

GIUSEPPE BRUNETTI

ELEVEN EDITIONS OF *BEOWULF* 1936-2008:  
A LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL COLLATION

1. *From Klaeber to Klaeber*

The latest edition of the poem came out in early 2008, and it is a state-of-the-art edition: a rich *apparatus criticus*, an extensive commentary, both textual and interpretative, and a great glossary. The editors – R. D. Fulk, R. E. Bjork and J. D. Niles – present it as the fourth edition of Klaeber 3rd (1936), whose layout they take over updating the contents. Their aim is a preservative one – not to lose touch with the immense body of earlier scholarship summarized by Klaeber.<sup>1</sup>

They also preserve the moderate conservatism of Klaeber's textual principles against the ultra-conservative tendency of 20th-century *Beowulfs*. They emend 414 verses as against Klaeber's 406, with 321 emendations in common. Klaeber's «compromise scheme» was to «harmonize reasonable respect for the copyists with the presumptive claims of the author» – «a problem of far from easy solution».<sup>2</sup> And the compromise can be gauged against the three older editions that lasted into the Klaeber era: Heyne-Schücking's fourteenth (1931) has 474 emendations, Sedgefield's third (1935) has 587, Holthausen's eighth (1948) has 536.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Fulk 2007b: 144.

<sup>2</sup> Klaeber 3rd 1936, pp. 277-278.

<sup>3</sup> Klaeber's first edition was published in 1922, Schücking's in 1908, Sedgefield's in 1910 and Holthausen's in 1905. The latter is the single longest-lived edition of the poem; a different longevity, by relay, is that of *Heyne-Schückings Beowulf*: four editions by M. Heyne 1863-1879, three by A. Socin 1888-1903, seven by L. Schücking 1908-1931, and four by E. von Schaubert 1940-1963.

conservative standard had been set by Chambers (1914) with 359 emendations.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1 *Rettung vs emendatio*

The new editions published between Klaeber's third and fourth show the increasing preference for salvaging manuscript readings over emending them. I have selected nine: five English and/or American, two German (they, too, are revisions of previous ones), one French and one Italian. Here is the number of verses containing emendations:

abbr.	editions	emendations
K13	Klaeber 3rd 1936	406
Do	Dobbie 1953	381
Sc	v. Schaubert 1963	340
Wb	Wrenn-Bolton 1973	363
Ni	Nickel 1982	325
Cr	Crépin 1991	278
Ja	Jack 1995	396
Mr	Mitchell & Robinson 1998	368
Ki	Kiernan 1999	215
Br	Brunetti 2003	360
K14	Klaeber 4th 2008	414

Table 1. Emendations

The eleven editions emend 470 verses overall (out of 6,364 total verses), with only 92 emendations common to all.<sup>5</sup> Their time series is better seen in a graph.

<sup>4</sup> «To the present editor there seems to be no middle course between, on the one hand, leaving the language of the poem in the form given to it by its last transcribers, and, on the other, attempting to rewrite the whole poem in the language of the eighth century», Chambers 1914: xxiii.

<sup>5</sup> Chambers 1914, Schücking 1931, Sedgefield 1935, Klaeber 3rd 1936 and Holthausen 1948 share 216 emendations among them.

