

My Excellent Etymological Adventure

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The *perceptive* reader will have *noticed* that, with the *exception* of the *personal pronoun*, the *comically pretentious title* of this *piece derives principally* from Latin.

You see, the first two lines of this work are full of words that come mostly from Latin, some of them – God help us – from French! But not line three! Or line four! The words you are reading now come straight from Old English.

English is an *etymological cornucopia constructed* on a firm Germanic *foundation* with a *spice cupboard full of useful, even elegant, Romance Language words*. Writers through the ages have *availed* themselves to *varying degrees* of the *spices Romance language offers*, and *because* of this our tongue is not *meat-and-potatoes* dull, but rather bristles with *excitement*, or at least it should.¹

Enough with the italics. Let's get serious.

The Second Edition of the 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary contains full entries for **171,476** words in current use² and we are told that only **4500** of these words come from Old English.³ Can this be true? The mother tongue comprises but 2.6% of the language? If this were the case, wouldn't we expect English writing to consist mostly of Latin and French words strung together with a few ands, ifs and buts from Old English supplemented by numbers and the names of body parts from the mother tongue? My skepticism about this led me to study actual writing in Middle and Modern English, and the results of this study forced me to research the topic further, to find out what is really going on.

A 1973 survey of 80,000 English words in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary [SOED] revealed that 24.6% (19,680) of these words originate from Germanic tongues: mainly Old English, Old Norse and Frisian. Another 28.3%, or 22,592 words come from Latin, although thousands of these words are Latinate technical terms coined by scientists, and are seldom found in ordinary prose and poetry. About 28.4%, originate in *Langue d'oïl*, the languages of northern France, including Norman and Parisian French. A few Greek and miscellaneous words round out this language of Shakespeare, Milton, and Tom Clancy.⁴

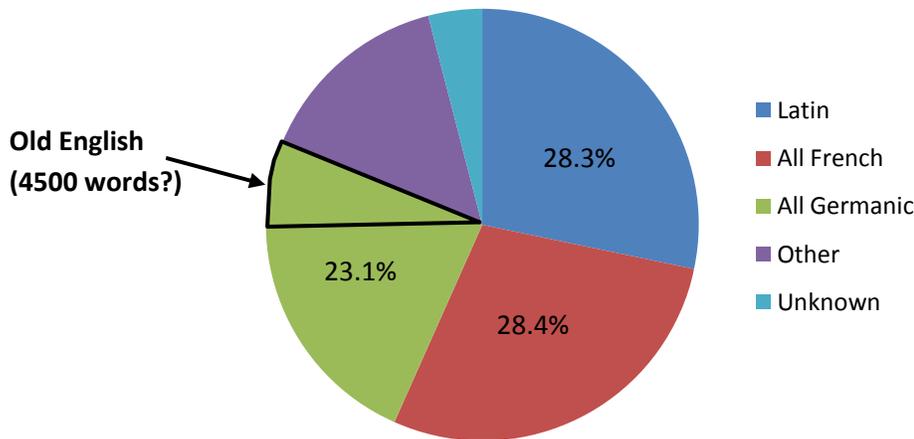
¹ Throughout this paper, I will make use of an amazing tool: the *Online Etymological Dictionary*: <http://www.etymonline.com>, a project of author and language-lover Douglas Harper.

² <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/page/howmanywords>

³ Perlestaig, A., Stanford University Linguistics 06, Fall 2010, Lecture 2, Slide 74.

⁴ Finkenstaedt, T. and Wolff, D., "Ordered profusion; studies in dictionaries and the English lexicon," 1973, pg. 119.

1973 Computer Dictionary Etymology



This Pie Chart depicting the origin of English Words, originates from the 1960s “Computer Dictionary” compiled with by Finkenstaedt et al. of Heidelberg University. The 4500 word overlay depicting the putative Old English slice of the pie was added by me. Since the “Germanic” component of the SOED study comes mostly from Old English, it would appear that the 4500 word claim is in error. But what is clear is that together, words derived from French and Latin dominate the modern English lexicon. The remainder of this paper looks more carefully into these “Romance” language segments of our polyglot tongue.

