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“This Wizard of the Cooking-Stove”: How P.G. Wodehouse Contributed to the Field of Gastronomy through Anatole, the French Chef, in the Jeeves-and-Wooster Series

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Abstract

Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson’s premise that Balzac, a realist fiction author, contributed to the cultural field of gastronomy by his ethnographically accurate depictions of restaurants in mid-nineteenth-century Paris, prompts asking whether this may be true for other fiction authors that painstakingly reflect the foodways of their time and place, such as English author P.G. Wodehouse through his character, the French chef Anatole, in the Jeeves-and-Wooster series. Thematic analysis found three gastronomic themes surrounding Anatole that could be confirmed as historically accurate. The highly-skilled chef employed in the country houses of the Edwardian upper class possessed cultural capital through his professional capabilities and in turn bestowed this capital upon his employers. Details of foodstuffs, dishes and meals as well as the descriptions of the character’s voice and appearance show Wodehouse’s keen understanding of French haute cuisine and the culinary scene of the period. It can be concluded that Wodehouse, despite his light-hearted comedic style, was an astute literary ethnographer and indeed contributed to the field of gastronomy. This invites wider application of Ferguson’s premise onto other authors and types of writing.

Keywords

P.G. Wodehouse; Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson; Literary Ethnography; Gastronomy as Cultural Field; Cultural Capital.

Sociologist Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson argues that gastronomy as a cultural field emerged in mid-nineteenth-century France through a combination of the significance gastronomy as a cultural practice had achieved in France by that period, and the gastronomic texts or culinary discourse that surrounded this development.¹ Besides chef Antonin Carême, food journalist Alexandre Grimod de la Reynière, essayist Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, and philosopher Charles Fourier, she includes realist fiction writer Honoré de Balzac as an author of such culinary writings. Ferguson describes Balzac’s fiction with its graphic depictions of dining in Paris as a “dramatic ethnography of the nascent industrial capitalism of post-revolutionary France.”²

¹ Priscilla P. Ferguson, “A Cultural Field in the Making: Gastronomy in 19th-Century France,” *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 3 (1998): 597-641.

² Ferguson, 628.

Similarly, McVicker explains that Balzac used scenes of nourishment to portray the “psychology of the individual and therefore society,”³ and that Balzac’s interest in food was such that “it was impossible for him to conceive of a fictional society in which this element did not play a major role.”⁴ Boutin refers to Balzac’s “documentary impulse” and argues, like Ferguson, that his novels can be read as “literary ethnography.”⁵

It is this premise – that a realist fiction writer, by being ethnographically accurate about food and foodways, can contribute to the field of gastronomy – that prompts the question of whether Ferguson’s argument could be extended to other fiction writers who painstakingly depict a time and place, such as the English writer P.G. Wodehouse (1881-1975). References to food, particularly *haute cuisine*, are prevalent in Wodehouse’s writing, and Clevenger explains that Wodehouse is a gastronome “not for his personal devotion to the tummy or palate, but rather for his Art – his exquisite writing about food and dining” which the author uses to set scenes, evoke mental images, show character and even to advance plots.⁶ Among the prolific author’s most famous characters are the cerebral valet Jeeves and his employer, the young man-about-town Bertie Wooster. It is in some of the short stories and novels in the Jeeves-and-Wooster series that a French *haute cuisine* chef named Anatole appears (Table 1), initially employed by Bertie’s friends, the Littles, and later by Bertie’s Aunt Dahlia.⁷ Ostensibly a minor character (Table 2) who only once appears directly on the scene, chef Anatole, his cooking and his employment situation all frequently play a major role in plot developments. This paper argues that this narrative significance attached to chef Anatole reflects the social significance of French chefs and French cuisine in Edwardian England. It further argues that by rendering Anatole and his social situation with historically accurate detail, Wodehouse provides a “dramatic ethnography” of gastronomic practices in this society, as referenced by Ferguson, and thereby contributes to the cultural field of gastronomy.

³ Cecil D. McVicker, “Balzac’s Literary Cuisine: Food as an Element of Realism,” *The French Review*, 28, no. 1 (1954): 45.

⁴ McVicker, 44.

⁵ Aimée Boutin, “Paris Street Cries in Balzac’s *Père Goriot*,” *French Forum* 30, no. 2 (2005): 68.

⁶ Ken Clevenger, “Was Wodehouse a Gastronomer?,” *Plum Lines* 26, no. 4 (2005): 15.

⁷ P.G. Wodehouse, “Clustering Round Young Bingo,” in *Carry on Jeeves*, 223-254 (1925; repr., London: Arrow, 2008); P.G. Wodehouse, “The Love that Purifies,” in *Very Good, Jeeves*, 160-181 (1930; repr., Middlesex and New York: Penguin, 1958); P.G. Wodehouse, “The Spot of Art,” in *Very Good, Jeeves*, 114-137 (1930; repr., Middlesex and New York: Penguin, 1958); P.G. Wodehouse, “Jeeves Makes an Omelette,” in *The World of Jeeves*, 708-728 (1963; repr., London: Arrow, 1992); P.G. Wodehouse, *Right Ho, Jeeves* (1934; repr., Middlesex and New York: Penguin, 1962); P.G. Wodehouse, *The Code of the Wooster’s* (1938; repr., London: Arrow, 2008); P.G. Wodehouse, *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (1954; repr., London: Arrow, 2008); P.G. Wodehouse, *Jeeves in the Offing* (1960; repr., London: Arrow, 2008); P.G. Wodehouse, *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, in *The Jeeves Collection* (1963; repr., London: Cresset Press, 1992); P.G. Wodehouse, *Much Obligated, Jeeves* (London: Barrie & Jenkin, 1971); P.G. Wodehouse, *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen* (1974; repr., London: Arrow, 2008).

Table 1: Jeeves-and-Wooster publications in which Anatole appears

Short Stories	<p>“Clustering Round Young Bingo” (<i>Carry on Jeeves</i>, 1925)</p> <p>“The Love that Purifies” (<i>Very Good, Jeeves</i>, 1930)</p> <p>“The Spot of Art” (<i>Very Good, Jeeves</i>, 1930)</p> <p>“Jeeves Makes an Omelette” (<i>The World of Jeeves</i>, 1958)</p>
Novels	<p><i>Right Ho, Jeeves</i> (1934)</p> <p><i>The Code of the Woosters</i> (1938)</p> <p><i>Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit</i> (1954)</p> <p><i>Jeeves in the Offing</i> (1960)</p> <p><i>Stiff Upper Lip</i> (1963)</p> <p><i>Much Obligated, Jeeves</i> (1971)</p> <p><i>Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen</i> (1974)</p>

Table 2: Wodehouse’s output of short stories and novels featuring Jeeves and Wooster and Anatole⁸

	Overall published	Featuring Jeeves and Wooster⁹	Including Anatole¹⁰
Short Stories	Over 300 ¹¹	35	4
Novels	71 ¹²	11	7

The Gastronomic Field

Ferguson’s construction of the gastronomic field in nineteenth-century France follows Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory. Bourdieu viewed society and cultural life as being situated in a series of social arenas or *fields*. Fields are structured social spaces, characterised by individual practices, forms of authority, standards, and rules.¹³ Having their own rules means fields are relatively autonomous, but a certain overlap or

⁸ This table does not show Wodehouse’s writings in other genres such as plays, poems, scripts or autobiographies, as only novels and short stories are part of the original Jeeves-and-Wooster series. Subsequent adaptations for film or theatre were not considered in this study.

