

BOOK REVIEW

Selosse, Philippe (dir.). *Le Français préclassique (1500-1650)*, 25. Paris: Champion, 2023, 262 pp. 978 2 7453 5841 7.
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This is another excellent issue of this specialist journal. In 1990 its editors coined the expression “pre-classical French” to refer to the stage of the French language development between the Middle Ages and the Classical period (1500–1650), a period marked by significant linguistic, literary, and cultural transformations that set the foundation for modern French. The contributors of this issue aim to take a fresh look at the contact between French and Italian languages in 16th century France, by analysing italianisms present in the language of the Italian immigrants as well as in the language of the “italianised French”. These studies offer a renewed perspective on Henry Estienne’s famous *Deux Dialogues du nouveau langage François, italianizé, et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps* (1578).

A short foreword by Philippe Selosse, the director of the publication, outlines the themes and findings of the studies that follow.

Thomas Scharinger focuses on the many immigrants who constituted what was called “Little Italy” at the French court (p. 15–37). Using a socio-linguistic approach, he examines a large corpus constituted by memoirs, diaries, travel accounts, and private correspondence, including 168 letters written by Catherine de Medici, Queen of France from 1547 to 1559. His analysis highlights that Italian migrants not only spread but also introduced italianisms into 16th century French. Scharinger concludes that Estienne’s humorous observations were correct (notably about code switching) and that his satirical comments on the language of the courtiers were not always exaggerated.

Nicole Pypaert then examines the work of the historian Gabriele Simeoni (1509–1570?), in particular his *Cesar renouvelé* (1570), an adaptation of Caesar’s *Commentaries* reduced to maxims (p. 39–58). Pypaert identifies many formal, lexical and grammatical interferences used by this Florentine migrant at the French court. She invites us to consider the language of Italian migrants in 16th century France as a variety of French.

The two following articles are devoted to the italianised language of French authors. Indeed, the influence of Italian poetry in Renaissance France was profound and transformative, shaping French literary culture as well as French language. Paola Cifarelli focuses on Mellin de Saint-Gelais (1490–1558), a court poet who was one of the first to use Petrarcha’s sonnet form in French (p. 59–70). She selects six poems with an Italian poem as an intertext (Sannazaro, Berni, Barignano, Alamanni and of course Petrarcha) and studies Saint-Gelais’s lexical choices. She uses the

concept of “conditioned translation language” (“langue conditionnée de traduction”) to describe Saint Gelais’s language, which by choice is formed on its Italian model. Giuliano Rossi focuses then on the ‘Father of Italian language’, Dante Alighieri. He studies a little known early translation (before 1524) of the famous *Commedia* by François Bergaigne (p. 71–92). The French translator chose to use verse following Dante’s third rhyme sequence, in an attempt to acclimatise a poetic model in this language still in the process of conquering its title of nobility, French. Bergaigne does not shy away from italianisms, be it because of the constraints of the rhyme scheme, or because of the difficulty of rendering Dante’s own neologisms into French.

The second part of this issue is devoted to book reviews, and a substantial article by Philippe Selosse, who meticulously studies the botanical name of *Orchis bouffon* (p. 95–134). The green-winged orchid or green-veined orchid (or *Anacamptis morio*) is a flowering plant of the orchid family. Selosse goes back to the origins of the designation. He studies the “progressive deformations of its name, up to the modern form and its multiple semantic remotivations” (p. 10). In so doing, Selosse settles the debate on the meaning of *morio*. The word does not refer to the Italian *morione* (helmet) but to the Latin *morio* (fool) and the expression *testiculus morionis*, was first used by Rembert Dodoens, a Flemish botanist, in his 1568 *Florum, et Coronarium odoratumque nonnularum herbarum historia* to describe this particular species of orchid. Selosse carries out a fascinating investigation into botanical works, emphasising the variations and hesitations of the expression, before finally arriving at the modern *Orchis bouffon*. The findings of this “causal and vegetal proliferation” (p. 125) are multiple, and are an opportunity to review the history of the birth of the botanical science in the Renaissance.

A special feature of this journal issue is the “articles de comptes rendus”, or substantial book reviews by eminent specialists, of the most recent scholarly publications on the language (vernacular as well as vehicular) of the pre-classical period (p. 137–255). I will not review them here, but will simply mention the excellent review of the *Grande Grammaire Historique du Français* (2020) by S. Baddeley, J. Ducos, N. Fournier and S. Lardon (p. 152–203). The 51 chapters of this indispensable book are meticulously summarised and analysed.

Finally, a multilingual lexical Index (in French, Latin, Greek, English) provides a useful overview of the words analysed in the volume.

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