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Old Norse Idiomatic Phrases in *Lay of Havelok the Dane*

Tsukusu Ito

Since A.D. 787, the marauding expeditions of Vikings brought crucial changes to the society of the Anglo-Saxons. The language itself was affected by Old Norse vocabularies. Unfortunately, we have few extant vernacular documents recorded in the period of this mingling of Vikings and Anglo-Saxons, and consequently we know little about the process of language mixture. But in later periods, especially in Early Middle English, many Old Norse vocabularies were used in literary works. Although loan words from Old Norse have already been acknowledged by scholars,¹ Old Norse idiomatic phrases have not attracted for much academic consideration. However, in the period of mingling of the Scandinavians and the Anglo-Saxons, their offspring would have achieved reasonable competence in both languages and been familiar with various idiomatic phrases. This process must have occurred when the influence of Old Norse upon Old English was still strong. This essay presents some instances for the evidence of this process in English from a viewpoint of those who were familiar with Old Norse idiomatic phrases.

Among the Early Middle English literary works, *Havelok* is most

peculiar in treating an Old Norse subject as well as in exhibiting considerable Old Norse influence in its language. The story of a Danish king starting his dynasty in England is told by a poet who discloses his knowledge and subtle sense of Old Norse language through his use of various idiomatic phrases. Concerning the matter of subject, the marriage of Havelok to an English princess, Goldeborw, is symbolic of the union of the two races. It is also symbolical that the heroic foreign protagonist, first being regarded of low rank, discloses his noble birth and noble nature. In the telling of this tale idiomatic expressions reveal a wealth of meaning; it is clear they were adopted with the intention of broadening the connotative range of English.

There are three types of idiom in *Havelok*. The first type is also called separable verbs. The structure of it is Verb + Adverb/Preposition, as G. V. Smithers, the editor of the latest edition of *Havelok*, defines: Separable verbs consist "of a verb plus adverb or preposition", many of which are lineal descendants of OE phrasal compounds, e.g. the Modern English separated phrase *stand by* is a descendant of the OE phrasal compound *bistandan* (Bennet and Smithers 1968, xxxii). This type of idiomatic verb is naturally subdivided into two kinds: intransitive verb phrases and transitive verb phrases. This subdivision is, however, only significant if the substantive object of a transitive verb phrase plays an idiomatically significant role. Secondly, a verb + certain nouns makes a certain meaning, allowing consideration that this may be called a variant of a second sub-division of the former type. Idiomatic phrases which do not have separable verb patterns are regarded as the third type. Four of them are mentioned by Smithers: *gouen hem ille, made . . . gouen, wiþ neuwes under hernes set, and wil of*.

G. V. Smithers labels 76 head-words in his glossary of *Havelok* as

separable-, or quasi-separable-verbs. According to his definition, “the main criteria for classifying OE and ME verbs as separable compounds are:

1. the word-order
2. a recorded OE antecedent (which incidentally gives a further opportunity for both separated and unseparated forms to occur)
3. Germanic cognates — among other things, because in e.g. German, Dutch, and Afrikaans the practice even of the present day is that:
 - (a) in a main clause, ‘simple’ (non-compound) tenses are used in separated form, with the verb first and the particle later in the clause;
 - (b) in a subordinate clause, the verb is used in unseparated form (i.e. with the particle first), at the end of the clause (Smithers 1987, lxxxv).”

He adds “if at least one of these criteria is met, the ME verb in question is admissible as a separable compound, whether an ancient one or newly formed in ME (Smithers 1987, lxxxvi).” The question is, however, with such idiomatic compounds to what degree we can identify the mingling of the two languages, i.e. the infusion of Old Norse into Middle English.

To answer this question, 4 good examples of separable-, or quasi-separable-verbs (hence abbreviated as sep.v. and quasi-sep.v. respectively) with the prefix *ageyn-* will be examined. Smithers defines their meanings and etymological origins as follows:

[ageyn-come] sep.v. “come to meet”. [OE ongægn-cuman]

[ageyn-go] quasi-sep.v. “go to meet”. [ME ageyn + go]

[ageyn, ayen-nime] quasi-sep.v. “go to meet”. [ME ageyn,

[ageyn-stonde] sep.v. "resist" [OE age(a)n-, ongean-standan]

These etymological definitions give rise to doubt. First, if there is the equivalent of ME *ageyn-come* in OE, are there any phrasal verbs corresponding to ME *ageyn-go* in Old English, too? Second, as Old Norse also has some equivalent phrases of these, there seems to be some possible recognition of the Old Norse influence, or at least throw light on the relationship between Old Norse and Middle English phrases.

