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‘Perroquets en cage’: Henri Estienne and anti-aulic satire

David Cowling (Durham University)

CELTOPHILE AU LECTEUR:

Maint courtisan use de mots nouveaux,
Qu’il n’entend point, et si les trouve beaux.
Luy, bigarré, bigarre son langage.
Mais pardonnons au perroquet en cage.

Celtophile to the reader: Many a courtier uses new words / that he does not understand, and yet he finds them beautiful. / Gaudy himself, he makes his language gaudy. / But let us forgive this caged parrot.

PHILAUSSONE:

Je luy sçay bon gré de me vouloir guarir si je suis malade, mais il faut qu’il guarisse mes compagnons courtisans, aussi bien que moy. Car c’est une maladie contagieuse, tellement qu’incontinent je la reprendray d’eux.¹

Philausone: I am grateful to him for wanting to heal me if I am ill, but he will have to heal my fellow courtiers as well as me. It is a contagious disease, and I will catch it from them again straightaway.

The picture that emerges from these two quotations, both drawn from the *Deux Dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps*, a lengthy satirical attack on the excesses of the court of Henri III published (anonymously) in Geneva by Henri Estienne in 1578, is hardly a very flattering one. In the first quotation, a liminary quatrain addressed by Celtophile (lover of all things authentically French, as his name indicates) to the reader, courtiers are presented as being at the vanguard of linguistic change and innovation, using ‘mots nouveaux’ with the same relish with which they deck themselves out in extravagant and colourful clothes. This showy superficiality of dress is carried over to their linguistic habits, as their language takes on a multi-coloured aspect (‘bigarré’). Yet we are left in no doubt that the courtiers use such words for purposes of display only; they are incapable of understanding them. The metaphor of the caged parrot, with its obvious connotations of ignorance, servility and captivity, makes clear the author’s satirical point – despite their gaudy appearance,

¹ Henri Estienne, *Les Deux Dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps* (1578), ed. by P. M. Smith (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980), pp. 34, 438. Further references to this edition will be incorporated into the text. All translations are my own.

courtiers speak without understanding.² In the second quotation, taken from the end of the second dialogue, the choice of metaphor is more ominous: Philausone (lover of Italy), himself a courtier, admits that all courtiers are sick; even if they are cured of their illness, presumably through strict isolation from the court, they risk catching it again from their fellow courtiers as soon as they return. What is this mysterious illness? How is it spread? And how is it related to the love of novelty and *le paraître* denounced in the first quotation? In order to answer these questions, it will be necessary to examine the contribution by Henri Estienne (1531-98), the great sixteenth-century humanist and Hellenist, compiler of the monumental *Thesaurus linguae graecae* of 1572 and scholarly editor of numerous first editions of ancient Greek authors, to the debate about the relative merits of French and its rivals among the vernacular languages, most notably Italian, and, indeed, to the campaign to preserve the imagined purity of the French language from foreign (primarily Italian) influence.³ Before discussing an example of the type of courtly discourse that Estienne is seeking to proscribe, however, it will be necessary to consider the motivations, both linguistic and political, for Estienne's attack on 'italianisms'.

The son of Robert Estienne, the Parisian humanist scholar, printer, and committed adherent of the reformed religion, whose output includes the first printed French-Latin dictionary (1540) and a *Traicté de la grammaire françoise* (1557), the young Henri fled Paris and followed his father to Geneva in 1551 to escape persecution by the Sorbonne and safeguard the succession of the family press.⁴ Having taken over his father's press according to the provisions of the latter's will in 1559, Henri proceeded, over the next forty years, to publish a prolific output of humanist and Hellenist material, including an impressive tally of first editions of ancient Greek authors, whom he edited himself. Interspersed among this learned output Estienne published four works in the vernacular concerned, directly or indirectly, with contemporary

² Estienne's courtly parrots are, however, conspicuous by their absence from B. T. Boehrer's recent monograph *Parrot Culture: Our 2,500-Year-Long Fascination with the World's Most Talkative Bird* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

