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Jazyk války v básnických skladbách *Sir Gawain and the Green
Knight* a *Béowulf*

The Language of War in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
and *Béowulf*

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V Praze, dne 25.7.2010

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1. Abbreviations

Beo.	<i>Beowulf</i>
BT	Bosworth-Toller's <i>Anglo-Saxon Dictionary</i>
CA	Componential analysis
EETS	Early English Text Society
ME	Middle English
OE	Old English
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
SGGK	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>
MEC	<i>Middle English Compendium</i>

1. 1. List of tables, diagrams and graphs

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2. Introduction

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.

The theoretical part of the work will present a discussion of theoretical matters that allow us to analyze the use of the lexical items. Because the present work will use both linguistic and literary analyses, in the first chapter of the theoretical part we shall introduce the notion of a lexical field and the method of componential analysis. The

second part of the theoretical introduction will deal with the literary-cultural aspects of the analysis. The topics that will be covered are:

- (1) the genre distinctions of both poems (heroic poetry and courtly romance), analyzing in some detail the notion of a hero across space and time,
- (2) the characteristics of alliterative poetry in Old and Middle English,
- (3) and the similarities and differences of poetic diction in both traditions and poems that stem from them.

The initial research hypothesis emerges from the fact that both poems, *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, spring from a common literary of alliterative heroic poetry, which is manifested most evidently in poetic diction of both poems. It is thus expected that there will be notable parallels in the way the ‘warrior’ lexical field is structured and the way lexical items are employed to achieve specific poetic effects. The parallels should mirror the fact that both poems share the notion of the warrior – hero bound by a heroic code. Although the ‘heroic code’ is a vague notion that resists exact classification, we may expect that in case of *Beowulf*, the notion of military proves and loyalty to the liege lord will be primary, while in the case of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the military aspect of the heroic nature will be supplanted by the dimension of chivalry, which combines the notion of a warrior with the dimension of courtesy.

Of course, both poems are separated by at least three hundred fifty years¹ of cultural development, and in effect they come from vastly different cultural and linguistic environments. Thus the differences in structure and usage of the lexical field will reflect the different cultural, literal and linguistic backgrounds, resulting in one poem being a heroic epic and the other a chivalric romance.

¹ This is only the minimal possible approximation based on the dating of the actual extant manuscripts. The Cotton Vitellius A. xv manuscript that contains the *Beowulf* poem is thought to be written some time between 975 and 1025 (Kiernan 4) and Cotton Nero A. x manuscript that contains the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* poem can be dated to the second half of the fourteenth century. (Doyle 1982, 92)

3. Theoretical part

3.1. Linguistic section

3. 1. 1. Lexical field theory and componential analysis

This section opts to provide the necessary theoretical framework for our discussion and treatment of lexical items denoting ‘warrior’ in *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*. First, we shall define key concepts and notions, such as lexeme, meaning or sense-relations, and then we will proceed to the discussion of the theory of lexical field and the practice of componential analysis.

Semantics is a notoriously tricky discipline even in synchronic linguistics, where we can at least rely on native speakers’ intuition when classifying and describing the vocabulary of a language. It is even more difficult to try to understand and describe an earlier stage of the language, when we can rely only on the surviving written evidence that is preserved in manuscripts and, inscriptions or early printed material. Three factors complicate the way we need to treat the surviving data:

Odstraněno: ,

- (1) the preservation of texts, especially of an older stage of the language, depends solely on chance. The nature, quantity and type of texts that are available to us now are thus purely random.
- (2) Literacy and textual production are conditioned by cultural practice; thus for example in Anglo-Saxon England, monastic scriptoria were the only producers of texts. Furthermore, the notion of literacy and textual production differs profoundly from contemporary practice, since before the advents of printing manuscripts were the only way of recording texts. As such, book production was slow, expensive and in a sense restricted to the elite culture. This in turn conditioned the type of texts that were mostly recorded – historical, religious and philosophical.
- (3) Written medium is only secondary to the spoken medium, and it is governed by different rules and practices than the primary spoken language.

Given these three factors, historical linguistics (and historical semantics for that matter) is in a way an attempt to stitch together a garment most of which is torn off. We see the threads, we may hint at the size and style of the garment, the colours, however faded, are still visible; but we shall never meet the person who wore it. Nevertheless, despite the fragmentary nature of the surviving data, the corpora of extant Old English and Middle English texts are extensive enough to allow research without too much conjecture.

Let us start with defining the basic notions. Semantics is the study of meaning; lexical semantics is the systematic study of meaning-related properties of words.² Word is the basic unit of lexical semantics, but its definition is notoriously tricky and terminology varies. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the present work, we shall define the term ‘word’ as “the smallest grammatical unit that can be moved around in a sentence or be separated from its fellows by the insertion of new material.”³ Furthermore, a word “is the largest unit which cannot be interrupted and whose elements cannot be reordered.”⁴ Usually, three main senses of ‘word’ are distinguished:

- (1) a **word-form** (or **lexical form**) is a minimal physically definable free form in text or speech, typically separated at both ends by pauses/juncture. It can be treated also as the inflectional (or other) variant of a lexeme on the morphological, phonological or graphemic level.⁵
- (2) a **lexical unit** is the union of lexical form and a single sense;⁶
- (3) a **lexeme** (synonymous with **lexical item** for the purpose of the present text) is an abstract unit underlying the related set of word-forms, which realize the lexeme in various contexts and fulfil a range of grammatical functions.⁷

In the present text, we shall use the term ‘word’ as a convenient term for all three notions mentioned above in contexts where the distinction between word-form, lexical unit and lexical item is not important. At this point, we need to introduce the notion of *morpheme* as the smallest unit of language having lexical or grammatical meaning.⁸ It

² Cruse 2006: 95

³ Cruse 2006: 190

⁴ Cruse 2006: 190

⁵ Lipka 89

⁶ Lipka 4, Cruse 1991:77

⁷ Adapted from Klégr LS 01-2010

⁸ Lipka 3

is thus “the smallest linguistic sign, having both form and meaning, tied together arbitrarily or conventionally.”⁹ The difference between words and morphemes is that a morpheme cannot exist independently of a word, it is dependent on it.¹⁰ A word can be thus made up of only one single morpheme (a *monomorpheme* or *simplex*) or it can be constituted of more lexical morphemes (*complex lexeme*).¹¹

Having defined the basic notions, we may now proceed to the discussion of lexical field theory. The theory was developed in Europe in the 1930s most importantly by Jost Trier (1894–1970) and Johann Leo Weisgerber (1899–1985). Following the principles of structural linguistics, this theory claims that “the vocabulary of a language is not just a collection of words scattered randomly through semantic space: it is at least partially structured by recurrent sense relations. In some areas of the vocabulary the sense relations unite groups of words into larger structures, known as *lexical fields* (or *word fields*).”¹² Trier “distinguished between conceptual and lexical fields, whereby the lexical field divides the conceptual field into parts, like a mosaic. A word acquires its meaning by its opposition to its neighbouring words in the pattern.”¹³ His theory contained a number of controversial assumptions, such as the assumption that there are no semantic overlaps and no semantic gaps in the partitioning of the conceptual field by the lexical field. These views were later criticized and modified by a number of scholars, most importantly by Lehrer and Lyons.

The way how lexical items are related to each other in terms of meaning is the main focus of works of Ullmann (1962), Lehrer (1974), Nida (1975), Lyons (1977), Leech (1981), and Cruse (1986, 2000) and Lipka (1991). Although their conclusions are often profoundly different, broadly speaking we can divide sense relations into two main types, ‘paradigmatic’ and ‘syntagmatic’. Cruse states that “[p]aradigmatic relations hold between items which can occupy the same position in a grammatical structure,”¹⁴ while “[s]yntagmatic sense relations hold between items in the same

⁹ Lipka 3

¹⁰ Dušková 1.1

¹¹ Lipka 2-3

¹² Aronoff, Rees Miller 259

¹³ Lehrer 1974: 15

¹⁴ Cruse 2006: 163

grammatical structure.”¹⁵ Paradigmatic sense relations between lexical units are established on the basis of four types of relations between the denotations of lexical items; these relations are (1) identity, (2) inclusion, (3) disjunction and (4) overlap. Based on these relations, primary lexical relations are **cognitive synonymy**, **hyponymy**, **incompatibility** and **compatibility** respectively. Cruse and Lyons introduced variants of the primary relations: complementarity, a special case of incompatibility between two-member lexical sets, antonymy, which is distinguished from complementarity by gradability, meronymy as part-whole relationship and converseness as a special species of opposite.¹⁶ Lexical items that share the same orthographic and/or phonological form are treated as polysemous, if the senses are related. In cases where the different senses are unrelated, we distinguish between homonyms, homographs or homophones. Syntagmatic relations explore the effects of putting meaning of items together in well-formed grammatical structures, and describe them in terms of **anomaly**, **pleonasm**, or specify their **selectional restrictions**.

Due to the topic and scope of the present work dealing with expressions denoting ‘warrior’, we shall be further concerned only with **synonymy**. Cruse states that “synonyms must have a significant degree of semantic overlap” and simultaneously they must have “a low degree of implicit contrastiveness.”¹⁷ Thus synonyms “are lexical items whose senses are identical in respect of ‘central’ semantic traits, but differ ... only in respect of ... ‘minor’ or ‘peripheral’ traits.”¹⁸ The difference between synonyms can be viewed on a scale of synonymy, with absolute synonyms on one end and zero-synonymy on the other. This notion is of course a problematic one; absolute synonyms are lexical items that have all their contextual relations identical. But since the basic function of words is to be distinctive, such identical pairs of absolute synonyms are extremely rare, if encountered at all. Zero-synonymy, on the other hand, is a rather diffuse concept and cannot be established with the same degree of clarity as the notion of absolute synonymy. Taking this into account, Cruse nevertheless partitions the scale into absolute synonymy, cognitive (partial) synonymy, plesionymy and non-synonymy on the basis of propositional and

¹⁵ Cruse 2006: 164

¹⁶ Cruse 2006: 39

¹⁷ Cruse 1991: 266

¹⁸ Cruse 1991: 267

expressive meanings of items. But such classification of synonyms for 'warrior' in *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is beyond the scope of the present work due to the system of and we shall not develop the concept further.

Rather than depend on truth-functional conception of synonymy, we shall approach the problem of description by the method of componential analysis. Componential analysis is a traditional method in lexicography, dating back to the 1950s and the 1960s. It describes the meaning of lexical units as a combination of basic meaning components. Major uses of componential analysis in structural semantics are in the works of Hjelmslev (1953), Pottier (1964, 1965), Coseriu (1964, 1967), Geckeler (1971), Nida (1975) and Lipka (2002), while the approach was successfully used also in anthropological studies by Goodenough (1956) and Lounsbury (1956). The terminology varies with respect to the proponent of the theory; for the purpose of the present work, we adopt the approach described in Lipka 2002 and we shall call the basic meaning components 'semantic features'. The concept of feature was borrowed from the functional perspective of the Prague School of linguistics, which used a set of binary, gradual and equipollent features for describing phonological properties of sounds. Transferred to syntactic and semantic levels of the language, componential analysis opts to describe semantic relations on a systematic basis by assigning binary (+/-), relational (\rightarrow) or transfer values to a finite set of semantic components shared by the items belonging to the same lexical field. Two basic types of meaning are usually distinguished, denotative and connotative. These two types of meaning are in binary opposition; in traditional linguistics, denotation describes the relationship between a linguistic unit and the non-linguistic entities to which it refers,¹⁹ while connotation covers subjective and emotional associations that are suggested by and are inherently part of the meaning of a lexical item.²⁰

Given these two basic kinds of meaning, there was a need to devise a typology of semantic features in order to provide the systematic description of meaning lexical semanticists were trying to achieve. Such universal typologies were devised for example by Nida (1975) and Lipka (2002), but their perspectives differ in significant respects. Nida distinguishes between 'common', 'diagnostic' and 'supplementary'

¹⁹ Crystal 136

²⁰ Crystal 102

components; ‘common’ components identify the items as belonging into a specific semantic domain, ‘diagnostic’ components of meaning distinguish between items belonging to the same domain, while ‘supplementary’ components do not distinguish between the items, but are rather features that are associated with the meaning of the item. Supplementary components are activated and reinterpreted especially in figurative extensions of meaning. Lipka, on the other hand, adopts a number of typological and nomenclature approaches from various scholars in the field, and by combining them opts to overcome the shortcomings of componential analysis, such as the reservations against representing meaning in terms of binary oppositions. He recognizes seven types of features, summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Lipka’s typology of semantic features²¹

#	Name	Notation	Example	Description
1	Denotative	[+/- HUMAN]	<i>girl vs. filly</i>	central inherent features, capture relations with extra-linguistic reality
2	Connotative	[+/- ARCHAIC]	<i>steed vs. horse</i>	central components, do not concern properties of the denotatum in the extra-linguistic sphere
3	Relational	[→ PARENT] [← PARENT]	<i>father vs. son</i>	used for describing relations between items – opposition, converses
4	Transfer	<-SOLID> or [2 PENETRABLE]	<i>to drink (carrots)</i>	features capturing syntagmatic dimension of meaning; explanation of metaphors
5	Deictic	[+/- PROXIMATE]	<i>now vs. then</i>	explain locative, temporal and directional processes
6	Inferential	[STICK] [TO GET ATTENTION]	<i>to beat to nudge</i>	variable type of feature absent from traditional classifications; not inherent and obligatory; explain fuzziness of meaning, polysemy, regional, stylistic and other variations
7	Distinctive			all except 6.

Most basically, Lipka’s typology distinguishes between distinctive (DFs) and inferential (IFs) semantic features. Distinctive features are inherent, obligatory, and their main justification is their function of distinguishing between lexical items on the basis of their presence/absence (+/-) or different value. On the other hand, inferential features are optional, supplementary and dependent on linguistic and extra-linguistic context, from which they may be inferred. Since they are variable, they are not assigned a value. Lipka stresses that the distinctive and inferential categories are global and can be further subdivided if additional criteria are used, making his analytical approach very flexible.