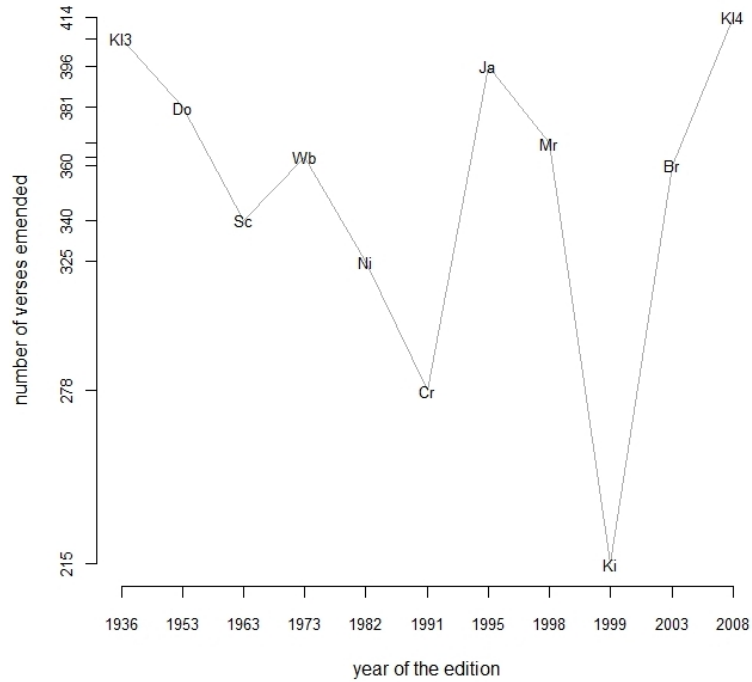


Figure 1. Number of verses with emendations

The limit set by Chambers in 1914 – and retained by Wrenn-Bolton 1973, Mitchell & Robinson 1998 and Brunetti 2003 – has been lowered in succession by von Schaubert 1963 (a revision of Heyne-Schücking 1931), Nickel 1982 (a revision of Holthausen 1948), Crépin 1991 and Kiernan 1999. Klaeber's standard is reverted to by Jack 1995, and reinstated by Klaeber 4th 2008.

Here is the number of emendations the eleven editions share between them:

	Kl3	Do	Sc	Wb	Ni	Cr	Ja	Mr	Ki	Br	Kl4
Kl3	406	336	295	317	264	215	359	316	117	311	321
Do	336	381	291	309	266	217	338	295	119	292	306
Sc	295	291	340	311	277	219	294	270	116	268	272
Wb	317	309	311	363	270	222	319	289	119	289	291
Ni	264	266	277	270	325	234	264	242	112	240	245
Cr	215	217	219	222	234	278	214	208	119	206	209
Ja	359	338	294	319	264	214	396	314	115	316	313
Mr	316	295	270	289	242	208	314	368	120	349	290
Ki	117	119	116	119	112	119	115	120	215	121	129
Br	311	292	268	289	240	206	316	349	121	360	287
Kl4	321	306	272	291	245	209	313	290	129	287	414

Table 2. Pairwise common emendations

The data can be further articulated by adding up the number of emendations each edition has in common with each of the others, and that of different ones; exclusive emendations can also be counted.

	common		different		exclusive	
Kl3	2851	0.71	1209	1.00	17	-0.06
Do	2769	0.55	1041	0.21	10	-0.41
Sc	2613	0.23	787	-0.97	4	-0.71
Wb	2736	0.48	894	-0.47	6	-0.61
Ni	2414	-0.18	836	-0.74	13	-0.26
Cr	2063	-0.89	717	-1.30	16	-0.11
Ja	2846	0.70	1114	0.56	9	-0.46
Mr	2693	0.39	987	-0.04	7	-0.56
Ki	1187	-2.68	963	-0.15	63	2.23
Br	2679	0.36	921	-0.35	3	-0.76
Kl4	2663	0.33	1477	2.25	52	1.68

Table 3. Cumulative emendations

The decimal values are standardized data: they measure the distance from the mean (made equal to zero) in terms of  $\pm$  standard deviations. They can be represented as distances between the editions.

