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Carl Gustav Tessin and Culinary Considerations

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Abstract

One of the challenges of my work is to find pertinent criteria to measure the reception of some aspects of French culinary art in Sweden during the second half of the eighteenth century and beyond. My study is limited to Stockholm and some countryside mansions and castles owned by nobles who were intimate with the royal Court.

I am focusing on diplomats but also on food professionals who moved to Sweden and who can be called “passeurs” or “go-between”. I will focus on the Francophile Count Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695-1770) and especially his purchases when he was an “envoyé extraordinaire” in France between 1739 and 1742. Although it is quite a descriptive work, it seems to offer an original in-depth analysis of the circulation of goods.

KEYWORDS: 18th century, food studies, cultural history, anthropology, diplomacy

Carl Gustaf Tessin & Culinary Considerations

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Sweden is a country in the Northern and frozen periphery of Europe. The country is made very distant from France by geographical barriers. Eighteenth-century Sweden remains scarcely studied by outsiders. Its historiography is far from abundant. In 1980, the Swedish historian Carl-Axel Gemzell stated: “The great geographical distances and the language barrier explain why Scandinavia and Scandinavian history bear a somewhat exotic stamp in France” (239-256). Reused recently in an article on the Scandinavian historiography in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this quote is still topical (Purchasse & Schnakenbourg, 2007: 7-12). One of the challenges of my work is to find pertinent criteria to measure the reception of some aspects of French culinary art in Sweden during the second half of the eighteenth century and beyond. My study is limited to Stockholm and some countryside mansions and castles owned by nobles who were intimate with the royal Court.

I am focusing on diplomats but also on food professionals who moved to Sweden and who can be called “passeurs” or “go-between”, because they are responsible for introducing one culture to another. This project anchors my work within the framework of the few existing studies concerning the relations between the two countries (See, for instance, *Le Soleil et l'Etoile du Nord, La France et la Suède au XVIIIe siècle*: 1994) and they are integrated in the studies of what is called ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’, a binary notion increasingly challenged because it revolves around the depiction of big cities like Paris or London. Yet, different levels of comprehension have to be taken into account. First, it is important to understand how people from the North perceived themselves and were perceived by the French (See Schnakenbourg: 2012). Indeed, Stockholm was very far from Paris and perceived from both sides as a remote and far away place. In January 1768, Clas Julius Ekeblad jots down the following report in his diary: “Ajent appris que j'étois Suedois, ils me demanderent si dans notre pai nous ne trouvions jamais des sauvages de l'Amerique car selon eux La Suede etoit une des isles de l'amerique, si nous étions chretiens, et tent autres betises de la sorte” (Wolff 2007: 159). In 1761, the Swedish traveller Ferner reported on the questions by a Parisian:

Mme Tournière me demanda si l'on avait du beurre et du fromage en Suède, si l'on y mangeait de la viande fraîche; car elle croyait qu'il n'y avait pas de bétail, mais qu'on y envoyait de la viande salée de l'étranger, si les gens distingués portaient la perruque et se poudraient, si l'on y buvait du café, si l'on avait des voitures couvertes, etc., ce qui révéla son ignorance et sa prédilection pour sa patrie qu'elle considérait comme la tête du monde entier. Je répondais avec autant de sel que le permettait le respect de son sexe, en disant que j'étais heureux d'être renseigné d'une façon si facile de ce que les Français pensent en général des autres nations. (Åke Grafström 1964: 8)

Food is much more than a daily act and, in the 18th century, the table's distinction was increasingly associated with the mind but obviously, for this French woman, Sweden was still far off from these refinements, even doubting that basics products such as butter and cheese were to be found in the Nordic kingdom. This is without even mentioning coffee, perceived as a fashionable beverage. (Mousseaux, 2015). To go further than the fanciful picture of this lady - yet with a supposedly educated background - this example leads us to recall, if not question, the importance of food in the popular imagination and construction of identity.