²¹ Adapted from Lipka 2002: 126-131

We have introduced the theory of lexical field, the paradigmatic relation of synonymy, and the method of componential analysis. Given the notion of ‘semantic feature’, we may re-evaluate a lexical field as a number of lexical items sharing a common semantic feature (depending on our criteria for analysis) and synonymy as a set of lexical items sharing a common denotative feature. With this in mind, it is possible to devise a typology of semantic features that would describe the differences in lexical field denoting ‘warrior’ in *Beowulf* and *SGGK*. In order to achieve the most systematic approach possible, it is helpful to introduce a system of classification of difference continuum in synonymy, summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Classification of difference continuum in synonyms²²

Dimensions of difference		Opposite poles of the difference continuum in synonyms	
1. Denotative meaning:		equivalent	different (in minor, peripheral features) superordinate x subordinate x coordinate (hyperonymous/hyponymous/cohyponymous)
2. Connotative meaning:	regional	common core	national standard (Briticism, Americanism) regional standard (EngE, ScE, IndE) regional dialect (Yorkshire dialect, Irishisms, Scotticism, etc.)
	social: social status	standard/neutral	marked: genteelism, slang word, technical jargon term, cant word, argot word
	normativity	correct	marked: hypercorrect, incorrect, barbarism
	temporal	contemporary	marked: conservative, dated, old-fashioned, obsolescent, obsolete, archaic, historical neologism
	attitude (emotion, expression, evaluation)	neutral	marked: emotive, affective, expressive-emphatic, evaluative: a) positive: hypocorism, pet form; familiarity diminutives; euphemisms, jocular, facetious terms; cacophemism b) negative: pejorative, derogatory term; dysphemism; ironic uses, offensive term; vulgarism; swear word; taboo word
	field: technicality textuality	neutral	marked: technical term (med., zool., theat., stock exch., relig., philos., mus., law, etc.) literary expression (poeticism), journalistic expression
	style (formality)	neutral	marked: high style: elevated/very formal, pompous, formal – demotic: informal, colloquial (colloquialism), slang
3. Mode (channel):			written – spoken
4. Frequency		frequent (unlimited frequency)	now rare word, rare word, nonce-word, hapax legomenon
5. Origin/assimilation:		indigenous expression	loan word; hybrid
6. Collocability (collocational range)		equivalent	different
7. Syntax (valency, functions):		equivalent	different
8. Form (structure):		simple lexeme	complex lexeme (one-word, multi-word)

Of course, the classification needs to be adapted to suit the nature of analyzed material, since several concepts introduced in Table 2. are not suitable for diachronic analysis of language. But the implementation of the above described theories and their results will be dealt with in the Research Part of this work.

²² Summarized by Klégr. The classification is devised from several sources dealing with difference in synonymy; used with permission.

3. 2. Literary-cultural section

3. 2. 1. Old English heroic epic and Middle English courtly romance

In order to be able to analyze and assess our lexical fields of interest and their use in *Beowulf* and *SGGK*, it is necessary to discuss the poems from a more general point of view with respect to the literary framework they belong to. The following discussion will thus deal with the genre distinctions of both poems and continue with a survey of the methods and traditions both genres employ, and will also relate to relevant matters such as manner of transmission of the poems, heroic status of its protagonist or different reception of both poems by their contemporary audiences.

Starting with *Beowulf*, which has come down to us in only one extant manuscript dating from around the break of the millennia, it is a long narrative poem centered on the exploits of its main hero, eponymous Beowulf, with a multitude of digressions and allusions. Given its unique status in the literature of the English speaking world as the longest surviving and also the oldest literary work of an undisputable merit for literary scholars, historians and linguists alike, it has thus been a matter of many disputes which aimed to place it within the framework of literary genres and styles. The most common classification is that *Beowulf* is a heroic epic poem or tale, although many other classifications have been proposed and argued for. Here some scholars introduce a distinction between heroic and epic, although both terms are used almost synonymously for a number of medieval works of literature; yet the term heroic and the heroic poetry that stems from this notion is of vital interest to us for its specifics. As John Michael Crafton written in his essay *Epic and Heroic Poetry*, “heroic poetry is composed to commemorate the deeds, usually martial, of one or more heroes whose accomplishments represent the supreme values of a community and inspire the listeners either to emulate or to admire these heroes.”²³ These heroic values stem from the relation between the lord and the retainer, which is the basic building block of Germanic heroic society. The traditions of heroic society can be deduced from various literary sources, such as the works of Tacitus, Gregory of Tours and contemporary

²³ Crafton in Lambdin 210

legal codices, for example *Lex Salica* and related relevant archaeological findings. But the pagan, pre-state tribal society as is depicted in *Beowulf* was no longer in existence in the time of the composition of the poem, but what is crucial for our further analysis is the heroic tradition that was derived from it. As we know from the sources, the heroic “society revolved around the strong, enterprising chieftain and his courageous band of followers. The essential cohesive elements were the personal loyalty of the retainers and the large-hearted liberality and bold strength of the leader.”²⁴ It thus glorified the “valor of the individual”, both in the persona of the lord and his retainer. In such organization of the society, the bonds of kinship formed the basic units of society. These relations were “the main source of protection for the individual, promising him legal and military assistance and, on the basis of wergild, providing him with a badge of status”²⁵. The retainer had obligations towards his lord and his kinsmen, such as protection of his liege lord, or involvement in a feud. Although personal valor was important, an individual without a lord “counted for nothing”²⁶, since “his legal status depended on his kinsmen to the extent that a man without kinsmen was the equivalent of an unfree man, unable to take part in legal or political decisions and deprived of rights.”²⁷ It is no wonder that the poetic image of an outcast, a man without the protection of his lord, belongs amongst the most moving and tragic notion that is to be found in the corpus of Old English poetry.

In such a society, we would find what has been called “heroic ideology” or “heroic ethos”. Although this notion is difficult to characterize without overall generalization, we might trace the concept of nobility of a man as a result of his status as a free man and a warrior; and warfare was stimulated, since the loyalty and courageous deeds of lord’s thanes were recompensed by generous rewards in form of material items, such as gold, treasure, weapons, armour, horses or land. Such generosity on the side of the lord could be sustained only by plunders and tributes. Thus when the leader is described as a ring-giver, a common kenning, and the thane as a ring-friend or ring-receiver, it was not only poetic diction, but it mirrored the central feature of the institution. The lord and the thane were mutually dependent and shared mutual responsibilities; the affiliation of the thane with the lord secured the individual’s

²⁴ Albertson 2

²⁵ Campbell 168

²⁶ Green 49

²⁷ Green 49

social and political status, while the retainers were the military force of the lord and, last but not least, they were interdependent in the respect of the concept of honor and glory – a courageous retainer was honoring his lord by his strength, while only a strong lord could obtain sufficient means to support a large group of followers. A strong individual retainer was a demonstration of the might of his lord, and vice versa. As such, the identity of the hero himself was constituted with regard to his relation to his liege lord and kinsmen, as can be seen on the manner warriors perceived themselves; thus the first thing we know of Beowulf is that he is the retainer of Hygelac and so on.

Such steadfast valor and complete loyalty are expressed in a highly stylized manner and by a number of traditional devices, such as kennings and variation, which will be described in more detail in following discussion of the language of the poems.

Thus much of what we consider Old English literature, including the epic, could be said to grow out of the heroic tradition that is so characteristic for the Old English poetry. The epic, being a more complex genre, can be characterized formally as “a long narrative poem commemorating the exploits of one or more heroes of national significance in an elevated or grand style that includes elaborate descriptions of battles, armaments, adventures, and monsters, as well as elaborate speeches, catalogs, similes, allusions, digressions, and epithets. Furthermore, these exploits often involve divine or otherworldly beings and journeys to ends of the known world and beyond. The term epic, then, denotes a certain level of subject matter (deeds of supremely national significance) and style (nonconversational, memorializing verse).”²⁸ The motifs and events that are common in the epic are “the arming of the hero, the explanation of a person’s or inanimate object’s ancestry, an emphasis on the importance of religious observances and/or prophecies and omens, a far-ranging journey, references or allusions to legendary stories from that or previous societies, a presentation of how that society’s gods interact, a descent into the underworld, and encyclopedic allusions to the types of learning valued by that society.”²⁹ Almost all these themes are to be found in Beowulf. An epic is a work of usually great length (Beowulf with its 3182 lines belongs among the shorter of the genre) and also of great

²⁸ Crafton in Lamdin 211

²⁹ McDonald in Lambdin 232 - 233

universal significance and it often contains the “history, religion, and wisdom of an ancient people; not too surprisingly, the epic also contains within it other literary genres, such as lyric, elegy, proverbs and aphorisms, and even at times satire or mock epic.”³⁰ In *Beowulf*, this encyclopaedic quality, which is one of the already mentioned formal characteristic of an epic, is manifested on numerous occasions. Much of the text is taken up with digressions and allusions that draw the early histories of the Swedes, the Danes or the Frisians and show a keen interest the author of the poem must have had in history of the Germanic world. Much of what is alluded to is in fact only a fragmentary mention of what must have been well-known events and histories in the time of the composition of the poem, as mentions of similar matters in other Germanic continental sources show, documenting for example Hygelāc’s unfortunate raid on the Frisians or the death of Ongenþēow the Swede. For this reason, *Beowulf* was long regarded as an early historical document from which much of the Germanic prehistory can be discovered; its literary qualities for modern criticism were established and appreciated only later.

The epic genre is also distinguished by its sociopolitical dimension, as it represents the point of view of aristocracy and also the abstract ideals of aristocratic society. The language of an epic is related to this, as it has a special purpose, which, according to Crafton, is one of the most important of the defining traits of the epic. The performance of the epic has to have a sense of grandeur, a nearly sacred and ritualistic quality, an aspect for which the term ‘performative’ was borrowed from speech-act theory. As such, “the epic was to be heard or read in a mood of solemnity approaching that of a religious or political ritual.”³¹ The language of the epic plays a vital part in this performative constitution of the epic, as it “has to be such that the listener or reader is moved to perceive that listening to or reading an epic results in something more than the comprehension of a story; rather, it is a participation in the memorializing of the highest values of the culture and an awareness that in keeping the epic alive, the culture survives.”³² The technical elements that contribute to the realization of such grandeur is the already mentioned “elevated style, elaborate and often allusive similes (epic similes), formal speeches by the characters, authorial commentary, invocation of the gods or muses to aid the poet’s presentation of the

³⁰ Crafton 212

³¹ Crafton in Lambdin 212-213

³² Crafton in Lambdin 213

material, and all-inclusive lists of people or things involved in a part of the story (epic catalog).”³³

Of course, strong voices were raised against labelling Beowulf as ‘an epic’, most notably by J. R. R. Tolkien in his famous and influential 1936 lecture “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics”. Here, Tolkien is averse to label the poem by a term derived from Greek or other literary traditions, as it cannot fit the context of the poem, and calls Beowulf “an heroic-elegiac poem”.³⁴ Whichever term would be chosen to describe Beowulf, it is the poem’s heroic nature that cannot be questioned.

Let us now move to the discussion of the romance genre, of which *SGGK* is the most well know, albeit not the most typical, representative. What we need to realize in the beginning is that during the transition from what we now call Old English literature to Middle English literature, a period of immense cultural and linguistic change occurred, resulting in the establishment of a new language, new traditions and a new culture. First of all, the language of the Anglo-Saxon world gradually disappeared after the Norman Conquest of 1066, due to the drastic change of linguistic situation in England after it was conquered by the Normans. For more than two centuries, the literary language of the new aristocratic elite was Norman French and later Anglo-Norman French. English resurfaced as a literary language again, although much changed, and with it resurfaced a changed perception of the heroic and epic in poetry, which found its most eloquent expression in romance. Crafton writes that the romance “is generally regarded as an amalgamation of the Latin epic (particularly of the Virgilian mode), the *chanson de geste*, Provençal lyric, the chronicle, a dash of Augustinian Neoplatonic Christianity, and, of course, the influence of a greatly changing structure of economic and power relations. The result is a narrative that focuses less on the local event and place and less on the deeds of the body than on the universal in events and on the modes of the mind or soul.”³⁵ The heroic status of the main protagonist is still of vital importance, but the heroic ideal has changed. The centrality of prowess in a hero remains, but it gains a spiritual. That is to say, while Beowulf fights his three monsters, all these battles are first and foremost physical battles, described in painstaking and often gory details, although there is a symbolic

³³ McDonald in Lambdin 232 - 233

³⁴ Tolkien 1936

³⁵ Crafton in Lambdin 219-220

elegiac dimension of the meaning on second look. But Sir Gawain, on the other hand, does battle with *wormez, wouolves, wodwos, bullez, berez, borez* and *etaynez*,³⁶ but the battles with all these monsters and wild creatures are mentioned only in passing, summarized in mere 4 lines of the narrative. His real battles take place in his chamber, as he tries to resist the wooing of Lady Bertilac, and are battles of the spirit. Furthermore, the location where the narrative takes place is much more dislocated and vague than in *Beowulf*, where the historical context of the story was a vital part of the narrative. In *SGGK*, Gawain does travel to the wilderness, but “but its only importance is to symbolize universal wilderness”³⁷ where the hero meets his challenger and the location of the castle of Hautdesert is not part of any elaborate geopolitical setting of the story. The adventures the hero faces “represent the sum of the values of courtesy that must be read as an idealization of the values of the new aristocracy.”³⁸ The notion of the hero is also changed, as the protagonist of the romance is a knight on a quest, which is supposed to test his character. The frequent motifs then are “the distressed damsel, the evil challenger, the fair unknown, the knight of unusual prowess, the power of love that enables overcoming otherwise-insurmountable obstacles, or the enchantment that must be removed by a feat performable only by the hero.”³⁹ The knight has gained a new dimension, unknown in the previous epics, and that is the dimension of love. He thus becomes “a domesticated hero, a hero as much at home in the court and in the budouir as on the battlefield. Part of whose excellence is his (and entirely equally in this instance)/her courtesy, which literally means behaviour in accordance with the mores and moraines of the court.”⁴⁰ The heroic code becomes chivalry, a code of knighthood that has been characterized as “an ethos in which martial, aristocratic and Christian elements are fused together.”⁴¹ In this sense, the romance gains a didactic aspect as “the courtly chivalric romance may have focused on education in social or courtly values; for example, in Old French, romance was often a vehicle for teaching fin amour, and in Middle English, for teaching feudal and social duties.”⁴² One last dimension of the

³⁶ Dragons, wolves, wild men of the woods, bulls, bears, boars and giants. *SGGK*, lines 720-723

³⁷ Crafton in Lambdin 220

³⁸ Crafton in Lambdin 221

³⁹ Crafton in Lambdin 352-353

⁴⁰ Shutt ML-04

⁴¹ Keen 1984: 1–2 Keen, Maurice 1984. *Chivalry*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

⁴² Crafton in Lambdin 354

medieval romance is its entertainment value, where the courtly aspect often blended with the popular.

SGGK is, as has been already mentioned, the most famous, yet not the most typical representative of the romance genre in Middle English literature. It has, similarly as *Beowulf*, come down to us in only one extant manuscript, dating from about the second half of fourteenth century. If the number of extant copies of the works may be taken as an indicative of the relative popularity of the works, many romances of lesser literary merit surpass SGGK. It has been also argued that SGGK may have found only a tiny readership among its contemporaries, as its one-manuscript only status may hint at. There were assumptions that tried to explain the solitary status of the poem due to its supremely literary quality. This inherent elaborateness of language and the complicated symbolism of the plot make it difficult to interpret the narrative as performative, which was the dominating mode of transmission of popular romances, as they were usually read aloud in a domestic or courtly ambience.⁴³ The plot is self-contained, spanning only throughout the Christmas feast and the subsequent year and focusing on events and devices that gain numerical symbolisms – “two feasts, two parts of the beheading game, two courts, three temptations, four parts, four seasons.”⁴⁴ As such, the work demands close and repeated reading to fully appreciate its nuances and implications.

