

Les Quinze Livres d'Athénée:
French Culinary Culture in the Making

by
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« DANS LES *LIVRES D'ATHENEE*, IL PAROIST
QUE LES HOMMES DE SON TEMPS, N'ESTOIENT
GUERES DIFFERENTS DE CEUX DU NOSTRE »

MICHEL DE MAROLLES,
« DISCOURS », *LES QUINZE LIVRES
DES DEIPNOSOPHISTES D'ATHENEE*.

As someone who inhabits 19th-century France, I venture forth in the land of 17th-century studies as a tourist, appreciative of the welcome in foreign lands and marveling at things that you natives have known forever. Like many tourists, I have organized my trip around food as a means of cultural participation as well as nutritional survival. We culinary tourists undoubtedly eat to live, but mostly, we eat to understand.

The past is not only a foreign country, it is a very different kind of country (Lowenthal 1985). Most obviously, its dependence on vestiges severely constrains our access to this country. We can never see Molière perform, so we must make do with reading his plays and recreating them on our stages. Performance raises a vast number of vexatious questions concerning authenticity, originality, and cultural transmission. What is the status of the texts we read and on which we base our understandings? How legitimate is it to assert that these plays of ours are also plays of Molière? Cuisine too is a performative art, absolutely as ephemeral as drama or music and just as dependent upon re-production and re-creation. We cannot partake of *la grande cuisine* at the royal banquet table or in lesser venues so we read about those *fêtes* and *festins* (see Wheaton 1983, chs 6-7), including the most famous one of all, the *banquet manqué* at the Prince de Condé's where, in Mme de Sévigné's much cited account, his *maître d'hôtel* Vatel did himself in precisely because of the *manque*.

That French cuisine is something of a master narrative within French culture has as much to do with what we read as with what we eat. The ephemeral nature of food makes cuisine absolutely dependent upon representation. From cookbooks to scientific treatises to literary and philosophical disquisitions, texts make cuisine possible. By taking food out of the kitchen and beyond the banquet table, culinary texts transform an ephemeral alimentary product into a perduring cultural phenomenon (Ferguson 1998). In France, one of the strongest kicks into the realm of culture comes from the many texts that invariably associate the joys of alimentary consumption with what Montaigne called, derisively, *la science de gueule* (“De la vanité des paroles,” I, 51)(1969, 362). Reading is very much a “*joie de gueule*,” one where intellectuality tempers, extends, and modifies the sensuality of primary consumption. We eat with our minds as well as our mouths, and culture kicks in when mind matters as much as matter.

I.

Three exemplary culinary texts suggest the range of the work of textualization in 17th-century France: first, the best known in culinary circles, La Varenne’s *Le Cuisinier françois* of 1651. With its 40-plus editions in 50 years (including translations *Le Cuisinier françois* was the most celebrated culinary text of the 17th century, a text that was all the more important because it inaugurated a period of striking productivity for French culinary texts (Flandrin, Hyman and Hyman 1983, 62-65; Hyman and Hyman 1997); second, a work I found quite serendipitously, *Le Pont-l’Evesque*, a wonderfully excessive “agro-gastro” poetic paean written by one Hélié Le Cordier in 1652 (see excerpts in the appendix); and, third, my primary example, the undeservedly neglected *Les Quinze Livres des Deipnosophistes* by Athenaeus (CE 170-230) translated by the abbé Michel de Marolles.¹

Written in the beginning of third century by a Greek living in Rome, this bizarre culinary compendium received its first French translation in 1680 thanks to the abbé Michel de Marolles. The banquet-narrative of what his first French translator appropriately calls an “*ouvrage délicieux*” fills over 1000 pages of mostly very

small type with culinary facts and fabulations, anecdotes and narratives. The discussions of how the Homeric heroes dined, lists of foods, dishes, ingredients, and tidbits of poetic, philosophical, and medical works relating to food and feeding cast *The Deipnosophists* as a compendium of the mores of an ancient culture (see Wilkins, Harvey, and Dobson 1995; Dalby 1996), customs for which, in many cases, this is the sole source.² Pierre Bayle, for one, was quick to express his gratitude: “Pour nous, qui ne pouvons plus consulter qu’une très-petite partie des Auteurs allégués par Athénée, et qui ne trouvons que dans son livre cent particularités curieuses dont il parle, nous regardons sa compilation comme un trésor très-précieux” (cited, Athenaeus 1789, epigraph; Cf. Athenaeus 1680, 1). Perhaps because most of the works that Athenaeus cites or refers to have been lost, this extended (not to say distended) text also stands as a literary and linguistic treasure trove (Cf. Gulick 1969, Jeanneret 1991).

