

It is said that in times of war, the muses are silent. Yet extraordinary poetic voices can be heard from the past if we listen close enough; they tell the tales of glorious victories, woeful defeats, terrible monsters and heroes of old. Two such tales are the poems *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Both poems are separated by an abyss of time, yet there is something in the tone and manner of the yarn that unites the two. It may be the character of the hero, his adventures, his enemies or his ultimate downfall; but the tales are told in a language that has great dignity, capacity for expression and a slow sonority seems to echo the roar of the ancient battlefields. The language of war, then, is the topic of the present work. The ways of characterizing a man as a warrior in *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* will be subject to analysis that should reveal the cornerstones of poetic diction in both poems. In order to achieve this, we shall look at the lexical fields that denote 'warrior' in the poems. These lexical items will be subject to analysis from three points of view:

- (1) First, we shall investigate the structure of the lexical fields denoting 'warrior.' The items will be looked at from a morpho-semantic point of view. The description will contain morphological characterization of the lexical items, analysis of semantic components and the characterization of the register of the items.
- (2) Secondly, we shall look at the occurrences of the lexical items in the text of both poems by means of frequency analysis
- (3) Finally, we shall look at the items in context of the poems. By looking at their reference and contextual use, we will formulate the tendencies that characterize the nature of poetic diction in both poems.