The language of the work is extremely difficult, “combining dialectal enigmas, archaic forms, specialized vocabularies and extreme literary compression,”⁴⁵ reminiscent of the deliberately archaic diction of *Beowulf*.⁴⁶ The enigma of the Green Knight, often seen as a character embodying “[t]he vegetation myth of life, death, and rebirth”⁴⁷ give the narrative new and novel interpretations. SGGK is unique in the respect that the work achieves – through its motifs such as “the rise and fall of civilizations yielding to rebirth of others and the Christian proclamation of life, death, and spiritual rebirth unite with the year-and-a-day time scheme in a great natural,

⁴³ Hann and Symons, in Brown 344

⁴⁴ Craft in Lambdin 369

⁴⁵ Hann and Symons, in Brown 344

⁴⁶ Tolkien 1936

⁴⁷ Craft in Lambdin 369

civilizational, and spiritual cycle— an idealistic, romance portrayal of how the individual can fit into the great scheme of things.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Craft in Lambdin 369

3. 2. 2. Alliterative Poetry in Old and Middle English

The formal aspect of the verse of our works is very important, as its structure clarifies, and often demands the use of certain words. In order to be able to analyze which occurrences of our lexical items were partly or fully motivated by the demands of the verse, we need to discuss the characteristics of the verse in some detail. Apart from the similar concept of heroism and the aristocratic character of the narrative, what both *Beowulf* and *SGGK* have in common is their use of the alliterative verse. But since a substantial amount of time passed between the compositions of the poems, both alliterative verses work on different principles.

Starting with the Old English tradition, “alliteration was the dominant poetic form in Old English poetry.”⁴⁹ Alliteration is best described as the repetition of the same initial sounds in accented syllables of syntactically prominent words in predictable and well-defined ways. The Old English alliterative verse consists of two half-lines of variable length, joined together by the alliteration of their chief syllables. There are two stresses per half-line and a variable number of unstressed syllables, hence the metre can be very flexible and can accommodate a number of syntactic patterns. Consonant sounds alliterate with like consonants, but vowels and diphthongs all may alliterate with one another. Similarly, consonant clusters spelled *sc-*, *sp-* or *st-* alliterate only with themselves.⁵⁰ The first half-line is usually referred to as the *a-verse*, the second as *b-verse*. They are divided by a caesura or metrical pause, while the alliteration works as the cohesive element binding the two half-lines together metrically and phonetically. And while the aesthetic function of the pattern is evident and important, it is this cohesive function of alliteration which is the most striking. That is to say, alliteration binds the line also semantically, as the alliterating words are marked out as being the most prominent of the verse.

Odstraněno:

There are two factors to consider when classifying alliteration patterns. The first one is stress. Basic rule states that there should be exactly two fully stressed syllables in

⁴⁹ Lightsey in Lambdin 37

⁵⁰ Hogg 122

each half line,⁵¹ sometimes also called *lifts*.⁵² The number and position of unstressed syllables is relatively free and variable, but they are in a position that is describable by a system of patterns first outlined by Eduard Sievers in 1885.⁵³ His categorization is based on a statistical rather than linguistic approach to the corpus of Old English poetry, but despite a century of scholarly work in this field his classification remains valid to the present day. Sievers recognizes five basic half-line patterns, as summarized in Table 3. These types consist of a pattern of fully stressed (/), partly stressed (i.e. with secondary stress) (\) and fully unstressed (x) syllables.⁵⁴ The number of unstressed syllables is relatively unimportant and variable, as has already been mentioned.

Table 3: Sievers' typology of verse patterns⁵⁵

Type	Pattern
A	/ x / x
B	x / x /
C	x // x
D	// \ x or // x \
E	/ \ x /

Each long line must have at least one alliterating sound in the a-verse, and one and one only in the b-verse. The initial stressed syllable in the b-verse must alliterate as a rule and determines the alliterating sound of the entire line. This 'headstave',⁵⁶ as it is also called, therefore must alliterate with at least one stressed syllable in the a-verse, sometimes with both. Of course, there are some special circumstances and conditions that further develop and modify this basic scheme; but a fuller treatment is outside the scope of this work. But what is pertinent to our present analysis is the realization that

- (1) the most semantically important words in the verse are highlighted by alliteration,

⁵¹ Hogg 119

⁵² Kendall 14

⁵³ In Sievers 1885, later developed in Sievers 1893

⁵⁴ Hogg 121

⁵⁵ Adapted from Lightsey in Lambdin 38

⁵⁶ Lightsey in Lambdin 38

- (2) alliteration binds the verse together and
- (3) in certain position, the demands of alliteration restrict the selection of words to the ones with a specific initial sound as necessitated by the headstave.

As we move to the discussion of the meter of *SGGK*, we must realize that little record of Old English alliterative verse exists from the eleventh century onwards. Already by the end of tenth century, the surviving corpus of Old English poetry shows deviations from the strict norms of alliteration described above, which may hint at the situation where “composers and scribes no longer fully understood the linguistic rationale of the earlier tradition.”⁵⁷ The new Continental fashion of syllable counting (isosyllabism) and end-rhymed French poetry was brought to England after the Norman Conquest in 1066 and almost entirely displaced the earlier domestic tradition, at least as the extant manuscript evidence shows. By the beginning of the thirteenth century important literary compositions such as *The Owl and the Nightingale* and *The Ormulum* attest to the understanding and approval of the innovative rhythmic patterns by speakers of English.⁵⁸ But it is this scarcity of manuscript documentation that leads some critics to assume that there was a distinct break in the practice of alliteration between the Old English and Middle English periods.⁵⁹ Yet in the middle of the fourteenth century, the alliterative verse again reappears and becomes a dominant form of verse production. There are many theories concerning this so-called ‘alliterative revival’; one of them being that the practice of alliteration has disappeared from the manuscript production and once again became a popular form transmitted orally.⁶⁰ Although some form of continuity is probable, all theories concerning the break in the alliterative tradition rely on sparse available evidence and are necessarily based upon conjecture. What can be asserted without doubt is the fact that the extant manuscript evidence indicates that mid-fourteen century saw the appearance of a highly developed alliterative style, especially in the West Midlands and the north-west. Although this ‘fashion’ was apparently localized and relatively

⁵⁷ Minkova in Brown 176-177

⁵⁸ Minkova in Brown 160

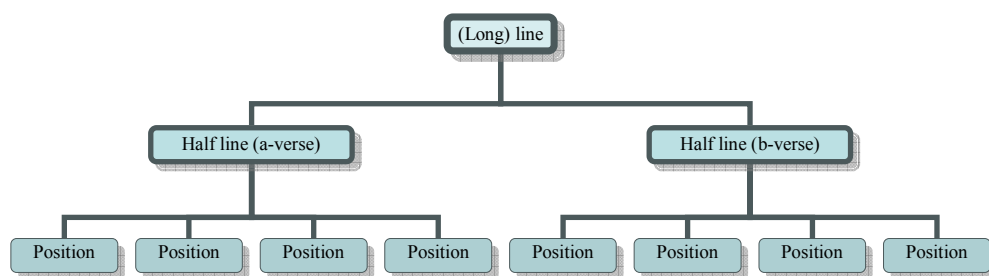
⁵⁹ Lightsey in Lambdin 41

⁶⁰ Chism 10

short-lived,⁶¹ it did produce works of extraordinary literary and artistic merit, *SGGK* being one of them.

Similarly as in Old English, alliteration as a creative device in Middle English was grounded in the prosody of the language, since “[s]tress on the first syllable of the root was the dominant contour in English word accentuation during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.”⁶² Alliteration in the Middle English period exhibits a wide variety of alliterative verse forms, but despite the earlier assumptions about the metrical laxness of the Middle English alliterative line, research by Hoyt Duggan and others suggests that the meter is as strictly rule bound as its Old English antecedent.⁶³ Despite the variety of forms, the constituent structure of Middle English alliterative verse is represented in Diagram 1 in the most abstract and idealized form:

Diagram 1: Metrical constituents of Middle English alliterative verse⁶⁴



The Middle English alliterative line is looser, with four or five stresses in each long line, with usually three alliterating words in the a-verse and at least two stresses in the b-verse after the caesura.⁶⁵ The long line is a syntactically complete entity: line-ends coincide with clause or phrase boundaries. Each half-line also tends to be a self-contained phrase, divided by at least a minimal pause between the two parts, which is not usually set off typographically or otherwise marked, but is easy to locate from the rhythm of the line.⁶⁶ A prominence in the abstract metrical scheme shown above is

⁶¹ Minkova in Brown 177

⁶² Minkova in Brown 176-177

⁶³ Duggan 223

⁶⁴ Adapted from Minkova in Brown 177-178

⁶⁵ Lightsey in Lambdin 44

⁶⁶ Minkova in Brown 177-178

also known as the strong (S) position, *ictus*, or *lift*. An ictus is normally filled by a syllable bearing linguistic stress and can accommodate only one syllable.⁶⁷

First three lifts of the long line must alliterate. The desire for additional ornamentation often led Middle English poets and scribes to add extra alliterating words in the first half-line, or to position an alliterating syllable in the rightmost ictus of the a-verse, although this alliteration is structurally redundant. Unlike in Old English, where this would be completely irregular, the second ictus in the b-verse can also be filled by an alliterating syllable.⁶⁸ The weak (W), or *non-ictic* positions, also known as *dips*, are filled by unstressed syllables and they vary in size: they can host a single unstressed syllable (weak dips), or they can enclose a string of two or more unstressed syllables (strong/heavy dips).⁶⁹

The a-verse is commonly heavier than the b-verse, because it may have three ictuses which may, but do not have to, alliterate. Since the norm is for each half-line to have two ictuses, three-ictus verses are also known as ‘extended’. This type of extension is not allowed in the b-verse.⁷⁰ The occurrence of two ictuses and two strong dips is also very common and it is regarded as the ‘unmarked’ type of a-verse.⁷¹

SGGK has its long lines organized into verse paragraphs of variable length, each completed with a single-stress line termed the *bob*, followed by a final quatrain or *wheel* of three-stressed alliterating lines, end-rhyming with the bob on the second and fourth line. And while the poem is structurally dependent on alliteration, the tendency toward the innovative rhyming accentual verse is indisputable.⁷²

⁶⁷ Minkova in Brown 177-178

⁶⁸ Minkova in Brown 177-178

⁶⁹ Minkova in Brown 178

⁷⁰ Minkova in Brown 179

⁷¹ Minkova in Brown 179

⁷² Lightsey in Lambdin 44

3. 2. 3. The language of poetry in Old English and Middle English alliterative traditions

The nature of poetic diction of Old English and Middle English poetry is markedly different. Let us first discuss the Old English poetic diction, which will deal with the notion of a poetic vocabulary, the use of compounds, kennings, variation and the notion of formula.

To start with the primary distinctive feature of Old English poetic diction, there is a marked difference between the vocabularies of prose and poetry. The Anglo-Saxon poets made use of a large stock of distinctly poetic words⁷³ which are not found in the prosaic records of the Old English corpus or are found only very rarely. Such poetic words were used alongside words that belong to the common vocabulary of Old English. In cases where the same word was used in a poetic and in a prosaic context, there may often be a difference in its connotation. That is to say a word “used with a specific, ‘technical’ sense in prose did not carry that sense in poetry.”⁷⁴ Such difference between the poetic and prosaic usage of the words was often fruitfully employed to give more layers of meaning to a lexical item in a specific context of the word in a poem. The poetic meaning of the item was often older, going back to the old Germanic level, while the prosaic meaning of the word was closer to the contemporary reality of the poet himself and thus could actualize the context for the poet’s days. The nature of the contrast between the different layers of meanings is often a difference between a Christian and pre-Christian meaning of the word.⁷⁵

Many exclusively poetic words are “no doubt archaisms”.⁷⁶ As J. R. R. Tolkien remarks, “the diction of *Beowulf* was poetical, archaic, artificial (if you will), in the day that the poem was made.”⁷⁷ And although the poetic expressions passed out of colloquial use, “[t]hey were familiar to those who were taught to use and hear the language of verse...; but they were literary, elevated, recognized as old (and esteemed

⁷³ Gneuss in Godden, Lapige 47

⁷⁴ Gneuss in Godden, Lapige 48

⁷⁵ Čermák 283

⁷⁶ Klaeber lxiv

⁷⁷ Tolkien, On Translating *Beowulf*

on that account).⁷⁸ Such archaic words evoke tradition⁷⁹ and are the result of a tradition; Tolkien further comments that such “building up of a poetic language out of words and forms archaic and dialectal or used in special senses”⁸⁰ helped to form a tradition based on “the development of a form of language familiar in meaning and yet freed from trivial associations, and filled with the memory of good and evil.”⁸¹

The second distinctive feature of the Old English poetic diction and of *Beowulf* in particular, tied to the notion of a specific poetic vocabulary, is the frequent use of compound words. About one third of the lexicon of *Beowulf*, about 1500 occurrences in total,⁸² consists of compounds. Many of these words do not occur elsewhere in the Old English corpus apart from *Beowulf*. The frequency of occurrence of such nonce expressions may well be an accidental consequence of the limited survival of early poetry,⁸³ yet it was suggested by Klaeber and others⁸⁴ that the compounds may have been created by the poet himself to suit his specific contexts. Such contexts, apart from semantic requirements, were restricted by the constraints of alliteration, the need to reduce the number of unstressed syllables to a minimum as given by the metre requirements and the demands of variation⁸⁵, which will be dealt at some length later in this section.

Tolkien notes that “[t]he primary poetic object of the use of compounds was compression, the force of brevity, the packing of the pictorial and emotional colour tight within a slow sonorous metre made of short balanced word-groups.”⁸⁶ Such compression adds dimension and depth of meaning to poetry. Many poetic compounds are elliptical in nature, incorporating a metaphor. The metaphor works on the principle when neither constituent of the compound denotes literally the compound’s referent.⁸⁷ These expressions are called *kennings*, a term borrowed from Icelandic⁸⁸, and they are traditional stylistics device found in many works of

⁷⁸ Tolkien, On Translating Beowulf

⁷⁹ Fulk 31

⁸⁰ Tolkien, On Translating Beowulf

⁸¹ Tolkien, On Translating Beowulf

⁸² Niles 1981: 489

⁸³ Scragg in Godden, Lapidge 65-66

⁸⁴ Klaeber lxiv, Fulk 31, Scragg in Godden, Lapidge 66

⁸⁵ Scragg in Godden, Lapidge 65-66

⁸⁶ Tolkien On Translating Beowulf

⁸⁷ Fulk 31

⁸⁸ From the term *kenningar*, roughly ‘paraphrase’, applied to similar constructions in Icelandic. Fulk 31

Germanic literary tradition. A kenning can be often found also as a phrase. Tolkien describes the effect of these traditional poetic devices thus: “[T]he kenning flashes a picture before us, often the more clear and bright for its brevity, instead of unrolling it in a simile.”⁸⁹

Old English poetic diction is extremely flexible, because “compound words lend themselves to adaptation to different metrical and semantic conditions, since one element of the compound can be replaced by a synonym or a word in a related semantic field.”⁹⁰ We have already mentioned that quite a substantial number of compounds in *Beowulf* is not found anywhere outside the poem itself. But as J. R. R. Tolkien remarks, “No ‘Anglo-Saxon’ who heard or read them would have been conscious that they were combinations never before used.”⁹¹ The flexibility and productivity of the process of compounding which Tolkien points at was not unnoticed by other scholars; for example Niles claims that “[t]he extraordinary wealth and variety of compound diction in *Beowulf* is the product of a centuries-old tradition of oral alliterative verse-making”⁹² that had armed the poet with a formal and inherited vocabulary and a flexible system of poetic diction that is based on the process of compounding to a great extent.

