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Anachronism and innovation: A case of hybrid economies in the early 19th century

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Abstract

Anachronism is commonly viewed as a mistake or a sin in historical analysis, and thus to be avoided. This article argues that there is a place for anachronism when engaging with ahistorical fields, and that anachronism can be used as critical analysis. By way of studying the famous French chef Antonin Carême, and the way in which he utilized revisionist history to position his own *nouvelle cuisine,* the article discusses innovation management and industrialized logic in a historical context, and the way through which this can be utilized to critique simplistic notions of economic eras.

Key words • Anachronism • cuisine • hybridity • innovation management • revisionist history

Introduction

Keeping to a tradition of linearity in organization theory (cf. Burrell 1997, 1998), the study of history in management and organization studies has emphasized the way in which our socio-economic systems have developed, by showing how historic structures have created formations, tendrils and layers of atavistic knowledge still present in contemporary thinking. History in such views is simply 'that which has happened', and is thus resistant to more complex theoretical reworkings. Even though some would challenge this, pointing to examples such as Bruno Latour's famous argument about the historicity of microbes before Pasteur (Latour 1993, 1999), there is still much to be done regarding what could be described as the 'flow' of history. By this I mean the way in which history and historiography have been equated with notions of systems and statics, rather than the manifold ways in which a historical mindset may unearth surprising fluxions and eddies in what otherwise looks like unending progression (cf. Foucault 1972).

With this in mind, this article deals with the notion of anachronism, observed through a case of management history. An anachronism is usually seen as the enemy of true history, as it denotes a phenomenon that is conspicuously foreign to the time period within which it seems to appear – often illustrated by factual and often amusing errors in movies, such as the wristwatch worn by a Roman soldier in the Hollywood epic 'Cleopatra'. At the same time, anachronisms may serve to highlight our common

assumptions about what constitutes the new and the true and the good, as they so clearly work outside standard schemes of classification, and thus work against our 'order of things'. Further, as Daniel Graham (1988) has so elegantly argued, anachronism may be a productive and even necessary part of history, as any history:

> [G]rows out of a confrontation between the past and the present. The past cannot be historical without a contrasting present; the present cannot be historically conscious without appreciating the differences of the past. To do any kind of history, and in particular to do history of philosophy, is thus to engage in a certain kind of anachronism. And so, in order for Aristotle to become the father of the history of philosophy it was necessary for him to be the father of anachronism.(Graham 1988, 148)

The most famous case against anachronism in the study of history is probably the one presented by Herbert Butterfield in *The Whig Interpretation of History* (Butterfield 1965, see also Poe 1996), where he treats anachronism as a form of mental laxity among historians, outlining a series of reasons for the attractiveness of it. To begin with, anachronism enables the historian to cut through the existing problems inherent in any body of primary historical data, and thus makes it possible to create simple solutions out of irreducible complexity. Further, anachronism can result from the meta-theoretical striving towards certain types of answers, so that the love of generalization – in Poe's words (1996, 346) 'an elective affinity for certain historical projects' – drives the historian towards anachronistic shortcuts. Taken together, the ease with which anachronism can be applied and the way in which it is harmonious with the tendency to create 'Big Stories' out of the chaos of history are here seen as a temptation that historians can only resist with the greatest difficulty.

My take is slightly different. While I agree that the imposition of modern understandings onto the historical record is problematic, and that a general history must be aware of the trouble that such an approach can bring with it, this does not necessarily mean that all forms of anachronistic understanding are detrimental. Rather, I would argue that such moves may well help a project such as management and organizational history, as the very need for such a project lies not in mistaken views of the history of the field (such as in the case of Whig interpretations), but in the fact that the field is fundamentally *ahistorical.* What I would therefore argue is that management and organization studies does not primarily need a more thorough and stringent analysis of history, but rather a problematization of it in order to position history in the field. By emphasizing anachronistic themes, for example, I feel history can be better positioned as an integral part of the critical project, and a break with the mistaken idea that it serves merely as a documentary endeavour. By utilizing explicitly speculative ideas, the historical project can tentatively recast its relation to management inquiry, and also further play up the interesting dynamic between economic and speculative history.

