

## Wodehouse in the Comics

BY PETER NIEUWENHUIZEN

*What follows are highlights from Peter's humorous and informative talk delivered at the 2015 convention. The descriptive text is your OM's paraphrase of Peter's comments, as there was no written text to his talk. There's much more to this collection, and if you would like the complete set of Peter's images, simply let me know and we'll zip it over to you via the ether.*

PETER FIRST offered some general comments. He showed how the same scene can be illustrated quite differently. For example, below are illustrations of the same scene from two publications of "Extricating Young Gussie." He followed with "fantasy" illustrations of how one artist envisioned some of the well-known Wodehouse characters (below right).



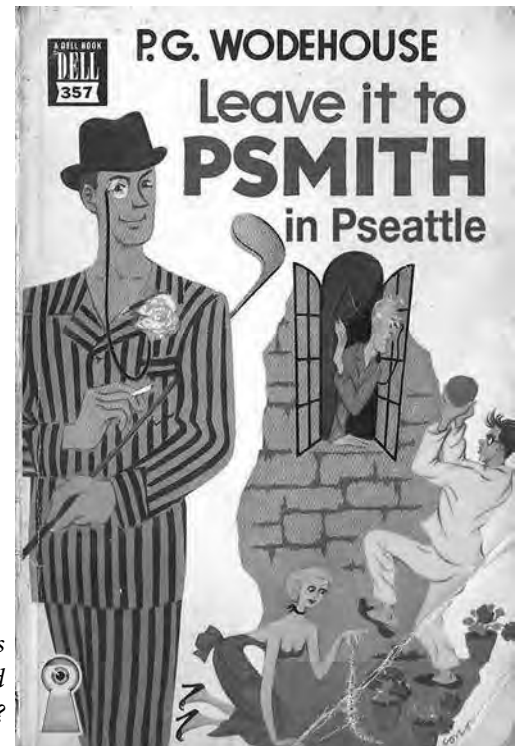
*The Most Frightful Thing Happened. The Girl Next Me Got Up and Began to Sing*



*"THE GIRL NEXT ME GOT UP IN HER SEAT, THUCKED HER HEAD BACK, AND BEGAN TO SING."*

*The illustration above was from a September 1915 publication in the Saturday Evening Post; the one on the right is from the Strand Magazine of January 1916.*

*Do you have this rare customized Psmith novel?*



The remainder of Peter's talk was a chronological series of images from, and comments about, many of the great comic and graphic-novel artists. There were some remarkable adaptations, including those featuring Lego characters, Donald Duck, and others. The only comment we can find to make is that there is no limit to how one might envision Plum's stories in the mind's eye.



In the 1980s and 1990s, a series of Donald Duck cartoons with Wodehousean stories was published, some in the Netherlands and some in the U.S. The example to the left was drawn by Tino Santanach Hernandez. There were also interpretations by cartoonist Daniel Branca.

In 2014, a comic book entitled Canine Classics was published as part of the Graphic Classics Series in Wisconsin. It included a version of Wodehouse's "The Mixer," script by A. Caputo and drawings by Shepard Hendrix.

**SUMMER MOONSHINE BY P.G. WODEHOUSE**

*Joe Vanringham meets Jane Abbott and proposes within minutes...*

*Because Jane's already engaged to Adrian Peake -- a fortune seeking dandy who mistakenly thinks Jane's rich.*

*Naturally, Adrian has a secret too!*

*There's a big, wacky cast! And a plot with lots of hilarious twists-- sort of like a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta without the music.*

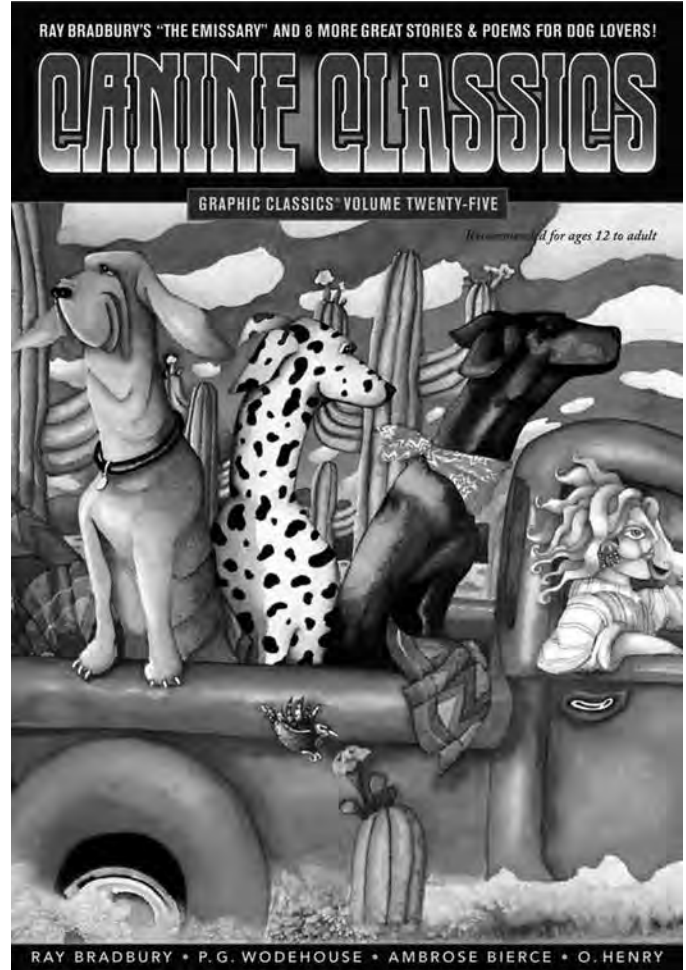
*Oh, there's also a funny fight!*

*And the ending? Well, do you even have to ask?*

John Lustig's 2007 guest cartoonist strip for the Unshelved Book Club was a version of Summer Moonshine. John was formerly a journalist, but was also well-known as the illustrator for Last Kiss magazine covers ("I'm a virgin!" "Again?").



Here is one of the many works from Dutch artist and cartoonist Peter van Straaten. For more information, see Peter N's article about Peter v. S.'s passing in the Spring 2017 issue of Plum Lines.



From PGW's "The Mixer," published in 2014's Canine Classics



American Brian Moore sketched a scene from Bertie Wooster Sees It Through (2010) using watercolor, gouache, and ink.



The great Dutch cartoonist George Mazur offered this version of Psmith.



Some of Brian Moore's preliminary sketches



From "The Bacon and Egg Affair" ("The Reverent Wooing of Archibald") in Top Spot magazine (October 1959, by Cecil Orr)



There are no limits to the interpretations of P. G. Wodehouse's works, including Dave Goeb's 2003 Lego version of "Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest." Awesome!

THE QUALITIES REQUIRED IN WINNING A SHIP'S SPORTS EGG AND SPOON RACE DID NOT MAKE MUCH IMPRESSION ON MYRTLE-BUT SHE DID PROMISE TO SEE WILLIAM AGAIN.



Cecil Orr's version of "The Story of William" (which he titled "The Heroic Chump") in the February 1959 issue of Top Spot magazine ("The paper with man appeal!")

In 1961 in Rotterdam's daily newspaper Dagblad, the great George Mazure drew 100 installments of Leave It to Psmith (below).

P.G. WODEHOUSE



Above and below, Bertie looking spiffy and other scenes from 2009's Please, Jeeves, one of the manga by Bun Katsuta



Two of the Wodehouse covers designed by George Mazure in 1960-61







In 1948, Dutch cartoonist Leen Spierenburg (aka Jack Spieger or Bing Reupers) wrote a monthly cartoon pocket book based on Psmith, Journalist. Volume 6 was “De Grote Match” (“The Big Match”), in which Psmith became the character “Panther Bill.”



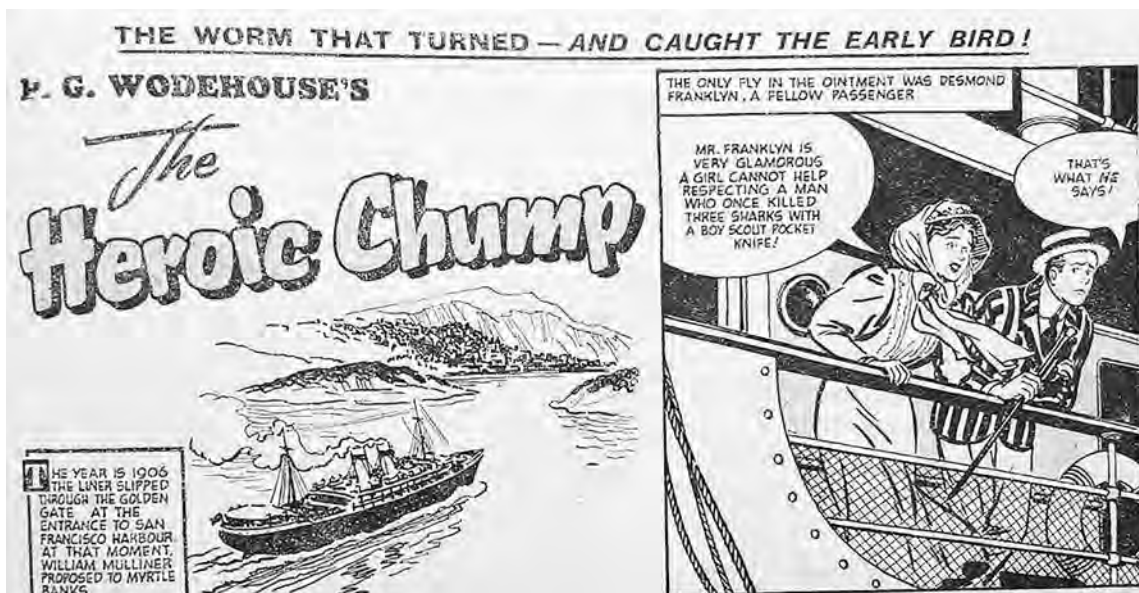
In Japan from 2009 to 2014, Hakusensha published several manga, including several of the Jeeves novels. These were illustrated by Bun Katsuta. The illustration to the right was a tribute by Bun to *The Man Who Knew Almost Everything*, Norman Murphy.