But first, we take a quick peek at the character of the non-Romance vocabulary. We are told that the usual case with languages is for the root tongue to be the ancestor of most simple words. To test this maxim, I resorted to a word list I had compiled in a study of Malagasy, the language of Madagascar [see Appendix 1]. In addition to body parts such as *bone, liver, nose, ear and tongue*, the Malagasy inherited their numbers and many other common words from the people who invaded the island circa 700 A.D. from – of all places – Borneo.⁵ Would the meanings of words this island nation inherited from its pre-millennium invaders, words kept in constant use into the 20th century, be in any way similar to the meanings of words brought to the island nation of Britain by its pre-millennial invaders, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes? With only three exceptions from a list of 37 words, the Malagasy-derived list accurately predicted that these basic English words were descended from the mother tongue, Old English.⁶

Prose and Poetry Study

The next step in the investigation was to analyze passages of prose and poetry chosen from famous works, or from my personal favorites, starting with Geoffrey Chaucer in 1380 and concluding with Susan Orlean in 1998. Using the *Online Etymological Dictionary*, I sorted words into four classes: Old English, Old Norse (or Frisian [rare]), Latin (including Italian), and

⁵ Van Tuyl, R. ““The Most Beautiful Mystery in the World...*The Intriguing Case of the Mysterious Malagasy*,” Stanford Lin05, Winter, 2010.

⁶ The exceptions were: *sky* and *to die*, brought by Vikings, and *fruit*, a contribution of the French that replaced the original Old English word *appel*.

French. Based on the aforementioned lexical study, I expected to see mostly words derived from the Romance languages.⁷

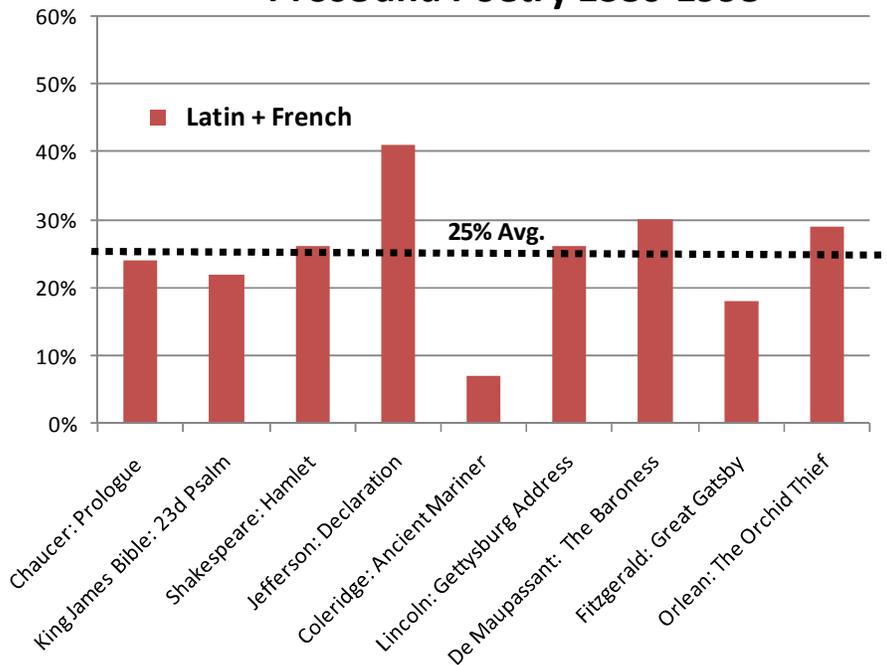
Not so!

With amazing consistency, writers from Chaucer to Orlean, stretching from 1380 to 1998, used a vocabulary derived only 25% from Romance languages (mostly Latin and French), and 75% from Germanic sources (mainly Old English and Old Norse). [Texts in Appendix 2].