Take the notion of there being at least a potential 'new economy'. There are a number of aspects that are routinely brought forth when discussing the various versions of 'new economy'-ness (de Cock, Fitchett, and Volkmann 2004). One of these is an empha-

sis on image and performance, another is 'innovation'. A third, general enough to get an 'economy' assignment of its very own, is the way in which experiences are viewed as a legitimate avenue of value-production (see, for example, Pine and Gilmore 1999; Postrel 2003). Further, such characterizations often interact with another aspect, namely the tendency to demarcate economies as eras, where the new/innovation/experience/whatnot economy takes its rightful place in a chronology that extends from rural through feudal and bourgeois to industrial and new. Similarly, the industrialized thinking, with which the post-industrialized is posited as a break, is normally viewed as starting with industrialization, thus tying a mode of thinking to a material circumstance. Thus we may unconsciously assume that moves reminiscent of Taylorism, for example, can only be found in a specific era, and that ascribing such logics to earlier eras would be a mistake. But this argument builds specifically on our belief that the original definition of the epistemic foundation of, for example, the industrialized era is correct, thus in fact fighting one anachronism with another and taking an ahistorical perspective insofar as this would posit history as fixed and already fully known. A serious historical analysis requires something more than sticking to predefined categories, and 'anachronistic' work may thus be a necessary part of critical inquiry.

Combined, these tendencies, one through which special characteristics are assigned to an economic 'figuration' (cf. Elias 2000), and one where such theoretical constructs are positioned as connections and ruptures to a perceived chronology of economic eras, effectively create edifices of economic reason that become highly immobile and autonomous – if an image belongs to *this* version of economy, it cannot belong to *that*. Picking a characteristic is, by logical necessity, a way to posit this same aspect as non-characteristic for other phenomena – at least if one wants to claim analytical interest in the said characteristic. The result: fixed illustrations. Claims of having isolated specific aspects as distinctive for a particular brand of economy – one that can be referred to in abstract terms, disconnected from specific examples – present us with icons of an age. This article will discuss a counterpoint to the dichotomy between old economies and new ones, an anachronistic reading and a sketch of 'chronologically hybrid' economies.

In the same way that Paul McGrath (2005) attempts a reading of knowledge-intensive firms by interrogating organizational practices in medieval monasticism, I am working with an assumption about how our understanding of organizing can be challenged by making unexpected connections over the barriers of historical eras. Just as Michel Serres (1982, 1997) has discussed knowledge production as taking place in the passages between disciplines, and has mixed and remixed insights from varying historical eras in writing about science, I wish to argue that economic activity should not be studied in the fixed forms of eras or 'isms'. This is also to an extent a way to approach the issue of hybrid forms in economy, as J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996) has explicated it – a way to discuss how different modes and tropes of economic behaviour intertwine into helices of uncertain lineage. This is not meant as one more layer of complexity added on to the quilt of theory, but quite the opposite. By discussing the problems of eras or epochs in economy, I also wish to point to the necessity of approaching such issues empirically rather than attempting to build overarching the-

oretical structures – and naming them. This naming, which often functions as the very foundation of identity, is not unproblematic; it can be used in strategic, and quite aggressively personal, ways.

Take a statement that is often bandied about in discussing the switch from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, namely the claim that value-production has changed from things to images, from commodities to symbols (see, for example, Baudrillard 1998; Lash and Urry 1994). Implicitly, such a claim would have us believe that image simply wasn't an issue in earlier epochs, that we can ascertain an economic development from the concrete to the ephemeral – branding, for instance, is often seen as a wholly contemporary phenomenon (see, however, Koehn 2001). This notion, though pleasing in the way it allows sweeping generalizations, can in fact be read as fundamentally ahistorical, being too crude to grasp the complexities of economy through the ages. What such a view hides is the very real fact that image and style have been present in economic life from the very beginning of organized economy. If we look to economic anthropology, classical examples such as the potlatch (Mauss 1924/1990) or the kula ring (Malinowski 1922/1978) are dependent on managing an image and the play of aesthetic values and style. Within the sphere of the market economy, world trade may very well have started from the business in spices and dyes, both representing luxuries and aesthetic frivolities. One could name a number of similar examples, showing that contrary to the usual implicit assumption of a recent paradigmatic break in the development of economy, issues such as style and aesthetics have been an integral part of the economy for a very long time (cf. Rehn 2004). In much the same way, we can argue that the disciplinary regimes that are now seen as quintessentially industrial have in fact been present in economic thinking since time immemorial (see Ezzamel 2004). Consequently, the questions of anachronism and hybridity present themselves in our inquiries into management history. This article will attempt to engage with these questions, by way of cuisine.

