Article:

E. L. Olszewska, 'Illustrations of Norse Formulas in English', *Leeds Studies in English*, 2 (1933), 76-84

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ILLUSTRATIONS OF NORSE FORMULAS IN ENGLISH.

Norse influence on English is seen in the adoption of formulas as well as single words. These may be classified as compounds, alliterative collocations and other formulas of various kinds.

When a formula is adopted each element may appear in English in a form corresponding to its Norse original; e.g., *a33 occ a33* in *Ormulum*, for example, corresponds regularly to OWN. *ei ok ei*. Usually, however, one or more elements occur in a form representing the corresponding native cognate. The difference between cognates in the two languages is often very slight; compare, for example, *Grettis saga* (ed. R. C. Boer) lxxxvii, 21 *Hann kvæð já við* and OE. *Chron.* (D) 1067 *Hē cwæð ia wið*. Illustrative of this replacement are such formulas as ME. *mare (more)* and *minne*: OWN. *meiri ok minni*, ME. *kaste wordes*: OWN. *kasta orðum*, and ME. *sette of line*: OWN. *setja af lifi*.

The replacement of an element in a formula by a non-cognate native synonym is rare, because the cognate was usually at hand. In alliterative collocations words are coupled by and replacing OWN. *ok*. Old English had no form corresponding to the Norse reflexive pronoun in the third person and consequently this is replaced by OE. *hine*, *him*, ME. *him*, etc.; compare *OE. Chron.* (E) 1003 *Gebræð hē hine sēocne* and *Fagrskinna* (ed. F. Jónsson), p. 81, | 10 (*Hann*) brá sær sjúkum. Another example is *als* in ME. *lete (late)* *als* 'to behave as if, to pretend' which serves the function of *sem* in OWN. *lóta sem* of the same meaning; compare *Cursor Mundi* 8614 *In bede*

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1 For the use of the word *formula* see O. Jespersen, *Philosophy of Grammar*, p. 18 f.
2 Some examples of formulas are listed by F. Kluge, *Pauls Grundriss* 1,938 (Old English only) and E. Björkman, *Scandinavian Loan-words*, p. 14 footnote 1; see also B. S. Phillpotts, *'The Battle of Maldon': Some Danish Affinities in Modern Language Review* XXIV, 187 f.
3 For similar remodellings in Orkney Norn see H. Marwick, *Orkney Norn*, p. xxxi f., e.g. *to share the teeth, to clench the teeth*: Da. *skjære tander* (p. xxxii).
4 Norse origin of the Middle English idiom is recognized by Tolkien and Gordon, *Gawain*, line 1281 note.
There are many examples of compounds, paralleled in Norse, of which one or both elements exist independently as part of the stock of Norse loanwords in English. Typical examples are ME. *spaman ‘soothsayer’: OWN. spámaðr (of which the first element is represented in ME. spa ‘prophecy’) and ME. *stakgarth ‘rickyard’: OWN. stakkgarðr (of which both elements occur separately in Middle English). Such compounds may have been formed in English from the separate elements, but it is more probable that they represent adoptions of the compounds as a whole. In some instances one element has been replaced by the native cognate e.g. ME. meteníðing ‘one who grudges food,’ recorded in Poema Morale (Trin. Coll. MS.) 234: OWN. matníðingr.

Of especial interest are compounds containing an element which is part of the native vocabulary but does not occur there with the meaning it bears in the compound. An example is ME. *laghtermilde ‘generous with laughter,’ recorded only in unlaghtermilde in Cursor Mundi 3283 O maidens saugh he cum on raw; þe formast was unlaghter milde, Hir semed na wight to be wilde. This corresponds to OWN. hlátrmíldr ‘free with laughter.’ OE. milde, ME. mild(e) does not appear to have had the specific sense ‘liberal’ which is frequent in Old Norse. Moreover ON. míldr occurs in many compounds in the sense ‘generous with,’ as OWN. fémíldr ‘liberal,’ tármíldr, OSw. tármílder ‘tearful.’

