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THE ROLE OF POPULAR CULTURE IN LANGUAGE BORROWING BETWEEN  
FRENCH AND ENGLISH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Humanities

By

MARIANNE ELIZABETH BROADWATER  
B.A., Wright State University, 2005

2007  
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November 15, 2007

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Marianne Elizabeth Broadwater ENTITLED The Role of Popular Culture in Language Borrowing Between French and English BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Humanities.

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## ABSTRACT

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The Role of Popular Culture in Language Borrowing Between French and English.

This thesis proposes that popular culture often derives from the privileged upper classes and that popular culture established by the elite has played an important role in linguistic exchange throughout history between French and English. Focusing on the time periods 1066 AD to 1500 AD and the twentieth and twenty first centuries, it describes the manner of exchange and development of French and English lexicons and analyzes in detail the histories of one French word and one English word. Additionally, the examples given in this thesis illustrate the flow of popular culture from the high-ranking and powerful members of society to the common people.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| I. Introduction.....   | 1    |
| II. Historical Development of French and English with<br>Examples of Interborrowing..... | 6    |
| III. The Influence of Popular Culture on the Evolution of<br>French and English.....     | 24   |
| IV. A Detailed Analysis of Two Examples of Linguistic<br>Exchange.....                   | 44   |
| V. Conclusion.....   | 62   |
| Works Cited.....   | 65   |

## I. Introduction

Culture and language go hand-in-hand given that the cultural trends of a time period influence oral and written language in both subtle and overt manners. Words allow us to communicate ideas laden with specific cultural and social nuances and historically contextualized connotations. Thus, words not only represent objects, but societal uses, beliefs, and stereotypes relating to those objects. While many people believe that the path language follows begins with the lower levels of society, working its way up to the elite classes, I would argue the opposite: that the dominant classes wielding linguistic power instigate linguistic conventions that then become generalized. Usually, speakers borrow words carrying high social value that are used dynamically in oral contexts reflecting contemporary social trends and movements. In other words, speakers choose to emulate the popular culture shaped by the upper classes as characterized by the language spoken therein.

Moreover, one would be naive to wholly attribute popular culture to the masses because it is clear that

throughout the ages the elite have inspired sociolinguistic trends that have filtered down to the people. My study will focus on popular culture as a catalyst for the cross-pollination of French and English vocabulary, spelling, and grammar beginning in 1066 with the Norman invasion of England. In this paper, I will show that the notion of the "elite" has evolved to connote not only the royal and upper middle classes, but significantly the celebrities and notorious members of modern society. My objective is to prove that "popular culture" as dictated or imposed by elite social strata has always been a powerful vehicle for the symbiotic development of languages that mutually influence each other.

Before starting a discussion of popular culture in language, it may be beneficial to give some accepted definitions of the term to help clarify the concept. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "popular culture" as "the cultural traditions of the ordinary people of a particular community," and though there is no entry in the *American Heritage Dictionary* for "popular culture," its abbreviation "pop" is defined as "of or for the general public; popular or popularized: *pop culture; pop psychology*." Views such as these are mirrored by *The Journal of Popular Culture*

whose website expounds on the definition of this phenomenon:

The popular culture movement was founded on the principle that the perspectives and experiences of common folk offer compelling insights into the social world. The fabric of human social life is not merely the art deemed worthy to hang in museums, the books that have won literary prizes or been named "classics," or the religious and social ceremonies carried out by societies' elite.

As one can see, according to these definitions, popular culture pertains to the common people and the social trends to which they adhere.

However, I am of the opinion that the famous, celebrated and even notorious members of a society are often the originators of fashionable culture traits and, subsequently, linguistic innovations. I would even venture to say that popular culture and language often derive from the elite layers of society, contrary to the accepted notion that they originate from the people. Examples of this phenomenon abound in contemporary American culture where corporations determine music choice, popular clothing, slang, and other lifestyle accessories through

clever marketing strategies. An example of this intricate system can be found in the path taken by trendy expressions like *bling-bling*, that receive consecration through publication in respected dictionaries. While such terms may arise from a creative epiphany, they first garner public attention via mass distribution by a powerful record company. Minya Oh states that the group "Cash Money Millionaire" coined the term *bling-bling* in the late 90s, which would never have attained dictionary status without the backing of corporate sponsorship. Furthermore, with the success of French rap star MC Solaar's song "Bling Bling," the term has attained widespread usage in France and French speaking countries ("Mach 6"). If one believes that the lower economic classes exert unilateral cultural influence in social and therefore linguistic trends, then one must willingly suspend one's knowledge of the cutthroat nature of the recording industry, the "kings" of popular music that make or break artists and their creations.

Many of today's "fads" and "crazes" begin with a person or group of people who wield some cultural influence in society, whether they be movie or sports stars, musicians, or any other kind of celebrity. Today's celebrities have their parallels in medieval society in the

nobility. Just as actors, singers, and athletes guide our culture today, so did the nobility of the medieval period.

An example of this in medieval times is the troubadour. Though the troubadour targeted the nobility with his poetry, he was often not a member of that class being poor or of low birth (Moller 138, 160) and so, in order to be successful, he had to use the vocabulary of the nobility. However, one can not assume the exclusion of lower class audiences simply because the troubadour specifically aimed his work at the upper classes. The troubadour's work was, by nature, an oral and public entity. Moller supports this stating that the poetry "was not read in privacy but presented at social gatherings" (138) and, as such, it would have been audible to many members of the elite classes, with royal servants present. In this way, vocabulary could pass from the nobility to servants, serfs, or peasants, thus making certain words "popular" and bringing linguistic usage of the two classes closer together, creating a common lexicon.

## II. Historical Development of French and English with Examples of Interborrowing

In order to understand the intimate historical connections between French and English, it is helpful to explore the evolution of the two languages. First I will trace the development of interaction between the two languages through war, peace, intermarriage (of royalty), and cultural "imperialism." Then I will analyze the historical influence of popular culture as I define it in the oral, then written emergence of Modern French and English as reciprocating recipients of cultural fads.

Although French and English derive from two different families of the Indo-European linguistic group, the two languages share much common vocabulary and some similar grammatical structures. This is due to the history of rivalry and invasion and cultural sharing between the speakers of these languages. A good starting point for comparison between the two languages is to examine their origins and early histories.

The origins of English lie in northern Europe in the areas of northern Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands.

The Germanic-speaking people in these regions (the Saxons, Angles and Jutes) began invading and settling England in the fifth century A.D., around the time the Romans were leaving. After displacing the Celtic tribes to the extreme north and west of the island, they set up their own kingdoms in central and southern England (Knowles 20).

Bill Bryson states that it is very difficult to say exactly when these Germanic people began speaking English. However, it can be definitively stated that English was a separate language due to the appearance of the first written texts<sup>1</sup> in the eighth century (Knowles 28). Late in the same century, Vikings (or Danes) from Norway and Denmark began invading the northern areas of the country (Knowles 33). Approximately one hundred years later, the English king, Alfred, made a treaty with the Danes. This treaty cut the country in half from London to Chester, creating the area in the northeast known as the Danelaw where the Danes set up their own kingdom. In the middle of

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<sup>1</sup> The language of these texts, though, is hardly recognizable as English. This is due in part to the large system of inflections that no longer exist in Modern English. The other factor is the absence of a large chunk of vocabulary that will not enter the language for several centuries.

the tenth century, the English recaptured the Danelaw and integrated it into a united England (Knowles 35).

It would not be long before England was troubled by invaders once more. One of the most important events in the history of the English language is the Battle of Hastings in 1066, marking the end of the Old English period and the beginning of Middle English<sup>2</sup>. William<sup>3</sup>, later known as the Conqueror, crossed the English Channel from Normandy intent on defeating his rival to the English throne, Harold. Upon his victory, William brought with him the French feudal system and his language, Norman French<sup>4</sup>.