That food is a staple in any economy is so obvious that stating it seems naïve. Nevertheless, business scholars have rarely addressed the dynamics of food, this assumedly most basic form of economy. Particularly, the aspect of cuisine has received almost no interest at all (see, however, Rao, Monin, and Durand 2003), and while many have argued that image and the labour process are important in contemporary economy, the same elements have been crucial in the food economy for at least the last 800 years. With this in mind, the following sections will discuss a case taken from French culinary history where the separation between pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial becomes problematic, and which instead might best be treated as a distinctly hybrid economy. Such a hybrid will contain several seemingly anachronistic moves, for example where innovation management becomes intertwined with archaic practices, and where the image economy meets scientific management. Specifically by working with rather than against this, we might be able to problematize simplistic understandings of management and, indeed, of management and organizational history.

Anachronism in the Kitchen

An accomplished artist who thought that sugar-works were the acme of the architectural arts, who became rich by writing on his art and who died from manual labour, Antonin Carême (1783–1833) was by all accounts a man apart (Kelly 2003). Our story doesn't begin with him, however. Instead, inasmuch as it has a beginning, it begins with François Pierre de la Varenne (1615?–1678), the father of classical French cooking. It is of course impossible to fix the development of a cultural field to a specific individual, or the development of judgement thereof, to a specific year or even span of years. Medieval tomes discuss, in some detail, what constitutes 'good taste' in food and what doesn't, as does the *Satyricon* in its own inimitable way. Nor was Varenne the first famous cook. We know the names of several chefs in ancient Greece and Imperial Rome, and we have information about advanced cooking and cooks in China and India from the same time or earlier (Symons 2000). In modern Europe, the famed chef Taillevent predates Varenne by about 300 years. So both culinary judgement and famous chefs have been around for a long time. Why, then, focus on one or two particular individuals?

François Pierre de la Varenne became a part of the culinary pantheon by publishing *La Cuisinier français* in 1651. In itself the book is merely a cookbook, but it is also a remarkable feat of modernization. It presents French cuisine as it had developed up until then, but it also makes fine cooking something that extends beyond the somewhat cramped confines of the noble kitchen. It is written in language comprehensible to even an interested layman and many of the dishes are actually manageable without an army of assistants. As Willan (2000, 59) notes, it is a seminal book in that it ushers in *haute cuisine,* distancing itself from the massive banquets of medieval cooking (see also DeJean 2005, 111–12). Discussing things such as the preparation of vegetables and the basics of cooking, it is in a way the Renaissance of French cuisine. It also conspicuously shies away from the massive and ostentatious displays so popular in earlier epochs and introduces a kind of simplicity to the art.

We know only a little about Varenne as he died almost completely forgotten (see, however, DeJean 2005, 107–14). However, his magnum opus had a magnificent impact. Simply put, it became the standard work that cuisine was measured against. The statement made by the structure and choices present in the book – particularly about what was left out – affected judgement regarding taste immensely, and made cooking *à la mode* in France. Though Varenne wrote fairly little that would have been seen as inflammatory, as the developments taking place in Italy had already made the old medieval style of cooking unfashionable, his position as the focal point for discussions regarding French cooking obviously made the book controversial. *La Cuisinier français* was a book where choices had been made according to the specific culinary judgement of Varenne. In writing the book he had thus established a specific set of judgements, a primer in taste, and done so not as a medium but as an individual. Although such codifications could not be seen as absolute, the book still established that there was such a thing as a French culinary field and that the French could muster their own judgement when it came to food, rather than accepting the then dominant Italian logic. It also

pointed out that Varenne himself was part, even the leader, of this change. Whereas earlier cookbooks had, in effect and by necessity, been collections of recipes with little or no radical innovation, this new book established a paradigmatic change. In part this was due simply to the fact that there was now enough written on the culinary arts that a juxtaposition could be attempted. Further, Varenne hit upon a nerve by presenting his book as a celebration of a new kind of French independence, a clarion call for a specifically French taste and culinary judgement. This was, de facto, a new cuisine and the basis for a new kind of judging refinement.

As any introductory textbook on innovation management would have it, innovation is an invention that has been turned into an economic advantage (see, for example, Tidd, Bessant, and Pavitt 2001). To control any improvement or technological change (broadly understood), some kind of management must be marshalled. This has been traditionally understood as matching what new inventions can do with the way in which the market is prepared to adapt to them. As a result, in this discourse there has been a notable detachment of the product from the process by which it is managed, so that managing innovation is seen as something else than actually innovating. A vulgar version of this is the narrative of the genius inventor tricked by a cunning capitalist, told in a way that keeps a strict boundary between technology and economy. In such a view, the invention is an essence, and the managing of it is a transformatory practice through which the technological object is tied via a socio-technical network to a market. It also posits that the creation of technology and the creation of economy are separate issues. This is interesting insofar as the notion of innovations as important parts in an economy came to us through the notion of the invention (and not the other way around). If one reads Schumpeter's *The Theory of Economic Development* (1934), it is obvious that he posits the role of the manager as secondary, and that his hallowed entrepreneur is in fact an inventor. The exact role of innovation management thus stands as a contested area, not least because there seems to be no way to clearly delimit the different aspects of how an innovation is accepted in a society (cf. Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 1987). In the specific area discussed here, this becomes even more pronounced.