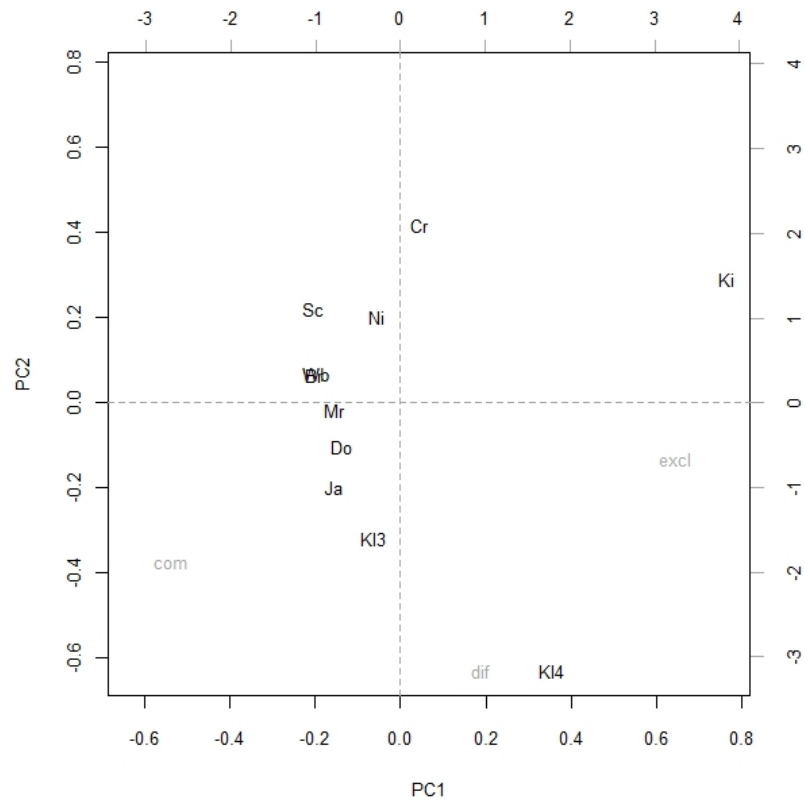


Figure 2. Emendation space

Most editions form a chain of proximities along the vertical axis; and against them stand out Kiernan 1999 and Klaeber 4th 2008, the two outliers that are farthest from the mean (the origin of the axes). What varies along the vertical axis (top down) is the number of different emendations; the exclusive ones vary from left to right along the horizontal axis. Klaeber 4th 2008, in the bottom right quadrant, has the highest number of differences and the second highest number of exclusives; Kiernan 1999, in the top right quadrant, has the highest number of exclusives and the lowest number of common ones.

The two editions represent two opposing textual principles: Kiernan 1999 sees the manuscript as a unique moment in which the poem was assembled and copied (*Liedertheorie*); for Klaeber

4th 2008 the manuscript bears traces of a process of transmission during which the scribes' errors and linguistic usages have produced a layered text (the former are emended, the latter only marked diacritically).<sup>6</sup>

## 2. *Lexicographic variants*

The emendations that have been counted are alterations of manuscript readings, plus omissions and additions (and bar spacing between morphs). Some emendations are mere variants of word forms (**fela/feola** 1032a), others are differences in morphology (**ræswa/ræswan** 60b), others still in lemmas (**earfeþo/eafeþo** 534a); and of course many invariant forms involve semantic and/or syntactic differences (**hwata** 3028a).

Thus the full lexicographic variation between editions remains to be mapped – that is, the interpretation of the manuscript readings entrusted to glossary and commentary.<sup>7</sup> Its scope includes the following types of variation:

### a. Graphemic identification of constituents

The scribes' morphemic decomposition of words (Stevick 1975 and Crépin 1991 measure spacing between morphs) is open to alternative reconstructions.

The ms reading **leof land fruma** (31a) is rendered in all the three possible ways: three simple words (=two phrases), **leof land fruma** (Mr, Br); a compound and a simplex (=two phrases), **leofland fruma** (Cr, Ni); a simplex and a compound (=one phrase), **leof landfruma** (K13, Do, Sc, Wb, Ja, Ki, K14).

The ms reading **be wæpned men** (1284b) is **bewæpned men** for Ki, **be wæpnedmen** for all the others.

<sup>6</sup> Kiernan had expressed the need for a «truly conservative edition» in 1981: 278; Fulk's commitment to «the layeredness of the text» is in Wawn (ed.) 2007: 145.

<sup>7</sup> Eight editions out of eleven are provided with analytic glossaries (Kiernan 1999 and Brunetti 2003 have an electronic glossary, the latter can be found at <<http://www.maldura.unipd.it/dllags/brunetti/OE/begin.htm>>); Wrenn-Bolton 1973 and Jack 1995 have a list of lemmas, the latter in the form of marginal glosses; Dobbie 1953 has an extensive textual commentary.