³ The only monograph study to date of Henri Estienne's vernacular production is that of L. Clément, *Henri Estienne et son œuvre française: étude d'histoire littéraire et de philologie* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1967 [Paris, 1898]). More recent critical work on Estienne is presented in the collective volume *Henri Estienne: actes du colloque organisé à l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne le 12 mars 1987 par le Centre V. L. Saulnier* (Paris: Ecole normale supérieure, 1988). For Estienne's humanistic output, see J. Kecskeméti, B. Boudou, and H. Cazes, *La France des Humanistes: Henri II Estienne, éditeur et écrivain* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

⁴ For a biography of Henri Estienne, see L. Feugère, *Essai sur la vie et les œuvres de Henri Estienne* (Paris: Delalain, 1853).

questions of cultural and, more particularly, linguistic influence, namely the *Traicté de la conformité du langage françois avec le grec* (1565), *L'Apologie pour Hérodote* (1566), the *Deux Dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé* of 1578 and the *Precellence du langage françois* of 1579. In the first of these, the *Traicté de la conformité du langage françois avec le grec* of 1565, Estienne sets out the main themes of his later works, chief among them hostility towards those who, by introducing foreign words, adulterate the 'purity' of the French language.⁵ In view of the importance that questions of authority in language will assume in the later works, it is worthwhile to quote from a section of Estienne's dedicatory letter to Henri de Mesmes,⁶ the royal *maître des requêtes*, in which Estienne addresses the 'desordre et abus qui est aujourd'huy en l'usage de la langue françoise' [disorder and abuse that can be found today in the use of the French language]:

Car j'ay tousjours eu ceste opinion, que la Cour estoit la forge des mots nouveaux, et puis le Palais de Paris leur donnoit la trempe: et que le grand desordre qui est en nostre language, procede pour la plus part, de ce que messieurs les courtisans se donnent le privilege de legitimer les mots françois bastards, et naturalizer les estrangers.⁷

I have always been of the opinion that the [royal] court was the forge for new words, and that the Paris law courts tempered them; the great disorder that characterises our language derives, for the most part, from the fact that our friends the courtiers arrogate to themselves the privilege of legitimising bastard French words and naturalising foreign ones.

Estienne takes as a given that the royal court, based by this time in Paris, is a centre of lexical innovation (which he expresses by means of the metaphor of the forge), and that it acts in concert with the Parisian legal profession, identified here through metonymy with the *Palais de Justice*. At the same time, however, he casts doubt on the good faith of the courtiers, who have given themselves the right to adopt 'bastard' words (presumably linguistically mixed forms) and to 'naturalise' (i.e. import) foreign

⁵ For the notion of linguistic purism more generally, and the range of metaphors habitually used by purists, see G. Thomas, *Linguistic Purism* (London: Longman, 1991), pp. 19-34.

⁶ For Estienne's connections with Henri de Mesmes and the latter's excellent knowledge of Italian literature, see J. Balsamo, *Les Rencontres des Muses: italianisme et anti-italianisme dans les Lettres françaises de la fin du XVIe siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1992), p. 52.

⁷ H. Estienne, *Conformité du langage françois avec le grec*, ed. by L. Feugère (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970 [Paris, 1853]), p. 14. Further references to this edition will be incorporated into the text.

terms.⁸ In the preface to his treatise, Estienne continues his attack on courtiers by developing the notion of extravagance in dress that we have seen earlier:

Mais avant qu'entrer en matiere, je veulx bien advertir les lecteurs que mon intention n'est pas de parler de ce language françois bigarré, et qui change tous les jours de livrée, selon que la fantasie prend ou à monsieur le courtisan, ou à monsieur du palais, de l'accoustrer. Je ne preten point aussi parler de ce françois desguisé, masqué, sophistiqué, fardé et affecté à l'appetit de tous autres, qui sont aussi curieux de nouveauté en leur parler comme en leurs accoustemens. Je laisse apart ce françois italianisé et espagnolisé. Car ce françois ainsi desguisé, en changeant de robbe, a quantetquant perdu (pour le moins en partie) l'accointance qu'il avoit avec ce beau et riche language grec. (*Conformité*, p. 20)