William discarded much of the English aristocracy, government officials and clergy replacing them with members of the French upper class (Millward 143). For this reason, the language of the English elite quickly changed to

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<sup>2</sup> Scholars generally use this battle to mark the end of Old English and the beginning of Middle English because it marks the beginning of large-scale French influence on English.

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, the Normans were descendants of Norse invaders who gave their name to the area, Normandy. William himself was the direct descendant of a Dane named Rollo (Millward 142).

<sup>4</sup> Norman French is a dialect that is slightly different from the Standard variety that developed around Paris. According to Bryson and C. M. Millward this is an important factor in helping English regain its status with the upper classes (54, 142).

French, also known as the Anglo-Norman dialect. Those wishing to gain higher status in society soon realized they would have to learn the language. However, the number of French speakers in England was relatively small. Most of the population was English speaking peasantry who had very little need to speak fluent French.

The largest borrowing of vocabulary occurred at this time with English adopting approximately 10,000 words into its vocabulary (Nicholls, "The Routes of English" and "The Making of Middle English"). As I will discuss later, the new French vocabulary covered many categories reflecting both the popular and prestigious areas of French culture, with the grand majority pertaining to higher society. Moreover, many of these expressions did not replace their English equivalents, but either became more "cultured" synonyms of English words or pushed the English words into narrower, more specific meanings.

In 1204, French king Philip II chased the English out of Normandy thereby isolating them with respect to the European continent. Because of this insularity, the French aristocracy in England began to feel more English and increasingly less attached to continental mores and language. In addition, since the Anglo-Norman dialect spoken by the ruling class in England was a low-prestige

variety in France and was difficult for the French to understand, they ridiculed it mercilessly, thus alienating the Anglo-Normans from their European counterparts (Millward 144). For these reasons, English gradually began to gain recognition as a national language, independent of French. Another contributing factor for the resurgence of English was the advent of the Bubonic Plague in England, which occurred in the middle of the fourteenth century. The Plague killed at least one third of the population, making workers scarce (Horrox and Ormrod 3, 185). Consequently, English-speaking peasants began to demand more money for their work, forcing their French-speaking lords to interact with them using their language in order to reach an agreement (Millward 145). This constant usage gave English a higher status in society.

The last vestiges of the popularity of the French language were lost during the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) between the English and the French. In the end, the English lost all of their French territory along with their desire to speak French (Millward 145). Eventually, by the end of the fourteenth century, English became once more the language of government in England (Knowles 51). At this point, there were few native speakers of French, and it had

to be taught in school as a second language instead of learned at home as a first language (Millward 144).

One of the essential differences between French and English is that French is a Romance Language. The Latin roots of French were sown during the Roman invasion of Gaul in 120 BC, and culminated with the defeat of the Celtic leader, Vercingétorix, in 52 BC (Wise 32). France, or Gaul, as it was called, was originally settled by the Celts. However, after the Roman invasion, the Celtic population was almost completely assimilated into Roman culture. Very little is known about the Gaulish language, and only a handful of their words survive today (Ravisé 2). In order to live in the dominant Roman society, the Celts learned the language of the oppressor, Latin. This Latin was not the classical version that scholars have studied for centuries, but the colloquial version spoken by the Roman soldiers and commoners living in the area during this era. Throughout this period in time, Latin was fluidly metamorphosing into separate dialects, which would, in turn, become the bases for new languages. While these dialects are collectively called Vulgar Latin because of their use by the common people (Herman 7), other scholars use the term Proto-Romance because of their differences and departures from Classical Latin (Elcock 20).

Some of the first written accounts of Proto-Romance comprise a document known as the *Appendix Probi*. In the early fourth century AD, a teacher named Probus compiled a list of incorrectly used terms and phrases that he encountered among the common people, in other words not in accordance with Classical standards (Rohlf's 24). A section of the *Appendix* reads like this,

*Speculum non speclum*

*Masculus non masclus*

*Articulus non articlus*

*Oculus non oclus.* (Rohlf's 25)

These pairs of words illustrate the pronunciation changes taking place at the time, and they serve to mark the first steps toward a distinct French language.

Around the time of Probus, Germanic tribes began invading from the east. By the end of the fifth century they had taken control of most of the western portion of the Roman Empire. In northern France, the dominant tribe was the Franks. They would not only lend their name to the area, but also a portion of their lexicon, especially war vocabulary. However, Latin remained a language of power and influenced every aspect of the emerging French society. Clovis, the first Christian king of France ruling from 481 to 511, made sure that Latin continued to be the language

of religion, making it as important for everyday life as his native Frankish (Rickard 8).

In 768, Charlemagne became king of the Franks (Ravisé 7), and instigated what is called the Carolingian Renaissance. Because he wanted to standardize the Latin the scholars were learning and teaching, he reformed the writing system. In response to the illegible, non-spaced, official documents, he created Carolingian Miniscule, a form of cursive writing with separated words in the body of the sentence, and lowercase letters and uppercase letters at the beginnings of sentences (Walter 66-67). In implementing these reforms, he and his people came to realize that they no longer easily understood Classical Latin, and they began to think of their language as separate from Latin.

During the reign of Charlemagne, the *Glosses of Reichenau* appeared. Since most texts in France were written in Latin and, as stated above, the scholars were beginning to have trouble understanding Latin, they began making notes in the margins of their texts. These notes were somewhat like dictionary entries giving alternate "French" words for their Latin counterparts. Phenomena like the *Glosses* led the bishops at the Council of Tours in 813 to allow priests to give sermons in the vernacular

language, then called the *rustica romana lingua*, and now known as Old French (Rickard 18). This made it possible for the uneducated common people to understand what their priests were saying.

Not long after, in 842, the earliest surviving document written officially in French appeared. The *Serments de Strasbourg* were oaths that were exchanged between two grandsons of Charlemagne, Charles the Bald and Louis the German, uniting them against their brother Lothaire (Ravisé 11). As a sign of good faith, each brother swore allegiance in the other's language. Louis's speech is written in Old French and though it is short, it remains one of the greatest milestones in the documented history of French.

In the same century, the Vikings began invading the northern coast of France, making incursions and even some settlements almost as far inland as Paris (Walter 80). Their violence and pillaging made such an impression on the kingdom that the king, Charles the Simple, gave them the territory of Normandy in 911. By this time, the northern invaders had already begun to think of themselves French, having intermarried with French women, given that few of their own wives had traveled with them (Walter 80). They also adopted the language and customs of the French. By

the time of William's conquest of England, they considered themselves wholly French, having completely forgotten their Scandinavian language, except for a few place names and some sailing vocabulary (Walter 85). A similar phenomenon occurred in England, thus explaining common place names in France and England.

Since English and French have some common ancestry, it follows that they share some similar vocabulary that originated directly from outside sources such as other Germanic languages and Latin. First, since Latin is a very prolific language, not only was it the basis for French, but it also loaned many words to Old English. The four hundred year long Roman occupation of England augmented the English vocabulary. In addition, in the fifth century, Romanized Germanic invaders who had picked up Latin on their way to England brought new Latin terms to the English language. There are many pairs of French and English words that independently developed from Latin. For instance, words such as *beurre* and *butter* both came from the Latin word *butyrum*. Others include *cuisine/kitchen* from *coquina*, *poivre/pepper* from *piper*, *école/school* from *schola* (which was actually a Greek word borrowed by Latin), *fièvre/fever*

from *febris*, *table/table* from *tabulus*, *poire/pear* from *pirum*, and *porte/port* from *portus*<sup>5</sup> (Pyles 314, 316-317).