The ‘black raven’ **hrefn blaca** (1801a) harbinger of the morning is **hrefnblaca** ‘blackbird’ in Ni.

There is much variation between compounds and free phrases: **eal**, **fela**, **eald** and **hilde** can be treated as independent words or first parts of compounds. Nickel 1982 marks with a hyphen many undecidable cases (180), as for instance **fæder-bearme** (21b).

Some editions recognize also three-member compounds: **anwiggearwe** (1247b) is a simple adjective in Ni, Cr and K14, and a phrase, **an wig gearwe**, in the others (ms **anwig gearwe**).

#### b. Disambiguation

Syntactic: the ms reading **ahte** (31b) is preterit (with the object either understood or expressed) in all the editions except von Schaubert 1963, for whom it is a past participle in an absolute construction.

Semantic: **sec** (2863a) is adjective **seoc** or noun **secg**? **hyt** (2649b) is noun or pronoun? **gehedde** (505a) is verb **gehegan** (with acc.) or verb **gehedan** (with gen.)? **ealde wisan** (1865b) are ‘the old chiefs’ (acc. pl. masc.) or is ‘in the old way’ (acc. sing. fem.)? **hwata** (3028a) is adjective ‘brave’ (nom. sing. masc.) or noun ‘prediction’ (gen. pl.)?

#### c. Punctuation

The punctuation can be variously assigned, in particular to mark the boundaries of complex clauses and establish dependency (whether a given subordinate goes with the preceding or the following main clause).

### 2.1 *A lexicographic collation*

It is this variation that I have documented both qualitatively and quantitatively – by making it available for consultation and by graphing the overall differences as distances between editions.

The collation has been made on the basis of a uniform lexico-grammatical markup of the texts in XML, each word form having been annotated for lemma, class, homography, syntax

(=government), morphology and Italian translation;<sup>8</sup> this lemmatization is reproduced as interlinear glosses (the grammatical abbreviations are expanded by positioning the cursor on them).

The electronic edition is organized in the format of ‘text and apparatus of variants’, in two main frames.<sup>9</sup>

