

**HUSBANDS, OUTLAWS AND KIDS: THE INFLUENCE OF OLD NORSE ON THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**HUSBANDS, OUTLAWS E KIDS: A INFLUÊNCIA DO NÓRDICO ANTIGO NA  
LÍNGUA INGLESA**

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**Abstract:** What have common English words such as *husbands*, *outlaws* and *kids* and the sentence *they are weak* to do with Old Norse? Yet, all these examples are from Old Norse, the Norsemen's language. However, the Norse influence on English is underestimated as the Norsemen are viewed as barbaric, violent pirates. Also, the Norman occupation of England and the Great Vowel Shift have obscured the Old Norse influence. These topics, plus the Viking Age, the Scandinavian presence in England, as well as the Old Norse linguistic influence on English and the supposed French influence of the Norman invasion will be described. The research for this etymological article was executed through a descriptive-qualitative approach. Concluded is that the Norsemen have intensively influenced English due to their military supremacy and their abilities to adaptation. Even the French-Norman French language has left marks on English. Nowadays, English is a *lingua franca*, leading to borrowings from English to many languages, which is often considered as invasive. But, English itself has borrowed from other languages, maintaining its proper character. Hence, it is hoped that this article may contribute to a greater acknowledgement of the Norse influence on English and undermine the scepticism towards the English language as every language has its importance.

**Keywords:** Old Norse Loanwords, English Language, Viking Age, Etymology.

**Resumo:** O que têm palavras inglesas comuns como *husbands*, *outlaws* e *kids* e a frase *they are weak* a ver com os Nórdicos? Todos esses exemplos são do nórdico antigo, a língua dos escandinavos. No entanto, a influência dos Nórdicos no inglês é subestimada, pois os Nórdicos são vistos como piratas bárbaros e violentos. Além disso, a ocupação normanda da Inglaterra

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e a Grande Mudança Vocálica obscureceram a influência nórdica. Esses tópicos, e a Era Viking, a presença nórdica na Inglaterra, bem como a influência lingüística do nórdico antigo no inglês e a suposta influência francesa da invasão normanda serão descritos. A pesquisa deste artigo etimológico foi realizada por meio de uma abordagem descritiva-qualitativa. Concluiu-se que os escandinavos influenciaram intensamente o inglês devido à supremacia militar e suas habilidades de adaptação. Até a língua francesa dos escandinavos da Normandia deixou suas marcas no inglês. Atualmente, o inglês é uma língua dominante, com inserção em vários idiomas, o que é frequentemente considerado como invasivo. Mas, o próprio inglês tomou emprestado de outras línguas, mantendo seu próprio caráter. Espera-se que este artigo possa contribuir para um maior reconhecimento da influência nórdica no inglês e minimizar o ceticismo em relação ao idioma inglês, já que todos os idiomas têm sua importância.

**Palavras-chaves:** Empréstimos do Nórdico Antigo, Língua Inglesa, Era Viking, Etimologia.

### Introduction

One might think what common English words such as *husbands*, *outlaws* and *kids* have to do with Vikings? Moreover, the sentence *they are weak* may appear as very English. The truth is that these words and sentence are fully based on Old Norse, the language of the Norsemen. Indeed, Old Norse, the language of the Norsemen has been responsible for the fact that “[...] many general words entered the language, nearly 1000 eventually becoming part of standard English” (Crystal, 1997, p. 25). In addition, Baugh & Cable (2002, p. 95) confirm Crystal’s statement by adding “that number, if we restrict the list to those for which the evidence is fully convincing, is about 900. These [...] are almost always words designating common everyday things and fundamental concepts”.

Dawson (2003, p. 43) remarks that “[...] Norse had considerable impact on all aspects of the English language [...]. Some of the effects were lost, but many survived, and features of this language variety were later diffused into the dialects which would become the foundation of “Standard English”, so that many of these effects can be seen in Modern English”. Likewise, Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 28) emphasizes the influence of Old Norse by declaring that “the English terms that derive from Old Norse have become essential for everyday speech. They have held their place in English throughout the centuries and the English tongue would be unadorned without them”. However, the Norsemen’s influence on the English language is not very known and even underestimated.

A possible explanation of this underestimated Norse influence on English might involve the twentieth century view of the Norsemen as barbaric violent pirates, invaders and cruel plunderers. Also, the Norman occupation of England has obscured the Viking influence, as Old Norse was considered as a “barbaric” language compared to the “noble” French language. A further reason concerns the Great Vowel Shift, which has impacted the English language considerably with respect to pronunciation and spelling, thus obscuring the Viking influence.

These aforementioned topics will be discussed in this article. Other attention will be given to the Viking Age and the settlement of the Vikings in England. Furthermore, the vocabulary and grammar the English language has borrowed from Old Norse will be described. Additionally, the supposed French influence of the Norman invasion will be discussed. After all, as Baugh and Cable (2002, p. 83) underline the Norse influence on English:

The daring sea rovers to whom these unusual achievements were due are commonly known as Vikings, and the period of their activity, extending from the middle of the eighth century to the beginning of the eleventh, is popularly known as the Viking Age. It was to their attacks upon, settlements in, and ultimate conquest of England that the Scandinavian influence upon Old English was due.

The research for this etymological article was executed through a descriptive-qualitative approach. According to Key (2007), a descriptive research contains categorized information, which is meant to distinguish the data and to aid the reader in noting the data. Also, a descriptive research involves the description of various examples and the visualisation and comprehension of the data through, for example, tables.

These tables were based on Baugh & Cable (2002), Crystal (1997) and the Online Etymology Dictionary (2013). The examples in the tables are intended to illustrate the Old Norse element in the English language and “lists as these suggest the everyday character of the words that the Scandinavian invasions and subsequent settlement brought into English” (Baugh & Cable, 2002, p. 90). Key (2007), also notices that qualitative methods include

empirical support to produce information in view of the subject that is studied. Qualitative methods may also be used for generalisations beyond the studied subject.

This introduction will be followed by a description of the Old English and Old Norse languages. Then, the Viking expansion, causes for the Viking expansion, the Scandinavian settlement in England and the Danelaw will be discussed. Further sections will relate to whether the Old Norse influence is obscured, Anglo-Norse language contact and the first borrowings from Old Norse.

Consequent sections will comprise the Old Norse influence on proper names, grammar and syntax as well as the Old Norse influence on English verbs, nouns, adjectives, non-standard speech and the Viking literary influence. These sections will be followed by the Normandy French influence on English. The final remarks and the bibliographical references will conclude this article. However, first of all, the etymology and misconception of the term *Viking* will be analysed.