I will focus on the Francophile Count Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695-1770) and especially his purchases when he was an “envoyé extraordinaire” in France between 1739 and 1742. Although it is quite a descriptive work, it seems to offer an original in-depth analysis of the circulation of goods. The Count's father-in-law, the Count of Sparre, was an ambassador at the Court of Louis XIV, and

he identified as much with the French as with the Swedes. It is common knowledge that Tessin played a great role in the pro-French party, the Hats, formed by people from the Court and members of the high aristocracy. The Hats were sometimes referred as the “Nordens fransmän”, or “French of the North”. Besides, French connections were indicative of one’s privileged status as a result of refined education including the prerequisite of speaking and writing properly in that foreign language. Most of the Count’s writings are in French: “Pourquoi est ce que je n’écris pas toutes mes drogues en suédois? C’est que j’ai plus de modèles en François. Je suis trop paresseux pour frayer mon chemin: il me faudroit façonner des phrases, et peut- être créer des mots” (Åkerö-dagbok L82:1:3). More than two hundred and fifty years later, a lot of words used by the Count and many others related to the culinary field are almost untranslatable or barely approximated in English.

Tessin was often amused by the lack of knowledge in French displayed by some of the people he encountered. He made fun of some Dutchmen: “Le Gouverneur de Messieurs de Stohlberg [...] fut une demie heure a table a demander un coffre, avant qu'on ne put comprendre que c'etoit a des gofres, ou gaufres, car je ne sais comment cela s'ecrit, qu'il en vouloit. Je leur ai de l'obligation d'estropier ainsy le François, car sans eux que vous ecrire?” (Proschwitz 1983: 59). His servant’s blunders amused him because they went against French culinary etiquette:

Roth est moins Francisé que jamais. Voicy quelques uns de ses traits. Il n’y a que deux jours que revenant de la Chasse, il nous dit qu’il avoit tué neuf perdreaux y comprises Dixip Cailles. [...] Madame la Princesse de Lygnes Luy reprochant un soir a souper qu’il coupoit un Dindon à l’allemande: Il s’en trouvat tres, mais tres, scandalisé, et nous dit apres: si cela n’avoit pas été dans la maison de M. le Comte je sai vraiment bien ce que j’aurois repondu. Et quoi dimes nous en Chorus ? J’eusse repliqué, nous fit il. Non en verité Madame je l’ai appris en France. Où trouvés vous une tete plus digne de Calotte? (Proschwitz 1983: 111-112)

This anecdote demonstrates that cutting meat properly way was more than an ordinary task, and according to Grimod de la Reynière (1758-1837), often viewed as one of the fathers of culinary criticism, it was an art. Published for the first time in 1808, a full chapter of his famous *Manuel des Amphitryons* is dedicated to this question. Besides, the author remarks with some sadness that this mastery had lost prestige.

Tessin's letters were often punctuated with picturesque stories, probably for the delight of his readers from Stockholm. Obviously, French inns and the food that was served there did not always satisfy him:

Vous connoissés en tout cas le tourbillon de la Cour: Voicy ce qui m’y arrive et sur la route : Dabord Essone, ou au sortir de mon petit Cabinet doré, Monseigneur de Flemming nous mit Pensionnaires chez une telle Madame d’Effilé: Mouton coriasse, fricassée a jeter aux chiens, Levraut a se bouger le nez, Creme a l’œuf : c’est tout. Le lendemain cette bonne Nourrice me demanda: si j’étois content ? Avec Pretres et Vieilles, point de querelles: Tout a été bon a quatre plats prés; Postillon fouette! Et nous voilà a Fontainebleau [...]. Envoyés moy je vous prie du strömling, assez pour le Cardinal, et une bouchée pour moy, renfermés le reste dans votre Lyre pour ne le pas perdre de veüe. Je voudrois bien encore de la viande de Rennes, gros comme le nez du Baron Oxe. N’y a-t-il rien de plus? (Proschwitz: 114-115)