Like any translation, however, and all the more so for such a colossal enterprise as this one, the first French edition of Athenaeus also attests to the period in which the work was translated. So that *Les Quinze Livres d’Athénée* points today’s readers as much to the culinary sensibility of 17th-century French culture as it does to the culinary mores of ancient Greece. The culinary culture that we associate with modern France has its roots here, in the writings about food that played a signal role in both at and beyond the court.

First, the translator, Michel de Marolles (1600-1681).³ Marolles is an intriguing figure, a minor player who turns up in a number of key places. An exceptional interest in the fine arts led to what seems to be his best known, or at least most reprinted work, *Le Livre des peintres et graveurs*, and to an extensive collection of prints and engravings. Purchased by Colbert, these constituted the foundation for the Estampes et gravures at the Bibliothèque Nationale today.⁴ But it is as a positively indefatigable translator that Marolles weighed in with his contemporaries: the abbé took on authors both sacred (Genesis, Daniel, the Psalms, Nahum, the Song of Songs, the New Testament, a verse translation of Revelation, the Epistles of Paul) and profane (Ovid, Petronius, Juvenal, Lucretius,

Martial, Lucan, Horace, Catullus, Persius, Statius, Seneca, Terence, Tibullus, and Vergil in addition to Athenaeus). He also wrote a discourse on the “advantages” of the French language, a work on Paris, a life of Hadrien, a treatise on epic poetry, a much reprinted breviary, and a history of mythology, another of the kings of France and of his own family, and two volumes of memoirs (1656-57). (*Les Quinze Livres* provides a partial catalogue of his works in prose and in verse, published and unpublished, as well as an engraving of himself!). Marolles’ language was latin, and, as his subtitle tells us, he worked from the latin translations of Noël le Comte (1556) and Jacques d’Alechamp (1612)(Vicaire 1890, Jeanneret 1991, 166). But he also translated Aeschylus and certainly implied in *Les Quinze Livres* that he also worked from Greek.

Marolles translated at a speed that is nothing short of vertiginous: in the *Discours* preceding his translation, he detailed the day-by-day progress from the 6th of August 1674 to the 11th of March 1675 (Marolles 1680, xliii). He can hardly have reread much, if at all, and while proud of his speed, he was well aware that it opened him to censure (Marolles 1680, xi-xii): “...tout cela ne paroitra jamais assez juste à ceux qui veulent pointiller sur tout” (xxxvi). Marolles chaffed at the universal acclaim for Vaugelas’ translation of Quintus Curtius’ *Vie d’Alexandre*. Any comparison would be fallacious for not only did Vaugelas spend thirty years translating “un petit Ouvrage,” a work made even shorter by virtue of two missing books, but he worked from two existing translations. To be sure, Monsieur de Vaugelas was an “honneste homme; il estoit modeste & judicieux, & faisoit bien ce qu’il faisoit; Mais cela n’a rien de commun avec ce que les autres ont composé” (xliii), meaning, obviously Marolles’ own, expeditious translations of a great number of long and difficult works of which *Les Quinze Livres d’Athénée* were the culmination.