But, before I begin, I wish to warn my readers that I do not intend to refer to that gaudy form of the French language that changes its livery every day depending on how our friend the courtier or our friend the lawyer choose to dress it up. Nor will I be referring to the kind of French that is disguised, masked, affected, made up, and confected according to the wishes of all those other people who are as obsessed with novelty in their speech as they are with novelty in their clothes. I shall leave to one side the French that is italianised and hispanised. The reason for this is that this disguised French, by changing its dress, has at the same time lost (at least in part) the similarity that it used to display with the rich and beautiful Greek language.

In the same way that it would be impractical, and indeed extremely costly, to change 'livrée' every day,⁹ the French language can only suffer from the courtiers' attempts to dress it up, or (to continue with Estienne's metaphors) to disguise, mask, adulterate or indeed apply cosmetics to it. Such changes to the language's superficial appearance, whether as a result of Italian or Spanish influence, are motivated both by *curiositas* (still a largely negative quality in the sixteenth century)¹⁰ and by the same desire to follow the current fashion that is evident in the courtiers' showy dress. What is more, changes to the language's outward appearance (in other words, it would appear, its lexicon) serve, unhelpfully, to disguise its relationship with Greek. This last claim might surprise us, yet the work as a whole is devoted to an attempt,

⁸ For contemporary calls to limit the number of naturalisations of foreign (especially Italian) immigrants, see H. Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 140, 214; J. Boucher, *Société et mentalités autour de Henri III*, 4 vols (Paris: Champion, 1981), p. 614.

⁹ Jerome Lippomano, the Venetian ambassador to the French court, reported in 1575 that young courtiers spent large amounts of money changing their clothes, and that a courtier was not considered rich unless he possessed twenty-five to thirty outfits, which he changed every day. See P. M. Smith, *The Anti-Courtier Trend in Sixteenth Century French Literature* (Geneva: Droz, 1966), p. 157.

¹⁰ See N. Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe: Word Histories* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), pp. 34, 44.

supported by all the philological and etymological evidence that Estienne, the eminent Hellenist, can muster, to demonstrate a close linguistic relation between French and the language of Homer and Plato. This enterprise ultimately proves, as we might have expected, unconvincing, notwithstanding Estienne's identification of some words of Greek origin in French (*boutique*, from *apotheke*, and *évêque*, albeit indirectly, from *episkopos*, for instance), some similarities in the use of articles and in the use of infinitives and adjectives as nouns, but its ideological basis is of some relevance for Estienne's hostility to borrowing from other vernaculars, and particularly from Italian. As Estienne explains in his preface, not only is Greek 'la roine des langues' [the queen of languages], perfect in respect of its ease of pronunciation and its copious lexicon, 'il en preste à tous autres languages, et n'en emprunte de pas un' [it lends to all other languages and does not have to borrow from any]. This feat of lending to other languages without needing to borrow from them is achieved primarily through its facility in the creation of neologisms. (We might remark, uncharitably for Estienne, that it is also thanks to the chronological anteriority of Greek to other European languages of culture.) A modern encyclopaedia of linguistics will tell us that the term 'loan word' is first attested in English, at least, in 1874, being a calque of the German *Lehnwort*.¹¹

Estienne's use of the metaphor of word borrowing, which we might view as part of the 'prehistory' of the modern term, undoubtedly preserves more of the economic flavour of the image when viewed in the context of the nascent mercantilism and protectionism of the later sixteenth century, when France's linguistic, and specifically lexical, capital was seen as part of the country's balance of payments, as the recent research of Philippe Desan and Terence Cave has shown.¹² In the same way that early mercantilist thinkers advocated keeping the national debt as small as possible while promoting economic autonomy, in order to satisfy national demand from within the kingdom, Estienne takes as his model of perfection a language that can satisfy its need

¹¹ See E. Haugen and M. Mithun, 'Borrowing: Overview', in the *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, ed. by W. J. Frawley, 2nd edn, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), I, 242-47.