このおじいさまこそ  
今回 取材旅行の案内を  
してくださった  
英国ウツドハウス協会  
元会長の  
ノーマン・マーフィーさん

みんな  
子供みたいだなあ



More of Leen Spierenburg's work from his Psmith cartoon book.



Here is the opening pane of Cecil Orr's “The Heroic Chump” from the February 1959 Top Spot magazine. This is a version of 1927's “The Story of William” (aka “It Was Only a Fire”).

# Further Evidence that Wodehouse Rooted Blandings in Rural Bridgnorth

BY TROY GREGORY

ENGLISH CHILDREN'S television producer Ann E. Wood once claimed to have "found Blandings Castle by accident. At least, I never meant to go looking for it." I know the feeling. I thought I had found it once before, hidden in the recessed, mythopoeic mind, just where the tributary Hippocampus divides the Anterior Cingulate and the low-lying regions of the Amygdala. I hadn't been looking for it, just meandering about for thoughts devoid of polemic, when I glimpsed its shimmering grey stone. Not a sensation easily forgotten. Today, however, I find myself less certain of what I glimpsed, or thought I had glimpsed, long ago.

Before exploring the "further evidence" of my title, I'd like to share my earlier vision of Blandings, a reverie linked to Carroll's rabbit hole and Lewis's wardrobe. Hollywood long ago exploited the trope and has by now probably exhausted it, though given that we're dealing with Wodehouse, Hollywood's borrowing is apt, even endearing. We reach some crisis point in a character's life where trauma overrides the senses and we're given to understand it's all up, endgame. Then, inexplicably, the film pans to some joyous memory from the character's past: a kiss, a pretty face, a poignant conjuring of family or home.

If the moment is done correctly and catches us off-guard, it is pure, unadulterated Wodehouse, though the scale of the trope in Tinseltown could never rival the battlements, pigsties, or legs of lamb with potato, spinach, and jam-laden-rolly-poly-pudding finishes of Blandings Castle. The trope in Wodehouse in fact is so grandiose that our proximity renders it unintelligible. Like Dante looking on the giants in Canto XXXI of *Inferno*, we cannot view the thing whole, and so mistake the pieces of our skewered perspective for the totality we miss. If Wodehouse and not Virgil were our guide through the inferno of social turmoil and conflict in the twentieth century, escorting us safely through the dangers to the paradisaical grounds of Blandings, Wodehouse, with his comic gift for the out-of-context quotation, might have reprimanded contemporary readers in much the same fashion that Virgil reprimanded Dante: "Because you try to penetrate the shadows . . . from much too far away, / you confuse the truth with your imagination."

Perhaps the reason that we quote Evelyn Waugh on the backs of so many editions of Wodehouse owes something to this perspective. Waugh understood the

Edenic strain in Plum and understood, perhaps better than younger generations, that that strain answered the horrors of two World Wars. When the traumatic need for such escape exits the world stage, the charm of the cast spell diminishes and leaves readers with mere ritual—spiritually important ritual, to be sure, but a mere husk devoid of the substance of history. And yet the fairy charm of the place haunts us, attesting to some earlier hosted presence now MIA. So real is the felt presence that grown men and women—otherwise prodigiously gifted scholars—chart probable locations for Blandings Castle in a physical Shropshire (and surrounding) landscape, consult contemporary rail schedules from known stations in Shropshire to cross-check and confirm their theses, employ computer-generated geospatial information systems to challenge earlier theses and promote new locations, and finally recreate (on the extant evidence) the castle's ground and floor plans (with approximation provisos and alternative renderings).

With all respect to Richard Osborne, Michael Cobb, Ionicus, Ann E. Wood, Norman Murphy, Alex Kirby, Daryl A. Lloyd, Ian D. Greatbatch, Graham Tibbets, and resident members of the stone-and-mortar-Castle-Blandings school, publishing well into the 2000s, all of whose books, articles, maps, illustrations, and blueprints I have on my study shelves and study walls (with a portrait, of course, of Empress herself), I had always supported a removal of Blandings to its proper fairy location. Blandings, I held, was surely a state of mind, an endorphin assault on the central nervous system and pituitary gland which triggered euphoric states of bliss, escape, and a slipping of the reality around us for the "fairy something better" that its fertile conjurings promised. Nothing ostensibly is real at Blandings Castle—verisimilitude does not hold court there—and so why the physical structure or grounds should be exceptions was beyond me.

If we took Wodehouse at his word, he warned us in 1938, the year he was working on *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, of his tendency to "go off the rails unless I stay all the time in a sort of artificial world of my own creation." Earlier, in 1935, while busying himself with "Uncle Fred Flits By," he preferred "ignoring real life altogether." And on whose greater authority could we forget that "a real character in one of my books sticks

out like a sore thumb.” He might have added “or physical structure” and saved us our (re)searches. And if we have been too apt to dismiss such comments as coy evasions on Plum’s behalf (following Barry Phelps), then we might at least trust Evelyn Waugh, who reminded us that “Mr. Wodehouse’s characters are not, as has been fatuously suggested, survivals of the Edwardian Age. They are creatures of pure fancy.” So too, I thought, are his rural landscapes and residences. I mean, looking for Blandings Castle is like attempting to locate Big Rock Candy Mountain or the Land of Cockaigne, or like asking Mister Peabody’s coal train to haul back the Paradise of Muhlenburg County again. Not quite playing the game. Not the straight bat.

Such were my thoughts, which I dearly wanted to believe were tuned to the frequency of Wodehouse’s imagination. Though I might admit a physical rabbit hole or an actual wardrobe on this side of fancy, a portal connecting readers in this world to the escape in another, I was unwilling to concede that some model for Blandings existed in a real topography, and I certainly couldn’t imagine that model exerting a verisimilitude over the Wodehouse imagination. (Just the trauma, I mean to say, was transportation enough to remove readers from this too-too-solid earth, once under the Blandings spell.) I didn’t want Wodehouse’s imagination to work in any other way. I wanted pure, unadulterated invention. I wanted a resident alien transported from the golden age, or at least from Saturn, speaking into existence a piffle we had never conceived before. I was blinded by my own bias to the very real need in Wodehouse to build foreign matter on familiar ground.

Then I reread *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* in preparation for a 2017 freshman class. In Chapter Two of that hallowed volume, we discover Lord Emsworth’s son and heir, Lord Bosham, “visiting the castle for the Bridgeford races.” Initially, the “Bridgeford” reference seemed innocuous, though its appeal to a specific location and event within reach of the castle gave me pause. Like Norman Murphy, I remembered the local newspaper which announced the triumphs of Empress of Blandings, the *Bridgnorth, Shifnal, and Albrighton Argus*. So, too, I remembered reading Wodehouse’s letter to Bengt Appelkvist, where he confessed, rather evasively, to “have always pictured Blandings as somewhere near Bridgnorth in Shropshire, where I lived as a boy.”

I also remembered that Murphy, in a 1981 private publication, had named Bridgnorth a likely model for Market Blandings, and Apley Hall a not unlikely prototype for Blandings Castle. Apley Park, he explained, “has a superb setting and I made a mental



“Picnic by the River,” an unsigned nineteenth-century watercolor of Apley.

note that it was the best candidate I had seen so far.” (Murphy actually worked from photographs housed in the British Museum—even though photography could hardly capture the rich aesthetic of Blandings—before making belated visits to each of his short-list locations, including Apley, and settling on his Blandings Castle. Surely watercolors of Apley from a period closer to Wodehouse’s imagination might have convinced Murphy further. For example, see above, the English-School rendering entitled “Picnic by the River.”)

Influenced by snapshots of material structures and not by artistic renderings, Murphy later changed his mind about Apley. Not so Ann E. Wood, who remained convinced that Apley resided close to Wodehouse’s fancy. Writing in 1980–81 for *P. G. Wodehouse: A Centenary Celebration 1881–1981*, she settled securely on Bridgnorth, near where the Wodehouses lived before the turn of the twentieth century and “where Wodehouse said he spent some of his happiest boyhood days,” as the location that Plum imaginatively reworked to Market Blandings. Wood based her theory on oral histories of the region and their close proximity to facts in the novels. Others since have grown more technologically savvy in their search methodologies, stupefyingly so, and surely Daryl A. Lloyd and Ian D. Greatbatch settled the matter conclusively in favor of Bridgnorth using geospatial technologies and search parameters. (They published their findings in 2003 and again in 2009, in the *Journal of Maps*, which you can find at <http://tinyurl.com/pgw-lloyd>.) I say “surely” with some trepidation, given the reception of the findings by previous authorities like Murphy—“a nice try, but rubbish”—and more particularly given reservations by Lloyd and Greatbatch themselves:

The technique used is, admittedly, not perfect, and contains a considerable amount

of uncertainty, not least of all that the subject matter does not actually exist! It follows, then, that the key characteristics used—as they have been taken from novels—are very difficult to quantify, and Wodehouse himself was not always completely consistent. . . . As for whether this produces the “right” answer to the location of Blandings is debatable—it is correct insofar as the definition of the search provided, but this does not mean that the searches based on architectural characteristics have given false results. Besides, it is highly unlikely that Wodehouse only had one place in mind when conceiving Blandings, especially considering the long period over which he wrote about it, most of which he spent abroad in the United States of America or France. Therefore the most likely scenario is that all of the places mentioned in the various research have played their own contributing role to Wodehouse’s thoughts and conceptions.