Another example is ME. care-bed ‘sick-bed, especially that of those bedridden on account of old age,’ occurring, for example, in the metrical homilies in Archiv LVII, 299/2 line 36 Ffel aunter þat he wox seke. . . In care bed he lay so longe. . . þat he drouh faste to þe deþ. (The altered form bed of care occurs in Cursor Mundi 3612 I lig her now, in bedd o care . . It bes not lang þat I ne dei; also ibid. 5434 Now lijs iacob in bedd o care And hels fast to his ending). The element care represents OWN.
kör ‘sick-bed’ used chiefly in the phrase liggja í kör ‘to lie bedridden (especially on account of old age).’ The compound körbeðr is instanced once in a verse in Egils saga (ed. F. Jónsson) xxxi, 14 where it occurs as a kenning for an egg.\(^5\) OWN. kör is probably to be referred to the same stem as Sanskrit jārā ‘old age, weakness from old age,’ (see A. Torp, Nynorsk Etymologisk Ordbok s.v. Korlegen), and consequently it is related to the same group of words as OWN. karl, OE. ceorl and not to OE. cearu. In Middle English, however, there is obviously association with care ‘grief’ (< OE. cearu), e.g. Sir Perceval 1062 The kyng to carebedd es gane For mournynge es his mastere mane. The same compound survives in Orkney Norn kír-bed (see H. Marwick, Orkney Norn, s.v.). OE. goldwrecen\(^6\) ‘inlaid with gold’ is a similar example. This is probably an adaptation of OWN. gullrekinn, of which the second element is generally considered to be in origin the past participle of reka=OE. wrecan (see Egilsson-Jónsson s.v. rekinn), but the past participle of the native verb is nowhere else recorded in this use.\(^7\)

**Alliterative and other Formulas.**

Many formulas are common to Norse and English, e.g. OE. cuman on unwar ‘to take one by surprise,’ OWN. koma á úvart. In examples such as ME. sette to boke (cf. OWN. setja til bókar) it is probably only fortuitous that they are not recorded in Old English. An instance where a formula owes its form partly to English and partly to Norse is ME. rede drem ‘to interpret a dream,’ cf. OE. rædan swesn and OWN. rāða draum.

When a Norse loanword is adopted into English naturally it usually appears in contexts similar to those in which it is used in Norse and consequently often in formulas paralleled in Norse. OWN. grið is borrowed into Old English and OWN. setja grið appears as OE. settan griþ, ME. sette griþ. ME. ill adj. and ille

\(^5\) The explanation of the kenning is probably that just as the man who lies í kör seldom leaves his bed, so the sitting bird seldom leaves the egg; so K. Gislason, Udgvalg af oldnordiske Skjaldekvad, p. 53.

\(^6\) D. Whitelock, Anglo-Saxon Wills, no. xxvii, 7 a goldtreken spere.

\(^7\) So Whitelock, op. cit., p. 185.
adv. (: OWN. illr and illa) are elements in a number of formulas, for example in ille farande and give him ille (see below), in the compound illwill (: OWN. illvili) and in the adverbial phrase il(le) hail(e) ‘disastrously, in an evil hour’ (: OWN. illu heilli) as in Music Song 51 in Reliquiae Antiquae I, 291 Il hayl were þu boren. Similarly when verbs are borrowed, Norse prepositional constructions are often represented in English, as OE. tacan on ‘to touch’: OWN. taka á, OE. tacan wiþ ‘to receive’: OWN. taka wið, and ME. ware in ‘to lay out’ (see N.E.D. s.v. Ware v.2) : OWN. verja í.

Some of the Norse formulas were introduced into English as part of legal terminology, e.g. OE. beran up mál and cuman to wiþermále. Those recorded in Old English generally do not survive in Middle English, and those found in Middle English have become part of the ordinary vocabulary also. An example is ME. þwert nai ‘a direct denial’ (cf. OWN. setja þvert nei ‘to deny flatly,’ Mod. Sw. tvårt nei). This is found in thirteenth century legal records (see N.E.D. s.v. Thwert-out), but it also occurs in Peter’s denial of Christ in Cursor Mundi 15921 Ful eber thuert nai . . Ne wist i neuer quat he was sin i was born in land. Similarly ME. bla and blodi and probably also god and gode men.