### **Etymology and misconception of the term *Viking***

The term *Viking* “[...] is usually thought to be derived from Old Norse *vīk*, a bay, as indicating “one who came out from, or frequented, inlets of the sea [...]”. Another etymological possibility derives *Viking* from *wic*, a village or camp. In Old English, *wicing* appears first in the Anglo-Saxon poem *Widsith* (9<sup>th</sup> century). (Harper’s Online Etymology Dictionary, 2013).

Crowcroft & Cannon (2015, p. 924) indicate that *Viking* is Old Norse “[...] which only came into common usage in the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to describe peoples of Scandinavian origin who, as raiders, settlers, and traders, had major and long-lasting effects on northern Europe and the Atlantic seaboard between the late 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries”. The term *Viking* was not used in English during the Viking age. Only during the twentieth century, the term *Viking* came to be in use as having a broader meaning as a term for a whole civilisation, for instance: Viking Age, Viking culture and Viking art (Barber, 2009).

But these modern conceptions of the Vikings often strongly differ from the complex, advanced civilisation of the Norsemen, being portrayed as violent, piratical and barbarian heathens. These current representations of the Vikings are based on clichés and stereotypes, complicating to appreciate the real Viking legacy and leading to misconceptions regarding the Vikings (Brink & Price, 2008).

These misconceptions date from the Middle Ages, when the Vikings attacked the Lindisfarne abbey. This event shocked Europe thoroughly and demonised the opinion of the Vikings for centuries, neglecting the achievements of the Vikings, such as their artistic, technological and nautical skills (Sawyer, 1995). In the 18th century and the 19th century, developed a picture of the Vikings as noble savages and barbarians. It was during these centuries that the term *viking* was first popularised and misused under influence of Romanticism (Brink & Price, 2008).

This Romantic period was marked by the rise of nationalistic movements. The Middle Ages served as a model to justify the often misplaced nationalistic claims, to ridicularise other countries, or misinterpret other cultures, such as the Scandinavian ones. In this context of misinterpretation, Langer (2002, p. 7) states that:

The period of the brute barbarians was frequently perpetrated by artists of different nationalities, and since they were not Scandinavians, they might lack any proper knowledge of the Viking Culture. Therefore, this new image for the barbaric warrior would be made out of a collection of traits associated with prejudicial concepts in the minds of people who were ultimately foreign. That is, not from Scandinavian origin. And this image was often that of a uncivilised brute, bearing all the characteristics of a sub-human creature.

Maybe even worse, In Nazi Germany, the Vikings were idealised as pure Germanic by Nazi supremacists who molded the Viking legacy and people to fit into the ideology of a Germanic master race. Likewise, Scandinavian mythology and runes were utilised in Nazi mysticism. rituals and pseudoreligion (Brink & Price, 2008). This way, the misconception and clichéd view of the Viking culture has been persistent as can be noted from comics, movies, television series and computer games.

All in all, the term *Viking* is not applied as a name for any people or culture in general. In this article, the term *Viking* refers to the Scandinavian raiders and not to the whole Scandinavian culture as is acknowledged that the Norse civilisation during the Viking Age was militarily, technologically and culturally very advanced and has impacted history profoundly. The term *Viking*, therefore, is not used in a denigrating and offensive way. But to avoid any misconception or indignation, in this article will mostly be used the terms *Northmen*<sup>2</sup> and *Norse(men)*.

### Old English

Old English<sup>3</sup> is an Indo-European language, belonging to the Germanic languages. The Germanic languages are divided into three groups. A first group contains the East Germanic languages, which are dead languages such as Gothic. A second group consists of the North Germanic languages, such as Swedish, Danish, Islandic and Norwegian. The West Germanic languages, the third group, include languages such as Frisian, German, Afrikaans, English and Dutch. The closest relatives of Old English are Old Frisian and Old Saxon (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

Old English<sup>4</sup> is the earliest form of the English language and was spoken during a part of the Middle Ages. Old English was developed from dialects brought to Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century by Germanic invaders and settlers, such as the Angles, Saxons and Jutes<sup>5</sup>. Baugh & Cable (2002, p. 45) remark that “[...] it is impossible to say how much the speech of the Angles differed from that of the Saxons or that of the Jutes. The differences were certainly slight”. But, these Angles, Saxons and Jutes settlers and invaders became dominant and their languages

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<sup>2</sup> A term which is still being used in England, the Netherlands, Germany and other North European territories.

<sup>3</sup> English, from *Englisc* (belonging to the Angles) may have been derived from *Angles* (5<sup>th</sup> century Germanic invaders of Great Britain). The Angles were a fishing people and as such England would mean the 'land of the fishermen' (Barber, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Old English: from 450 to 1150. Middle English: 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century. Early Modern English: 1500 to 1650. Modern English: after 1650 (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> The Angles and Jutes came from modern-day Denmark. The Saxons from present-day Germany and the Netherlands (Barber, 2009).

replaced the original languages of England such as Brittonic, the language of the Celts, and Latin, which was brought to Britain by the Romans (Barber, 2009).

Brittonic and Latin hardly made impact on the Anglo-Saxon invaders and were even regarded as 'inferior' and 'non-native' by the Germanic invaders. Thus, after several decades of Anglo-Saxon settlement, "[...] by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the foundation was established for the emergence of the English language" (Crystal, 1997, p. 7). The Old English language had four dialects: Mercian, Northumbrian, West Saxon and Kentish. The eastern and northern parts of England were subject to Old Norse influence due to Viking rule and settlement in the 9<sup>th</sup> century as will be discussed later on (Barber, 2009).

Anglo-Saxon literacy developed after the Christianisation of Britain in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, leading to the first Old English literary works. These literary works were written in a runic system, but during the 7<sup>th</sup> century this system was replaced by the Latin alphabet, and "[...] very little material remains from this period. Doubtless many manuscripts were burned during the 7<sup>th</sup>-century Viking invasions", as Crystal (1997, p. 10) remarks. King Alfred the Great unified the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (excluding the Danelaw territory) in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. This led to the standardisation of the language of government and literature. Alfred favoured education in English and was responsible for literary, religious and other works translated into English (Pyles & Algeo, 1993).

During the 10<sup>th</sup> century, a new literary standard arose under the influence of Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester. This language arguably represents the "classical" form of Old English. This "classical Old English" retained its prestige until the Norman Conquest in 1066, after which English lost for a while its importance as a literary language. English was replaced as the language of the elite by Anglo-Norman, a language related to French, marking the end of the Old English era. The Norman domination over Britain was responsible for the development from Old English into Middle English (Pyles & Algeo, 1993).