The reason for the frequent use of compounds may be found in the nature of the Old English alliterative metre, as it depends on nouns rather than verbs for stress.⁹³ Compounds often fit the Old English half-line precisely, and the two heavy stresses fall on the initial syllables of their constituents. Such “lack of directness based on heavily stressed nouns gives great dignity”⁹⁴ to the events and situations described in alliterative poetry. Nevertheless, there are many compounds in which the first element does not have the full extent of its meaning, but it rather adds colour to the second, more important element. This can be explained by the grammatical nature of the compound. In many nominal compounds, the second element is more important because it determines the gender of the compound as a whole and takes the inflectional ending. As such, it thus determines the function of the compound within

Naformátováno: Písmo:
Kurzíva, Angličtina (Velká
Británie)

⁸⁹ Tolkien On Translating Beowulf

⁹⁰ Scragg in Godden, Lapige 66

⁹¹ Tolkien On Translating Beowulf

⁹² Niles 489

⁹³ Stanley 428

⁹⁴ Stanley 428

the verse, while the first element gives weight to it in the metrical system, resulting in the sonority and solidity that is a marked feature of the alliterative long line.⁹⁵

The third distinctive feature of the Old English poetic diction is the principle of *variation*. This can be defined as “varying poetic terms in appositive constructions.”⁹⁶ One notion is expressed from two or more different perspectives, which are contrasted with each other in parallel syntactic constructions, identifying different aspects of what is being described. Apart from adding depth to the description, one of the functions of variation may be to improve understanding of the narrative by means of repetition, since the poetry often exhibits complex syntax that overruns lines and therefore is quite demanding for the listener or reader of the poems. Of course, such variation also makes great demands on poet’s vocabulary, further complicated by the constraints of metre and alliteration. This can be one of the reasons why the Old English poetic diction employs such an extensive number of compounds and a wide variety of nearly synonymic expressions. There is a heated debate among the scholars to determine the nature of the synonyms, one group⁹⁷ proposing the theory that although the words once had distinct meanings that had to some extent fallen together due to “semantic attrition of use”,⁹⁸ they nevertheless retained “some slight difference in connotation and power of suggestion.”⁹⁹ The second group of scholars, for example Niles, Kendall, Whallon, Fry or Sisam, claims that the diction of Old English poetry is functional rather than ornamental and the vocabulary of poetry is formal and inherited rather than idiosyncratic. To understand their claim, we need to introduce the notion of the *formula*, and the theory of the oral-formulaic character of the Anglo-Saxon poetry.

We have already introduced the notion of tradition in poetry; what these scholars claim is that the poetry was composed and transmitted orally before it was set down in writing, and that there “must have been a vast body of oral tradition.”¹⁰⁰ The alliterative metre was the controlling, functional element of the diction, while its demands on the vocabulary made Old English poetic diction extremely flexible. Niles

⁹⁵ Stanley 432-433

⁹⁶ Fulk 31

⁹⁷ E.g. Wrenn 80, Brady 1963, 1961

⁹⁸ Wrenn 80

⁹⁹ Wrenn 80

¹⁰⁰ Fulk 193

explains that “[d]epending on his compositional desires of the moment the poet could express the idea ... in any of the different consonantal alliterations ([b], [f], [g], [h], [l], [m], [r], [s], [þ] or [w]) as well as in the vowel alliteration. ... In *Beowulf*, ... we find an extraordinary variety of diction by which the same essential idea may be expressed within the same metrical limits.”¹⁰¹ For him, the actual use of the words in poetry did not necessarily carry specific implications: “A *guðbyrne* is a byrne that alliterates in [g]; a *heaðobyrne* is a byrne that alliterates in [h].”¹⁰² Furthermore, the poet knew the abstract patterns of verse-making that allowed him to generate new words to fit the context and satisfy the demands of alliteration,¹⁰³ making the distinction between functionally interchangeable simplexes in poetry close to zero.¹⁰⁴ Such “set of generative patterns, rather than a set of fixed phrases ... truly constituted the poet’s formulaic vocabulary.”¹⁰⁵

The key notion in the oral formulaic theory is that “stylized language is an aid to the composition of a literature preserved in memory alone.”¹⁰⁶ The theory was introduced to the context of Anglo-Saxon studies by Francis P. Magoun in 1953. He adapted the Parry—Lord theory of oral-formulaic composition, which was formed as a consequence of an investigation of Homeric diction and an extensive field study among the unlettered singers of tales in former Yugoslavian countries in the 1930s, to the context of Anglo-Saxon studies. In his influential essay, Magoun analyzed the first 25 lines of *Beowulf* for the presence of formulas as defined by Parry¹⁰⁷ and concludes that Anglo-Saxon poetry is entirely oral in character. He explains the grounds for the oral-formulaic theory thus: “the unlettered singer, ordinarily composing rapidly and extempore before a live audience, must and does call upon ready-made language, upon a vast reservoir of formulas filling just measures of verse.”¹⁰⁸ This influential essay has sparked a heated and extremely prolific academic debate, which continues to the present day. Whatever may be the stance of the individual scholars, the general

¹⁰¹ Niles 495

¹⁰² Niles 499

¹⁰³ Niles 495

¹⁰⁴ Niles 499

¹⁰⁵ Niles 495

¹⁰⁶ Fulk 29

¹⁰⁷ Formula is “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.” Parry 80

¹⁰⁸ Magoun 446

consensus now is that there most probably was some sort of oral tradition that shaped the diction and vocabulary of the Old English alliterative poems.

The character of poetic diction of the Middle English alliterative verse is quite different. Our preliminary remark must concern the relative localisation of the so-called 'alliterative revival' in space and time, being limited from the mid-fourteenth to fifteenth century and the West Midlands and the north-west. Two important implications arise from this realisation. First concerns the nature of verse itself, since alliterative verse was only one of the two dominant poetic modes in the English language during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The second dominant mode that eventually became the more important of the two was the practice of writing syllable-counting rhymed poetry, most successfully employed by Chaucer. When characterizing alliterative poetry, it is often contrasted with rhymed poetry, and their distinctions are established on the basis of mutual differences. Thus when we will speak about specific vocabulary of the alliterative revival, what is implied is that the vocabulary was different from the vocabulary of rhymed poetry.¹⁰⁹

Second implication concerns the localization of the poetry. Middle English in the fourteenth century had already regained its prestige and acquired the status of a national vernacular as well as a literary language, and authors such as Gower, Chaucer, Langland or the *Gawain*-poet chose to write their works in English rather than in Anglo-Norman, French or Latin. But there was no standard variety of the language yet, so the texts from this period exhibit a wide range of spelling, vocabulary and syntax differences, although their authors may have been contemporaries. According to Horobin, in a broad generalization we may speak of two main variants of the English language, southern and northern dialect respectively. Fifteenth century saw the emergence of a standard written language based on the southern variant, as it was the language of London, and thus it was the language of administration, court and parliament.¹¹⁰ Present-day attitudes to dialect use often stigmatise non-standard varieties in some way, but since there was no standard variety of Middle English in the fourteenth century, such attitudes to regional variation do not apply to Middle

¹⁰⁹ This implication is necessarily only very general and does not take into account individual differences in style and register of specific poets and poems, which may transcend and challenge such broad generalizations.

¹¹⁰ Horobin in Saunders 182

English.¹¹¹ The *Gawain*-poet wrote in a north-western dialect, but his works are no less sophisticated than those of London poets such as Gower and Chaucer.¹¹²

Having established these two basic distinctions, we may now proceed to the discussion of the nature of alliterative poetic diction itself. Similarly as in Old English, Middle English alliterative poetic diction exhibits a distinct and characteristic vocabulary. Words that are different from the diction of rhymed poetry may be broadly divided into three groups:

- (1) words of technical nature,
- (2) dialect words and
- (3) words that are restricted to alliterative verse in the fourteenth century.¹¹³

A cursory glance at the distribution of the constituents of *Gawain*-poet's vocabulary will prove useful in elucidating the nature of the three groups of words mentioned above. Duggan states that the greatest number of words that are used by the *Gawain*-poet is derived from Old English (60,7%), the next largest group from Old French (22,3%), Old Norse (8,1%) and under one percent from other sources.¹¹⁴ Of course, the poets used a vocabulary which was a mixture of common and specific terms, and individual usage varied greatly; but the above mentioned divisions are useful in the realisation that the three main groups of poetic vocabulary are predominantly derived from three main sources – the technical terminology is most often of French origin, the dialect words are predominantly of Scandinavian origin, and the words that are restricted to alliterative verse are principally derived from Old English.

To understand this claim, let us now analyze the three groups of words individually. Starting with the words of technical nature, we must realize that alliterative poets were fond of rich descriptions full of technicalities, which in itself may indicate a feature of the style of alliterative verse.¹¹⁵ Looking at the origin of technical words

¹¹¹ Machan 2003

¹¹² Horobin in Saunders 184

¹¹³ Turville-Petre 70

¹¹⁴ Duggan bases his estimates on the research made by Oakden (1930), Gordon (1953), Anderson (1969, 1977), Davis (1967), and Vantuono (1984), which have all come to conclusions that vary from each other by only a few percentage points. Other estimates are in existence, most notably that of Norman Hinton, who estimates the distribution thus: Germanic: 58.7% Romance: 41% Other: 0.15%. Duggan in Brewer 238-239

¹¹⁵ Turville-Petre 70

Odstraněno: !

Naformátováno: zvýrazněné

that are used in such descriptions, we come to realize that the majority of the specific lexicon is derived from French. The height of the process of lexical borrowing was the mid to late fourteenth century, the period in which the major Middle English poets were all active.¹¹⁶ Horobin points out that “more interesting than the sheer number of French words is the kind of words and how they are used. French culture was particularly admired for aristocratic pursuits such as hunting, music, fashion, cooking, dance, love-making and science, and it is in these areas that the largest number of borrowings occurred.”¹¹⁷ Thus in *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*, we find highly technical and specialized vocabulary in the descriptions of the arming of Gawain, feasting, greeting, hunting and love-making, all of which are matters connected with the notion of elevated and aristocratic pursuits.

The second group of words that are specific to the alliterative diction are dialect words. We have already mentioned that the majority of alliterative works come from the West Midlands and the north-west of the country, and that the Middle English language had two major variants, southern and northern. Therefore such dialect words are words that “would sound natural to an audience in the northern half of the country, but unacceptable, even perhaps incomprehensible, in London.”¹¹⁸ In many cases, these words are of Scandinavian origin. While some of them were apparently in wide usage in the northern half of the country, others are more restricted locally. Such dialect words are most commonly found as “local words descriptive of everyday objects and activities: the hills, valleys and streams, talking and riding,”¹¹⁹ although some of them most probably gradually became distinctly alliterative and poetic words due to their frequent use by the alliterative poets. One more aspect pertaining to the use of dialect words is that the poets could exploit the dialectal variation available to them in their local dialect. Identical concepts could be expressed by different dialectal forms of words, which was a useful resource for poets writing in the alliterative metre which demanded a large number of synonyms with different initial sounds. Thus the alliterative poets, such as the *Gawain*-poet, could draw upon both the Norse-derived and the Old English-derived words in particular alliterative contexts,¹²⁰ since their

¹¹⁶ Horobin in Saunders 190

¹¹⁷ Horobin in Saunders 190

¹¹⁸ Turville-Petre 70

¹¹⁹ Turville-Petre 77

¹²⁰ Horobin in Saunders 186

local dialect made use of both forms of the word and such variation was acceptable also for their audiences. It is necessary to note that in some cases, such as in the lexical item *wyðe*, it is extremely difficult to determine whether the word is derived from a dialectal use or from the older Anglo-Saxon layer of vocabulary.

The third and last group of words we shall analyze are words that are “restricted to alliterative verse in the fourteenth century, and are found rarely elsewhere, even in non-alliterative works from the same part of the country.”¹²¹ This group of distinctly alliterative words is the most reminiscent of the specialized poetic diction of the Old English poetry, since it contains “numerous synonyms for certain key concepts, enabling the poet to employ a rich and varied lexis. [One] important function of these synonyms was to allow a poet to draw upon synonymous words with different initial sounds, an important resource for a poet writing in a metre dependent upon alliteration.”¹²² The technique of the alliterative line, usually involving three semantically prominent words in the alliterative pattern,¹²³ is the most important aspect in the development of the alliterative lexis. But while these words “were not regional but rather belonged to a particular stylistic register, the primarily western and northern distribution of alliterative verse meant that many of these specialised words would have been unfamiliar to southern and eastern audiences.”¹²⁴

Many of these words had been poetic words also in the Old English diction, but even in cases where there is no connection with the older poetic tradition most of the alliterative words are of native origin. But as Turville-Petre remarks, “[t]he majority of alliterative poets, prompted by the needs of alliteration, quarried every conceivable source to provide themselves with a vocabulary that helped them to write alliterative verse more fluently and, more important, that gave to their poetry a distinctiveness and an exuberance equalled by no other school of writers.”¹²⁵ There were assertions that such use of words descended from the older tradition demonstrates the presence of an unbroken alliterative practice; but the changes in diction and language between the Old English period and the fourteenth century were extensive and such readiness of the alliterative poets to embrace words from different sources points rather at their

¹²¹ Turville-Petre 70

¹²² Horobin in Saunders 187

¹²³ Turville-Petre 70

¹²⁴ Horobin in Saunders 187

¹²⁵ Turville-Petre 81-82

need for a varied vocabulary than at a survival or a conscious revival of the older tradition. Moreover, most of the chiefly alliterative words can be traced intermittently in written documents through the early Middle English period¹²⁶, and as such a straightforward claim for an unbroken alliterative tradition between Old and Middle English alliterative traditions is out of place. There seems to be a gradual process of establishing this specific vocabulary, since the earliest Middle English alliterative works do not exhibit such a wide range of alliterative synonyms, but the later works, which include *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*, possess the widest and richest vocabulary of all.¹²⁷ The extent to which poets make use of the specific alliterative diction varies also regionally, as the more southern alliterative poems use much less of the specific vocabulary than their northern fellows. Two factors may account for this difference; the first one is the fact that many specialized words are drawn from northern dialects and would be thus unavailable to the southern poets, while the second factor may be the influence of Langland, who consciously avoided many items from the traditional alliterative vocabulary for its romantic and heroic connotations, as it would not fit the religious nature of his work.¹²⁸

One concluding remark concerning the alliterative vocabulary addresses the distinctive and special quality these words must have had for the poets. It is not the meaning that distinguishes them, as many words are very general in their denotation, but their use in the alliterative line. Since many of them “were words introduced into the poetic vocabulary to satisfy a metrical need, ... they could not be used freely where the alliterative pattern did not call for them.”¹²⁹ Thus the majority of words restricted to alliterative verse appear only in alliterating positions, leading to their denomination as stylistic “metrical”¹³⁰ words. This, too, is reminiscent of the assertions the proponents of the oral-formulaic theory had about the status of certain words in the Old English poetic diction. But the oral-formulaic theory in Middle English does not have such a strong standing as in the Old English tradition; scholars might at most hint at the possibility of a residual status of certain items. But whichever theory may seem more plausible, it is difficult to challenge the notion that

¹²⁶ Turville-Petre 80

¹²⁷ Turville-Petre 71

¹²⁸ Turville-Petre 71

¹²⁹ Turville-Petre 83

¹³⁰ Turville-Petre 83

“the language of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is thoroughly traditional. Where he is original, the poet may rather be said to add to the tradition than to depart from it.”¹³¹

¹³¹ Borroff 90

4. Research Part

4.1. Methodology and data selection

The formulation of criteria for selection of data was the primary concern. The lexical field denoting “warrior” is structured differently in each language and in each age; furthermore, there are notable differences as to which words will be used to denote “warrior” in each of the poems. The composition and structure of the lexical field derived from the poems themselves is thus a vital part of the analysis.