It is very difficult to say what counts as a new invention in cooking, as most developments are incremental and almost all can be understood only in the context of cuisine generally. Whereas strictly technical innovations can at least in part be judged in an instrumental fashion – what they do and how well they do it – the same does not hold true for *Jambon braisé et glacé à la Piémontaise* (one of Carême's dishes). This dish, which would probably not impress a modern gourmet, must be understood in the historical and cultural context within which it was served. To caricature a little, the creation of a new dish can only be done in two ways. On the one hand you can make a refinement of an existing dish from, for example, *La Cuisinier français,* and fit it to tradition, developing a new dish that works in the grammar created by a similar work. On the other hand, you can make a whole new dish, radically diverging from the set rules, and thus innovate outside established boundaries. We can refer to this difference as endo- versus exo-innovation, according to whether the innovation tries to conform to a set cultural practice or overthrow it. What follows is a case of radical exo-innovation.

There have been a number of cases where critique and passionate judgement have been utilized to create the truth of cooking. The French have seen a number of attempts, from the philosophical musings of Brillat-Savarin to the more rabelaisian Grimod de la Reynière, but there may never have been quite as absolute a character as Antonin (actually Marie-Antonine) Carême (Kelly 2003). A culinary genius, he saw himself as the saviour of cuisine. In his version of history, he didn't merely rejuvenate a field he saw as degenerated; he presented revolution and rebirth. Trained in a number of specialities, among them the art of the *patîssier* or pastry chef, he entered the culinary field with a fervour. And in the spirit of his age, he saw in cuisine a perfect marriage between art and science, and decided to take it to new levels of both. Accomplished in drawing after having studied at the *Cabinet des Gravures,* he started his major project by publishing two books mainly known for their elaborate illustrations of sugarcraft, *Le Patîssier Royal* and *Le Patîssier Pittoresque,* both in 1815, at a time when his fame as a chef was already well established. He also made his famous statement regarding the art of pastry chefs:

> [L]es beaux arts sont au nombre de cinq, à savoir: la peinture, la sculpture, la poésie, la musique et l'architecture, laquelle a pour branche principale la patîsserie. [The fine arts are five in number, i.e. painting, sculpture, poetry, music, and architecture, of which pastry making is the main branch.][1]

Although pastries are no longer a central aspect in our view of cooking, the importance of the *patîssier* was great. He was the creator of those grand spectacles of the set table, the *extraordinaires* or *pièces montées* [tiered cakes]. These intricate, towering setups were the foci of a setting, and Carême mastered them both in practice and in theory. They were, in the original sense of the word, follies. Fantastic, often rather gaudy creations that mimicked Roman pillars or an idyllic pastoral scene, they were used to present food and 'make' a table. They were normally placed at central places, with the most elaborate holding centre stage. Carême excelled in the creation of these *pièces de résistance.* In other words, he was trained in a subfield of cuisine where presentation and image were everything, and his first books are more works on aesthetics than on gustatory pleasures.

But this does not mean that he should be understood as being without substance. All accounts point to the fact that he worked excessively hard to master all the disciplines that exist in a major kitchen. Having first become a *patîssier*, he went to work for Talleyrand and learned the art of the *cuisinier* through collaborations with a number of the greatest chefs of the age. This process took about 12 years, in addition to his two years as an apprentice *patîssier.* He rose rapidly in stature and reputation during this period and, celebrated as the greatest chef of his lifetime, he was to be called 'the chef of kings and the king of chefs', a characterization that was later reused to describe Auguste Escoffier and which may also have been used in connection with Taillevent. With respect to the former part of this sobriquet, he would come to work and cook celebrated dinners for, among others, Tsar Alexander I and Britain's Prince Regent. He also, after finishing his apprenticeship, went on to his grand project, the development and codification of what is to be known as the *Grande cuisine.* This is, in its way, the successor to both medieval cooking and the *cuisine l'ancienne* that developed, in twists and turns, out of and as a reaction

to it. For Carême, this cooking of the 'ancients' was truly important, for it formed the backdrop to how he constructed his own culinary judgement.

Antonin Carême was in some ways the last of his kind rather than the first. Perhaps the last truly great chef who worked in private homes rather than as the proprietor of a restaurant, he was in a way part of a bygone age, the *ancien régime.* Aristocratic and elitist in many ways, he was not the democratic communicator one could maintain Varenne was, even though he maintained that his dishes could be tried out by any reader. Instead, his aim was loftier: to develop a true cuisine for the age.