French and English also share some common Germanic<sup>6</sup> roots. For instance, the French word *banc* and the English word *bench* are related in that they each derive from the Germanic word, *bank*<sup>7</sup>. Correspondingly, the verbs *choisir* and *choose* have similar Germanic ancestry. *Choisir* comes from Gothic *kausjan* while *choose* is from Old Frisian *kiasa*. The words *bière* and *beer* have an interesting history: both come from Middle Dutch *bier*. However, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the Germanic people took the word from the Latin verb *bibere* meaning *to drink*. Ironically, even the words designating the two languages are ultimately of Germanic origin: *Français* and *French* both come from the word *frank*, the name of the dominant tribe in France, and *anglais* and *English* come from *angle*, the name

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<sup>5</sup> According to Pyles, the words *tabulus*, *pirum*, and *portus* came from Celtic words the Romans picked up (317).

<sup>6</sup> *Les Emprunts Gallo-Romans au Germanique* contains a long list of French words of Germanic origin (Guinet 203)

<sup>7</sup> The following etymologies come from the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Dictionnaire étymologique et historique du français* (Dauzat et al.).

of a large tribe in England and *Angul*, its place of origin in Germany.

Moreover, French and English share a few Scandinavian words. These terms survive mainly in place names in both countries. Two such words are the French *bec* and *tot* and their English counterparts, *beck* and *toft* which mean *stream* and *village*, respectively. The places that contain these names are mainly in the northern areas of both countries, where Old Norse had the most influence. Names include *Esquetot*, *Appetot*, *Cadebec*, *Annebec*, *Bolbec*, *Houlbec* and *Beaubec* in France (Walter 84), and *Easttoft*, *Langtoft*, *Grizebeck*, and *Troutbeck* in England. The word *beck* is still used colloquially in the north of England to refer to a brook or stream (Millward 197). Walter states that *beck* is related to the German word with the same meaning *Bach* (84).

French was also a conduit for Celtic and Germanic words after the Norman invasion of England. English borrowings from French which were originally Celtic<sup>8</sup> include *car*, *change*, *garter*, *mutton*, *socket*, and *vassal* (Millward 201). The English words *blond* and *blank* come from the French equivalents, *blond* and *blanc*. These, in turn, came

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<sup>8</sup> Many of these words actually entered Latin first from Gaulish and into French from Latin before proceeding into English.

from the Germanic words *\*blund* and *\*blank*<sup>9</sup>. Other Celtic and Germanic words taken from Norman French and Old French include *dance, filter, furnish, guard, garnish, grape, hamlet, garden, march, regard,* and *soup*. All of the preceding words greatly resemble their Modern French counterparts.

It must be noted, that there are some English words that do not resemble modern French, while still being related. This is due to differences in the Norman dialect and the central dialects in and around Paris during the Old French period. A good example of this at work in the modern era is the word *war*. It may be difficult to connect this word with the Modern French *guerre*, however the two come from the same Frankish word, *\*werra*. The English word actually came from the Norman French dialect form *I* which retained the Germanic *w*. In the region around Paris, some words beginning with *w* and those beginning with *gw* took a *g* instead of a *w*. Another example of this kind of dichotomy involves the Latin /k/ sound before the letter *a* for which Parisian French adopted [tʃ] (spelled *ch*) and Norman French kept the [k] (spelled *c*) (Millward 201). English contains

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<sup>9</sup> The asterisk symbol (\*) denotes a word or form that scholars have not found written evidence for, but believe existed.

a number of doubles where it adopted both versions of the words such as *cattle/chattel* and *wile/guile*.

As the largest source of borrowed words in English, French permeates almost every aspect of English vocabulary. These areas include food, law, government, military and social rank. Thanks to French, English speakers begin salivating when they hear the words *mustard, sugar, stew,* and *beef*. The realm of law is laden with words such as *broker, arson, attorney,* and *indictment*. In addition, the government owes much to French for swelling English vocabulary with words like *oppress, tyranny, country* and the word *government* itself. Not only do many military ranks come from French but also *peace, moat, skirmish,* and *archer*. Many social ranks and forms of politeness such as *dame, servant, sir,* and *peasant* come from French because, as stated earlier, after the Norman invasion, most of the aristocracy of England was French.

Interestingly, time has a way of changing the balance of power, even between languages. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, English would have its revenge as it began heavily influencing French despite the valiant gate keeping efforts of the French government. The English rise to dominance as a language spoken around the world has made it very important to French vocabulary. Many English

words used in popular culture and technology have entered French vocabulary through television, film, music and capitalistic ventures. In addition, the meanings of many French words and phrases are changing and shifting to reflect meanings of similar words in English. Because the French are very protective of their language, not all of them have embraced these new anglicisms, alternatively called *franglais*. The French government has written laws regulating and restricting the use of English words in public and many French linguists have spoken out about the contamination English words bring to the French language.

Many new words are simply borrowed straight from English. Some are technological words like *laser* and *e-mail*. Others related to popular culture are *week-end*, *milk-shake* and *cow-boy* (Saugera 965-966). Many borrowings also come from English adjectives and, in conjunction with English nouns, are often used to create brand names. A good example of this is the word *fast*, taken from the English term *fast-food*. Picone gives a list of some of the brands created with this word: *Fast Frites*, *Fast Good*, *Fast Pizza*, *Fast Tchise*, *Fast Air*, *Fast Tour*, *Foto-Fast*, *Vidéo-Fast*, and *Transports Fast* (49).

The French also borrow English suffixes sometimes as false cognates. The most popular is probably the present

participle marker *-ing*. The process by which this suffix is used is simple but can lead to confusion. When an English word enters the French vocabulary, the French people take the whole word or, sometimes, part of it and add the suffix, thus creating a new word. Often this new word looks like a normal English word, but has a different meaning. An example of this is the French word *lifting* derived from and meaning the same as the English *face lift*.

Calques, or direct translations, are also an important part of English influence on French. Semantic calques occur when French words similar to English words take on the meaning of the English word. Two examples of this evolution are the words *réaliser* and *futur*. In French, the verb *réaliser* means *to accomplish*, but recently the meaning of the English verb, *to realize*<sup>10</sup>, has become part of the French verb (Picone 4). Similarly, *futur* previously meant *life after death*, but it is being used more frequently in the same way the English word, *future*<sup>11</sup>, is used (Rifelj 412). Structural calques are created when English is translated directly into French. Words such as *tour-opérateur*, *malfaiteur*, and *fibres optiques* are direct translations from English *tour operator*, *evil doer*, and

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<sup>10</sup> The standard French translation is *se rendre compte*.

<sup>11</sup> The standard French translation is *avenir*.

*fiber optics*. Often these words defy French grammar rules, but a few, like the French-invented but grammatically English *fibres optiques*, can have a dual meaning. In this case, it can mean either *fiber optics* or, using French grammar, *optical fibers* (94).

Purist grammarians have tried to avoid these anglicisms and condemn them as a kind of corruption of pure French. The French government has even created committees and councils to protect this integrity of the language, and has passed laws regarding the use of English words in public. The most famous of these is the law of August 4, 1994, generally called the Toubon Law, which prohibits the use of foreign words and expressions in public (in written advertisements, television commercials, public speaking, etc.) unless there is no equivalent in French ("Loi n°94-665").

Soon after the law was passed, Jean-Loup Chiflet published a book called *Sky Mr Allgood!* in which he makes fun of the government's suggestion to create French words to replace the English expressions. The book is a sarcastic and witty look at government proposed translations of French anglicisms, but additionally includes some of the author's own whimsical translations, created in a similar fashion. More recently, due to the

prevalence of anglicisms, publishers are beginning to print genuine *franglais* dictionaries. This, again, shows the popularity of borrowings from English.

Linguistic trading is as old a tradition as commercial trading. Studies such as mine do more than show the history behind certain words and phrases; they provide another way to trace the history of cultures and peoples, and even give us glimpses of the daily lives of our ancestors. A word like *garter*, or *porte-jartelles* in French, can tell us that, in Celtic times people would wear socks (or similar garments that needed to be held up) because this word ultimately comes from a Celtic word referring to the bend of the leg or the calf area. More importantly, the etymology of *garter* tells us that these garments were important enough to have one established word in the language that other languages assimilated into their own vocabulary. Linguistic borrowings can tell us a lot about common cultures and histories. For this reason alone, language represents an international exchange and, as such, a global community.