⁹ Compiled by authors from Nigel Cawthorne, *A Brief Guide to Jeeves and Wooster* (Philadelphia: Running Press Book Publishers, 2013), Kindle.

¹⁰ Compiled by authors through reading of Jeeves-and-Wooster short stories and novels.

¹¹ Anthony Powell, *Under Review: Further Writings on Writers, 1946-1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 300.

¹² Eileen McIlvaine, Louise Sherby and James Heineman, *P.G. Wodehouse: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Checklist* (New York: Heineman, 1990).

¹³ Rick Fantasia, “Cooking the Books’ of the French Gastronomic Field,” in *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu’s Legacy: Settling Accounts and Developing Alternatives*, ed. Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 28-44.

“straddling” can occur.¹⁴ Ferguson argues that gastronomy as a cultural field is an overlap of the culinary field and the literary field.¹⁵

Gastronomy and the Gastronomic Cultural Field

In *The Physiology of Taste* (1826), French social commentator Brillat-Savarin saw gastronomy as “interdisciplinary and dynamic,”¹⁶ with all the infrastructure and institutions involved in providing nourishment included in his concept of gastronomy:

The material subject of gastronomy is everything which can be eaten; its immediate object, the preservation of the individual; and its methods of attaining that object, cultivation which produces foodstuffs, commerce which exchanges them, industry which prepares them, and experience which devises the meaning of turning them to best possible account.¹⁷

Developing her concept of the gastronomic field, Ferguson expands on this early definition of gastronomy and defines it as a “structured set of culinary practices and texts uniting producer and consumer.”¹⁸ It is the inclusion of texts by Carême, Grimod de la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin, Fourier and Balzac – the literary field – that leads to Ferguson’s concept of the gastronomic field as a *cultural* field, “straddling” the culinary and literary fields. As food and culinary practices are fundamentally localised and ephemeral, it is precisely the culinary discourse, the writing about foodstuffs, dishes and meals, that “fixed the culinary product and gave it an existence beyond the sphere of immediate culinary production.”¹⁹ Only through words and texts can culinary practices expand and become cultural practices. Literary fiction that features richly detailed observations of the foodways of a time and place, and is therefore quasi-ethnographical, is particularly apt to transmit such culinary discourse.

Ethnography and Fiction: Border or Blurred Lines?

Ferguson is not alone in recognising the relationship between ethnography and fiction. Nic Craith and Kockel discuss the “blurring boundaries”²⁰ between the genres. They argue that “there is much to gain from cross-disciplinary perspectives and intercultural

¹⁴ Ferguson, 629.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Lindsay Neill, Jill Poulston, Nigel Hemmington, Christine Hall and Suzanne Bliss, “Gastronomy or Food Studies: A Case of Academic Distinction,” *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education* 29, no. 2 (2017): 92.

¹⁷ Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*. (1826; transl. Anne Drayton; London: Penguin, 1970), 52-53.

¹⁸ Ferguson, 603.

¹⁹ Ferguson, 610.

²⁰ Máiréad Nic Craith and Ullrich Kockel, “Blurring the Boundaries between Literature and Anthropology. A British Perspective,” *Ethnologie Française* 44, no. 4 (2014): 689.

interactions”²¹ between realist authors and anthropologists, especially those working with ethnographic methods based on participant observation and “thick descriptions.”²² Nineteenth-century Victorian writers such as William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, George Meredith and Charles Dickens engaged with anthropology as they sought to portray a “realistic social life experience”²³ and endeavoured to describe life “authentically and without idealization.”²⁴ These authors regarded their novels as “objective (i.e., scientific) accounts of human behaviour.”²⁵ For instance, George Eliot aims to present an accurate depiction of everyday life in her novel *Adam Bede* (1859) where she aspires “to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in [her] mind” and feels

bound to tell you, as precisely as [she] can, what that reflection is, as if [she] were in the witness-box, narrating [her] experience on oath.²⁶

Novelist Walter Scott worked on a theory of cultural evolution in a study of inhabitants of the Scottish Highlands; literary scholar Mary Agnes Noble argues that

under Scott’s influence...novels became a unique medium that could integrate the poetry of primitive cultural forms with the naturalistic interpretive lens of the anthropologist, a productive fusion of romance and scientific social analysis.²⁷

Inversely, anthropologist Nigel Rapport uses the literature of E. M. Forster to supplement his fieldwork on life in the Northern English village of Wanet and highlights similarities between realist fiction and anthropology, saying that “Forster inspires [him] with his close observation, his wise commentary, his stylish narration.”²⁸

Narayan insists that a border exists between the two genres but recognises that “there is fiction in which the author believes him- or herself well-versed enough in the worldview of the people described to write from within their perspective.”²⁹ She acknowledges that crossing the border may be “mutually enriching for both ethnography and fiction,”³⁰ allowing ethnographic writings to become “richer, more nuanced, evocative and readable texts,” whereas an understanding of how structural

²¹ Nic Craith and Kockel, 695.

²² Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973; repr., New York: Basic Books, 2017), 3-36.

²³ Nic Craith and Kockel, 690.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Eliot in Nic Craith and Kockel, 690.

²⁷ Noble in Nic Craith and Kockel, 690.

²⁸ Nigel Rapport, *The Prose and the Passion: Anthropology, Literature, and the Writing of E.M. Forster* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 43.

²⁹ Kirin Narayan, “Ethnography and Fiction: Where is the Border?” *Anthropology and Humanism* 24, no. 2 (1999): 141.

³⁰ Narayan, 143.

forces shape personal detail, “may potentially make for more powerful and engaged creations [of fiction writing].”³¹ However, she warns that ethnography risks losing clarity if it becomes too like fiction and also argues that in crossing the border, fiction risks losing the “power of a good story in favour of becoming a forum for mechanically transmitting facts.”³² In contrast, Behar argues that ethnography ought to develop its artistic side. She claims that ethnography became a “blurred genre”³³ when it moved from being simply thick description to requiring this description to be backed up with theoretical references. She suggests that fear of losing the trappings of academia prevents ethnographers from bringing art into their work but argues that the failure to do so will mean “the art of ethnography will be taken over by creative writers and artists...[who] will be sure to call it anything but ethnography.”³⁴

Wodehouse regularly described two ways of writing; his, “a sort of musical comedy without music and ignoring real life altogether,” and the other “going deep down into life.”³⁵ This paper disagrees with Wodehouse’s representation of his work as ignoring real life, despite his light-hearted, humorous style. In fact, it proposes that Wodehouse is a true ethnographer, in the sense of a focus on participant-observation of a culture or society that results in the documentation of findings.³⁶ In the case of Wodehouse, this was the privileged upper class of Edwardian England. Jeeves and Wooster first appear together in the short story “Extricating Young Gussie” published in 1915; the final novel featuring the duo, *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*, was published nearly sixty years later, in 1974. However, notwithstanding a brief experiment after the Second World War at placing the characters in contemporary settings, Wodehouse set the stories firmly in the late Edwardian period, welcoming readers to

the world of Jeeves and Wooster...[a] world of sunshine, country houses and champagne, somehow permanently stuck in the Edwardian era before the slaughter of the First World War.³⁷

Edward VII ruled England from 1901 to 1910, following the death of his mother Queen Victoria, but the Edwardian period covers the years 1901-1914 and ends with the outbreak of the First World War.³⁸ Wodehouse came of age at the turn of the twentieth

³¹ Narayan, 143.

