Aula 2

THE ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

META

Apresentar um panorama histórico da literatura anglo-saxônica, atentando para seus principais gêneros.

OBJETIVOS

Ao final da aula o(a) aluno(a) deve ser capaz de:
Compreender o processo de formação da língua inglesa em sua primeira fase, tal como se apresenta nas peças literárias do período.
Reconhecer e identificar os principais gêneros literários do período, relacionando-os às suas condições de produção, circulação e recepção.

PRERREQUISITOS

Familiaridade com a problemática do conceito de Literatura;
O contexto sócio-histórico da formação étnica e cultural dos grupos sociais que formavam o período anglo-saxônico.

Luiz Eduardo Oliveira

INTRODUÇÃO

Last class, we could notice the importance of archeology and philology for the construction of the Anglo-Saxon historical narrative, and that the only thing we know about the Anglo-Saxon Period, which, chronologically speaking, lasts from the fifth century, the century of the fall of the Roman Empire, when the Jutes, Angles and Saxons invaded and settled in England, and goes on until 1066, which is the year of the invasion of the Normans, led by William the Conqueror.

In this second class, we are going to study the Anglo-Saxon literature, that is, the process of formation of the literary canon of the period, as well as the main litterary genres throough which this literature is expressed. It will be importante, before the study of literature itself, to know something about the situation of the English language during this phase of development.

At the end of the class, we are going to visualize the main historical episodes of the period in a chronological timeline.

THE ANGLO-SAXON LANGUAGE

During the Anglo-Saxon period, the language spoken was completely different from Modern English. They used to speak a language the linguists call **Old English**. But what was exactly Old English? Old English was the idiom in which most of the writings of this period were written, especially during the reign of King Alfred, the Great, because they spoke many different languages.

Eric Hobsbawm used to say that a national language is an imposition of the elite on the common people. So, the language spoken by the people, considered Old English, was the language of certain pieces of literature of the period, because nobody knows exactly what was the language like, once England was divided into four different kingdoms. When we say kingdoms during this time, we mean the king and his court in his castle. Most of the people were spread all over the place. During the Middle Ages, we don't have cities yet. The groups of people lived around the castles, around the kings, and of course they were different ethnically, culturally, linguistically.

A good example of how Old English looked like can be seen the the interesting online Project of the University of Texas called Old English Online, written by Jonathan Slocum and Winfred P. Lehmann (http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/eieol/engol-0-X.html). According to the authors, Old English itself has three **"dialects"** : West Saxon, Kentish, and Anglian. West Saxon, being the language of Alfred the Great (871-901), achieved the greatest prominence; accordingly, the chief Old English texts have survived in this language. In the course of time, Old English underwent various changes such as the loss of final syllables, which also led to simplification of the morphology. Upon the conquest of England by the

Normans in 1066, numerous words came to be adopted from French and, subsequently, also from Latin.

The alphabet used to write the Old English texts was adopted from Latin, which was introduced by the Christian missionaries. As it would occur in a period without the printing press, spelling was never fully standardized. King Alfred did attempt to regularize spelling in the 9th century, but by the 11th century there were changes in pronunciation which were reflected on spelling. In modern transcriptions, editors often add **diacritics** to signal vowel pronunciation.

Anglo-Saxon scribes added two consonants to the Latin alphabet to render the th sounds: first the runic thorn (þ), and later eth (ð). However, there was never a consistent distinction between them. The nature of non-standardized Anglo-Saxon spelling does offer compensation: no letters were "silent" (i.e., all were pronounced), and phonetic spelling helps identify and track changes through time.

Thus, Old English texts look strange to a modern English speaker, because many Old English words are no longer used in modern English and, like Latin, the inflectional structure was far more rich than is true of its modern descendant. However, many of the most common words in Old and modern English are the same. According to some linguists, over 50 percent of the thousand most common words in Old English survive today. Conversely, more than 80 percent of the thousand most common words in modern English come from Old English:

Nouns: cynn 'kin', hand, god, man(n), word.
Pronouns: hē, ic 'I', mē, self, wē.
Verbs: beran 'bear', cuman 'come', dyde 'did', sittan 'sit', wæs 'was'.
Adjectives: fæst 'fast', gōd 'good', hālig 'holy', rīce 'rich', wīd 'wide'.
Adverbs: ær 'ere', alle 'all', nū 'now', tō 'too', ðær 'there'.
Prepositions: æfter 'after', for, in, on, under.
Articles: ðæt 'that', ðis 'this'.
Conjunctions: and, gif 'if'.