The focus was thus on lexemes that denote “warrior” explicitly. To be more precise, the lexemes were restricted firstly by being all nouns and secondly, all lexemes that were selected to be part of the semantic field contain the semantic component [+WARRIOR]. This has been established with the use of glossaries and dictionaries for each poem; so, in the end, there are 47 lexemes denoting “warrior” in *Beowulf* and 16 lexemes in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

The glossaries used to ascertain the meaning of the lexemes were:

- (1) *Beowulf* – the Glossaries attached to the editions by Klaeber, Wrenn, Wyatt and Chambers. Furthermore, each lexeme was cross-checked with Bosworth-Toller’s *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*.
- (2) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* – the Glossaries attached to the editions by Gollancz, Tolkien and Gordon. Furthermore, each item was cross-checked with *Middle English Compendium*.

Some methodological problems and limitations should be noted here. First of all, due to the device of variation, warriors can be referenced by more lexical items and phrases than only by the ones that were selected to constitute our lexical field. We are nevertheless concerned only with inherent denotative meaning of the lexical item that fulfils our requirement for selection as stated above.

Furthermore, following the consideration Caroline Brady set forth in her 1983 essay on the “warrior” vocabulary in *Beowulf*, one set of lexemes denoting a specific

category of warriors was excluded from both lexical sets, specifically the lexemes denoting kings. Although many of the lexemes that denote kings do contain the [+WARRIOR] semantic component, this restriction appears to be reasonable, since a king, although perforce a warrior (especially in Anglo-Saxon England), had other duties that were specific to his royal obligations and that are reflected in his relationship with his kin, his retainers and his people as a whole. For these reasons the “king” vocabulary is substantially different from the “warrior” lexical set and thus too broad for the scope of the present work. Nevertheless, in the case of the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* lexical field, items such as *prince*, *leder* or *mayster* were included into the lexical field, because they do not inherently imply any of the royal obligations that we are trying to avoid.

Also, the criteria for selection of lexical items were broadened in the case of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to include items that denote ‘knight’. The reason for this is in the fact that the knight is per se a warrior, but it also encompasses a dimension of courtesy. To explain, the major difference between the warrior vocabulary in *Beowulf* and *SGGK* lies in the fact that in the case of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, there is a notable difference in the quality of the notion of warrior. Hand-to-hand combat had a much lesser presence in the understanding of the notion of warrior in chivalric romance; the element that was added to the notion of a warrior is the dimension of love, creating a category of the “knight” – a warrior that is skilled not only in the art of battle, but also in the art of love, being thus a subject that is equally at home in the battlefield as well as in the courtroom.¹³² For this mixture of social and military duties, items denoting ‘knight’ were included in the lexical field.

1. Lexical fields denoting “warrior” in *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Naformátováno: Odrážky a číslování

As has been already said, the lexical field denoting “warrior” contains 47 items in *Beowulf* and 16 items in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

The items of the *Beowulf* lexical set are summarized in Table 4.

¹³² Shutt lecture ML-04

Table 4: The *Beowulf* lexical field

LEXEME	MEANING ¹³³
æsc-wiga	<i>(spear-) warrior</i>
beado-rinc	<i>(battle-)warrior</i>
beorn	<i>man, hero, warrior</i>
byrn-wiga	<i>mailed warrior</i>
cempa	<i>fighter, champion, warrior</i>
dryht-guma	<i>retainer, warrior, man, noble warrior</i>
eorl	<i>nobleman, man, warrior, hero, earl</i>
fēpe-cempa	<i>foot-warrior, foot-champion</i>
fēde-gest	<i>foot-guest, warrior</i>
freca	<i>bold one, warrior, bold or eager man</i>
gār-wiga	<i>spear-fighter, warrior</i>
gār-wigend	<i>spear-fighter, warrior</i>
gūð-beorn	<i>warrior</i>
gūð-freca	<i>fighter, bold fighter</i>
gūð-fremmende	<i>warrior</i>
gūð-rinc	<i>warrior</i>
gūð-wiga	<i>warrior</i>
gūð-wine	<i>war-friend, warrior, sword</i>
hæle/hæleð	<i>hero, warrior, man</i>
heapo-liðende	<i>war-sailor, sea-warrior, warlike farers, warrior-sailor</i>
heaðo-rinc	<i>warrior</i>
helm-berend	<i>helmet-bearer, warrior</i>
here-rinc	<i>warrior, army-man</i>
hilde-mecg	<i>warrior, battle-man</i>
hilde-rinc	<i>warrior, battle-man</i>
hild-freca	<i>fighter, warrior, fierce warrior, battle-hero</i>
lind-hæbbende	<i>shield-bearer, warrior</i>
lind-wiga	<i>shield-warrior</i>
mago-rinc	<i>young warrior, retainer</i>
mago-ðegn	<i>young retainer, thane</i>
ōret-mecg	<i>warrior</i>
ōretta	<i>warrior</i>
rand-wiga	<i>shield-warrior</i>
rinc	<i>man, warrior, wight</i>
rond-hæbbende	<i>shield-bearer, warrior</i>
sæ-rinc	<i>seaman, warrior</i>
scealc	<i>(servant), retainer, warrior, man, marshal</i>
sceaþa	<i>one who does harm, enemy, criminal, warrior, injurer, foe</i>
sceōtend	<i>shooter, warrior</i>
scyld-freca	<i>shield-warrior</i>
scyld-wiga	<i>shield-warrior</i>
searo-hæbbende	<i>armour-having, armoured warrior</i>
sweord-freca	<i>sword warrior</i>
þegn	<i>thane, follower, attendant, retainer, warrior, servant</i>
wiga	<i>warrior</i>
wigend	<i>warrior</i>
wig-freca	<i>warrior, war-wolf</i>

¹³³ Meaning elements are a summary of Kiernan's, Wrenn's and Wyatt and Chamber's Glossaries

Table 5. The *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* lexical field

LEXEME	MEANING ¹³⁴
burn(e)	<i>warrior, knight, man</i>
cheualry	<i>knighthood, body of knights</i>
frek(e)	<i>man, knight</i>
gome	<i>knight, man</i>
hapel	<i>knight, master, Lord</i>
knyȝt	<i>knight, servant</i>
leude	<i>man, knight, prince</i>
lord(e)	<i>lord, noble, ruler</i>
mayster	<i>lord, knight, master</i>
prynce	<i>prince, Christ</i>
renk	<i>knight, man</i>
schalk	<i>man, servant</i>
segg(e)	<i>man, knight, priest, everybody, men</i>
syre	<i>lord, knight, sir</i>
tulk	<i>man, knight</i>
wyȝe	<i>man, knight, person, one, attendant</i>

Naformátováno: Písmo: není
Kurzíva, Angličtina (Velká
Británie)

Methodology

To achieve our stated goals, lexical items from both poems are subject to:

- (1) structural analysis,
- (2) frequency analysis,
- (3) contextual analysis.

Structural analysis is concerned with each lexical set defined above as a whole. The lexemes of both sets will be looked upon from the point of view of morphology (simplices vs. compounds) and lexical semantics (denotative, connotative semantic features; genericity vs. specificity). The aim is to analyze inherent (that is, not context dependent) features of the lexical sets in question, describe and compare them.

Frequency analysis will look at the frequency of occurrences of the lexical items in the text of the poems. Applying conclusion drawn from the previous section, the behaviour and relative importance of items in the lexical set shall be elucidated on the basis of their frequency of occurrence.

¹³⁴ Meaning elements are a summary of Gollancz's and Tolkien and Gordon's Glossaries

Contextual analysis will deal with the contextual meaning and actual use of lexical items. Specific regard will be paid to reference of the items, so characters in both poems will be divided into several groups according to specified criteria, and terms applied to them will be analyzed. Also, when analyzing the context, relevant non-semantic aspects of the context will be looked at, such as alliteration or the function (e.g. when the lexical item is employed in the device of variation) of the lexical items.

Such threefold analysis should elucidate in detail the inner behavior of the semantic field denoting “warrior” in each poem. The concluding part will look at conclusions drawn from analyzing the use of lexical items in each poem and shall draw tendencies, parallels and differences between the two poems.

← **Naformátováno:** Odrážky a číslování

4. 2. Structural analysis

The structural analysis of the lexical fields aims to provide a notion of the structure of the fields based on morphological and semantic grounds.

Morpho-semantic analysis:

From the point of view of morphology, the first difference that we are immediately able to discern between the two lexical fields is the prevalence of compounds over simplices in the *Beowulf* lexical field. There are 35 compounds as opposed to 13 simplex expressions in the *Beowulf* lexical field, whereas there are no compounds in the Middle English lexical field. To account for this difference, it is necessary to recall the fact that Old English, and especially Old English poetic diction, makes a frequent and fruitful use of compound expressions. Since compounds prevail in the lexical field and their importance and impact is of vital importance to the aim of the present work, it is necessary to devise a classification of the compounds.

But before we can proceed to the discussion of compounds in *Beowulf*, it is interesting to note that the lexical field in *SGGK* does not contain any compounds. This is because the processes of forming poetic compounds were no longer productive. Due to natural language change, the language was more analytical, which resulted in changed syntactic patterns. Such a change had its effect also on the structure of the Middle English alliterative line, which was looser and usually also longer than the Old English one, and no longer required the tight metrical pattern that was often accomplished by the use of compounds.

Classification of compounds from the *Beowulf* lexical field

First of all, of the 35 compounds present in the *Beowulf* lexical field, there are 23 that contain a simplex expression that can be found among the 13 simplex nouns also present in the lexical field. The pattern is the same in all 23 cases – the simplex expression operates as a head noun, with a noun or adjectival modification. The most productive nouns in compounding are *wiga* and *rinc*, with 7 compounds each. The endocentric compounds are joined with their head nouns by the relation of hyponymy.

(1) Endocentric compounds with head noun present as an independent item in the lexical field- HYPONYMY

wiga => æsc-wiga, byrn-wiga, gār-wiga, gūð-wiga, lind-wiga, rand-wiga, scyld-wiga,
rinc=> beado-rinc, gūð-rinc, heaðo-rinc, here-rinc, hilde-rinc, mago-rinc, saē-rinc,
freca=> gūð-freca, hild-freca, scyld-freca, sweord-freca, wīg-freca,
beorn=> gūð-beorn,
cempa=> fēþe-cempa,
þegn=> mago-ðegn,
wīgend=> gār-wīgend,

There seems to be a pattern to compounding in these compounds. First of all, their head nouns compound with a number of expressions that are of three categories – either modifiers denoting [+WAR] such as *beado-*, *gūð-*, *heaðo-*, *hild(e)-*, *wīg-*, modifiers denoting [+WEAPON] (be it offensive or defensive, such as armor or shield) e.g. *æsc-*, *byrn-*, *gār-*, *lind-*, *rand-*, *scyld-*, *sweord-*, or modifiers denoting [+TRANSPORT] such as *sæ-* or *fēðe-*. Apart from these three major categories, only the modifier *mago-* stands apart, denoting [+YOUNG].

(2) Endocentric compounds whose head nouns are not present in the lexical field

dryht-guma, gūð-wine, fēðe-gest, hilde-mecg, ðret-mecg

All head nouns of these compounds operate as independent lexical items in the Old English corpus. Two of them, *guma* and *wine*, are present as independent lexical items also in *Beowulf*, but their inclusion into the field was impossible due to semantic restrictions.

(3) Compounds with participial heads

gūð-fremmende, helm-berend, lind-hæbbende, rond-hæbbende, searo-hæbbende, heaþo-līðende

The compounds differ from the rest by the fact that their head is formed by a participle, denoting [+POSSESSING] or [+PERFORMING]. The same semantic division of the modifiers applies as with the endocentric compounds.

Analysis of Semantic Components

Moving from morpho-semantic classification of the lexical fields to semantics, the lexemes were analyzed using the method of componential analysis. Before we can proceed to the discussion of the results, we need to clarify the method used in the analysis. The componential analysis opts to describe the differences in denotation of the lexemes. The categories are devised with respect to the meaning of the lexemes as stated in *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and its *Supplement* for the *Beowulf* lexical field, and in *The Middle English Compendium* for *SGGK* lexical field.

Before we can proceed, an explanation of the terminology used in the classification is necessary. The obligatory part of each lexeme in both lexical fields is the [+WARRIOR] component, as has been formulated above. For the sake of brevity, this component is not included in the tables. For the *Beowulf* analysis that is summarized in Table 3., the component [+MAN] signifies that the lexeme can refer to a generic human. The component [+HERO] denotes that the lexeme implies a heroic status of its referent. The component [+BATTLE] signifies that the lexeme contains an element that directly and unequivocally refers to warfare, such as the modifiers *wīg-* or *gūð-* do. In these three categories, only the + sign was used to notify that the lexeme contains the component for the sake of brevity and clarity.

The remaining categories are structured differently. The heading in the table designates the type of the component, while the components themselves are specifying the type (such as [+SWORD] or [+SPEAR] for the type Offensive equipment). The analyzed types of categories are Equipment, Character, further specified into Positive (+) and Negative (-). These categories are important in expressing the difference between e. g. the [+NOBLE] component of *beorn* and the [+CRUEL] component of *beado-rinc*. Further categories describe Transport and Rank. The remaining two categories, Special and Associative, express components that are distinctive part of the meaning of the lexemes, but are not included in the categories mentioned so far. Components such as [+DEVASTATION] for *here* or [+PROWESS] for *cempa* are included here.

For the *SGGK* lexical field summarized in Table 4., again, the obligatory component [+WARRIOR] is not included in the table for the sake of brevity. The MAN component, marked only + for the sake of brevity in relevant case, signifies that the lexeme contains a generic meaning, referring to any human being. The component WAR, marked similarly only +, designates that lexeme contains a component that implies warfare. The rest of the categories are again structured differently, the heading designating the category of the component, the components are specifying the type. The types analyzed are Rank, Character, Number and Sentiment. Also, the lexemes sometimes contain a component that is pertinent to our analysis, but which does not fit into any category mentioned previously. Such components are to be found in the Special category.

The results of the componential analyses are summarized below in Table 6. for the *Beowulf* lexical field and in Table 7. for the *SGGK* lexical field.