> My colleagues can now see undisputed proof of the advances in nineteenth century French cooking for which I have been responsible. I do not claim that this new work should bring an end to further progress in the culinary art: craftsmen who are imbued with the true spirit of science will no doubt produce innovations; but it is my work that will have inspired them. (Carême 1833/1994, translation from Hyman 2001: 71–2).

And he did. He presented fish and fowl prepared in a far simpler way than had been the custom, emphasizing the natural tastes of the served food. He simplified sauces and the way in which dinners were structured. Further, he turned away from what he believed was an excessive way of spicing food and the tendency to enrich dishes with a profusion of trimmings. He also became famous. His *Le Maître d'hôtel français ou Parallèle de la Cuisine ancienne et moderne selon les quatre saisons* [The French Head Cook: Or a Comparison between Ancient and Modern Cookery, in All Four Seasons] was published in 1822, and *Le Cuisinier parisien* in 1828; with these he ushered in what he called 'modern' cuisine. Nevertheless, his greatest work, the magisterial *L'Art de la cuisine française au dix-neuvième siècle* [The Art of French Cookery in the Nineteenth Century], was to be his last. He died in 1833, the same year as the two first volumes of the work were published. His close collaborator Plumérey would finish two more volumes after the death of the master.

The Order of Tasteful Things

Regardless of what one thinks of the food and its critique that Carême presents, his grand project of a 'modern style' has a number of aspects that are interesting to note for a student of business and economy. What made him stand out was his highly structured approach to kitchen work. He created a code of best practice for kitchens which involved an intricate system of regimented work, reminiscent of Frederick Taylor's system but predating it by a full century. His kitchen was divided into 16 'stations', structured with a brigade of chefs, cooks and various assistants. Not only did this make the kitchen more efficient, it freed the head chef from a lot of the toil and drudgery, positioning him as a creator and overseer more than a *primus inter pares.* Although hierarchy in the kitchen may have existed since time immemorial, the cook has usually been seen as a manual labourer. Many of the finest early chefs, names such as Taillevent, Vatel and Menon, obviously worked more as managers and artists than as labourers, but the perception of them was

still that of the builder and constructor. By introducing structure into the organization, Carême seems to have tried to do through organization what he was doing elsewhere through text. The ordering of the kitchen was of course a way to make ever more glorious dinners possible, but it was also a way to codify the position of the chef. From having been something akin to a feudal lord, he became a professor in a laboratory or a captain of industry. The modernization of the kitchen occurs not only through increasing technological rationality, but through the way in which positions in the kitchen are symbolically linked through positions elsewhere in society. One has to keep in mind that refined cooking may have been one of the first spheres that was heavily organized. Excepting the Church and the State, the King's kitchens were likely to have been one of the most institutionalized organizations in medieval life. Whereas trade and industry were relatively fluid structures, comprised of small autonomous units, and larger organizations such as armies were assembled and managed on an ad hoc basis, the royal kitchen was a constantly operational organization with clear boundaries and an explicit hierarchy. In this sense, it is one of our first modern business organizations. However, the medieval origins of cuisine also made the organizational culture of major kitchens rather atavistic. Physical abuse and harsh working conditions were the norm until the 20th century (and in part this has changed less than one might think), and a certain primitivism still seems to reign in restaurant kitchens (see Bourdain 2000). Carême's restructuring could thus be seen as part of his overall project of making the art of cooking modern, scientific and ordered.

By arranging his kitchen into apprehendable units with clear connections between them, Carême could work on creating dishes without worrying about the complexities of preparation in the hustle and bustle of an organically organized kitchen. Growing up in an age which rejoiced in classifications and what must have seemed like never-ending scientific development, he is likely to have seen similarities between his kitchen and a place of science. The stations were his dissections of cooking, and the instruments (such as serving plates) he designed himself aided in creating the exactness the age idolized. Whereas our age tends to see innovative milieus as slightly chaotic and characterized by a creative disarray, this may in fact be a symptom of our age rather than something innate to innovation. For chefs in Carême's age, the usual milieu was one of confusion and flux, a sorcerer's den of boiling cauldrons, smoke and fire. The ordering of the kitchen, which to our age may seem like the introduction of that greatest enemy of creativity, namely Taylorism, might in fact (and Carême is very explicit in saying this) have been the way for cuisine to develop. If we wish to translate this into the vernacular of modern management theory, we could say that even though he was knowledgeable in the post-industrial value-production inherent in using presentation and image as important parts of his overall strategy, he was also well versed in Fordist production strategies. The difference is that this took place long before notions such as Fordism and post-industrial economy become possible.