The Count knew the art of storytelling but the evocation of this adventure with an exotic taste also made him reminisce his country. The culinary anecdote was a chance to mark his identity. The strangeness of French life did not make him forget the familiar pleasure of a red herring or a piece of reindeer meat. It is not so surprising that taste emerges as an important factor in the definition of identity and otherness (See Brulotte 2009: 25). However, this notion of French and Swedish identity might be used carefully because, as advocated by Montaigne and quoted by Serge Gruzinsky: “Un

honnête homme, c'est un homme mêlé” (2001: 1-19). Identity is a plurality, unfolding in time and space. Nevertheless, Tessin reasserts his faithfulness to his prince and to his country on June 29 1742 while musing upon some French potential: “Nul autre engagement ne me lie que mon Amour pour ma Patrie: J'y sacrifierai mon sang, s'il le faut; Et ce sang sera pur Suedois: Ce n'est pas une parade que je fais icy, je me parle a moy meme: Je ne suis rien moins que François, dès le moment qu'on me prouvera une meilleure convenience pour mon Prince et mon Païs” (Proschwitz 1983: 336).

If the Count was asking his wife to send some reindeer meat to France, he was also sending to Sweden numerous parcels during his entire Parisian stay. Because of their size, a lot of packages were carried by sea freight usually leaving from Rouen. Alternatively, they were travelling by post through Hamburg. It is important to remember that boats were able to leave the port during the suitable season, and only if the weather allowed it. Thus Carl Fredrik Scheffer addresses a letter to Tessin on October 7, 1746, stating that: “Il me tarde bien de voir en pleine mer tout ce qui est à Rouen depuis longtems. Jamais les occasions pour Elsenour ou Stokholm n'ont été si rares que cette année” (Heidner 1982: 88). Tessin drew up exhaustive lists of all the goods to be sent to Sweden. These documents are still available for consultation at the Royal Library (KB) in Stockholm. The source consists of an elegant book bound in green morocco leather. Art historians interested in the countless and ruinous art purchases of the Count, who considered himself as a victim of “tableaumanie”, have already studied these lists (Roland-Michel 1987: 26-28). However, among these innumerable paintings and adornments ranging from a marble chimneypiece to wigs, dolls, seeds for the garden, clothes and beauty spots, the Count meticulously listed the foods and books he sent home. As a result, this apparently dry list which was not written to be read by someone else other than the Count himself or his family turns out to be stimulating material to reflect on consumptions of foreign goods and how these purchases can be linked to the question of identity and representation (See Almeida-Topor 2006).

Before introducing eatable goods, a few words on another kind of *passer*: books about cuisine. Books have always been great travelers. (Varry 2010). Finding traces of these cookbooks in inventoried libraries is interesting. Indeed, if they did not necessarily have a direct impact on cuisine, they proved that there was an interest in French cuisine. There is also an engaging link between the “bouche parlante” and the “bouche goûtante” for the gourmet readers who could exchange their knowledge of food and so could therefore further savor what they were reading. The lists prove that Tessin was sending a huge amount of books to Sweden. When back home, he also asked Carl Fredrik Scheffer (1715-1786), Swedish ambassador to Paris between 1744 and 1752, to send him all the new publications. Scheffer wrote to Tessin on that matter on July 21, 1745: “J'aurai soin aussi alors que la Bibliotheque de Votre Excellence ne manquera de rien et qu'elle recevra par Bolin tout ce que les Libraires de Paris ont d'assés bon pour y meriter une place” (Heidner: 90). Furthermore, also kept at the Royal Library in Stockholm and written in French by Tessin, “Le Catalogue des livres et des manuscrits, des estampes et dessins contenus dans la bibliothèque d'Akerö” contained books related to cooking classified in a category called “ménage et économie domestique”. At this time, two main categories of books dealing with cuisine were available: cookbooks and publications about general domestic economy including the maintenance of gardens.