## Old Norse

Old Norse was a North Germanic Language, spoken by inhabitants of Scandinavia and their overseas settlements. Old Norse existed roughly from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Old Norse began to develop into the modern North Germanic languages<sup>6</sup> during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, marking the end of Old Norse. Old Norse was divided into three dialects, namely Old West Norse, Old East Norse and Old Gutnish. The Old West Norse dialect included Old Norwegian and Old Icelandic. This dialect was also to be found in Ireland, Scotland, The Isle of Man, England and Normandy in present-day France. (Harbert, 2006).

The Old East Norse dialect was spoken in Sweden and Denmark as well as in England, Normandy and Kievan Rus<sup>7</sup>. The third Old Norse dialect, Old Gutnish, was spoken in Gotland<sup>8</sup> and in the eastern settlements. The result of the Scandinavian expansion was that during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Old Norse was the most widely spoken language in Europe, stretching from Vinland<sup>9</sup> in the West to the Volga River in Eastern Europe (Harbert, 2006).

The earliest known inscriptions in Old Norse are in runic alphabet and date from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These runes were used until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Latin Alphabet was introduced through the christianisation of Scandinavia in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest texts in Old Norse in the Latin alphabet date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the texts in Old Norse literature were written in Iceland. The best-known texts are the Norse and the Icelandic sagas and mythological literature. Also, Old Norse translations of courtly romances, classical mythology, the Old Testament, as well as instructional material, letters and official documents are amongst the Old Norse texts (Pyles & Algeo, 1993).

Although that Old English and Old Norse were related languages, it must be stipulated that a great many of common, everyday Old Norse words have been adopted into the English

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<sup>6</sup> Faroese, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic, amongst others,

<sup>7</sup> Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. The latter two countries have derived their names from Kievan Rus.

<sup>8</sup> Sweden's largest island

<sup>9</sup> Part of the coast of Canada, where Leif Erickson landed about the year 1000.



language during the Viking Age. Old Norse also influenced the Norman language and through Norman, the modern French language. This Norman-Franco language arrived in Britain after the Norman Conquest in 1066, leaving its linguistics marks on the English language (Pyles & Algeo, 1993), as will be described later in this article.

### **The Viking age and expansion**

The age of the Scandinavian expansion lasted from 793 to 1066. According to Sawyer (1995, p. 3), The Viking Age is “[...] best defined as the period when Scandinavians played a large role in the British Isles and western Europe as raiders and conquerors. It is also the period in which Scandinavians settled in many of the areas they conquered, and in the Atlantic islands”. Thus, during this period, the Norse traders, warriors, settlers and invaders expanded their influence from Europe to Asia, Africa and even to North America<sup>10</sup>.

The Norsemen’s objectives involved raiding. “[...] although it is likely that commercial development would have preceded this two-hundred year period [...]” (Miglio, 2010, p. 2), which indicates that the Norsemen initially had non-violent intentions. The raiding, “[...] pillaging and killing that followed Viking incursions was considered little more than a ‘summer job’ by the Scandinavians, as an extension of commercial enterprises” (Miglio, 2010, p. 4).

The Northmen would plant crops after the winter and raided when the ice was melted. After the raiding and plundering they returned with their loot in time for the harvest. It must be noted though that the Norsemen settled for a longer time in, for example, present-day Russia, England and Greenland. In this way, the Norsemen significantly influenced the then-known medieval world and, for instance the English language (Brink & Price 2008).

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, Newfoundland, Canada.

### Reasons for the Viking expansion

There are several theories that explain the reasons for the Scandinavian expansion. A first one that is posited concerns economic causes. Trade and urbanism were developing in Europe. Also, the Islamic world was expanding their trade to the North of Europe, [...] a consequence of the Arab conquest of much of the Mediterranean coastline, making the *Mare Nostrum* a barrier to European commerce for the first time, rather than a connective waterway” (Miglio, 2010, p. 4). The Scandinavians rose to the occasion and raided and plundered the upcoming weakly defended urban centers. The Islamic trade routes likewise attracted the Norsemen to attack and raid the south of Europe and Asia and to take over many of the trading routes, thus dominating the trade between Europe and Asia. (Graham-Campbell, 2001).

A second reason for the Scandinavian expansion relates to demographics. The Scandinavian population increased considerably during the early Middle Ages. This resulted in a shortage of land to cultivate. Therefore, many Scandinavians were without income or food. Consequently, these landless men found a solution in piracy, raiding and plundering. Additionally, the younger sons of a family found no other way of providing for themselves than raiding as the eldest son inherited the family estate (Graham-Campbell, 2001).

Related to politics and religion, in this case revenge, is the theory that the Norsemen’s raids were provoked by the Franks. The Frankish King Charlemagne tried to convert the Norsemen to Christianity. For this purpose, the Franks invaded Scandinavia and forced the population to convert. The refusers were killed. These Frankish attempts to convert the Scandinavians caused intern tension and conflicts amongst the converted Scandinavians and the refusers. In consequence, the Scandinavian raids may have been motivated by revenge on the Franks and a way for the refusers to escape conversion to Christianity (Graham-Campbell, 2001).

Last but not least should be mentioned that all of the aforementioned reasons for the Viking Age and Scandinavian expansion would not have been possible were it not for the technological superiority of the Norsemen. This technological superiority was defined by nautical skills, represented by the Viking longship<sup>11</sup>, which was a factor for that “[...] the Scandinavians enjoyed an undisputed control of the sea and coastal routes” (Miglio, 2010, p. 4). These longships facilitated longer sea journeys through, for instance, larger sails. Another advantage of Scandinavian nautical technique was that they could turn their ships over and drag their ships over land, from shallow to deep water (Brink & Price, 2008).

The eleventh century is regarded as the end of the Viking Age and expansion. This end was provoked by royal power and the Catholic Church. The monarchies in Scandinavia with the support of the Catholic Church imposed their centralising power over the local chiefs and replaced the economy based on raids in favour of market towns. However, several raids occurred up to the fifteenth century, though these raids had as objective plundering and looting and not the expansion of the Scandinavian territory (Graham-Campbell, 2001).

### **Scandinavian settlement in England**

The earliest known occurrence of a Scandinavian raid in England is dates from 789, when Northmen sailed to the Isle of Portland. They were mistaken for merchants. When asked to pay tax on their goods, they murdered the official. But the raid on the island monastery of Lindisfarne, which is often set at the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 793 “[...] has traditionally been considered as the beginning of the so-called Viking Age in [...]” (Miglio, 2010, p. 2) England. The raiders killed several monks and looted the monastery.