The etymology of the phrasal verb *ageyn + come* is to be examined first to see whether Smithers' opinion is justified. Although in Bosworth and Toller's authoritative dictionary of Old English we can find only the compound word *ongean-cyme*, whose meaning is "a return" (Bosworth-Toller 752), *the Dictionary of Old English* (hence abbreviated as *Dict. of OE*) tells us that the phrase *cuman + ongean(es)* means: "to come towards, go to meet" (*Dict. of OE cuman* E.20.a.). Smithers' idea about the etymology of ME *ageyn-come* being from the OE equivalent is supported by this definition. Nevertheless, the fact that the ON equivalent idiom, *koma í gegn + dative*, exists leads us to a further consideration. Obviously, the phrase *í gegn* meaning "against" is a prepositional phrase which is the exact equivalent of OE *ongean* and ME *ageyn*, though the word *gegn* by itself can hold the meaning "against". Smithers does not mention this phrase, but we find in an Icelandic law book, *Grágás*, an example of this phrase, whose meaning is also defined as "einer Sache entgegenkommen [come to meet something/someone]" (Nahl, et al, I : 500).

The next phrasal verb in question is *ageyn-go* — or **ongean-gon*, as a reconstructed form in OE. Smithers states that its etymology is to be sought neither in OE nor in ON but to be defined as a phrase

newly-formed in the ME period. This is, however, to be doubted. Although there is no entry for **ongean-gan* as a compound word in Bosworth-Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, we can recognize the phrase *gan* + *ongean* in two citations for the head-word *ongean*:

Se man ðe ongean us gæp, Gen. 24, 65.

["The man came to meet us".]

Seo ea gæp ongean ða Assiriscan, Gen. 2, 14. (B-T 751)

["The river goes to meet the Assyrians".]

The definition of the preposition *ongean* is sufficiently related to our subject: "[M]arking motion, 'towards, in the direction of, to meet'". The meaning of the phrase *ongean gan* in both of the citations is obvious, i.e. "go to meet". Smithers' opinion, therefore, that *ageyn-gon*—unlike ME *ageyn-come*—is not derived from the OE phrasal verb is not entirely persuasive. Furthermore, ON also has a phrasal verb equivalent to the OE phrase. Cleasby defines in his dictionary that ON *ganga í gegn* (*ganga* is the cognate of ME *go*) means "to go against, to meet" (Cleasby 189).

ME phrase *ageyn-nime* is a characteristically genuine ME compound, since there is no such compound or phrase in either Old English or Old Norse. The verb *nime* by itself has its equivalents in both OE and ON. Nevertheless, although in *OED* the verb is given the meaning of "to betake oneself" in the intransitive sense (*OED* *nim*, 2.)—for which definition the first *OED* example is taken from Aelfred's *Boethius* in c. 1100, OE *niman* and ON *nema* hardly had the meanings "to go, to come", and eventually they were hardly interchangeable with two other verbs, *come* and *go*. At any rate, it is to be said that this compound is a later formation, as Smithers claims, or that we find it difficult to identify the equivalent phrasal idiom in OE and ON with cognate words for ME *nime*.

The fourth compound verb, *ageyn-stonde*, is seen by Somithers as a direct descendant of OE *age(a)n-*, or *ongean-standan*. According to Bosworth-Toller's dictionary, there is no OE equivalent among the head-word. Nevertheless, we, again, find an example in a citation for a separable verb phrase under the head-word, "*ongean*". The ME phrase *ageyn-stonde* means "to resist". Together with the preposition "*ongean*," "denoting hostility, resistance, or opposition in action or feeling, 'against, with, contrary to, in opposition to'," OE verb "*standan*" appears in the phrase "*standan . . . ongean*," which means "to resist (something)":

Him lað wære ðæt hi ongean heora cynehlaford standan sceoldan.
(*Chr.* 1048; cited in Bosworth-Toller 751.)

[“For them, it would be displeasing that they should resist their royal lord”.]

In addition, there is also an idiomatic verb phrase "*standa gegn*" in ON, whose meaning, "to resist," identifies it as the cognate phrase for ME *ageyn—stonde*.