³² Narayan, 144.

³³ Ruth Behar, “Ethnography in a Time of Blurred Genres.” *Anthropology and Humanism*, 32, no. 2 (2007): 145.

³⁴ Behar, 154.

³⁵ Wodehouse in David Heddendorf, “When Plummie Met Sally: The Other P.G. Wodehouse,” *The Sewanee Review* 118, no. 3 (2010): 411.

³⁶ Coleman, Simon and Bob Simpson, “Glossary of Terms,” *Royal Anthropological Institute*, accessed 15 July 2021, <https://www.discoveranthropology.org.uk/about-anthropology/glossaryofterms.html>.

³⁷ Cawthorne, 82.

³⁸ Juliet Gardiner, *Manor House: Life in an Edwardian Country House* (San Francisco: Bay Books, 2003), 10.

century and for most of his life wrote of this “recently vanished society,”³⁹ providing a rich depiction of the upper-class society of Edwardian England. He affirms in an interview with writer and broadcaster Alistair Cooke that the Bertie-Wooster-type of character was “very prevalent when [Wodehouse] was in and about London – 1911-12-13.”⁴⁰ In a 1971 interview with H.W. Wind in the *New Yorker*, Wodehouse was asked if the world about which he wrote ever existed:

‘Oh, it very definitely existed,’ replied Wodehouse with animation. ‘When I was living in London around the turn of the century, a good many of the young men dressed in morning coat, toppers and spats ... Anyway, when I started writing my stories, Bertie was a recognisable type. All the rich young men had valets.’⁴¹

The son of a colonial civil servant, Wodehouse had spent most of his childhood in boarding schools, and school holidays with various aunts and uncles. On these visits, Wodehouse was regularly sent to have tea with the servants and became familiar with life below-stairs in country houses.⁴² Wodehouse’s own notes relate a visit to cousins in 1905 during which he questioned the servants about their lives and observed the strict etiquette practised among them.⁴³ The author’s life experiences and meticulous observations provided him with rich material to faithfully depict the life of the Edwardian upper class and their symbiotic relationship with servants and staff. Wodehouse’s quasi-ethnographic practices provide justification for examining the historical accuracy of his depiction of chef Anatole, allowing for a consideration of the author’s contribution to the field of gastronomy.

Methodology

To investigate the depiction of the French chef Anatole in Wodehouse’s writings, thematic analysis with a manifest approach was chosen. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data”⁴⁴ and a common method for analysing ethnographic data.⁴⁵ Following the premise of this paper that realist fiction

³⁹ Robert McCrum, *Wodehouse: A Life* (London and New York: W.H. Norton and Co, 2004), 418.

⁴⁰ P.G. Wodehouse, “P.G. Wodehouse Discussing Jeeves and Wooster (1960s Interview),” interview by Alistair Cooke; Video, 8:55; published by Roman Styran, 26 August 2015, <https://youtu.be/Re9QXetFipM>

⁴¹ In Norman Murphy, *The P.G. Wodehouse Miscellany* (Gloucester: The History Press, 2015), Kindle, 127.

⁴² McCrum, *A Life*.

⁴³ In Norman Murphy, *A Wodehouse Handbook: The World of Wodehouse Vol. 1*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: Sybertooth Inc., 2013), Kindle.

⁴⁴ Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, “Teaching Thematic Analysis: Overcoming Challenges and Developing Strategies for Effective Learning,” *The Psychologist* 26, no. 2 (February 2013): 120.

⁴⁵ April Burns, “Analyzing Ethnographic Data,” in *Ethnography Made Easy*, ed. Alia R. Tyner-Mullings, Mary Gatta and Ryan Coughlan. New York: City University of New York. Accessed 12 July 2021. <https://cuny.manifoldapp.org/projects/ethnographies-of-work>

texts may be considered quasi-ethnographic writings, a thematic analysis was expected to yield systematic insights into the depiction of the chef. A manifest approach examines the literal meaning of texts and focuses only on what is obvious within the text, different from a latent analysis which seeks to delve deeper into the meaning of the text.⁴⁶ It could be argued that a manifest approach is generally suited to investigate quasi-ethnographic realist fiction.

Data collection involved reading the short stories and novels cited in Table 1, noting any reference to Anatole. In all, 108 such references were compiled, varying in length from a single sentence to a 1,100-word scene, where Anatole makes an actual appearance in *Right Ho, Jeeves*. Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic analysis were then applied to this data.⁴⁷ The first step requires familiarisation with the data. This involved reading and re-reading the data while making note of any early impressions or patterns that emerge. The second step used a manifest approach to generate initial codes. These codes "identify a feature of the data [...] that appears interesting."⁴⁸ The nine codes established are detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Initial codes established

A French chef proficient in French cuisine	A chef worth stealing	Anatole's voice
A French chef who can cook English Food	Anatole used to blackmail Bertie/ used in a wager/ potentially offered in exchange for silverware	Anatole's appearance
Anatole resigns	Anatole's cooking as a device to placate Tom to obtain money for Dahlia	Derogatory comments about the French

Step 3-5 of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is to search these codes for themes, "coherent and meaningful pattern[s] in the data relevant to the research question;"⁴⁹ review these themes to ensure they are coherent and supported by the data; and to ultimately define these themes which, given the relatively limited data set, was concluded at the end of step four. It was expected that two pre-determined themes would be corroborated through the analysis. Firstly, the circumstances of a French chef in the employ of an Edwardian English family, and secondly, the elite status a French chef had within that society. The two themes are interrelated and founded on historical evidence. Demand for French chefs rose as they became almost a requirement among

⁴⁶ Helena Priest, Paula Roberts and Leslie Woods, "An Overview of Three Different Approaches to the Interpretation of Qualitative Data. Part 1: Theoretical Issues," *Nurse Researcher* 10, no. 1 (2002): 30-42.

⁴⁷ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006), 77-101.

⁴⁸ Braun and Clarke, 88.

⁴⁹ Clarke and Braun, 3.

the wealthy in nineteenth-century England as an indication of social status.⁵⁰ Trubek explains that it was

difficult to maintain class rank without the public exhibition of one's ability to consume in an appropriate fashion...and the role of cultivated consumer became a vital part of class identity.⁵¹

French cuisine was an essential element of this cultivated and conspicuous⁵² consumption, but it was “not just French cuisine, but also French chefs that the consumers desired.”⁵³ The demand for chefs as a measure of rank in turn conferred an élite status onto these chefs.⁵⁴ As they actualised French *haute cuisine* as a status symbol of the European élite, those chefs also “made it a marker of their own status as élite culinary professionals.”⁵⁵

However, the intention of the thematic analysis was also to search for any unexpected themes arising during the analysis – the “serendipity effect.”⁵⁶ These turned out to be Anatole's voice and appearance, as well as elements of Francophobia in the dialogue surrounding the French chef. While the latter chimes with traces of Francophobia in English public discourse in the century after the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and thus further underlines Wodehouse's fine ethnographic sensitivity for the *zeitgeist*, it does not really relate to gastronomy and will therefore be disregarded. What follows is the final, sixth, step of the Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis – the writing up – where the three gastronomically relevant themes are further examined to determine how ethnographically accurate they are, supporting the argument that Wodehouse has contributed to the field of gastronomy by capturing the gastronomic culture of his time.