Many alliterative collocations derived from the common stock of Germanic verse are evidenced both in Old English and Old Norse. An example is OE. land and leode ‘land and people,’ OWN. land ok lyðr; in this instance Middle English has both the native land and lede (see N.E.D. s.v. Lede 1b) and the borrowed land and lith(e). It is only rarely that both significant words in an alliterative collocation are Norse loanwords, as in OE. mund and mälæg. Many examples in which one word is a loan may have arisen independently in English, for example litill and lawe in Wars of Alexander 1868 (cf. OWN. lágr ok litill in Snorra Edda (ed. F. Jónsson), p. 57 line 21) or gloppene and grete ‘to be downcast and weep’ in Anturs of

8 Fritzner s.v. heill n. quotes illu heilli vartu skapað and þa vart heilli versto i heim borin.
Arther 91 and 92 (cf. Atlamál in grænlenzko in G. Neckel, Edda I, p. 253 line 6 glúmnudu grimmir, ok grétu þeygi). When a loanword is recorded in English only or chiefly in an alliterative formula, adoption of the Norse formula is probable rather than new formation in English. ME. min(ne) ‘less’ occurs very frequently, but only in collocation with mare, more (although the related word minning ‘diminution’ is recorded once); nais ‘disgraced’ occurs only in collocation with naked, litið(e) ‘people’ only with land, site ‘grief’ rarely except with sorw.

Below are given examples of alliterative collocations and other formulas which are probably Norse in origin:—

a33 occ a33, constantly. Frequent in Ormulum, e.g. 3212 Hiss drinnch wass waterr a33 occ a33. Cf. OWN. ei ok ei (Fritzner s.v. ei), OSw. ä ok ä.

[and(e)] drawe and(e), to breathe, draw breath. Bestiary 310 Ne drageð ge non onde; Cursor Mundi 531; etc. Cf. OWN. draga ond, anda (Vigfusson s.v. önd), Mod. Da. drage aande, Mod. Sw. draha andan.

bale and bote. See N.E.D. s.v. Bale sb. 6, 7 and Björkman, Scandinavian Loan-words, p. 14 footnote 1.

bla and blodi, bruised and bloody. Leges Quatuor Burgorum in Acts Parl. Scot. I, 37 Si quis verberando fecerit aliquem blaa et blodi etc.; Pricke of Conscience, etc. (see N.E.D. s.v. Blae). Cf. OWN. blår ok blóðugr, OSw. blår ok blóþoghur. This is a legal formula in Norse (e.g. Norges Gamle Love, ed. R. Keyser and P. A. Munch, etc., I, 357 Ok er hon blo eda blodog þa er han sæckr .iij. morkum; ibid. I, 73, 167, II, 324), as elsewhere in Germanic, e.g. MLG. bla en blodich.

[bon(e), sb.] bidde bone, to ask a prayer. Bestiary 101 Bidden bone to gode; see also N.E.D. s.v. Boon sb. 1. Cf. OWN. bôðja bónar (bænar) (Vigfusson s.v. bôðja).

[bon(e), adj.] wel bon(e), well equipped, excellent. Laȝamon 14294 Heo weoren swiðe wel ibon; Havelok 2355 wel o bon; Robert of Brunne’s Chronicle (Rolls) 8861 wel bone. Also mid

10 ME. king and kaisere probably shows the substitution of a Norse form in an English collocation (OE. cásere and cyning).
11 The examples are from Middle English, unless OE. is prefixed.
golde ibon, ornamented with gold. Layamon 25788. Cf. OWN. vel buīnn (Fritzner s.v. buīnn 1), buīnn gulli, gullbuīnn, OSw. gulbōin. Cf. F. Madden, Layamon's Brut III, Glossarial Remarks to line 6168.