From these cases, we can say that if a ME phrase has its antecedent equivalent phrase in OE, there is always an equivalent phrasal idiom in ON. Three possible reasons may be proposed for this phenomenon: 1. ON idiomatic phrases were necessary for the succession of the OE verb + preposition pattern. 2. Although the succession of idiomatic phrases, or the preservation of the meanings of phrasal verbs, from OE to ME did not require ON idioms, ON idioms played some role in giving contextual connotations to the ME idioms. 3. It is merely a coincidence that such ON idiomatic phrases are acknowledged, and in the ME period, the phrases lost any ON connotations or implications.

In some cases, it is difficult to decide a certain phrase retains its OE connotation and has no ON connotation at all. The ME separable

verb, *at-gonge*, is a good example:

We shole *at* pis dore *gonge* (l.1789 *Havelok* ; emphasis added).

[“We should approach or attack this door”.]

Smithers claims derivation from either OE or ON:

[*at-gonge*] ?quasi-sep.v. [OE *ætgangen* “approach” or adopted ON *ganga at* “to attack”.] (Smithers 1987, 175)

Smithers gave up on deciding on the meaning of the phrase in the poem: “There is no means of deciding whether *at* . . . *gonge* here means ‘get at’(<OE *ætgangen*) or ‘attack’ (as a semantic borrowing of ON *ganga at*), or ‘get in through’” (Smithers 1987, 133). We can, however, eliminate at least the third possibility of his interpretation. In *Middle English Dictionary* [*MED*], the preposition *at* has the meaning “through” only when it is together with another preposition of *in* or *ut* [out]:

in at, out at, (go, look, etc.) “in at or through (an opening, etc.), out at or through (something)” (*MED at* 1b.).

Therefore we can concentrate on the two other interpretations, although contextually, “get at the door” and “attack the door” are very similar. This is a description of the beginning of a battle; hence, instead of interpreting the phrase in the rather neutral sense of the OE implication, taking the ON connotation makes the scene more vivid to the audience. Presumably the poet was so familiar with ON idiomatic phrases, that he enriched the OE native phrase by adopting or utilizing the ON meaning. It is thus quite feasible for us to admit Old Norse idiomatic meanings.

In contrast to the last case, there exists an example in which Smithers admits the borrowing of an ON implication:

He dide sone ferd ut [bede],

pat al pat euere mouhte o stede

Ride (ll.2548-50 *Havelok*)

(He soon called for an army, every member of which could ride a horse)

Smithers defines ME *ut-bede* as a “separable verb, ‘call out for military service [calque on ON *bjōða út*]” (Smithers 219). The verb *bede* itself is derived from either OE *beodan* or ON *bjōða*. Although Smithers says there is no OE antecedent for the phrase (Smithers 1987, lxxxvi), not only in ON but also in OE there exists an equivalent phrase:

beodan “to call (an army) to service”

beodan ut “to call out (an army)” (*Dict. of OE beodan* A.10.)

Therefore, it is not necessary to determine that the derivation of the phrase is only from ON. Moreover, as the phrase takes the object *ferd*, “army”, the whole idiom is to consist of Verb + Preposition + Noun, “army”. Do the idiomatic phrases in both OE and ON take an object of “army”? They do. According to the *Modern Icelandic Dictionary*, a word for army, *liði*, plays a role of specific object for the preposition, *ut* (*Íslensk Orðabók* 79).

From these examples, we can see the difficulty in deciding whether one phrase is derived from Old English or from Old Norse. The links to both languages seem so strong that it appears impossible to say that only one language played a prevailing role in the succession of the idiomatic phrases of Anglo-Saxon antecedent as well as those of ON antecedent to either English or Scandinavian offspring in the East Midlands.

Nevertheless, the next example shows a much stronger influence of ON on native quasi-idiomatic expressions. In line 1283, there is a phrasal expression with a verb *brayd* :

Of his slep anon he brayd,

And seide (ll.1283–84 *Havelok*)

[“He suddenly started up from his sleep, and said”]

Smithers defines the meaning of the single verb as “started up” (Smithers 1987, 179). In *MED*, however, this line in *Havelok* is cited as the first example of an idiomatic phrase *breiden of slep*, meaning “wake up suddenly” (*MED breiden* 10. a.). The problem is that neither Bosworth-Toller nor the *Dict. of OE* mention the collocation of the OE equivalent *bregdan* with a noun for “sleeping or dreaming” to express “to wake up”. On the other hand, in ON phrases, the cognate verb *bregða* takes the dative of nouns of “sleep,” *svefni*, *blundi*, denoting “to awake”. (Cleasby 78). Since the inflectional system in ME does not work, prepositional phrases substitute for cases. In *Havelok*, the phrase *brayd of slep* is thought to be a newly formed idiom derived from the ON phrase.