### III. The Influence of Popular Culture on the Evolution of French and English

Instances of popular culture are easily identifiable in modern times; however they are possibly more enigmatic for researchers studying the medieval period. Sometimes both time periods share genres and borrow similar kinds of words. Conversely, as time passes and the priorities of a society change, so does its culture and thus, many genres of borrowings from one time period will not have an analogue in the other. For example, borrowings pertaining to food seem to be universal in both time periods, but law terminology was only borrowed during the medieval period.

One must remember here that, as stated in the introduction, "popular culture" in many instances can be shown as deriving from high social prestige, upper classes, or celebrities. For instance, as I will discuss later, brand names as common vocabulary occur both figuratively and literally in modern language and figuratively in medieval speech. Brands become popular for the common people, but in a modern context, they originate from the upper class, affluent individuals who create them. One can

observe a similar phenomenon in the medieval period with the interdependency of the aristocracy and the common people whereby the aristocracy uses vocabulary that penetrates the lower layers of society.

For English, this development begins in the centuries immediately following the Norman conquest of England. The French language, both Norman and central French dialects, had a profound effect on English, but this effect was not purely linguistic. Given that language and culture are irrevocably linked, the changes occurring in English at that time reflect both the cultural causes and consequences of vocabulary assimilation.

The same is true of the situation between French and English today, except that the transfer of vocabulary is working in the opposite direction. English influences French a great deal, though the reverse was true during the medieval period. As before, these changes help us see elements of culture that often do not appear in history books. If we compare and analyze language used in both time periods, we can draw conclusions about universal or timeless cultural traits. For instance, the borrowing of food-related terms, shows the universal appreciation for food and cooking, and reveals changing tastes and gastronomic trends of a given historical period.

Sometimes exact parallels are difficult or impossible to identify. Important cultural traits change as people do. Technology, values and governments evolve, and language can be an indicator of these transformations occurring throughout history in society. Because of this, once popular aspects of society fade in the eyes of the public and new trends take their place. Some cultural trends seem to be timeless, but only time can tell which fads will last and which will fade into oblivion.

One interesting way to look at popular culture (as defined above) through language is to think of words as brand names, figuratively and literally. Thinking literally, many English words used today derive from brand names famous for the product they make. Examples of this are *Kleenex*, *Google*, *walkman*, and *Scotch* [tape]. These words represent popular brand names which are infiltrating the French language today through American popular culture. Searches on the internet at yahoo.fr will lead to many French-language web sites such as blogs or internet-published articles in which these words occur with the same meaning as the English. In fact, *google* and *scotch* can even be found in verb form (*googler* and *scotcher*). These brand names are prevalent enough in France, either in stores or in American media that they have been assimilated

into everyday speech, even though equivalent words or phrases exist for each product.

Brand names are a very important part of popular culture. Jenny Adams discusses brand names in terms of specific kinds of items in her article about the book *Timeline* by Michael Crichton. While discussing items important to the characters in the novel, she states that they "are commodities that acquire a cultural status through their respective claims to a specific name that connotes a specific value. In short, the rugs, like the car, are a type of brand" (707). So, the name of an item carries the weight of its cultural significance. This is how brand names such as those listed above have become synonymous with the things they represent, almost to the exclusion of other names. This theory can also be applied to more generic words when thinking in terms of pop culture. Words associated with a prestigious form of speech become similar to brand names in that they are the symbols of this culture.

For example, in the medieval period, French had (and still has today) two words for animals: the animal itself and the meat it provides. English created similar pairs by borrowing the French words for meats, not the animals from which they are derived, which tells us that the English

found French culinary culture to be very important. Perhaps the French aristocrats would request, in French of course, their English servants to prepare a dish. So, the servants would have to learn what that name was. Then, for the sake of convenience, this name would get passed down the line from the servants preparing the meal to those who had to acquire the particular piece of meat. Finally, this name is used regularly by the people working directly with the meat and so, anyone wishing to have it would need to know the new specialized name. This theoretical model serves to illustrate the manner in which the upper classes create a "brand name" from their lexicon that the masses then accept into their own.

One can compare a word like *beef* to *Kleenex* or *walkman* because each follows a similar journey. The powerful people in society create or use a word, and, because of that power, the word appeals to the masses who then accept its usage, sometimes regardless of the utility of the item which the word represents. For instance, a person who does not use tissues often may still call them Kleenex. Thus, even though medieval peasants would most likely not have been able to acquire meat for their meals, they would still acquire the vocabulary related to the food due to the interdependence of upper and lower classes.

Though this phenomenon took place in medieval times, it can be explained using the modern concept of "brand names." For example, today, if two stores both sold the meat from a cow, but one store called it "beef" and the other called it "cow" most people would probably wonder why the second store called their meat "cow" and buy from the first store which used the French word. Why? Like a brand name today, "beef" was something a French aristocrat ate and "cow" was a large animal peasants tended to in the fields. *Beef* connotes a connection to the refined, genteel, upper class which would appeal to anyone with the means eat the meat. Medieval English speakers using this word chose the aristocratic "brand" over the plebeian.

One can observe this inclination toward the prestigious in modern French food vocabulary borrowed from English. The French drink *milk-shakes* (Saugera 965) and *Bloody Marys* (Chiflet 11) and they eat popular American foods such as *hamburgers* and *hotdogs* (Chiflet 20). Even the American tradition of *fast food* bears the same name in French and many American fast-food restaurants exist in France, including the very popular McDonald's restaurants. McDonald's is a good example of the power food carries in society. The cultural event of eating at a McDonald's restaurant in the U.S. comes with its own vocabulary such

as *McNuggets*, *Big Mac*, *Happy Meal* and *McFlurry*. When the culture crossed the Atlantic Ocean, so did the vocabulary. All of these words can be found on the menu at French McDonald's restaurants, as well as their website. They were borrowed directly into the language, much in the same way English speakers in medieval times borrowed the French words for the different types of meat. This time McDonald's really is a brand name, and the prestigious nature of the vocabulary comes from the popularity of American culture in France.

Borrowing a cultural institution is not a new idea in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. After 1066, William introduced the French feudal system to England and with this came a new social hierarchy. The new class of nobles in England would have a profound effect on the vocabulary of English, especially given the interdependence of the classes under the feudal system. The idea of nobility as pop culture may seem to be a contradiction in terms however, the English nobles' need to conform to the dominant culture and language of the Franco-Norman occupier, and the consequent trickle down of elite ideas and expressions to the lower classes, can justify defining the Anglo-French aristocracy as purveyors of popular culture and language. An example of this transfer of

Franco-Norman aristocratic linguistic values to the lower classes within the context of the externally imposed feudal system can be seen in the various forms of formal address in letters from the fifteenth century. In his chapter on social hierarchy, Peter Coss gives examples of this phenomenon, and states that "their continuing use, even in contexts where they are undercut by expressions of hostility or affection, is symptomatic of a society acutely conscious of hierarchy," (73). Thus, conformity to the prescribed rituals of society was considered very important, permeating the upper and lower classes in England, and creating a channel for linguistic exchange.

An obvious example of aristocratically inspired linguistic enrichment can be seen in the plethora of Gallic titles flooding the English language post 1066. The English already had the words *æðeling* ("nobleman" or "prince"), *eorl* ("noble"), and *þeow* ("servant" or "slave") (Marsden 405, 428, 498), but they borrowed words (*prince*, *noble*, *servant* and *slave*) that had more specific meanings and which were more useful among the new French aristocracy. Most likely, the French would have looked down on someone who chose to address them in terms not befitting their station, possibly because they were English terms, but also because they did not mean quite the same thing as their own

labels. So, the Old English words either died out because they were no longer needed (*æðeling*, *þeow*) or became a more specific title (*eorl* = mod. *Earl*).