Still, his greatest work may have been the introduction of an order of sauces. Whereas sauces in earlier times had been a question of individual preference and choosing from among a series of recipes for dressing different kinds of dishes, the scientific

mind of Carême introduced a *system.* Although his discussion of sauces can be slightly confusing for a modern reader as sauces in this age were not always the thickened kind we often associate with the word, he in fact established much of classical French cookery by rebelling against it. The *nouvelle cuisine* that predated his *cuisine moderne,* and which he interestingly often refers to as a *cuisine ancienne,* was wont to use all kinds of unthickened sauces, infusions of the kind that regained new interest with the 'nouvelle' *nouvelle cuisine* of the 1970s. Carême was reacting to the bread-based sauces of medieval times, and quickly redefined them as a classical idea which he broke with. He instead propagated the use of bound sauces and presented the notion of the 'master sauces' and their lesser variations, '*des grandes et petites sauces en gras et en maigre*' ['some great and some lesser sauces, both with and without meat'] (Carême 1833/1994, 287–402). This latter notion was a major development in cuisine, for no one had in fact created such an order of sauces. His Taylorism thus extends beyond the mere structuring of work and over into the structure of the gustatory aesthetic. Although his treatise on these matters also includes '*des ragoûts et garnitures'*[stews and garnishes], '*des purées de racines et plantes légumineuses*' [mashed roots and vegetables] and '*des essences*', we will here only look to that which Carême deigns to call true sauces.

> [J]e le répète, sans dépenser autant que le vieille cuisine, la cuisine moderne a toute la succulence désirable, et elle a bien plus d'élégance et de variété que l'ancienne. Je le répète sans crainte: la cuisine française du dix-neuvième siècle restera le type du beau de l'art culinaire. [I repeat, modern cookery, although less costly than the old one, holds all the desired succulence, and shows much more elegance and variety than ancient cooking. I am not afraid to repeat it: nineteenth century French cuisine will remain the emblem of the beautiful in culinary art.] (Carême 1833/1994, 291)

> [N]ous devons toujours marquer des grandes sauces en maigre, ainsi que vous le verrez bientôt, puisque nous voilà très incessamment arrivés à la cuisine du carême. -Vous avez raison, lui dis-je, car ces grandes sauces donnent aux petites plus d'onction et de nutrition: c'est par ces résultats que se caractérise la bonne cuisine. [We must always begin great sauces without meat, as you will shortly see, since the time of fast days is soon approaching. – You are right, I answered, because these great sauces give the lesser ones more unctuousness and nourishment: these outcomes are the characteristics of good cookery.] (Carême 1833/1994, 298)

In the system of sauces, there are four leading master sauces, and a series of lesser sauces. The four master sauces are the *espagnol,* the *velouté,* the *allemande* and the *béchamel,* emulsions that should be well known to any modern chef. Together these form the base upon which the entire system is built, and more than a hundred variations follow from them. These variations are structured logically, in a systematic way, and elegantly presented as the only avenue towards true gustatory pleasure. What Carême did, and which follows logically from his grand project, is codify their use, and through this he deftly incorporated a

number of developments into a notion of himself as the creator of the *Grande cuisine française.* Stating, more or less simultaneously, that he has found the correct way to think about sauces and that French sauces are the finest in the world (based on '*Mes voyages en Allemagne, en Bavière et en Prusse*' [My travels through Germany, Bavaria and Prussia]), he further made himself part of a national move. Both cuisine and Carême were specifically French and specifically scientific, making it hard to tell one from the other. *L'Art de la cuisine française,* his major work, was in these respects both a treatise on the scientific development of a part of the economy and a nationalist tract – and there may have been a specific point to this. For although it is the irrefutable judgement of Antonin Carême that created the modern style as the acme of culinary refinement, particularly in the view of Carême, his project was a more wide-ranging one. The systematization of the kitchen, the order of sauces, the created paradigmatic shift between the old and the 'modern', all co-existed as part of an enlightened project in the world, brought to the fore by the Revolution. Carême was the dawn of Reason in the kitchen, and thus a precursor to a wide range of developments in the economic sphere. The structure of sauces, their 're-engineering', was a microcosm of a rationalization that was to follow in most economic activities. In the new age of which Carême was a harbinger, sauces are far from an insignificant detail, for every part must be fitted under a system. And judgement was a way for this system to develop. There was no clear dividing line between rationality and aesthetics or between logical decision and judgement, in these cases, for both guided and created the other. Value-creation, in this perspective, was not something merely guided by culinary refinement; it was something that came into being according to the culinary logic – a logic that was both systematic and aesthetic, ordered by science and infinitely permutable.