Marolles was right to worry about the critics, who certainly did not mince words. It was, Chapelain asserted in reference to Marolles’ translation of Statius (1658), “un des maux dont notre langue est affligée ... que l’auteur a fait voeu de traduire tous les auteurs

anciens. ... toute la grâce qu'ils peuvent attendre, c'est celle du Cyclope d'Ulysse, d'être dévorés les derniers" (cited Bosseboeuf 1911, 182). Given the highly specialized vocabulary for the *Deipnosophists*, the foods, the fish and vegetables, the culinary preparations, seasonings and so forth, it is not surprising that later commentators on Athenaeus were even more severe. Lefebvre de Villebrune, who made another translation in 1789, dismissed the previous translator of the work that he entitled *Le Banquet des savans* as a "littérateur" who knew no Greek and was ignorant of just about everything Athenaeus wrote about: "Il ne pouvoit que s'égarer à chaque pas" (Athenaeus 1789, "Avertissement). (Villebrune pointed out that he was the first translator with access to proper texts). A 19th-century translator gave "l'infatigable abbé de Marolles" the final seal of disapproval: "Son mérite, comme traducteur, est connu, et il suffit de le nommer pour dire que l'ouvrage n'est pas bon" (Athenaeus 1828, iii).⁵

II.

Les Quinze Livres is symposium, but it is a symposium gone bulimic. The founding fiction is the meal to which a Roman citizen has invited a number of his fellows. The 15 books now extant refer to some 1500 works, most, of which are now lost, and quote from 800-odd authors (1991, 68). The banquet—3 meals actually—prompts and sustains the narrative mimesis—the *logodeipnon*, the meal of words, to use the neologism of the first compiler of the work.⁶ However, neither the meal nor the narrative is an ordered cultural production in the measured mold that French classicism and, subsequently, classical French cuisine have taught us to expect and appreciate. We are dealing with an orgy, not culinary but linguistic so that it is appropriate that Marolles translated Petronius's *Le Festin de Trimalcion* in 1677, just before the *Deipnosophists*. This gastronomy is a logophagy, a grammar as well as a literary text, and, as such, a vital contribution to Greek lexicography (Jeanneret 1991, 160-71).

What is so striking about this work, and where I make a connection to the larger place of cuisine in French culture, is that it clearly addresses a *mondain* audience. Marolles proudly proclaims

it the first translation into a living European language. (Not until 1854 is there a translation into English). *The Deipnosophists* was well known to classicists: a romanized Greek text was published in Venice in 1514; Marolles worked from the first Latin translation by Natali Conti (Noël le Comte) (1556) and the second Latin translation of Jacques d'Alechamp and Isaac Causaubon, first published in Lyon in 1612 and reissued in 1657 and 1664. Marolles made several overtures to the *mondains*, of which the most obvious is the importance he attached to verse. If Homer had written in French, Marolles assured his readers, he would have written nothing but rhymed prose (Marolles 1680, xvi). Accordingly, many of the narratives mixed verse with prose, particularly in those sections supposedly recounted by one or another of the guests at the banquet. The introductions, summaries and much of the commentary reverted to prose.

The expansive dedication offers another sign of the Marolles acute sense of placement in 17th-century elite French culture: “à Monseigneur le Duc de Montauzier Pair de France, Chevalier des Ordres du Roy, Gouverneur & Lieutenant General pour Sa Majesté en Normandie, Saintonge, & Angoumois, Gouverneur de Monseigneur le Daufin.” All the duke’s titles are listed, although by 17th-century standards the dedication is not especially florid. There is nothing close to Hélié Le Cordier’s elaborate dedication to Mademoiselle [la Grande Mademoiselle, la duchesse d’Orléans] in “Le Pont-L’Evesque” where the reiterated invocation of La Princesse structures the entire work.

The prominence of classical authors among his translated works marks Marolles as an “ancien,” and in this regard *Les Quinze Livres d’Athénée* served him well. In justifying his translation of Athenaeus, Marolles’ 35-page introductory “Discours” defined the public he hoped to reach and, by extension, his own stance vis-à-vis that public. Marolles defended Athenaeus, and therefore himself, against any violations of the *bienséances* that might be alleged, and he did so by invoking the authority of the ancient authors cited by Athenaeus. *The Deipnosophists* is surely the paradigmatic exemplar of the citation complex—almost noth-

ing is said in the banquet without invoking, and often citing at length, an authority for the practices, etymologies, or customs in question. One of the guests—Ulpian of Tyr—simply cannot hear a term without enquiring into its origins, usages, connections.