Sporadic raids on the British shores continued during the last decade of the eighth century. For instance, in 794 and 795, Lindisfarne once again was attacked. In 802, the abbey was burned to the ground. In 794, a Scandinavian fleet attacked a monastery at Jarrow, but their leaders were killed. Some of the raiders escaped by ship, only to have the crews killed by

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<sup>11</sup> A famous kind of longship is the *Drakkar* (dragon).

locals. This attack was one of the last raids on Britain for about 40 years (Graham-Campbell, 2001).

In 850, Scandinavians overwintered for the first time in Britain. In 865, a Danish group landed in East Anglia, led by Ivar the Boneless and Halfdan Ragnarsson. These Danes captured York (Jorvik) where some of them settled as craftsmen and farmers. In 867, Northumbria became part of the Danelaw<sup>12</sup>, after its conquest by Halfdan Ragnarsson and Ivar the Boneless. Ecgerht, an Englishman, was put on the throne as a puppet king. By 870, Bagsecg and his five earls arrived in England. Bagsecg's and Halfdan's allied forces raided large parts of England until 871, when they planned to invade Wessex (Brink & Price, 2008).

However, Bagsecg was killed at the Battle of Ashdown (871). As a result, many Norsemen returned to Jorvik in northern England. However, Alfred the Great of Wessex fought against the Scandinavian invaders and drove back the Norse frontier by taking York. A new wave of Norwegians appeared in England in 947 when Eric Bloodaxe took York on behalf of the them (Brink & Price, 2008).

In 871 the Scandinavians split into two armies, Guthrum leading one army to Wessex, and Halfdan went north. In 876, Halfdan shared out Northumbria, which became the Danelaw. Most of the English kingdoms could not hold back the Scandinavians, although Alfred of Wessex defeated Guthrum at Edington (878). Treaties were made in 886, which formalised the borders of the English kingdoms and the Scandinavian Danelaw (Brink & Price, 2008).

The Anglo-Norse conflict continued, despite these treaties. However, Alfred and his successors could retake York. In 1003, the Danish King Sweyn Forkbeard raided England and became king of England in 1013. Sweyn Forkbeard was succeeded as King of England by his son Cnut (1016-1035). The English throne was occupied by Cnut's sons Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut until 1042 (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

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<sup>12</sup> The Danelaw will be discussed further on in this article.

The Scandinavian presence in England lingered until 1066, when the Norsemen lost the battle with the English under Harold Godwinson at Stamford Bridge. The death of the Norwegian King Harald Hardrada ended the hope of reviving Cnut's Empire. This event is often regarded as the end of the Viking Age in England. Harold Godwinson himself died several weeks later when William the Conqueror and his Normans, descended from Norsemen, defeated the English army at the Battle of Hastings. William was crowned king of England on 25 December 1066 (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

Although the Viking Age may have ended by the Norman conquest, several raids on England during the next centuries is noted. For instance, in 1070 the Danish king Sweyn Estridson occupied York in support of Edgar the Ætheling the last surviving English pretender to the throne. However, Sweyn accepted a payment from William the Conqueror and deserted Edgar. In 1175, one of Sweyn's sons supported another English rebellion, which had ended before they arrived, thus they settled for plundering York (Graham-Campbell, 2001).

Some Scandinavian raiding occurred during King Stephen's reign, when King Eystein II of Norway plundered the east coast of England and the Yorkshire coast. Although, the intention was to plunder and not to conquer. These last raids marked the end of the English Viking Age. Nevertheless, the Isle of Man remained under Scandinavian authority until 1266 and Shetland belonged to the king of Norway as late as 1469 (Graham-Campbell, 2001).

### **The Danelaw**

An immediate consequence of the Scandinavian presence in England was the Danelaw. This "[...] Danelaw had been independent only for about 50 years, those legal and cultural characteristics were nonetheless still recognized even after the Norman Conquest", as Miglio notices (2010, p. 4) the importance and lasting effect of the DaneLaw.

As has been indicated before, Alfred of Wessex defeated Guthrum in 878 at Edington. This battle led to the peace treaty of Wedmore (878). This treaty "[...] defined the line, running roughly from Chester to London, to the east of which the foreigners were henceforth to remain.

This territory was to be subject to Danish law and is hence known as the Danelaw” (Baugh & Cable, 2002, p. 84).

Consequently, the Danelaw became the part of England which was ruled by the Scandinavians and lasted in England to as late as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This Danelaw included cities such as Leicester, Derby, York, Cambridge and Nottingham. The Danelaw territory had its own laws, for instance, “[...] Norse legal and monetary systems eventually replaced their English counterparts in the Danelaw. The system of land measurements and administrative districts and their governance was also replaced by agrarian settlements and a retention of military organization [...]” (Dawson, 2003, p. 42), which led to more freedom for the farmers than in the Anglo-Saxon territory.

Also, the Norsemen converted to Christianity. This “[...] reassured the Anglo-Saxon population that they would be governed by a Christian king, on a par with the Anglo-Saxon monarchs [...]” (Miglio, 2010, p. 5), clearing the way for a fusion between the English and the Norse invaders. (Sawyer, 1955). In this way, as BAUGH & CABLE (2002, p. 85-86) confirm:

Thus we have to do not merely with large bands of marauders, marching and carrying hardship and devastation into all parts of the country for two centuries, but also with an extensive peaceable settlement by farmers who intermarried with the English, adopted many of their customs, and entered into the everyday life of the community. In the districts where such settlements took place, conditions were favourable for an extensive Scandinavian influence on the English language.

In fact, the Danelaw was responsible for a considerable influx of Scandinavian vocabulary into the English language, as will be discussed in the next sections.

### Is the Old Norse influence obscured?

It was observed in the introduction of this article that the influence of Old Norse on the English language is not very known and even underestimated. Several linguistic factors contribute to this unfortunate notion and obstruct the recognition of the Old Norse influence, as will be discussed in this section. The similarity between Old English and Old Norse is the first factor that will be examined.

The similarity between Old English and Old Norse generates difficulties to determine whether a word is borrowed or not, as “[...] the English and the Norse language varieties were similar in many aspects and had many roots in common [...]” (Dawson, 2003, p. 44). Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 5) adds that the Old Norse influence on English was underestimated “[...] due to the fact that the Norse constituents were so thoroughly integrated into English that many of them remained undetected until the nineteenth century”.