<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p>Form. Lem. Tra.</p>	<p>0718 næfre he on aldrdagum ær ne sibðan  <b>næfre</b> av <b>maí</b> <b>he</b> p nsm <b>egli</b> on pp-rd in <b>ealdor-dagas</b> m dp <b>giorni della vita</b> ær av <b>prima</b> ne c <b>né</b> <b>sibðan</b> av</p> <p><i>dopo</i>  0719 heardra hæle healðegnas fand!  <b>heard</b> a <b>asfc</b> <b>ðuro</b> hælo f as <b>sorte</b> <b>heall-pegu</b> m ap <b>seguace nella sala findan</b> v-a p3s <b>trovare</b></p> <p>0720 Com þa to recede rinc sibðan  <b>cuman</b> v-+ p3s <b>giungere</b> þa av <b>allora</b> to pp-rd a <b>reced</b> m ds <b>sala</b> <b>rinc</b> m ns <b>guerriero</b> <b>sibðan</b> v i <b>camminare</b></p> <p>0721 dreamum bedæled. Duru sona onam  <b>dream</b> m dp <b>gioia</b> <b>bedelan</b> v-d ppnsm <b>privare di</b> <b>duru</b> f ns <b>porta</b> <b>sona</b> av <b>subito</b> <b>onirnan</b> v p3s <b>spalancarsi</b></p> <p>0722 fyrbendum fæst. syððan he hirc folnum æthran;  <b>fyr-bend</b> f dp <b>banda forgiata</b> <b>fæst</b> a-d nsf <b>saldo</b> <b>sibðan</b> c <b>quando</b> he p nsm <b>egli</b> <b>heo</b> p gsf <b>essa</b> <b>folm</b> f dp</p> <p><i>palmu æthrinan</i> v-g p3s <b>toccare</b>  0723 onbræd þa bealohydig. ða he gebolgen was,  <b>onbregdan</b> v-a p3s <b>disserare</b> þa av <b>poi</b> <b>bealo-hydig</b> a nsm <b>malevolo</b> þa c <b>perché</b> he p nsm <b>egli</b> <b>gebelgan</b> v</p> <p><i>pp adirarsi wesian</i> v-x p3s <b>essere</b>  0724 recedes muþan. Rafe æfter þon  <b>reced</b> m gs <b>sala</b> <b>muþa</b> m as <b>entrua</b> <b>hraðe</b> av <b>subito</b> æfter pp-ri <b>dopo</b> þæt d isn <b>ciò</b></p> <p>0725 on fagne flor feond treddode,  <b>on</b> pp-ra <b>su</b> <b>fah</b> a asm <b>lucente</b> <b>flor</b> m as <b>asato</b> <b>feond</b> m ns <b>nemico</b> <b>treddian</b> v p3s <b>avanzare</b></p>
<p>Edizione base  Kl3  Klaeber 3rd 1936</p> <p>Altre edizioni  Br  Brunetti 2003  Cr  Crépin 1991  Do  Dobbie 1953  Ja  Jack 1995  Ki  Kiernan 1999  Kl4  Klaeber 4th 2008  Mf  Mitchell &amp; Rob. 1998  Ni  Nickel 1982  Sc  V. Schaubert 1963  Wb  Wrenn – Bolton 1973</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><i>Trascrizione MS</i></p> <p>f. 146v : 01 (ne) sibðan 719 heardra hæle heal ðegnas  f. 146v : 02 fand 720 com þa to recede rinc sibðan 721 drea</p> </div> <p><b>Wb</b>  0719 heardra hæle healðegnas fand.  <b>heard</b> a <b>asfc</b> <b>ðuro</b> hælo f ðs <b>sorte</b> <b>heall-pegu</b> m ap <b>seguace nella sala findan</b> v-a p3s <b>trovare</b></p> <p><b>Sc Ni</b>  0719 heardra hæle healðegnas fand.  <b>heard</b> a <b>asmc</b> <b>forte</b> hæle m as <b>uomo</b> <b>heall-pegu</b> m ap <b>seguace nella sala findan</b> v-a p3s <b>trovare</b></p>

Figure 3. View of the electronic edition

A base edition, Klaeber 3rd 1936, is visualized in the top frame, the variants of form (in the line) and of lemma, government, morphology and translation (in the glosses) present in the others being highlighted in various colours (lines without highlights have no variants): clicking on the line number there appears in the bottom frame the corresponding line of the other editions with the variants highlighted, in the line and/or glosses (and clicking on the abbreviation of the edition one can see the context of the line in another window).

<sup>8</sup> This is the tagging devised for my Old English poetry Web site (Brunetti 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Brunetti 2009 (Web site built with the assistance of Antonietta Spanu, University of Pisa)

There appears also a transcript of the line as it presents itself in the manuscript, with numbering of folio and folio line.

An alternative mode of consultation is by concordances of forms, lemmas, or Italian translations. In the top left corner one can select a word from the appropriate list (in which homographs have distinct entries), or type it also with the help of regular expressions (?=character present one or zero times; \*=group of zero or more characters; here homographs are not distinguished), and in the top frame are visualized the lines and the glosses of the base edition in which it appears directly or indirectly (if present in the other editions: the search is on the lexicon of all of them). One can go back to the text of the base edition by clicking its name in the column on the left.

This for the consultation. Then there are the statistical data of the collation, both single (with base edition) and multiple collation (of all the editions pairwise).

A line-by-line collation with the base edition registers the following differences in lemmas and, for the same lemmas, in morphology, translation, forms and syntax:

	K13				
	lemmas	morphology	translation	forms	syntax
Do	83	22	92	113	14
Sc	123	33	104	79	14
Wb	106	35	119	66	12
Ni	319	47	156	274	13
Cr	267	38	137	114	18
Ja	66	23	123	52	9
Mr	143	41	208	26	27
Ki	267	66	147	108	26
Br	134	42	208	24	29
K14	175	40	86	43	16

Table 4. Lexico-grammatical collation with base edition

Nickel 1982 has the highest differences for lemmas and forms; Brunetti 2003 for translation and syntax etc.