In terms of sentence structure, the word order in Old English prose is not so very different from that of modern English, with the chief differences being the positions of verbs (which might be moved to the end of a clause for emphasis) and occasionally prepositions (which might become "postpositions"). In Old English verse, word order becomes much more free, and word inflections & meaning become even more important for deducing syntax. Although it is not our intention in this course, once a modern English reader has mastered the something of the vocabulary and inflectional endings of Old English, the text comprehension becomes easier.

Ver glossário no final da Aula

THE ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

King Alfred is also important in the history of English literature, because he asked his counsel to write a yearly chronicle about his reign, so that the most important happenings of his reign could be narrated by the chroniclers. Due to this initiative, he became a very famous king and also a man of letters. That's why he decided to translate most of the literature which was known or produced during this period into the language which was spoken in Wessex. Thus, it is of great value his contribution to the construction of the Anglo-Saxon canon. To do that, he had the help of the Christian monks, who put into verse many poems which were oral and pagan in their origin. The case of **Beowulf** is the most famous one.

Bede is another very important character of this period, the *Venerable Bede*. He was an English monk at the Northumbria monastery of Saint Peter at Monkwearmouth, and its companion monastery, Saint Paul's, in modern Jarrow, both in the Kingdom of Northumbria. He is well known as an author and scholar and his most famous work **Historia ecclesiatica gentis Anglorum, The ecclesiastical history of English people** gave him the title of the Father of English history. According to some historians, he's not only the father of English history, but also the father of modern history, because, for the first time, he used the word "English", that is, a specific people, "gentis anglorum", in Latin, as an object of history. Needless to say that most of the works during this time were written in Latin. Some of them were translated into or written in Old English.

Venerable Bede Translating John   by J. D. Penrose

Bede (/' bi ː d/ beed; Old English: Bæda or Bēda; 672/673 – 26 May 735), also referred to as Saint Bede or the Venerable Bede (Latin: Bēda Venerābilis), was an English monk at the monastery of Saint Peter at Monkwearmouth and its companion monastery, Saint Paul's, in modern Jarrow (see Monkwearmouth-Jarrow), Northeast England, both of which were located in the Kingdom of Northumbria. He is well known as an author and scholar, and his most famous work, Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum (The Ecclesiastical History of the English People) gained him the title "The Father of English History".

We have two kinds of literature during this period: a pagan literature and a religious literature. It is said that the first piece of English literature is a religious piece. I'm talking about the poem by **Cædmon** Caedmon was a sacred and mysterious poet who did not know how to write or read. He worked in an Abbey, right, in a monastery, and, in the middle of the feast, when the harp was passing from hand to hand, he refused to sing because didn't know how to sing. Doing so, he went to the place he used to sleep, together with the horses, and then he had a dream, and in his dream God himself talked to him, and taught him how to sing the song of creation, and that's what he did: he came back to the feast, and sang the verses of Genesis, of the creation of the world. So, this mythology tells us the beginnings of religious poetry in England. Of course, it serves as a symbol, as a mark of this religious poetry, and we are restricted to Caedmon. By this example, we can see the influence exerted by Christianity, which was so strong that could even convert those Northern groups which invaded England.

