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The English Language: How the French Normans Changed its Trajectory through the Onset of the Battle of Hastings

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Capstone

Dr. Murdoch

The English Language: How the French Normans Changed its Trajectory through the
Onset of the Battle of Hastings

March 7th, 2018

Throughout *history*, almost every *single region* in the world has been *conquered* in some *capacity* by another ethnic *group* or *military power*. So, with this pre-*conceived* notion in mind, it is not abnormal that England has had a *very complex history* of being *conquered* by various nearby *people groups* since it was first *inhabited*. To *personify* these elusive *people groups* and demonstrate how impactful and influential they were within the *confines* of England, a *closer examination* should be put in *order*. The *mentioned people groups* are known as the Celts, the Romans, The Danes, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, and the French. Each of these *different groups* created an *environment* that provided an *entirely different culture* that was either *relatively*, or effectively *enforced* on what English *culture* was known as at the time. This means that *depending* on which *group* is discussed, each one of them had a specific way in which they *changed* the trajectory of the English *language*. Within that construct, one can deduce how the *transformation* of any *language*, but the English *language*, specifically, was *facilitated* by the *manner* in which English *culture* was *metamorphosing due* to the onset of new laws and regulations *invoked*, new *forms* of *art* being created, the occurrence of *religious persecution* and the *subsequent flourishing* of *novel religious institutions*, the rise and fall of *certain military powers*, and the innovation of *ammunition* and *weaponry*. *Despite* each of these *groups carrying* a specific *responsibility* for how the English *language* is *currently employed*, the French *people*, via the *Battle* of Hastings and what followed thereafter, have had the *paramount influence*. This can be *proven* through the lens of

orthography, *military*, *art*, *religious* words and/or phrases, *propriety* and *etiquette*, and *cuisine*.¹

This premiere paragraph is sprinkled with different colors and sporadic bolded and italicized words to prove the aforementioned thesis in a visual manner. The reasoning for each word that has been bolded and italicized is due to the findings that have arisen after researching each individual word in the Oxford English Dictionary.² So, if a word has been bolded and italicized and it remains in black, that means that it is French in origin. If a word has been bolded and italicized but it has been switched to blue font, that means that it either has French etymology or Latin etymology, according to the OED, or both simultaneously. If the word has been bolded and italicized but the font is green that signifies that the word equally has French and Italian etymologies. Finally, if the word is bolded and italicized but it has purple font it is to show that it is somewhat French etymologically, but not completely. After this premiere paragraph, each of the primary source quotations will go through the same process to illustrate the sheer significance the French language has had on the English language clear up until today.

The Battle of Hastings, in 1066, resulted from the intricate intermixing of the Danish culture, English Culture, and French culture. To gain an accurate understanding of the inner workings of why this major battle occurred, one must acquaint oneself thoroughly with the

¹ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

² Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: Volume 1 A-M, 5th ed., accessed April 18th, 2018.

Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: Volume 2 N-Z, 5th ed., accessed April 17th, 2018.

Oxford English Dictionary, accessed April 18th, 2018, <http://www.oed.com/>.

Every word etymology found within the first paragraph and the proceeding primary source quotation throughout this research paper will have been found in one of these three versions of the Oxford English Dictionary.

history of England, France, and Denmark and how much of each of their successions of royalty had arisen due to the Danes frequently invading England and France, specifically Normandy, which etymologically signifies, “Normannia, ‘the land of the Norseman.’”³ Astounding numbers of royals are interrelated between these three regions throughout the centuries, creating a very complicated, yet interesting backdrop for the insight behind all of these events that led up to the Battle of Hastings. For instance, when a certain people group was actively invading England, especially the Danes, the royal family of England at that time would evade death, or torture, by escaping to a region that was located nearby. King Æthelred and his son, Edward, fled to Normandy, when, under the orders of King Swein Forkbeard, the Danes commenced invading England after a couple of quiet years away from actively attempting and succeeding at controlling parts of England. Eventually, Cnut, a Danish King, reprised the Danes’ idealism of conquering England, in 1015. This subsequently caused Edward and his brother, Alfred, to evade annihilation by inhabiting Normandy, instead of England, as Cnut rose to power as the King of England. Their mother, Emma, a French noble, ultimately remarried Cnut, due to her previous husband, King Æthelred’s untimely death. This created a web of interconnected relationships between France, England, and Denmark, as Edward and Alfred grew up in Duke Richard II’s (their maternal uncle) house in Normandy. Their cousin, Robert, had an illegitimate child, William, who eventually came to be known as the infamous William the Conquerer.