Nonetheless, there are several tests to determine an Old Norse origin. A first test has to do with the meaning of a word. For instance, the word *plow*, stood for a land measure in Old English, whereas in Old Norse it was used for an agricultural implement. In the latter meaning, Old English used the word *sulh*. This usage has become obsolete and the Old Norse meaning has survived in Modern English as *plough* (Baugh & Cable, 2002.)

Likewise, the development of sounds may resolve doubts regarding the Norse origin, as is confirmed by Dawson (2003, p. 44): “the origin of particular words for which there was an Old Norse and Old English common root can be determined by knowing the outcome of certain phonological developments that distinguish the two language varieties”. An example given by Baugh & Cable (p. 87, 2002) concerns the sound *sk*: “in Old English this was early palatalized to *sh* (written *sc*), whereas in the Scandinavian countries it retained its hard *sk* sound”. Thus, Old English vocabulary such as *ship*, *shall* and *fish* have retained the *sh* sound in Modern English. Borrowings from Old Norse are pronounced with the *sk* sound: *skin*, *skill*, *skin*, *sky*, *bask*. Additionally, the hard pronunciation of *k* and *g* as in *kid*, *get*, *give*, and *egg* indicates an Old Norse origin (Crystal, 1997).

Also, the spelling and of the English language contributes to the fact that the Scandinavian influence on English may be underestimated and obscure, as the spelling of English often differs from the pronunciation of English. This may have obscured the Old Norse influence on the English language. The responsible phenomenon for this was the Great Vowel Shift.

This Great Vowel Shift was a series of changes in the pronunciation of the long vowels that occurred roughly between 1350 and 1600 during the period of Middle English as a result of the French influence due to the Norman Conquest. The vowels, /i:/ and /u:/, became diphthongs and the others, /e: ε: a: o: o:/, raised in tongue height (Aitchison, 2010).

Thus, what occurred during the Great Vowel Shift was that the long *e* in *meet* was pronounced as /e:/ so Middle English *meet* sounded like Modern English *mate* /met/. The long *i* in *bite* was pronounced as /i:/. Therefore, Middle English *bite* sounded like Modern English *beet* /. The long *a* in *gate* was pronounced as /a:/, with a vowel as in *rather*. The long *o* in *loot* was pronounced as /o:/, as in modern *oa* as in *toad*. Old English had a long /ε:/ in *heat*, like the short *e* in *bed*, but pronounced longer. The long /ɔ:/ was pronounced as in *goat*. (Aitchison, 2010).

Hence, while the Great Vowel Shift was taking place, Old English pronunciation and spelling continued and became part of Modern English. However, Middle English spelling and pronunciation with its sound change also became part of Modern English. Therefore, the Great Vowel Shift provoked the peculiarities of spelling and pronunciation of Modern English that have obscured the Norse influence in the English language. (Aitchison, 2010). Nonetheless the relative unfamiliarity of the Viking influence on English, Baugh & Cable (2002, p. 88) remark that:

When a word appears in Middle English that cannot be traced to an Old English source but for which an entirely satisfactory original exists in Old

Norse, and when that word occurs in texts written in districts where Danish influence was strong, or when it has survived in dialectal use in these districts today, the probability that we have here a borrowed word is fairly strong.

### **Language contact and first borrowings from Old Norse**

As has been remarked in the above section, Old Norse and Old English were similar and mutually comprehensible as both languages were Germanic languages. In some places where the Norsemen settled, they hold on to their language, although some Old Norse vocabulary entered the local English language due to a lack of English linguistic equivalents, thus, “many of the lexical items which show the influence of Norse on English are “new” words (i.e. ones for which there was no Old English parallel)” (Dawson, 2003, p. 43).

But, at first, the relation of the Norsemen with the English was too hostile, which contributed to a modest influx of Old Norse borrowings into English. These borrowings are associated mostly with sea-roving and, as Baugh & Cable (2002, p. 90) mention:

The Danish invasions were not like [...] bringing the English into contact with a different civilization and introducing them to many things [...], that they had not known before. Consequently, the Scandinavian elements that entered the English language are such as would make their way into it through the give-and-take of everyday life.

In fact, later on, when the English had a more peaceful contact with the Northmen due to the Danelaw, a Norse-dominated region, a mixture of two people and their languages caused that Old Norse vocabulary entered the English language on a larger scale. In this Danelaw region, a bilingual situation developed. This situation occurred through marriage between the English and the Norsemen, the Norse domination and trade. In this way, as Crystal (1997, p. 25) indicates: “the closeness of contact between the Anglo-Saxons and the Danish settlers is clearly shown by the extensive borrowings. Some of the commonest words



in modern English came into the language at that time [...]”. For instance, as Miglio (2010, p.9-10) observes that, under influence of the Danelaw:

[...] legal terms are among the first loanwords in Old English, [...] there could be two main reasons for this, either the Scandinavians were superior in the formulation of their legal system, or they quite simply imposed it as conquerors on those territories where they settled, and that out of pragmatic reasons even Old English speakers in territories not immediately dominated by the Scandinavians would adopt loans for unfamiliar legal concepts rather than coin a neologism for them.

Some borrowings from the Scandinavian legal system were such as *law* and *outlaw*. The word *law* is based on the Old Norse *Lagu*, which is derived from the Old Norse verb *leggja* (to determine, to establish). Eventually, *Law/Lagu* replaced the Old English *æ(w)*. The term *outlaw* is a type of banishment that involves a community “[...] in protecting itself from the ‘outsider’ the outlaw, often equated with a preying beast prowling on the outskirts of civilisation, the *vargr*, the wolf, who had no legal rights and must be persecuted by all” (Miglio, 2010, p. 12). This concept of outlawry brought to the English notions of the Scandinavian peer-based society instead of the English royal authority’s law enforcement.

In other cases, Old Norse replaced a native word as a result of the coexistence in the Danelaw. As examples words such as *boon*, *loan*, *sister* and *weak* are mentioned. But occasionally both the English and the Old Norse word survived, albeit with a different use. The following pairs are noteworthy examples of this phenomenon (the original Old English vocabulary is given first): *craft – skill*, *from – fro*, *hide – skin*. (Crystal, 1997).

When the Norman Conquest ended the Norse rule in England, the status of the Norse language declined and the remaining Norsemen, assimilated to English, causing the death of the Norse language in England. But, “[...] there can be no doubt that the basis existed for an extensive interaction of the two languages upon each other, and this conclusion is amply borne out by the large number of Scandinavian elements found in English” (Baugh & Cable, 2002, p.

87). Indeed, the amalgamation of the Norseman and the English, the close relation of Old Norse and Old English, as well as the bilingualism must have contributed to the borrowing from Old Norse into English.

