

The Franglais War

The Académie Française complains constantly about the disappearance of their pristine, melodic language under the weight of harsh English words adopted into their popular lexicon. Yes, they do use sandwich, OK, Happy Hour, weekend, brunch, T-shirt, job, parking, hamburger, hot dog et al. But what about our proud Anglo-Saxon heritage? It has been almost decimated by the plethora of French words and expressions. Something like 45 percent of English words are French in origin usually derived from an original Latin root. Judge for yourself which language has suffered or benefitted most from the incursions of its neighbour by reviewing this synopsis of a novel.

“The *heroine* is Angelique, a *petite femme fatale* from the *elite class* of Bordeaux. Her father is the *enfant terrible* of his *clique*, a *roué* who is having an *affair* with his *au pair*. Angelique is *waiting* for her *fiancé*, a *lieutenant* in the *army*. He is taking her to a *discoteque* and then on to a *café* where there is a *cabaret*. She is in her *boudoir* wearing a *negligée*, through which can be seen her *lingerie*, particularly her *brassière*. She is eating *canapés* and sipping an *apéritif*. Earlier she *devoured* an *omelette* with a *salad vinaigrette* followed by a *soufflé*. Her *chauffeur* drives her to the *rendez-vous* in a *cul-de-sac*. She is very *chic* and is full of *energy* and *optimism* for the *soirée*.

But unfortunately the evening is *sabotaged* by the *arrival* of her former *paramour* a *cadet* in the *navy*. He throws down the *gauntlet* and *challenges* her *fiancé* to a *duel*. They meet in the *forest* at the *appointed hour* and her *fiancé* is *vanquished*. The *victorious cadet* administers the *coup de grâce* with his *épée*. Her *fiancé* is taken to the *morgue* and Angelique swears to *avenge* his *demise*. She has a *tête-à-tête* with a *famous* criminal over *dinner*. For *entrée* She has the house *speciality*, *coq-au-vin* with *pomme frites* and he has *filet mignon*. He is very *gauche* and commits a *gaffe* by eating his *pomme frites* with his fingers and dropping them on his *serviette*. The gangster

agrees to *assassinate* the *cadet* but his pistol jams and he is *apprehended* by the police. Under interrogation, he *implicates* Angelique and the *clandestine intrigue* becomes a *cause célèbre* on *television*.

The *judge sentences* Angelique to *probation*. He is *lenient* because it was an understandable *crime of passion* with an *honourable motive*. The *cadet* is *arrested* and *receives* a lengthy *prison* term.

Angelique *rapidly* regains her *zest* for life and *gastronomic adventures* and *develops* a *liaison* with another *bon viveur* and *connoisseur* which leads to *matrimony*. The *ceremony* is *incredible* and the happy *couple embark* on a lifestyle characterised by *magnums* of *vintage champagne*, *elegant limousines* and *ancient chateaux*.”

French fury at the introduction of a few English words into their everyday speech is therefore misplaced. The mass eradication of Anglo-Saxon words by a tsunami of French replacements after the Norman Conquest should instead be a source of Gallic pride.

500 Words