According to Carter and McRae (1997), there are personal and religious voices in the Anglo-Saxon literature. Although the literary pieces were kept by the christian monks, who were the guardians of culture, the voice of texts like **Caedmnon's Hymn, Deor's Lament or The Seafarer** represent the voice of everyday people. The frame of reference of them is the Latin exegetical commentaries and liturgical texts. **The Seafarer**, for example, while describing the day-to-day life of a seafarer, also reflects contemporary interpretations of the Psalms. In **Deor's Lament**, in turn, the poets speaks the daily trials of life. Naming several heroes of Germanic origin. These poems were preserved in t**he Exeter Book**, a manuscript from the end of the tenth century containing poetry which is still keptin Exeter Cathedral library in Devon. The theme of the solitary outcast who is without protection from a noble lord – a very necessary condition for the poet's survival during those days – is represent by **The Wanderer**. Here is an extract of the põem in an abridged and translated version:

> He who deeply contemplates this wall-stead,
> and this dark life with wise thought,
> old in spirit, often remembers long ago,
> a multitude of battles, and speaks these words:
> "Where is the horse? Where is the young warrior? Where is the giver of treasure?
> Where are the seats of the banquets? Where are the joys in the hall?
> Alas the bright cup! Alas the mailed warrior!

The poet recalls old legends of battle and and feels the sadness for beign bereaved of horse and wealth. It seems like the poet reflects the biblical tradition of questioning the famous "Ubi sunt?"(Where are they?),

and the only reply he can get is that it's in the night of the past, as if they never had been. Here is the same passage in Old English:

Se þonne þisne wealsteal wise geþohte
ond þis deorce lif deope geondþenceð,
frod in ferðe, feor oft gemon
wælsleahta worn, ond þas word acwið:
"Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom maþþumgyfa?
Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?
Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!

Here you can hear **The Wanderer** being recited in Old English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVyXDYp60BE

As we can see, the Anglo-Saxon literature encompasses genres like history, such as Venerable Bede's **Ecclesiastical History of the English People**, written in Latin, and **The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle**; devotional Works dedicated to religious life, such as Ancrew Rule, philosophy; translations opf parts of the Bible; lyrical and religou poetry and, finally, epic poetry, as it is the case of **Beowulf.**

Another fascinating religious piece is **The Dream of the Rood**, which is a highly visual text with many referenbces to Latin hymns and liturgy:

Listen! The choicest of visions I wish to tell,
which came as a dream in middle-night,
after voice-bearers lay at rest.
It seemed that I saw a most wondrous tree
born aloft, wound round by light,
brightest of beams.

It is easy to notice the large number of words and images used to signify Christ and his cross: the tree, the glorious gold cross etc. Here is the quoted passage in Old English:

Hwæt! Ic swefna cyst   secgan wylle,
hwæt† me gemætte   to midre nihte
syðþan reordberend   reste wunedon.
Þuhte me þæt ic gesawe   syllicre treow
on lyft lædan,   leohte bewunden,
beama beorhtost.

It is important to know that all the texts nin the oral tradition of Anglo-Saxon literature are poetry. They were propbrably written down

after many years after they were first performed in the feasts of the time and sub by the **minstrels**. Most of them are short, except Beowulf. They have in common the use of **blank verse** and a double line with a break in the middle. This would give the verse a specific rythm for the minstrel or scop to perform in public. The use of alliteration ando f repreated sounds is anoither common characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon verse.

One poetic trope which must be emphasized are the **kennings.** They often occur in compunds, like in **hronrad** (whale-road) or **swanrad** (swan-road) meaning the sea; **banhus** (bone-house) meaniung the human body etc. Some kennings involveborrowing or inventing new words, but most of them are chose to meet the alliterativerequirement of the poetic line. It is, unbdoubtedly, a hard work for the interpreters and literary historians.

The only poet whose name has come to us is **Cynewulf**. He has been credited with writing **The Dream of the Rood**, among other poems. He is famous for his religious compositions, and is regarded as one of the pre-eminent figures of Christian Old English poetry. Posterity knows of his name by means of runic signatures that are interwoven into the four poems which comprise his scholastically recognized corpus. These poems are: **The Fates of the Apostles, Juliana, Elene**, and **Christ II** (also referred to as **The Ascension**).

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

Julius Caesar invades Britain, 55/54 BC

43/50 A.D., Roman Emperor Claudius, Roman conquest; Romanization/Christianization, Latin conquest of southern and midland peoples completed, 78-85 A.D., Roman Governor Agricola Roman historian Tacitus, author of Germania (98 A.D.), description of life of Germanic tribes, concept of comitatus

Hadrian's Wall (73 miles long), 121-127 A.D. Fortification against Picts and Scots

Germanic tribes (Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Burgundians, Vandals, Lombards, etc.), migrations throughout Europe and raids against Rome (Visigoths sacked Rome in 410 A.D.)