### **The Scandinavian influence: names**

A first Old Norse linguistic influence on the English language that is examined more abundantly refers to names of towns and proper and personal names. As Crystal (1997, p. 25) clarifies: “a large number of settlements with Danish names appeared in England [...] related to the boundary of the Danelaw. There are over 1500 such place names in England, especially in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire”. Miglio (2010, p. 8), adds that “it is generally accepted that, [...] these place names [...] indicate that a sizeable part of the original Anglian population would have stayed on under the new Scandinavian overlords”.

More than 600 names of towns end in *-by*, Scandinavian for ‘farm’ or ‘town’. For instance: *Derby*, *Grimsbj* and *Rugby*. Other names of dwellings end in *-thorp* (village), such as: *Althorp*, *Astonthorpe*, and *Linthorpe*. A further group consists of place names ending in *-toft* (‘homestead’): *Eastoft*, *Lowestoft* and *Sandtoft*. A final group of place names ends in *-thwaite* (clearing): *Applethwaite*, *Braithwaite*, *Storthwaite* (Crystal, 1997, p. 25).

As for the Scandinavian influence on English personal and proper names, Crystal (1997, p. 26) notes that “[...] the Scandinavian influence in the north and east is very clear, especially in Yorkshire and north Lincolnshire, where over 60 per cent of personal names [...] show Scandinavian influence”. The Scandinavian names entered the English language mostly through intermarriage. Hence, “the resulting generations of Anglians of mixed Scandinavian origin would therefore have been most influenced by Scandinavian customs, laws, and language” (Maglio, 2010, p. 8).

The Scandinavian surnames have spread to other parts of the English-speaking world. For example, surnames that end in *-son* or *-sen*, such as *Anderson*, *Hanson*, *Henderson*, *Johansen*, *Johnson*, *Madsen*, *Olson*, *Pederson* and *Thompson*. Other surnames based on Old Norse include:

*Collins, Drabble, Gamble, Goodman, Grime, Gunn, Harold, Knott, Mainwaring, Osborne, Starbuck, Thurgood, Tovey and Truelove*. Likewise, as Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 25), “there are many English personal names of Old Norse origin, which have remained in English since the Viking Age”. For instance: Osmond, from Old Norse *Ásmundr*, Ronald, from *Rögnvaldr*; Carl, from *Karl* and the female name *Erica*.

### Old Norse influence on grammar and syntax

Old Norse has also influenced the English language considerably regarding grammar and syntax, for instance the inflectional system. Baugh & Cable (2002, p, 93) explain that:

[...] the English and Scandinavian languages differed chiefly in their inflectional elements. The body of the word was so nearly the same in the two languages that only the endings would put obstacles in the way of mutual understanding. In the mixed population that existed in the Danelaw these endings must have led to much confusion, tending gradually to become obscured and finally lost. It seems natural that the loss of inflections, which was characteristic of the English language [...], was strengthened and accelerated by the conditions that prevailed in the Danelaw, and that some credit must be given the Danes for a development that [...] resulted [...] in so happily simplifying English grammar.

Another example of simplifying English grammar through the inflectional system was achieved by the Scandinavian presence through the loss of grammatical gender, as Potter (1950, p. 33) confirms: "no less far-reaching was the influence of Scandinavian upon the inflectional endings of English in hastening that wearing away [...]." Also, the explicitly marked case disappeared under Old Norse influence over time. The only case currently still existent in English is the second case.

Thus, likewise, the syntax of English was affected by Old Norse. The Scandinavian presence provoked that English became an analytic language instead of a synthetic language. As Dawson (2003, p. 45) confirms: “English is marked [...] by a fairly dramatic shift [...] from a highly synthetic system to one more analytic, [...] the overall impact of these changes was accelerated in the areas in which Norse-English contact took place”.

An analytic language establishes relationships between words in sentences through *helper* words (prepositions, particles, etc.) and word order. A synthetic language uses inflection or agglutination to indicate syntactic relationships in a sentence. Inflection adds morphemes to a root word to determine a word’s grammatical property. Agglutination combines two or more morphemes into one word to include a word’s grammatical category: subject, object, etc. (Potter, 1950).

But, an even more important Old Norse contribution to grammar may be, as Crystal (1997, p. 25) remarks, that

even the personal pronoun system was affected, with *they*, *them*, and *their* replacing the earlier forms. And, the most remarkable invasion of all, Old Norse influenced the verb *to be*. The replacement of *sindon* by *are* is almost certainly the result of Scandinavian influence, as is the spread of the 3rd person singular -s ending in the present tense in other verbs.

Dawson (2003, p. 44) also claims that “perhaps the most significant and lasting area of Norse influence on English is seen in the personal pronoun system, in the third person pronouns *they*, *them*, and *their*. Old English employed *hīe*, *hiera*, and *him*. Probably, the Old Norse forms were considered as less confusing with forms of the singular in English, so “the corresponding Old Norse paradigm *they*, *them*, *their*, provided by contrast, an agreeable alternative, which made it difficult to confuse with *he*, *him* and *her* [...]” (Friðriksdóttir, 2014, p. 17). The present plural of the verb *to be* is *are*. So, in *they are* “[...] both the pronoun and the verb are Scandinavian and we realize once more how intimately the language of the invaders has entered into English” (Baugh & Cable, 2002, p. 92).

Other contributions to the English grammar from Old Norse are the use of phrasal verbs (for instance, the many examples with *get*) and an admissible omission of the conjunction *that*. Moreover, worth mentioning are the adverbs (e.g. *aloft*, *athwart*, *hence*, *together*, *whence*) and conjunctions (e.g. *though*). Furthermore, some prepositions have entered the English language through the Viking presence, for example, the prepositions *till* and *fro*. The latter has survived as the expression *to and fro*. (Potter, 1950).

### English verbs from Old Norse

The Scandinavian presence has been responsible for a considerable quantity of verbs in the English language. But, also with respect to verbs, as Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 18) indicates, another “[...] borrowing from Old Norse is that of the third person singular –s ending in verbs, which does not appear in English until Middle English [...], replacing the Old English –(e)th ending”.

Some examples of verbs borrowed from Old Norse are: the verb *to call* comes from *kalla*, which means “cry loudly”. The verb *to die* is derived from *deyja*, “to pass away”, whereas *to ransack* is based on *rannsaka*: “to search the house”. The verb *to whirl* stems from *hvirfla*, which means “to go around”. The Old Norse verb *haggen*, meaning “to chop” survived in English as “to haggle” (Baugh & Cable, 2002). In table I are more verbs borrowed from Old Norse listed in order to illustrate the varied character of the borrowings.