The titles of Anglo-Saxon social hierarchy seem to be somewhat less complex than those of the invading Normans. The fact that Old English words such as *æðeling* can be translated by more than one word of French origin points to this. According to Frank Barlow, Anglo-Saxon aristocracy included three castes: kings, earls, and thegns (5) and the latter two were granted by the king and were more dependent on service to the king than wealth. However, the new Norman aristocracy had many titles such as barons, counts, and dukes, for example, in addition to "king" and these titles depended on the wealth of the person (95). What could the remaining English speaking aristocrats do?

Necessity would have called for English aristocrats to adopt the French titles. Words just did not exist in English for the new social positions available in the country. They would need to come from somewhere, and it was convenient for the English to borrow from their French neighbors. These words would have to be borrowed, if for nothing else, so that the English aristocracy could save face in front of the new governing French nobles and for

the common English-speaking peasantry to have a vocabulary with which to refer to their new masters.

Not only did the French language influence titles in England, but it had a large impact on the second person pronoun. Today English has one such pronoun: *you*. In Old English there were two: the singular *þu* (modern *thou*) and plural *ge* (modern *ye*), which correspond to the French pronouns *tu* and *vous* (Marsden 357 and Knowles 57). Knowles explains two changes that take place due to French influence. First, the subject pronoun *ye* is replaced by the object pronoun *you*. This reflects the French pronouns which are the same: *vous* for the subject and *vous* for the object. Then English begins to use *you* in place of *thou*, losing "the distinction between singular and plural" (58). He explains that this occurs because the meanings shifted so that *ye* was used between equals and to address social betters and *thou* addressed those socially lower and eventually became a kind of insult by the end of the sixteenth century (Knowles 58). Knowles seems to say that the transition away from *thou* is completely due to its pejoration; however, I suspect that the change would additionally be influenced by the appeal of speaking in a "posh" manner, using a formal form to lend class to a

person's speech, or as John of Trevisa might have said, "for to be more ytold of" (qtd. in Knowles 54).

The desire to lend an upper-class feel to one's language goes deeper than even grammar according to some scholars. John Clark believes many spelling changes occurred in Middle English because French speakers who were trying to spell in English did not know how to spell certain sounds which did not exist in their own language (115). This led to guessing at spellings and, because of this, today we spell *what* and *who* with a *wh* instead of *hw* as in Old English and words like *cild* (where the *c* represents the sound [tʃ]) in Old English are spelled with a *ch* so that we have *child* (Clark 117, 116).

Knowles sees a problem with this theory, though. He states that most of the writers of this period were not French speakers learning English, but "clerks familiar with English" (59). When looking at the problem in this way, it is important to remember that many educated people at this time were bilingual, so these clerks writing in English very probably spoke French as well. This could create problems when attempting to spell a word due to the lack of a concrete spelling standard in Old English and early Middle English such as exists today in Modern English. Knowles, himself, provides evidence for this with several

quotes illustrating code-switching during the period. He quotes texts written in French that switch to English, demonstrating that many people with the ability to write were bilingual (55-56). In cases such as these, perhaps the writer forgot or did not know how to spell an English word, but he knew how the sounds were spelled in French and wrote his word accordingly. If this is the case, spelling changes such as those mentioned above could signal easiness between the two languages. Moreover, from the viewpoint of someone writing in English, the French way of spelling was acceptable, perhaps favorable due to its elevated status.

Similarly, some modern English spellings, usually in the form of suffixes, have found their way into the French language. As I mentioned earlier, the French have begun to use the English spelling of the suffix *-ing* to create nouns (Walter 243). She discusses the word *lifting* in depth and despite its appearance it has a different meaning to the English word. It is a contraction of the popular English term "face lift" where *face* is dropped and the English-derived French noun marker *-ing* is attached to the end. Walter discusses the implication of this kind of creation :

En effet, un linguiste anglophone citant dans un article en anglais cette forme *lifting*, utilisée par les Français, a éprouvé le besoin d'en donner

entre parenthèses la traduction en anglais (*face lift*), montrant ainsi que le terme *lifting* isolé n'était pas compréhensible pour un anglophone<sup>12</sup>.

(243)

Other examples of this spelling consist of *footing* ("jogging" in English), *zapping*<sup>13</sup> ("changing the television channel") (Walter 243) and *brushing* which means "to dry your hair" (Rifelj 410). The French also use the suffix *-man* to indicate things people do. Examples include *tennisman*, *barman*, *ranchman*, *jazzman* and *bluesman* (Picone 5, 299, 303). These new French words create a representation of the ways the culture of English speakers has infiltrated the French language. The areas of sports, music, and even personal appearance contain borrowed words from popular culture, reinforced by new words created from those that were borrowed.

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<sup>12</sup> "In Effect, an English-speaking linguist citing the form *lifting*, used by the French, in an English article must give an English translation in parenthesis (*face lift*), showing that the isolated term *lifting* is not comprehensible to an English-speaker."

<sup>13</sup> Walter makes a few remarks about this word. *Zapping* is an example of a word changing in meaning. In English this word has the possible meaning of "to kill" (308). I suppose the French meant to say facetiously that they were "killing" the channels when changing them.

In medieval times, public opinion about the French language seemed positive, even if the transition through war and battle to its use in England could easily have led to more resistance. English people quickly learned that, with the new aristocracy in place, if they wanted to get anywhere in society, they would have to know French. Much evidence of this line of thought exists; examples include the fourteenth century translator John Trevisa's opinion that northerners "wol lykne hamsylf to gentil men and fondep wip gret bysynes for to speke Freynsch, for to be more ytold of"<sup>14</sup> (qtd. in Knowles 54) and in the same century, Robert of Gloucester states similarly in his *Chronicle*: "Vor bote a man conne Frenss me telp of him lute"<sup>15</sup> (qtd. in Denison and Hogg 14). So, in order to be considered worthy of higher society, one had to know French.

However, Robert of Gloucester goes on to state that it is still important to speak English in addition to French

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<sup>14</sup> "want to liken themselves to men of gentle birth and strive with great effort to speak French, in order to be accounted more highly" (Knowles' translation)

<sup>15</sup> "For unless a man knows French he is thought of little account." (Horobin and Smith's translation)

"vor þe more þat a mon can, þe more wurþe he is"<sup>16</sup> (qtd in Denison and Hogg 14). Thus, it was important for people to know not only French, but also English, if only to increase status through knowledge. A man is more "worthy" because he is able to communicate with more people. Since lower classes providing the labor for the upper class still spoke English, it was important to be able to communicate with them.

The French have a more mixed opinion of the influence of English on their language. Beginning as early as the seventeenth century, the French government has created offices to regulate and watch over the language (Cerquiglioni 977-79, Lodge 237). In 1635, Richelieu established the Académie française, and since 1901, the French government has made laws in cooperation with the Académie and other offices such as *le Haut Comité de la langue française* to manage and guide the development of the French language (Lodge 237). Lodge mentions as well that during the 1970s and 1980s "linguistic laws" were created to fight against anglicisms (237). Pierre Trescases mentions the law of December 31, 1975 (9) which, according to "Loi n°94-665", prohibits foreign words and phrases

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<sup>16</sup> "For the more that a man knows, the more worthy he is"

(except translations) in written documents and business advertisements. According to Jean-Loup Chiflet, this law has "forbidden the usage of English words in the official vocabulary" (6).

