convert them to vegetarianism.” Earlier (ch. 9), Psmith makes a case for the solitude required for poetic inspiration:

I need the stimulus of the great open spaces. When I am surrounded by my fellows, inspiration slackens and dies. You know how it is when there are people about. Just as you are starting in to write a nifty, someone comes and sits down on the desk. . . . Every time you get going nicely, in barges some alien influence and the Muse goes blooey.

The “Muse goes blooey,” we presume, much as it did when Coleridge was interrupted by that gentleman from Porlock. With Wodehouse, it is hard to take poetic practice with due seriousness. Poets are themselves to be shunned. *Leave It to Psmith* features one genuine poet to offset Psmith’s fake one, a Miss Aileen Peavey, about whom we are told, “It is a sad but indisputable fact that in this imperfect world Genius is too often condemned to walk alone—if the earthier members of the community see it coming and have time to duck.”

The literary class war waged by Wodehouse becomes useful as a plot device in many Bertie/Jeeves narratives. A significant proportion of Bertie’s difficulties arises from the intrusive attempts of aunts and girlfriends to make him read improving literature—and what does Wodehouse pillory as “improving” literature? Depending on the narrative, it may include T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, or Henri Bergson! As Voorhees has noted, Bertie’s reluctance in this matter echoes Huck Finn’s attempts to avoid the devotional literature foisted upon him by the Widow Douglas (“Jolly” 219). Wodehouse’s substitution of modernist literature for the nineteenth-century literature of piety demonstrates his awareness of modernism’s status as reigning orthodoxy in the twentieth century.

Wodehouse's antagonism to modernism never declined; until his last years, as Voorhees points out, Wodehouse equated an "intellectual view of the world . . . with tragedy, pessimism, and negation" ("Jolly" 217). For instance, when Mr. Mulliner ("The Castaways") explains that one of his relatives has suffered a reversal of fate, Wodehouse has him speak slightly of the standard literary practice of the day: "It was as if he had suddenly stepped into one of those psychological modern novels where the hero's soul gets all tied up in knots as early as page 21 and never straightens itself out again." Wodehouse's verdict on modernism relies on his sense of a moral degeneration in the twentieth century, a sense which underlies such statements as Bertie's reflection in *The Code of the Woosters* that being subjected to two separate sorts of blackmail is "pretty good going even for this lax post-War world." The modernist spirit, according to Wodehouse, requires a sense of hopelessness. He claims in *Something Fresh* that "worry is the specialty of the twentieth century," and in *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (ch. 12) we see a dejected Pongo Twistleton made an example of twentieth-century angst by the loony doctor Sir Roderick Glossop: "Sir Roderick carried away with him an impression of a sombre and introspective young man. He mentioned him later to the Mothers of West Kensington as an example of the tendency of post-war youth toward a brooding melancholia."

Wodehouse's aversion to elitist notions of despair surfaces in his attacks on nineteenth-century philosophers. The arty women who try to mold Bertie find in Nietzsche, Martineau, and Schopenhauer adequate replacement for the high modernists they promote otherwise. Wodehouse himself clearly conflates the pessimism of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche with the much later literary expressions of pessimism in an author like Eliot. For Wodehouse these are interchangeable satiric targets. His caricaturing of philosophic gloom is evident in his attack on Schopenhauer in *Summer Lightning* (ch. 11). A lovelorn Millicent expounds to a lovelorn Sue about Schopenhauer's wisdom:

"Schopenhauer says that all the suffering in the world can't be mere chance. Must be meant. He says life's a mixture of suffering and boredom. You've got to have one or the other. His stuff's full of snappy cracks like that. You'd enjoy it . . . Schopenhauer says suicide's absolutely O.K. He says Hindoos do it instead of going to church. They bung themselves into the Ganges and get eaten by crocodiles and call it a well-spent day. Schopenhauer says we are like lambs in a field,

disporting themselves under the eye of the butcher, who chooses first one and then another for his prey. Sure you won't go for a walk?"