Themes

Anatole as a French Chef in Edwardian England

The first theme relates to the circumstances of Anatole as a highly-skilled and highly-trained French chef employed by a family in Edwardian England. As the chef

⁵⁰ John Burnett, *Plenty & Want: A Social History of Food in England from 1815 to the Present Day*. 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1989), 70.

⁵¹ Amy Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 60.

⁵² Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. (1899; repr., introduction by John Kenneth Galbraith; Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1973).

⁵³ Trubek, 50.

⁵⁴ Debra Kelly, “A Migrant Culture on Display: The French Migrant and French Gastronomy in London (19th – 21st centuries),” *Modern Languages Open* (2016).
<http://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.148>

⁵⁵ Trubek, 10.

⁵⁶ Thomas F. Carney, “Content Analysis: Construing Literature as History,” *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 1 (1967): 28.

occupation in France had been professionally honed through systematic culinary practice and writing since the seventeenth century,⁵⁷ anyone considered a “French chef” in the early twentieth century would have undergone rigorous professional training. Wodehouse first introduces Anatole in “Clustering Round Young Bingo” when he is in the employ of Bingo and Rosie Little, with Bertie describing him as “a Frenchman of the most extraordinary vim and skill.”⁵⁸ Throughout the series Anatole is referred to as “the best cook in England,”⁵⁹ “an outstanding cook,”⁶⁰ a “monarch of his profession,”⁶¹ and “God’s gift to the gastric juices.”⁶² In *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, Bertie gives the following description of the effects of Anatole’s cooking:

I have touched so far only lightly on this Anatole, and I take the opportunity now of saying that his was an output which had to be tasted to be believed, mere words being inadequate to convey the full facts with regard to his amazing virtuosity. After one of Anatole’s lunches has melted in the mouth, you unbutton the waistcoat and loll back, breathing heavily and feeling that life has no more to offer, and then, before you know where you are, along comes one of his dinners, with even more on the ball, the whole lay-out constituting something about as near Heaven as any reasonable man could wish.⁶³

To confirm whether this reverence for the French chef and French cuisine in Wodehouse’s stories is an ethnographically sound characterisation, it is important to examine how French cuisine became such a coveted element of Edwardian life. Factors that led to its status include changes in dining practices in late Victorian and Edwardian England; a growing appreciation of French food, which was facilitated by some earlier cookbooks; “celebrity” chefs of the period and their cookbooks; and the growth of the tourist industry, which increased exposure to French cuisine.

Changing Dining Habits

By the first half of the nineteenth century, French cookery and service had become *de rigueur* in fashionable circles in England.⁶⁴ The appreciation of French food was limited to the wealthy, urban population at this time, while the rural population remained suspicious of these “fancy French dishes.”⁶⁵ The audience for French food increased as the Victorian era progressed, helped by economic development and a growing middle

⁵⁷ Trubek, *Haute Cuisine*; Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 71.

⁵⁸ “Clustering,” 227.

⁵⁹ “Purifies,” 161.

⁶⁰ “Spot of Art,” 114.

⁶¹ *Right Ho*, 34.

⁶² “Omelette,” 711; *Much Obligated*, 15; *Upper Lip*, 31; *Aunts*, 112.

⁶³ *Feudal Spirit*, 74-75.

⁶⁴ Burnett, 70.

⁶⁵ Burnett, 69.

class. This new middle class aspired to imitate the conduct of the aristocracy and copied the evolving aristocratic dietary patterns. One of these was changing mealtimes, with breakfast becoming an earlier and lighter meal, while lunch became more substantial; the husband either returned home to dine with his family or ate at his club while his wife ate a light meal of meat, fish, or leftovers at home. Afternoon tea became a requirement due to dinner being served later in the evening, with half past seven the usual time by the middle of the century. This later hour was due to the later sitting of parliament and extended city working hours; it was facilitated by the introduction of gaslight and encouraged by the fact that Queen Victoria enjoyed a late dinner.⁶⁶ Dinners provided opportunities to display wealth and refinement, and thus social status, through appropriate, conspicuous consumption habits, including the services of French chefs.⁶⁷ During the Edwardian period dining out in restaurants and hotels flourished, becoming a “new and fashionable entertainment for the upper class,”⁶⁸ and it is here that many of the expanding wealthier class encountered the French style of cooking and dining.⁶⁹

Celebrity Chefs

Promoting the acceptance of French cuisine in nineteenth and early-twentieth-century England was also the rise of “celebrity” chefs and the cookbooks they wrote. There had been an awareness of French cuisine in England from the seventeenth century, evident in some early English cookbooks and translations of French texts.⁷⁰ The nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the rise of mainly French celebrity chefs who worked and wrote in England for at least some years. These include Antonin Carême (1783-1833), Louis-Eustache Ude (*ca* 1769-1846), Alexis Soyer (1809-1858), Charles Francatelli (1805-1876), Auguste Escoffier (1846-1935), Alfred Suzanne (1829-1916) and Marcel Boulestin (1878-1943). Most of these chefs worked either for the nobility or for gentlemen’s clubs. However, as the nineteenth century ended and the availability of French cuisine expanded into hotels and restaurants, the “great age of dining out”⁷¹ began with the opening of the Savoy Hotel in London in 1889.

⁶⁶ Burnett, 67-68.

⁶⁷ Trubek, 60; see also Graham Harding, “‘Dinner Is the Great Trial’: Sociability and *Service à la Russe* in the Long Nineteenth Century,” *European Journal of Food, Drink, and Society* 1, no. 1 (2021): 55-78.

⁶⁸ Burnett, 202.

⁶⁹ See Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire, “Haute Cuisine Restaurants in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Ireland,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 115C, Food and Drink in Ireland (2015), 371-403 for the flourishing of restaurants and dining out in Edwardian Dublin.

⁷⁰ Valerie Mars, “Experiencing French Cookery in Nineteenth-Century London,” in *A History of the French in London: Liberty, Equality, Opportunity*, ed. Debra Kelly and Martyn Cornick (London: University of London, 2013), 217-240; see also Ivan Day, ed., *Eat, Drink & Be Merry: The British at Table, 1600-2000* (London: Philip Wilson, 2000).

⁷¹ Burnett, 202.

