BEOWULF AS AN OLD ENGLISH HEROIC POEM: LANGUAGE, ALLITERATION, AND THE IDEAL OF HEROISM

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Abstract: *This article examines Beowulf as a major work of Old English literature, focusing on its language, alliterative verse, and representation of heroism. The discussion draws on the account of the poem and the linguistic examples presented in the supplied source text. The poem follows Beowulf's encounters with Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a dragon, while also addressing kingship, loyalty, generosity, mortality, and responsibility. The opening lines, "Hwæt! Wē Gār-Dena in gēardagum," illustrate features of Old English, including inflectional endings, compounds, and alliteration. Forms such as "Gār-Dena" and "gēardagum" show grammatical relations through endings, while words such as "þrym" and "ellen" contribute to the poem's heroic register. The article uses qualitative close reading and historical-linguistic interpretation rather than statistical analysis. It argues that Beowulf's courage is not represented as an entirely individual quality: his deeds are judged in relation to the safety and reputation of the community. The poem also places heroic fame alongside the inevitability of death. These features make Beowulf useful for examining the relationship between Old English linguistic structure, poetic form, and the social values represented in medieval literature.*

Keywords: *Old English, Beowulf, heroic poetry, alliteration, inflection, Germanic tradition, loyalty, honour, mortality*

БЕОВУЛЬФ КАК ГЕРОИЧЕСКАЯ ПОЭМА ДРЕВНЕАНГЛИЙСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ: ЯЗЫК, АЛЛИТЕРАЦИЯ И ИДЕАЛ ГЕРОИЗМА

Аннотация: *В статье рассматривается «Беовульф» как одно из значительных произведений древнеанглийской литературы с акцентом на языке, аллитерационном стихе и изображении героизма. Анализ опирается на описание поэмы и языковые примеры, представленные в исходном материале. В произведении рассказывается о столкновениях Беовульфа с Гренделем, матерью Гренделя и драконом; одновременно затрагиваются темы королевской власти, верности, щедрости, смертности и ответственности. Начальные строки «Hwæt! Wē Gār-Dena in gēardagum»*

иллюстрируют особенности древнеанглийского языка, включая флективные окончания, сложные слова и аллитерацию. Формы «Gār-Dena» и «gēardagum» показывают выражение грамматических отношений посредством окончаний, а слова «þrym» и «ellen» формируют героический стиль поэмы. В статье применяется качественный анализ текста и историко-лингвистическая интерпретация, а не статистический метод. Утверждается, что мужество Беовульфа не является исключительно индивидуальным качеством: его поступки оцениваются с точки зрения безопасности и репутации сообщества. Поэма также сопоставляет героическую славу с неизбежностью смерти. Эти особенности позволяют исследовать связь древнеанглийского языкового строя, поэтической формы и социальных ценностей средневековой литературы.

Ключевые слова: *древнеанглийский язык, Беовульф, героическая поэзия, аллитерация, флексия, германская традиция, верность, честь, смертность*

BEOWULF QADIMGI INGLIZ QAHRAMONLIK DOSTONI SIFATIDA: TIL, ALLITERATSIYA VA QAHRAMONLIK IDEALI

Annotatsiya: *Maqolada Beowulf qadimgi ingliz adabiyotining muhim asarlaridan biri sifatida til, alliteratsion she'r tuzilishi va qahramonlik tasviri nuqtayi nazaridan ko'rib chiqiladi. Tahlil taqdim etilgan dastlabki matndagi doston tavsifi va lingvistik misollarga asoslanadi. Asarda Beowulfning Grendel, Grendelning onasi va ajdar bilan to'qnashuvlari tasvirlanadi; shu bilan birga, podshohlik, sadoqat, saxovat, o'lim va mas'uliyat mavzulari yoritiladi. "Hwæt! Wē Gār-Dena in gēardagum" boshlang'ich satrlari qadimgi ingliz tilining grammatik qo'shimchalari, qo'shma so'zlari va alliteratsiyasi kabi xususiyatlarini ko'rsatadi. "Gār-Dena" va "gēardagum" shakllari grammatik munosabatlarning qo'shimchalar orqali ifodalanishini namoyon etadi, "þrym" va "ellen" so'zlari esa dostonning qahramonlik ruhini kuchaytiradi. Maqolada statistik tahlil emas, balki sifatli matniy tahlil va tarixiy-lingvistik talqin qo'llanadi. Tahlilga ko'ra, Beowulfning jasorati faqat shaxsiy fazilat sifatida tasvirlanmaydi: uning harakatlari jamoaning xavfsizligi va obro'si bilan bog'liq holda baholanadi. Doston qahramonlik shuhratini o'limning muqarrarligi bilan ham yonma-yon qo'yadi. Bu jihatlar qadimgi ingliz tilining tuzilishi, she'riy shakl va o'rta asr adabiyotida aks etgan ijtimoiy qadriyatlar o'rtasidagi aloqani o'rganish imkonini beradi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *qadimgi ingliz tili, Beowulf, qahramonlik dostoni, alliteratsiya, grammatik qo'shimcha, german an'anasi, sadoqat, sharaf, o'lim*

INTRODUCTION

English literary history is closely connected with the historical development of the language. Old English developed after the arrival in Britain of people speaking Germanic languages from the fifth century onward. Its literary works preserve linguistic structures and social values that differ from those of later periods.