³ Morris, Marc . *The Norman Conquest: The Battle of Hastings and the Fall of Anglo-Saxon England*. New York, New York: Pegasus Books LLC, 2012. (15).

Across from Normandy, Cnut, in England, was technically married to two different women. One of them, was English, named Ælfgifu, who⁴ “came from an English family based in the Midlands. An important family: her father had for a time been the earldom of southern Northumbria, until he was murdered on the orders of King Æthelred,”⁵ Cnut’s predecessor. It was after this marriage that Cnut married Emma, who was originally married to King Æthelred. This emergence of unity of the Normans and the Danes, via marriage, occurred in 1017. In true Viking fashion, Cnut attempted to assert his control over every area he could, through his connections and resources. This can especially be proven upon examination of how he implemented his sons’ inherited power throughout his growing kingdom. With Emma, Cnut had a son named, Harthacnut, whom he enlisted to reign over Denmark, since he himself was occupied with presiding over England at the time. Similarly, he had two sons with his first wife. They were named Harold and Swein. Upon Earl Hakon dying in 1030, Swein and his mother Ælfgifu were tasked with the opportunity to serve as the reigning officials of Norway, by none other than Cnut. However, a predicament seemed to have arisen once Cnut died. Who would be the new king of England? According to Marc Morris there was a precedent that, “The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle” discussed, in which⁶

“there was a meeting of his counsellors in Oxford. England already had a long tradition of such assemblies: it is a mark of the kingdom’s political maturity that in times

⁴ Morris, Marc . *The Norman Conquest: The Battle of Hastings and the Fall of Anglo-Saxon England*. New York, New York: Pegasus Books LLC, 2012.

⁵ Ibid, (30).

⁶ Ibid.

of crisis its leading men would generally come together to debate their differences rather than immediately reaching for their swords. But, the decision to meet in Oxford that Autumn shows how serious the situation had already become, for the town lay on the River Thames, which in turn marked the boundary between Wessex and Mercia. And, sure enough when the meeting took place, the two earldoms were divided over the succession. ‘Earl Leofric and almost all the thegns north of the Thames’, to quote the Chronicle, wanted their next king to be Harold. But ‘Earl Godwine and all the most prominent men in Wessex’ declared in favour of Harthacnut.”⁷

After this, the kingdom ultimately went to Harold because Harthacnut was preoccupied with reigning over Denmark. However, Harold died on March 17th, 1040, thus facilitating the transformation of the kingdom, in which Harthacnut was made King of England. But, as changes always provide an environment for discourse, this following discourse was not one of a positive nature. The people of England seemed to lack support for his rule because of the exorbitant implementation of taxation he established throughout the kingdom. According to Marc Morris, it was not solely just the issue of his taxation, he was also a⁸ “pledge-breaker, harrier of his own people: small wonder some powerful people started to look at Harthacnut and wonder if they might have made a mistake.”⁹

With this knowledge in mind, Harthacnut sought after the aid of his brother, Edward the Confessor, child of Æthelred, the former king before Cnut, and Emma in 1041. At this point,

⁷ Morris, Marc. *The Norman Conquest: The Battle of Hastings and the Fall of Anglo-Saxon England*. New York, New York: Pegasus Books LLC, 2012. (31,32).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid (40).

each brother would share the reign of England. The tides started changing again, though, because on June 8th, 1042, Harthacnut died upon taking a sip of a drink, as he was participating in the festivities of a wedding. This event obviously created a huge shift in England, as it was no longer a joint kingdom between the English and the Danes. Now it was solidly a kingdom from Æthelred's succession. During this entire time, there were different men known as "thegns," or the nobility, that were under the power of the Earls of the different regions throughout England. Marc Morris, further perpetuates this idea by explaining that¹⁰

"an ominous silence descends as England becomes a one-party state under the Godwines. Between them the four brothers controlled every part of England except Mercia, where scholarship has overturned the older notion, based on figures in the Domesday Book, that their combined income exceeded that of the estates, Edward probably retained the edge. But in pre-Conquest England, land and lordship were not automatically linked: a landowner could have tenants without necessarily being their lord, and a man could be 'commended' to a lord without necessarily holding was seemingly lacking. The Godwines, by contrast had an affinity that was vast, powerful and irresistibly expanding. Harold alone had a following measured in thousands, with scores of thegns commended to serve him in almost every shire."¹¹

So, as one can see, the Godwines had significant potency, perhaps even hegemony, despite the fact that they were not actually directly related to Kings Æthelred and Edward. On January 5th,

¹⁰ Morris, Marc . *The Norman Conquest: The Battle of Hastings and the Fall of Anglo-Saxon England*. New York, New York: Pegasus Books LLC, 2012.