Tourism

Those that could afford it took advantage of the development of tourism in the late nineteenth century and experienced French food on visits to the continent. During the Edwardian period, the “smart set” had a fixed leisure routine:

Yacht racing at Cowes in August; in September the Prince went abroad, usually to one of the fashionable German or Austrian spa resorts; in October he would be deer-stalking in Scotland, and from November until early spring would be based at Sandringham hosting shoots and doing the rounds of other people’s country house sporting parties. In May he would be in London for three months for the season, having spent a month or so on the Riviera in early spring. And then the restless carousel started up again.⁷²

César Ritz and Escoffier were two of the most lauded characters in continental hospitality during this period, especially in their collaboration, which commenced as they worked the seasons between hotels in Lucerne and Monte Carlo during 1883-1889. In 1889 they moved to London to work in the newly opened Savoy Hotel, and thereby changed dining in London. Managed by Ritz, with Escoffier in control of the kitchens, the hotel heralded the era of “grand commercial dining.”⁷³ The collaboration of Ritz and Escoffier at the Savoy meant that

gradually even conservative people who had never dined in public were lured away from their clubs, and frequently preferred to give some of their most elegant dinner parties at the Savoy, where they could count upon the collaboration of the world’s greatest chef, and the world’s greatest hotelier.⁷⁴

This is the scene Wodehouse grew up in, the “Edwardian London of the great hotels, brilliantly lit restaurants, gentlemen’s clubs, and department stores [which] shaped Wodehouse as much as Dulwich [his school] had done.”⁷⁵ Examining Escoffier’s *Le Guide Culinaire* (1903), the chef’s influence on Wodehouse is clear. Among the many references to French cuisine that pepper the stories featuring Anatole, the most comprehensive menu is provided in the *Code of the Woosters* when Bertie and his Aunt Dahlia envisage the perfect, Anatole-created meal for when Bertie is released from a potential prison sentence for alleged theft (Table 4).⁷⁶ Table 5 shows four menus taken from *Le Guide Culinaire* and, allowing for seasonal variations in salads and methods of cooking asparagus tips, all the dishes in Wodehouse’s menu are taken from these four Escoffier menus.

⁷² Gardiner, 223-224.

⁷³ Michael Symons, *A History of Cooks and Cooking* (Devon: Prospect Books, 2001), 292.

⁷⁴ Marie-Louise Ritz in Edward Page and Patrick Kingsford, *Master Chefs: A History of Haute Cuisine* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1971), 220.

⁷⁵ McCrum, 60.

⁷⁶ *Code*, 274-276.

Table 4: Menu from The Code of the Woosters

Wodehouse Menu	Wodehouse Menu ⁷⁷
<i>Caviar Frais</i>	Fresh Caviar
<i>Cantaloup</i>	Orange-fleshed Sweet Melon ⁷⁸
<i>Consommé aux Pommes D'Amour</i>	Consommé with Provencal Tomatoes ⁷⁹
<i>Sylphides à la crème d'Écrevisses</i>	Sylphides (?) ⁸⁰ with a Crayfish cream sauce
<i>Mignonette de poulet petit Duc</i>	Chicken Breast in Madeira with Asparagus, Mushrooms and Truffles ⁸¹
<i>Suprême de foie gras au champagne</i>	Goose Liver with Champagne
<i>Nonats de la Méditerranée au Fenouil</i>	Mediterranean Whitebait ⁸² with Fennel
<i>Selle d'Agneau aux laitues a la Grecque</i>	Saddle of Lamb with Lettuce
<i>Points d'asperges à la Mistinguette</i>	Asparagus Tips ⁸³
<i>Neige aux Perles des Alpes</i>	Meringue with Chartreuse liqueur bonbons ⁸⁴
<i>Timbale de ris de veau Toulousaine</i>	Veal sweetbreads in pastry with mushroom sauce and truffles ⁸⁵
<i>Salade d'endive et de céleri</i>	Endive and Celery Salad
<i>Le Plum Pudding</i>	Plum Pudding
<i>L'Étoile au Berger [sic]</i>	Star-shaped mousse flavoured with Benedictine liqueur, served in raspberry ice-cream with spun sugar ⁸⁶
<i>Bénédictins Blancs</i>	? ⁸⁷
<i>Bombe Néro</i>	Sponge, caramel, ice cream and chocolate truffles coated in meringue, served with a cup of flaming rum ⁸⁸
<i>Friandises</i>	Small, delicate sweets and pastries
<i>Diablotins</i>	Small poached gnocchi sprinkled with cayenne and grated cheese and gratinated ⁸⁹
<i>Fruits</i>	Fruits

⁷⁷ If not otherwise indicated, translation by the authors

⁷⁸ Victoria Madden, "Eating like P.G. Wodehouse – The Ultimate Anatole Menu from The Code of the Woosters," *Moulders Lane* (blog), 30 October 2015, accessed 07 September 2021, <https://moulderslane.wordpress.com/2015/10/30/eating-like-p-g-wodehouse-the-ultimate-anatole-menu-from-the-code-of-the-woosters/>

⁷⁹ Auguste Escoffier, *Guide to Modern Cookery* (1903; repr., London: William Heinemann, 1907), 224-225

⁸⁰ Escoffier (528-529) indicates *sylphides* as a sort of mousse, while Madden (2015) with reference to the Russian Wodehouse society, translates this as "lobster."

⁸¹ Madden, "Eating".

⁸² See Escoffier, 262.

⁸³ Preparation unclear, see Madden, "Eating".

⁸⁴ Escoffier, 785 and Madden, "Eating".

⁸⁵ Madden, "Eating".

⁸⁶ Escoffier, 795

⁸⁷ No translation or explanation could be ascertained.

⁸⁸ Escoffier, 807-808.

⁸⁹ Escoffier, 682.

Table 5: Escoffier Menus Highlighting in Bold the Origin of Wodehouse's Menu

<p style="text-align: center;">MENU.⁹⁰</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Hors-d'oeuvre Moscovite.</i> Melon Cantaloup. <i>Tortue Claire.</i> <i>Velouté aux Pommes d'Amour.</i> <i>Paupiette de sole à l'Ancienne.</i> Timbale de Ris de Veau Toulousaine. <i>Poularde Rose Marie.</i> Selle d'Agneau aux laitues à la Grecque. <i>Petits pois à l'Anglaise.</i> <i>Punch glacé.</i> <i>Caille en cocotte.</i> Salade Romaine. <i>Asperges d'Argenteuil.</i> <i>Terrine de Canard Rouennaise.</i> Bombe Néro. Friandises. Diablotins. Fruits. 13th June, 1906</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Example of a Fancy SUPPER MENU.⁹¹</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Caviar de Sterlet <i>Crêpes Moscovite</i> Consommé aux Pommes d'Amour Sylphides à la crème d'Écrevisses Mignonnette de poulet Petit-Duc. <i>Velouté Favori</i> <i>Cailles dodues escortées d'Ortolans</i> <i>Nymphes roses—Désirs de Mascotte.</i> Pointes d'Asperges à l'huile Vierge. <i>Charmes de Vénus voilés à l'Orientale.</i> <i>Plaisirs des Dames.</i> <i>Étoiles Filantes—Frvolités.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">VINS.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Zeltinger Schlossberg, 1897. Bollinger, Extra Dry, 1898.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carlton Hotel, Saturday 06th October, 1906</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">CHRISTMAS DINNER.⁹²</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Crêpe [sic] aux oeufs de Sterlet.</i> <i>Consommé Santa-Maria.</i> <i>Velouté aux Paillettes dorées.</i> <i>Paupiette de Sole sous la cendre.</i> <i>Caille à l'Orientale.</i> <i>Jeune Chevreuil aux Cerises.</i> <i>Crème de Marrons.</i> Suprême de Foie gras au Champagne. Neige aux Perles des Alpes. <i>Chapon accompagné d'Ortolans Ste.</i> <i>Alliance.</i> Salade Nazareth. <i>Asperges de France.</i> Le plum pudding des Rois Mages. L'Étoile du Berger. Bénédictins Blancs.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">25th December, 1905</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MENU.⁹³</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Hors-d'oeuvre.</i> <i>Huîtres au raifort.</i> <i>Poutargue ae Gènes. [sic]</i> <i>Figues fraîches.</i> <i>Cocky Leekie.</i> <i>Velouté aux fleurs de courgette.</i> <i>Truite au bleu.</i> Nonats de la Méditerranée au Fenouil. <i>Poularde à l'Aurore.</i> <i>Selle de Chevreuil à la Bohémienne.</i> <i>Pommes aigrettes à la gelée de groseille.</i> <i>Suprêmes d'Écrevisse au Champagne.</i> <i>Pastèque en Sorbet.</i> <i>Perdreau aux raisins.</i> <i>Salade Créole.</i> <i>Coeur d'artichaut Petit-Duc.</i> <i>Mousse Favorite.</i> <i>Délices au Caramel.</i> <i>Pêches Rose Chérie.</i></p>