In addition, a quasi-sep.v. *ut-brayde*—another phrase with the verb *breiden*, which is defined as ME formation, “[ME out + brayde]” (Smithers 219)—leaves room for reconsideration of the assumption of either ON or OE origin. The ON verb, *bregða* commonly takes as an object “sword or knife” meaning “to draw (a sword or knife)” (Cleasby 77). At the same time, in OE we find the same collocation pattern, *bregdan* “to draw (a sword or weapon)” (*Dict of OE bregdan* 1.e.). Smithers seems to avoid a determination of the etymology. But, there is no need to emphasize one language as being the origin of an ME phrasal verb; we should refer to both OE and ON to obtain a broader sense.

The examples of phrases with *brayde* belong to the type, consisting of a verb + a certain noun, which expresses a specific meaning. This type of idiomatic phrase in ME specifically shows how some idiomatic phrases of ON origin were accepted into English even though there had been no OE example.

According to Smithers, idiomatic phrases found in *Havelok* are not necessarily word-for-word equivalents of antecedent phrases. For instance, *made . . . gouen* (ll.218–20, 365) consists of *make*, the literal, but not etymologically the exact, equivalent, of the Middle Swedish word *göra*, which forms an idiomatic phrase with *given* (Smithers 1987, 93), meaning “to settle and distribute (one’s) testamentary arrangements”. Besides, another idiomatic phrase, *wip neues under hernes set* (l.1918), “strike with the fist under the ear,” consists of an ON idiom and an Old French idiom: ON *setja hnefann* (*við*) “strike with the fist (against)” and OF *desuz l’oie*, “under the ear” substituted by the native word *under* and an ON synonym *hernes*, “ears”. These two examples, as well as the case of *breide of slep*, show that the poet was free to combine familiar words to form a new ME idiom.

From this point of view, the separable verb, *upp-breken*, suggests an origin different from that suggested by Smithers, who defines it as a newly formed phrasal verb of ME, though the derivation of the phrasal verb is to some degree related to the Middle Dutch word *opbreken*: [ME *up-* + *breken*; cf. MD *opbreken*] (Smithers 1987, 219.). This may be true. But we might also turn to the ON idiom *brjóta upp*. The ME phrase is found in l.1961:

Mi dore he breken up ful sket,

And wolde me binden hond and fet (ll.1961–62).

[“They broke my door very quickly, and wanted to bind my hands and feet”.]

The point is that the object is “door”. The ON phrase *brjóta upp* takes a word meaning “door, fence, etc.” to imply “to break into (something)”. For instance, *brjóta upp hlið* means “to break up a fence, or a gate”. In *Egils Saga*, another object is found:

peir brutu upp þilit

[“They broke up the wainscot”] (Cleasby 80-81).

The ON verb *brjóta* is the literal equivalent of ME *breke*, so we can infer that the phrase in *Havelok* may have been derived from ON with an alteration of the cognate word into the native common word. Of course the native word OE *brecan* takes objects like “house” meaning “to break into the house” (*Dict of OE breccan* 3.a.). But according to the dictionary, no word of door or fence is referred to for this implication. We are suggested, however, by the dictionary to see the definition of another word, *up-brecan*, which can be naturally speculated to be the direct origin of the ME separable verb. So we are made to wait for the publication of the forthcoming volumes of the dictionary.

This essay’s main concern is to determine to what degree the poet (or his contemporaries) could have been conscious of Old Norse connotations for Middle English phrasal idioms. Any conclusion depends on how we interpret the following lines with the ME compound verb *forfaren*. In *Havelok*’s prayer to God, he says:

Luerd, haue merci of me,
And late wel passe þe se.
pat Ihc haue þer-offe douthe and kare,
Withuten stormes ouer-fare
pat Y ne drenched [were] þer-ine
Ne forfaren for no sinne,
And bringge me wel to þe lond
pat Godard haldes in his hond,
pat is mi rith eueri del— (*Havelok* ll.1376—84).