¹¹ Ibid (107).

1066, King Edward died due to a malady. There seems to have been no search for a new king, even though King Edward never had a child with his wife, because promptly, thereafter¹², “Harold Godwineson was crowned as his successor.”¹³ The entire situation appears to be slightly murky though, as¹⁴

“Harold had promised William ‘that he would strive to the utmost with his counsel and with his wealth to ensure that the English monarchy should be pledged to him after Edward’s death’. The news that Harold had made himself king was thus regarded by William as a betrayal, a violation of the fealty and the other sacred oaths he had previously sworn... the duke’s immediate response was to send messengers to England urging Harold to renounce the throne and keep his pledges. Harold, unsurprisingly, chose to ignore these admonitions.”¹⁵

This blatant denial of truth, by Harold, caused William of Normandy to take matters into his own hands. Soon after, he established a group of people to help him infiltrate England. This event was the commencement of the Norman Conquest, which eventually led to the Battle of Hastings. William of Normandy succeeded in this gruesome battle, while, King Harold died in a manner that has been disputed by a couple of different sources. Upon his death¹⁶

¹² Morris, Marc . *The Norman Conquest: The Battle of Hastings and the Fall of Anglo-Saxon England*. New York, New York: Pegasus Books LLC, 2012.

¹³ Ibid (131).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid (142).

¹⁶ Ibid.

“The Normans, however, saw matters differently. On the Continent, a king was created at the moment of his coronation, not before. The Edgar episode, of course, gave them good reason for insisting on this point: the boy had not been crowned; ergo he was not king. The English may have thought this was rather irregular, but they were clearly in no position to debate constitutional practice, and so fell quickly into line with Norman thinking. At the same time, they realized that this new logic left the country in an anxious state of limbo: England would have no king until William was crowned. Hence, says William of Poitiers, ‘the bishops and other leading men begged him to take the crown, saying that they were accustomed to obey a king, and wished to have a king as their lord’. The Normans, too, urged their leader to take the throne quickly, albeit for different reasons. ‘They wished their gains and honours to be increased by his elevation.’”¹⁷

This is where everything takes a turn. As the new king, William the Conqueror was the king of England, and since he hailed from France, and all of his noblemen took over the ranks of nobility in England, due to the majority of the previous English noblemen dying from participating in the Battle of Hastings, the entire trajectory of the culture, society, and England forevermore appeared differently. If one were to take a second to think of this issue from an outside perspective, it is entirely expected that they would reach the conclusion that this is inevitable. This is because whenever anyone is in charge of a group of people that obtain a lesser amount of power, they will ultimately start to shift their thinking, opinions, and manner

¹⁷ Morris, Marc . *The Norman Conquest: The Battle of Hastings and the Fall of Anglo-Saxon England*. New York, New York: Pegasus Books LLC, 2012. (197).

of acting to resemble their leader, whether or not this happens consciously or subconsciously.

This idea can further be proven by John W. Clark, who explained that¹⁸

“in short, before the end of the eleventh century, the throne, the royal administration, education, almost all the agricultural land (and hence almost all the wealth and economic power), and all the great places in the church and many of the small ones were possessed by men of French birth, French culture, and French language. French had become within three decades inevitably the daily language, both spoken, and written, of nine out of ten of the persons of weight and substance in England.”¹⁹

So, with this in mind, it is imperative to examine the different ways in which the English people started to merge their culture from being inherently Anglo-Saxon to more French in nature. This can be done through a multitude of different lenses, but first it is interesting, and very telling, to look at the way that religion in England played a hugely pivotal part in the shaping of the English language, after William the Conqueror became king of England.²⁰

The Religious Denouement within the English Language

What was happening in the area of religion during these proceeding years of William the Conqueror’s reign is of intrigue. After this period, came an era in which “holy poetry” was regarded as a form of literature with high esteem. This is because many people of prominence within this era, also known as the Reformation, sought after a way to juxtapose religious ideas

¹⁸ Clark, John W. . *Early English: An introduction to Old and Middle English*. New York, NY: The Norton Library: W. W. Norton & Company Inc. , 1957.

¹⁹ Ibid (111).

²⁰ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

and ideals against the normative form of literature at the time. This can, especially, be seen through Andrew Marvell's writing, entitled, "The Coronet,"²¹

"When for the thorns with which I long, too long,
With many a *piercing* wound,
My *Saviour's* head have *crowned*,
I seek with *garlands* to *redress* that wrong:
Through every *garden*, every mead,
I gather *flow'rs* (my *fruits* are only *flow'rs*)
Dismantling all the *fragrant* tow'rs
That once *adorned* my shepherdess's head.
And now when I have *summed* up all my *store*,
Thinking (so I myself *deceive*)
So rich a *chaplet* thence to weave
As never yet the King of *Glory* wore:
Alas I find the *serpent* old
That, twining in his speckled breast,
About the *flow'rs disguised* does fold,
With wreaths of *fame* and *interest*.
Ah, foolish man, that wouldst debase with them,
And *mortal glory*, Heaven's *diadem*!