⁹⁰ Escoffier, 845.⁹¹ Escoffier, 845.⁹² Escoffier, 842⁹³ Escoffier, 846

The Status of the French Chef in Edwardian England – Anatole and Cultural Capital

The second theme to manifest is that in Edwardian England, being a French chef conferred an élite status on the chef and on those who consumed his product.⁹⁴ From the time Aunt Dahlia hires Anatole she recognises the potential of using his culinary skills to control people. Of the four short stories and seven novels in which Anatole features, there are six in which his status and social value are pivotal to the plot. However in all, he is a valued tool used by Aunt Dahlia to control both Bertie and her husband, Tom. She bends Bertie to her will by threatening him, either explicitly or implicitly, with being barred from Anatole's cooking, and this is sufficient to prompt Bertie to agree to Aunt Dahlia's schemes.⁹⁵ Anatole also helps Dahlia keep her husband Tom and his delicate digestive system in an agreeable state, thus making it easier to extract the money needed to keep her magazine *Milady's Boudoir* operational. Having eaten a meal prepared by Anatole while he was still employed by the Littles, Tom provides money for the magazine, prompting Dahlia to exclaim:

Why, if Tom gives up a couple of thousand now, practically without a murmur, the imagination reels at what he'll do with Anatole cooking regularly for him. He'll be signing cheques in his sleep.⁹⁶

The importance of Anatole to Tom's dietary well-being is underlined when Tom delays a planned cruise for a month because Anatole develops the flu and Tom will not travel without him.⁹⁷ Indications of Anatole's status include various episodes concerning guests at Brinkley Court, the country home of Tom and Dahlia, attempting to acquire Anatole. In the *Code of the Woosters*, Tom considers exchanging Anatole for a silver cow-creamer, and Sir Watkyn offers to drop charges against Bertie in exchange for Anatole. In *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, Aunt Dahlia intends to use Anatole's culinary skills to persuade newspaper owner Mr Trotter to buy *Milady's Boudoir*, while in *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, Bertie is again accused of stealing, but Runkle will not press charges if Dahlia agrees to give him Anatole. In "The Love that Purifies," Aunt Dahlia uses Anatole as a wager in a bet. The chef himself is also conscious of his worth. Anatole threatens to resign twice in *Right Ho, Jeeves*, once when his food is returned uneaten with Bertie noting that

when the first two courses came back to the kitchen practically untouched, [Anatole's] feelings were so hurt that he cried like a child. And when the rest of the dinner followed, he came to the conclusion that the whole thing was a studied and calculated insult and decided to hand in his portfolio,⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Kelly, "A Migrant Culture"; Trubek, *Haute Cuisine*.

⁹⁵ *Upper Lip*, 62.

⁹⁶ "Clustering", 251.

⁹⁷ "The Spot of Art".

⁹⁸ *Right Ho*, 107.

and a second time when Gussie appears at Anatole's bedroom skylight. Dahlia obsesses on both occasions about how to retain the chef. Anatole's cooking is used to persuade Tom to either pay off Dahlia's gambling debts or bail out her magazine *Milady's Boudoir*. However, in *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, the last novel in the series, Bertie suggests that having to pay off Dahlia's gambling debt would, in this case, mean

upsetting the latter's gastric juices for one didn't know how long, which would mean him pushing his plate away untasted night after night, which would mean Anatole, temperamental like all geniuses, getting deeply offended and handing in his resignation.⁹⁹

These two types of status, one inherent in Anatole as a French chef and the other conferred onto Dahlia by employing him, suggest that Anatole both possesses and bestows what Bourdieu refers to as cultural capital.¹⁰⁰ Cultural capital is the "skills, knowledge, and behaviours that one can tap into to demonstrate cultural competence."¹⁰¹ While recognising the prominence of economic capital, which is "immediately and directly convertible into money,"¹⁰² Bourdieu argues that any understanding of the social world requires a comprehension of practices that cannot be socially recognised as economic. He posits two other forms of capital – cultural and social:

cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and *social capital*, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility.¹⁰³

Bourdieu does not present a precise definition of cultural capital but states it may exist in three forms: the embodied state, the institutionalised state, and the objectified state. Embodied cultural capital is developed from birth and is largely out of the control of the individual. It is the incorporation of cultural practices and traditions that are both consciously and unconsciously acquired over time, and primarily from the family.

We know nothing of Anatole's early development, so it is not possible to state that he has embodied capital. However, any training Anatole undertook in *haute cuisine* confers institutional cultural capital upon him. From a database created from the biographies of sixty nineteenth-century French chefs, Trubek identifies specific

⁹⁹ *Aunts*, 161.

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1986), 15-29.

¹⁰¹ Nicki L. Cole, "What Is Cultural Capital? Do I Have It? - An Overview of the Concept," *ThoughtCo.com*, 23 September 2019, accessed 02 July 2021. <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-cultural-capital-do-i-have-it-3026374>.

¹⁰² Bourdieu, "Capital," 16.

¹⁰³ Bourdieu, "Capital," 16.

characteristics common to these chefs.¹⁰⁴ They were usually born and raised in the provinces and, beginning at the age of thirteen to sixteen, gained their education in the culinary profession through the apprenticeship system, generally in a large town. From there they would work their way up the hierarchy of the kitchen. There was then the option to work abroad. Given the skills in *haute cuisine* demonstrated by Anatole as exemplified in the *Code of the Woosters* menu, it can be argued that Anatole underwent the training process described by Trubek and therefore, that he possesses institutionalised cultural capital. This type of capital relates to academic or professional qualifications and credentials, which create a “certificate of cultural competence”¹⁰⁵ allowing the holder to measure themselves within society. Qualifications can be used to convert cultural capital into economic capital; for instance, to retain Anatole’s services, Dahlia tops any other salary offer made to him.¹⁰⁶

The third form of cultural capital, objectified cultural capital, is represented by material goods. Such cultural capital can be acquired both materially, which Bourdieu argues presupposes economic capital, i.e., the financial ability to acquire the goods, and symbolically, which presupposes cultural capital, i.e., the ability to recognise the status being conferred by the good. However, Bourdieu states that objectified cultural capital can also be obtained by acquiring “the services of the holder of this capital.”¹⁰⁷ Dahlia acquiring the services of Anatole, a highly trained and skilled holder of *haute cuisine* cultural capital, defines him as objectified cultural capital. Bourdieu later defined *symbolic capital* as “the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate.”¹⁰⁸ By possessing institutional cultural capital, Anatole also has symbolic capital, and by hiring his cultural capital in its objectified form, Dahlia similarly acquires symbolic capital. It is this symbolic capital that the Totters, Mrs Runkle, Sir Watkyn Bassett and Lady Snettisham seek to obtain by acquiring Anatole’s services.