The cumulative count of the pairwise collation (the differences of each edition from all the others) characterizes each edition in relation to all the others. Differences in punctuation have been added – that marking sentence boundaries (. ; ! ?).

	lemmas		morphology		translation		forms		syntax		punctuation	
K13	1697	-0.63	386	-1.32	1380	-0.95	930	-0.58	178	-1.33	1695	-0.10
Do	1623	-0.75	444	-0.76	1536	-0.28	1320	0.17	213	-0.57	1677	-0.13
Sc	1760	-0.53	517	-0.05	1579	-0.10	1008	-0.43	222	-0.37	1759	0.00
Wb	1631	-0.74	489	-0.32	1383	-0.94	978	-0.48	212	-0.59	2163	0.62
Ni	3296	1.93	561	0.38	1607	0.02	2731	2.87	218	-0.46	1696	-0.10
Cr	2723	1.01	492	-0.29	1430	-0.74	1176	-0.11	267	0.62	2047	0.44
Ja	1424	-1.07	437	-0.83	1370	-0.99	991	-0.46	202	-0.81	1830	0.11
Mr	1847	-0.39	542	0.20	2015	1.76	961	-0.52	277	0.83	1317	-0.69
Ki	2827	1.18	782	2.53	1598	-0.02	1408	0.34	331	2.02	3052	2.00
Br	1692	-0.64	520	-0.02	2032	1.83	934	-0.57	289	1.10	330	-2.21
K14	2480	0.62	571	0.48	1700	0.41	1103	-0.24	219	-0.44	1792	0.05

Table 5. Cumulative lexico-grammatical collation

The decimal values are standardized data: they measure the distance from the mean (made equal to zero) in terms of  $\pm$  standard deviations.

Klaeber 3rd 1936 has all negative values, that is below the mean; Kiernan 1999's are all positive except one (and three of them are the highest of the respective variables); von Schaubert 1963 and Klaeber 4th 2008 have the values nearest to the mean, but with different signs.

## 2.2 A representation of variance

The editions can be thought of as points in a multidimensional space whose coordinates are the lexicographic variables. Statistical methods reduce the dimensions to those with the most significant variance. I have used *principal components analysis* (PC) in order to give a graphical representation of the pairwise collation as distances between the editions relative to the lexicographic variables.

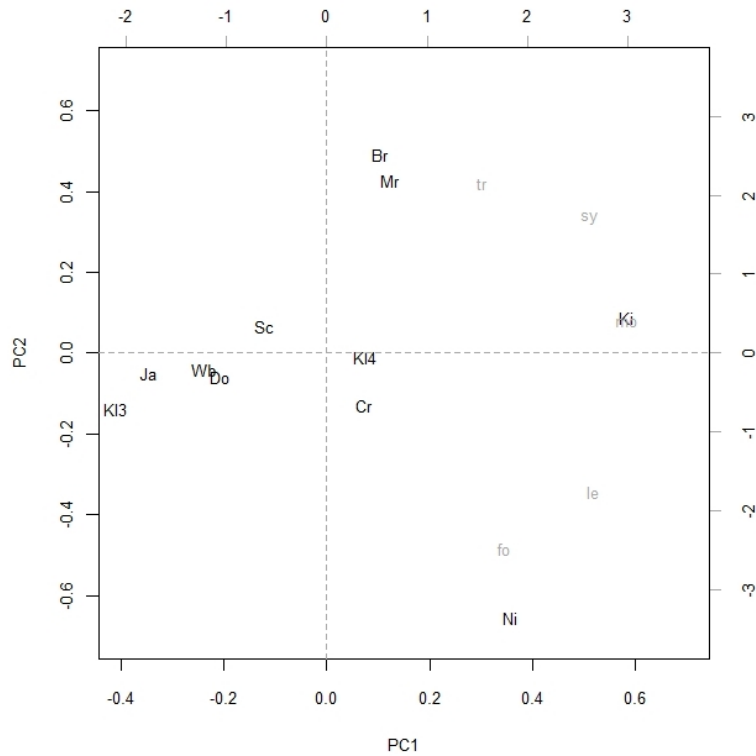


Figure 4. Lexicographic space

Here, too, a chain of proximities along the horizontal axis and four outliers – Brunetti 2003, Mitchell & Robinson 1998, Kiernan 1999, and Nickel 1982.