**Table 1** - Examples of verbs borrowed from Old Norse

Modern English	Old Norse
blend	blanda
cast	kasta



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clip	klippa
crawl	krafla
cut	kuta
gasp	gæispa
get	geta
give	gifa
glitter	glitra
hit	hitta
lift	lyfta
raise	ræisa
rid	ryðia
run	rinn
scare	skirra
seem	søma
shake	skaka
sprint	sprinta
take	takka
thrust	þrysta
want	vanta

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Source: compiled by author based on: Baugh & Cable (2002), Crystal (1997) and the Online Etymology Dictionary (2013).

### English nouns from Old Norse

The Norse influence has been responsible for simplifying the noun system, which in Old English “[...] had three basic noun classes, the strong masculine, strong feminine, and weak nouns; these were inflected for singular and plural number, and nominative, accusative, genitive, and dative case” (Dawson, 2003, p. 45). Modern English, under Old Norse influence, is only marked for singular or plural.

Quite some English nouns have an Old Norse origin. “These include many of our modern words which use [sk-] sounds (an Old Norse feature), such as *skirt* (*skyrta*), *sky* (*ský*), and *skin* (*skinn*) [...]” as Crystal (1997, p. 25) exemplifies. Other nouns borrowed from Old Norse include: *kid*, from *kið*, “a young goat”, whereas *Husband* is derived from *husbondi*, meaning ‘master of the house’.

It is noted that several nouns from Old Norse had initially a negative meaning due to the violent ways of the Norsemen; as Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 16) clarifies: “what is known about the Vikings stay in England is that they were brutes and bastards and where they went vandalism, robberies and destruction followed. And perhaps for that reason, negative terms of Old Norse origin were incorporated into English”. For instance, *knife* (from *knífr*), *gang* (from *gang*), *skull*, from *skulle* (which means *head*), *slayer* (from *safra*), *crook* (from *Krokr*), and *gun*, which is derived from the female name *Gunnhildr*. Both parts of this name *gunn* and *hildr*, are related to battle or war (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

It must be mentioned though that “[...] it would be difficult to carry on with casual conversation, expressing emotion and give thorough description if it were not for these borrowings (Friðriksdóttir 2014, p. 16). As a matter of fact, not all nouns borrowed from Old Norse have a negative meaning. For instance, borrowings as, *cake* (from *kaka*), *guest* (from *gestr*)



and *steak* (from *steik*, which means “to fry”, have a much more friendlier ring to them (Crystal, 1997). More nouns from Old Norse can be detected from table II:

**Table II** - Examples of nouns borrowed from Old Norse

Modern English	Old Norse
anger	angr
bag	baggi
birth	byrðr
blunder	blundra
club	clubba
creek	kriki
dirt	drit
egg	ægg
fellow	félagi
fog	fok
glove	lofi
knot	knutr
lad	ladd
leg	læggr
link	hlænkr



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loan	lán
mistake	mistaka
race	rás
raft	rapt
reindeer	hreindyri
root	rót
saga	saga
sale	sala
same	same
scale	skal
scarf	skarfr
score	skor
scrap	skrap
sister	systir
skate	skata
skill	skil
slaughter	slátr
troll	troll
window	vindauga

wing

vængr

Source: compiled by author based on: Baugh & Cable (2002), Crystal (1997) and the Online Etymology Dictionary (2013).

### English adjectives from Old Norse

The English language has also intensively borrowed adjectives from Old Norse. A first example is *awkward*, which stems from Old Norse *afugr*. This can be literally translated as “turned backwards”, “turned the wrong way” or “contrary”. *Sly*, from *sløgr*, means “cunning”. The adjective *ugly* comes from *uggligr*, meaning “dreadful” or “repulsive”, The adjective *rotten*, from *rotinn*, means “decayed” in Old Norse (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

Old Norse is also the accelerator of the end of the Old English inflected adjectives, which “[...] were indefinite or definite, and were inflected for singular and plural number; masculine, feminine, and neuter gender; and nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and instrumental case” (Dawson, 2003, p. 45). More examples of adjectives borrowed from Old Norse can be found in Table III:

**Table III** - Examples of adjectives borrowed from Old Norse

Modern English	Old Norse
both	baðir
flat	flatr
happy	happ
ill	illr
likely	líkligr
loose	lauss

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low	lágr
meeek	miúkr
odd	oddi
rugged	rogg
scant	skamt
sick	syk
tight	Pétrr
weak	væikr
wrong	vrangr

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Source: compiled by author based on: Baugh & Cable (2002), Crystal (1997) and the Online Etymology Dictionary (2013).

### Old Norse influence on non-standard speech

Baugh & Cable (2002, p. 93) express that “we should miss the full significance of the Scandinavian influence if we failed to recognize the extent to which it is found outside the standard speech. [...] modern dialects are full of words that are not now in ordinary use.” Indeed, much of the Scandinavian vocabulary has not been incorporated into the standard speech of the English language but has survived in regional speech or dialects.

Mainly in the north of England, Scandinavian vocabulary has survived in the local speech. It is estimated that about 7% of the northern dialects is of Norse origin. Some examples include: *garth* (yard); *kirk* (church); *laup* (leap); *nay* (no); *trigg* (true) (Crystal, 1997). In this way, “[...] there are [...] thousands of Scandinavian words that are still a part of the everyday speech

of people in the north and east of England [...]” as Baugh & Cable (2002, p. 95) underline the Norse influence on English local speech.

Despite the regional importance of the Old Norse influence, “[...] these northern dialects were later influential in the formation of London standard English and resulted in the spread of many of the Norse features [...]”, as Dawson (2003, p. 48) remarks. During the Middle English period, the northern dialects [...] showed an increase in analyticity, with loss of grammatical gender, loss of case markings on nouns, and loss of some verbal inflections [...] (Dawson, 2003, p. 49), features, as have been described, are reminders of the Old Norse language in England, which stem from regional Old Norse influence.

### **Viking literary influence**

Borrowings from Old Norse are rare in English literature, as The West Saxon dialect, the literary standard language, was located distant from the Scandinavian-controlled area. However, it is in poetry that the Norsemen have left their marks on the English literature, especially the so-called kennings. These kennings “[...] describe things indirectly, allusively, and often in compounds. Their meaning is not self-evident; there has been a leap of imagination, and this needs to be interpreted” (Crystal, 1997, p. 23). Thus, a kenning is a figure of speech that employs figurative language instead of a concrete single-word noun.