¹² See P. Desan, *L'Imaginaire économique de la Renaissance* (Mont-de-Marsan: Editions InterUniversitaires, 1993); T. Cave, *Pré-histoires II: langues étrangères et troubles économiques au XVI^e siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2001). A fuller discussion of the role of mercantilist thinking in Estienne's work can be found in D. Cowling, "'Neither a Borrower nor a Lender be": Linguistic Mercantilism in Renaissance France', in *Metaphor and Discourse*, ed. by A. Musolff and J. Zinken (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 190-204.

for neologisms from its own linguistic resources. The alternative, in economic terms, is for the French language to declare itself bankrupt:

Mais il nous en prend comme aux mauvais mesnagers, qui pour avoir plustost faict, empruntent de leurs voisins ce qu'ils trouveroyent chez, eux, s'ils vouloyent prendre la peine de le chercher. [...] Si tels emprunts continuent, que pouvons-nous attendre autre chose avec le temps sinon que nostre language, qui a eu si grande vogue et si grand credit par le passé, en la fin à faulte de pouvoir payer ses creditiers, soit contrainct de faire un tour de banqueroutier. (*Conformité*, p. 22)

But we are like the sort of poor householder who, in order to save time, borrows things from his neighbours that he would have found at home if only he had bothered to look for them. [...] If such borrowings continue, what else can we do but wait for our language, which has enjoyed such vogue and credit in the past, finally to be declared bankrupt, since it cannot repay its creditors.

(We might note in passing that the term 'banqueroute' is itself an Italian borrowing of the later fifteenth century.) It is hardly surprising, given the vehemence of the views expressed in this extract, that Henri Estienne himself advocates trawling through the dialects of France and, indeed, the literature of the Old French period, in order to find words that can take the place of borrowed forms, or make lexical borrowing unnecessary in the first place.¹³ It is surely significant, also, that Estienne should choose Greek as the model of linguistic perfection that French is judged most closely to resemble. None could deny that Italian was closely related to Latin; by choosing a more prestigious language than Latin and, into the bargain, one that had been the source of much lexical and cultural borrowing into Latin, Estienne is attempting to outflank Italian humanists who, following Petrarch's infamous claim that 'oratores et poetae extra Italiam non quaerantur', claimed that the glory of ancient Rome was destined to return to Italy and, in so doing, challenged the dominant French historical model of the *translatio studii*.¹⁴ Indeed, Petrarch's assertion served as a kind of lightning rod for anti-Italian sentiment in France throughout the fifteenth and

¹³ For the link established by Estienne between 'pure' French and geographical locations within the kingdom, see T. Hampton, *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century: Inventing Renaissance France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 155-56.

¹⁴ The quotation is from Petrarch's *Seniles*, IX. 1; for Franco-Italian rivalry, see F. Simone, *Umanesimo, Rinascimento, Barocco in Francia* (Milan: Mursia, 1968), p. 86; N. Mann, 'Humanisme et patriotisme en France au quinzième siècle', *Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Etudes Françaises*, 23 (1971), p. 60; L. Sozzi, 'La Polémique anti-italienne dans l'œuvre narrative d'Henri Estienne', in *Henri Estienne*, p. 100; J. Balsamo, *Les Rencontres des Muses: italianisme et anti-italianisme dans les Lettres françaises de la fin du XVIe siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1992), pp. 32-33, 37.

sixteenth centuries against the turbulent backdrop of the Italian military adventures of successive French monarchs. This humanist rivalry with Italy, for which there is much evidence in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century French writing, finds further, more overt expression in Estienne's celebrated polemic known as the *Apologie pour Hérodote* or, to give it its full title, the *Traité de la conformité des merveilles anciennes avec les modernes, ou Traité préparatif à l'Apologie pour Hérodote* of 1566.¹⁵ In this text, criticism of Italian influence on French morals is articulated, behind the pretence of a defence of the good faith and veracity of the Greek historian, through a series of scabrous anecdotes that present the Italian nation as morally degenerate and capable only of exporting curses, blasphemy, charlatanism, political assassination and every imaginable vice. This emphasis on the export of deplorable qualities and practices of course serves to justify Estienne's identification elsewhere of pejoratives, such as *charlatan*, *assassin* and *bouffon*, as the only acceptable category of lexical borrowing from Italian: these borrowings are required in order to denote the shameful innovations that Italian influence has brought to France, for which (of course!) there are no indigenous words.¹⁶