[“Lord, have mercy upon me, and allow me to traverse the sea without trouble, of which I am afraid and fear, and make my way across the sea without storms, so that I should not be drowned there in the sea, nor *perish* for sin but bring me to the land which

Godard holds in his hand, and that is my right inheritance in every deal". (emphasis added)]

The ME word *forfaren* is, according to *MED*, "to perish" either in intransitive or transitive sense. Here, contextually, the meaning of "perish" is "perish in the sea, to be drowned," a parallel of the word *drenched*. In his prayer, Havelok uses the word *drenched* twice (ll.1369, 1380). First, Havelok complains to God how Godard, the usurper of the Danish throne, did wrong to Havelok: Godard killed his sisters before his eyes, and wished to deprive him of his life, "in þe se, Bad he [Godard] Grim haue drenched me" ["Godard ordered his thrall, Grim, to drown Havelok in the sea"]. Godard rules over Havelok's own lands unlawfully (ll.1365–79). Here, the malicious act of killing Havelok in the sea impresses Havelok so much that he can not help confessing his fear to the sea, "of which I am afraid and fear." At the same time, however, he emphasizes that Godard's rule is sinful:

He haldes mi lond with mikel unrith,
With michel wrong, with mikel plith,
For I ne misdede him neuere nouth,
And haued me to sorwe brouth.

["Godard is ruling my land with great injustice, with much wrong, and with great harm, even though I did not harm him at all, he had brought me to sorrow."] (ll.1370–73)

His mentioning that he is innocent emphasizes here as well as suggests that the word *forfaren* should be interpreted in a Christian context; he pleads for mercy, since he has not sinned. Nevertheless, considering Havelok's emphasis on his fear of the sea, or fear of death in water, the ON word *fara*'s connotation supplies a more specific and appropriate meaning in this context.

The ON verb *fara* has a broader sense than other cognate words

of Germanic languages: "In the Icelandic scarcely any other verb is in such frequent use as *fara*, as it denotes any motion; not so in other Teutonic idioms . . . Gothic *farjan* means "to sail," and this seems to be the original sense of *fara*; Anglo-Saxon *faran*; the Germanic *fahren* and English *fare* are used in a limited sense" (Cleasby 141). When it comes to reflexive usage, *fara* comes to mean "perish" in ON, and frequently used for "to be drowned, perish in the sea" (Cleasby 143; *fara* B.II.2.). The example of the same usage of *fara* instead of being reflexive form is scarce but found: *fóru margir Islenzkir menn* ["Many Icelanders were drowned"] (*Biskúpa Sógur*, I, 436, cited in Cleasby 143). Cleasby says the usage of non-reflexive form may be merely because of miss-spelling, but if ON *fara* can mean "to be drowned," this type of usage may have encouraged the Englishmen of the ME period to make similar use of their native word.

Interestingly, Icelandic also has a phrasal idiom *fara fyrir*. The adverb/preposition *fyrir* corresponds English *for*, either as a prefix or a separated word of preposition or adverb. The compound form *fyrirfara* means "to destroy," and if it is reflexive, "to perish" (Cleasby 182). That is, both *fara* and *fyrirfara*, an exact equivalent of ME *forfaren*, take the reflexive form in ON to mean "to perish". Since the English language does not have reflexive forms in its conjugational system, the passive tense must have much more utility. Although in ON there is no extant record of the passive of either *fyrirfara* or *fara* meaning "to perish," for Englishmen the passive of the verbs would be taken to mean "to perish" as in *Havelok's* example.

This leaves the question of why in the extant manuscript the auxiliary verb *were* (or by Skeat *be*) was omitted, though the word *drenched* requires an auxiliary verb. Is it merely accidental? If it is not, we might take note that the original manuscript had a different

conjugational form of *forfaren*. If the original manuscript had a word which has something like a reflexive form—or the verb *forfare* in the subjunctive form + a reflexive pronoun *me* which as a whole would be suitable for the context, the verb *be*, or in OE form *beon*, would be unnecessary. Smithers also express uncertainty whether *forfaren* is an intransitive or a transitive verb: “**forfaren** p.p. ?intr[ansitive]” (Smithers 187). It could explain the reason why the auxiliary verb is not used in the extant manuscript. The scribe who sometimes shows his ignorance of ON idioms may not have understood the meaning of a reflexive or intransitive form sense, and may have instead chosen the preterite participle.