God bless such modesty. However, I now find myself (reluctantly) in possession of supporting evidence to further buttress the findings of Wood, Lloyd, and Greatbach. To do so, we return to the “Bridgeford races” in *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*.

“Bridgeford” is close enough to “Bridgnorth” to settle in even my stubborn mind as a likely borrowing, and while searching for possible historical races in Bridgnorth, I uncovered—on the internet, of all places—a famous racetrack from the historic township, where yearly greyhound and horse derbies were held and considerable quid changed hands as far back as 1690. (On this page is a dandy postcard of the Bridgnorth racecourse, commemorating its place in history.)

Information about the course, old programs, historic photos, town maps, the Apley estate plot, etc., can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/pgw-brid-race>.

What will likely strike readers who visit the site, even briefly, or readers who consult James Whyte’s *History of the British Turf*, is not so much the impressive size of the meet as the last date on which the derby was contested, May 20, 1939. Wodehouse, of course, published *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* in 1939, on August 18 in the US (New York: Doubleday, Doran), and on August 25 in the UK (London: Herbert Jenkins). Nostalgic press releases advertising the last meet of the famous old Bridgnorth races therefore would have occupied Wodehouse’s favorite British papers during the same months that he reworked his latest Uncle Fred draft, and those releases would most certainly have worked their way into the



*The Bridgnorth racetrack*

Wodehouse imagination as he sat down each morning to curse a bit at his Monarch typewriter.\*

Wodehouse had associated Uncle Fred with springtime and dog races already in “Uncle Fred Flits By” (1935), and I don’t mean to suggest that the upcoming May 20th plate, contested for the last time on the stomping grounds of Wodehouse’s youth, influenced the seasonal setting of his first Uncle Fred novel.

I do mean to say, however, that we now have yet another piece of evidence to support that Bridgnorth and Market Blandings, just less so Apley Hall and Blandings Castle, did most assuredly overlap in Wodehouse’s imagination. Am I more convinced than scholars of the past about the correctness of the overlap? Were I an affluent or enterprising man, I’d convince proprietors of local pubs in Bridgnorth to rename their establishments after public houses from the Blandings saga—The Beetle and Wedge, The Blue Boar, The Blue Cow, The Blue Dragon, The Cow and Grasshopper, The Goat and Feathers, The Goose and Gander, The Jolly Cricketers, The Stitch in Time, The Wheatsheaf, The Waggoner’s Rest—and I myself would take up residence at The Emsworth Arms, dispensing G. Ovens’s best to droves of visiting tourists.

Is the current mayor of Bridgnorth listening? There’s a mint to be made on a slight remodeling of your town, given its close ties to the mythic Eden that occupied so prominent a place in Wodehouse’s imagination—and our own. I mean, it’s not every day we locate the rabbit hole or wardrobe to a new world. Mark this, for heaven’s sake. Yes, I’m convinced of the fact.

\*In response to an editorial query, Troy admits he has not seen such a press announcement, and agrees that another likely explanation for not holding the races in 1940 was the outbreak of World War II.—O.M.



# Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse: Giovanni Guareschi

BY BOB RAINS

*Bob Rains gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Gettysburg College Professor Alan R. Perry, author of The Don Camillo Stories of Giovannino Guareschi: A Humorist Portrays the Sacred (University of Toronto Press, 2007).*

**A** PROLIFIC AUTHOR, he wrote numerous stories featuring two men who complemented and needed each other but certainly had their conflicts; he loved to poke fun at the clergy; when he was young, his father suffered financial reverses that adversely affected him and his family; he never graduated from university; as a young man, he contributed poems, vignettes, and sketches to multiple periodicals; he was imprisoned by the Nazis during World War II and then shamefully mistreated by his own government after the war; he worked in the film industry and some of his stories have been adapted to film, radio, and television; his works have been translated into many languages and continue to be sold worldwide; he has never received his full due from the academic literati, but his gentle humor has brought joy to millions. I refer, of course, to Giovanni Guareschi, creator of the Don Camillo stories.

Giovannino Oliviero Giuseppe Guareschi was born on May 1, 1908, in Fontanelle di Roccabianca in the Italian province of Parma. His father's business failures caused considerable hardship to his family. When Guareschi was six, the family moved to Parma, where he entered school. Despite being bright, Guareschi was often an indifferent student at best. He failed his first year at middle school and years later wrote, "My memories of homework will torment me the rest of my life." He entered *liceo* (high school) in 1925, where he did very well, and matriculated at the University of Parma three years later. It seems that Guareschi regarded university in much the same light that Wodehouse regarded working in the bank. Guareschi used his time at university to write articles, poems, cartoons, vignettes, and sketches, which he successfully placed in various local newspapers.

Guareschi left school to pursue a career in journalism. He met and eventually married Ennia, the "woman of his dreams." After finishing (or so he thought) his military service in 1936, Guareschi got a job, first as an illustrator and later as a writer, with the weekly satirical newspaper *Bertoldo*, a tabloid that subtly and not so subtly lampooned Mussolini's Fascist regime. In 1940, he published his first book (an anthology of his



*Guareschi in 1945*

articles), and two years later he published his first and only novel.

In October 1942, Guareschi's serious run-ins with governmental authorities began. Believing that his brother had been killed on the Russian front, he went on a bender one night and publicly shouted many imprudent things about the government of Benito Mussolini. Guareschi was arrested by the Fascists and avoided trial and extended imprisonment by "voluntarily" rejoining the Italian army, which was then fighting alongside the Nazis.

Within a year, Mussolini was overthrown and Italy signed an armistice with the Allies. As later described by Guareschi, on September 8, 1943, "The radio broadcasted that it was all over." But it was far from over for those unfortunate Italian troops that had been fighting with the Germans. Understandably, the Germans did not want them to leave with their equipment and then join the Allies. The next morning Guareschi awoke to find his barracks surrounded by heavily armed German troops. The Italians were given the choice of either fighting for Germany or being shipped off to a German *lager* (prison camp). Guareschi chose the latter, stating, "I will not die even if they kill me." He spent almost two years in harsh conditions

in various German prison camps, during which time he may have met the legendary partisan and Roman Catholic priest, Don Camillo Valota.

Like another foreign writer imprisoned by the Germans, Guareschi “wrote a number of things for everyday camp use.” He spent a good part of his time reading those pieces aloud to amuse and divert his fellow internees. Four years after the war, he published some of them in book form as *Diario Clandestino* (*My Secret Diary*). In the introduction, he explained how the



Fernandel as Don Camillo

© Stefan Kahlhammer (reproduced by permission)

pieces came about and expressed the hope that readers who had not shared “our humble adventure” would at least be amused by “the idea of a humorist’s account of his prison. Anyhow, here it is, ready for my twenty-three faithful readers. If it’s not all right, then next time I’m interned, I’ll try to do better.”

Upon returning to Italy after the war, Guareschi founded the satirical magazine *Candido*. In *Candido*, he wrote a regular feature called “Mondo Piccolo” (“Little World”). A couple of days before Christmas 1946, faced with a deadline for his column, Guareschi took a short story he had intended for placement elsewhere, chose larger type to fill the space, and put it into “Mondo

Piccolo.” That story was entitled “Peccato confessato” or “A Sin Confessed.” It was the first of what would eventually be some 350 short stories about a fictional priest who happens to be named Don Camillo. “A Sin Confessed” introduces the two main characters of the saga. Don Camillo is the village priest of a small town in the Po River Valley in the north of Italy. While he loves God dearly, he is a very earthy priest. He is a “great hulk of a man” who rides a motorcycle, loves to hunt, smokes cigars, gets into barroom brawls, and is not above cheating at cards or trying to bribe a soccer referee if he thinks it to be for a worthy cause. He can even handle a machine gun. In short, he is anything but a pale young curate. His nemesis is Giuseppe Bottazzi, known as Peppone, the head of the local Communist Party, who will become the village mayor in due course.

Don Camillo hates the Communist Party; Peppone hates the reactionary, political Church. But there’s a backstory: Don Camillo and Peppone were united together in the fight against the occupying Germans in World War II when Peppone was a partisan and Don Camillo was a military chaplain. Don Camillo “risked German bullets” in order to visit Peppone and his partisans up in the mountains with his field altar and to say a simple Mass military-style. At heart, Don Camillo and Peppone dearly love each other, their town, and their little corner of the Po Valley. In today’s vernacular, one might say that they are “frenemies.”

Oh, yes, there’s a third main character hovering about in “A Sin Confessed” and in many of the subsequent stories, a character who is in direct communication only with Don Camillo. That character is the crucified Christ, who frequently has to remonstrate with Don Camillo and curb some of his baser instincts. When Don Camillo, having been amply provoked, tells Jesus that he wants to beat Peppone to a pulp, Jesus says, “Your hands are made to bless, not to strike.” Not wishing to give away the full plot, I will simply add that priests do not normally bless parishioners with their feet.

“A Sin Confessed” was an immediate hit, and the public demanded and got many more Don Camillo stories, accompanied by charming line drawings by the author. The Don Camillo stories were anthologized in multiple volumes, eventually selling over 23 million copies. Most or all of the Don Camillo books have been translated into English. Indeed, Guareschi is Italy’s most translated author of the twentieth century. Pilot Productions in England has begun issuing a series of new English-language translations, starting with *The Complete Little World of Don Camillo* (2013), followed by *Don Camillo and His Flock* (2015), *Don Camillo and Peppone* (2016), and *Comrade Don Camillo* (2017). The

series (available through Amazon, of course) includes stories never before translated into English.