Roman departure from Britain 410 AD

Anglo-Saxon Invasions. Britain besieged by Picts, Scots, and Saxons. British leader Vortigern invites Saxons (Angles, Saxons,

Jutes) into alliance against Picts and Scots; Jute leaders Hengest and Horsa, Jute settlements in Thanet, Kent, and Isle of Wight.

Saxons rebel against Britons 442

Large-scale Germanic invasions (Angles, Saxons, Jutes), 449

Saxon settlements in Sussex and Wessex, 477- 495

British Celts driven into Wales, Cornwall, Ireland, and Brittany (on northwest coast of France). British resistance, King Arthur, British victory at Mt. Badon, A.D. 500

Gildas, De Excidio Britanniae (The Fall of Britain) (c. A.D. 540) , a Latin work describing and lamenting the fall of Britain to the Anglo-Saxons.

Angles' settlements in East Anglia, the Midlands, and Northumbria; term "Anglo-Saxons": originally Saxons in England (as opposed to continental Saxons); Angles > English, Angle-lond > Engla-lond > England ("land of the Angles").

Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy: Northumberland, East Anglia, Mercia (Angles), Kent (Jutes), Essex, Sussex, Wessex (Saxons); seventh century Northumbrian dominance, eighth century Mercian dominance, ninth/tenth century West Saxon dominance.

Pope Gregory sends St. Augustine (the "Apostle of the English," a Roman Benedictine monk, NOT the more famous St. Augustine who lived 354-430 A.D.) to Kent A.D. 597.

Aethelbert I of Kent (Jutes), converted to Christianity by Augustine, first Christian king of Anglo-Saxon England (Rex Anglorum), also compiled law code (c. 600) (definitions and rules of kinship, wergild, slaves and freemen/ceorl, nobles).

Gradual Christianization of Anglo-Saxons by Roman and Irish missionaries (St. Aidan and others, 635-655); coexistence of Christian and pagan beliefs, Wyrd and Providence.

Persistence of pagan customs, cenotaph of East-Anglian Raedwald at Sutton Hoo, 625 A.D.

Caedmon, oldest poetic vernacular work ("Hymn of Creation", c. 670), monastery at Whitby; also one of the earliest works, Widsith (c. 650-700), a poem in which a poet named Widsith recounts his own experiences as a wandering minstrel.

Lindisfarne Gospels, 698, Latin Vulgate text with interlined Old English paraphrase.

Venerable Bede (673-735), Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (Ecclesiastical History of the English People) (731), Latin work; Ruthwell Cross (early 8th c); origins of Beowulf.

Offa, king of Mercia (r. 757-796); Alcuin of York (732-804), high level of scholarship.

First Viking attacks 787, sack of Lindisfarne Priory 793; Book of Kells: Irish illuminated manuscript of four gospels (8th c.).

West Saxon King Egbert (r. 802-839), defeats Mercian king Beornwulf at Battle of Ellendune (825); conquered Mercia (829); lost Mercia to Wiglaf (830-831).

Cynewulf (c. first half of 9th c.), author of Juliana, Elene, Fates of the Apostles, Christ.

King Alfred (849-899), king of Wessex (r. 871-899), victories over Vikings at Ashdown 871, Edington 878, Treaty of Wedmore 878, Danish king Guthrum forced to accept Christianity and retreat to Danelaw; 886 Alfred captures London and is recognized as king of all England (except for Danish parts).

King Alfred's employment of Mercian scholars (Plegmund, Waerferth, Aethelstan, and Werwulf) in educational and literary endeavors (885), revival of learning, beginnings of Anglo Saxon Chronicle.

West Saxon dialect became literary standard of Old English literature; oral tradition.

Second half of tenth century: Dunstan, Ethelwold, Oswald, monastic reform, copying of manuscripts.

Battle of Brunanburh 937, English army under Aethelstan defeated army of Northmen, Scots, and Welsh allies; poem Battle of Brunanburh recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

Late 10th and early 11th century, renewed Scandinavian invasions, led by Norwegian Olaf Tryggvason and Danish king Svein.