Prose and Poetry VOCABULARY

Text	O.E. + O.N.	Latin + O.F.
Chaucer: Prologue	76%	24%
King James Bible: 23d Psalm	78%	22%
Shakespeare: Hamlet	74%	26%
Jefferson: Declaration	59%	41%
Coleridge: Ancient Mariner	93%	7%
Lincoln: Gettysburg Address	73%	26%
De Maupassant: The Baroness	70%	30%
Fitzgerald: Great Gatsby	82%	18%
Orlean: The Orchid Thief	71%	29%
Average	75%	25%

Prose and Poetry 1380-1998



⁷ See Appendix 2 for quotation and analysis of these passages.

The two biggest departures from the 25% norm were Thomas Jefferson -a Francophile fluent in French, who was educated from the age of nine in Latin and Greek – and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose epic poem *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was narrated by a grisly ancient mariner who spoke in a colorful primitive argot for poetic effect (“*Water, water every where nor any drop to drink*”). And surprisingly, Guy De Maupassant’s *The Baroness*, translated from the French, fell only slightly to the north of average, despite the translator’s obligatory mapping of the author’s French words to their English equivalents (e.g. intermediary [intermédiaire]; amateurs [amateurs]; and preferences [préférences]).

Autodidact Abraham Lincoln composed the most stirring speech in the history of American politics on the back of an envelope while travelling by train from Washington D.C. to Gettysburg Pennsylvania. Starting out with the charmingly archaic Old English phrase “Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth...” he was forced to dip into the Romance lexicon to make his point:

*Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this **continent** [L] a new **nation** [F], **conceived** [F] in **liberty** [F], and **dedicated** [L] to the **proposition** [F] that all men are **created** [F] equal...Now we are **engaged** [F] in a great **civil** [F] war, **testing** [F] whether that **nation** [F], or any **nation** [F] so **conceived** [F] and so **dedicated** [L], can long **endure** [F].*

Just imagine he had been forced to forego the French and Latin words:

*Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this **land** a new **kingdom**, **born in freedom**, and **given over to the thought** that all men **have the same rights**.*

William Shakespeare has charmed readers and audiences through the centuries with his goofy compote of English, Norse, Latin and French:

*For in that sleep of death what dreams [N] may come
When we have shuffled [N] off this mortal [F] coil [F],
Must give us pause [F]. There's the respect [L]
That makes calamity [F] of so long life.*

The meaning is anybody’s guess, but it sure sounds great!

Our most recent author, artful writer Susan Orlean, demonstrated how just a few modern Romance Language words and Latinate neologisms can spiffy up prose:

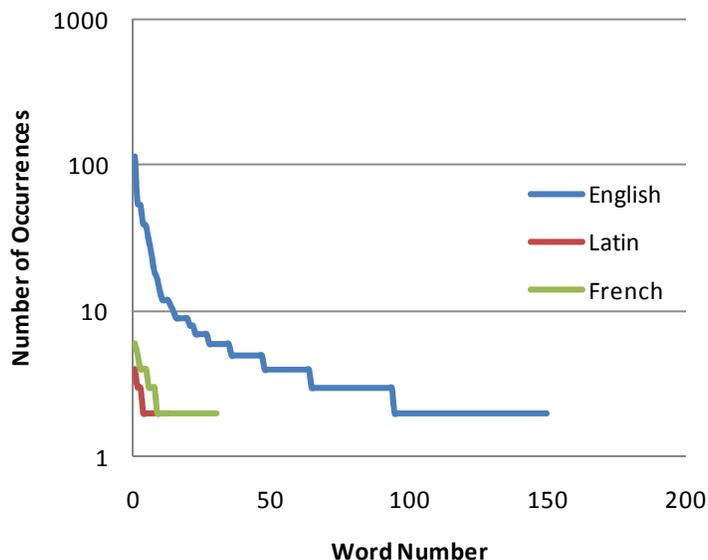
*He has the **posture of al dente** ^[Italian, 1935] **spaghetti** ^[Italian, 1849] and the **nervous intensity** of someone who plays a lot of **video** ^[L., 1935] games...*

So what is going on here? Why do all these authors use far fewer Romance words than would be expected? To answer this, we need to look at how words are counted, and how frequently some kinds of words are used.