Despite this pithy and relatively accurate rendering of Schopenhauer, one must entertain doubts as to whether Wodehouse ever read any of Schopenhauer's philosophy for himself. The consummate negativist Nietzsche also comes in for abuse. In "Jeeves Takes Charge," the title character, that redoubtable superman Jeeves, does Bertie the signal service of saving him from the originator of *der Ubermensch*: "I have had it from her ladyship's own maid . . . that it was her intention to start you almost immediately upon Nietzsche. You would not enjoy Nietzsche, sir. He is fundamentally unsound." In fact, Jeeves as superman stands as an implicit reproach to the superman theories of Nietzsche, Lawrence, and Shaw because Jeeves, that "constitutional superman" (*Carry On, Jeeves*), rules only through service (Spath). Jeeves's (and Wodehouse's) approval is granted only to pre-Romantic philosophic minds, Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius.

An analysis of Wodehouse's position in twentieth-century literary history and his antagonism to modernism would be incomplete without an examination of his political and economic world view. At some level Wodehouse attacks the same raw world of bourgeois capitalistic exchange which the modernists generally pillory. But his critique of capitalism is uneven. For the most part he casts a benevolent eye upon the class system and commonly extends his sympathy toward the impoverished peers of the twentieth century. Note the Horatio Alger model that Wodehouse uses to explain the means by which one ascends into the aristocracy in this speech from *The Return of Jeeves* (ch. 2) about a young man's predicament: "Bill starts at the bottom of the ladder as a mere heir to an Earldom, and by pluck and perseverance works his way up till he becomes the Earl himself. And no sooner has he settled the coronet on his head and said to himself, 'Now to whoop it up!' than they pull a social revolution out of their hats like a rabbit and snatch practically every penny he's got." Wodehouse had little sympathy for those who advocated the social revolution which brought Bill to his present difficulties. Many stories feature characters with Bolshevik leanings, like Brinkley, Bertie's substitute valet in *Thank You, Jeeves*, whose revolutionary sympathies make them objects of sustained ridicule. Wilfrid Sheed has argued that even Marxists love Wodehouse, despite his acceptance of the class system, because in his works "the horrors of class society are somehow magically transformed painlessly" (220). The painlessness issues

from Wodehouse's refusal to dwell on class envy and class conflict except as vehicles for comedy.

Much as Wodehouse accepts the class system, so too he consistently takes capitalism as a necessary precondition for his plots, at least to the degree that the need for economic subsistence and the need to have a job or "some of the ready" commonly serve as motives for action. But the fact that economic motives dominate the plots does not mean that such motives are taken in the end with particular seriousness. In his utopia no one really works except the killjoys (who like to). Everyone else, even those presumably employed at one occupation or another, plays. The servants are remarkably underemployed, as are the village folk. Blandings Castle, rather than a world in which the labors of the many support the ease of the few, is instead a world in which ease is supported for all magically. Those who do worry about the terms of their employment or about getting jobs "get them, all right, not by the laws of economics but by the laws of farce" (Voorhees *P. G. Wodehouse* 132). Jobs disappear and reappear with the ease of miracle, as the fluid dispensation of the post of Lord Emsworth's secretary makes evident. Neither are commodities allowed undue power, except, again, as necessary ingredients of the farcical exchange. Valuable items, such as pigs or silver cow creamers, are valuable more because someone has placed an irrational value on them than because they have intrinsic value or produce wealth for their owners. And these objects of value are almost infinitely transferable; it's axiomatic in Wodehouse that if an object has been purloined once from its rightful owner it will be purloined again, perhaps as often as half a dozen times.

It would be hard to call this position a uniform critique of capitalism or even an endorsement of feudalism. What is endorsed is the ahistorical world of an arcadia. Wodehouse never, to his credit, posited a world of painless exchange as one achievable in real life. He acknowledged that his world had "gone with the wind and is with Nineveh and Tyre. In a word, it has had it" (Cannadine 12). David Cannadine points out what Wodehouse probably also knew, that the models for Bertie and his friends (Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright, Gussie Fink-Nottle, Bingo Little, et al.) were slaughtered in World War I (10). Wodehouse instead leaps out of history altogether. His chronology was perpetually out of whack, as the plainly pre-1939 scene of Wodehouse's characters is commonly jarred by anachronistic reference to post-1945 culture, including tape recorders, atom bombs, population explosions, and overnight transatlantic airplane service (Hall "Timelessness" 23). The point is that if it is never any

particular time, it can be all times, a perpetual present. The value of such a world is precisely the value of our desire for that leap out of history. As Stephen Medcalf points out, the innocence of the Wodehouse world reproaches the world outside, even though the pressure of the outside world can always be seen dimly in it (200–01). Our pleasure in that world is that we take in a world of pure play that reproaches a world of capitalistic concern, for here commodities are infinitely malleable and there is milk and honey enough for all, even for the stymied antagonists.