Aethelred II Unraed (r. 978-1016); married to Emma (daughter of Richard II, duke of Normandy); peak of monastic and literary revival: Aelfric (955-1020), Catholic Homilies, Lives of the Saints; Wulfstan d. 1023, Sermo Lupi ad Anglos (1014, "Sermon of the Wolf to the English People") (in Old English with Latin introductory words).

Exeter Book (c. 1000) manuscript containing the Wanderer and the Seafarer, Widsith, The Wife's Lament, Guthlac, Juliana, Christ, The Ruin.

Junius Manuscript (c. 1000), containing the Old English Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, and Christ and Satan.

Vercelli Book (c. 1000), manuscript containing Dream of the Rood, Andreas, Elene, Fates of the Apostles.

Battle of Maldon 991; poem Battle of Maldon recorded in manuscript Cotton Otho (destroyed by fire in 1731), currently known version comes from transcript made in 1724 by John Elphinstone.

Cotton Vitellius (c. 1000), manuscript containing Beowulf, Judith, partially destroyed by fire in 1731.

Danish Canute (Cnut), king of England (r. 1016-1035), married Aethelred's widow Emma and fathered Hardecanute, king of England (1040-1042).

Edward the Confessor (r. 1042-1066), son of Aethelred II Unraed and Emma; lived in exile in Normandy, during Danish rule of England, until 1041; conflicts and power sharing with Godwin, earl of Wessex, and his son Harold Godwinson (last Anglo-Saxon king, died in 1066 at the Battle of Hastings).

Norman invasion;William the Conqueror, Battle of Hastings 1066, end of Anglo-Saxon Period.

CONCLUSÃO

As we coud see, the Anglo-Saxon literature encompasses literature written in Old English (also called Anglo-Saxon) in Anglo-Saxon England from the 7th century to the decades after the Norman Conquest of 1066. **Cædmon's Hymn**, composed in the 7th century according to Bede, is often considered the oldest extant poem in English, whereas the later poem, **The Grave**, is one of the final poems written in Old English, and presents a transitional text between Old and Middle English.

In descending order of quantity, Old English literature consists of sermons and saints' lives, biblical translations; translated Latin works of the early Church Fathers; Anglo-Saxon chronicles and narrative historical Works, not to mention the laws, wills and other legal Works, as well as practical works on grammar, medicine and geography written in Latin.

In poetry, there are over 400 surviving manuscripts from the period, of which about 189 are considered "major". The poem **Beowulf**, which we will study next class, often begins the traditional canon of English literature, being the most famous work of Old English literature. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle has also proven significant for historical study, preserving a chronology of early English history.

RESUMO

During the Anglo-Saxon period, Old English was the idiom in which most of the writings of this period were written, especially during the reign of King Alfred, the Great, because they spoke many different languages. We have two kinds of literature during this period: a pagan literature and a religious literature. Although the literary pieces were kept by the christian monks, who were the guardians of culture, the voice of texts like **Caedmnon's Hymn, Deor's Lament or The Seafarer** represent the voice of everyday people. These poems were preserved in **the Exeter Book**, a manuscript from the end of the tenth century containing poetry which is still keptin Exeter Cathedral library in Devon. All the texts nin the oral tradition of Anglo-Saxon literature are poetry. They were propbrably written down after many years after they were first performed in the feasts of the time and sub by **the minstrels**. Mosto f them are short, except **Beowulf**. They have in common the use of blank verse and a double line with a break in the middle. This would give the verse a specific rythm for the minstrel or scop to perform in public. The use of alliteration ando f repreated sounds is anoither common characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon verse. Beowulf is the most important literary piece of the period. The only poet whose name has come to us is **Cynewulf**. He has been credited with writing **The Dream of the Rood**, among other poems.

ATIVIDADES

Answer the qustions below:

How was the language sppoken during the Anglo-Saxon period? Is thjere any similarity between Old English and modern English?

What is the importance of King Alfred to the development of English literature?

What are the literary genres of the Anglo-Saxon literature?

What are the main characteristics of Anglo-Saxon poetry?