By the time that Estienne came to write his famous attack on the affectations of the italianising courtiers of Henri III, the *Deux Dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps* in 1578, political relations between the Italian faction at the royal court, loyal to the Queen Mother, Catherine de Médicis, and French Protestants had worsened considerably in the aftermath of the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre of 24th August 1572, a religious pogrom during which at least 3,000 Huguenots were killed in Paris alone.¹⁷ Public opinion in France and, indeed, Calvinist Geneva, where Estienne was living in exile, generally held Catherine responsible for this 'Italian crime'.¹⁸ When viewed against the backdrop of such sectarian violence, Estienne's anti-Italian barbs take on an additional dimension as a means of conducting a political

¹⁵ *Apologie pour Hérodote: satire de la société au XVI^e siècle*, ed. by P. Ristelhuber, 2 vols (Geneva: Slatkine, 1969 [Paris, 1879]). For a recent monograph study of this text, see B. Boudou, *Mars et les Muses dans 'L'Apologie pour Hérodote' d'Henri Estienne* (Geneva: Droz, 2000).

¹⁶ See T. E. Hope (*Lexical Borrowing in the Romance Languages: A Critical Study of Italianisms in French and Gallicisms in Italian from 1100 to 1900* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), pp. 145-46, 651-61.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the massacre and the xenophobic unrest that preceded it, see H. Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 80-113.

¹⁸ See Clément, *Henri Estienne*, pp. 31-40.

and religious argument through the medium of metalinguistic comment.¹⁹ Yet a legitimate question that one may ask of this text is that of the extent to which the courtly language which it presents and denounces is anything more than a parody, or a pastiche, of the speech of Henri III's courtiers, invented, or, at least, exaggerated by Estienne for the purposes of his satire on the degenerate morals of the Italian faction at the French royal court and of those French courtiers who were foolish – or venal – enough to imitate them. Before quoting an example of this 'bastardised' linguistic variety I will briefly resume the contents of the text. Celtophile, who (like Estienne himself) has spent a considerable period away from Paris and the court, encounters his erstwhile friend Philausone ('lover of Italy'), now a modish courtier. The latter promises to initiate Celtophile ('lover of France') into the new ways of the court but, in so doing, provokes an aggressive reaction: Celtophile expresses astonishment, and considerable vexation, at the number of lexical and other borrowings from Italian that his friend is using. Unable to resolve their dispute as to the acceptability of these forms unaided, the friends decide to submit it to the arbitration of a mutual friend, Philalethe ('lover of truth'). The second dialogue concludes with the judgement of Philalethe, which has the ring of inevitability about it: all Italian words are to be 'banished' within a period of three months, unless they can justify their presence in the French language. Philalethe's recourse to personification looks like wishful thinking: through their words, it is the Italian courtiers themselves who are being targeted, with the implication that they should be banished too. The political and religious dimension of Estienne's text is thus quite clear; but to what extent may it be viewed as an accurate record of language use at the court of Henri III?

Before attempting to answer this question, a number of caveats are necessary. First, Estienne had no first-hand knowledge of the French royal court in 1578 (indeed, it is ironic that he took refuge at the court of Henri III in the immediate aftermath of the publication of the *Deux Dialogues*, when the text was condemned by the Genevan authorities for having been published in a form not approved by the censors); secondly, the dialogue form, far from being a naturalistic genre in the sixteenth-century, had clear classical antecedents, chief among them the satirical dialogues of Lucian (an author whose work Estienne knew well), and had in all likelihood been

¹⁹ Estienne is, in the opinion of Hope (*Lexical Borrowing in the Romance Languages*, p. 231), 'an unrequited political theorist'.