Beowulf is one of the most significant surviving works of Old English literature. Its manuscript was transcribed at the beginning of the eleventh century, although the exact date of the poem's original composition is unknown. The narrative follows a warrior who assists King Hrothgar, defeats Grendel and Grendel's mother, later becomes a king, and finally fights a dragon, dying from his wounds [1,p.25–26].

The poem is more than a sequence of battles. It addresses kingship, generosity, loyalty, the relationship between individual achievement and the well-being of the community, and the inevitability of death. In the society represented in the poem, a king is expected to protect his people and reward his followers, while warriors are expected to demonstrate bravery and faithfulness. Honour is shaped by actions, relationships, and the community's memory of past achievements.

The aim of this article is to examine the linguistic and literary features of Beowulf through the examples already discussed in the source text. Particular attention is paid to inflectional morphology, compounds, alliteration, and the poem's representation of courage, loyalty, reputation, and mortality.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND MATERIALS AND METHODS

The source discussion draws on Fulk and Cain (2003) for the place of Beowulf in Old English literary history and on Allen (2017) for the broader linguistic transition between Old and Middle English [2,p.45–46]. The supplied text also refers to the continuity of alliterative verse and to the historical-linguistic interpretation of inflectional forms. These references are retained in the roles assigned to them in the source material.

The article uses a qualitative approach based on close reading of selected lines from Beowulf and historical-linguistic interpretation. The opening lines are considered as examples of Old English morphology and poetic form. The discussion focuses on the meanings of selected words, grammatical endings, sound patterns, and the relationship between the hero's actions and the values of the community.

The analysis is interpretative rather than statistical. The poem is treated as a literary example of Old English language and culture, not as a complete record of everyday speech in its period. The discussion is based on the information and references contained in the supplied article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The opening of the poem provides an example of Old English poetic language: "Hwæt! Wē Gār-Dena in gēardagum, / þēodcyninga þrym gefrūnon, / hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon." A modern rendering given in the source is: "Listen! We have heard of the glory of the Spear-Danes, the kings of the people, in days of old, and of how the nobles performed courageous deeds."

The word "Hwæt" attracts the audience's attention and establishes a formal narrative tone. "Gār-Dena" refers to the Spear-Danes, while "gēardagum" means "in days of old". The ending "-a" in "Gār-Dena" indicates the genitive plural, and "-um" in "gēardagum" indicates the dative plural. These examples show how grammatical relationships were marked by inflectional endings in Old English. The term "þēodcyninga" can be rendered as "of the people's kings" or "of the kings of the people". "Þrym" carries meanings such as glory, splendour, and power; "ellen" refers to courage or heroic force; and "gefrūnon" expresses the idea of having heard or known something. The words establish themes that are central to the poem.

Alliteration is a major organizing feature of the poem. Repetition of initial sounds links prominent words and helps structure the verse. The supplied source notes that the poem contains 3,182 lines of alliterative verse, while the author and exact date of composition remain unknown [3,p.16-18].

Beowulf's heroism is expressed through action. He risks his life to help Hrothgar's community and later confronts the dragon when his own people are endangered. The first victories restore safety to the hall, while the final battle shows the limits of individual strength: even a courageous king cannot guarantee the safety of an entire people. The poem presents honour as socially meaningful but also vulnerable to the inevitability of death.

The poem combines Germanic heroic features feuds, warfare, loyalty, and the pursuit of fame with Christian perspectives on providence and human limitation. This combination contributes to the complexity of its moral world [3,p.38-40].

The linguistic examples show that Old English grammatical relations could be expressed through inflectional endings. This contrasts with the later Middle English tendency, described in the supplied source, toward reduced inflections and a greater role for word order and function words. The contrast should be understood as part of gradual linguistic development rather than as an instantaneous change.

The poem's poetic form and social values reinforce one another. Alliteration gives the verse a recognizable structure, while words associated with kings, warriors, glory, courage, and community create a heroic register. Beowulf's deeds matter because they affect the safety and reputation of others, not merely his individual standing.

The poem also places public fame in tension with mortality. Beowulf's reputation depends on remembered deeds, yet the final battle demonstrates that human life and political security remain limited. The source text therefore presents heroism as both admirable and subject to human limits.

CONCLUSION

Beowulf offers an important example of the relationship between Old English linguistic structure, alliterative poetic form, and medieval heroic values. Its opening lines illustrate inflectional endings, compounds, and sound repetition, while its narrative emphasizes courage, loyalty, kingship, responsibility, and mortality.

The hero is valued for defending a community and maintaining a reputation through action. At the same time, the final battle reveals the limits of personal strength. The poem presents heroism not simply as individual power but as a social responsibility shaped by honour and the awareness of death.

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