They were so popular that five Don Camillo films were produced between 1952 and 1965. They were French-Italian co-productions starring the amazing Fernandel as Don Camillo and Guareschi look-alike Gino Cervi as Peppone. Guareschi himself participated in the production of the first film, but he famously did not make the cut in playing Peppone, with the director fortunately choosing Cervi instead. These films wonderfully capture the original stories' good humor and sense of time and place. They are now available in various formats, dubbed or subtitled, on YouTube.

In addition to his literary achievements, Guareschi found success as an early supporter of the Christian Democrats led by Alcide De Gasperi in postwar Italy. He created two effective and popular political posters against the communist-led Popular Front. So important were Guareschi's political efforts that the *Times* reported that the 1948 national election in which the Christian Democrats defeated the Communists was won "by De Gasperi and Guareschi together."

Guareschi's remaining years should have been calm and prosperous. But, as one commentator has noted, "It was not in [his] nature to do anything but provoke whoever was in power." In 1950, Guareschi was arrested and received a suspended sentence for publishing a satirical cartoon about Luigi Einaudi, the president of Italy. Four years later, the undaunted Guareschi published photocopies of two wartime letters that De Gasperi had allegedly sent the Allies asking them to bomb the outskirts of Rome. Claiming that the letters were forgeries, De Gasperi brought a criminal libel action against Guareschi, who was prevented at trial from producing evidence of their authenticity. Guareschi was convicted and sentenced to thirteen months' imprisonment at the hands of the government he had helped elect.

Conditions in this, his third imprisonment, were quite harsh. From jail he wrote to his wife, "if I could, I'd prefer to spend 20 months in a lager like it was back then, than another ten months here." Later he added, "I didn't imagine that Italians could be so aggressive against a simple journalist. The SS who were carrying out surveillance against me during my time in the lagers were angels by comparison."

Guareschi's health was precarious after his release from prison in 1955. He continued writing his stories and railing against the left and the right, against the increasing liberalization of the Catholic Church, against Vatican II. He died suddenly of a heart attack in July 1968 at the age of 60.

Guareschi has left behind gifts for us to treasure. Reading the Don Camillo stories is like reading the adventures of Bertie and Jeeves. I dare you to try to stop after just one. Watching the movies is icing on the cake.

## Luminous Rabbit Report

EVELYN HERZOG sent along some links regarding the availability of luminous rabbits. As you recall, Bertie was planning revenge on Tuppy Glossop for a previous prank, and said, "I am rather pinning my faith on the Luminous Rabbit, Jeeves. I hear excellent reports of it on all sides. You wind it up and put it in somebody's room in the night watches, and it shines in the dark and jumps about, making odd, squeaking noises the while."

There is a website called [luminousrabbit.com](http://luminousrabbit.com), though the site says its about "ideas that hop in the night—firearms, finance, economics, gambling, and politics," so it may not be the lighthearted fare we seek.

On the other hand, Alice M. Roelke's website [theluminousrabbit.blogspot.com](http://theluminousrabbit.blogspot.com) seems to be pleasantly literary, though it appears inactive in content since 2011. Perhaps she hopped away in the night.

The shopping site [femailcreations.com](http://femailcreations.com) has a "bunny LED" (item number 2135401) that is a porcelain luminous rabbit nightlight. It does not hop around.

Finally, the show *Sherlock* referenced a luminous rabbit named Bluebell, and this has found its way onto various T-shirts, buttons, etc. For example, a luminous rabbit button is available on Amazon (search for Bluebell the Vanishing Luminous Rabbit button if you're so inclined).

## Treasures of Tony Ring: Now on the Market!

THOSE OF YOU who know Tony Ring know that he's been a collector par excellence of Wodehouse first editions, Wodehouse historical and theatrical items, and much more. For the last couple of years, he's been plotting what to do with his collection and how to do it. Well, his problem seems to be solved as he has found a buyer for significant parts of the collection. As Tony said a few months ago, "The first tranche disappeared into a large van and I promptly went on holiday."

The available works can be found via Neil Pearson Rare Books. The website link is [www.neilpearsonrarebooks.com](http://www.neilpearsonrarebooks.com). Browse to your heart's content, but don't miss out on these treasures!

# What Would Marx Say: A Social Critique of Wodehouse

BY SISTER MARIA FRASSATI JAKUPCAK, O.P.

*Sister Maria sent this edited version of a paper that she wrote for a graduate course in literary criticism. The good sister teaches high-schoolers in California. We are always cheered to know that there are Plum-friendly teachers out there who are influencing our youth.*

FACED WITH the challenge of learning to bandy about the jargon of modern literary criticism during my first year in grad school, I silently exulted “What ho!” when my crabby Romanian professor allowed me to choose P. G. Wodehouse as my author.

In terms of types of analysis, though, my professor had his own ideas.

“You shall do Marxist analysis,” he said, mildly.

“Marxist?!”

“Marxist.”

When your published-in-half-a-dozen-languages-and-knighted-in-Romania professor tells you to do something, well, if you are a mildly terrified graduate student, you do it. I suspect that he knew it would be amusing. The product follows: I present it as a tongue-in-cheek salute to a great author.

## Method 1: Archetypal Criticism

IN THE PREFACE to *Summer Lightning*, Wodehouse took umbrage against “a certain critic” who “made the nasty remark” that his previous novel featured “all the old Wodehouse characters under different names.” Wodehouse retorted with the full force of his crushing wit:

[This critic] has probably by now been eaten by bears, like the children who made mock of the prophet Elisha; but if he still survives he will not be able to make a similar charge against *Summer Lightning*. With my superior intelligence, I have outgeneralled the man this time by putting in all the old Wodehouse characters under the same names. Pretty silly it will make him feel, I rather fancy.

Though history is silent both on the feelings of the critic and on the nature of his end, certainly lovers of Wodehouse feel that the critic was a silly man indeed. He altogether missed the point: P. G. Wodehouse was not aiming at originality but hilarity. Northrop Frye says that “laughter is partly a reflex, and like other reflexes

it can be conditioned by a simple repeated pattern” (*Anatomy of Criticism*, 168). Many of Wodehouse’s characters parallel those of ancient comedies.

In *The Educated Imagination*, Northrop Frye sums up the comedies of Plautus and Terence by explaining that what usually happens “is that a young man is in love with a courtesan; his father says nothing doing, but a clever slave fools the father and the young man gets his girl” (43). Frye goes on to say, “change the courtesan to a chorus girl, the slave to a butler, and the father to Aunt Agatha, and you’ve got the same plot and the same cast of characters that you find in a novel of P. G. Wodehouse.” The same procession of stock characters that so annoyed the nameless critic, Frye rightly points out, is part of the beauty of Wodehouse.

Frye’s mythos of comedy provides a great lens for reading Wodehouse. His analysis of comic character types lines up almost uncannily with the usual Wodehouse gang, each one playing a particularly well-defined role in the plot. Wodehouse was notoriously “maniacal about plot” and often wrote “preliminary synopses for his novels that ran over sixty thousand words” (Mooneyham, 120). His plots are convoluted because “there is something inherently absurd about complications” (*Anatomy*, 170).

Though the typical Wodehouse mode is to put the same characters into new situations, occasionally he threw new characters into old situations. An instance of this is found in “Jeeves Makes an Omelette,” which puts Bertie Wooster and his entourage into a story already written about Reggie Pepper in 1913 (see “Doing Clarence a Bit of Good”). The later version is a textbook example of Frye’s fourth phase of comedy, the Shakespearian romance. “The action . . . begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world” (*Anatomy*, 182). This movement “charges the comedies with the symbolism of the victory of summer over winter” (*ibid.*, 182–183). “Jeeves Makes an Omelette” is a perfect showcase for these elements.

The story opens in the “normal” London flat of Bertie Wooster. Of course, Bertie’s world is not what most would consider normal, and today he is “feeling at the top of [his] form without a care in the world.” Evelyn Waugh calls Bertie’s location “Eden,” but this world of “thirty-six holes of golf” and the *Times* crossword puzzle is perfectly normal for Bertie (McCrum, 402).

Enter Aunt Dahlia, Bertie's "good and deserving aunt," who acts as a sibylline. Dahlia phones Bertie with a real-world problem. Her husband, the *senex iratus* (angry father) character Thomas Portarlington Travers, is putting the future of her ladies' magazine in danger by refusing to lay out enough money to purchase a serial from noted writer Cornelia Fothergill. Tom is hopelessly concerned with the business affairs of the real world. As Bertie says, "until you have heard Uncle Tom on the subject of income tax and supertax, you haven't heard anything." Dahlia does not attempt to overcome Tom, but rather to lower the terms of Cornelia. In order to do this, she needs the help of her nephew, for whom she has "a little something" in the way of a request. Bertie complies because Dahlia "possess a secret weapon by means of which she can always bend [Bertie] to her will": a ban from her dinner table. This threat is particularly effective since Dahlia employs the much-sought-after chef Anatole, "God's gift to the gastric juices." Anatole is "a master of ceremonies, a center for the comic mood," and master of the comic feast essential to the resolution of the story (*Anatomy*, 175). If Bertie fails, he may be excluded from the feasting. He knows this is unbearable, so he dives into the project.