The Word Inventory

The claim that “the Oxford English Dictionary contains 171,476 words” is not technically correct. It actually contains 171,476 *lexemes*, the roots from which groups of words are formed (e.g. the lexeme *docket* spawns the words *docket*, *docketed*, and *docketing*). So if Germanic lexemes are more likely to spawn variations than Romance lexemes, there will appear to be relatively fewer Germanic words.⁸ But even if every word spawned from every *lexeme* were listed in the dictionary, there would be a huge bias against frequently-used words, of which Old English derivatives comprise the majority. The word “the” is listed only once in a dictionary, but if it were used but once in, say, a poem of length 100 words, the dictionary would vastly under-represent the frequency of use for “the” as compared to the poem. Actual usage in this hypothetical poem would be 1/100, whereas the OED shows “the” with frequency 1/ 171,476. Unless the probability of usage for Germanic words is the same as for Romance words, this quirk of counting greatly understates the use of Germanic words. In fact, my study clearly shows that Old English words in the combined vocabularies of all texts studied greatly exceed Romance words in probability of use as well as total number.

Common Words Frequency of Occurrence



Out of a word total of 1547 words for all texts studied, there were 1181 words derived from Old English, 12 from Old Norse, 85 from Latin, and 269 from French. In addition, the graph makes clear that the frequency of repeated use is far greater for Old English-derived words than for all others. In my study, the “top ten” words as to frequency of use were: *the*, *of*, *and*, *in*, *to*, *that*, *a*, *he*, *with*, *as*. In fact, the frequently-used words derived from Old English are mostly connective tissue. But the Old English vocabulary of this study also included magnificent words like *blissful*, *bloody*, *heretofore*, *unknown*, *southern*. There were a surprising number of terms for concepts relating to human values and emotion: *freedom*, *goodness*, *happiness*, *heartache*, *lust*, *misunderstanding*, *righteousness*. So Old English had a soul, not just a skeleton!

⁸ It must be said that whether this is the case or not is not known to me at present, but it is a possibility.

But Old English was the language of a relatively primitive people, and therefore lacked root words from which certain sophisticated concepts could be expressed. Latin, via French, provided a host of words relating to the organization of mankind: *council* [12th c]; *nobility* [13th c]; *city* [13th c]; *power* [14th C]; *community* [14th C]; *civil* [14th c]; *government* [1550]; *republic* [1600]. And among other words in the study's vocabulary, Latin terms coined in recent centuries express technical ideas not really known to the Anglo-Saxons or Vikings: *continent* [16th c], *focal* [17th c], *naval* [17th c], *inertia* [18th c], *video* [20th c]. This raises an important point: *not all French-derived vocabulary arrived with the Norman Conquest*. The etymological dates shown in citations tell us the earliest known date for which a *written* record of the word has been found. For example, we know for sure that the word *video*, was coined from Latin in the 20th century, to describe a 20th century technology, moving pictures. And *inertia* was first used in print by Johannes Kepler, the 17th – 18th century lion of the scientific revolution, the man who gave us the laws of planetary motion.⁹ Coined from the Latin *res publica*, the modern English word *republic* dates from the Renaissance, not the Norman Conquest. And so on. Though these “idea” words may have been used in speech long before they were committed to paper, many of them are products of the modern age, not the *moyen age*.

Having learned the origin profile for words likely to be favored by poets, politicians and literary writers, I expanded the study to include a more low-brow form of writing: the American Newspaper.