COMENTÁRIO SOBRE AS ATIVIDADES

Esta atividade tem por finalidade principal fazer você construa uma síntese dos principais conteúdos dessa segunda Aula, de modo a compreender criticamente o processo de constituição do cânone da literatura anglo-saxônica. Desse modo, será importante compreender o tipo de língua que se falava no período; a importância do Rei Alfredo para ao desenvolvimento da literatura inglesa. Em seguida, o aluno estará apto para responder perguntas acerca dos gêneros literários disponíveis no período e sobre as principais características da poesia anglo-saxônica.

PRÓXIMA AULA

Beowulf

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GLÓSSARIO

Old English: (Ænglisc, Anglisc, Englisc) or Anglo-Saxon is the earliest historical form of the English language, spoken in England and southern and eastern Scotland in the early Middle Ages. It was brought to Great Britain by Anglo-Saxon settlers probably in the mid-5th century, and the first Old English literary works date from the mid-7th century. After the Norman conquest of England in 1066, Old English developed into the next historical form of English, known as Middle English.

The word dialect, in this usage, refers to a language that is socially subordinated to a regional or national standard language, often historically cognate to the standard, but not derived from it. In this sense, the standard language is not itself considered a dialect.

A diacritic /daɪ.əˈkrɪtɪk/ – also diacritical mark, diacritical point, or diacritical sign – is a glyph added to a letter, or basic glyph. The term derives from the Greek διακριτικός (diakritikós, "distinguishing"), which is composed of the ancient Greek διά (diá, through) and κρίνω (krínein or kríno, to separate). Diacritic is primarily an adjective, though sometimes used as a noun, whereas diacritical is only ever an adjective. Some diacritical marks, such as the acute (´) and grave (`), are often called accents. Diacritical marks may appear above or below a letter, or in some other position such as within the letter or between two letters.

Beowulf (/ˈbeɪ.əwʊlf/; in Old English [ˈbeːo̯ˌwulf]) is an Old English epic poem consisting of 3182 alliterative long lines. It is possibly the oldest surviving long poem in Old English and is commonly cited as one of the most important works of Old English literature. It was written in England some time between the 8th and the early 11th century. The author was an anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet, referred to by scholars as the "Beowulf poet".

Cædmon (/ˈkædmən/ or /ˈkædmɒn/) is the earliest English (Northumbrian) poet whose name is known. An Anglo-Saxon who cared for the animals at the double monastery of Streonæshalch (Whitby Abbey) during the abbacy (657–680) of St. Hilda (614–680), he was originally ignorant of "the art of song" but learned to compose one night in the course of a dream, according to the 8th-century historian Bede. He later became a zealous monk and an accomplished and inspirational Christian poet.

A minstrel was a medieval European bard who performed songs

whose lyrics told stories of distant places or of existing or imaginary historical events. Although minstrels created their own tales, often they would memorize and embellish the works of others. Frequently they were retained by royalty and high society. As the courts became more sophisticated, minstrels were eventually replaced at court by the troubadours, and many became wandering minstrels, performing in the streets and became well liked until the middle of the Renaissance, although a decline in their popularity began in the late 15th century. Minstrelsy fed into later traditions of travelling entertainers, which continued to be moderately strong into the early 20th century, and which has some continuity in the form of today's buskers or street musicians.

Blank verse is poetry written in regular metrical but unrhymed lines, almost always iambic pentameters. It has been described as "probably the most common and influential form that English poetry has taken since the 16th century" and Paul Fussell has estimated that "about three-quarters of all English poetry is in blank verse."

A kenning (Modern Icelandic pronunciation: [cʰɛnːiŋk]; derived from Old Norse) is a type of circumlocution, in the form of a compound that employs figurative language in place of a more concrete single-word noun. Kennings are strongly associated with Old Norse and later Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon poetry. They usually consist of two words, and are often hyphenated. For example, Old Norse poets might replace sverð, the regular word for "sword", with a more abstract compound such as "wound-hoe" (Egill Skallagrímsson: Höfuðlausn), or a genitive phrase such as randa íss "ice of shields" (Einarr Skúlason: 'Øxarflokkr'). Modern scholars have also applied the term kenning to similar figures of speech in other languages, especially Old English.