chosen, as the text's modern editor, Pauline Smith, points out, to enable the author, already facing a charge of obscenity in Geneva relating to the publication of the *Apologie pour Hérodote*, to maintain a prudent distance from the forthright comments of his characters.²⁰ In addition, the dialogues are primarily metalinguistic in nature, with individual loanwords that have cropped up in the speech of Philausone being discussed in turn with a consistent, and, given Estienne's humanist credentials, predictable emphasis on etymology. The text is prefaced, however, by a letter reputedly written by Philausone (alias Jan Franchet) to his fellow courtiers setting out the argument of the book. This oft-quoted letter seems at first sight to be no more than a humorous attempt to insert as many foreign borrowings as possible into an ostensibly 'French' text. Before dismissing the letter as a facile joke, however, it will be necessary to examine it more closely in order to establish the extent to which it conforms to observed patterns in real code-switching discourse. By 'code-switching' I mean the use of elements derived from two separate languages within the same clause, with one language contributing the grammatical structure (often referred to as the Matrix Language), and the other contributing content morphemes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.).²¹

JAN FRANCHET, DICT PHILAUSSONE, gentilhomme courtoisopolitois, aux lecteurs tutti quanti.

Messieurs, il n'y a pas long temps qu'ayant quelque *martel in teste* (ce qui m'advient souvent pendant que je fay ma *stanse* en la cour), et, à cause de ce, estant sorti apres le *past* pour aller un peu *spaceger*, je trouvoy par la *strade* un mien ami nommé Celtophile. Or, voyant qu'il se monstret estre tout *sbigotit* de mon langage (qui est toutesfois le langage courtoisanesque, dont usent aujourd'huy les gentilshommes francés qui ont quelque *garbe*, et aussi desirent ne parler point *sgarbatement*), je me mis à *ragionner* avec luy touchant iceluy en le soustenant le mieux qu'il m'estet possible. Et voyant que, nonobstant tout ce que je luy pouves alleguer, ce langage italianisé luy semblet fort *strane*, voire avoir de la *gofferie* et *balorderie*, je pris beaucoup de *fatigue* pour luy *caver* cela de la fantasie. Mais (pour vous dire la verité), je ne trouves point de raisons *bastantes* pour ce faire. [...] (*Deux Dialogues*, p. 35; my italics)

Jan Franchet, called Philausone, courtly gentleman, to readers one and all:

²⁰ See Smith's edition of the *Deux Dialogues*, p. 25. For the dialogue form in the Renaissance, see V. Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²¹ In what follows, I will be using the descriptive framework set out by Carol Myers-Scotton in her book *Contact Linguistics: Bilingual Encounters and Grammatical Outcomes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Gentlemen, while suffering not long ago from a headache, which often happens when I am at court, I went out after dinner to stretch my legs and met, on the road, a friend of mine called Celtophile. Seeing that he appeared to be quite astonished by my language (which is, nevertheless, the language of the court, and is used by those French gentlemen that have some style and do not wish to speak crudely), I began to reason with him about it and defended it as best I could. But seeing that, despite all the arguments I brought to bear, this italianised language seemed most alien to him, and indeed to be clumsy and foolish, I tired myself out trying to dispel such thoughts from his mind. If truth be told, however, I could not find sufficiently powerful arguments to achieve this.

Analysis of the passage as a whole (some 450 words) reveals that, among the linguistic features borrowed from Italian (italicised in the quotation above), nouns are the most frequent category (13 items), closely followed by verbs (11 items) and then adjectives (7 items). Of the nouns, two are first occurrences and three *hapax legomena*; six of the verbs are hapax, as are four of the adjectives (including the obviously ludic ‘courtisanopolitois’ and ‘tutti quanti’). The high incidence of *hapax legomena* is open to more than one interpretation: on the one hand, the presence of such forms might suggest that Estienne was using his own imagination, and, indeed, excellent knowledge of the Italian language (abundantly documented elsewhere)²² to ‘enhance’ his data; on the other, such forms might represent items commonly found in code-switching discourse used in courtly circles, but of limited diffusion beyond the bounds of the court. Indeed, as Carol Myers-Scotton remarks in *Contact Linguistics* (2002), extensive code-switching involving the local language and a more prestigious variety, typically an international language such as English, characterises the ‘elite closure’ practised by the social elite in a number of today’s developing countries (p. 35). Estienne’s courtiers, like modern-day social elites, use their language choices as a means of maintaining existing boundaries between social groups, and of preserving their privileged access to wealth and prestige. This effect is particularly marked if, as was the case in sixteenth-century France, only a minority of the population have a command of the high-status variety. Indeed, it could be argued that the courtiers of Renaissance France practised a kind of double elite closure, having exclusive access both to the high-status Parisian standard (Estienne’s linguistic ‘forge’) and to a