²¹ Elizabeth Clark, "Religious Verse" in [A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture: Volume Two](#), ed. Michael Hattaway (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 382.

But Thou who only could'st the *serpent* tame,
Either his slipp'ry knots at once untie,
And disentangle all his winding snare:
Or shatter too with him my *curious* frame:
And let these wither, so that he may die,
Though set with skill and chosen out with care.
That they, while Thou on both their *spoils* dost tread,
May *crown* thy feet, that could not *crown* thy head.”²²

Interestingly, Anne, Lady Southwell, also provides an intriguing insight into her thoughts regarding religion and Francis Quarles through the means of an acrostic poem.²³ All of the words that are Anglo Norman or French in origin will be bolded and italicized in an effort to further showcase how wildly influential the French Normans were, through the aftermath of the Battle of Hastings. Her poem is as follows,

“Fain would I die whilst thy *brave muse* doth live

Quaintest of all the Heliconian *train*

Raised by thy *artful* quill, that life doth give

Unto the dullest things, thy fiery *stain*

Adds *immortality*, *maugre privation*

²² Andrew Marvell, “The Coronet,” in *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture: Volume Two*, ed. Michael Hattaway (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 387. [All words that are Anglo-Norman or French in origin in this poem will be emboldened and italicized (Marvell 2010, 387)]

²³ Elizabeth Clarke, “Religious Verse,” in *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture Volume Two*, ed. Michael Hattaway (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 392.

And by thy **power** brings forth a new **creation**.

Unhappy they that **poesy profess**,

Raising their thoughts by any star but thine,

Nor let them think **celestial powers** will bless

Loose **ballads** or hyperbolising **rhyme**;

Curst be those **sulph'rous channels** that make stink;

Each crystal drop that in their **crannies** sink;

Enthroned thy Phoenix in Jehovah's breast:

Since she **approves** herself bird of that nest

So shall she live immaculate and blest."²⁴

Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable offer a litany of words to further prove the substantial amount of influence that the French language, through religious words, had on the English language. This is because²⁵

“in monasteries and religious houses French was for a long time the usual language. Accordingly we find in English such French words as *religion, theology, sermon, homily, sacrament, baptism, communion, confession, penance, prayer, orison,*

²⁴ Anne, Lady Southwell, Untitled Poem, in [A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture: Volume Two](#), ed. Michael Hattaway (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 392.

²⁵ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

lesson, passion, psalmody; such indications of rank or class as *clergy, clerk, prelate, cardinal, legate, dean, chaplain, parson, pastor, vicar, sexton, abbess, novice, friar, hermit*; the names of objects associated with the service or with the religious life, such as *crucifix, crosier, miter, surplice, censer, incense, lectern, image, chancel, chantry, chapter, abbey, convent, priory, hermitage, cloister, sanctuary*; words expressing such fundamental religious or theological concepts as *creator, savior, trinity, virgin, saint, miracle, mystery, faith, heresy, schism, reverence, devotion, sacrilege, simony, temptation, damnation, penitence, contrition, remission, absolution, redemption, salvation, immortality*, and the more general virtues of *piety, sanctity, charity, mercy, pity, obedience*, as well as the word *virtue* itself. We should include also a number of adjectives, like *solemn, divine, reverend, devout*, and verbs, such as *preach, pray, chant, repent, confess, adore, sacrifice, convert, anoint, ordain*.”²⁶

So, common are these words, that every Christian and Catholic, who speaks the English language, will have encountered the majority of these words. But these words transcend religion as a number of them have reached the secular realm, as well, such as “confession,” “lesson,” “passion,” “novice,” “redemption,” “temptation,” “immortality,” “charity,” “mercy,” “pity,” “obedience,” “divine,” “chant,” and “adore.”²⁷ This proves how strong of a presence the French language has had on the English language. It was able to withstand centuries of

²⁶ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (170).

²⁷ *Ibid* (170).

separation between the Norman rule in England and present day in England while miraculously entrenching itself into an entirely different subsection of the English language.

