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## THE SUPERNATURALITY IN MODERN VERSIONS OF *BEOWULF*: A LEXICAL STUDY



## O SOBRENATURAL EM VERSÕES MODERNAS DE *BEOWULF*: UM ESTUDO LEXICAL

João Victor Pessoa ROCHA  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brasil

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### Abstract

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This paper aims to verify how supernatural characters and environments are described in modern versions of Beowulf and describe the root of the monsters' characterization. Four modern versions of the poem were used as corpus: A.D. Wackerbarth (1849), James M. Garnett (1882), Francis B. Gummere (1910) and John McNamara (2005). This research departs from the Lexical Field Theory, in which words can be gathered according to their common semantic meaning or to the absence of it (ABBADÉ, 2011; LIPKA, 1980). As a result, the lexical occurrences that describe the supernatural were divided into five fields: Religion, War, Name and Kinship, Creatures, and Hatred. There is a greater number of religious words, corroborating the idea that there is a contrast between paganism and Christianity in modern versions, just as there is in the original version of the poem "Beowulf" (GREENFIELD, 1966). Furthermore, the five proposed lexical fields correspond to the sacredness scale made by Júnior (2011), contributing to the idea that people in the Middle Ages saw the world with a supernatural perspective (JUNIOR, 2011).

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## Resumo

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Este estudo tem como objetivo principal verificar como os personagens e ambientes sobrenaturais são descritos nas versões modernas de Beowulf e descrever a raiz da caracterização dos monstros. Como corpus, foram utilizadas quatro versões modernas do poema: A.D. Wackerbarth (1849), James M. Garnett (1882), Francis B. Gummere (1910) e John McNamara (2005). Esta pesquisa parte da Teoria dos Campos Lexicais, na qual as palavras podem ser reunidas de acordo com seu significado semântico comum ou com a ausência dele (ABBADÉ, 2011; LIPKA, 1980). Como resultado, as ocorrências lexicais que descrevem o sobrenatural foram divididas em cinco campos: Religião, Guerra, Nome e parentesco, Criaturas e Ódio. Há um número maior de palavras religiosas, corroborando a ideia de que há um contraste entre paganismo e cristianismo nas versões modernas, assim como na versão original do poema "Beowulf" (GREENFIELD, 1966). Além disso, os cinco campos lexicais propostos correspondem à escala de sacralidade elaborada em Júnior (2011), contribuindo com a ideia de que as pessoas na Idade Média viam o mundo com uma perspectiva sobrenatural (JUNIOR, 2011).

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## Entradas para indexação

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**KEYWORDS:** Beowulf. Supernaturality. Lexicon. Lexical fields.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Beowulf. Sobrenaturalidade. Léxico. Campos lexicais.

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## Texto integral

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This study intends to analyze the presence, the use, and the interference of the lexicon for supernaturality in modern versions of Beowulf so that we can go further in the discussion about their reinterpretation into Late Modern English. Considering that, the Science of Lexicon, which is concerned with the description of the lexicon itself and its relation with other language dimensions, such as morphology and semantics (BIDERMAN, 2001), is a key area.

A few works delve into monsters in Beowulf. For instance, in Rodrigues (2015), the description of Grendel is analyzed in three modern versions in light of Translation and Otherness Studies. On the other hand, in González (2015), the monsters are investigated in only one modern version of the poem through Teratology Theories. However, none of them delve into the lexicon present in the poem. Therefore, in order to make the lexical analysis, this study was done with four chants from four versions of Beowulf written in Modern English.

The Lexical Field Theory (LIPKA, 1980) was used as a methodological basis aided by the relation between mental grammar and lexicon in Evans (2009). To analyze the historical and psychosocial elements in the poem, we considered the relationship between medieval culture and mysticism described in Júnior (2011), James (2014) and Van Dyke (2009).

In this work, the lexical representation in translated texts is considered essential, once the translator has to decide very carefully what words will be used to maintain the same lexical concept as the original text does. The analysis can be summed up in three steps: (i) highlighting and counting lexical words describing supernatural beings and places; (ii) gathering lexical words into lexical fields; (iii) investigating the impact of word choice in the characterization of monsters and mystical environments. By doing so, this study may give a starting point on the issue of how the medieval society conceptualized and interacted with nature.