Les Quinze Livres d'Athénée also points to literary genres and cultural forms in vogue in the 17th century. The symposium is a venerable literary and cultural form (cf Vetta 1997), but the banquet is very contemporary in the late 17th century, and the salon even more so. For the gathering around the table in *Les Quinze Livres d'Athénée* recalls the semi-informality of a salon more than the formal banquet (Wheaton 1983). Athenaeus shares with La Bruyère an interest in types and a penchant for the portrait and the fable. Take, for one example, the discussion of *Parasites* (Athenaeus 1680 [Livre 6, V] 330-357): Today, a Parasite “s'appelle Compagnon de son ami pour prendre ensemble ses repas,” a remarkable switch from the original designation of the official in charge of distributing wheat: “celuy qu'on appelle maintenant Parasite, est quelqu'un seulement adonné à la bonne chere sans souci de quelqu'autre chose que ce soit.”⁷ But Athenaeus' prolixity is the very contrary of La Bruyère's concision. In contrast to the Greek “greedy grammarian” (Jeanneret 1991, 160-171) who gives us 27 pages on Parasites—surely more than we could ever think to want to know—, the classical French author devotes a scant page to Troïle (1962, 157-58) or a half page to the *gourmand* Cliton in *De l'homme* (1962, 336). Even Boileau's “Repas ridicule” (Satire III) is a model of brevity compared to Athenaeus' many and lengthy discussions of meals.

Then, Marolles voiced his concern about les Dames “que l'on fait juges des écrits les plus polis, & sur tout, celles qui aiment les choses galantes, où elles s'entendent parfaitement, ne feront pas apparemment beaucoup d'estat de tout cét Ouvrage. . . .” (xv). To be sure, no women are in attendance at the banquet, but women turn up a great deal in the work—and Marolles makes a point of directing the reader to the section on courtisans and other women “qui ont abusé si souvent de leur beauté” (xxiv).

Finally, Marolles did not forget the institutional and societal ramifications of his enterprise: the King, the court, and attendant institutions. The dedication is only the first sign of this larger context of elite society. The wretched excesses detailed in this show, Marolles opined, just how modest Louis XIV is in comparison to say, Sardanopolis. The Louvre appears as “un grand lieu pour la Bibliothèque Royale,” significantly enriched by his own contribution of prints and engravings (xxxiv). Marolles identified all the members of the Académie française, not by name but by flattering characterizations of their official functions (xxxiii-xxxiv).

III.

Food is what Marcel Mauss identified as a “total social phenomenon,” that is, an activity so pervasive in society that, directly or indirectly, it points to and derives from every social institution—religious, legal, and moral—and every social circumstance—political, economic, and aesthetic (Mauss 1952, 147). That food so penetrates the social fabric is the work of many factors. But pride of place, particularly in French culinary culture, surely goes to the texts that turn singular food events into a veritable cultural configuration and transform a physiological need into an intellectual phenomenon. It is these texts that issue our passports to the foreign countries of the past. What is so wonderful about the *Deipnosophists* is its extraordinary diversity, its scope, and the exuberance of the author. Athenaeus is the first, and still unrivalled “tourist of the table,” a foodie of incommensurate proportions who is truly Herodotean in his insatiable curiosity and unflagging enthusiasm. *The Deipnosophists* are what Herodotus might write if he wrote about nothing but food.⁸ Perhaps more than any other work, *The Deipnosophists* convey a sense of just how total a social phenomenon food is.

That the abbé de Marolles chose this text to translate in late 17th-century France is no doubt connected to what Chapelain perceived as his program to do (in) all the classics. There is one more connection here between the ancient and the modern, between the familiar and the unknown. On the one hand, the world of Athenaeus is exotic in all senses of the term; on the other, Marolles is

convinced that it is very like his own: “dans les livres d’Athenée, il paroist que les hommes de son temps, n’estoient gueres differents de ceux du nostre” (Marolles 1680, xxiii). For us, this belief in the fundamental coherence of human nature erects another signpost to 17th-century France, its beliefs and values and its cultural creations.