English Gastronomy

It is interesting to take into consideration how much the French adore cuisine. This ideal, among the Norman nobles, was carried into England, as there is a huge conglomeration of words, related to food in any capacity, that have entered into the English Language. Baugh and Cable offer a substantial list of these specific words, and they are as follows:²⁸

“dinner and supper... feast, repast, collation, and mess (now military). So, too, are appetite, taste, victuals, viand, and sustenance. One could have found on the medieval menu, had there been one, among the fish, mackerel, sole, perch, bream, sturgeon, salmon, sardine, oyster, porpoise; among meats, venison, beef, veal, mutton, pork, bacon, sausage, tripe, with a choice of loin, chine, haunch, or brawn, and with gravy included; among fowl, poultry, pullet, pigeon, and various game birds mentioned below. One could have pottage, gruel, toast, biscuit, cream, sugar, olives, salad, lettuce, endive, and for dessert almonds, and many fruits, including raisin, fig, date, grape, orange, lemon, pomegranate, cherry, peach, or a confection, pasty, tart, jelly, treacle. Among seasoning and condiments we find spice, clove, thyme, herb, mustard, vinegar, marjoram, cinnamon, nutmeg. The verbs roast, boil, parboil, stew, fry, broach, blanch, grate, and mince describe various culinary processes, and goblet, saucer, cruet, plate, platter, suggest French refinements in the serving of meals. It is melancholy to think

²⁸ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

what the English dinner table would have been like had there been no Norman conquest.”²⁹

This is a fascinating list to ruminate over as it seems to be fairly all-encompassing of the gastronomy that can be found throughout England. If it were not for these foods, the English would not have the ability to prepare Shepherds Pie, or jam for their biscuits during their daily tea ritual. As a side note, it is very telling to synthesize that every single type of meat that is on the average omnivore’s table has a name that is derived from the French language.³⁰ That highlights the sheer power of the French language within the English language. Oftentimes it is entirely imperceptible, as orthography has changed over time. Not to mention, it further illustrates how the French language surpassed its original intentions with specific words, like, “mess” being attributed to the “military.”³¹

Beaux Arts’ Shining Foray into the English Language

Within English culture, it is very apparent that “art” and “learning” were held in high esteem as two of the oldest universities hail from England.³² They are Oxford and Cambridge. To showcase the depth of this esteem, Baugh and Cable have created a list in which³³

“art, painting, sculpture, music, beauty, color, figure, image, tone, are typical of the first class, while architecture, and building have given us cathedral, palace, mansion,

²⁹ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (171, 172).

³⁰ Ibid (172).

³¹ Ibid (171).

³² Ibid (172).

³³ Ibid.

*chamber, ceiling, joist, cellar, garret, chimney, lintel, latch, lattice, wicket, tower, pinnacle, turret, porch, bay, choir, cloister, baptistry, column, pillar, base, and many similar words. Literature is represented by the word itself and by poet, rime, prose, romance, lay, story, chronicle, tragedy, prologue, preface, title, volume, chapter, quire, parchment, vellum, paper, and pen, and learning by treatise, compilation, study, logic, geometry, grammar, noun, clause, gender, together with verbs like copy, expound, and compile,”*³⁴

are further examined to prove that the French had the most powerful influence over the English culture than any other people group that has invaded England.³⁵ Art can be seen in a various set of different forms, one being the illustrious, oftentimes misunderstood, form of literature: poetry. It is through poetry that the thesis being presented in this paper can be proven, especially through examining the likes of John Milton and William Wordsworth. John Milton wrote the wildly famous poem, “Paradise Lost,” which happens to be laced with a smattering of words that are French in origin. To help show this, each word in these poems that is originally from French, will be bolded and italicized,

“...As far as gods and heavenly ***essences***

Can ***perish***: for the mind and ***spirit remains***

Invincible, and ***vigour*** soon ***returns***,

³⁴ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (172,173).

³⁵ Ibid.

Through all our *glory* extinct, and happy state
Here swallowed up in endless *misery*.
But what if he our *conqueror* (whom I now
Of *force* believe almighty, since no less
Than such could have o'versed *powered* such *force* as ours)
Have left us this is our *spirit* and strength *entire*
Strongly to *suffer* and *support* our *pains*,
That we may so *suffice* his *vengeful ire*,
Or do him mightier *service* as his thralls
By right of *war*, whate'er his business be,
Here in the heart of hell to work in fire,
Or do his errands in the gloomy deep?...³⁶

William Wordsworth also provides a stunning image of his inner thoughts through his poem, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798,"³⁷ replete with Anglo Norman words or words that were introduced into the English language from the French language via the Normans after the Battle of Hastings

³⁶ John Milton, "Paradise Lost," in The Best Poems of the English Language: From Chaucer Through Frost, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2004), 224, 225, book 1, lines 138-152.