Dahlia's call causes Bertie, and the story, to retreat into a green world, in this case Marsham Manor at Marsham-in-the-Vale. When Bertie and Jeeves arrive at Marsham Manor, Wodehouse significantly mentions it had been "a long drive on a chilly winter afternoon"; a signal that all is not well in the natural home of summer. The problem is a painting: the Fothergill Venus, an incompetent daub by Cornelia's father-in-law, which hangs alongside another classical female allegory by Cornelia's artist husband. It is not surprising to find that the problem in the green world has to do with a woman since "the comic theme of a ritual assault on a central female figure" is well-known to this topos (*Anatomy*, 183). In this case the painting of Venus is driving the younger Fothergill crazy, turning his food "to ashes in his mouth." Something must be done, and Dahlia does it: she charges Bertie with the task of "pinching" the Venus to make it look as though some local art thieves had taken it.

Not only does this task set Bertie firmly in the midst of a traditional quest, complete with weeping heroine Cornelia Fothergill and a "young saber" to carry out the job, but it also provides the necessary instrument of metamorphosis Dahlia needs to bypass her "real world" financial trouble. If Bertie can "liquidate the Edward Fothergill Venus," Dahlia will get the stories she needs from Cornelia, which will allow her to conform to Tom's irrational terms.

Bertie, in his role as self-deluded *alazon* (an impostor who sees himself as greater than he actually is), runs for help to his *eiron* (who understates his own abilities as the opposite of the *alazon*), that *servus dolosus* (the tricky slave) par excellence: Jeeves (*Anatomy*, 173). "My attitude towards Jeeves on these occasions," Bertie explains, "is always that of a lost sheep getting together with its shepherd." Jeeves recognizes that the "sanctions . . . in the matter of Anatole's cooking" must be avoided at all costs, so he offers his customary help, assisting Bertie by breaking a window, stoking the fire, snipping up the offending painting and, of course, serving up a "whisky and a syphon." With his assistance, it appears that the offending Venus is destroyed.

However, the real Venus escapes unharmed. At the end of the sacrifice, the intrepid Jeeves realizes that they have managed to destroy the wrong painting. While Dahlia has some colorful words for Bertie on this score, neither she nor Jeeves noticed the mistake either; the painting was close enough to the real thing to fool all of them. Frye mentions that "the death and revival, or disappearance and withdrawal, of human figures in romantic comedy generally involves the heroine" (*Anatomy*, 183). The Venus that was so destructive to the younger Fothergill dies to be reborn as the "child" of the elder Fothergill: "I watched it grow. I loved it. It was part of my life," the old artist tells Bertie.

It appears the triumph of spring over winter is in jeopardy. The Venus stand-in was valuable; its destruction destroyed Dahlia's chances of resolution in the real world. Jeeves saves the day:

"If Mr. Wooster were to found here lying stunned, the window broken, and both pictures removed, Mrs. Fothergill could, I think, readily be persuaded that he found the miscreants making a burglarious entry and while endeavouring to protect her property was assaulted and overcome by them. She would, one feels, be grateful."

Bertie thinks that this is carrying the point a bit too far and decides to refuse, excluding himself from the prospect of Anatole's feasting. Of course, this is an unacceptable ending and Jeeves, true to form, knows it. When "something struck [Bertie] violently on the back hair" it was none other than the faithful *eiron* keeping the story on track. This accomplishes Bertie's symbolic death, another figure familiar to comedy, whereby the hero dies to effect a "resurrection at the center of a risen society" (Hamilton, 137). As Bertie awakes, the proliferation of figures of confusion creates



an impression of metamorphosis, of a society being reborn:

What's that word I'm trying to think of? Begins with a "c." Chaotic, that's the one. For some time after that conditions were chaotic. The next thing I remember with any clarity is finding myself in the bed with a sort of booming noise going on close by. This, the mists having lifted, I was able to diagnose as Aunt Dahlia talking.

Dahlia is sharing with Bertie the good news that his actions, specifically his symbolic death, have set the world to rights. The paintings have been duly disposed of and the blame falls on a local gang of thieves. This induces Cornelia to assist in overcoming Tom and to give Dahlia the serial "on easy terms." "You were right about the blue bird," Dahlia says to Bertie, indicating the victory of summer over winter, "it's singing." The victory in the green world has brought about the desired resolution in the real world, and Dahlia is suggesting the traditional comic merriment when she tells Bertie he ought to be "dancing about the house."

## Method 2: New Marxist Criticism

**P**ELHAM GRENVILLE "PLUM" WODEHOUSE was, in 1900, a rising star at Dulwich, his "middle-class school," and was looking forward to a brilliant academic career at Oxford when the blow fell (McCrum, 26–27). He wrote to his friend Jimmy George to break the "dread news . . . My people have not got enough of what are vulgarly but forcibly called 'stamps' to send me to Varsity . . . Oh! Money, money, thy name is money! (A most lucid remark)" (McCrum, 36). For reasons still unclear to history, Wodehouse's father, retired colonial servant Henry Wodehouse, decided he had not money enough to send his third son to college. The financial situation of the Wodehouse family had been tenuous, but his father's decision still came as a serious shock.

This upset of the young Wodehouse's expectations was part and parcel of his Victorian childhood. The third son of a man serving in Hong Kong, Wodehouse and his two older brothers were raised by a series of nurses, nannies, and aunts as they bounced around England waiting for their parents to return. "Wodehouse," says a recent biography, "saw his parents for barely six months between the ages of three and fifteen" (McCrum, 15).

Wodehouse could joke about family financial trouble, but his reification of the rupee (which he describes as "always jumping up and down and throwing fits") is significant; he points out that in the Wodehouse

household, "expenditure had to be regulated in the light of what mood [the rupee] happened to be at the moment" (McCrum, 37). The rupee is allowed to be moody, but Wodehouse himself, in accordance with his position, must keep the proverbial stiff upper lip. Not only was Wodehouse cut off from the 'Varsity, he also had to leave Dulwich and venture into the wilderness of wage-earning in the land of "Honkers and Shankers," the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (McCrum, 36, 39).

This tumble from the relatively bourgeois life of a student to faceless proletarian drone in the beehive of bank activity marked Wodehouse for the rest of his life. Money was always a worry, and it "would animate the plots of many later novels and stories" (McCrum, 43). Still, though the rupee had dashed his hopes, he was not about to let it ship him off to employment in the colonies. Obsessed with obtaining financial independence as a writer before he was sent out East, Wodehouse kept an almost fanatical account of his freelance wage earnings from 1900 to 1908. He managed to earn enough "boodle" to stay in England, but it was because he learned very early to present himself and his work as a commodity to be sold. The extent of the reification this produced is evidenced in the fact that in later life he "often characterized himself as a 'dumb brick'" (ibid., 21).

It is not surprising, then, that in his stories "Wodehouse attacks the same raw world of bourgeois capitalistic exchange which the modernists generally pillory" (Mooneyham, 132). Capitalism had failed him by building up expectations it could not deliver, and he lived his whole life in exile from the upper-class literati he had anticipated joining. There is an echo of this disappointment in his common theme of the broken engagement. As early as 1913, in "Doing Clarence a Bit of Good," his character Reggie Pepper was remembering one of these lost loves:

I loved Elizabeth Shoolbred. . . . [T]here was a time, for about a week, when we were engaged to be married. But just as I was beginning to take a serious view of life and study furniture catalogues and feel pretty solemn when the restaurant orchestra played "The Wedding Glide," I'm hanged if she didn't break it off, and a month later she was married to a fellow of the name of Yeadsley—Clarence Yeadsley, an artist.

Elizabeth seemed a certain future for Reggie, just as Oxford had for Wodehouse, but neither was to be. Oxford, like Elizabeth, would have to find another artist.

Though this early reification of Wodehouse's life was to leave its mark on all his work, it was by no means the only way in which Wodehouse was failed by capitalism. His famous 1940 capture by the Nazis offers another example. Wodehouse, nearing the age of sixty, was automatically released according to German policy (Sproat, 929). In the course of his imprisonment, however, the Germans realized that they had come upon a valuable commodity, one that might ease American tensions about the war. The Germans then decided to make use of Wodehouse; they tricked him into making five humorous radio broadcasts. It was Wodehouse's belief that "the British and American public would admire him for what he said in his broadcasts, because he showed that throughout his internment he had remained cheerful and, in the words of Bertie Wooster, 'kept a stiff upper lip'" (ibid.). Wodehouse, not realizing that the Nazis had commodified him as a pawn in a political maneuver, was to suffer greatly for these broadcasts. It was assumed he had traded the broadcasts for his freedom; "a typical newspaper headline was 'Wodehouse plays Jeeves to Nazis'" (Sproat, 929). Though an investigation done at the time exonerated Wodehouse of all guilt, it was never released during his life (ibid.). The British Ideological Apparatus apparently saw fit to make Wodehouse the victim of the public's anger, thus distracting it away from the state that had fought the war (see *The Political Unconscious*, 287). Once again, Wodehouse had been used. He lived under the cloud of those radio broadcasts for the rest of his life and never returned to England.

Though Wodehouse might not have been aware of it himself, his use of the "subversive" form of comedy places him squarely in the 'hidden fight' of oppressed against oppressor (*Anatomy*, 164). As Fredric Jameson says, "It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative [that is, the conflict between oppressor and oppressed], in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and proper necessity" (*PU*, 20).

This seems a strange assertion since Wodehouse, promoter of the feudal spirit, seems to "cast a benevolent eye upon the class system" (Mooneyham, 132). Yet it is instructive that his stories are not universally well-received by the upper classes. When Wodehouse was proposed as a Champion of Honour in 1967, the then British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Patrick Dean, objected that the award would "give currency to a Bertie Wooster image of the British character which we are doing our best to eradicate" (Sproat, 930). Dean sensed something subversive about Bertie Wooster, and indeed

he was correct. Bertie Wooster was part of Wodehouse's "literary class war" that helped expose the bourgeois British character for the foppish, insipid mess he saw it to be (Mooneyham, 130). This is not surprising if, as Fredric Jameson writes, "all contemporary works of art . . . have as their underlying impulse . . . our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life, both as we live it now, and as we feel in our bones it ought rather to be lived" ("Reification and Utopia," 147).

