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recipes, offering a great range of old English flavour combinations. There are some real winners, both for the grand occasion and the family supper (I have earmarked duck braised with turnips and green peas, red cabbage braised with sausage meat, and potted cheese for immediate consumption). Had the recipes been more economically laid out, we could have had more historical discussion, which I must admit I hungered for. But the author's desire to place these dishes before a new and, I hope, receptive audience is to be applauded. (The lack of accents on *Deja* is as the publisher intended.)

Francesca Orestano and Michael Vickers, eds.: *Not Just Porridge: English Literati at Table*: Archaeopress Publishing, Oxford, 2017: 180 pp., paperback, £20.00.

This is a collection of essays by Italian scholars of English that were the excellent outcome of a series of gatherings, hosted by the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of Milan, in the 'attic cells of a former convent'. The tone and language are refreshingly free of scholar-speak, indeed some of the pieces read like a sixth-former's essay, with narrative and laying-out of the facts to the fore. The literary figures discussed include Samuel Johnson, Jane Austen, Mrs Beeton, Dickens, Henry James, Arnold Bennett, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, A.A. Milne, Roald Dahl and Helen Fielding. There are occasional lapses in understanding of British habits (the account of Dr Johnson seems to muddle luncheon and dinner; I was not clear whether the author of 'Tea (and lots of honey) in the Hundred Acre Wood' was describing the right sort of malt extract favoured by Tigger), but the summaries of what their respective subjects think or do about food are of interest. One might question how much influence *The Origin of the Species* really exerted on the structure of Mrs Beeton's handbook; but be very amused by the account of Henry James's adoption of Fletcherism, the crazy theory put forward by Horace Fletcher that everything should be chewed innumerable times until the goodness was extracted and the fibrous material spat out. James was a slow eater.

Allan Jenkins: *Plot 29*: Fourth Estate, 2017: 252 pp., hardback, £14.99.

This memoir by the editor of the *Observer Food Monthly* has deservedly received rave notices. Although sometimes presumed a food book, perhaps because of the author's position, it is not that at all. It began life as a journal of a year on a north London allotment: its therapeutic value, the progression from seed to fruition, the cameraderie, the routine and the beauty. Biological diversity would be provided by accounts of periods spent on a London rooftop terrace (all in pots) and beside the North Sea on a plot of woodland in Danish Jutland. But what might have been a pleasing contemplation of the joys of gardening is subverted, but at the same time enhanced, by the progressive intrusion of the author's memories of a fractured childhood and an account of his present-day

efforts to untangle the facts surrounding his origins and his growing-up. These come in small spurts as his own discoveries are pieced together from fugitive recollection and slow reading of documents and files obtained from social service departments. Eventually, the memoir's pace picks up, to the exclusion of other matters. This structure is intriguing and intelligent. Allan Jenkins was in the care of the local authority and, together with his elder brother, fostered by a Devon couple until nearly the end of his schooldays. Although each boy had their ups and downs, he was the more malleable of the two and had the better outcome. This book is also a reconnection with and rebalancing of his relationship with his brother, now dead. The harrowing, or certainly affecting, nature of this life-story is keenly in counterpoint with what's going on on the land – therapeutic indeed. A deeply satisfying work, there is also a quotient relating to food and cookery: whether the approach of his foster-parents to growing and feeding, or his own memories prompted by foods, or his relating the allotment to the kitchen – these provide a sub-theme that will attract the reader. Wholly recommended.

Pamela Sambrook: *The Servants' Story*: Amberley Publishing, 2016: 288 pp., hardback, £20.00.
Pamela Sambrook has long guided us through the domestic thickets of England's country houses, whether in her *Country House Kitchen* (1996, edited with Peter Brears), or *Laundry Bygones* (Shire, 1983), *Country House Brewing* (Sutton, 1996), *The Country House Servant* (Sutton, 1999), or *The Country House at Work* (on Dunham Massey, the National Trust, 1999). In this most recent study, she delves the archive of the Dukes of Sutherland to give a detailed account of the domestic administration of Trentham Hall in Staffordshire during the nineteenth century. The Sutherland estates were among the largest in the kingdom, so there is also mention of Lilleshall in Shropshire and Stafford House (now Lancaster House) in London. It was of this latter that Queen Victoria remarked, 'My dear, I have come from my house to your palace.' Every chapter deserves praise, whether for the affecting personal stories of individual servants or for the grand discussion of providing food for the servants' hall, or for reflections on sexual misdemeanours or its general and crystal-clear description of the mechanics of administration and control. Really excellent stuff.

Anthony Warner: *The Angry Chef – Bad Science and the Truth about Healthy Eating*: Oneworld, 2017: 326 pp., paperback, £12.99.
It was amusing and instructive to interview Anthony Warner at the Dartington Literary Festival and to witness both his immense common sense and the ferocity of the backlash should he seem to challenge readers' fondest imaginings about the food they should eat. The book emanates from a blog which he has