Wodehouse reproaches a world that does not believe in Arcadia, that has given up on the possibility of a vision of human destiny as intelligible and happy. Wodehouse tries to show that modernism's metaphysics are out of joint and attempts to argue for comedy's enduring message of human value, that things will end happily despite trouble. This claim to a higher moral status has merit. In one sense the ends of comedies make a providential argument de facto. As Christopher Herbert tells us, "It is not just that comedies have happy endings . . . but that the whole design of comedy lets us know that no other kind of ending is conceivable" (404–05). Comedy invariably makes a claim about human evil parallel to that of the medieval Christian portrayal of the Vice figure, whose crimes are laughable precisely because he operates in a world that makes evil ultimately absurd and unimportant. Here is the *felix culpa*, the doctrine that all evil works to good on the cosmic scale. In chapter 17 of *Joy in the Morning* (the very title with its roots in the Psalms accords with a providential reading of human suffering), Wodehouse supplies us with farce's *felix culpa*. Edwin the Boy Scout, a deeply repellent little boy, has just dealt the *senex* figure, Lord Worplesdon, a crushing blow with a hockey stick. Bertie sees in the attack evidence of divine order, feeling in himself, he says, "that sort of awe . . . one gets sometimes, when one has a close-up of the workings of Providence and realizes that nothing is put into this world without a purpose, not even Edwin, and that the meanest creatures have their uses." Similarly, in *Summer Lightning*, when the skulduggery of a decamping pigman fails to stay the Empress of Blandings, Lord Emsworth's prize pig, from eating her full, the narrator comments, "The right triumphs in the world far more often than we realize" (ch. 1).

But this claim to moral value is complicated by the modernists' insistence that this sort of moral value is senseless. Wodehouse is ignored, not because he is not peerless in his literary accomplishment, but because his metaphysics bear little relationship to the age's. As Anthony Quinton notes, "The objection is that . . .

Wodehouse's world is not truly or metaphysically real; it ought not to exist and is not worth thinking about" (84). What we inevitably ask is, if the moral claims of a given text are historically limited, are the moral claims of Wodehouse's world themselves anachronistic or escapist? And escapist for whom? And if moral claims can be rendered obsolete when a culture's expectations shift, can genre, which depends on particular moral views of human experience, also be rendered obsolete? Many poststructuralists and Marxists are ready to assert that genre is dead, replaced by Literature as an all-consuming and ironizing category. For instance, Fredric Jameson suggests that "A final position is possible, one which, while admitting the social nature of the generic situations, declares that the old-fashioned genres have ceased in our time to exist, and that we no longer consume a tragedy, a comedy, a satire, but rather Literature in general in the form of each work" (158–59). If genres can really die (rather than lie dormant only to rise again), the defense of Wodehouse which points out that realism is an artificial artistic standard is a limited one. (Among the best of such a defense I might cite Quinton's stinging questions: "Is its lack of Zolaesque naturalism seen as a weakness of *The Rape of the Lock*? Are pastoral poems taken to task for their inadequacies in the light of the oviculture of their time?" [84]) If genre dies, Wodehouse can be legitimately termed anachronistic. But if comedy remains a salient response to human experience, even if it suffers from lack of academic and intellectual approval, perhaps Wodehouse's literary achievement is a genuine one and our inability to so see him in our time is a form of inevitable historical myopia.

NOTES

⁵That aunts represent the constraints of the superego rather than mothers keeps us from being overly disturbed by Oedipal anxieties. Wodehouse intuitively grasped that it was necessary that his blocking characters be at a remove from the central anxieties of the family romance. Wodehouse explained that "the main thing is that if you want to draw an unpleasant character, you can't very well make her a mother and she's got to be some sort of relative, so make her an aunt" (Robinson 496).

⁶If Wodehouse wasn't satisfied with British mysteries, he turned to even more secure texts, his own: "I simply can't cope with the American novel. The most ghastly things are published and sell a million copies, but good old Wodehouse will have none of them and sticks to English mystery stories. It absolutely beats me how people can read the stuff that is published now. . . . I am

reduced to English mystery stories and my own stuff. I was reading *Blandings Castle* again yesterday and was lost in admiration for the brilliance of the author" (*Yours* 193–94).