Various classics of this period are to be found in Tessin's library; two books by François Massialot (1660-1733), *Le Cuisinier royal et bourgeois* and *Nouvelle Instruction pour les confitures, les liqueurs et les fruits*, respectively published for the first time in 1691 and 1692. The Count also owned *Le Pâtissier françois*, written by François Pierre de la Varenne in 1653. *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* by Menon, first written for a rising bourgeoisie, is present as well. Famous for his “correspondance littéraire” read by many heads of kingdoms, on February 1st 1757, Melchior Grim wrote that it was a book worth having in a library (Girard 1977: 516). It is noteworthy that Tessin's inventory contained the most

famous Swedish cookbook published by Cajsa Warg (1703-1769) It is to be noted that these books were not necessarily inventoried in libraries but could have been considered as part of the kitchen equipment (See J. Davis 2013: 74).

Among the various kitchen utensils the Count sent to Sweden, a package of eighteen items included a waffle iron, a draining board, a grater in white iron, a saucepan a coffee grinder, a box to roast the coffee and a coffee pot. The utensils are mainly made of copper. Refinement and sophistication were desired through the acquisition of items such as portable kitchens because they were new, rare and fashionable (a winning trio): “Pour paier une partie de vos peines je vous ferai tenir incessamment les Cuisines portatives qui font tant de bruit icy, et avec lesquelles on epargne quasy totalement le bois” writes Tessin in a letter addressed to Carl Harleman on May 29, 1740 (Proschwitz: 88). Tessin also sent French porcelain such as tea, chocolate or coffee sets. He purchased a lot of Chantilly porcelain, from a manufacture created by Louis-Henri de Bourbon, Prince of Condé in 1735 and some items made in Saint-Cloud, a manufacture created by the Dukes of Orléans in 1664 (See le Duc 1998). Coffee and tobacco were among the perishables he forwarded home. Tessin sent tea and coffee “en grains brûlés” (it was probably easier to procure and less expensive in Paris than in Stockholm).

Although under studied by historians, food gifts were very common (See Meyzie 2006: 33-50). Tessin announces rather triumphantly to his wife that some of the coffee and tobacco he sends her are a present from Zaid Pacha, ambassador of the Sublime Porte in Paris, who had been received in Versailles in 1742: “Le meme Dimanche l'Ambassadeur de la Porte, je ne puis, comme vous voies, m'empecher d'en parler! bon! on n'entend que cela dans Paris...” (January 15, 1742; Proschwitz: 281). As exports associated with the Ottoman Empire, coffee and tobacco are obviously part of diplomatic exchanges. These lists made by the Count are even more interesting when they are crosschecked with his letters. Thus, Tessin is often one of the guests of the Turkish ambassador. He reports on a meal they shared, differences detected in food consumption and pricing, and he displays a genuine appreciation of Turkish sorbets and rice:

Ce fut avant hier, ma chere Ulla, qu'on me remit votre Lettre du 27. Fevrier, chez l'ambassadeur Turc en sortant d'un grand diné: J'appelle grand diné une Table de Vingt couverts.[...] Dabord les Hors d'oeuvre, secundo les Entrées, ensuite les rotis, puis les entremets, et finalement le desert dans un autre Apartement. Seurement son Excellence a mangé son pain quotidien de ce jour là, qui va cependant a Deux Mille francs, et peut etre y a t'il mis le double, car les Traitteurs de Paris écorchent les Chretiens, que ne fairont ils pas les Turcs? A la verité rien n'étoit epargné a ce repas qui n'avoit pourtant pas l'air de chez soy. [...] Ce que j'y trouvois de mieux etoient des Sorbets admirables, et le Pilau, ou le ris, accomodé par un Musulman a sa façon qui vraiment est tres bonne. Pour le vin ce n'etoit que du mixtum fixtum, et on s'aperçut bien que les Turcs n'en boivent point. Mais ma Chere Ulla, je ne sais point a propos de quoy je vous mets d'un repas, ou regnoient le silence et l'ennuy. (Proschwitz:307-308)