³⁷ Bloom, Harold. "Tintern Abbey," in The Best Poems of the English Language From Chaucer Through Frost, 325. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2004.

initiated William the Conqueror as the king of England. Again, all of the words that fit the aforementioned requirements will be bolded and italicized. This poem not only illustrates the longevity and fervor with which these words have flourished within the English language, but it also proves how these originally foreign words to the citizens of England, have now become so commonplace that they can be utilized with such propensity without fear of the majority being incapable of comprehending his writings. The poem is as follows:

“...These *beauteous forms*,

Through a long *absence*, have not been to me

As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye:

But oft, in lonely rooms, and ‘mid the din

Of towns and *cities*, I have owed to them

In *hours* of weariness, sensations sweet,

Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;

And *passing* even into my *purser* mind,

With *tranquil restoration*:-feelings too

Of *unremembered pleasure*: such, *perhaps*,

As have no slight or trivial *influence*

On that best *portion* of a good man’s life,

His little, nameless, *unremembered, acts*

Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of *aspect* more *sublime*; that blessed mood
In which the burthen of the *mystery*,
In which the *affections gently* lead us on,-
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the *motion* of our *human* blood
Almost *suspended*, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made *quiet* by the *power*
Of *harmony*, and the deep *power* of *joy*,
We see into the life of things..."³⁸

The Norman Government's Entrance into the English Language

It is easy to deduce that as William the Conqueror took over power in England, he too, completely changed the government simultaneously with other areas of culture. With this shift, naturally a shift would also arise linguistically to adequately describe what was occurring

³⁸ William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798," in The Best Poems of the English Language From Chaucer through Frost, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2004), 326, 327, lines 23-48.

throughout England, especially within the government. These words could be related to the idea of a leader, or even what a leader does activity-wise during his career. To help further explain this idea, Baugh and Cable give an exhaustive list in *The History of the English Language*, starting with³⁹

“*government, govern, administer*, might appropriately introduce a list of such words. It would include such fundamental terms as *crown, state, empire, realm, reign, royal, prerogative, authority, sovereign, majesty, scepter, tyrant, usurp, oppress, court, council, parliament, assembly, statute, treaty, alliance, record, repeal, adjourn, tax, subsidy, revenue, tally, exchequer*. Intimately associated with the idea of government are also words like *subject, allegiance, rebel, traitor, treason, exile, public, liberty*. The word *office* and the titles of many offices are likewise French: *chancellor, treasurer, chamberlain, marshal, governor, councilor, minister, viscount, warden, castellan, mayor, constable, coroner*, and even the humble *crier*. Except for the words *king* and *queen, lord, lady, and earl*, most designations of rank are French: *noble, nobility, peer, prince, princess, duke, duchess, count, countess, marquis, baron, squire, page*, as well as such words as *courtier, retinue*, and titles of respect like *sir, madam, mistress*. The list might well be extended to include words relating to the economic organization of society-*manor, demesne, bailiff, vassal, homage, peasant, bondman, slave, servant...*” and ends with, “*caitiff*-since they often have a political or administrative aspect.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

⁴⁰ Ibid (169).

If it were not for the massive undertaking of the French language's infiltration into the English language, Americans, The British, Australians, and Canadians, along with every other country in the world that speaks in English, in regards to specific "governmental" issues, such as impending "economic" crises, looming warfare, or humanitarian aid, the personnel within each "government" would have no means in which they could address various heads of "offices" or discuss set norms within the established system.⁴¹

French Infiltration into the English Language

An interesting concept to ponder would be just how much did the French Normans contribute to English culture, and by extension the English language, through the military and their participation in battles, for example? It is not something that would normally be on one's mind, but it is interesting to note that the person seeking this knowledge will ultimately be infiltrated with an onslaught of words that are not Anglo-Saxon in origin. This onslaught of words as a list:⁴²

"...army and the navy... peace, enemy, arms, battle, combat, skirmish, siege, defense, ambush, stratagem, retreat, soldier, garrison, guard, spy, and we have kept the names of officers such as captain, lieutenant, sergeant. We recognize as once having had greater significance words like dart, lance, banner, mail, buckler, hauberk, archer, chieftain, portcullis, barbican, and moat. Sometimes we have retained a word while forgetting its original military significance. The word 'Havoc!' was originally an order

⁴¹ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (169).