The variables (in grey) are arranged bow-like in the two right quadrants: they are in a smaller scale (marked on the sides PC1 and PC2) and indicate the directions from the centre in which they locate the editions according to their weight in each of them. Thus Brunetti 2003 and Mitchell & Robinson 1998, high up in the top right quadrant, are marked off by semantic and syntactic differences; Nickel 1982 is marked off by those of forms and lemmas; and the position of Kiernan 1999 adds the differences in lemmas and syntax to those in morphology. Klaeber 3rd 1936, with all its negative values, is in the farthest place from all the variables. And the remaining editions look like a migration flight to the

centre (the zero of the standardized data) – nearest which is Klaeber 4th 2008, which most approximates the mean of the differences.

In the next graph punctuation has been added. Even if slightly perturbed, the positions are more or less the same: but Brunetti 2003 soars by virtue of a light, non-disambiguating punctuation, which leaves undetermined whether a subordinate depends on the main clause that precedes or follows it (the full stop marks the discourse unit of the *verse paragraph*). Its low number of differences is like the common factor of the punctuation of all the editions.

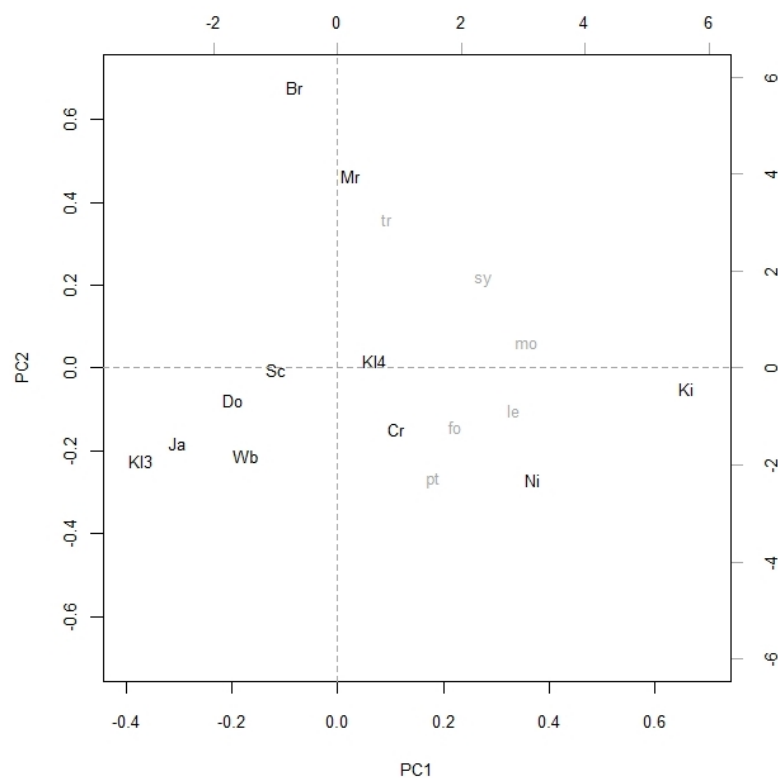


Figure 5. Lexicographic space (with punctuation)

The two dimensions represented (=components, PC1 and PC2) explain 82% of the variance (without punctuation); it rises to 94%

if a third dimension is added (see the Web site for a three-dimensional view).<sup>10</sup>

### 3.0 Beowulfingas: a family portrait

If a literary work is a family rather than an individual, this is *Beowulf's* modern family – or *Beowulfingas*, as agnatic families are called in the poem.