The description of Tessin is enthralling. For instance, his report on rice helps understand his perception of foreign food. Travels and experiences abroad are essential in the circulations of dish and taste (Laurieux 2005). Even though Tessin noticed that the wine was far from outstanding, the presence of this beverage at the table of the ambassador reveals the necessities of a diplomatic reception in Paris. In that case, politics and gastro-diplomacy are more important than the religious and identity principles of the Ottoman representative. (Stefanini 2016). Ludington, in an original piece of work, has recently questioned this link between wine and politics, arguing that in England wine consumption has been for a long time a symbol of politics since it embodied the power of the Court, the Church and the aristocracy (2013: 1).

Meanwhile, Tessin once sent “60 bouteilles de vin de Calabre”, however he did not send a lot of wine. This absence of alcohol from the lists does not mean that they were not drinking this

beverage at Tessin's house. Wine arrived to Sweden via traders, notably from Holland. The Count's cellar was certainly well stocked, since in the Nordic and Eastern countries it was considered as a sign of distinction (See Flandrin 1999: 24-33). Yet, beer consumption was widespread back in Sweden. When she returned home with a French maid named Julie, the Countess of Tessin wrote to her husband that the girl was happy there and was drinking beer without even thinking about wine: "Julie est contente ici comme une Reine. Elle boit de la Biere comme le plus hardy Soldat et ne se soucie guerre de vin" (Proschwitz: 194). On the other hand, Tessin regularly sent strong alcohol like a "baril med 6 pintes", "mirabelle a l'eau de vie & baril med 6 pintes Cerises a l'eau de vie", or "40 bouteilles Liqueurs". In one of his letters, Tessin was ready to go through great efforts to send some Maraschino, a liqueur made with cherries and mainly produced in Croatia and Italy: in case he could no procure it from Paris, he might get some directly from Venice (Proschwitz: 216). Tessin also sent a box of liqueurs belonging to a Mlle Noverre. Indeed, as also attested in this letter to his wife (August 18, 1741), the Count took care of some purchases for friends or acquaintances that requested some products from the capital of taste and elegance:

Les Douze Eventails sont deja achetés; Mon plus grand etonnement est, que certaines personnes éventées veillent encore s'éventer d'avantage: Comme je n'aime pas a mal parler des Gens a leur insçu, je vous prie de dire cette verité a Madame la Comtesse de Stromberg, en La supliant de ne pas perdre de Memoire son tres humble Evantailliste: Cette fourniture d'armes ofensives et Defensives revient a 30. Sols piece [...] que je La prie de payer incessamment, et elle me donnera pour ma peine et pour boire ce qu'elle jugera a propos. (Proschwitz:185)

Thus, he was purchasing items on behalf of Scheffer and the French ambassador in Stockholm between 1741 and 1749 — the Marquis de Lanmary. As for Manette Noverre, she arrived in Sweden with Tessin as a maid and later worked for the Queen Louise-Ulrique (1720-1782). She was the daughter of Jean Louis Noverre, distiller. The Countess surmised that it might have been economically sound for the father of her maid to move to Stockholm:

Le parfumeur dont tu ameines La petite fille, ne seroit-il point tenté de venir s'établir à Stockholm à present que L'on y a La liberté de La Religion Reformé. Je crois qu'il y gagneroit quelque chose, car L'on aime beaucoup toutes sortes d'odeurs et d'eau, des parfums des Pommades, des Poudres et puis des gands de toutes Espèces, pour moy je crois bien qu'il feroit quelque Chose. (Proschwitz: 299)