²² See Hope, p. 231. Estienne did derive some of his presumed Italian borrowings from written, as opposed to oral sources, as R. Sampson has demonstrated (‘The Loss of French Prosthesis and the Problem of Italianisms’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 39 (2003), 357-70; ‘Henri Estienne and Vowel Prosthesis: A Problem in the Phonetic Adaptation of Sixteenth-Century Italianisms in French’, *French Studies*, 58 (2004), 327-41).

prestigious foreign variety. This state of affairs would seem to have guaranteed the necessary ‘critical mass’ (in Myers-Scotton’s terminology, p. 238) for extensive lexical borrowing to take place; indeed, Philaethe remarks disapprovingly that the court has become ‘une petite Italie’, with Italian courtiers and those who aspired to imitate them in a clear majority over courtiers having a measure of linguistic discernment based on some knowledge of classical languages, who are described as having ‘quelques lettres’ (*Deux Dialogues*, 397, 417, 396). What is more, the high incidence of *hapax legomena* in Philausone’s letter is, perhaps, most readily understandable in the light of Myers-Scotton’s distinction (p. 239) between ‘cultural’ and ‘core’ borrowings: whereas cultural borrowings, which fill lexical gaps and typically accompany technological or cultural innovations (or importations), may well occur in the speech of monolinguals ignorant of the donor language, core borrowings, which appear to duplicate existing words (with, of course, different pragmatic and semantic emphases), appear initially in bilingual code-switching and may be relatively ephemeral (indeed, they may occur singly) or be of limited diffusion. It would thus appear that Philausone’s letter, despite its avowedly fictional status, is as amenable to the type of analysis practised by students of language contact as any piece of ‘authentic’ discourse. It is therefore likely that, as Pierre Trescases has asserted, Estienne’s work constitutes not an over-enthusiastic embroidering of the available data, but rather ‘l’analyse d’un certain jargon de la cour ou même [...] de celui d’une élite sociale’²³ [the analysis of a certain courtly jargon or even [...] that of a social elite’]. Estienne’s mouthpiece Philaethe himself echoes this view when he declares, at the end of the *Deux Dialogues*, that the phenomenon of linguistic mixing that the author has just spent four hundred pages denouncing has in fact originated from the code-switching of Italians, who, out of ignorance, have used mixed forms such as ‘quand anderons-nous là’ and have subsequently been imitated by the French (*Deux Dialogues*, p. 439).

Of course, dominant social groups tend to distinguish themselves symbolically from the groups whom they dominate not only in terms of their use of language, but also in terms of style of dress, food and so on. We have already seen, however, that Estienne sought to discredit the courtiers of Henri III, through his careful choice of metaphor,

²³ ‘Nouveau regard rétrospectif et instructif sur les «Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé» d’Henri Estienne’, *Le Français moderne*, 46 (1978), 256-63 (p. 261).

in such domains as well. His ultimate aim seems to have been to discredit the court as an arbiter of linguistic usage and to supplant it with humanists such as himself, whose knowledge of classical languages and judicious application of 'Reason' are set against the ignorance, servility and lack of patriotism of the courtiers. Although Estienne's campaign had little immediate success – Vaugelas still acknowledges the authoritative status of the court in the seventeenth century – it does give us a privileged insight into the linguistic practices of the social elite of Renaissance France, who display, in this respect at least, striking similarities with the social elites of the modern developing world.