OE. bregdan hine sēocne, to feign illness. OE. Chron. (E) 1003 Đā sceolde se ealdorman Ælfric lǣdan þa fyrde ac hē tēah forð þa his ealdan wrencæas . . gebræd hē hine sēocne. (F. Hē . . cwæd ðæt hē sēoc wære); Layamon 6667 ðe king hine bræid sæc alse þeah hit seoð weore. Cf. OWN. bregða sēr sjúkum (Fritzner s.v. bregða 5). (So Madden, op. cit., III, Glossarial Remarks to line 6667).

brent gold, pure gold. Robert of Brunne’s Chronicle (Rolls) 10042; Parlement Thre Ages 131; etc. Cf. OWN. brennt gull (Vigfusson s.v. brena).

[farande] wel (ille) farande, well (ill) fitting or favoured. Handlyng Synne 9380 ðe lettres were weyl farande; Sir Perceval 848 Siche ille farande fare; etc. Cf. OWN. vel (illa) farandi (Vigfusson s.v. fara). (So Björkman, op. cit., p. 209).

[gersum] gold and gersum. Layamon 939; see further Tolkien and Gordon, Gawain, line 1255 note. Cf. OWN. gull ok gørsemi, OSw. gul ok gōrsem.

god and gode men. OE. Chron. (E) 1137 For þi luueden him god and gode men; see further C. T. Onions, Times Literary Supplement, 13 Aug., 1931, p. 621. To the parallels he cites from OIC. and OSw. may be added an example from Norges Gāmle Love III, 22 þa er þæt gudi künctic ok godom mannum at, etc.

gon on hande, to submit. Layamon 28963 Alle heo eoden an honde þan kinge Gurmunde. Cf. OWN. ganga á hønd e-m (Fritzner II, 185/2 s.v. hønd), OSw. ganga á hand (Söderwall s.v. hand 4).

graiþe gang, to go. Cursor Mundi 5191 Graid your gang (v. rr. graiþe our gang, lat vs gang). Cf. OWN. greiða gengu (Vigfusson s.v. greiða).

[griþ] OE. griþ settan, to make peace. OE. Chron. (C) 1002 Hē . . gryð wið hi gesette; Ormulum 87 He sette griþ þ & friþþ
Bitwenenn heffne & erðe. Cf. OWN. setja grið (ok frið) (see Vigfusson s.vv. grið B, friðr).

gull and grene (literally, yellow and green), see quotations. Gospel of Nicodemus (EETS.) line 70 Pire Iewes . . for gram wex gulle and grene; Mary's Lamentation 149 in Yorkshire Writers ed. Horstmann, II, 276 For wa I wex both gul and grene; Metrical Paraphrase Old Testament stanza 1409 (ed. Kalén in Göteborgs Högskolas Årsskrift XXVIII, p. xxi) For greved, both goole and grene. Cf. Mod. Da. gul og grøn, Mod. Sw. gul och grön, used in similar contexts.

halde hand over, to protect. Cursor Mundi 4196 Ioseph es now ledd out o land, Godd hald ouer him his holi hand; ibid. 4804. Cf. OWN. halda hendi yfir e-m (Vigfusson s.v. halda).

[iæ] OE. cwepan ia wið, to agree. OE. Chron. (D) 1067. Cf. OWN. kveða já við (Fritzner s.v. já). (So Björkman, op. cit., p. 109).

[ille] give him ille, to be distressed or grieved. Cursor Mundi 3037 Abraham, he said, giue þe not ill; Havelok 164 He greten and gouleden and gouen hem ille; etc. Cf. OSw. giva sik illa (Söderwall s.v. giva 10, 11); see C. T. Onions, Review of English Studies V, 328 f.


[lagu] OE. lecgan laga, to appoint laws. OE. Chron. (E) 1086; Laſamorn 6305; etc. Cf. OWN. leggja leg (Vigfusson s.v. leggja), OSw. lāggia lagh (Söderwall s.v. lāggja).

[lat(e)] lete late, to make a noise. Cursor Mundi 12496, 14608; Gawain 1086. Cf. OWN. lāta lātum (Vigfusson s.v. lāt).


to be lighter, to be delivered. Cursor Mundi 8593 On a night bath lighter war þai; see further N.E.D. s.v. Light a.¹ 3. Cf.
OWN. verða léttari (Vigfusson s.v. létt) as in Brennu-Njáls saga (ed. F. Jónsson) lix, 1 Fám nóttum síðar varð Þorgerðr léttari . . ok kom þar til sveinbarn.