But I claim a closer connection still. *Les Quinze Livres d’Athénée* constitute an important element in what I call the textualization of a truly French cuisine, with its rules and regulations, but also with its instrumental works like *Le Cuisinier françois*, its literary works like *Le Pont-l’Evesque*, its ideology and its stereotypes. In the early 19th century the great chef Carême would codify French cuisine.⁹ But well the flourishing of a truly national cuisine (Ferguson 1998), *Les Quinze Livres* joined the many other stories that French culture tells about itself where the relationship to food is not only personal but cultural. Where French culinary culture stands out from many others is that the experience of food is simultaneously sensual, intellectual, and aesthetic. Michel de Marolles and Athenaeus together point us to the culinary culture that remains, still today, such a mark of France and things French.

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NOTES

¹ Of the 15 books, only summaries exist for books 1, 2 and part of 3, 11, and 15. See C. Gulick (1969, 1: vii-xxi). Its documentary value leads Gulick to claim that “in some respects it is the most important work of later antiquity” (1: xv).

² The full title gives a sense of the scope of the work as well as the claims of the translator: *Les Quinze Livres des Deipnosophistes d’Athénée de la ville de Naucrâte d’Egypte, Ecrivain d’une érudition consommée, & presque le plus sçavant des Grecs. OUVRAGE DELICIEUX. Agreeablement diversifié & rempli de Narrations sçavantes sur toutes sortes de matieres & de sujets. Traduit pour la premiere fois en François, sans l’avoir jamais esté en quelque Langue vulgaire que ce soit sur le Grec Original, apres les Ver-*

sions Latines de Natalis Comes de Padouë, & de Jacques d'Alcham de Caën Medecin fameux.

³ See Bosseboeuf, *passim*. Marolles was buried in the original Saint-Sulpice where he was also honored with a plaque. A visit in 1998 turned up no trace of either tomb or plaque.

⁴ A key in “De la mode” relative to Démocède, the collector of estampes, particularly those of Jacques Callot, is given as François-Roger de Gaignières, the abbé de Marolles, or Quentin de Lorangère (La Bruyère 1964, 395, nt 1). But the description is a perfect fit for Michel de Marolles, the abbé de Villeloin, who was not only an avid collector of prints, and notably those of Callot, but also wrote verse captions for an edition of Callot.

⁵ Not that Lefebvre de Villebrune’s version fared much better: “Les savans ne font aucun cas de cette traduction, qui est en effet très défectueuse, et fourmille des contre-sens les plus grossiers” (Athenaeus 1828, iii). He justifies his own translation as a “lecture agréable au savant, et même à l’homme du monde,” the best Greek-Latin edition and even the Villebrune translation being exorbitantly expensive (Athenaeus 1828, iv).

⁶ “L’ARGUMENT DE TOUT L’OUVRAGE, tiré du premier, ou tout au plus des trois premiers Livres: Car il ne se trouve presque rien icy de tout ce qui se lit dans les autres, d’où l’on peut aisement croire qu’il est imparfait.

L’auteur du Livre, ou celui qui en est comme le Pere, c’est à dire ATHENEE, l’adresse à Timocrate. Son titre est des *Deipnosophistes*, pour dire le Banquet des Sages; Il y feint que Laurent Citoyen Roman homme de qualité autant qu’il estoit plein d’esprit & comblé de biens, avoit invité chez luy à prendre un grand repas, des Personnages sçavans en toute sorte de litterature, & de belles connoissances.

Dans le Festin qu’il leur fait, il semble n’oublier rien de tout ce qui se peut imaginer de plus rare, de plus recherché, & de plus curieux, pour le rendre agreable & magnifique; ce qui luy donna sujet de parler d’une infinité de choses diverses. Là donc, on s’entretient de la nature des Poissons, & de la maniere dont on se

sert pour les bien apprester. On y explique divers termes qui sont en usage pour parler de toutes sortes d'Huiles, & de tous les Animaux qui sont connus sur la terre. On n'y oublie pas les noms de ceux qui en ont écrit l'Histoire, non plus que des Poètes & de tous les autres qui ont traité des Instrumens de Musique, dont la variété est merveilleuse. On y parle des Jeux, des Vaisselles, des Bassins de toutes sortes d'especes, des Vases, & des Coupes à boire. On y discourt de l'Opulence des Roys, de la grandeur des Navires, & d'une infinité d'autres choses qu'il seroit trop long de reciter par le menu, en quoy je ne pense pas aussi qu'un jour entier pust suffire.