However, perhaps the most well-known of the laws is the law of August 4, 1994, popularly called the *Loi Toubon* ("Allgood Law") in honor of Jacques Toubon, who was the Minister of Culture and Francophonie in 1994. The controversial section is Article 5 :

Quels qu'en soient l'objet et les formes, les contrats auxquels une personne morale de droit public ou une personne privée exécutant une mission de service public sont parties sont rédigés en langue française. Ils ne peuvent contenir ni expression ni terme étrangers lorsqu'il existe une expression ou un terme français de même sens approuvés dans les conditions prévues par les dispositions réglementaires relatives à l'enrichissement de la langue française. ("Loi n°94-665")<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Whatever the object and the forms, the contracts to which a moral public official (?) or a private person executing a mission of public service are a part are drafted in the French language. They can contain neither a foreign expression nor a foreign term when there

Or more simply, any French person who wishes to express him or herself, must do so in French. He or she is not allowed to use any word which is not French, except if there is no equivalent in French.

In writing, it might seem like the French people in general agree with this law because they want to purify their language. According to Trescases, those who use borrowed words are not well educated or are linguists (109, 110). Cerquigliani declares that "every change, all novelty stemming from the outside is seen as a loss or as an aggression," according to the purists (981). The authors of most books and articles would have us believe that all French people want to erase anglicisms from French.

A sign that this is not the case comes in the form of the book *Sky Mr Allgood!* by Chiflet. His title contains a play on words that includes the name of the author of the Toubon Law, Jacques Toubon, translated into English in the aims of mocking his passion for linguistic purity. In his book, Chiflet gives humor to the subject by creating a list of anglicisms and translations which are often ridiculous. Under the entry to *blaze* he gives an example of its usage:

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exists an expression or term in French with the same approved meanings in the previewed conditions by the relative statutory measures for the enrichment of the French language."

"Très smart ton blazer!" and in order to translate into proper French he advocates the use of the French verb *flamboyer*<sup>18</sup>: "Très elegant ton flamboyer!" (11). He suggests, jokingly, that a *Bloody Mary* must be called a *Mary Saignante* (11). Other translations include *bulldog* / *taureau-chien*, *night-club* / *gourdin de nuit*, *hot-dog* / *chien chaud* and *cow-boy* / *garçon vache* (15, 16, 20, 18,). *Madame Butterfly* must be *Madame Mouche à Beurre*, and one drinks an *Écossais sur les rochers* instead of a *Scotch on the rocks* (23, 34). Under the entry for *cover* he gives an example of the anglicism: "Ces cover-girls sont très souvent nues."<sup>19</sup> But in proper French it should be "Ces filles couvertes sont très souvent nues,"<sup>20</sup> (16).

Chiflet writes to make us laugh, but Laroche-Claire has the power to do this in a dictionary without meaning to. Using the same examples from Chiflet, Laroche-Claire's entry under *cow-boy* would have us say *convoyeur de bétail* ("herd conveyor" in English), *garçon vacher*, *garçon de ferme*, or *cavalier* (85). And if a *bulldog* becomes a *bouledogue*, where is the change except in the spelling

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<sup>18</sup> *Flamboyer* means "to blaze" in French, though here he uses this term to make a play on words of the noun *blazer*, an article of clothing.

<sup>19</sup> "These cover-girls are often naked."

<sup>20</sup> "These covered girls are often naked."

(56)? It is still the same word with the same pronunciation, only now it resembles a French word. He wants people to say *vodka-tomate* for *Bloody Mary*, but the point of the English term is not to name the contents of the drink (43). And *hot-dog* is certainly more easy to say than *pain saucisse* (141). So, the utility of many anglicisms becomes apparent, but we return to the question of words like *réaliser* or *attaché-case* and we ask ourselves: Why do we not simply use the preexisting words *se rendre compte* and *mallette*? These anglicisms survive because the popularity of American culture and the desire to be associated with it, at least in some small way, are a driving force behind their use.

In this way, people throughout history have shared a common bond: the desire to climb the social ladder, or at least speak as though they had arrived. Popular culture and its upper class origins have the power to turn words into brands which influence the way people perceive language. In such a way a word becomes more than a representation of an object or idea; it represents the perceived superiority of that object or that idea. When two cultures collide, as in medieval England or modern France, one culture will acquire a dominant or superior status, at least in some areas, and words related to these

areas become "branded." These "brands," literal and figurative, trickle down through society until they penetrate every level and then a truly popular expression exists.

#### IV. A Detailed Analysis of Two Examples of Linguistic Exchange

An etymological study of a word can offer a closer look at how a word passes from generation to generation and language to language. By following the path of a word through history, we can gain insights into the cultural tendencies of specific points in time. In the following pages, I will track the histories of two words: the English word *melancholy* and the French word *réaliser*. Each word has a unique origin and purpose in its respective lexicon and each has passed through French and English via diverse levels of popular culture, derived from upper and lower classes that surround its genres of use.

*Melancholy* is a very old term that has gone through many transformations of form and meaning throughout the centuries. Today it means "sadness, dejection, esp. of a pensive nature; gloominess; pensiveness or introspection; an inclination or tendency to this" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). It is also often referred to as *melancholia* in medical circles. It is somewhat of an archaic term with the majority of use and meanings originating before the

year 1600 (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Many instances of the word are in a medical or psychological context and also in literature. Also, throughout the ages, most sources specify a difference between a generally melancholy person and someone who has contracted the disease of melancholy and also that the state of melancholy derives from an imbalance of some sort within the body. The following pages will give a historical background of some literary and medical examples of this term, *melancholy*.

*Melancholy* first appeared in English in the fourteenth century but its meaning goes much further back. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it comes from two Greek words, μέλαν (*melano*) meaning "black" and χολή (*choler*) meaning "bile." Jordan Almond states that the Greeks believed that bile controlled people's emotions and that being sad or depressed was caused by black bile (165), hence the word μελαγχολία (*melancholia*) in Greek.

The Greek physicians Hippocrates and Galen popularized the diagnosis of melancholia in the fourth and fifth centuries BC and the second century AD, respectively. According to Pierre Pellegrin, melancholia was part of the theory he supported that the body's health was influenced by four different fluids or four humors as Hippocrates called them (421). These included black bile, yellow bile,

phlegm and blood and were alternately named "melancholic," "choleric," "phlegmatic," and "sanguine" respectively (Phillips 52). Each was associated with different organs of the body and personality traits. Galen associated *melancholy* with maladies such as leprosy, jaundice, intestinal diseases, glandular diseases, dysentery, and cholera and also developed theories about the relationship of black bile and the spleen (Phillips 177-178).

Next, the term came into Latin where the spelling *melancholia* appears. Then French borrowed the term. The French developed a variant of the word, *malenholie*, because they associated it with sickness in general and confused it with their own term for sickness at the time, *mal* (Barnhart 468). Old French uses it first to mean "profound sadness" (around 1180) and then in medical terms (around 1256) (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Finally, in the fourteenth century English acquires the word from Old French. Its meaning and usage are still very much the same as in Hippocrates' day. It began as *malyncoly* around 1303, and Chaucer used an adjectival form (*malencolyk*) in his *Canterbury Tales* around 1385 (Barnhart *Chambers* 648). It was considered a "mental disorder characterized by depression" (Barnhart *Etymology* 468),

which was caused by an excess of black bile secreted by the spleen. This belief would persist for several centuries.

In 1514, Albrecht Dürer created an engraving which he called *Melencolia I*. In this engraving he personified the main symptoms of the disease. It shows a winged figure sitting dejectedly, pen in hand, but not writing. Various tools surround her but lay unused while an hourglass in the background shows time slowly running out. Thus, according to the Wake Forest University Art Department "the woman is unable to freely practice any art; the union of theory and practice required to do so evades her," making her a personification of *melancholy*. The idea is that because of her depression she sits unable to be creative. All she is able to do is dwell on her present state perhaps in a similar way that writers with writer's block are frustrated because the words just do not come to them.