We divided this paper as follows: the next section explores the notion of mysticism and its manifestation in the Middle Ages. The following section presents a broad discussion about the poem and a deeper consideration on its monsters. Then, the last theoretical section claims the lexicon as part of our mental grammar and discusses the foundations of the lexical field membership. The last sections show the methodology and analysis as well as the results and the conclusion.

## 1 MYSTICISM IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The term “Middle Ages” is a consequence of how modern people understood this period. Humanist experts, influenced by the Renaissance, dubiously named it that way because they thought the artistic and scientific medieval productions lacked reasoning (SULLIVAN, 1958). The events that happened between the Classical Antiquity and the 15th century have been seen as a gap or a hiatus. Therefore, they named it “in-between times”, in other words, the “Middle Ages” (JÚNIOR, 2001).

A phenomenon that may confirm this view of “lacking reasoning” is the fact that medieval literature is full of reports of travelling to the After-Life and of meeting with monsters (JÚNIOR, 2001). According to this author, this abundance of the theme shows that it is not the author’s fantasy; it is the representation of a psychosocial feature of the Middle Ages, instead. Being Beowulf part of the Middle Ages literature, the references to creatures, such as dragons, is noticeable, because “references to dragons appear frequently in those types of literature which were used as source material by medieval authors.” (RAUER, 2000, p. 52). Comparatively, in sacred texts, the dragon figure represents a sign of the devil and, consequently, a God and man’s enemy (RAUER, 2000).

Moreover, for medieval societies, the nature and the universe were seen in their completeness and, for that reason, they did not see some phenomena as supernatural, they were part of the environment, not an outstanding occurrence (JÚNIOR, 2011). Another key point is that supernaturality entails naturality, even though this does not happen the other way around (SALER, 1977). Thus, in the Middle Ages people believed in the mystical description of the world, as James (2014) explains that “[a]ll our attitudes, moral, practical, or emotional, as ‘objects’ well as religious, are due to the ‘objects’ of our consciousness, the things which we believe to exist, whether really or ideally, along with ourselves” (p. 54). This way,

we can claim that the supernaturality seen and felt by people in that time was also an object of their consciousness.

As Júnior (2001) argued in his book, many people believed and still believe that sacred is the opposite of profane, so the discussion of profane and sacred is needed. However, profane and sacred are complementary, since profane, according to the Cambridge Dictionary<sup>11</sup>, means “not relating to religion or spiritual matters”. They are not antonyms; rather, they complete each other. Thus, “there is no, as we say, opposition sacred/profane, rather a scale of sacredness which covers everything: God, angels, humankind, stars, animals, plants, the Devil”<sup>22</sup> (JÚNIOR, 2001, p. 193, our translation). In that case, the reference to describe the world back in the Middle Ages was related to sacredness, in its broad meaning.

Supernaturality has, in some degree, complementary relation, or even a synonymy, with mysticism, since supernatural elements might not be seen in their realness. This can be seen in James’s (2014) description of the mystical experience in two main characteristics: ineffability and noetic quality. The former refers to the fact that mysticism defies expression and the quality to be given in words. The latter relates to illumination of the mystical event, as they are revelations full of significance and importance (JAMES, 2014).

The supernatural was in day-to-day life in the Middle Ages. Consequently, the manifestation of the mystique was also present in medieval artistic productions, including literature. Hence, the first Old English poem stands out from other pieces due to its historical representation. It shows elements of how mysticism was deeply present in the medieval daily life, how supernaturality is not related only to Christianity and how the physical and emotional manifestation of the supernatural was common, back in the Middle Ages.

Van Dyke (2009) claims that the Middle Ages are full of affective mysticism, which explores the way in which supernatural union can be practiced and conveyed in emotional, physical, and sensory terms:

Affective mysticism’s emphasis on the importance of physical and emotional as well as intellectual and volitional union with God, for instance, actively undermines a strongly dualist conception of human nature that identifies the self with the rational soul (...) (VAN DYKE, 2009, p. 728).

Therefore, considering the body and the cognition as gateways to experience mysticism, the affective mystic belief connects the matter and the physical body directly to the sacred.