It is not always easy to separate the different kind of liquids resulting from distillation because distillers created and sold all sorts of products, not only table alcohol, such as the French "Parfait amour" or the more exotic "eau des Barbades", but also cosmetics like the fashionable "Eau de la reine à la Bergamote" or "eau de lavande" as well as "caude chipre", and medicinal "eau des Carmes", "eau de Colodon" or "eau vulnéraire". Alcohols as drinks or perfumes fall in the same category in books such as the *Nouvelle chymie du goût et de l'odorat, ou l'art de composer facilement & à peu de frais les liqueurs à boire & les eaux de senteurs* published in 1755. Noverre made prized orange blossom preparations. Tessin was sending various and numerous products derived from this flower: from strong liqueur to sweet fruit syrup. Obviously, it was not always easy to distinguish a liqueur from a syrup: Scheffer once sent to Sweden the one for the other: "Vous m'avés envoyé une Eau de Vie, au lieu d'un Sirop a la fleur d'Orange [...] et au lieu de rafraichir les Dames de la Cour, j'ai pensé les griser" (Heinder: 234). An embarrassing situation for the Swedish Ambassador who tried to explain the origin of his mistake:

Il est vrai que je n'ai pas demandé un sirop come Votre Excellence me marque l'avoir entendu. Mais il est vrai aussi qu'en cherchant dans mes instructions la cause de mon erreur, j'ai trouvé dans la lettre de Votre

Excellence du 15/26. Fevrier ces propres termes: je vous recommande la route de Rouen pour 6. Bouteilles d'eau à fleurs d'Orange. Or, je la supplie très humblement d'observer que de l'eau à fleurs d'Orange n'est pas du sirop. Il est certain que cette eau devoit etre sucrée comme Votre Excellence me l'avoit ordonné. Aussi le Sr Noverre pretend il qu'elle l'etoit. Mais sans doute qu'il m'a mal servi et je cherche ailleurs un meilleur fabriquant. (Heinder: 238)

The Count mailed some orange blossom water that could be used both as personal perfume and as flavor especially in desserts. Jacques Valmont-Bomare mentions its versatile qualities in his *Dictionnaire d'histoire naturelle* published for the first time in 1764:

Les fleurs d'orange, à cause de leur odeur agréable qui est préférée à celle des roses, de l'ambre & du musc, son fort en usage parmi nous, soit dans les parfums soit dans les assaisonnemens. [...] On fait avec ces fleurs des conserves différentes, soit solides, soit molles ; des tablettes qui sont très agréables au goût & que l'on présente au dessert, ou que l'on mêle dans les médicamens pour corriger leur goût désagréable & pour fortifier l'estomac : on fait aussi avec ces fleurs un sirop & un rafafia délicieux. (Valmont-Bomare 1764: 554)

Tessin once mailed six cakes flavored with orange blossom water.

After beverages, I will now introduce food goods, often the same kind of products. Indeed, travels were long, several months were needed in order to reach the destination and so it was necessary to send only imperishable edible goods: “sucres fins au Cedrat”, another product that contained citrus fruit, were appreciated in Stockholm because the northern weather did not allow these trees to grow, and sugar preserved the candy. The Count sent boxes of sugar-coated almonds and candied raspberries (“en fruits de framboises”). We also find the mention of “nompaille”:

Il se fait encore une sorte de petite Dragée, qui vient particulièrement de Sedan, qui est aussi menue que de la graine de navette, & quelquefois plus fine, à laquelle on donne le nom de Nompaille. Cette dernière espèce de Dragée n'est autre chose, que de l'iris en poudre, couvert d'un peu de sucre. C'est de cette Nompaille, dont on se sert à mettre sur certaines pâtisseries, & sur le pain d'épice. (Savary des Bruslons 1760: 168)