In the seventeenth century the disease and condition of melancholy became a major theme of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Almeida 3). Shakespeare had a vast knowledge of the disease thanks to Timothy Bright's *Treatise on Melancholy*, published in 1586, which was the first book about mental diseases published by an Englishman (Overholser 343). Knowing this, Carol Heffernan, in her book *The Melancholy Muse*, describes Hamlet as being a

"sufferer of melancholic *disease* (not melancholy *temperament*)" (123). She supports this idea by stating that various characters in the play describe Hamlet as having been a cheerful and lighthearted person before his father's death. Hamlet himself tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about his depression:

I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my  
mirth, for— / gone all custom of exercises; and indeed  
it goes so heavily with my / disposition, that this  
goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile /  
promontory, this most excellent canopy the air, look  
you, this brave / o'er-hanging firmament, this  
majestical roof fretted with golden / fire, why it  
appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent con-  
/ gregation of vapors. (Shakespeare 36)

Even within the play Shakespeare refers to Hamlet twice as being specifically melancholy: once by Hamlet himself at the end of Act II and once by his uncle, Claudius, at the end of Act III scene I (Shakespeare 1882 & 1887).

Shakespeare shows further knowledge of the disease by giving examples of its causes and showing his characters attempting to cure Hamlet. Shane Almeida talks about causes of melancholy in his essay "The Madness and Melancholy of Hamlet." He states that fear can be a cause

of melancholy and that "in addition to his duty for revenge, perhaps Hamlet feels threatened by King Claudius and plans to avoid the fate of his father by killing his uncle" (11). Also, sorrow for the loss of his father is a major contributor to his melancholic state. After all, according to Robert Burton (a contemporary of Shakespeare's), sorrow is a major cause of the disease (225). One cure for the ailment is to place the patient with friends as a therapeutic solution. Shakespeare uses this idea when Claudius tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to give Hamlet some company. Then later Shakespeare employs knowledge of cures by having Claudius send Hamlet and his friends to England. A change of scenery was often a remedy for melancholy.

The way Shakespeare writes the character of Hamlet he might as well have used modern books about medicine. Hamlet's symptoms of sadness, anger and fear reflect the modern hallmarks of someone considered to have a chemical imbalance. So, by today's standards, Hamlet could be diagnosed with clinical depression.

Robert Burton's book, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1621, chronicles all of the symptoms and cures found in *Hamlet* and many others. According to Almeida it is "the most comprehensive examination of the Elizabethan

view of melancholia in existence" (1). In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton discusses the many kinds, causes, symptoms and cures of melancholy, of which many appear in *Hamlet* as discussed above. In fact, many of the essays and articles I encountered compare the two and describe Hamlet as a typical example of someone suffering from the disease.

In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton shows off his knowledge of classical scholars of melancholia, quoting heavily from people like Galen and Hippocrates. On page 148 he gives a lengthy definition of melancholia that covers the entire page because of these quotations. According to O'Connell he "defines melancholy in relation to other diseases of the head, frenzy, madness, and dotage" (54). Heffernan informs us that, according to Burton, fear and sorrow are the two main causes of the disease (6). Throughout the course of the book, Burton states that diet, physical constitution, air, and aging are other causes (O'Connell 53). Burton also divides the disease into three kinds according to where they affect the body: Head melancholy which affects the brain, whole body melancholy and hypochondriacal or windy melancholy which affect the bowels, liver and spleen (O'Connell 55). In many cases the cure for melancholy would be derived from treating these areas using methods such as "diet, evacuation, physic of

various kinds, cordials and so forth" (O'Connell 60), but Burton also believed that one must also be cured morally through recognition of the disease and the control of one's emotions.

What we see in Burton is a further cataloging of melancholy and its medicinal usage. He begins to make distinctions between various types of diseases all encapsulated by the idea of melancholy or depression. Similarly, today we distinguish between various types and degrees of depression. He also puts forth the idea of treating the disease by altering the diet or using special chemicals to cure the disease just as, today, we use drugs and diet alterations to balance chemicals in the body. He recognized, as we do today, that melancholy is not just a state of mind but an imbalance within the body that can be cured scientifically.

Later in the eighteenth century melancholy became almost fashionable, which is similar to today's society where diagnoses of clinical depression are very common. It was even sometimes called the "English Malady" because of its prevalence in Britain (Babb 165). It also gained a new synonym, *spleen*, due to its perceived point of origin in the body and it was also called such names as *vapors*, *hypochondria*, and *hysteria*. It is important to note that

these are all earlier uses of words which today have somewhat altered meanings. Also, *hypochondria* and *hysteria* are used to denote male and female melancholic sufferers respectively (Babb 171).

At this time people believed that the symptoms of melancholy manifested themselves as black vapors in the body which would ascend to the brain causing the sufferer to be depressed. As in centuries before it was also believed that not all melancholy people suffered from the disease, but there existed people who were simply melancholy by nature. There was also a distinction made between *melancholy* and *unnatural melancholy* (Babb 168), which would be an eighteenth century equivalent of manic depression where the sufferer feels extremely happy and profoundly sad at varying intervals. Also, among the sufferers of the disease, women were believed to be more susceptible to it than men due to their more delicate bodies (Babb 172).

Today, after the advent of modern medicine and scientific procedures, melancholy no longer has the same associations as it had for centuries before. Black bile, vapors and the like no longer worry society. Instead, the meaning of the melancholy disease has been transferred to what we call clinical depression. It may have a new name

but the ideas behind it and the resulting condition are very similar.

According to the *WebMD.org* "Depression Guide," one cause of modern depression is chemical imbalances in the brain which resembles the ideas of black bile and vapors. These imbalances can be rectified by taking drugs to correct the imbalance which, again, is reminiscent of Burton's cordials. Also, life experiences such as the death of a loved one can be a modern cause for depression just as it was for Hamlet in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Even the consumption of alcohol and other drugs such as tranquilizers and narcotics can cause depression. This harkens back to Burton's theory that diet causes melancholy. Other treatments for depression include diet modification and exercise both of which were cures proposed by Burton. New to the list of cures is electroconvulsive therapy which is designed to trigger seizures by sending electricity through the patient's brain. This treatment is highly controversial and is used only if other treatments have not worked.

Today the actual word *melancholy* is used in a more literary and stylized fashion. This can be seen in song lyrics from modern recording artists. In 1970 The Moody Blues wrote a song using the word in the title, called

"Melancholy Man." The first line also contains it: "I'm a melancholy man, that's what I am, / All the world surrounds me, and my feet are on the ground." More recently Adam Sandler wrote a song for his film *The Wedding Singer* called "Somebody Kill Me" where he uses *melancholy* in a somewhat comical setting: "I hope you're glad with what you've done to me. / I lay in bed all day long feeling melancholy. / You left me here all alone, tears running constantly." Still, the meaning of the word is very clearly depicted as sadness or depression. Perhaps the most stylized rendering of *melancholy* comes from The Smashing Pumpkins. Their album titled "Melon Collie and the Infinite Sadness" contains songs of exactly the nature described in the title. Even though the title splits the word into its separate parts when said aloud it makes complete sense. The title even provides a definition of the word: "infinite sadness." Other musicians who have used *melancholy* to similar effect in their lyrics include Queen, Jewell, Anna Nalick, Ani DiFranco, Trisha Yearwood, Toby Keith, Veruca Salt and Gorillaz (AZLyrics.com).

These people are just some of the latest in a long line of users of the word *melancholy*. Throughout its rich history it has had a number of meanings, usually of a medical orientation. It continues to flourish today in

various ways such as music and it will surely continue to transform and move in the English language as younger generations are introduced to it.

The English word *melancholy* followed a straight path through history to arrive at its present form. However, the French word *réaliser* took a more meandering road. The verb can be traced back to its origins in Latin, through history to today where its meaning is undergoing a process of expansion. Along the way it detoured into English and back again through the medium of American pop culture. Using the history of this word, we can generate an idea of the how important popular culture is to the growth of language.