Dans la suite du discours, on dépeint un Festin somptueux; Et pour l'æconomie de l'Ouvrage, elle est proportionnée à celle du Banquet. ATHENEE, comme celuy qui en est le véritable Dispensateur, s'y fait admirer dans toutes les parties qui presentent à l'esprit des Images agreables. Et, s'estant appliqué avec un soin merveilleux à bien parler, comme faisoient les Orateurs, qui de leurs temps s'en acquitoient si dignement dans Athenes, apres s'estre vaincu soi-mesme en quelque sorte, il a montré comme par degrez aux choses qu'il exprime avec beaucoup d'élégance dans tout l'Ouvrage.

Les Deipnosohpistes, ou les Sçavans invitez à ce Festin, furent...." (Athenaeus 1680, 1).

⁷ A century later, Mercier picks up the discussion of men who "used to be called parasites" (1994, 1: ch lvi, "Les dîneurs en ville," 150-53), not surprisingly, given the interest in gastronomy characteristic of the time, a reference to Athenaeus turns up in the early 19th century, "Le Glouton," "conte tiré d'Athénée" (*Gastronomiana* 1816, 46).

⁸ In the insatiable appetite for wonder and new experience of "tourism" the classicist James Redfield (1985) sees the essence of the Herodotean approach to history. Athenaeus is Herodotus gone over the top, with very little of the order, the sense of proportion, and the encompassing argument that makes *The Histories* such a monumental work.

⁹ Other things being equal, in this context one can see Carême as something of the Malherbe of French cuisine. Author of the mo-

numental *L'Art de la cuisine française* (1833) Carême was highly conscious of the foundational nature of his work: “Enfin Carême vint, et le premier en France/Fit sentir dans les plats une juste cadence/ D’un mets mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir,/ Et réduisit la Muse aux Règles du devoir”(With apologies to Boileau-*L'Art poétique*, 1674, chant 1). It is noteworthy that Brillat-Savarin (1839, 343) proposed a tenth muse for the joys of gastronomic taste, to be known as Gastérea.

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APPENDIX

LE PONT-L'EVESQUE : poeme dedie a Mademoiselle / par le sieur Helie Cordier

A Paris : Chez Charles de Tunes ..., 1662. 14 chants: chant 5 - les fruits, ch 6-le cidre, chant 8-les poissons, chants 11-12 le fromage; 55 strophes d'octosyllabes

CHANT SIXIESME

Le vin que tout le monde loüe
Rend l'esprit guay, ie te l'avoüe,
Mais tu te doibs représenter,
Quelle est sa qualité plus digne;
Et que s'il te fait tant chanter,
C'est ainsi que chante le Cygne.

CHANT ONZIESME

Pour faire voir que nostre Ville
Possede une terre fertile
Tant dehors, que dedans encor,
C'est qu'au champ de ses armoiries
Cette Vache s'y void en or,
Que représente nos prairies.

.....

PRINCESSE daignez me souffrir
Puisque ie doy tout vous offrir
Icy que ie vous represente
Le PONT-L'EVESQUE en racourcy;
S'il vient d'une terre plaisante
Il est délicieux aussy.

CHANT DOUZIESME

Pres les lieux de sa naissance
Pour venir à la connoissance
De ce Fromage de renom,
Il faut qu'aux Pays plus étranges
Sous les lumieres de son nom
Je fasse éclatter ses loüanges.

...

Ce Pays peut-il témoigner
Ou mieux par figure enseigner,

L'obeissance à la couronne,
 Du commencement à la fin,
 Que par le fromage qu'il donne,
 Portant l'Image d'un Dauphin?

...

Ainsi le Pays, sous nos Roys,
 Du Fromage a chanté leurs loys,
 Et Puis étant à Vous PRINCESSE
 Il prit la forme d'un Croissant,
 Pour montrer que de Vôtre ALTESSE
 Nos biens vont toujourns en croissant!