What was it that Wodehouse felt in his bones about how life should be lived? The answer can be seen partly in the world of Jeeves and Wooster, specifically in the short story "Jeeves Makes an Omelette." Written in 1958, it is interesting as a rewrite of the 1913 Reggie Pepper story cited above. The changes in the basic narrative give an instructive glimpse into what Wodehouse felt about society.

Gone is the sense of pining for a lost love; the older Wodehouse remembers no fondness for the world that rejected him. In fact, the broken engagement that motivated the action of the first story is replaced by a purely pecuniary motive. There is no trace, in the Pepper story, of anything like Aunt Dahlia's trouble with Uncle Tom and *Milady's Boudoir*, as there is likewise no trace of loyalty to a lost love in the latter. The inclusion of the financial motive is not surprising considering Wodehouse's obsession with making enough money. The fact that Tom is fanatical about money is meant to reflect poorly on England since, as Frye says, "the extent to which [the blocking characters] have real power implies some criticism of the society that allows them their power" (*Anatomy*, 165). It is also significant that Dahlia needs the money for a "weekly paper for half-witted women," with which Bertie Wooster twice associates himself as an "old hand." When the elder Fothergill asks if he is an artist, Bertie responds, "No, more a literary man. I once wrote an article on 'What The Well-Dressed Man Is Wearing' for *Milady's Boudoir*."

The farce is that Bertie, educated at the Oxford denied to Wodehouse, is only capable of producing literary trash. Bertie becomes part of Wodehouse's "literary class war" and can be taken to represent the world of the literati as Wodehouse sees it from his point of view as outcast (Mooneyham, 130). In contrast to this, Wodehouse casts himself as the character most lacking in traditional advantages and yet repository of all the cultural capital in the story: Jeeves.

Jeeves is, like Wodehouse, reified. This is signaled both by the application to Jeeves of inhuman verbs like "trickled" and "shimmered" and by Dahlia's suggestion that Jeeves "must have [his] brain pickled and presented to the nation." It is abundantly obvious that Jeeves is the

real brains in the Wooster-Jeeves outfit. Bertie checks his mangled quotations against Jeeves and attributes to him the works of greats, like Keats: "I looked at her with a wild surmise, silent upon a peak in Darien. Not my own. One of Jeeves's things." Jeeves is the one with knowledge of the "burgling industry" needs, as well as the one who discovers Bertie's mistake of destroying the wrong painting. Jeeves only mentions the later mistake after "all that was left of the Venus, not counting the ashes, was the little bit at the south-east end." Given Jeeves's characteristic efficiency, the delayed discovery seems purposeful. This delay created the necessity of knocking Bertie out "like some monarch of the forest beneath the axe of the woodman," and it is Jeeves who does the honors. As Jeeves says, "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." So while the financial problems of the story are overcome, it is through the auspices of the working-class Jeeves, not through any competence of his Oxford-trained master.

This is significant when one considers that Wodehouse felt more at home in the servants' quarters. As he said of visiting upper-class homes in his youth: "There always came a moment when my hostess, smiling one of those painful smiles, suggested that it would be nicer for me to go and have tea in the servants' hall . . . [Once there,] I forgot to be shy and kidded back and forth with the best of them" (McCrum, 23).

What Wodehouse has done, by allying himself to the proletarian underdog in the story, is to create a level playing field where "chaps" like Jeeves have the chance to give "chaps" like Bertie their comeuppance. By subtly presenting Jeeves as superior to Bertie, Wodehouse has "totally and painlessly reversed" the liberal standards of the reader. As Wilfred Sheed says of Wodehouse, "I can't imagine the most fanatical Marxist objecting (in fact, I know one and he doesn't)" (Sheed, 220). In the end, the Jeeves stories create a commentary on oppressive class structures by mercilessly satirizing them.

## Conclusion

**C**LEARLY, WODEHOUSE bore up well under this requisite badinage of literary mumbo-jumbo. Fredric Jameson's New Marxist critique is insightful, but his insight is based on the faulty premise that all motives are ultimately material (*PU*, 20). To accept this premise is to misunderstand Wodehouse. For him money was unquestionably a motive, but it was not the only, and certainly not the highest, motive. As he says:

I should think it extremely improbable that anyone ever wrote anything simply for money.

What makes a writer write is that he likes writing. Naturally, when he has written something, he wants to get as much for it as he can, but that is a very different thing from writing for money (McCrum, 56).

To assign a financial or political motive to the work of Wodehouse is to read him incorrectly; alas for the New Marxists!

Northrop Frye's theories are much more helpful. Wodehouse makes us laugh because he is part of a tradition that has made us laugh for the past three thousand years. Frye's analysis reveals much more about Wodehouse as an absolute master of the comic form. The convolutions in the plot are there not because they serve to awaken the reader to a greater political reality, they are there because they are ridiculous. This hilarity probably explains Plum's widespread exclusion from the canon of undergraduate syllabi, but his sparkling prose is certainly enjoyed by many more readers than that of his obtuse modernist contemporaries.

Personally, I still think the real genius of Wodehouse is his ear for language. Wodehouse reads like a verbal pyrotechnic display; he takes familiar texts and explodes them into pieces. There are at least ten easily recognizable quotations in "Jeeves Makes an Omelette" that range from Shakespeare to the Edwardian schoolboy canon to American advertising. This explosion does not aim at rebelling against linguistic conventions, but rather, to bandy another fancy term, it aims at defamiliarization, a tactic that deconstructs a text only to return it with fresh delight. Consider this from "Omelette" when Bertie has the following exchange with Jeeves:

"I'm like those Light Brigade fellows. You remember how matters stood with them?"

"Very vividly, sir. Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die."

"Exactly. Cannon to right of them, cannon to left of them volleyed and thundered, but they had to keep snapping into in regardless. I know just how they felt," I said, moodily stepping on the accelerator. The brow was furrowed and the spirits low.

Bertie's mangling gives a fresh delight to Tennyson's text. As Mary Lydon says of discovering a mangled Shakespearian sonnet in Wodehouse, "the pleasure of coming across this exchange is quite simply unbeatable" (24).

It is clear that Wodehouse offers a wide field for literary analysis. But why analyze? Wodehouse is clever,

quirky, and terribly enjoyable. It doesn't really matter if he turns out to be a political prophet, a master of an under-used form, or a brilliant linguist. His world remains unchanged and delightful, and his writing is as captivating as ever.

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# Not Yet Last Call: Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington

**I**N CASE YOUR invitation has been lost in the mail, you are cordially invited to register, attend, and enjoy a bash to stagger humanity. The Wodehouse Society (U.S. and outliers) is looking forward to hosting you in Washington, D.C., in October, where Wodehouseans will gather, browse, sluice, listen to edifying and amusing anecdotes, maybe learn the Charleston, and generally bask in the glow of each other's company.

The talented duo of Maria Jette & Dan Chouinard will entertain us with an encore performance of songs of the Master. There will be guaranteed riveting talks by riveting speakers plumbing all matters Plum. Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Dirda will give our keynote speech. (If you catch him in the hall, you might ask him about Conan Doyle, too.) Tony Award winner Ken Ludwig is even now slaving away on a skit designed to spread sweetness and light. And need I mention the costume contest, the auction, and the rummage sale?

**It is not too late to register** for the convention and the hotel. The registration form is enclosed and also available on our website at [www.wodehouse.org](http://www.wodehouse.org).

The hotel registration is separate from convention registration. To register for the Hamilton Crowne Plaza, call the hotel at 1-877-270-1393 or book online through <http://hamiltonhoteldc.com/>. Ask for a room in the block for the Wodehouse Society. NB: the cutoff date for our room block is September 19 and rooms are subject to availability. Once they're gone, they're gone.

*Mr. Wodehouse Goes to*  
**WASHINGTON**



## Music by Terry Kitchen on the D.C. Menu

**A** TRADITION on the Thursdays leading into TWS conventions is a musical performance by Wodehousean and award-winning folk singer/songwriter Terry Kitchen, aka NEWT Max Pokrivchak. The tradition continues! On October 19, Terry (and special guest Gary Hall) will perform at the Vinyl Lounge at Gypsy Sally's, at 3401 K Street NW from 8–10 PM. There will be no cover, but perhaps an eager tip jar. Please use the rear entrance to the building. (This gives it that nice speakeasy feeling.) The website is <http://www.gypsysallys.com/vinyl-lounge/>. See you in D.C.!

## A Few Quick Ones

*Courtesy of Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch*

“Stylishly malicious” restaurant critic A. A. Gill passed away in December in London. William Grimes wrote an obituary of Gill for the December 13, 2016, *New York Times*. Grimes mentioned that Gill was noted for his skewering skills and zingers (a famous pâté tasted like “pressed liposuction,” for example), and quoted Gill’s description of himself as “the bastard son of P. G. Wodehouse and the Marquis de Sade.”

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In the October 2016 *Majesty* (the “Quality Royal magazine”), in an article entitled “Darling Angel,” Caroline Aston describes the affair between Mrs. Freda Dudley Ward and Edward, Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII. Three hundred personal letters that Freda and Edward exchanged were sold in 2013 at New York’s Sotheby’s. One of the items is a fine photo of Edward, signed by Edward (as David, his name to his family and intimates), with a Wodehouse lyric from *Oh, Boy!* (1917): “I never knew about YOU [Edward’s capitalization]/You never knew about ME.” Obviously perfect poetry for a fifteen-year royal affair.