The French Chef in Edwardian England

How realistic is this status of French chefs in Edwardian England? By the late Victorian period employing a French chef or at least one trained in French cuisine was a requirement of any family with social aspirations.¹⁰⁹ This desirability already existed a century earlier, as Samuel and Sarah Adams note in 1824:

The man Cook, now become a requisite member in the establishment of a man of fashion, is in all respects the same as that [sic] of a female Cook. He is generally a foreigner, or if an Englishman, possesses a peculiar tact in manufacturing many

¹⁰⁴ Trubek, 68-69.

¹⁰⁵ Bourdieu, “Capital,” 20.

¹⁰⁶ *Much Obliged*, 186.

¹⁰⁷ Bourdieu, “Capital,” 20.

¹⁰⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” *Sociological Theory* 7, no.1 (1989): 17.

¹⁰⁹ Burnett, 193; Gardiner, 82.

fashionable foreign delicacies, or of introducing certain seasonings and flavours in his dishes, which render them more inviting to the palate of his employer, than those produced by the simply healthful modes of modern English Cooks.¹¹⁰

However, the fashionable foreign chef was still in limited supply in 1824:

In France, all culinary business is conducted by men, and there are, at least, as many men cooks as considerable kitchens; but in England, men cooks are kept only in about 3 or 400 great and wealthy families, and in about 40 or 50 London hotels. But it is usual in smaller establishments to engage a man cook for a day or two before an entertainment.¹¹¹

By 1890, this number had multiplied to five thousand French chefs employed in Britain.¹¹² These chefs were aware of their value. The 1st Duke of Wellington had a French chef, Felix, who regularly resigned if he felt his food was not appreciated.¹¹³ Conflict between employer and chef could also arise due to the “mutual incomprehension”¹¹⁴ regarding food preferences between the English employer and the French chef. Monsieur Perez who was employed in Lyme Park, now part of the UK National Trust but the home of the Baron Newton family until 1946, frequently expressed frustration at a lack of appreciation of his French creations.¹¹⁵

Within the household, the French chef would have been part of the “Upper Ten” members of the household staff, which also included the house steward or butler, housekeeper, valet, and lady’s maid.¹¹⁶ However, the nature of the chef’s job prevented him from forming the close relations with the family that other servants would have enjoyed.¹¹⁷ The Adams note of the “man Cook” that

his situation is one of great labour and fatigue, which, with the superior skill requisite for excellence in his art, procures him a liberal salary, frequently twice or thrice the sum given to the most experienced female English Cook.¹¹⁸

There are historical examples of individual chefs earning quite considerable sums of money. Ménagier, the French chef of Queen Victoria’s Windsor residence, was paid

¹¹⁰ Samuel Adams and Sarah Adams, *The Complete Servant, Being a Practical Guide to the Peculiar Duties and Business of All Descriptions of Servants ... with Useful Receipts and Tables* (London: Knight and Lacey, 1824), 368). Spelling as in original.

¹¹¹ Adams and Adams, 369. Spelling as in original.

¹¹² Trubek, 47.

¹¹³ Sian Evans, *Life Below Stairs: In the Victorian and Edwardian Country House*. (London: National Trust, 2011). Kindle.

¹¹⁴ Evans, loc. 409.

¹¹⁵ Evans *Below Stairs*.

¹¹⁶ Evans, loc. 271.

¹¹⁷ Evans, loc. 257-260.

¹¹⁸ Adams and Adams, 368.

£400 per year with a living-out allowance of a further £100.¹¹⁹ This compares with an average of £80 paid to chefs in the nineteenth century.¹²⁰ The chef at Petworth House, West Sussex, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, was earning £120 per year and had a significant retinue working for him including a roasting chef, a pastry chef and several kitchen maids and scullery boys. At the same time, chefs at Penrhyn Castle were paid £150 per year and were also assisted by numerous staff.¹²¹ While recognising that significant differences could occur among individual chefs, Day has produced a rough guide of the wages of various roles within the country residence household, using primary source material from homes such as Castle Howard and Nostell Priory.¹²² Table 6 outlines the more senior male members. The table shows the increasing relative importance of the chef in the early part of the twentieth century as reflected in his increasing salary relative to the other senior male employees, with only the estate steward earning more than the chef by that time. Gardiner associates this increase in relative salary with competition for the services of French chefs.¹²³

Table 6: Average Annual Wages for Various Positions 18th-20th Century¹²⁴

	18 th Century	19 th Century	20 th Century
Estate Steward	£40	£120	£200
House Steward	£35	£80	£100
Chef/ Man-cook	£30	£80	£150
Valet	£20	£50	£120
Butler	£10	£50	£70

As seen, such was the cultural capital associated with employing a French chef that the risk of poaching was constant. Poaching staff was “frowned on in polite circles” but a shortage of servants in the early twentieth century meant “scruples were occasionally overlooked.”¹²⁵ Social commentator and journalist Beverly Nichols notes:

Those were days when women really did ensnare each other’s chefs and kidnap each other’s head-gardeners and offer the most shameless bribes to each other’s ‘treasures’. (The word ‘treasure’ is charmingly period. In the upper classes it implied the perfect Jeeves or the ideal nanny. In the middle classes it usually referred to a housemaid or a cook).¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Burnett, *Plenty & Want*.

¹²⁰ Julie Day, “The Servant Hierarchy,” *Countryhousereader* (blog), 19 December 2013, accessed 02 July 2021, <https://countryhousereader.wordpress.com/2013/12/19/the-servant-hierarchy/>.

¹²¹ Evans, *Below Stairs*.

¹²² Day, “Hierarchy”.

¹²³ Gardiner, *Manor House*.

¹²⁴ Table compiled from information in Day, “Hierarchy”.

¹²⁵ Evans, loc. 2398.

¹²⁶ cited by Evans, loc. 2401.

When Anatole makes his first appearance in the Jeeves and Wooster series, he is employed by Bingo and Rosie Little, but by the end of the story, with Jeeves' intervention, he has joined the Travers household. As demonstrated, Wodehouse provides several examples of individuals trying to procure Anatole's services. Part of Jeeves' original plan is that by poaching Anatole from the Littles, the breach of etiquette would be such that Rosie would not allow Dahlia to publish her article in *Milady's Boudoir*.