Table 6: Componential Analysis of the *Beowulf* lexical field

Word	MAN	HERO	BATTLE	Equipment		Character		Transport	Rank	Special	Associative
				protective	offensive	+	-				
æsc-wiga			+		+SPEAR						
beado-rinc			+				+CRUEL				+GLOOM
beorn	+	+				+NOBLE					
byrn-wiga			+	+ARMOR							
cempa			+							+PROWESS	
dryht-guma	+					+POPULAR			+RETAINER		
eorl	+	+				+NOBLE, +BRAVE					
fēþe-cempa			+					+FOOT		+PROWESS	
fēðe-gest								+FOOT		+GUEST	
freca		+				+BOLD					
gār-wiga			+		+SPEAR						
gār-wīgend			+		+SPEAR	+NOBLE					
gūð-beorn		+	+			+NOBLE					+FAME
gūð-freca		+	+			+BOLD					+FAME
gūð-fremmende			+								+FAME
gūð-rinc			+								+FAME
gūð-wiga			+								+FAME
gūð-wine			+			+FRIEND			+EQUAL	+HELP	+FAME
hæle/ hæleð	+	+				+BRAVE					
heaþo-līðende			+					+SEA			+GLOOM
heaðo-rinc			+								+GLOOM
helm-berend				+HELM							
here-rinc			+?								+DEVAS-TATION
hilde-mecg			+								+FAME
hilde-rinc			+								+FAME
hild-freca		+	+			+BOLD					+FAME

lind-hæbbende				+SHIELD							
lind-wiga			+	+SHIELD							
magorinc									+SERVANT	+YOUNG	+STRONG
magorðegn						+NOBLE, +BRAVE			+SERVANT, +RETAINER	+YOUNG	
ðret-mecg			+							+PROWESS	
ðretta			+							+PROWESS	
rand-wiga			+	+SHIELD							
rinc	+										
rond-hæbbende				+SHIELD							
saerinc								+SEA			
scealc	+								+SERVANT, +RETAINER		
sceapa							+ENEMY				
sceotend					+ARROW					+SKILL	
scyld-freca		+		+SHIELD		+BOLD					
scyld-wiga			+	+SHIELD							
searo-hæbbende				+ARMOR							
sweord-freca		+			+SWORD	+BOLD					
þegn	+					+NOBLE, +BRAVE			+SERVANT, +RETAINER		
wiga			+								
wigend			+			NOBLE					
wig-freca		+	+			+BOLD					+GLOOM

Table 7: Componential Analysis of the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* lexical field

Word	MAN	WAR	Rank	Character	Number	Sentiment	Special
burn(e)	+	+	+SERVANT, +LORD	+NOBLE		+CHIVALRY	
frek(e)	+	+		+BRAVE		+CHIVALRY	
gome	+					+CHIVALRY	
hæpel	+	+		+NOBLE		+CHIVALRY	+DEITY
knyȝt		+	+RETAINER	+NOBLE		+CHIVALRY	+LANDOWNER ?
leder		+	+LEADER				
leude	+		(pl.) +RETAINERS, (sg.) +SERVANT		(pl.)+FOLK	+CHIVALRY	+DEITY (??)
lord(e)		+	+LEADER	+NOBLE		+CHIVALRY	+DEITY
prynce			+LEADER	+NOBLE		+CHIVALRY	+DEITY
renk	+	+				+CHIVALRY	
schalk,	+	+				+CHIVALRY	
segg(e)	+				(pl.)+FOLK	+CHIVALRY	
syre				+NOBLE		+CHIVALRY	
tulk	+	+				+CHIVALRY	
wyȝe	+					+CHIVALRY, +FAMILIARITY	+DEITY

Comparison of the Semantic Components Analyses

Now, let us consider the differences and similarities in the structure of the semantic components in the two lexical fields. Firstly, both fields contain lexemes that can refer to a generic human being, but such lexemes are more dominant in the *SGGK* lexical field (34, 4% as opposed to 14,5% in the *Beowulf* lexical field). This is only to be expected, when we take into consideration the morphological structures of the fields with the predominance of simpler structure in the *SGGK* lexical field.

The two analyses contain similar components [+BATTLE] in the *Beowulf* lexical field and [+WAR] in the *SGGK* lexical field. These two components are different for a reason. In the *Beowulf* lexical field, the reference to battle is explicit, achieved by the means of modifiers such as *gūð-* or *heaðo-*, or such component is an inherent part of the meaning of the word, such as in the word *wiga*, derived from OE *wīg* “fight, battle, war, conflict”¹³⁵ But in the *SGGK* lexical field, the reference to warfare is much more subtle, being usually a part of the meaning, but not so transparent as in the case of the *Beowulf* lexical field. As for the component [+HERO], no such element is traceable in the *SGGK* lexical field. This is not to signify that the lexemes do not depict heroes; it rather points at a different notion of heroism in both lexical fields and thus as a different notion of heroism as we know it in *Beowulf* and the Anglo-Saxon England, as opposed to the heroism of the age of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. We have already mentioned the different perspectives of the hero in both poems;

¹³⁵ Boswort-Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*

while the heroes in *Beowulf* are brave in battle, loyal to their lord and true to their word, in *SGGK* the military sense of the notion of heroism makes way to the notion of a courteous knight, who, apart from being brave and valiant, true to his sovereign, also owes allegiance to his lady, expanding the notion by the dimension of love. For this reason, it was deemed appropriate to separate these two distinct notions of heroism. The [+HERO] component of the *Beowulf* lexical fields points at the military concept of heroism. The category of Character, then, is very similar in both lexical fields, as the notion of nobility and bravery of the warriors remains unchanged. Yet there is the difference in the negative Character components in the *Beowulf* lexical field, since direct military involvement of the warrior in warfare entails also destruction and cruelty, a dimension almost absent from the *SGGK* lexical field.

Given the differences in the military character of the fields, the category of Equipment of a warrior and the category of Transport is entirely absent from the *SGGK* lexical field. Other differences in the types of categories are to be explained along similar guidelines. The category of Rank is more extensive in the *SGGK* lexical field, as the society to which the terms are applied to was much more structured hierarchically than in the case of the heroic community of the *Beowulf* poem, where each man was deemed to be a warrior per se and the only hierarchical relation was the relation of the king and his retainer, which is excluded from current analysis for reasons stated in the section Selection of data.

Division of the *Beowulf* lexical field according to occurrence in OE corpus (poetic vs. prosaic usage)

Another aspect of the *Beowulf* lexical field that is pertinent to our analysis is the analysis of the register of the items. Klaeber provides a classification, based on the occurrences of the lexical items in the entire Old English corpus, characterising the items as:

(1) words occurring in both poetry and prose

cempa, eorl, þegn, wiga,

(2) words incidentally found in prose (in Glosses or elsewhere) or when closely related words occur in prose

freca, ōret-mecg, scealc, sceōtend, wīgend,

(3) words (or meanings) found in poetry only

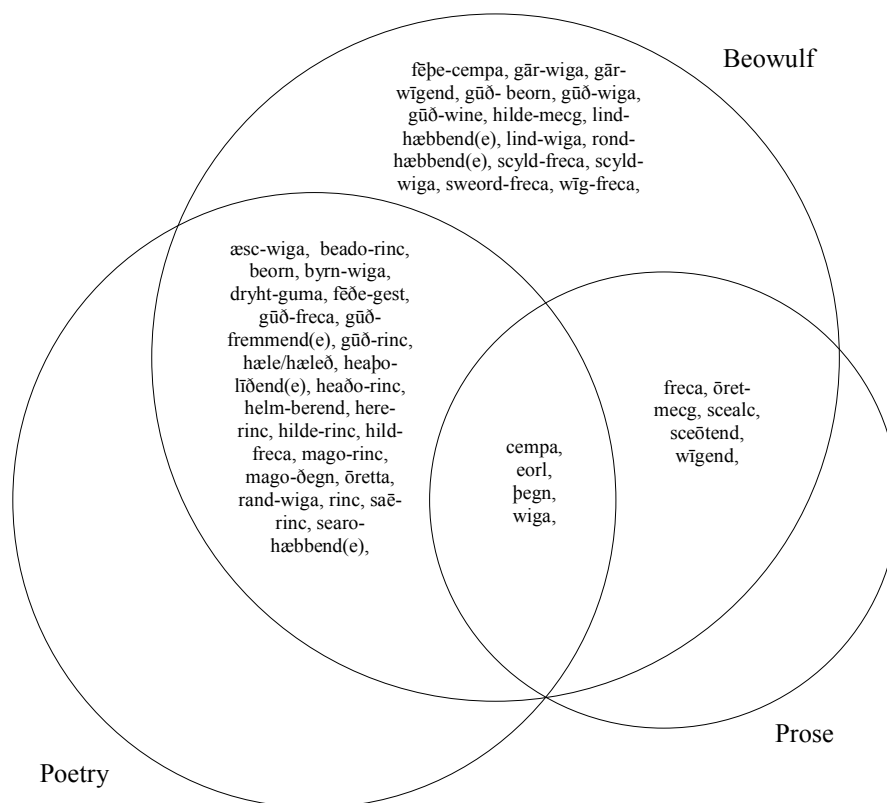
æsc-wiga, beado-rinc, beorn, byrn-wiga, dryht-guma; fēðe-gest, gūð-freca, gūð-fremmend(e), gūð-rinc, hæle/hæleð, heaþo-līðend(e), heaðo-rinc, helm-berend, here-rinc, hilde-rinc, hild-freca, mago-rinc, mago-ðegn, ðretta, rand-wiga, rinc, saē-rinc, searo-hæbbend(e),

(4) words not found outside of *Beowulf* (in either poetry or prose)

fēþe-cempa, gār-wiga, gār-wīgend, gūð-beorn, gūð-wiga, gūð-wine, hilde-mecg, lind-hæbbend(e), lind-wiga, rond-hæbbend(e), scyld-freca, scyld-wiga, sweord-freca, wīg-freca,

This division is summarised in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2: Usage of the *Beowulf* lexical field



The importance of this division lies in the demonstration of the nature of the “warrior” lexical field in *Beowulf*. The great majority of the lexemes in the lexical field (81,25%) are part of the specific poetic diction so characteristic for Old English.

No such strict division of the lexical field is present in the *SGGK* lexical field. There is, nonetheless, the suggestion by Turville-Petre about a different status of items that are inherited from the older poetic tradition, such as lexemes *renk*, *segge*, *freke*, *leude*, *burne*, *habel*, *tulk* and *wyʒe*. These archaic words are deemed to be “technical aid in the composition of the verse, not because any intrinsic stylistic value”¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Cronan 1986, Borroff 1962

4. 2. Frequency Analysis

Moving from the description of the lexical fields from the point of view of morphology and semantics, we shall now consider the occurrence of the lexical items in the text of the two poems. Before we start with contextual analysis to examine the way the items are used by the poets, we shall firstly look at their quantitative distribution in the text. The frequency of occurrence shall hint at the relative importance of the individual lexical items within their word field and at the semantic range these items have. Given this predicate, let us now consider the data summarizing occurrences of lexical items in Table 8.

Table 8: Frequency of occurrence of lexical items in the poems *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

<i>Beowulf</i>				<i>SGGK</i>	
Words	Occ.	Words	Occ	Words	Occ.
æsc-wiga	1	hilde-mecg	1	burn(e)	46
beado-rinc	1	hilde-rinc	5	frek(e)	30
beorn	10	hild-freca	2	gome	23
byrn-wiga	1	lind-hæbbende	2	hæpel	25
cempa	10	lind-wiga	1	knyȝt	82
dryht-guma	5	mago-rinc	1	leder	1
eorl	45	mago-ðegn	6	leude	37
fēþe-cempa	2	ōret-mecg	3	lord(e)	56
fēðe-gest	1	ōretta	2	mayster	3
freca	1	rand-wiga	2	prynce	10
gār-wiga	2	rinc	9	renk	11
gār-wīgend	1	rond-hæbbende	1	schalk	7
gūð-beorn	1	saē-rinc	1	segg(e)	28
gūð-freca	1	scealc	2	syre	44
gūð-fremmende	1	sceaþa	2	tulk	8
gūð-rinc	5	sceōtend	3	wyȝe	47
gūð-wiga	1	scyld-freca	1		
gūð-wine	2	scyld-wiga	1		
hæle	31	searo-hæbbende	1		
heaþo-līðende	2	sweord-freca	1		
heaðo-rinc	2	þegn	26		
helm-berend	2	wiga	5		
here-rinc	1	wīgend	9		
		wīg-freca	2		
Total words N		47		Total words N	16
Total occurrences S		219		Total occurrences S	458

Looking at the occurrences of the lexical items in the poems, we may discern that although the *SGGK* lexical field contains fewer lexemes, their actual usage is much more frequent than

in the *Beowulf* lexical field. Based on the general structure, the terms may be assigned into one of three frequency categories:

I. High frequency items: occurrence $x > 20$

Beowulf (3): eorl, hæleð, þegn

SGGK (10): knyzt, lord, wyȝe, burn(e), syre, leude, frek(e), segg(e), habel, gome

The category of items with the highest number of occurrences in lexical fields reveals striking difference in the usage of the items in the poems. First of all, while in the *Beowulf* lexical field only three items classify for this category, which is less than 7% of the total number of lexical items that constitute the field, they have almost a half of all the occurrences of the lexical field denoting “warrior” in the poem. The items are all simplices and all denote a noble, brave kind of warrior, containing components [+NOBLE], [+BRAVE], while all three lexemes can be used generically too, containing the component [+MAN]. Also, looking at the division of items into poetic and prosaic registers, only the item *hæle* is a poetic term, while *eorl* and *þegn* are found in prosaic contexts in the OE corpus.

The *SGGK* lexical field is quantitatively more prominent in both respects, in the number of lexemes qualifying for the category, as well as in the number of occurrences that make up the category. 10 items, being about 35% of the lexical field, give together an astonishing 84% of all the occurrences of the lexical items in the poem. Given the division in the status of the items as was suggested above, we may further divide the category into items inherited from the older poetic tradition of oral heroic poetry (*wyȝe*, *burn(e)*, *leude*, *frek(e)*, *segg(e)*, *habel*, *gome*), as opposed to items that are native to the tradition of chivalric romance (*knyzt*, *lord*, *syre*). The number of occurrences for the archaic items is slightly prevalent, 56% as opposed to 44% of the native terms. Given the semantic structure, it is interesting to note that the terms native to the chivalric romantic tradition are the only ones that cannot be used generically, while the archaic words all contain the component [+MAN].

II. Middle frequency items: occurrence $20 > x > 3$

Beowulf (9): beorn, cempa, wīgend, rinc, mago-þegn, wiga, dryht-guma, gūð-rinc, hilde-rinc

SGGK (4): renk, prynce, tulk, schalk,

The category of items with middle frequency of occurrence bears more similarities than any other category. The percentage of the lexical field it comprises in both lexical fields is similar – 19% in *Beowulf* as opposed to 24% in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Still, given the number of occurrences, the *Beowulf* lexical group is predominant with 29% of total occurrences, while the *SGGK* group only has around 13% of the total occurrences.

Furthermore, in the *Beowulf* lexical field, there are 4 compounds, all of which are poetic, but not exceptional for *Beowulf*. 2 simplices are found in both prose and poetry in the OE corpus. Contrarily, the *SGGK* category contain only simplices with a predominantly monomorphemic structure.

