

**OLD ENGLISH ZOOMORPHIC AND ECOMORPHIC SIMILES OF  
EQUALITY WITH THE *GELICOST* COMPONENT**

Being considered a less effective device than a metaphor, simile does not enjoy a high degree of popularity in research, presenting, thus, a chain of gaps to be filled especially if to talk about thousand-year-old similes. This paper focuses on Old English zoomorphic and ecomorphic similes of equality marked by the superlative degree of the comparison marker *gelice*. It deals with the semantics of similes marked by the *(ge)/(on)licost* component with the special emphasis on its implicature.

*Key words:* simile, Old English, zoomorphism, ecomorphism, implicature.

***М. Я. ОЛЕНЯК. СТАРОАНГЛІЙСЬКІ ЗООМОРФНІ ТА ЕКОМОРФНІ  
ОБРАЗНІ ПОРІВНЯННЯ РІВНОСТІ З КОМПОНЕНТОМ GELICOST***

Вважаючись менш ефективним стилістичним засобом ніж метафора, образні порівняння не часто виступають в ролі об'єкта досліджень, створюючи, таким чином, лакуни, які потребують заповнення, особливо якщо йдеться про аналіз матеріалу давніх періодів мови. Статтю присвячено давньоанглійським зооморфним та екоморфним образним порівнянням рівності, маркованим показником порівняння у найвищому ступені. Робота фокусується на семантичних особливостях давньоанглійських образних порівнянь, позначених маркером *(ge)/(on)licost*, звертаючи особливу увагу на їхню імплікативність.

*Ключові слова:* образне порівняння, давньоанглійська мова, зооморфізм, екоморфізм, імплікація.

***М. Я. ОЛЕНЯК. ДРЕВНЕАНГЛІЙСЬКІ ЗООМОРФНІ ТА ЕКОМОРФНІ  
ОБРАЗНІ СРАВНЕНИЯ РАВЕНСТВА С КОМПОНЕНТОМ GELICOST.***

Считаясь менее эффективным стилистическим средством чем метафора, образные сравнения не часто выступают в качестве объекта исследований, создавая, таким образом, лакуны, требующие заполнения, особенно если речь идет об анализе материала древних периодов языка. Статья посвящена древнеанглийским зооморфным и екоморфным образным сравнением равенства, маркированным показателем сравнения в превосходной степени. Работа фокусируется на семантических особенностях древнеанглийских образных сравнений, обозначенных маркером *(ge)/(on)licost*, обращая особое внимание на их импликативность.

*Ключевые слова:* образное сравнение, древнеанглийский язык, зооморфизм, екоморфизм, импликация.

**Relevance.** To the best knowledge of the author the only diachronic investigation of the similes structure in Middle English was conducted by Saara Nevanlinna in 1980s based on the Helsinki corpus. There have also been some sporadic cases of simile analyses in the literary works of certain periods or some authors' works. Thus, Joseph Margolis draws comparison between simile and related devices; Marilyn A. Walker, Monroe C. Beardsley, Gregory W. Dawes study semantics of simile; Elizabeth M. Tyler, highlights the poetics of the Old English literature providing some simile examples; Mark C. Amodio, Stodnick, Jacqueline;

Trilling, Renee R. analyse and compare Old English translations and adaptations of Latin texts some of them containing similes.

**Purpose.** This study aims to provide an account of every zoomorphic and ecomorphic simile in Old English which contains the superlative degree of the Old English marker of similarity *gelice*.

**Tasks.** The tasks of the article are the following: 1) to analyse the existing research concerning Old English simile in general and zoomorphic and ecomorphic similes in particular; 2) to sample Old English zoomorphic and ecomorphic similes of equality with the *gelicost* component; 3) to study the explicit level of the sampled material and its implicature; 4) to attempt to find some regularities in tenor-vehicle correlation in Old English zoomorphic and ecomorphic similes of equality with the *gelicost* component; 5) to trace the existence of modern counterparts of similes in question.

**Novelty.** The article presents the first attempt of the semantic features analysis of the Old English simile of equality with the *gelicost* component. The data discussed are taken from the Old English corpus of University of Toronto employing a continuous sampling method. The Old English corpus of University of Toronto contains at least one copy of every surviving Old English text, thus all existing cases of the abovementioned type of simile have been analyzed. The whole corpus of the Old English zoomorphic and ecomorphic similes of equality containing the superlative degree of a copulative *lice* compiles only 20 examples.