Innovation as the Manipulation of History

Although it is a more or less incontrovertible fact that Antonin Carême did develop French cuisine enormously, it is perhaps more interesting to note *how* he did it. Hyman (2001) has in an insightful article referring to Carême's work as a '*Culina Mutata*', a mutation in the culinary culture. He also notes that in studying the development of cuisine, attention must be paid to the ways in which articulate chefs pass culinary judgement and further that:

> [T]he existence of a 'debate' about cookery in print and specifically in cookbooks is, in itself, particularly interesting. It underlines the role of gastronomic controversies in defining cuisine and associates the chef not only with manual skills but with conceptual powers as well. Food, even good food, is not just something one eats: one prefers the old school or the new, one articulates opinions. (Hyman 2001, 81)

The innovation management skill Antonin Carême truly excelled in was this, the art of articulating opinion. The main culinary encyclopedia, the *Larousse Gastronomique*

(2003) summarizes it thus: '[R]eading some of his recipes, one may wonder if he was concerned more with ceremony than gastronomy. In fact, Carême used money, political power, and social connections in order to enhance his reputation; indeed, he considered that only the great people in the world could appreciate him.' What set him apart, though, was the way he utilized vituperation as an innovative way to promote his own innovations. His writing was often vitriolic, and he seemed to delight in referring to his fellow cooks as dunces, degenerates or worse. Also, in realizing his big project, he was not afraid to generalize quite radically. The cuisine Carême proposed and presented himself as the originator of was in his words 'the modern style'. Such a notion is of course dependent on there being something outdated and classical with which this modernity can be juxtaposed. Problematically enough, which Hyman notes, this was not something that existed, as much as something that was systematically created by Carême in parallel with the celebrated *cuisine moderne.*

His 'modern style' was presented as not only a development, but as a whole new phenomenon, a pure form of cooking. As an innovation, this juxtaposition was significant. It is important to note that the notion of an innovation is usually perceived as a thing or an introduced process, something that can be treated as ahistorical or even breaking with history. The perspective here is more a relational one. What Carême presented were not inventions in any classical sense. He tinkered, he refined, he chose among options in taking things along a specific path. He did introduce a number of specific judgements, such as the correct way to set a grand table or the right sauce for a particular kind of fish, but he rarely *invented*. The issue is thus how he managed to turn his refinements into innovations. Although culinary criticism had existed before him, Carême elevated this to an art form, deftly mixing scientific rhetoric with an almost religious fervour with respect to gustatory sensations. In contrast, Varenne may have broken with the medieval tradition, but still incorporated parts of it and presented progression rather than revolution. Similarly, la Chapelle (an earlier major chef), who held a fairly high opinion of himself as a culinary artist, positioned his own contribution as refinement and rarified judgement, but not as the birth of a whole new era. For chefs before Carême, writing on food was a question of judgement and progress, but it was with Antonin that a whole tradition could be summarily dismissed in the name of culinary science. By evoking things in earlier modes of cooking such as an implicit impurity, crassness, lack of style, insufficient understanding, magical rather than scientific thinking and the like, he made every move he then presented, his very *oeuvre,* as an innovation.

Reading a cookbook by Carême is not entirely unlike reading the writings of Karl Marx. Whereas Marx trashed bourgeois economists, referring to them as sycophants and cretins, Carême's text is littered with phrases such as '*la jactance ignorante et prétentieuse*' ['their ignorant and pretentious gab'], referring to the work of la Chapelle as 'ridiculous' and calling other chefs 'charlatans'. His disdain for earlier epochs showed no boundaries, and every single aspect of his predecessors' dinners was presented as mistaken and undeveloped at best, barbarian and grotesque at worst. The developments he made were presented as almost Herculean, for he himself had lifted cuisine out of the swamps of the past. The old style of cooking, which Carême seldom