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A Few Quick Ones

All of this batch of Quick Ones have been provided by Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch. Thanks to all eagle-eyed readers who find and send these nuggets.

In the column entitled "Plumshoe" in the July 10 *Times Literary Supplement*, the reviewer ("W.C.") quoted from Plum about his abiding love for his years at Dulwich College. W.C. then contended that Raymond Chandler may have gained many of the same literary powers from that same well. "Chandler had enrolled at Dulwich in the year Wodehouse left, and returned to teach part-time at the school in 1910." Chandler was quoted as saying that "if I hadn't grown up with Latin and Greek, I doubt if I would know so well where to draw the very subtle line between what I call the vernacular style and what I should call an illiterate or faux naif style." This very much echoed Wodehouse's praise of the values of a classical education for authors. W.C. ended with this observation: "Is Chandler's great detective almost as much a product of the English public school systems as the equally decent but somewhat dimmer protagonists of Wodehouse's ripping yarns?"

Literature columnist Paula Byrne, in the February 20 *Times Literary Supplement*, wrote about Jane Austen ("Ungentle Jane") and reminded us that Austen's earlier writings were "violent, restless, anarchic, and exuberantly expressionistic. Drunkenness, female brawling, sexual misdemeanor, and murder run riot across their pages." She then concluded her essay by stating: "As a diet of P. G. Wodehouse is the best antidote for the flu, for anyone languishing with a broken heart there is no better tonic than the comedy—and indeed the cathartic violence—of Jane Austen's youthful writings."

In the February 14 *Spectator*, columnist Bruce Anderson contended that military humor, while not everybody's cup of tea, provides "some of the finest comic writing" to be found. "Every soldier I know has a wonderful repertoire of stories." Specifically, he mentioned George MacDonald Fraser's three McAuslan books, saying that these stories "put [Fraser] up there with Wodehouse."

In that same February 14 issue of the *Spectator*, Dot Wordsworth (a very good name for the writer of the column "Mind Your Language") discussed the American use of the word "likely" as an adverb, where it typically is used as an adjective in formal writing. She covered a few other oddities, then came to the word "sure," which "looks more like an adjective than 'surely' does, but both may be used as adverbs." She then mentioned the use of "sure" as an emphatic alternative to "yes", and quoted from Wodehouse: "'Is that a fact?' 'Sure,' murmured Archibald.'"

PDFs for Posterity

TO PRESERVE the entertaining, informative, and useful material in *Plum Lines* for fans and researchers, we are starting to archive as many of the past *Plum Lines* as we can. We began with the 2004 editions which are now posted in the online *Plum Lines* Archive and available for review. Links to the currently available issues can be found by clicking on the *Plum Lines* tab of The Wodehouse Society website (www.wodehouse.org). Among the several highlights to be found and/or remembered in these four issues are John Graham's continuing series on collecting Wodehouse books, an article by the renowned Charles E. Gould, Jr., Dan Cohen's column on the Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse series (George Ade), and another in that same series by David McDonough about Robert Benchley. Elin Woodger's history of TWS to 2005 is intriguing, and there is a review from Jan Wilson Kaufman of the 2004 Wodehouse biography by Robert McCrum, *Wodehouse: A Life*. There is also a link to the *Plum Lines* Index. Aunt Dahlia (Elin Woodger, former president of TWS) has compiled a complete index to all the articles in *Plum Lines* over the years. The index has recently been updated to include all issues from 1980 through 2014. A user may search the *Plum Lines* Index and note the volume number, issue number, and page number of the desired topic and then look for that specific edition in the *Plum Lines* Archive.

Kudos to our dedicated volunteer webmaster, Noel Merrill, for this valuable new addition to TWS's website.

Lord Emsworth stifled a moan, and tried—a task which the deaf adder of Scripture apparently found so easy—to hear nothing and give his mind to the things that really mattered.

Heavy Weather (1933)

P. G. Wodehouse in the *Globe* Newspaper
Volume 2



By the Way: 200 Verses

featuring the work of P. G. Wodehouse
from his years at the *Globe*, 1901–1908

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We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, tales of My First Time, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above. Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1. If you have something that might miss the deadline, let me know and we'll work something out.

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