⁴² Ibid.

giving an army the signal to commence plundering and seizing spoil. Verbs like to *arm*, *array*, *harness*, *brandish*, *vanquish*, *besiege*, *defend*, among many, suffice to remind us of this important French element in our vocabulary.”⁴³

In fact, there is such a multitude of military terms, that are French in origin, that it makes it difficult to comprehend how there was ever a military in England before the Normans invaded. Obviously, the previous statement is not true because there had been plenty of battles prior to William’s invasion, so it leaves the reader to wonder, where did the original Anglo-Saxon terms disappear to? Thus, further proving that the French have had the most influence on the English language than any other group that has invaded England throughout the establishment of England.⁴⁴

Norman Culture’s Procession into the English Language

A fascinating area of study is culture and the underlying ideas that it possesses, such as, “fashion, meals, and social life.”⁴⁵ To truly fathom how deeply interconnected cultural terms are related to the ruling leader, and thereby in extension, French terms being interconnected with terms that are discussed frequently within England, one should read this excerpt from Baugh and Cable’s book, *A History of the English Language*:⁴⁶

“that the upper classes should have set the standard in fashion and dress is so obvious an assumption that the number of French words belonging to this class

⁴³ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (171).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid (171).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

occasions no surprise. The words fashion and dress are themselves French, as are *apparel, habit, gown, robe, garment, attire, cape, cloak, coat, frock, collar, veil, train, chemise, petticoat*. So too are *lace, embroidery, pleat, gusset, buckle, button, tassel, plume*, and the names of such articles as *kerchief, mitten, garter, galoshes, and boots*. Verbs like *embellish* and *adorn* often occur in contexts which suggest the word *luxury*, and this in turn carries with it *satin, taffeta, fur, sable, beaver, ermine*. The colors *blue, brown, vermilion, scarlet, saffron, russet, and tawny* are French borrowings of this period. *Jewel, ornament, brooch, chaplet, ivory, and enamel* point to the luxuries of the wealthy, and it is significant that the names of all the more familiar precious stones are French: *turquoise, amethyst, topaz, garnet, ruby, emerald, sapphire, pearl, diamond*, not to mention *crystal, coral, and beryl*.⁴⁷

Another interesting component within English culture are⁴⁸

“the innovations made by the French in domestic economy and social life. *Arras, curtain, couch, chair, cushion, screen, lamp, lantern, sconce, chandelier, blanket, quilt, coverlet, counterpane, towel, and basin*, indicate articles of comfort or convenience, while *dais, parlor, wardrobe, closet, pantry, scullery, and garner* (storehouse) imply improvements in domestic arrangements. *Recreation, solace, jollity, leisure, dance, carol, revel, minstrel, juggler, fool, ribald, lute, tabor, melody, music, chess, checkers, dalliance, and conversation...ambler, courser, hackney, palfrey, rouncy, stallion, for*

⁴⁷ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (171).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

various types of horse, together with *rein, curb, crupper, rowel, curry, trot, stable, harness; mastiff, terrier, spaniel, leash, kennel, scent, retrieve; falcon, merlin, tercelet, mallard, partridge, pheasant, quail, plover, heron, squirrel; forest, park, covert, warren... joust, tournament, pavilion.*"⁴⁹

The French Language's Parle into the English Language

To truly grasp the entirety of the transformation of culture that arose throughout England, one should take a look at the litany of words that Baugh and Cable asserted in *A History of the English Language*, under the sub-section, "Breadth of the French Influence."⁵⁰

They state that

"one has only to glance over a miscellaneous list of words-nouns, adjectives, verbs-to realize how universal was the French contribution. In the noun we may consider the range of ideas in the following list, made up of words that were already in English by 1300: *action, adventure, affection, age, air, bucket, bushel, calendar, carpenter, cheer, city, coast, comfort, cost, country, courage, courtesy, coward, crocodile, cruelty, damage, debt, deceit, dozen, ease, envy, error, face... fame, fault, flower, folly, force, gibbet, glutton, grain, grief, gum, harlot, honor, hour, jest, joy, labor, leopard, malice, manner, marriage, mason, metal, mischief, mountain, noise, number, ocean, odor, opinion, order, pair, people, peril, person, pewter, piece, point, poverty, powder, power, quality, quart, rage, rancor, reason, river, scandal, seal, season, sign,*

⁴⁹ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (172).

