

I always feared a misdemeanour discovered, a promise unfulfilled. In fact, her letters were more often a joy, replete with opinion, assertion and lines of new thought. She had the capacity to inspire – charmingly captured in Adam Federman's account of the close group of young local admirers that gathered round Patience and Norman at Spigolizzi. I feel sure, however, that Patience would have been irritated by the publisher's decision to quote her words with American spelling.

Peter Brears: *Traditional Food in Cumbria*: Bookcase, Carlisle, 2017: 412 pp., hardback, £20.00.

Just Lancashire to go and Peter Brears will have filled his quiver of studies of the cookery of our northern counties. He has already waggled his toe southwards in his work on Shropshire, and who is to say that he will not start reeling off the repertoires of foreign shires (foreign to his present abode at least, although his professional career in museums did begin in Hampshire). This *Cumbria* is arranged along the same lines as *Yorkshire* and *Northumbria*. There is, therefore, a liberal allowance of architectural and material culture to balance the recipes, the folklore and the social history, all of course illustrated by Brears' own fair hand. Legion are the dishes explained: porridge, crowdy, spiced beef, oatcakes and bannocks, charr – potted or otherwise, a portfolio of puddings, and all manner of celebration foods. The folkloric chapters on groanings (confinement), weddings, funerals, calendar customs and Christmas to name but a few are especially rewarding. The importance of Peter Brears' work cannot be overestimated: this is the first time that English cookery has been subjected to such close inspection. My dream, when doing Prospect Books, had always been to mastermind a county by county account of the entire realm, as Pevsner and his buildings. It was not to be, but still might be achieved. Give thanks in the meantime for Peter Brears.

Jonathan Meades: *The Plagiarist in the Kitchen. A Lifetime's Culinary Thefts*: Unbound, 2017: 176 pp., hardback, £20.

A high point of last year's holiday reading was this author's *An Encyclopaedia of Myself* (Fourth Estate, 2014, £18.99). We readers sat open mouthed (but dictionary to hand) before the spate of words: clever words, sometimes ugly sounding, often needing third-party confirmation. A Meades sentence can be recognized a long way off. We enjoyed the eloquent loathing of God, faiths and their advocates, Tony Blair, Sir Stafford Cripps and Edward Heath, the astounding and apparently inevitable mortality of his childhood acquaintances, and his near-perfect recall of surroundings and personalities way back to a summer holiday in Dartmouth when five years old. Bracing and invigorating, and full of informed opinion. His new cookery book is put out by Unbound, the crowd-funding enterprise mentioned in the last

issue. If the project raises sufficient dosh, the advance to the author should happily exceed a publisher's sober advance. Subscribers, or funders, get to see their names in the last pages of the work. Meades has not enjoyed the best of health in recent months, culminating in heart surgery. Yet when, by way of promotion, he cooked a lunch at his home in Le Corbusier's *Unité d'habitation* in Marseilles, it consisted of brandade of salt cod, a parmentier of duck confit and Agen prunes and a *rebarbe* – a mixture of Roquefort, cream, butter and brandy. Perhaps, like his old friends and connections, he has a death wish. Or a mordant sense of humour. The book certainly has the latter. And great, and simple (but still requiring a level of preparational devotion), recipes: strong flavours, their character not much adrift from that projected by Meades himself. Not one to mince words, there's an instruction or command on every page, and a wide-ranging sensibility that takes in more than just food. On the principle that there's nothing new in cooking, Meades enjoys taking from all and sundry (including his father) for his favoured way of doing things. The borrower's scaffolding is clipped together with plenty of quotations in support of, or musing on the rights and wrongs of plagiarism. The spice of prejudice and strong opinion, as with all of Meades's writings, is liberally scattered over everything. Whether the experience is deepened by the author's own photography is another matter. Deeply enjoyable.

Sarah Moss: *Spilling the Beans. Eating, Cooking, Reading and Writing in British Women's Fiction, 1770–1830*: Manchester University Press, 2011; 202 pp., paperback; £15.99.

This review has been some years in the delivery. So long, indeed, that the easiest way to buy the book is on the resale market. The hardback, first published in 2009, comes in at £50. Those of you who have enjoyed Moss's fiction and other works will know she writes with grace and intelligence. This, her first book, is product of her parallel life as an academic. I only came to it because I had been reading with riotous pleasure Susan Ferrier's novel *Marriage* (1818). One chapter of Sarah Moss's study is devoted to the food described in *Marriage*, with its knockabout satire on Scottish cooking and gross ridicule of fat gourmandizing male English parasites and their love of *haute cuisine* (among many other interesting features). Moss makes sensible commentary on this and other Ferrier novels (which, regrettably, are much more difficult to obtain in a modern edition) and devotes other chapters, equally clear and enlightening, to Mary Wollstonecraft and Fanny Burney. When critics approach food in a literary context, their jargon and conclusions are often impenetrable. This is not.

Jakob A. Klein and James L. Watson, eds.: *The Handbook of Food and Anthropology*: Bloomsbury, 2016: 480 pp., hardback, £115.00.

The anthropology of food involves research into food security, nutrition,