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James Meeks reviewed Fredric Jameson’s *Raymond Chandler: The Detections of Totality* (Verso, July 2016) in the January 5 *London Review of Books*. At one point, Meeks felt that the first-person narrative voice of Philip Marlowe had been “replaced, or doubled, by Bertie Wooster. . . . Marlowe is coming round from being beaten up: ‘Blood began to move around in me, like a prospective tenant looking over a house.’ [OM: A bit more sanguine than Bertie, perhaps, but the style is there!]

## David Landman’s Firsts Now Available!

**D**AVID LANDMAN is selling his collection of first editions, including a fine copy of Wodehouse’s first published song lyric, *Put Me in My Little Cell*, for \$750.

This publisher’s file copy bears the stamp of producer Frank Curzon and also two stamps (“File Copy” and “Plates Melted”) in purple on the front.

For more information about this item or other of David’s “firsts,” contact David at [davidalandman@gmail.com](mailto:davidalandman@gmail.com).

## Chapters Corner

**W**HAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page).

Please note that our webmaster, Noel Merrill, tries to keep chapter activities posted on the society website. So, it’s a good idea to send information about upcoming events to Noel on a timely basis. His contact information is on the last page of this issue.

### 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



### Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)



Contact: Scott Daniels



## Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Herb Moskowitz



ON A SPRING DAY in Philadelphia, wedged between two snowstorms, Head House Square was full of men in kilts, apparently Scots protesting St. Patrick's Day.

We welcomed new member Adam Gale, who honored us by trekking to Philly from the great Metrop of NYC. He complained that the patrons watching Association Football in the next room at Cavanaugh's were too quiet for St. Patrick's Day.

Bob Rains invited us to The Wodehouse Society's nineteenth international convention, which is to be held October 19–22 at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C., but warned that parking is not included in the price of the hotel. Bob encouraged everyone to register early for the convention and separately for the hotel, where rooms will be subject to availability.

Dan Cohen could not make it to the meeting, but we raised a glass to him as it was his 81st birthday. His wife, Susan, had given him a Maltese Falcon, a most appropriate gift.

Bob Nissenbaum introduced the day's program, which included several short presentations for the purpose of introducing and advocating a diversity of material, especially for Chaps to read things other than Jeeves and Wooster. He sprinkled his favorite quotes throughout the program.

Steve Wieland was up first, talking about a couple of Mr. Mulliner stories, "The Reverent Wooing of Archibald" and "The Man Who Gave Up Smoking," the latter of which he described as "the darkest Plum gets."

Dotty Hoffman spoke about the story "Uncle Fred Flits By." She passed out a vocabulary cheat-sheet. Bob Nissenbaum noted that this story had been adapted for television, starring David Niven, and was one of the subjects in a one-man stage show by John Lithgow. Furthermore, he said that it was one of the best Wodehouse stories, citing the TWS poll that produced the collection *What Ho!* This set off a lively discussion over what constituted other "good" stories. Bob Rains rattled off "The Crime Wave at Blandings," "The Great Sermon Handicap," and "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend."

Ben Wieland gave us some insight about the novel *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* and focused on the gambler-bookie-detective Claude "Mustard" Pott.

Jim Hawking discussed the Uncle Fred novel *Cocktail Time* and also *Highballs for Breakfast*, a book of passages about alcohol.

Bob Rains handed out several Wodehouse poems from two collections. He talked about the difficulty of identifying Wodehouse's early, unsigned poems. One series, entitled "The Parrot," is available online, but is not definitive and some of its entries may be of dubious authenticity. There was also discussion of a more definitive and full volume edited by Tony Ring, *What Goes Around Comes Around*. Bob led a reading of a pair of very early poems, "A Solitary Triumph" and "A Protest," from 1903 and 1904, both on the topic of crime committed by men versus women, but with opposing views.

Herb Moskowitz gave a report about the Broadway musical *Anything Goes*, music and lyrics by Cole Porter and book originally written by Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse. But real-life tragedy imitated art, requiring a last-minute (last-fortnight) revision by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, to the point of changing plots and adding characters, so it is not clear how much Wodehouse remains in Herb's favorite "Wodehouse" musical. Herb read a poem that has been attributed variously to George S. Kaufman, Dorothy Parker, and B. G. De Sylva:

This is the trio of musical fame,  
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern:  
Better than anyone else you can name,  
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.  
Nobody knows what on earth they've been  
bitten by,  
All I can say is I mean to get lit an' buy  
Orchestra seats for the next one that's written by  
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.

Herb also mentioned his favorite short story, "The Clicking of Cuthbert," source of his nom de Plum, the novelist Vladimir Brusiloff.

Diane Hain spoke about the Mulliner story "Strychnine in the Soup." Published in 1932, shortly after Plum's time in Hollywood, it is about reading mystery stories. Moreover, it starts with a "meet cute," a Hollywood technique whose name first appeared in writing in 1941, but which was used by writers much earlier. It is associated with "screwball comedies," which are often dated to *It Happened One Night* (1934). The story also contains a fairly early use of "pipsqueak."

The next meeting was on Sunday, May 7, hosted by Steve Wieland, and included a reading from a Mulliner story.

**Chicago Accident Syndicate**  
(Chicago and thereabouts)  
Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison



**The Clients of Adrian Mulliner**  
(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)  
Contact: Elaine Coppola



**T**HE CLIENTS of Adrian Mulliner will hold a Senior Bloodstain during the Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington convention. The Bloodstain is scheduled for Friday, October 20, from 4 PM to 5 PM at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel. The program will include remarks by Peter Blau, BSI, of the local Sherlockian scion, The Red Circle. We are also anticipating a dramatic reading. Our beautiful pin, designed by Laurie Fraser Manifold, will be on sale for \$10. All local Wodehousians/Sherlockians are invited, as are conference attendees.

**The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine**  
(Denver and vicinity)  
Contact: Jennifer Petkus



**A**SSUMING OUR May 14 gathering went as planned, we met at Pints Pub in downtown Denver at 12:30 PM. The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine discussed *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, the 1954 Jeeves and Wooster pairing called *Bertie Wooster Sees It Through* in the U.S.

Also, as is our usual practice, the member who fought tooth and nail to propose the book to be discussed has the privilege, nay the honor, of supplying the rest of us with discussion notes. However, member Larry, in his diabolical fashion, credits us with more resourcefulness than perhaps is our due. Rather than telling us, he encourages us to seek out our own information.

At our next meeting, we may also discuss the date of our proposed summer cricket outing, where we attend a game of the Littleton Cricket League at Cornerstone Park. In the past, members of Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients and the Denver-Boulder region of the Jane Austen Society of North America

have attended the game as well. We skipped the outing last year but hope to make it up this year.

**The Drone Rangers**  
(Houston and vicinity)  
Contact: Carey Tynan



**The Flying Pigs**  
(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)  
Contact: Susan Pace or Bill Scrivener



**A** GRAND FEAST in the style of Anatole was on the docket for March 3. We had an excellent turnout, despite some last-minute cancellations due to illness and injuries. Our May gathering was a foray to Orchids in the Palm Court—a venue whose offerings are nearly on a par with Anatole's. We were on our best behavior and curtailed any impulse to engage in bread-throwing. The plan was to follow up with a less posh gathering that even Ukridge could scrape together the wherewithal to attend.

We hope to have a sizeable contingent in D.C. for Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington, knowing that a splendid time is guaranteed for all.

The Flying Pigs are eager for new recruits. Get in touch!

**Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham**  
(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)  
Contact: Laura Loehr



**S**HORTLY AFTER the Rhode Island convention, Sven Hammar and his wife, Shirley Sampson, sat at a table to share donuts and coffee with Laura Loehr and her husband, Paul, before a Friday morning performance of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. While also sharing pleasantries, Sven, Shirley, and Laura discovered we were all fans of the Master. This led to an instant friendship (very understandably!), and ultimately to the founding of the Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham, so as to spread Sweetness and Light in the western New York area. We met for a while, but have been in limbo in recent years due to personal circumstances, with no one else available to pick up the slack. Still, friendships have prevailed.

Which is why it is with deep sadness and regret that we share the news of the passing of Sven on January 30, 2017, just days past his 87th birthday. Sven started his life adventure in Moscow, Idaho, and lived in Lipscomb County (Texas), Rochester (New York), and Cleveland (Ohio) before living in western New York for his last 46 years. During his working career he was a teacher at the high school and college levels. Later, he focused on working with senior citizens. He was Executive Director of the Chautauqua County Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and Director of the Chautauqua County Office for the Aging. He was a Korean War veteran in the U.S. Army. Sven was a devotee of PGW to the end, and so he helped spread sweetness and light in the best Plummy tradition. He was proud of his Swedish heritage, liked to wear hats and caps, and enjoyed his martinis (much to the admiration of Norman Murphy one day at lunch in Buffalo).

A celebration of his life was held on March 26, where we had the honor of meeting his family from far and wide. Sven will be sorely missed by all who knew him, but especially by Shirley, to whom he was married for 37 years.

**The Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society**  
(Tennessee)

Contact: Ken Clevenger



**T**HE MELONSQUASHVILLE (TN) Literary Society met on May 13 at the beautiful Knoxville home of Cynthia Yeager and Guy Wages. It is always special when we get an audience in greater numbers than our dramatic reading cast. But with nine performers and twenty-one in the seats, we set an attendance record.

Guests brought plates of finger food to share, savory and sweet, and the board groaned appropriately. There were several sherry selections and chilled champagne. Your reporter cannot do justice to all the beverages and comestibles, but I must give special note to Cynthia's cold tea concoction, and whoever brought the insalata caprese on a stick. Yum!