pinpointed in any detail, was in his description one where monsters lurked, where fish was made to taste like fowl and spices were used in peculiar and suspect ways. Carême's notion of *cuisine ancienne* was in many ways a discourse on corruption and pollution, for in a way that paralleled Douglas's (1966/2001) classic analysis of impurity, he focused on the ways in which old practices mixed things he believed should be kept apart. For instance, he railed against the way in which the 'ancients' used meat as a garnish for fish, thus creating what for him must have been a monstrous hybrid. He pontificated at length on the necessity of letting fish taste like fish, and explained how the earlier cooking did nothing to let 'discriminating taste' develop. He further attacked the way in which the same earlier cooks used spices and aromatics to create 'unnatural' tastes and thus manage the flavour of dishes. Where Douglas's analysis of *Leviticus* showed how notions of impurity were tied to phenomena having or acquiring characteristics across imagined boundaries of categories, so that an aquatic creature with, for example, the 'feet' of a land-dweller was seen as impure, Carême seemingly sought a similar purity in the area of cooking. A fish that was manipulated to taste like something else was not only bad cooking, it was against order and purity. It was, simply put, dirty, not the way civilized people behaved. Somewhat oddly, Carême saw this position as his invention, his doing, ignoring for instance Nicolas de Bonnefons who as early as 1651 promoted the very same purity (see DeJean 2005, 115) and still managed to be one of the ancients Carême so despised.

This badmouthing of earlier epochs, which Hyman (2001) traces in detail, can be seen as an integral part of the value-production of *cuisine.* There is nothing implicit in the notions of innovation or 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter 1934) that states that lying about earlier systems in order to introduce a new way to comprehend judgement and refinement could not qualify. Although many of the accusations Carême directed at the earlier chefs were patently untrue – his claim that he himself had introduced the switch from massive displays of food to more delicate and costly dishes was not only a lie, it was a blatant one as a similar move was already 100 years old – this is not necessarily a particularly valid point of criticism. Our moral objections to such behaviour do not disqualify it as an astounding success, for Carême's gamble worked. His contemporaries hailed him as a genius, and even today he is referred to reverently in most books on the development of *haute cuisine.* What he managed to do by juxtaposing his own notions of refined food with a made-up *cuisine ancienne* was to transform a set of principles into an innovation by making people believe in his judgement. The exact methods may have been somewhat suspect, but it is obvious that he was highly skilled in managing his project in a way that turned it into an innovation, rather than managing the innovation – this in itself being a problematic notion. What is important is that Carême managed the relation between the old style and his own new style in a way that made the latter something other than a mere development. By retelling the history of *cuisine* and presenting himself as a break within this history, he managed innovation into being.

The Case for Anachronistic Understandings

As Parkhurst (1998) and Hetzel (2003), for example, have discussed, the actions of individual chefs in history may seem marginal. However, these have affected not only their own time(s), but have also been constitutive of how the culinary field and national identities have developed, all the way to our own post-industrial age. Thus, the discipline and manipulation of judgement evident in the works of Antonin Carême has had an effect which might still exert a specific influence in the multi-billion industry that we now know as *haute cuisine.* This is not without economic interest. But what is more interesting than this is the way in which the case of Carême may be used to develop our view of management history, and the role of historical reflection in critical inquiries into management.

What I have tried to show is the way in which an anachronistic reading of history can be used to highlight certain aspects of how we tend to view it. By addressing, for instance, the ways in which a French chef in the 19th century can be seen as enacting a disciplinary regime we commonly equate with a far later period, we can gain perspective on what is actually meant by 'Taylorism', for example. Although it is clearly an anachronism to say that Carême was a Taylorist, as the scientific management movement came into being about 75 years later, we can still use such notions to problematize what we in fact think we mean by scientific management. In the same way, the brand management and manipulation of images Carême engaged in are not necessarily post-industrial, but they can still serve to temper the tendency to ascribe symbolic value production as a strictly and characteristically modern business model. In the end, I do not wish to say that Carême is either pre-modern, industrial or post-industrial. Rather, I claim that he was a hybrid, encompassing all these modes.

Several of the innovations he introduces – such as the factory-like structure of the kitchen and the structuring of sauces – have clear connections to the episteme of industrialization and managerial control. Other aspects, such as his zeal for self-promotion and his attention to the presentation of dishes, would seem to position him as part of the post-industrial 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore 1999). What this article has tried to argue, then, is that both these anachronistic interpretations can in fact be used simultaneously, as they both help us to break with static images of economic history as simple progression. Instead of presenting such a static image, I have tried to highlight the fluid and hybrid nature of history, where simplistic understandings of eras and development can be a crutch and a hindrance, and through this point, some of the ways in which history can be used as a productive and critical tool in management inquiry.

In a way, my anachronistic reading of this curious culinary case tries to stay true to the historical subject, as I am manipulating understandings in a similar vein to Antonin Carême. This may seem somewhat counterfactual, but it also goes to show that certain managerial skills now lauded as brilliant new insights were actually deployed in a much earlier age. Bringing this to light might, in its own small way, jolt us ever so slightly out of our complacent understandings of history. And if this can be done, anachronism may show a redeeming side after all.

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