[lith(e)] land and lith(e). See N.E.D. s.v. Lith sb.\(^4\) Cf. OWN. lýðr ok land (Vigfusson s.v. lýðr).

[mål] OE. beran upp mål, to state the grounds of an action. OE. Chron. (E) 1052. Cf. OWN. bera upp mål (see Norges Gamle Love V. glossarium s.v. mål); see W. H. Stevenson, English Historical Review II, 334.

to be man for him (refl.), to be a man. Cursor Mundi 4415 (Potiphar's wife to her husband) For-þi, als þou es man for þe, On him (sc. Joseph) lok i wil wroken be. Cf. OSw. vera maper for sik (Söderwall s.v. mapar 2), early Da. være mand for sig (Kalkar s.v. Mand 3), Mod. Da. være mand for sig selv. OWN. has such expressions as vera maðr fyrir e-u and mikill fyrir sér.

[minne] mare (more) and minne. See N.E.D. s.v. Min a. Cf. OWN. meiri ok minni; see Tolkien and Gordon, Gawain, line 1881 note.

OE. mund and mâldæg, marriage payment and contract. Anglo-Saxon Wills (ed. Whitelock) p. 82 line 6. Cf. OWN. mundr ok mâldagi (see Norges Gamle Love V. glossarium s.v. mundr); see Whitelock, op. cit., p. 195.


OE. settan of, ME. sette of, to remove from, sette of liue, to kill. OE. Chron. (C) 1050 Hé sette ealle sæa litismen of mâle (see Stevenson, English Historical Review II, 335); ibid. (C) 1043 Man sette Stigant of his bisceoprice; Cursor Mundi 8639 þe dede child . . þat þi-selue of liif has sett. Cf. OWN. setja af 'to depose,' setja af lifi 'to kill' (Vigfusson s.v. setja), OSw. sätia af.

[sit(e)] sorw and sit(e). See N.E.D. s.v. Site sb.\(^1\) Cf. OWN. sorg ok sit (Vigfusson s.v. sít).

[skill] can skill, to have knowledge or discrimination. Hand-lyng Synne 369 Of hancel y can no skylle; see further N.E.D. s.v. Skill sb.\(^1\) 5. Cf. OWN. kunna skil (Vigfusson s.v. kunna A.4).

take in hand(e) to shake hands, press one's hand. Metrical
Paraphrase Old Testament 1547 In hand sone he hym toke and kyssyd hym curtasly. Cf. OWN. taka i hend e-m (Fritzner II, 187/1 s.v. hönd), OSw. taka í hand (Söderwall s.v. taka 9).

take on hand(e), to undertake. See N.E.D. s.v. Hand sb. 42. Cf. OWN. taka á hendr (Fritzner II, 186/1 s.v. hönd).

take (to) rede, to resolve. See N.E.D. s.v. Rede sb.1 2b, c. Cf. OWN. taka råð, taka til råðs (Vigfusson s.v. taka A. II, IV).


OE. in ungildan ækere. See J. Steenstrup, Normannerne IV, 356.

waite scaphe, to injure. See N.E.D. s.v. Scathe sb. 2b. Cf. OWN. veita e-m skaða ‘to kill’ (Vigfusson s.v. skaði).

[waken] holde waken. 1. trans. to keep on the alert. Robert of Brunne’s Chronicle (Rolls) 15957 Hertly were þey halden waken; Lantern of Light 52 Þei . . holden waken her ynward iþe. 2. refl. to be on the alert. Robert of Brunne’s Chronicle (Rolls) 9914 þey wypynne held þem wel waken. See further N.E.D. s.v. Wake v. 5. Cf. Da. holde en vaagen, holde sig vaagen; Kalkar, s.v. Vågen, quotes at i holder et vaaget øje over alt det.

will of the way, astray. Rauf Coilyar 73 Wankand will of his way. Cf. OWN. villr vega (Vigfusson s.v. villr).


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