A sweet tooth was at that time an elitist prerogative, since sugar was a luxury product. Tessin mailed some “pâtes d'abricots d'Auvergne” (jellied apricots). Fruit jelly and candied fruits were highly popular. Nicolas de Bonnefons, author of *Le Jardinier français* explains: “elles sont estimables en ce qu'elles s'envoient de loin, & se présentent aux personnes des plus hautes qualitez, qui les estiment tant pour leur bonté, que pour la commodité qu'ils ont de les porter en la pochette, à cause de leur friand goût, & pour leur faire bonne bouche au sortir du repas” (1693: 345). We also find the mention of “jam”. However, this term refers to many preparations (Michel 2002: 655-662). Liquid jams but also marmalade, including some made with apricot and orange, were sent by Tessin. He also sent apple jellies. Thus, the Count was sending a lot of fruits, in various forms. Some were dried fruits such as raisins and figs, not to be found easily in the North. Thanks to the development of “fruiterie”, it was possible to preserve the fruits through the winter months, by following the indications consigned in *Le Confiturier français* by François Pierre de la Varenne or *Instruction pour les confitures, les liqueurs et les fruits* by Massialot, a volume Tessin owned. Tessin sent for instance « des boîtes de prunes de Ste Catherine », even specifying the variety of the fruit, as well as quinces and peaches. The Count sent a large panel of foodstuff in Sweden, from Gruyere cheese to anchovies. This last product, if distinctive of the Mediterranean region, was also very appreciated in Sweden. Olives and capers also crossed Europe in the packages. These products from the Mediterranean region were exotic in Sweden. But food and culinary utensils were increasingly a global affair. Maddalena Mazzocut-Miss and Pietro Allia note the combination, in Chardin's still life, of local

simple products like fruits and biscuits with exotic and luxurious items such as old China porcelains (2014: 121). Admitted at the French Academy as “peintre d'animaux, de batteries de cuisine et de différents légumiers”, Chardin was in contact with Tessin who bought several paintings like, for example, a still life named ‘Rabbit with Copper Cauldron and Quince’ painted around 1739-1740. In August 1741, Tessin sent the painting to Stockholm where it remains to this day. This painting was sold to the Swedish Royal Family in 1749, and it is now the property of the National Museum.

The geographical origin of the food is often mentioned in Tessin’s lists. For instance, the Count sent “50 grosses noix de Tours”, “6 pots Noix de Rouen”, “12 bol epinevinettes sans pepins de Dyjon”, “6 angélique de Poitou”. The luxury was here the distance and the foreign element of the food linked to a geographical origin conferring a warrantee of quality. For instance, the barberries from Dijon were supposed to be the best that could be obtained (as were the nuts from Rouen) according to Jacques Savary des Bruslons (1760:1451). Bruslons observes that people from Northern countries especially favored from France wines, eau de vie, vinegars, salt, dried plums, chestnuts and walnuts (1760: XIII).

For the Swedish ambassador, the attraction of French cooking and French foods is undeniable and it affected his domestic economy. His wife left France in 1741 in order to save money, but on April 6 1742 he confesses he is penniless: “Je suis un panier percé, je l’avoue a ma honte, a mon dam, et a ma confusion” (Proschwitz: 309). The same year, he makes light of “la Banqueroute de l’Ambassadeur” (Proschwitz: 267) in a letter to Carl Harleman. On May 29, he warns him that: “Je puis vous offrir de tout, exceptée ma bourse, car elle n’en vaut pas la peine: C’est elle qui a le plus operé pendant mon Ambassade: Elle est vuide: J’en loue Dieu, c’est un embarras de moins” (*Ibid.*, 327). Nevertheless, though the household was in debt, it was necessary to receive guest properly and once at home, his wife urged him to send her a French cook:

Bohlin vous rameinera un Cuisinier, qui a été aide chez Mr. de la Mark pendant son Ambassade a Madrid. Je ne l’ai pas essayé, pourvu qu’il sache faire une soupe, un morceau de bouilli, et un ragout, cela nous suffit. N’est ce pas ma Reine ? Au reste il me paroît doux et accomodant. Il s’est engagé a raison de Cinq Cent Franc par an, le logement, la nourriture, des Camisolles et des Tabliers. Je souhaite que vous en soyés contente, sans quoy il n’aura fait qu’apprendre le Chemin par ou s’en aller. (Proschwitz: 215).