**Theoretical value.** The article contributes to the relevance theory focusing on the pragmatic aspect of poetic comparisons, it specifies the aims of Old English zoomorphic and ecomorphic similes creation.

**Practical value.** The results may be used in the courses of literature, Old English stylistics and further researches of figures of speech.

Zoomorphism is a derivative of the Greek lexemes *zōon*, which means “animal,” and *morphē*, which means “form,” or “shape.” It is a literary technique in which animal attributes are imposed upon non-animal objects. Ecomorphism is another literary technique in which ecological or environmental attributes are ascribed to non-environmental objects. In the Old English similes of equality such animal attributes are ascribed to humans, artefacts and gods. Zoomorphic and ecomorphic similes are capable of carrying a potent characterological notice bringing about both esthetical and emotional vibrations.

Most linguists group similes according to a) the vehicles, organizing the latter into thematic groups of nature, artefacts, anthroponyms, animals etc. (O. Gergel, N. Riabikina,

G. Denisova, J. Shie, R. Moon, S. Tomita); b) the tenors and the vehicles, organising both into thematic groups (O. Chernousova, I. Kondakova, A. Kazakov, H. Kryvenko, D. Chudyk, Yu. Yudina); c) general meaning of simile referring to a certain sphere of extralinguistic reality, singling out such groups as appearance, action, character etc. (S. Talko, A. Shevchenko); d) lexical meaning of a tenor or vehicle (M. Rumiantseva); e) positive/negative connotation of the ground (T. Veale, Y. Hao).

In simile it is not what is “outside” but what is “inside” that counts more. Simile is mainly not the objective of the speaker but the means to impart some implicature.

#### 1. Old English zoomorphic similes with the *gelicost* component.

2.1. Zoomorphic anthropocentric similes compare people’s actions with those of animals to hint at some characteristics of people, either positive or negative. To describe favourable deeds the images of harmless animals are employed while the images of predators are used to highlight unworthy human actions, for example:

e.g. *Pa he his folc genam swa fæle sceap, lædde geliccast leofe eowde þurh westenas wegas uncuðe.* ‘And he raised his people and led them like sheep across the desert.’

The simile taken from 11-th century “Paris Psalter” is not aimed at people with sheep comparison; it describes good Christians who would follow their God obediently while in another example taken from 10-th or 11-th century “Orosius” the objective is to criticize an undeserving and shameful behavior by means of people to predators comparison:

e.g. & his æfterfolgeras feowertiene gear hit sibþan totugon & totæron þæm gelicost þonne seo leo bringð his hungregum hwelpum hwæt to etanne..... ‘and his successors rushed to them and dragged and tore them like when a lion brings some food to its hungry cubs...’

2.2. Zoomorphic similes do not usually describe other animals though one example was found in a 9-th century “Phoenix” where there arose a need to describe the appearance of a mythological bird. The simile employed the image of a seemingly closest animal to the unique creature:

e. g.: Se fugel is on hiwe æghwæs ænlic, onlicost pean, wynnum geweaxen, þæs gewritu secgað. ‘In colour the bird is in every way unique, most like a peacock, grown with joys, of which writings speak.’

2.3. Zoomorphic similes can focus on man-made objects, highlighting a physical property of an artefact similar to the one of a bird namely the ability to float. The similarity of shape of the objects contributes to the comparison and within the sampled material there are two cases of a ship and a bird juxtaposition:

e. g.: *Is þes bat ful scrid, færeð famigheals, fugole gelicost glided on geofone.* ‘The ship, with a foamy neck, most like a bird went over the sea.’

The smooth gliding over the sea implies calm and balmy weather as well as a stunning peaceful view of a vessel freely floating on the waters.

2.4. Old English theocentric zoomorphic similes allow to reveal the nature or mood of a deity which can be either positive (employing the image of harmless animas) or negative (resorting to the image of predators):

e.g. *He þa anhornan ealra gelicost his halige hus her on eorðan getimbrade.* ‘He like all unicorns his holy home created on earth’.