⁹ Online Etymological Dictionary

American Newspaper Study

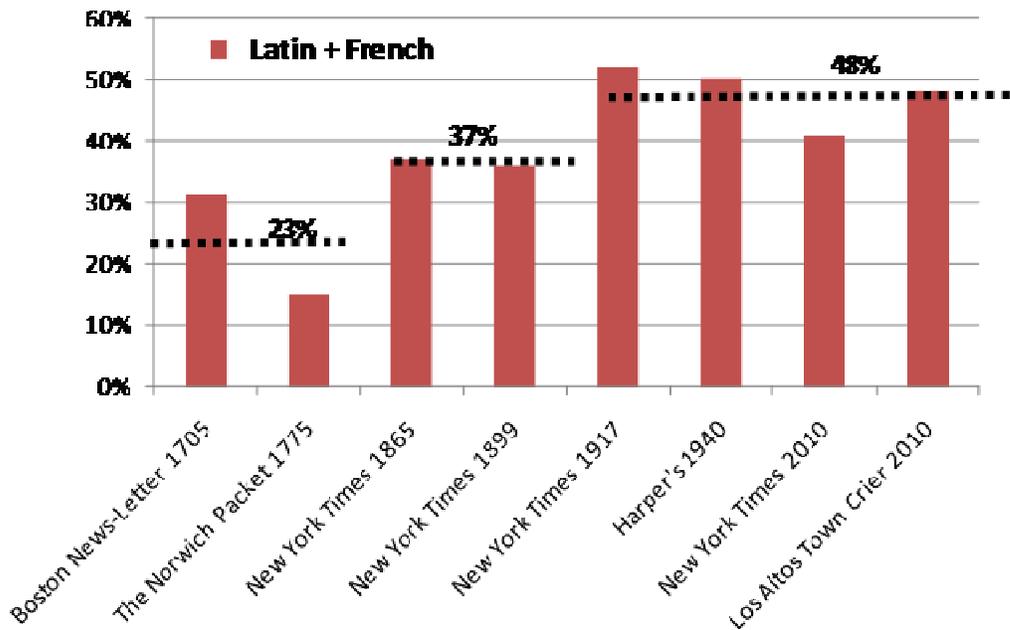
In addition to the works of prose and poetry, I studied writing from American newspapers and magazines published from 1705 to 2010.¹⁰ The results were markedly different than for the prose and poetry studied. The texts are shown in Appendix 3.

American Newspaper

VOCABULARY

Text	O.E. + O.N.	Latin + O.F.
Boston News-Letter 1705	69%	31%
The Norwich Packet 1775	85%	15%
New York Times 1865	63%	37%
New York Times 1899	64%	36%
New York Times 1917	48%	52%
Harper's 1940	50%	50%
New York Times 2010	59%	41%
Los Altos Town Crier 2010	52%	48%
18th Century Average	77%	23%
19th Century Average	64%	37%
20th Century Average	52%	48%

American Newspapers 1705-2010



¹⁰ American Newspaper Archives are available online at www.nytimes.com and the websites of most general-circulation papers. In addition, historical newspaper archives can be accessed at: <http://infoweb.newsbank.com> (subscription required).

Though somewhat counterintuitive, it seems that newspapers and magazines outscore prose and poetry in the Romance words derby. Even the *Los Altos Town Crier*, a rag that features high school sports scores, real estate ads, and police reports (“...a woman called to say that...”) far outshines the likes of F. Scott Fitzgerald when it comes to the use of Latin and French derivatives.

In fact, the use of these Romance Language derivatives has increased over the centuries in American Newspapers. The 18th century news averaged 23% Romance words, the 19th century 37% and the 20th-21st centuries a whopping 48%! Why is this? One possibility is that writers of 18th century newspapers, unlike Thomas Jefferson and his educated peers, had probably not studied much Latin, Greek or French. As time wore on, newspaper writers became more educated, developing larger and larger vocabularies which would have contained more Romance language words. Much of this could be attributed to the rise of the American Public School in the 19th century. As writers learned more words, they used more words. And modern newspapers feature much talk about politics and government, subjects requiring the use of Romance terminology: *city council candidate* has no alternative expression in Old English.

But whatever the reason for the high use of Romance words in my modern newspaper and magazine samples, it has nothing to do with “fancy” writing. Compare these samples from 1705 and 1917:

Boston News-Letter, August 13, 1705: Vocabulary: 69% OE+ON; 31% Latin + OF

*The Letters which came this day from France give an Account, That the French and Spanish Forces before Gibraltar had **attacked** the Hill which **commands** that Town, and **poffeffed** themfelves of it; but the **Garifon rallying** out upon them, beat them back with **confiderable** Lofs...They **add**, that this has **encreafed** the mifunderftanding and **jealoufie**¹¹ between the 2 Nations, each laying upon the other the **blame** of the ill **Succefs** of this **Siege**.*

This is fairly stilted writing, even for the time, though it contains only 31% Romance words.