A few months later, the French cook is in Stockholm and the Countess is pleased with his work despite the costs she incurs (Proschwitz: 41). Meanwhile, her husband had to let go of all the French employees from his kitchen at the Parisian Hôtel, rue Taranne. The departure of his wife was not enough to clear up the ambassador’s finances, so he kept only the Swedish personnel:

Dés votre départ j’ay fait main basse sur tous les Cotillons de ma maison, qui est a present en etat de figurer avec la Chartreuse. L’officier a aussy été remercié, et demain viendra le tour des cuisiniers, j’avoue que l’ordre est un peu renversé de commencer par le desert, mais Mlle Raumy a besoin d’être confite, et je n’ay pas eu le courage de la separer de son ouvrier. Me voilà bientôt suédoisé au milieu de Paris, je compte que notre bourse s’en trouvera infiniment mieux. (Proschwitz: 145)

In this way, the lavish everyday life of the Count was a little stained. But we might be allowed to think that the symbolic loss of the French personnel was probably at least as important as the pecuniary gain. This correlation between French cooks and symbolic as well as political power has been often mentioned, but almost never studied in detail. Nevertheless, Gilly Lehmann pointed out in an article about England the connection between Whigs patrons and French cooks (1999: 73). However, it is to be noted that, according to the Countess, the couple was not looking for a great cook but only for someone who was able to cook something eatable as if it were impossible to find proper cooks in Stockholm:

Je ne suis point du tout contente de ma menagere qui ne scait point accomoder un morceau a manger qui vaille [...] Mon projet seroit donc si tu amenois quelque apprenty ou quelque garçon que tu pus avoir a melieur marché que ces grands Cuisiniers dont Dieu nous preserve, il me paroît que cela ne seroit point mal parce qu'avec celle cy il est impossible d'avoir Ame qui vive a Diner ou a Souper et l'on m'a dit meme icy que C'est une marchandise introuvable qu'une Menagere qui scache faire la Cuisine. (Ulrica Lovisa Tessin to her husband, July 3, 1741; Proschwitz: 217)

Tessin and his wife were from one of the most important families in Sweden but they were apparently not looking for a great cook. But having one, and especially one from France, was nonetheless a luxury helping to maintain a good reputation as written by M. Denesle in a book published in 1766: "Une bonne table est encore un excellent moyen à mettre en œuvre pour se faire une belle réputation dans le monde! On n'aime pas communément les riches qui ne donnent point à manger, ou qui s'en acquittent mal quand ils le font" (Denesle 1766: 288). Consequently, it might be surprising to find some lines written by Tessin in his diary against table luxury: "Parmi les diverses sortes de luxe, il n'y a de nuisible que celui de la table. Il ruine la santé, et renchérit les denrées nécessaires à la vie, au lieu que tout autre faste aide à la subsistance des ouvriers, et facilite celle des pauvres" (Kungliga biblioteket [KB], Stockholm, Åkerö-dagbok L82:1:2, January 23, 1757 - November 6, 1757). Nevertheless, nothing proves that a brief thought, written in French like most of the correspondences and philosophical and moral considerations of the Count, must have an impact on everyday life.

Crossing the lists of the Count with other sources such as letters is useful and clarifying because they help to gain a better understanding of the perception of some aspects of French culinary sphere and above all they enable an original analysis of circulations of goods during this period. Even when in debt, the Count was sending French products to his wife as a way to maintain the lifestyle of his family. Some of them could be found in Stockholm, but Paris could provide regional and international imports. If having a French cook does not necessarily mean eating French cuisine, such an employee added to the pleasure of the dinner guests and definitely served self-representation.

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