In the example taken from the 11-th century “Paris Psalter” the image of a Christian symbol of purity is employed to highlight favorable characteristics of a deity while in the below presented example the anger and fury of God is depicted through the comparison of the omnipotent Lord to a mad creature. Thus, zoomorphism itself is not the purpose, it is the means to artistically emphasize inner qualities giving them certain evaluation.

e. g. *...and se hlaford ne scrifð, ðe ðæm here waldeð, freonde ne feonde, feore ne ahtum, ac he reðigmod ræst on gehwilcne, wedehunde wuhta gelicost; bið to up ahæfen inne on mode for ðæm anwalde þe him anra gehwilc his tirwina to fultemað.* ‘...and the lord does not care, who the army rules over, whether friend, or foe, life or possessions, but savage in mind he assaults/rushes onto all, like a mad dog.’

2. Old English ecomorphic similes with the *gelicost* component.

2.1. Theocentric ecomorphic similes are mainly concentrated on some physical properties of the objects as in the 7-th century “Daniel” where the description of an angel appeals to senses:

e. g.: *Pa wæs on þam ofne, þær se engel becwom, windig and wynsum, wedere gelicost þonne hit on sumeres tid sended weorðeð dropena drearung on dægges hwile, wearmlíc wolcna scur*”. ‘When he was in the oven the angel descended most like the breeze in the summer season when drops of rains are sent falling during the day, and warm showers from the heavens’.

The aim of this simile is not to compare the angel to the breeze but to create a sharp contrast between an unbearable heat and an amiable feeling of coolness, which arises pleasant associations thus contributing to the idea of deity’s goodness and virtue.

Ecomorphic similes compare the characteristics of the actions of some inalienable parts of a person or a deity to the actions of certain natural phenomena:

e.g. *Ac hi forweorðan wætere gelicost, þonne hit yrnende eorðe forswelgeð; swa his bogan bendeð, oðþæt bitere eft adl on seteð, swa his gearnuncg byð.* ‘I flew like water, when all my bones relaxed and the heart melted like wax’. In this example from “Paris Psalter” the author compares the God to water thus explaining his omnipresence and depicting a wonderful pleasant feeling it causes.

2.2. Old English ecomorphic simile can be focused on man-made objects in which case it is used to describe an unbelievable power comparing weapon to ice being capable of melting:

e. g.: *Þæt wæs wundra sum, þæt hit eal gemealt ise gelicost, ðonne forstes bend fæder onlæteð, onwinded wælrapas, se geweald hafað sæla ond mæla; þæt is soð metod.* ‘Then the sword, the battle-blade, began to dissolve into battle-icicles from the war blood; it was a wonder that it melted entirely, most like ice when the frost-fetters the Father unlooses.’

2.3. Ecomorphic simile was also used to eloquently describe the state of a person, for example:

*Ne mæg þær æni man be <agnum> gewyrhtum gedyrstig wesan, deman gehende, ac ealle þurhyrnð oga ætsomne, breostgehyda and se bitera wop, and þær stænt astifad, stane gelicost, eal arleas heap yfeles on wenan.* ‘Nor may there any man, by work of merit, bold become in presence of the judge, but fear will run alike through all, thoughts of the heart ... and there will stand, stiffened like a stone, all the wicked troop in expectation of evil’

The simile is employed here not to compare a man to a stone but to emphasize a complete motionlessness and unspeakable fear.

Many of the similes in question are still used in Modern English to which belong: *to melt like a wax / eyes; to be cool like a breeze; stiff as a stone; to flow like water / rain; to be led like a sheep; tear apart like a lion; to fly like a bird; stiff like steel; to glitter like a jewel; to be like poison (about words)*. It can be accounted for by the fact that the majority of Old English manuscripts are Christian texts which being translated in later periods preserved the images initially used in them.

### 3. Conclusion.

Old English simile was a powerful tool to contribute to the current poetics. It did not serve only for an artistic description but was mainly used to convey some implicature. Old English zoomorphic similes with the *gelicost* component tend to specify the movement, way of performing the action revealing some attending circumstances, usually a person’s / deity’s temper or behavior, less frequently – to describe the appearance. Old English ecomorphic

simile with the *gelicost* component, on the other hand, are more likely to highlight physical properties or states. Having considered the regularities of some tenor-vehicle correlations we have been able to find out typical simile collocations in the Old English; regular occurrence of vehicle with the salient feature it represents could prompt us the existence of some ideas about different aspects of Anglo-Saxons' life. The material shows that two tenors (ship and floater) were used with the same vehicle (bird) on the same ground (going over the sea) as well as one and the same ground (entire melting) was used as a commonly shared feature of weapon, ice and wax. Because of the canonical nature of the Christian manuscripts and the peculiarities of translations of such texts, many zoomorphic and ecomorphic similes in question are still used in Modern English.

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