OE *faran*, the cognate of ON *fara*, does not have the meaning “to perish”²; in the English language only *forfaran* has it. Since both ON *farask* and *fyrirfarask*, the reflexive forms of ON *fara* and *fyrirfara* respectively, have the meaning of “to perish,” the special connotation of *fara* “to perish *in the sea*” may have merged with the meaning of *fyrirfara*, a more familiar word for this implication for the English. Hence it may not be so strange even if *forfaran*, the equivalent of *fyrirfara*, has the meaning “to perish in the sea, to drown” in the ME period. In any case, ON *fyrir-fara* and OE *forfaren*, together with ON *fara*, may have played certain roles for the connotation of the context in this place.

This interchangeability of words suggests that more immigrants from Scandinavia could adopt English idioms as well as separable or inseparable compounds. Furthermore, if some one like the poet of *Havelok* had sufficient knowledge about ON idioms and phrases which are comparable with English, he could have used either English phrases or Old Norse phrases freely, or even transfer the meaning from one to another.

Yet, we do not have sufficient examples to prove that the phrasal verbs, which are found in both English and Scandinavian languages, do not appear coincidentally. Without such examples, we may only speculate whether ON idioms are found only because ON and OE are cognate languages. However, we can see that, even if the intermingling of ON and OE idioms had been widespread, we could trace only small extent of identification because of the decline of ON knowledge, as is recognized in the extant manuscript of *Havelok*, which reveals that the scribe did not know as many ON idioms as the original poet. So let us turn to the peculiar instance with an idiom *give oneself ille*. An obvious usage of the idiom can be seen in line 164:

He greten, and goulden, and *gouen hem ille* (l.164).

[“They wept and howled and were distressed”.] (Emphasis added)
Obviously, the sentence shows a typical alliterative practice seen in Middle English and Middle Swedish poetry:

The lady grette and gafe hir ille.

[“The lady wept and was distressed.”]

(*Ysumbras*, l.192; cited in Onions 1929, 328)

[Konungen] gaff sik illa oc grätt ganzze sarliga

[“The king was distressed and wept very sorrowfully.”]

(*Didrik af Bern*, Ch. ccxxx; cited in Onions 1929, 329)

Dretningen gret og gaff sik illa.

[“Dretningen wept and was distressed.”]

(*Didrik af Bern*, Ch. cclxi; cited in Onions 1929, 329)

The idiom is, originally, to be regarded as a fixed phrase for alliteration. In *Havelok*, too, the idiom plays a role for alliteration.

The next example, furthermore, is also of the same pattern:

i) Goldeborw gret, and *was hire ille* (*Havelok* l.1129)

ii) Goldeborw gret, and *yaf hire ille* (Emended by Stratmann)³

[“Goldeborw wept, and *was distressed*”.] (Emphases added)

The first example shows the reading of the extant manuscript, printed by Skeat, while the second Stratmann’s emended text. ME *yaf* is the preterite tense of the verb *yeue*, which derives from OE *gefan*, while in line 164 *gouen* points to an ON origin, *gefa*. Paleographically, *w* is easy to mistake for *y*. It is because OE alphabet *wyn* looks like *p*; as is often pointed out, some old shops in Britain had *Ye* on their sign instead of *pe*, the old form of *the*. The reason why the emendation was needed is that the scribe did not know the idiom, At any rate, as we have seen, alliterations for the idiom are preserved in *Havelok*. This fact is evidence that the poet himself was familiar with the original usages as well as the original meanings of the idiomatic phrases in Old Norse.

We may thus conclude that the poet of *Havelok* had extensive knowledge of ON. It is still beyond doubt that he was an Englishman, but his use of idioms mostly shadows ON cognates. For instance, though Smithers points out one of the few OE idioms used in *Havelok*, it is none-the-less a cognate of an ON idiom. The OE idiom in question is formalized by Smithers as *standan ege*. Smithers himself quotes an example from *Beowulf*:

Norð-Denum *stod*

atelic *egesa*. (*Beowulf* 783–84; cited in Smithers 1987, 100)

[“The North-Danes feared horribly”.]

The ME idiom in question, on the other hand, is found in the following lines:

Soplike, in a lite prawe

Al Engelond of him stod awe—

Al Engelond was of him adrad. (ll.276–78 *Havelok*)

[“Truly, in a short period of time, All England feared him,

All England was afraid of him".]

Here, OE *ege(sa)* is taken place of by the ON cognate *agi* meaning "awe"⁴. In ON, however, *agi* itself forms an idiom with the verb *standa*:

var eigi sá annarr konungr, er mönnum stæði af jafnmikill agi af fyrir visku sakir. "there was not another king who inspired his men with so much awe for his wit's sake." (*Fornmanna Sögur*. X.406.; cited in Cleasby 10).