III. Low frequency items: occurrence $x \leq 3$

Beowulf (36): æsc-wiga, beado-rinc, byrn-wiga, fēðe-gest, freca, gār-wīgend, gūð-beorn, gūð-freca, gūð-fremmende, gūð-wiga, here-rinc, hilde-mecg, lind-wiga, mago-rinc, rond-hæbbende, saē-rinc, scyld-freca, scyld-wiga, searo-hæbbende, sweord-freca, fēþe-cempa, gār-wiga, gūð-wine, heaþo-līðende, heaðo-rinc, helm-berend, hild-freca, lind-hæbbende, ōretta, rand-wiga, scealc, sceaþa, wīg-freca, āg-laēca, ōret-mecg, sceōtend,

SGGK (2): leder, mayster

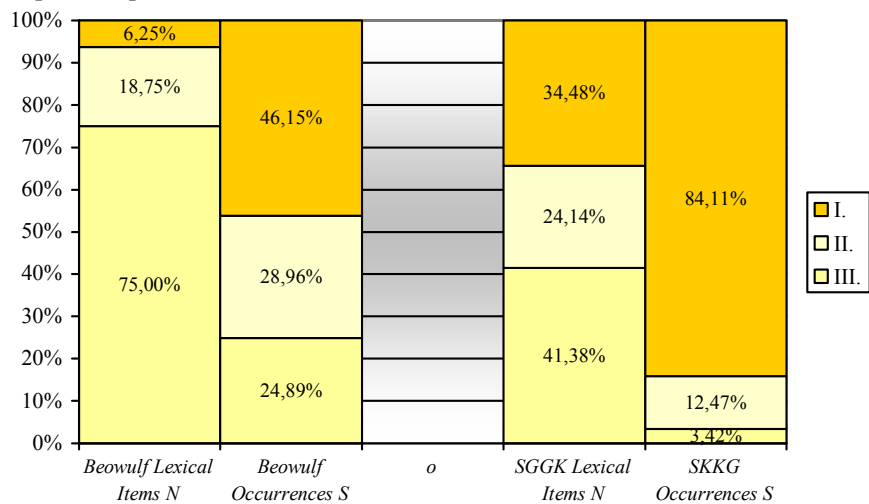
The category of items with the lowest frequency of occurrence is also the category where the biggest differences in usage can be seen. In the *Beowulf* lexical field, this category contains an astonishing 75% of all the lexical items comprising the field. Furthermore, except for 4 items, all other are compounds, including also the 14 compounds that are not found anywhere else but in the *Beowulf* poem.

The *SGGK* category contains only 2 items, but their total occurrences make up only around 4% of the total occurrences of all items in the poems. This allows us to relatively compare the importance the lexical items have within the field – while in the *Beowulf* lexical field, even the low frequency items are of vital importance, however specific and limited their meaning and application may be, in the *SGGK* lexical field, the low frequency items are marginalized, the most semantic versatility and prominence being on the high frequency items, which take up to 84% of the total occurrences. These tendencies are summarised below in Table 9 and accompanying Graph 1.

Table 9: Proportional Distribution of the Lexical Fields

	<i>Beowulf</i>				<i>SGGK</i>			
	N	%	S	%	N	%	S	%
I.	3	6,25%	102	46,15%	10	34,48%	418	84,11%
II.	9	18,75%	64	28,96%	7	24,14%	62	12,47%
III.	36	75,00%	55	24,89%	12	41,38%	17	3,42%
Total	48	100,00%	221	100,00%	29	100,00%	497	100,00%

Graph 1: Proportional Distribution of the Lexical Fields



4. 4. Contextual analysis

This part of the works opts to provide an analysis of the use of the lexical items in context of the two poems. First, we will analyze the use of lexical items in *Beowulf*, then we shall proceed to the discussion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and in the end, a general comparison of the two will be devised.

Before we can start with the actual analysis, it is necessary to recall that the recent discussions about the nature of the poetic diction take two general directions. In the case of *Beowulf*, scholars are divided into the two schools of thought – first one, represented by Magoun, Niles or Whallon, claim that the poem is a product of centuries-old oral tradition and thus the language of *Beowulf* is essentially formulaic in nature. Their claim has two implications with regard to language: (1) the demands of alliteration restrict and condition the use of lexical items, and (2) the alliterative form of the verse gave rise to a specific formulaic vocabulary, which contains numerous different formulas to express essentially the same idea within the same metrical limits. The second group of scholars, most notably Brodeur or Brady, claim that the language of the poem is consciously used for its effect and thus each lexical item in the text is used for its specific effect within the given context.

The discussion of the diction of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is quite different in nature. There are no claims to establish an existing oral tradition in the time the poem was written; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is essentially bookish and literate in its nature. But the alliterative form of the verse raises similar questions as in the case of *Beowulf*. Given the number of synonyms for the common notions, such as the notion of ‘man, warrior’ in our case, the primary concern of the analysis will be to explore whether there is a difference between the usages of the lexical items with regard to their origin. Thus the analysis will aim to determine whether there is a difference in the usage of the ‘alliterative words’ of native origin according to Turville-Petre’s distinction, and other lexical items that are part of our lexical field.

The method of analysis is thus essentially the same in both poems. In our present analysis, we shall concentrate on the reference of the items in the poems; given the space restrictions, it is necessary to limit the scope of investigation to the expressions that refer to Beowulf and Wīglāf in the case of *Beowulf*, and expressions that refer to Gawain and the Green Knight in

the case of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Two dimensions will be explored – the contextual use and implications of the items, and the position and character of the items within the alliterative line.

Starting with *Beowulf*, it is necessary to explain why the characters of Beowulf and Wīglāf were used for our analysis. The reason is quite simple – *Beowulf* is a heroic poem. Lexical items referring to Beowulf are thus the most logical choice for analysis, as he is the main hero of the poem, occurring in all three parts and embodying the values and ideals of heroic society. Wīglāf, in the other hand, is a character that comes into the story much later; nevertheless, his role is crucial, as he is the embodiment of heroic values too, especially in contrast with his cowardly companions that leave Beowulf in his hour of need. The two characters thus have a common undercurrent of heroism, which will be used as grounds for comparison. Furthermore, these two characters have one more common trait – they are both (for the most part) in the position of retainers. Hrōðgar or Hygelāc would certainly be interesting subjects for analysis, since a king in the Anglo-Saxon world is necessarily a warrior too; but as Brady remarks: “a king in either age had duties other than fighting, and it is these other peculiarly royal obligations – to his personal troop of warriors (*comitatus*), his kin and his people as a whole – which the *Beowulf* poet chooses to stress.”¹³⁷ Thus the vocabulary for kings is a substantially different one, and it is no surprise that in the 245 occurrences of our lexical items in the poem, only 11 of them refer to either Hrōðgār or Hygelāc.¹³⁸

The two characters that we will be looking at in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are Gawain himself and the character of the Green Knight. Again, the reasons for this selection are thus: Gawain is the central character and the embodiment of heroic values. But contrary to the function of Wīglāf in *Beowulf*, the character of the Green Knight is much more obscure and difficult to generalize. Whether he is an embodiment of a vegetation myth, a trick of Morgan La Fay or a monster in his own right, he is the external element that comes to the court of King Arthur to test the limits of chivalry. He therefore knows them and oversteps them, and we shall see how this is manifested in the use of our lexical items with regard to him. But we shall not take the references to Lord Bertilac into account, although both characters prove to be one person in the end. This is necessary because Lord Bertilac stands closer to King Arthur

¹³⁷ Brady 1983: 200

¹³⁸ Of course, Beowulf becomes a king himself in the course of the story. The lexical items from our lexical field which refer to him as a king will not be excluded from the contextual analysis and will be treated independently from the ones denoting Hrōðgār or Hygelāc.

on the hierarchical scale, fulfilling the role of a host and master of the castle, therefore having different roles in the narrative, while the Green Knight is, *per se*, a warrior and thus is better comparable with Sir Gawain.

As for the analysis of the demands of alliteration, we shall look on the position of lexical items within the long-line and we shall also specify which lexical items alliterate in which positions.

Starting with the lexical items from our lexical field that refer to Beowulf and to Wīglāf, there are 45 occurrences in total referencing Beowulf¹³⁹ and 10 occurrences referencing Wīglāf.¹⁴⁰ This is of course not the total number of occurrences where Beowulf or Wīglāf is referenced; the principle of variation allows characterization from different perspectives and the number of lexical items used to refer to the two characters is far greater than the 47 lexical items that constitute our lexical field. Of a total of 47 expressions, 22 are used to refer to Beowulf:

beorn, cempa, dryht-guma, eorl, fēþe-cempa, freca, gūð-rinc, hæle, here-rinc, hilde-rinc, hild-freca, mago-ðegn, ðretta, rand-wiga, rinc, scealc, scyld-freca, sweord-freca, þegn, wiga, wīgend, wīg-freca.

7 lexical items are used to refer to Wīglāf:

cempa, eorl, fēþe-cempa, gār-wiga, lind-wiga, mago-ðegn, þegn

The frequency of occurrence of these lexical items is summarized in Table 10.

Table 10: Frequency of occurrence of lexical items referring to Beowulf and Wīglāf

Lexical item in reference to:	Beowulf	Wīglāf
<i>beorn</i>	3	
<i>cempa</i>	4	1
<i>dryht-guma</i>	1	
<i>eorl</i>	7	2
<i>fēþe-cempa</i>	1	1
<i>freca</i>	1	
<i>gār-wiga</i>		2
<i>gūð-rinc</i>	2	

¹³⁹ Occurrences referencing Beowulf are in lines 194, 248, 408, 627, 629, 747, 761, 791, 939, 1024, 1033, 1176, 1312, 1468, 1495, 1501, 1512, 1532, 1543, 1544, 1551, 1563, 1574, 1576, 1585, 1644, 1646, 1702, 1761, 1768, 1793, 1816, 1852, 1871, 1881, 1972, 2337, 2338, 2366, 2433, 2496, 2538, 2559, 3005, 3099 (line numbers according to Klaeber 1950)

¹⁴⁰ Occurrences referencing Wīglāf are in lines 2603, 2626, 2674, 2695, 2721, 2757, 2810, 2811, 2853, 2908

<i>hæle</i>	4	
<i>here-rinc</i>	1	
<i>hilde-rinc</i>	2	
<i>hild-freca</i>	1	
<i>lind-wiga</i>		1
<i>magō-ðegn</i>	1	1
<i>ōretta</i>	2	
<i>rand-wiga</i>	1	
<i>rinc</i>	1	
<i>scealc</i>	1	
<i>scyld-freca</i>	1	
<i>sweord-freca</i>	1	
<i>þegn</i>	4	2
<i>wiga</i>	2	
<i>wīgend</i>	3	
<i>wīg-freca</i>	1	
Lexical items	22	7
Occurrences	45	10

This distribution of frequency of occurrence for Beowulf is quite in accord with the overall occurrences of the lexical items in the poem. Of the high-frequency expressions, only *rinc*, occurring 9 times in the poem, is used once only in the entire poem to refer to Beowulf.

Two different types of reference can be distinguished. According to the context, we need to make a difference between references that occurred in speeches (i.e. how other characters referred to the hero) and lexical items by which the 3rd person narrator referred to the hero. The one time when Beowulf is referred to in reported speech (627) is treated as a reference in speech. Given these distinctions, Beowulf is referenced 32 times in authorial narrative and 13 times in speech by other characters of the poem.¹⁴¹ Wīglāf is referenced 9 times in authorial narrative and one time in speech.¹⁴²

The first time that Beowulf is introduced in the poem, he is called *Higelāces þegn* by the narrator.¹⁴³ That this should be the first thing we know of him seems to be only fitting, as his heroic identity is constituted by his relation to his liege lord. In this respect, his position

¹⁴¹ Authorial references: 194, 629, 747, 761, 791, 1024, 1033, 1312, 1468, 1495, 1501, 1512, 1532, 1543, 1544, 1551, 1563, 1574, 1576, 1585, 1644, 1646, 1793, 1816, 1871, 1881, 1972, 2337, 2338, 2366, 2538, 2559. References in speeches: 248, 408, 627, 939, 1176, 1702, 1761, 1768, 1852, 2433, 2496, 3005, 3099.

¹⁴² Authorial references: 2603, 2626, 2674, 2695, 2721, 2757, 2810, 2811, 2853. Reference in speech: 2908

¹⁴³ Line 194

within the heroic society is more important than his name, since the second thing we know of him is his father's name; only after that, we come to know his own name. He later refers to himself as *mago-þegn* in his speech to Hrōðgar, possibly as a deliberate reference to the venerability of Hrōðgar (and Hygelāc for that respect) in contrast with his own youth. Beowulf is referenced as the thane of Hygelāc once more in the poem, in line 1574, as he is about to cut off Grendel's head after defeating his mother in her underwater cave. *Þegn* implies a status, a class – this is made even more pronounced by calling Beowulf *ealdor ðegn* in 1644, the principal thane, as he was walking among his earls back to Heorot, carrying the head of Grendel as a proof of his successful exploits. As such, the lexical item is found in contexts that are connected with kings – either with Hygelāc, or Hrōðgar. In 1871, Beowulf is called *ðegn betstan*; and the lexical item alliterates with *þeōden*, referencing Hrōðgar. This is also the only case when the item alliterates; in other occurrences, the item occupies second lift in the b-verse, and therefore cannot bear alliteration.

Wīglāf is called *þegn* 2 times and *magor-ðegn* once in the poem. In all three occurrences, what is stressed is his relation to Beowulf, his liege lord, in the same way Beowulf's loyalty to Hygelāc is expressed. Again, *þegn* is alliterating with *þeōden*, which references the dying king Beowulf on this occasion.

Bosworth-Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* notes that *þegn* is used as a complimentary term for 'man, warrior' in poetry, similarly as *eorl*. It is therefore no surprise that these two lexical items appear most commonly in reference to the hero. *Eorl* appears seven times in reference to Beowulf and twice in reference to Wīglāf; but two times, Beowulf is called *eorla hleo* and *eorla dryhten*,¹⁴⁴ epithets that refer to kings rather than to retainers. But they are contextually well established – in the first instance when Beowulf is called *eorla hleo*, the protector of the earls, he is in Heorot fighting with Grendel, protecting his Geatish warrior companions. The second time, when he is called *eorla dryhten*, he already became the king of Geats. It is interesting to note that the concept of a protector can be expressed also by *wīgendra hleo*, which is applied to Beowulf twice – first time in 1972, as he was coming back to Geatland to recount his adventures to Hygelāc, and second time in 2337 in close proximity to *eorla dryhten*, characterizing him as a king by the device of variation. The third time *wīgend* is found referring to Beowulf is in the parting funeral speech of Wīglāf, who calls him *wīgend weorðfullost*, the most honoured warrior on all earth, in 3099. But coming back to our discussion of *eorl*, Beowulf is called *eorl* three times in speeches – by the Danish sentinel, by

¹⁴⁴ In lines 791 and 2338.

queen Wealhðeow¹⁴⁵ and by Hrōðgar, all of them stressing his nobility. Beowulf is also called *eorl* in contexts when the vowel alliteration contrasts him with the supernatural and the fiendish – such as *eōten* referencing Grendel in line 761 and *āg-laēca* referencing either the sea-monsters or Grendel’s mother in line 1512. Wīglāf is called *eorl* twice in the poem – first time when he stands beside his liege lord (*andlongne eorl*, 2695) and courageously strikes the dragon, second time as he sits beside his dead lord, holding wake. This lexical item alliterates in all occurrences.