The following example from a modern newspaper is pretty straightforward and factual, with not much fancy about it, though over half its vocabulary is French + Latin.

New York Times, December 8, 1917 Vocabulary: 48% OE+ON; 52% Latin + OF

*WASHINGTON, Dec. 7.--The United States went to war against Austria Hungary, at 5:03 o'clock this afternoon, when **President Wilson approved a joint resolution, adopted by Congress, declaring a state of war to exist. The President, under the resolution, was empowered to "direct and employ the entire naval and military forces of the Government," to carry on the war to "a successful termination."***

¹¹ “Jealousy” meant “suspicion” in the 18th century.

Of course, modern writing can get carried away with the notion that Latinate terms constitute good writing. As this sample clearly shows, it ain't necessarily so:

*Withdrawing **positive reinforcement** and **eliminating the opportunity to obtain positive reinforcement** are commonly employed in our society as **punishments** for behavior **judged to be undesirable**.*¹²

-versus-

*We often **punish** those who behave badly by taking away things we give them to behave well.*¹³

Conclusion

Despite dictionary word counts that place English words derived from Germanic languages (including Old English) in the minority, and the claim that Old English is the ancestor tongue to only 2.8% of modern English, a survey of literary prose and poetry from 1380 to 1998 shows that Germanic-derived words comprised about 75% of the vocabulary used by actual writers, and nearly all of these words come from Old English. But American newspapers and magazines have shown an increase in the use of English words derived from Romance languages over the period 1705 to the present, to the point where 20th and 21st century news writing uses roughly half-Germanic, half-Romantic vocabularies.

So it seems that modern English has been much civilized by Latin and French and has become, after all, a substantial Anglo-Saxon repast turned spicy gourmet feast thanks to its one-quarter Romance vocabulary.

¹² Williams, J., "Origins of the English Language," 1975, pg. 113

¹³ Ibid.

**Appendix 1:
Core List of English Words and their Ancestors in Old English, Norse and French**

A Basic List of Modern English words I had previously derived from a study of cognacy between Merina Malagasy and its precursor Bornean languages appears here. The only thing Merina Malagasy and English have in common is that they are both island languages imported by invaders starting no later than 600-700 AD. Otherwise, they have nothing in common. But true to form, the tightest cognacy for both English and Merina Malagasy to their respective precursor languages is for words involving body parts, basic natural and manmade objects and numbers. Thirty-four of the thirty-seven English words on this list derive directly from Old English, two from Old Norse. The one word derived from French is *fruit*. But this is a special case. The Old English Word for *fruit* was *appel*, a word probably created by a people whose only fruit was indeed the apple. As the English gained access to more and more fruits, probably after the Norman Conquest, the word *fruit* became the general term and *appel* specialized itself to describe the original northern-climate fruit, the apple.

Matches to Basic English Word List			
English	O.E.	O.N.	O.F.
bone	ban		
liver	lifer		
hair	hær		
nose	nosu		
tongue	tunge		
to eat	etan		
eye	ege		
man	man		
woman	wimman		
name	nama		
rope	rap		
to die		deyja	
to fall	feallan		
bird	bridd		
feather	feðer		
leaf	leaf		
fruit	(appel)		fruit
stone	stan		
sky		sky	
moon	mona		
rain	regn		
fire	fyr		
day	dæg		
this	bis		
and	and		
One	and		
Two	twa		
Three	þreo		
Four	feower		
Five	fif		
Six	siex		
Seven	seofon		
Eight	eahta		
Nine	nigen		
Twenty	twentig		
Fifty	fiftig		
hundred	hundred		

Appendix 2: Analysis of English Prose and Poetry 1380 – 1998

Red=French; Green= Old English; Underlined Green=Old Norse or Frisian; Purple=Latin

Duplicate words in each text were removed, so that the result is a Vocabulary count for each writer, not a Word count.