A kenning has a base-word (the head-word) and a determinant. The object, place or person to which a kenning refers is the referent. A kenning may sometimes hard to be understood or interpreted. A famous example of a kenning is “whale-road” for “the sea”. Other examples include: “bone-house”, which stands for “body” and “battle light” (a sword). Kennings are also used as phrases. For instance, God, is termed as “the guardian of heaven’s kingdom” or as “the guardian of mankind” (Crystal, 1997).

But the Scandinavian literature has also left its linguistic marks on the English language through the Norse mythology as is noticed by Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 14): “A week consists of seven days. Of those seven English weekdays four bear the names of the Norse gods”. *Tuesday*

comes from *týsdagr* (Týr's day). The war god *Tyr* was *Odin's* son. *Wednesday* is based on *óðinsdagr* (Óðinn's day). This *Odin'* was the ruler of *Asgard*<sup>13</sup>, hence *Wodensdæg* in Old English and *Wednesday* in Modern English (Friðriksdóttir, 2014).

*Thursday* was derived from *þórsdagr* (Þórr's day). This *Þórr* (Thor) was also a son of *Odin*. *Friday* most likely comes from *Friggjardagr*. This *Frigg* was queen of *Asgard* and *Odin's* wife. Moreover, as Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 15) states "[...] Norse Mythology terms are continuously being altered and reused through literature, art and most recently video games, leaving immense influence on the English language". These video games as well as the innumerable television series (*Vikings*, 2013) and movies<sup>14</sup> have made household names of the Nordic gods.

### Normandy and its French-Norman influence on English

It has been noted in this article that the Viking influence in England ended with the Norman invasion and its consequent French influence. However, Normandy<sup>15</sup> discloses its Scandinavian origin as it means *Northmannia* or *Land of The Norsemen*, so "the contact between English and Norse was [...] certainly continuing to a certain extent even after the Norman conquest" (Dawson, 2003, p. 47).

The Scandinavian presence in Normandy began with raids into the Frankish territory from the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, including the besieging and sacking of Paris. This besiegement of Paris forced the Frankish king Charles the Simple to create the Duchy of Normandy for the Viking leader Rollo. In exchange for this, Rollo was baptized, married Charles's daughter and became a vassal to Charles the Simple in 911 (McArthur (2005).

Rollo's descendants adopted the Northern Old French language and intermarried with the original inhabitants. This way, they became the Normans, a Norman French-speaking

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<sup>13</sup> *Asgard* (Old Norse: *Ásgarðr*; the 'Enclosure of the Aesir') is the place where the Nordic gods lived, whereas the humans lived in *Midgard* (Old Norse: *Miðgarðr*; "middle yard").

<sup>14</sup> To name some examples: *Thor* (2011), *The Avengers* (2012), *Thor: The Dark World* (2013), *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017), *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) and *Avengers: Endgame* (2019).

<sup>15</sup> The North-West of France.

amalgam of Scandinavians and the local population of Franks and Gauls. The Norman French language was heavily influenced by Old Norse borrowings. Rollo's descendant William the Conqueror occupied the English throne in 1066 after the Battle of Hastings (McArthur (2005).

Through this Norman Conquest of England, French, in its variation as it was spoken by the Normans, left once again the Norsemen's linguistic marks on the English language. Although, the Parisian French has likewise influenced the English language, but the English who adopted the French language were "[...] the aristocracy and their immediate retainers, and Norman-French was until the 13<sup>th</sup> dominant" (McArthur (2005, p. 17). The commoners held on to their English tongue. The French language as a spoken language disappeared from England during the Hundred Year War<sup>16</sup>.

Some examples of Old French words with a Norman-French, thus Norse origin, that have survived in English are words with a hard *g*: *gammon*, *garden*, *garter*. The hard *c*, as in *car*, *carry*, *castle*, *cattle*, *cauldron*, *decay*, *escape*, *pocket* is a further Norman-French influence on English. The *ch*, as in *chair*, *cherry*, *chisel*, likewise indicates the Scandinavian Norman-French origin, as well as the *w* in *reward*, *wage*, *wait*, *warden*, *waste*, *wise* (McArthur (2005).

The *qu* in *enquire*, *quarter*, *question* is equally of Norman origin. Furthermore, "an *ai*, *ei* or *ey* spelling (and an *ee* or *ay* pronunciation): *convey*, *deceive*, *faith*, *heir*, *leisure*, *prey*, *receive*, *veil*" are Norman (McArthur (2005, p. 19). In addition, the *sh* in nouns as in *brush*, *cushion*, *fashion*, *mushroom*, *parish* and *push*, reveals a Norman origin, together with the *sh* in verbs, such as: *abolish*, *finish*, *perish*. Therefore, as has been perceived in this section, even the French domination of England was not without a Norse touch.

### Final Remarks

Old Norse has exercised its influence on the English language due to various reasons as have been described in this article. One of these reasons is related to the military supremacy

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<sup>16</sup> The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) was a conflict between England and France over the rule of France.

of the Norsemen, but also their abilities to adapt to other places have contributed as well to the influx of Old Norse borrowings. For instance, many Scandinavians married to English women and the Northmen did not have problems to learn and speak the fellow Germanic Old English tongue, constructing a close contact with the Anglo-Saxons.

Along these lines, the way was free for the English language to receive a sizeable influx of linguistic influence from Old Norse on grammar, syntax, names, verbs, nouns, adjectives, literature and non-standard speech. Even the Scandinavian-influenced Norman Conquest as well as the Scandinavian-influenced Norman-French language has left its linguistic marks on English. Therefore, as Baugh & Cable (2002, p. 95) add: “because of its extent and the intimate way in which the borrowed elements were incorporated, the Scandinavian influence is one of the most interesting of the foreign influences that have contributed to the English language”.

An interesting point regarding foreign influence is that the English language has become a *lingua franca* through globalisation as a consequence of the economic, political and military dominance of the United States of America and in an earlier instant through the power of the British Empire. The dominant position of the English language has led to many borrowings from English to other languages. This borrowing from English is often considered as invasive and threatening towards one’s native language and culture.

But, as can be noted from this article, the English language itself has borrowed substantially from other languages such as Old Norse. Therefore, it is not only hoped that this article can contribute to a greater acknowledgement of the Scandinavian influence on the English language, but also that English has maintained its proper linguistic and cultural character, despite the borrowings. In this way, this article may contribute to undermine the scepticism towards the English language.

Besides this, the acknowledgement of the presence of foreign vocabulary in the English language may provide more motivation and stimulation for students or enthusiasts in etymology to research the influence of their language on the English language. Hence, an article as this might contribute to the insight and perception that every language and culture has its importance in the world.

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