This idiom—however similar in construction to that in *Havelok*—suggests the meaning of *agi* here is "awe, respect," rather than "horror, terror," as in the case of OE as well as in *Havelok*. ON *agi*, as a cognate of OE *ege*, originally has the meaning of "horror, terror," yet we have no example of the idiom *agi standa* meaning "to have fear". OE *ege* and ON *agi* are both cognate words of the Gothic *agis*. On the other hand, scholars reconstructed another Gothic word **ogan*. As their appearances suggest, *agis* and **ogan* themselves are cognate with each other. However, both have their own cognate group; that of **ogan* includes OE *oga* and ON *ógn*.⁵ The two groups seem parallel at first sight (Table (i)), but, while OE *standan* does not collocate with the noun OE *oga*, ON *standa* makes an idiom with ON *ógn* meaning "to fear, terror, be afraid". Therefore, semantically the equivalent idiom for OE *standan ege* is ON *standa ógn*. The following illustrates the crossing pattern in both languages:

| | | | |
|----|-----|-----|------------------|
| i) | OE | ON | |
| | ege | agi | <=== Goth. aigs |
| | oga | ógn | <=== Goth. *ogan |

| | | |
|-----|------------------|-------------------------|
| ii) | OED's definition | Norse viewpoint |
| OE | standan ege | ON standa ogn |
| | standen + ON agi | standen + OE oga/ON agi |
| | | cf.OE ege? |
| ME | standen awe | ME standen awe |

The Norsemen, when they encountered the OE idiom *standan ege*, would have been reminded of their own idiom *standa ógn*, as well as *standa agi*. It is natural to hold a regent in "awe" as we found in the citation for the idiom *standa agi*. In *Havelok*, however, Godric, of whom all England was afraid, is always regarded as malicious. If we consult the ON literal cognate *standa agi*, we can imagine the poet's satirical voice insinuating that Godric does not deserve respect as the ON idiom implies. Instead, he is to be feared, because of his treachery.

As the ON idiom *standa ógn* is not uncommon, in order to imply "to fear" the Norse settlers in England could have easily adopted the English idiom, perhaps feeling a little embarrassment about using *ege*, the cognate of their own *agi*, which would have a totally different meaning. From the phonological point of view, it is hardly conceivable that the ON idiom *standa ógn* could have introduced the English cognate *oga* into the ON idiom, rather than the reverse; in other words, introduction of the ON cognate *agi* into the English idiom *standan ege*. Yet, there must have been some confusion between *oga* and *agi*, as the table above suggests.

The process of intermingling between Old Norse cognates and Old English cognates can not be fully traced using only ME texts. Nevertheless, the process must have been a sort of internalization of the Old Norse character into Anglo-Saxon people. The procedure might have been observed from both sides; not only from Anglo-Saxon side but Scandinavian's view. The story of *Havelok* is also told from both

sides; on the one hand the tale of the usurpation in England, on the other the usurpation in Denmark. In the poem we see merely the beginning of the Danish dynasty. Yet the result of it produced an intricate intremingling of vocabularies, with idioms derived from both OE and ON.

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Notes

The modern translations within square brackets are mine.

¹ See Erik Björkman, *Scandinavian Loan Words in Middle English*, 1900–02. New York: Haskell House, 1969; Mary S. Serjeantson, *A History of Foreign Words in English*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1935.

² Yet with a prefix *ge-*, there is a word *gefaran* which has the meaning “to depart, die” (Bosworth-Toller 389). The similarity in meaning to ON *farask* is worth noting. In this essay, however, since there is no cognate word of OE *gefaran* in *Havelok*, it is not treated further.

³ *Stratmann's Middle English Dictionary* 293.

⁴ “The actual *awe* . . . was a ON *agi* , acc. *aga* . . . The ME *eye*, (*aya*), and *awe*, were thus in origin and derivation distinct though cognate words, but were practically treated as dialectal variants of the same word . . . The sense

development is common to both" (*OED awe*, 1: 593).

⁵ Winfred P. Lehmann, *A Gothic Etymological Dictionary: Based on the Third Edition of Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Gotischen Sprache by Sigmund Feist*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986: 10, 270. Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Bern: Francke, 1959: I: 7–8.

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