Geoffrey Chaucer: *Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*, ca. 1380

Whan that *Aprill*, with his shoures soote
The droghte of *March* hath *perced* to the roote
And bathed every veyne in swich *licour*,
Of which *vertu engendred* is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The *tendre* croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe *cours* yronne,
And smale foweles maken *melodye*,
That slepen al the nyght with open eye --
(So priketh hem *Nature* in hir *corages*);
Thanne longen folk to goon on *pilgrimages*
And *palmeres* for to seken *straunge* strondes
To *ferne* halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And *specially* from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke.

Vocabulary: 76% OE+ON; 24% Latin + OF

William Shakespeare: *Hamlet's Soliloquy*, ca. 1600

To be, or not to be--that is the *question*:
Whether 'tis *nobler* in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of *outrageous* fortune
Or to take *arms* against a sea of troubles
And by *opposing* end them. To die, to sleep--
No more--and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand *natural* shocks
That flesh is *heir* to. 'Tis a *consummation*
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep--
To sleep--*perchance* to dream: ay, there's the *rub*,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have *shuffled* off this *mortal* coil,
Must give us *pause*. There's the *respect*
That makes *calamity* of so long life.

Vocabulary: 74% OE+ON; 26% Latin + OF

King James Bible: *The Twenty-Third Psalm*, published 1611

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Vocabulary: 78% OE+ON; 22% Latin + OF

Thomas Jefferson: *A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America*, 1776

... We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness... And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.

Vocabulary: 59% OE+ON; 41% Latin + OF

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1798

All in a hot and copper sky,

The bloody sun, at noon,

Right up above the mast did stand,

No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day,

We stuck, nor breath nor motion;

As idle as a painted ship

Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, every where,

Nor any drop to drink.

Vocabulary: 93% OE+ON; 7% Latin + OF

Abraham Lincoln: Gettysburg Address, 1863

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. ..

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.

[W]e here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Vocabulary: 73% OE+ON; 27% Latin + OF

Guy De Maupassant, *The Baroness*, 1880s (translated from the French)

I had known him by reputation [réputation] for a long time. Very bright, clever, intelligent [intelligent], he acted as intermediary [intermédiaire] in all sorts of transactions [transactions]. He kept in touch with all the richest art amateurs [amateurs] in Paris, and even of Europe and America, knowing their tastes¹⁴ and preferences [préférences]; he apprised them by letter [lettre], or by wire if they lived in a distant city [cité], as soon as he knew of some work of art which might suit them

Vocabulary: 70% OE+ON; 30% Latin + OF

F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*, 1925

And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . And then one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

Vocabulary: 82% OE+ON; 18% Latin + OF

¹⁴ Even though the English word *tastes* originates in French, the modern French equivalent is *gouts*.

Susan Orlean: *The Orchid Thief*, 1998

John Laroche is a tall guy, skinny as a stick, pale-eyed, slouch-shouldered, and sharply handsome, in spite of the fact that he is missing all his front teeth. He has the posture of al dente spaghetti and the nervous intensity of someone who plays a lot of video games...

Laroche's passions arrived unannounced and ended explosively, like car bombs. When I first met him he lusted only after orchids, especially the wild orchids found in Florida's Fakahatchee Strand. I spent most of two years hanging around with him, and at the end of those two years he had gotten rid of every single orchid he owned and swore that he would never own another orchid for as long as he lived.

Vocabulary: 71% OE+ON; 29% Latin + OF

Rory Van Tuyl, *The Most Beautiful Enigma in the World*, 2010

Madagascar, the world's fourth-largest island, was created about 160 million years ago in the breakup of the great Southern Continent. One fragment of this breakup - the one destined to become the Indian subcontinent - drifted north, collided with Eurasia, and eventually formed the Himalayas. But the fragment destined to become Madagascar, born before most of today's plants and animals existed, stayed in pretty much the same spot through the eons, just off the southeast coast of Africa.