The word *réaliser* can be traced back to the Latin word *res* which means "thing" (*Petit Robert*). This word changed in Medieval Latin and became *realis*, which Old French borrowed. It first appeared this way in writing in the thirteenth century, and the noun form would become *réel*. It was first used in French in areas concerning the law. Law in France at this time would have been a popular profession among the bourgeois class. According to Ravisé, "Au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle ils [les bourgeois] ont arraché aux nobles des libertés et même l'autonomie municipale," (23). Lords were losing authority over the inhabitants of cities and

towns. Disputes which, in the past, would have been presided over by the lord would now have to be handled by the bourgeois courts. Because of this, terms pertaining to the law would have become popularized and *realis* could enter everyday speech.

After this time its usage expanded in popular speech from noun into verb. According to Dubois, Mitterand and Dauzat, the verb form first appeared in the late fifteenth century (705). However, Dubois et al., and *Le Petit Robert* both give the date 1611 for the definition "to make something real,"<sup>21</sup> though why this year appears in a French dictionary is a mystery. It is a reference to the year that *réaliser* appeared in Randle Cotgrave's *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* which he had written as an aid to English speakers studying French. According to Smalley, Cotgrave compiled his dictionary from a number of other dictionaries. In fact, he cites François Ragueau and his *Indice des droicts Roiaux et Seigneuriaux* of 1583 for his entry *réaliser un contract* (Smalley 161). Apparently this word had appeared in print in other French dictionaries before Cotgrave's French-English compilation

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<sup>21</sup> This is the first definition in each dictionary of the verb *réaliser*.

and implies that it was a well-established part of French vocabulary by 1611.

However, Cotgrave's *Dictionarie* is important for the English language. It illustrates the demand in England for French teaching materials. French at this time still had a strong presence in Britain since it was an important language, though decreasingly so, in areas concerning the law as evidenced by the works of legal authors such as Richard Crompton and Sir Edward Coke (Sheen and Hutson 140-141), and as a mark of status among the nobility and gentry (Kibee 101). Because of its importance in law language, the verb *réaliser* could have very easily found its way into English. Thus, English acquired *réaliser* around the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The anglicized version, *to realize* (alternatively spelled *realise*) did not enter common usage until the mid-eighteenth century, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. At this time, the meaning of the word was identical to its French counterpart. However, the English term would expand its meaning over the next century to include not only making something real, but to understand something as though it were real. According to the *Oxford English dictionary*, this definition was, at first, "chiefly American" as evidenced by American authors such as

Washington Irving, Louisa May Alcott and Mark Twain who used this meaning to great effect.

In fact, in chapter 6 of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, the sentence, "The mere knowledge of a fact is pale; but when you come to REALIZE your fact, it takes on color," is a good example of the usage and possible ambiguities of this word (Twain 34). One interpretation of the usage of *realize* here is that a "fact" becomes a physical reality. This is supported by Twain's imagery of a fact coming from a slightly visible state into vivid color and thus, *realize* adheres to the original French meaning. A second interpretation is that one understands a fact as a reality which is supported by the notion that a fact is necessarily already a real object or idea and because of this, it is *understood* as such. In this way, the second, American meaning makes sense in this context. Such analysis of this sentence explains the ease with which people could expand the meaning of *realize* and begin using it in a new way.

At the end of the nineteenth century, *realize* made the trip back to France. The French borrowed their word back with its new, controversial meaning. Marcel Proust uses *réaliser* with the anglicized meaning in *Le Côté de Guermantes* in 1920, noting that it is a translation from

English which is known and understood as such by his contemporaries (Rey-Debove and Gagnon 837). In 1931, Jules Romains inserts this word, in quotation marks, in *Donogoo* saying, "comme ils disent [les Américains]," (qtd. in Rey Debove and Gagnon 836). These examples show that early in the twentieth century, the French made the distinction that the definition was strictly an English usage and particularly American in origin. By incorporating the English term into their works, Proust and Romains transform its meaning in French, making the English connotation of the word acceptable to their French readers. The use of foreign terms in popular literature is often viewed as elitist, however, as time passes, these expressions and nuances eventually trickle down to the masses. Usage in popular literature would then give another boost to the attractiveness of the word. Despite being rather elitist writers during their lifetimes, Proust and Romains are now widely read and their works are accepted as part of the literary canon. French children read these classics as part of a national curriculum, and accept their innovations as linguistic actuality.

Today, *réaliser* retains its original meaning, "to make real," but the French people also accept its American meaning, though it is still controversial and not as widely

used as its original meaning. *Le Petit Robert* lists it as "emploi critiqué," Jacques Van Roey, Sylviane Granger and Helen Swallow note that "l'emploi du verbe **réaliser** dans ce sens est contesté par certains puristes," (582), and Carol Rifelj cites several contemporary grammarians who advise against the anglicism (411). All three of these sources also give the alternate translation or recommended term *se rendre compte*. Even as recently as three years ago, Yves Laroche-Claire condemns the anglicism as a "glissement de sens," a "slip of meaning" and that the context of the sentence is not enough to make the meaning of *réaliser* understood. However, one search for the phrase *réaliser que* on *Yahoo! France* or *Google* shows that the anglicized meaning is very much a part of everyday French speech. Many posts on internet forums and professional and entertainment websites contain this anglicism without mention of its origin or controversial nature.

The story of the cross-borrowing of the word *réaliser* is a perfect example of the way in which elite or celebrity culture influences socio-linguistic trends. Despite the controversial nature of this interaction, it seems that the borrowed meaning of *réaliser* is a long-term change for French vocabulary. It is impossible and even improbable to say that it is a permanent fixture in the language due to

the dynamic nature of all languages. The term has existed in French for centuries and is a pertinent example of how language changes to suit the whims of the literary and cultural elite, who shape its use in contemporary society, thereby creating fashionable language used in popular culture.

## V. Conclusion

Popular culture has been a defining factor in the evolution of languages for centuries. However, I believe that the majority of definitions of the origins of *popular culture* are flawed because, as I have shown, many words borrowed between English and French that became a part of "popular" usage either began as class-specific or originated from members of the upper classes. I have found other definitions of the term that seem more inclusive than the generally accepted notion of the term *popular culture* as a social phenomenon deriving from the masses. For instance, the *Oxford English Dictionary* contains many definitions of the word *popular*, but two are very relevant to this argument: "3.a. Of, relating to, deriving from or consisting of ordinary people or the people as a whole" (emphasis added) and "7.a. Liked or admired by many people, or by a particular person or group." These definitions would seem to encapsulate everyone, including the upper classes, not just the lower classes or common people. According to these definitions, popular culture would include the privileged class.

Using my expanded definition of popular culture, one can truly state that ever since the Norman invasion in 1066, French and English have enjoyed a close relationship molded and shaped by the popular culture encompassing all levels of society of both groups of speakers. English vocabulary, spelling, and even grammatical structure changed under the influence of French in the medieval period. French itself was popular during this time among the English speaking aristocracy as the language of the monarchy and the French aristocracy. From the food the English ate to their forms of address, French was *en vogue*, and this shows in modern English vocabulary.

The French, in turn, are now borrowing from English as well. These anglicisms are a subject of controversy to many purists in the French community, but Anglo-American popular culture, as dictated by entertainment and food corporations, thrives in France, and this provides the proper environment for language borrowing. Similar to English in the medieval period, French has incorporated vocabulary from a multitude of different areas. A surprisingly large number of words related to technology, food and business come from English. These examples show that language follows the easiest course; it is not carved in stone, but slowly adjusts to the whims of society. In

this way a language develops and flows almost like a stream choosing its way, cutting a path across the land. Rocks become smooth, the riverbed constantly reshapes itself, but the stream is still there, hopefully stronger for the changes.

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