Our reading program, prepared by Linda and Ralph Norman, was scenes from *Joy in the Morning*. It was a real hit. Fran Dotterweich, Audrey Duncan, Harry Hall, Tanya Gheen, Bill Watts, Alan Lee, and talented newcomer Tom Heffernan all read superbly. Linda and Ralph, in addition to their reading roles, supplied props and sound effects, and, I for one, thought Harry's huge cigar, gratefully unsmoked, was a crowning touch.

The Melonsquashvillians have abandoned our tradition of a summer Crown & Goose Pub outing.

The new summer program, on July 15, will be a reading of "Comrade Bingo." We will pair this reading with a viewing of the *Jeeves and Wooster* adaptation of "Comrade Bingo" from the BBC's DVD series.)

We will meet at the Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church facilities and Fran Dotterweich will be arranging our hospitality.

**The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels**  
(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss



**T**HE MOTTLED OYSTERS chapter recently added two more Oysters. We welcomed back Clark Adams, who was a founding member of the Mottled Oysters. Clark had taken a sabbatical to finish up his legal career, see his wife earn her Ph.D., and get his daughters married off. About the time we dusted off Clark's chair at the table, Jim Thompson came along. Jim lives in the Harlingen, Texas, area, which is 250 miles away, proving the pull of Wodehousean companionship. Both Clark and Jim are lively additions to the group.

In case you follow along with our reading and discussion schedule, we tackled *Cocktail Time*, *Full Moon*, and *The Girl in Blue* in the spring. *The Girl in Blue* was a first reading for most of the group. Rounding out the summer schedule were *The Little Nugget*, *The Inimitable Jeeves*, and *Meet Mr. Mulliner*. Part of the fun in having new members is introducing them to our favorite Wodehouse books.

The Mottled Oysters/Jellied Eels of south Texas meet on the first Thursday of each month, around 7:30 PM at the La Cantera Barnes & Noble. If you are a Wodehouse fan living in or near San Antonio, or just visiting, we'd love to see you. Food and drink not being far from our minds, we are usually at a nearby Emsworth Arms (the Cheesecake Factory) before the meeting.

**The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society**  
(NEWTs)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: John Fahey



**The Northwodes**

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Mike Eckman



ON APRIL 23, a sunny and warm spring day, twenty of the Northwodes gathered at The Liffey Pub in Saint Paul for browsing, sluicing, and a discussion of *Summer Lightning*. The sluicing was facilitated by the fact that the meeting coincided with happy hour and the browsing was aided by an extensive brunch menu. The private room was decorated appropriately and labeled “Emsworth Arms Annex.”

Festivities started with a pin-the-tail-on-the-Empress competition. The target was a fine portrait of the pig with a bottle of Moxie as the prize. When we moved on to the book discussion, we found that the more serious of the group had done extensive research as we learned about the “dark martini” of gin and Italian vermouth, aka “gin and It.”

Several quotations from poems that every schoolboy of Wodehouse’s time would have learned were identified, and variations from the actual wording of the poem discussed. The reference to Eugene Aram was explained and a copy of the novel *Eugene Aram* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton was available for review. Several other references to the Lytton novel were identified in other Wodehouse works.

It was noted that, in line with great literature from the past, Galahad seemed to appear *ex machina* to facilitate the course of true love at the end.

We found the book to be rich and dense with Wodehouse wit and many favorite passages were read. Some attendees had read *Fish Preferred* and there was a discussion of that title.

Maria Jette reported that she had enjoyed Jonathan Cecil’s recordings of Wodehouse and had contributed a sum to the Hennepin County Library for the purchase of the recordings in honor of the late Norman Murphy. The library was so impressed with Maria’s gift that it allocated additional funds and purchased all of Cecil’s Wodehouse recordings. A check of the library’s website shows that they are being used by the library patrons. Perhaps others can follow Maria’s example.

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



ON MARCH 5, 2017, the Plum Crazyes met at the home of Betty and Tom Hooker. Following a splendid brunch, Bruce Montgomery delighted members with “P. G. Wodehouse’s Lyrics, Part 3: Historical Personages from the Pleistocene to the Napoleonic Eras (plus some notes about Jerome Kern).” Unlike Guy Bolton,

discussed in Bruce’s previous presentation, Kern had a happy marriage and family life. Kern collaborated with many partners throughout his career, most notably Oscar Hammerstein and P. G. Wodehouse.

In addition to a recording of Wodehouse reminiscing about his friendship and collaboration with Kern, Bruce played selections from several of their shows. Wodehouse’s whimsical lyrics include “in those prehistoric days subways did not sub” from “Flubby Dub the Cave Man” (*Oh, Boy!*); “And then next morning, if you please, they’d dress in iron BVDs . . . And when Sir Claude, so fair and young, got punctured in the leg or lung, they looked upon the argument as settled” from “Sir Galahad” (*Leave It to Jane*); “You wouldn’t find me tippling or reading Keats or Kipling” from “You Alone Would Do” (*Sitting Pretty*); and so on.

Report from the President: Bob Rains reminded members of the upcoming TWS convention. Bob and Andrea were in London last October to attend The PG Wodehouse Society (UK) dinner at Gray’s Inn Hall. In addition to the traditional dinner, the biennial event included a toast by Sir Edward Cazalet, a reading by Curtis and Lily Armstrong, and Wodehouse songs sung by Hal and Lara Cazalet.

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



THE PALE PARABOLITES are in the midst of planning their next luncheon meeting. Also, consideration is being given to the proposed costumes for the upcoming October convention costume ball. We are driving, not flying, so bulk and weight are not issues.

The small nearby community of Wodehouse sports a creek by the same name, and above is a photograph (courtesy of our chapter photographer, Stewart Hilt) of the headwaters of Wodehouse Creek, which is located on the west side of the Beaver Valley. I am informed the

fishing is excellent, and to cast my rod there is on my bucket list for 2017. Anyone out there care to join me?

### The PeliKans

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Bob Clark



### The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Doug Kendrick



### The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein



**T**HE PICKERINGS gathered at the home of David Warren on March 10, 2017. The and sluicing were superb. The Warrens' daughter Emily is a superb chef. We have had dinners prepared by Emily and Luann before and the standard is always very high.

President for Life Luann Warren called the meeting to order. The reading assignment was "The Letter of the Law," a golf story. It has been a long time since we have read one of the golf stories. Elliott Milstein explained one of the interesting aspects of this story. Many of the golf stories are about bad golfers who try to become good golfers. "The Letter of the Law" is about a match between two very bad golfers. For a writer, describing bad golf offers more comic possibilities than describing good golf. Wodehouse must have enjoyed writing this one. Another interesting thing about this story is that we get to meet and learn about the Wrecking Crew. They appear in some of the golf stories as minor characters, but are usually just an obstruction on the course. In "The Letter of the Law" we learn how they got their names and how they play, or do not play, the game.

One of the pleasures of the golf stories is revisiting the old club names. Mashie and niblick just sound better than five iron and nine iron. Perhaps we could start a campaign to bring back the old names.

The next meeting is May 20. The reading assignment is "Archibald and the Masses" and "The Code of the Mulliners."

### The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

### The Plum Crazyes

(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)

Contact: Betty Hooker



### The Plum Street Plummies

(Olympia, Washington, and vicinity)

Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



**T**HE PLUM STREET Plummies met at the Smithery, the home of Major Plug Basham, on April 15. The turnout was not quite what we had expected, since there were several last-minute cancellations. While the turnout was low in numbers, those attending (Owen Orsey and Susan Collicott) made up for the turnout in enthusiasm. We enjoyed tea, savories, and sweets before watching the first two episodes of *Jeeves and Wooster*, starring Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie. It seems those in attendance particularly enjoyed the section of the second episode based on "The Song of Songs." I do believe members of the Plum Street Plummies were a little disappointed that Plug did not sing "Sonny Boy."

The next meeting of the Plum Street Plummies was May 27 at 1 PM at our usual meeting place, Casa Mia, on Plum Street in Olympia.

### The Right Honourable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Jelle Otten



**R**ESTAURANT SZMULEWICZ was the new meeting spot for Honourable Knights on February 18, 2017. The interior of the restaurant is something like the Rovers Return, the fictional pub in the Granada TV soap opera *Coronation Street*. The innkeeper is Jolande Griffioen, and she told us that she is familiar with Wodehouse through her father's book collection. She fit the role of our new Miss Postlethwaite as if she had rehearsed it for years. Restaurant Szmulewicz is in the Bakkerstraat (Baker Street), off Rembrandtplein (Rembrandt Square). The square has an aura like Leicester Square in London. So the setting was great.



A new Dutch stamp was introduced with a portrait of P. G. Wodehouse. Rob Sander told us about a show at the Perdu Theatre in Amsterdam that allegedly had Wodehouse videos as part of the production. Karel Blommesteijn read his favorite Wodehouse excerpt from "No Wedding Bells for Bingo." Robert Reinder Folmer reviewed the BBC television serial *Victoria*, and spoke about fiction in the Victorian Age.

The annual tradition of the cock-and-bull story competition was exciting. The winner of the contest was Suzanne Hoogendijk, who said that she read a book called *The Stress and Burn-out Book* that recommended joining The Wodehouse Society for stress therapy.

At the end of the meeting we voted to make Szmulewicz the site of our June 10 meeting. Our next meeting after that will be on October 14. We don't know yet the exact location, but it will be in Amsterdam. If you would like to attend, please contact Jelle by e-mail.

### Rugby In All Its Niceties (Rugby, Tennessee Region)

(Donna Heffner)



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



### The West Texas Woosters (West Texas) Contact: Troy Gregory



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Quick Ones (unless otherwise credited) courtesy of  
John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog.

*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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