Vocabulary: 69% OE+ON; 31% Latin + OF

Though not discussed in the body of the paper, I found that this sample of my own writing was just slightly above the norm in its use of Romance-derived words.

Appendix 3: American Newspapers and Magazines

Red=French; Green= Old English; Underlined Green=Old Norse or Frisian; Purple=Latin

Duplicate words in each text were removed, so that the result is a Vocabulary count for each writer, not a Word count.

Boston News-Letter, August 13, 1705: Vocabulary: 69% OE+ON; 31% Latin + OF

The Letters which came this day from France give an Account, That the French and Spanish Forces before Gibraltar had attacked the Hill which commands that Town, and poffeffed themfelves of it; but the Garifon rallying out upon them, beat them back with confiderable Lofs...They add , that this has encreafed the mifunderftanding and jealoufie between the 2 Nations, each laying upon the other the blame of the ill Succefs of this Siege.

The Norwich Packet, April 22, 1775: Vocabulary: 85% OE+ON; 15% Latin + OF

...not a fingle wounded Man found alive, the Troops having, with a Barbarity heretofore unpractifed by British Soldiers, deftroyed all they met with: That at Lexington they burnt Four dwelling and Two Out Houfes, an aged Man whom they found fick in his Bed, was run through with a Bayonet...

NY Times, April 20, 1865: Vocabulary: 63% OE+ON; 37% Latin + OF

The death of our late noble and illustrious President continues here, as elsewhere, and will, at least till the grave covers his honored remains, the topic that absorbs all others, that seems indeed to render people impatient of bestowing a transient attention upon matters which at other times would be regarded as full of interest and moment.

NY Times, July 5, 1899: Vocabulary: 64% OE+ON; 36% Latin + OF

The people of the South and West want a larger circulating medium, but BRYAN, if elected, could not give it to them. The banking system is lamentably deficient in those sections, and there is \$500,000,000 less banking capital there than in 1860. National banks do not thrive in agricultural communities because money all congests in the commercial centres of the country.

New York Times, December 8, 1917 Vocabulary: 48% OE+ON; 52% Latin + OF

WASHINGTON, Dec. 7.--The United States went to war against Austria Hungary, at 5:03 o'clock this afternoon, when President Wilson approved a joint resolution, adopted by Congress, declaring a state of war to exist. The President, under the resolution, was empowered to "direct and employ the entire naval and military forces of the Government," to carry on the war to "a successful termination."

Harper's Magazine, August, 1940: Vocabulary: 50% OE+ON; 50% Latin + OF

The Long Watch in England

Surrounded by her ancient province, the sea, holding desperately to the image of her past securities, guarding her treasure with the force of her deep inner dismay, the ancient island world of England stands facing the future. What holds her together today is chiefly the immense accumulated inertia of the ages in men's thought and habit, together with the profound resources collected in a century and a half of unparalleled expansion and power.

New York Times, October 19, 2010: Vocabulary: 59% OE+ON; 41% Latin + OF

Surprise Interest Rate Move by China Roils Markets

BEIJING — China's central bank unexpectedly announced Tuesday that it would raise interest rates for the first time in nearly three years, apparently in the hopes of dampening inflation and cooling off this country's hot property market.

The move had an immediate effect on markets worldwide, sending stocks lower on exchanges in Europe and the United States as investors weighed the effect on China's continued economic growth and its ability to serve as an engine for a global recovery. The major Wall Street stock indexes were down sharply.

Los Altos Town Crier, September 28, 2010: Vocabulary: 52% OE+ON; 48% Latin + OF

Los Altos City Council candidates think the city can do more to improve the downtown, and suggestions ranged from building more office space to pedestrian-friendly plazas that minimize auto traffic.

Speaking before a full house at a Sept. 20 forum at Courtyard by Marriott in Los Altos, the four candidates in attendance ... addressed the touchy issue of downtown revitalization, the focal point of Los Altos 2025. The group, comprising civic and business leaders, sponsored the forum.