Pour marque que tout est à vous,
 Que par vous nous respirons tous
 Puisque par le coeur on respire,
 Car nos sens ne sont pas trahis
 Il le fit en Coeur, pour vous dire,
 Vous avez le coeur du Pays

Quoy que ces Coeurs soient de Fromage
 Ils n'ont point le desavantage
 Qu'ont certains coeurs de l'Univers,
 Dont on parle en si mauvais termes
 Qu'ils passent pour mous, & pervers,
 Au lieu que les nostres sont fermes.

Fromage avec raison par tout
 Prenant de la partie un tout,
 PONT-L'EVESQUE chacun t'appelle
 De ton nom seul, tout est instruit,
 En toy cette partie est telle
 Qu'elle fait pour le tout, du bruit.

Voyla son nom & sa figure,
 Voicy son aymable nature,
 Au coeur il a tant de valeur,
 Qu'au dehors il l'a manifeste;

Une si loüable couleur,
Est la consequence du reste.

Il est comme gris, demy-bleu,
Et marqueté de rouge un peu
Signe que sa substance est bonne,
Et que de l'Art il tire un sel
Aussy bon que Nature en donne
Dans nostre herbe, un universel.

Il n'est point d'une odeur mauvaise
N'y d'une plûre qui déplaïse;
Des autres il n'a point le fart
Tout le monde également l'aime
Car il est fait avec tant d'art
Que jeune ou vieux, il n'est que cresse.

.....

Encor qu'il soit le PONT-L'EVESQUE
Il ne répond point à l'Evesque;
N'equivoquons rien, toutefois
Il est d'une paste si douce
Qu'on le peut presser sous ses doigts
Sans répondre jamais au poulce.

Bien que tout Fromage soit fait
De l'humeur terrestre du laict,
Et partant qu'il nuise à la vie,
Celuy-cy par un goût si doux,
Montre, que de melancholie
Il contient, & fait moins que tous.

Celuy d'Auvergne, & de Hollande,
Et d'autres dont la poincte est grande,
Font vois qu'ils sympatisent bien,
A la noire melancholie
Qui bien souvent ne sert à rien
Qu'à nous faire alterer la vie.

.....

Si ce Fromag est tout de crème
 S'il est au de là du suprême
 S'il sort de terre, & mont aux Cieux,
 S'il est fait tout à la Divine,
 S'il est rendu le mets des Dieux
 C'est qu'un pareil Esprit l'affine.

Enfin de fromage à plaisir
 Pour satisfaire un beau desir,
 Appetit d'Esprit & de l'ame;
 Est fait d'un Esprit tout charmant
 Epris d'une celeste flâme,
 Puisqu'il est faict d'un saint Amant.

Quoy que le mien, Grande PRINCESSE
 Que j'ose offrir à Vôte ALTESSE
 N'aproche pas du mets des Dieux;
 Mes vers n'étant pas leur langage,
 Si vous jetez dessus, les yeux
 Je me vante d'un bon Fromage.

...

Tu ris, quand le BRIE est confus
 Et des dédains & des refus,
 Qu'il souffre même en sa patrie;
 Sa confusion le rend blanc;
 Quand, on dit, laissons là ce BRIE,
 Le PONT-L'EVESQUE est bien plus franc.

.....

Tu te rends si recommandable
 Parmi les appas de la table
 Que, si l'on te laisse vieillir,
 On Scait que tu deviens si rare,
 Que tu te fais bein recueillir
 Et donner d'une main avare.

Tu tiens dedans ta nouveauté
Aux Dames le goût enchanté,
Car avec le sucre & la crème
Tu rends un mets si délicat
Que le dégoût en prendroit même
Assez pour en manger le plat.

.....

PONT-L'EVESQUE parlant sur tous,
Crois-tu pas être des plus doux
Puisque tu plais à qui te touche?
Il faut que tu sois fait du Ciel
Pour croire entrer dans une bouche
Où n'entre & ne sort que du miel.

Acceptez-le grande PRINCESSE,
Avec plus de délicatesse
Que n'ont tous ceux de l'Univers;
Et quoy que sa douceur charmante
Ne paroisse pas dans mes vers,
C'est cette douceur que je chante.

.....