It can be seen as either, depending on the scale of representation. In the large narrative scale a reader who read two or more of these *Beowulfingas* (I have made Italian translations of Brunetti 2003 and Klaeber 4th 2008, the latter unpublished) would not read two or more different stories – of the difference proposed by Tripp 1983, who in his edition of the second part of the poem sees a man metamorphosed into a dragon. The differences are in the small scale of the discourse, where one might read – with regard, for instance, to the ship funeral narrated at the beginning – of a sovereign who has long ruled his beloved land, or of a beloved sovereign who has long owned a prince's vessel – with the syntax, possibly, either *apo koinou* or duly disambiguated.

Here is a detail of the family portrait:

Brunetti 2003	Klaeber 4th 2008
26 Scyld passed away at the appointed hour,	Scyld passed away at the appointed hour,
27 strong and valiant, into the lord's keeping;	strong and valiant, into the Lord's keeping.
28 they brought him to the current of the sea,	They brought him to the current of the sea,
29 his dear companions, as he himself commanded,	his dear companions, as he himself commanded,
30 while he wielded speech, the friend of the Scyldings,	while he wielded speech. The friend of the Scyldings,
31 the sovereign had long ruled his beloved land;	the beloved sovereign had long owned –
32 in the harbour stood a ring-prowed ship, icy	it stood in the harbour, the ring-prowed ship, icy
33 and ready to set out, the prince's vessel;	and ready to set out – a prince's vessel;

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<sup>10</sup> For the statistical method see Baayen 2008, ch. 5. The graphs have been drawn with the R language and environment.

34	then they laid down the dispenser of rings,	then they laid down the dispenser of rings,
35	their dear king in the bosom of the ship [...]	their dear king in the bosom of the ship [...]

## Bibliography

### Web sites

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- G. Brunetti (a cura di), *Edizioni del Beowulf: collazione lessico-grammaticale*, <<http://www.maldura.unipd.it/dllags/brunetti/OE/TESTI/Beowulf/Varianti/begin.htm>>, 2009- (latest update: 14 January 2009).

### The eleven editions

K13 = Klaeber 3rd 1936

*Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, edited, with introduction, bibliography, notes, glossary, and appendices by Fr. Klaeber, Third edition with first and second supplements, D. C. Heath and company, Lexington, Massachusetts 1950.

Do = Dobbie 1953

*Beowulf and Judith*, edited by Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, New York, Columbia University Press 1953 (The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records IV).

Sc = v. Schaubert 1963

*Heyne-Schückings Beowulf*. Herausgegeben von Else von Schaubert, 3 Teilen, Achtzehnte Auflage, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 1961-1963.

Wb = Wrenn-Bolton 1973

*Beowulf. With the Finnesburg Fragment*, edited by C. L. Wrenn and W. F. Bolton, University of Exeter 1988 (=1973 edition with supplementary bibliography).

Ni = Nickel 1982

*Beowulf und die kleineren Denkmäler der altenglischen Heldensage Waldere und Finnsburg*, In drei Teilen herausgegeben von Gerhardt Nickel, Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg 1976-1982.

Cr = Crépin 1991

*Beowulf*. Edition diplomatique et texte critique, traduction française, commentaires et vocabulaire par André Crépin, 2 vols., Kümmerle Verlag, Göppingen 1991.

Ja = Jack 1995

*Beowulf*. A Student Edition, edited by George Jack, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994 (reprinted with corrections, and revisions 1995).

Mr = Mitchell & Robinson 1998

*Beowulf*, an edition with relevant shorter texts, edited by Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, Blackwell, Oxford 1998.

Ki = Kiernan 1999

*Electronic Beowulf*, edited by Kevin Kiernan, 2 CD-ROMs, The British Library 1999 (2004).

Br = Brunetti 2003

*Beowulf*, a cura di Giuseppe Brunetti, Carocci, Roma 2003.

K14 = Klaeber 4th 2008

*Klaeber's Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, edited, with introduction, commentary, appendices, glossary, and bibliography by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, John D. Niles, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London 2008.

## Other editions

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