Beowulf is called *cempa* four times in the poem. Interestingly, none of the occurrences alliterate, and all of them are developed by an adjective or genitive combination, such as *æpele*, *reþe*, *mære* or *Geata*, highlighting the desired aspect of his character and at the same time fulfilling the demands of alliteration. Wīglāf is called *cempa* once in the poem; the adjective accompanying the noun is *geongan*, young. The item occurs three times in a context where direct combat ensues; and within the same military context, Beowulf and Wīglāf are both also called *fēþe-cempa*, which hints at the inherent military component of the lexical item.

The lexical item *hæle* occurs four times in reference to Beowulf, twice developed by the adjective *hildedeōr*. Both times it occurs in authorial narrative, when Beowulf has already finished his exploits in Denmark and is about to part with Hrōðgar. Hrōðgar calls Beowulf *hordweard hæleþa* soon after in his parting speech, speaking about the time when Geats will choose Beowulf, their best warrior, as their king, should Hygelāc die. The same kenning occurs also in 1047, where the referent was Hrōðgar himself, again ranking the epithet as one characterising kings rather than retainers. All occurrences of *hæle* appear in the a-verse and alliterate on both lifts.

Beorn is used three times in reference to the hero, always in the a-verse and always alliterating on both lifts, while once it alliterates with the name Beowulf itself in the b-verse. Other than that, it seems to characterize the hero spatially – *beorn in burgum*, *biorn under berge* – but the connotations are different. *Beorn in burgum* hints at the position of the retainer in a burgh, while *biorn under berge* is used to characterize the hero martially as he enters the dragon’s lair to fight him.

¹⁴⁵ In reported speech, 627

The lexical item *wiga* is used twice to refer to Beowulf. Both occurrences stress the military prowess of the character; *wælreow wiga* in line 629 is an *epithet constans*¹⁴⁶ invoking the rage and wrath of a Germanic *berserk*, even though Beowulf is characterised by this expression when he is on a feast in Heorot. *Wigena strengest* in line 1543 then evokes the notion of strength, although Beowulf's almost super-human strength is nearly not enough to overcome the fury of Grendel's mother, by which the hero is nearly overcome in the context of the reference. Furthermore, numerous compounds with *-wiga* are used to describe both Wīglāf and Beowulf. *Rand-wiga* is used to describe Beowulf as he yearns for rest after killing both Grendel and his mother, while *lind-wiga* and *gār-wiga* describe Wīglāf in the context of the battle with the dragon. In both occurrences of *gār-wiga*, the compound is modified by the adjective *geongum*, again stressing the youth of Wīglāf as opposed to the old age of Beowulf. All items alliterate on their respective consonants in all occurrences.

Compounds with *-rinc* and *-freca* elements are used to characterize only Beowulf. *Rinc* is a high frequency lexical item, but it is used only once in reference to Beowulf, when he is about to attack Grendel. But the compounds are more numerous; Beowulf is twice designated *hilde-rinc* as he swam to the abode of Grendel's mother and as he found the sword of the giant, while in a close proximity he is again characterized as *gūð-rinc*. Beowulf is also called *here-rinc* by queen Wealhðeow, as she was speaking to Hrōðgar about adopting Beowulf as a son. The one time he is called *freca*, the noun is modified by *Scyldinga*. The compounds with the *-freca* element do not occur in such inherently military contexts as the compounds with *-rinc*, nevertheless, when Beowulf is called *selran sweordfrecan* – better sword-warrior – he is contrasted with Unferð, who borrows him the sword Hrunting, but Beowulf alone dares to go under the water to fight Grendel's mother. Unferð is thus humbled and loses his glory (*dome*) as a warrior.

Moving now to the discussion of lexical items that refer to either Gawain or the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the first thing that strikes us is the number of occurrences. Gawain is referenced 163 times¹⁴⁷ as opposed to Beowulf's 45, and the Green

¹⁴⁶ Čermák 91

¹⁴⁷ Occurrences referencing Gawain are in lines 366, 377, 449, 476, 477, 482, 487, 537, 540, 557, 562, 574, 581, 622, 623, 631, 638, 639, 641, 648, 651, 675, 685, 691, 692, 709, 715, 734, 736, 748, 763, 771, 776, 779, 785, 793, 803, 810, 814, 816, 819, 825, 830, 840, 861, 873, 876, 887, 893, 902, 908, 938, 941, 945, 989, 993, 1035, 1039, 1043, 1050, 1071, 1088, 1091, 1109, 1189, 1195, 1208, 1222, 1225, 1226, 1244, 1248, 1261, 1272, 1276, 1279, 1282, 1294, 1306, 1366, 1381, 1385, 1469, 1476, 1477, 1481, 1482, 1487, 1508, 1538, 1558, 1560, 1619, 1624, 1629, 1631, 1637, 1641, 1657, 1658, 1660, 1670, 1675, 1686, 1731, 1743, 1776, 1779, 1788, 1801, 1821, 1834, 1855, 1863, 1869, 1872, 1925, 1926, 1948, 2006, 2014, 2024, 2034, 2037, 2050, 2071, 2072, 2090, 2091,

Knight is referred to 56 times¹⁴⁸ as opposed to Wīglāf's 10 occurrences. Table 11 below summarises the frequency occurrence of lexical items in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that are used to refer to Gawain and to the Green Knight.

Table 11: Frequency of occurrence of lexical items referring to Gawain and the Green Knight

Lexical Item referring to:	Gawain	Green Knight
<i>burn(e)</i>	16	5
<i>frek(e)</i>	11	5
<i>gome</i>	1	13
<i>hapel</i>	3	7
<i>knyȝt</i>	40	9
<i>leude</i>	15	2
<i>lord(e)</i>	x	1
<i>mayster</i>	1	1
<i>prynce</i>	6	x
<i>renk</i>	4	2
<i>schalk</i>	1	3
<i>segg(e)</i>	11	2
<i>syre</i>	30	2
<i>tulk</i>	1	x
<i>wyȝe</i>	23	4
Occurrences:	163	56
Lexical Items:	14	13

The number of lexical items that are used to refer to both characters is nearly the same, but a striking difference can be seen in the distribution of the lexical items. The lexical items that are used most frequently when referring to Gawain are *knyȝt*, *sir* and *wyȝe*; but the Green Knight is most frequently called *gome*, *knyȝt* and *hapel*. *Burne*, *freke*, *segge* and *lede* are used to refer to Gawain relatively often too; interestingly, he is called a *gome* only once in the entire poem and *hapel* only three times.

2095, 2118, 2111, 2131, 2154, 2175, 2185, 2212, 2235, 2235, 2237, 2240, 2269, 2273, 2274, 2315, 2320, 2321, 2333, 2337, 2338, 2363, 2366, 2373, 2395, 2396, 2407, 2467, 2469, 2489, 2492, 2505, 2513, 2518.

¹⁴⁸ Occurrences referencing the Green Knight are in lines 136, 149, 151, 160, 178, 179, 196, 221, 234, 249, 252, 256, 276, 276, 303, 309, 323, 329, 375, 377, 400, 405, 415, 417, 430, 437, 454, 549, 704, 707, 1059, 1063, 1753, 2098, 2118, 2148, 2148, 2191, 2206, 2227, 2235, 2239, 2259, 2268, 2270, 2284, 2302, 2322, 2331, 2372, 2377, 2385, 2389, 2403, 2408, 2461

Starting with the discussion of the most frequent lexical items, we must observe that *knyȝt*, together with *lorde* and *prynce* are elevated or idealizing words denoting specifically ‘heroic’ or ‘noble’ warrior. This can be seen in the frequent application of the items *knyȝt* and *prynce* to Gawain as opposed to the relative scarcity of their application when referencing the Green Knight. Contrary to this, the items that we called ‘alliterative words’ in the theoretical part of this work, such as *gome*, *wyȝe*, *lede*, *shalke* and *segge* have a much more vague reference and less restricted context, which makes them more versatile in use and thus ideal as metrical words fulfilling the demands of alliteration. If we have look at which words alliterate the most, it is precisely these items: *burne*, *freke*, *gome*, *hapel*, *leude*, *renk*, *schalk*, *segge*, *tulk* and *wyȝe*, that alliterate in almost all occurrences. Contrary to this, the lexical item *knyȝt* alliterates only in 51% of occurrences; *sir* fares even worse, alliterating in only app. 16% of all occurrences. This again proves the assumption about the status of these lexical items as ‘metrical words’ that are used when the demands of alliteration necessitate them; but outside of this, they are used only very rarely.

The corpus of Middle English texts shows extensive evidence for the items *burne*, *gome* and *lede* being employed in heroic or romantic poetic diction from the eighth to the fifteenth century. These are words that occur very frequently in the works of the poets of the alliterative tradition.

5. Conclusion

We have established and analyzed the lexical fields denoting 'warrior' in poems *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Given the conclusions of the practical analyses, we may formulate following tendencies that characterize lexical items and their use in both poems.

- (1) Both lexical fields exhibit major differences from morpho-semantic point of view. The lexical field referencing *Beowulf* contains much more lexical items than the lexical field of *SGGK*. Furthermore, the Old English poetic diction makes a frequent use of compounds, which constitute the major bulk of the lexical items in the field, but these items have a rather restricted semantic and metrical profile and their use in the poem is not very frequent.
- (2) The lexical items of the *Beowulf* lexical field exhibit a strong tendency towards formulaic character. The evidence for this are fixed patterns of alliteration, recurring adjectival modifications, use of kennings and compounds that fit the alliterative half-line metrically.
- (3) The *SGGK* lexical field contains less lexical items, but when looking at their frequency of occurrence, we realize that their actual use is much more frequent than the usage of the *Beowulf* lexical field. This is due to the fact that many items are used differently, such as *sir* being used as a title. Also, *SGGK* has an elaborate narrative structure with frequent use of dialogues; the use of the items in vocatives is thus substantial.
- (4) When looking at the status of the items, we may distinguish differences in the character of the items. In the case of the *Beowulf* lexical field, items have different poetic and prosaic connotations. While this gives depth to the meaning of the poems, it is difficult to determine whether the items are selected for their specific occurrences in the poems due to their semantic implications or whether it are the demands of alliteration that condition the use of the items. In the case of *SGGK* lexical field, two broad groups of words can be distinguished – elevated words, such as *sir* or *knyȝt*, which are applied predominantly to Gawain and metric words, which are used more freely contextually, but which are conditioned by the metrical need of the alliterative verse and are not used in places where the alliteration is not the desired effect.

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7. Slovak Summary / Zhrnutie práce

Predkladaná práca sa venuje problematike básnickej dikcie v skladbách *Beowulf* a *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Vychádzajúc z predpokladu, že obe básnické skladby pochádzajú z príbuznej literárnej tradície aliteračnej poézie, práca sa snaží postrehnúť podrobnosti a rozdiely v použití lexikálnych výrazov označujúcich „bojovníka“. Lexikálne jednotky boli podrobené analýze z troch rôznych perspektív: prvá analýza sa venuje morfológicko-sémantickej charakteristike oboch lexikálnych polí za účelom formulovania podobností a rozdielov medzi lexikálnymi poľami oboch básnických skladieb. V tejto analýze sa využíva teória lexikálnych polí a metóda komponentnej analýzy. Zároveň sa ale na jednotky nahliada z hľadiska registru a rozdielu v poetickom a prozaickom používaní. Druhá analýza je frekvenčná, ktorá má za úlohu zistiť počet a distribúciu lexikálnych jednotiek v rámci textu oboch skladieb. Na frekvenčnú analýzu nadväzuje analýza kontextuálna, ktorá skúma použitie a konotácie jednotiek, ktoré v texte odkazujú na vybrané postavy.

Teoretický úvod nastoľujúci potrebnú problematiku je rozdelený na dva celky. Prvá časť sa venuje lingvistickým konceptom, ktoré sa v priebehu analýzy využívajú. Na začiatku sa definuje terminológia špecifikujúca používanie výrazov *slovo*, *slovný tvar* a *lexikálna jednotka*. Ďalej sa rozoberá teória lexikálnych polí a z nej vyplývajúce paradigmatické a syntagmatické vzťahy, ktoré dané lexikálne pole určujú. Prestavuje sa koncept synonymie, avšak nezakladá sa na dokazovaní logickými postulátmi, ale na zhode jednotlivých elementov významu – sémantických rysov – v rámci jednotiek tvoriacich lexikálne pole.

Literárno-kultúrna časť teoretického úvodu je rozdelená na tri sekcie. Prvá sa venuje žánrovým rozdielom medzi staro-anglickou hrdinskou epikou a stredovekým rytierskym románom. Zároveň sa rozoberá koncept ideálneho hrdinu podľa dobových zdrojov. Druhá časť literárneho úvodu sa venuje podobnostiam a rozdielom staro-anglickej a stredo-anglickej aliteračnej poézie, pričom špecifikuje metrické a aliteračné požiadavky, ktoré môžu mať vplyv na kontext, v ktorom sa jednotlivé lexikálne jednotky vyskytujú. Tretia časť sa venuje špecifikám staro-anglickej a stredo-anglickej básnickej dikcie. V rámci tejto sekcie sa zadefinujú koncepty ako je princíp variácie, prevaha kompozít a špecifiká básnickej dikcie v staro-anglickej tradícii. V tomto kontexte sa zároveň uvedie teória orálnej kompozície staroanglickej poézie a z nej vyplývajúce implikácie na status lexikálnych jednotiek. V rámci diskusie o stredoanglickej poetickej dikcii sa špecifikujú tri skupiny charakteristické pre stredoanglickú aliteračnú poéziu, a to konkrétne technické termíny prevzaté prevažne

z francúzštiny, slová nárečového charakteru a 'metrické' slová, prevzaté prevažne z poetickej dikiie staro-anglickej.

Praktická časť práce si kladie za cieľ vymedzenie lexikálneho poľa označujúceho „bojovník“ v oboch básnických skladbách. Špecifikuje kritéria určujúce príslušnosť lexikálnych jednotiek do poľa. Jednotky sú potom podrobené už načrtnutej trojnásobnej analýze. V rámci štrukturálnej analýzy sa lexikálne jednotky analyzujú z hľadiska sémanticko-morfologického a zároveň sú podrobené komponentnej analýze. Frekvenčná analýza skúma výskyt lexikálnych jednotiek v texte básní a generalizuje tri skupiny slov na základe frekvencie výskytu. Kontextuálna analýza sa zaoberá použitím lexikálnych jednotiek v kontexte. Za týmto účelom sa vybrala v každom diele dvojica postáv, (postava Beowulfa a Wīglāfa v básni *Beowulf* a postava Gawaina a Zeleného rytiera v básni *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) a skúma sa použitie lexikálnych jednotiek, ich konotácie a funkcie.

V závere sa formulujú zistenia analýz, týkajúce sa použitia lexikálnych jednotiek, ich statusu, formy, funkcie a výskytu v básniach.