⁵⁰ Ibid (173).

sound, sphere, spirit, square, strife, stubble, substance, sum, tailor, task, tavern, tempest, unity, use, vision, waste," and then, "*able, abundant, active, actual, amiable, amorous, barren, blank, brief, calm, certain, chaste, chief, clear, common, contrary, courageous, courteous, covetous, coy, cruel, curious, debonair, double, eager, easy, faint, feeble, fierce, final, firm, foreign, frail, frank, gay, gentle, gracious, hardy, hasty, honest, horrible, innocent, jolly, large, liberal, luxurious, malicious, mean, moist, natural, nice, obedient, original, perfect, pertinent, plain, pliant, poor, precious, principal, probable, proper, pure, quaint, real, rude, safe, sage, savage, scarce, second, secret, simple, single, sober, solid, special, stable, stout, strange, sturdy, subtle, sudden, supple, sure, tender, treacherous, universal, usual.* A list of the verbs borrowed at the same time shows equal diversity. Examples are: *advance, advise, aim, allow, apply, approach, arrange, arrive, betray, butt, carry, chafe, change, chase, close, comfort, commence, complain, conceal, consider, continue, count, cover, covet, cry, cull, deceive, declare, defeat, defer, defy, delay, desire, destroy, embrace, enclose, endure, enjoy, enter, err, excuse, flatter, flourish, force, forge, form, furnish, grant, increase, inform, inquire, join, languish, launch, marry, mount, move, murmur, muse, nourish, obey, oblige, observe, pass, pay, pierce, pinch, please, practise, praise, prefer, proceed, propose, prove, purify, pursue, push, quash, quit, receive, refuse, rejoice, relieve, remember, reply, rinse, rob, satisfy, save, scald, serve, spoil, strangle, strive, stun, succeed, summon, suppose, surprise, tax, tempt, trace, travel, tremble, trip, wait, waive, waste, wince.*"⁵¹

⁵¹ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (173,174).

This just shows how expansive French etymology is throughout the English language. One can hardly describe anything without needing to attach a “verb” to it that hales from the French language, or Norman French.⁵² Ultimately, this section is the culmination of the prowess the French language has had over the English language in any capacity.⁵³

The Norman Government’s Entrance into the English Language

As with any change in leaders within a government, of course, so too, will there be a change in the outlook of the government. This can be found within the policies that are foregone from prior eras, along with the invention of new ones that are to be put in place. On occasion, new positions will be created to fulfil the burgeoning demands that the new regime, monarchy, or administration has created. While at other times the same exact positions will still be present, yet they will go through a faze of renaming. This might occur due to a shift in society that is happening simultaneously, as was the case with the title “stewardess” for a woman who attends to individuals’ needs through the duration of the flight, to formally being changed to a “flight attendant” to diminish the level of sexism that is implied from the previous title. However, within this time-period, the words were going through an overhaul due to the French being in power in every way. This aforementioned statement can be further proven by the list that Baugh and Cable provide in their book, *A History of the English Language*:⁵⁴

“...bar, assize, eyre, plea, suit, plaintiff, defendant, judge, advocate, attorney, bill, petition, complaint, inquest, summons, hue and cry, indictment, jury, juror, panel, felon,

⁵² Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (173,174).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

evidence, proof, bail, ransom, mainpernor, judgment, verdict, sentence, decree, award, fine, forfeit, punishment, prison, goal, pillory. We have likewise a rich array of verbs associated with legal processes: *sue, plead, implead, accuse, indict, arraign, depose, blame, arrest, seize, pledge, warrant, assail, assign, judge, condemn, convict, award, amerce, distrain, imprison, banish, acquit, pardon.* The names of many crimes and misdemeanors are French: *felony, trespass, assault, arson, larceny, fraud, libel, slander, perjury, adultery,* and many others. Suits involving property brought into use such words as *property, estate, tenement, chattels, appurtenances, encumbrance, bounds, seisin, tenant, dower, legacy, patrimony, heritage, heir, executor, entail.* Common adjectives like *just, innocent, culpable* have obvious legal import though they are also of wider application.”⁵⁵

Upon reflection, it is abundantly apparent that the Battle of Hastings was an event that has facilitated the most enormous change from Old English to Middle English, which eventually led to Modern English, due to the ramifications that occurred. Due to the Normans presiding as the nobility throughout England after the Battle, every facet of culture was subsequently affected as there was a dichotomy between the people of England who spoke English, or Old English, while the nobles spoke in Norman French. Eventually, as it can be seen historically, the two entirely different languages began to establish a Creole language as the Anglo-Saxons and the French commenced daily interactions in various settings.⁵⁶ To establish this information, poetry written by English speakers, throughout a few different centuries, was examined. Each

⁵⁵ Baugh, Albert C. , and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. (170).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

word's etymology was investigated in the Oxford English Dictionary to prove the connection between the Norman's language and its ultimate presence in the English language. Once a word's etymology was guaranteed French, then that specific word was bolded and italicized and was given a specific color to signify if it was solely French, a mixture between French and Latin etymologically, French and Italian etymologically, or somewhat, but not entirely, French etymologically.

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