Anatole's Voice and Appearance

The third gastronomic theme to emerge was Anatole's voice and appearance. Anatole features in four short stories and seven novels but appears and speaks only in one, *Right Ho, Jeeves*. Bertie reminds us that the chef learnt English while with the Littles and previously from the Brooklyn chauffeur of the Maloney family in Nice,

so, what with Bingo and what with Maloney, he is, as I say, fluent but a bit mixed.¹²⁷

Wodehouse freely admitted to taking inspiration from other authors, and the author Barry Pain likely inspired Anatole's voice. Pain was a comic writer and journalist, and a favourite author of Wodehouse. Both Landman¹²⁸ and Murphy¹²⁹ highlight the second paragraph of Pain's *Confessions of Alphonse* (1917), where the similarities in speech between Anatole and Pain's character, French-Swiss waiter Alphonse, are evident. With Gussie looking though the chef's skylight Anatole exclaims:

Hot dog! You ask me what is it? Listen. Make some attention a little,

while Alphonse demands:

My friends, listen. Make attention a little. I am a man that knows on which side is the buttered toast.

In *Right Ho, Jeeves*, Anatole gets so enraged that he resorts to his native tongue:

You think I like it? I am not content with such folly. I think the poor mutt's loony. *Je me fiche de ce type infect. C'est idiot de faire comme ça l'oiseau.... Allez-vous-en, louffier....* Tell the boob to go away. He is mad as some March hatters.¹³⁰

In discussing Wodehouse as a linguist, Bowen states that he had a good ear for French people speaking English and that if a linguist can be "someone with a phenomenal ear

¹²⁷ *Right Ho*, 201.

¹²⁸ David Landman, "Barry Pain, an influence on P. G. Wodehouse," *Plum Lines*, 13, no. 3 (1992), 9-10.

¹²⁹ Norman Murphy, *A Wodehouse Handbook: The World of Wodehouse Vol. 1*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: Sybertooth, 2013), Kindle.

¹³⁰ *Right Ho*, 202.

who likes nothing better than to play with how language sounds, and how to transfer that sound to the page,” then, she believes, Wodehouse qualifies.¹³¹

Wodehouse’s linguistic ability coupled with the inspiration derived from Pain’s Alphonse combined to provide the voice of Anatole, but where did Wodehouse get inspiration for his physical appearance? It is the same scene in which Anatole is first heard that his appearance is first discussed. Bertie describes him thus:

This wizard of the cooking-stove is a tubby little man with a moustache of the outsize or soup-strainer type, and you can generally take a line through it as to the state of his emotions. When all is well, it turns up at the ends like a sergeant-major’s. When the soul is bruised, it droops. It was drooping now, striking a sinister note.¹³²

Anatole’s moustache is referred to twice more when Anatole

threw another look up at Gussie, and did Exercise 2— the one where you clutch the moustache, give it a tug and then start catching flies,¹³³

and, later in the book, when

Uncle Tom made a noise like a cork coming out of a bottle, and Anatole, whose moustache had hit a new low, said something about ‘some apes and, if I am not mistaken, a “rogommier” — whatever that is.’¹³⁴

Earlier it was seen that Wodehouse used Escoffier’s *Le Guide Culinaire* (1903) to create the menu in the *Code of the Woosters*. James describes Escoffier as “clean shaven except for a rather bushy ‘Prussian’ (he would have preferred ‘French’) moustache, carefully combed but unwaxed, and his receding dark hair was beginning to grey,”¹³⁵ while Barr says Escoffier was “imperturbable, soft-spoken, and wore a carefully trimmed, professorial moustache. He was a small man, and quite handsome.”¹³⁶ Both biographers focus on Escoffier’s distinctive moustache, and given the influence Escoffier had on Wodehouse’s menus, it is probable that he based Anatole’s physical characteristics on the famous real-life chef (Figure 1).

¹³¹ Barbara Bowen, “P. G. Wodehouse Linguist?” *Connotations* 15, no. 1-3 (2005): 141.

¹³² *Right Ho*, 200.

¹³³ *Right Ho*, 201.

¹³⁴ *Right Ho*, 225. *Rogommier* is a French slang term for a drunkard.

¹³⁵ Ken James, *Escoffier: The King of Chefs* (London and New York: Hambledon, 2002), 169.

¹³⁶ Luke Barr, *Ritz & Escoffier: The Hotelier, the Chef and the Rise of the Leisure Class* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2018), 42.



Figure 1: Auguste Escoffier (Source: Musée Escoffier de l'Art Culinaire)



Figure 2, left: Thackeray's Illustration of Mirobolant (Source: Garval "Alexis Soyer", section 13)



Figure 3, right: Alexis Soyer (Stipple engraving by H. B. Hall, 1859, after E. Soer, 1843. Source: National Portrait Gallery)

Escoffier was not the first real-life chef to inspire a fictional chef in literature. William Makepeace Thackeray, in his novel *The History of Pendennis* (1848-50), based his character, the French chef Alcide Mirobolant, on Alexis Soyer. The author and the chef were friends since meeting in the Reform Club in 1837. Similarities can be picked up in details of how the fictional and the real chef dressed. Thackeray describes Mirobolant wearing "pantalon Ecosais, of a very large and decided check pattern,"¹³⁷

¹³⁷ William M. Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis*, 1848-50. Kindle, 114.

while journalist George Sala portrays Soyer wearing “impossible trousers.”¹³⁸ Figure 2 is Thackeray’s own illustration of Mirobolant, which recalls a portrait of Alexis Soyer (figure 3). Wodehouse read both Pain and Thackeray and regularly took inspiration from other writers.¹³⁹ As noted, Wodehouse was immersed in the dining scene of London, which in the early 20th century was epitomised by The Savoy, Ritz and Escoffier, so it is unsurprising that Wodehouse should model his French chef on the latter, at the time arguably the most famous and recognisable chef in England. This underlines once more Wodehouse’s keen ethnographic eye and ear for the gastronomic culture of Edwardian England, which he captures in his writing.

Conclusion

P.G. Wodehouse reportedly viewed his writing as “a sort of musical comedy,” and this may suggest that the author himself considered his work to be light and perhaps insignificant, but this paper argues the contrary. It proposes instead that Wodehouse is a true ethnographer who contributes to our understanding of Edwardian society, including its foodways, through meticulous descriptions of gastronomic practices. Wodehouse wrote of a society he knew intimately, namely the country houses and gentlemen’s clubs of the Edwardian England of his youth, replete with genteel social occasions catered for by French or French-trained chefs. Albeit with comedic light-heartedness, Wodehouse precisely depicted the high demand for French chefs in England during that time, and the social status not only of the chef themselves but by association of those that employed them. Not least, Wodehouse showed himself to be a connoisseur of *haute cuisine* and the culinary scene by featuring veracious details of food, foodways, and his portrait of a French chef modelled closely on the greatest chef-celebrity of his time, Escoffier. Wodehouse’s depictions of Edwardian society and foodways through his character, the French chef Anatole, are historically accurate and ethnographically rich and nuanced. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Wodehouse has indeed contributed to the cultural field of gastronomy. Finally, this conclusion invites a wider application of Ferguson’s concept of gastronomy as a cultural field to other, perhaps heretofore overlooked authors and texts describing food and foodways with ethnographic accuracy.

¹³⁸ Cited in Michael Garval, “Alexis Soyer and the Rise of the Celebrity Chef,” *Romantic Circles*, accessed 02 July 2021, https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/gastronomy/garval/garval_essay.html.

¹³⁹ McCrum *A Life*.