In Beowulf, it is likely that if we look closer at how Beowulf is described, it is possible to find some representations of the affective mysticism. The heroic

<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/>

<sup>2</sup> “Não havia, como di[z]emos, oposição sagrado/profano, e sim uma gradação do sagrado que cobria tudo: Deus, anjos, homens, astros, animais, plantas, Diabo.” (JÚNIOR, 2001, p. 193).

character is distinguished from the other warriors due to his physical skillfulness, his remarkable appearance and his rhetorical competence (GREENFIELD, 1966), frequently opposing to his opponents' characteristics.

Even though mysticism and supernaturality are part of our context, modern science has taken a different path regarding this type of phenomenon. Materialism and rationalism became stronger to a degree that Social Sciences consider supernatural beliefs as antithetical to modern thought and consequently destined to extinction (GOLDSTEIN; GRIDER; THOMAS, 2007). Nonetheless, researching about the interaction between naturality and supernaturality shed light on how humans represent knowledge (LEGARE et al., 2012). One way of demonstrating this interaction is through language and arts, therefore an ancient piece of literature may give hints about how people in the ancient times symbolized this intersection.

Ancient literature with this type of story associates natural and supernatural frameworks to explain a given phenomenon (LEGARE et al., 2012; GREENFIELD, 1966).

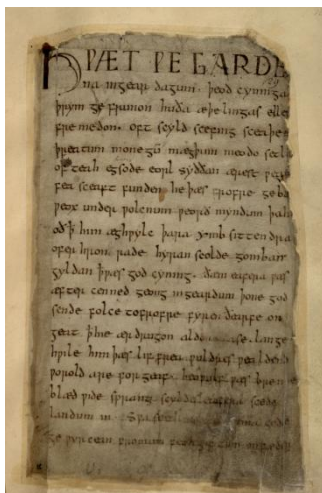
[Supernatural narratives] [...] are typically told as though one were on the witness stand, detailed and careful, incorporating numerous strategies that outline the nature of the observations, the testing of alternative explanations, and often including an indication of reluctance to interpret what occurred as 'supernatural'. (GOLDSTEIN; GRIDER; THOMAS, 2007, p. 70)

Markedly supernatural experience narratives, such as the case of Beowulf poem, tend to portray a deeply detailed, cautious, and sometimes even defensive structure (GOLDSTEIN; GRIDER; THOMAS, 2007). Therefore, Beowulf may be characterized as a supernatural experience narrative, because the characters interact with the supernatural environment and beings.

## 2 BEOWULF: THE POEM AND ITS MONSTERS

Beowulf, the first literary production in Old English, is written in the late West Saxon dialect (CHAMBERS, 1959). However, there are many linguistic forms from other dialects, such as Kentish and Mercian (CHAMBERS, 1959). In Figure 1, there is a picture of the original form of the poem.

**Figure 1 - Extract from the original version of Beowulf**



Source: The British Library<sup>33</sup>

As many may not think, the poem is not a Beowulf's biography neither a specific episode. In fact, it is two separate themes: the Grendel issue and the dragon issue. The epic poem tells the story of Beowulf, who comes to help Hrothgar, the King of the Danes, whose kingdom is being killed by a monster named Grendel. The young Geatish uses his strength and bravery to slay Grendel, to slay Grendel's mother in her underwater lair, and then to slay a dragon.

According to Greenfield (1966, p. 85), "[t]he complexity and richness of the [Beowulf] poem may perhaps be best summarized in the concept of contrast". Furthermore, the author argued that the contrasts and parallels within the text are what turns the poem into a unity. Notably, these literary devices operate in the structure, character, theme, and stylistic aspects (GREENFIELD, 1966). These mechanisms convey certain digressions, whether legendary or historical. Thus, they allow the Christian and the pagan elements to co-exist within the scope of the poem (GREENFIELD, 1966). For instance, in McNamara's version (2005) of Beowulf, it is possible to notice the co-occurrence between these two beliefs.

(...) for Grendel wove spells round all human weapons,  
on all swords of victory. Yet severed from life,  
he was fated to feel misery at the end of his days,  
his time on the earth, and the alien terror must now  
embark on a far journey into the power of fiends

The fact that Grendel can cast spells and is going on a journey with fiends, mixing pagan and Christian elements respectively, shows how the contrasts might

<sup>33</sup> Available at <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/large126510.html>. Access on 06 jun.2020.

have appeared in the Old English version of Beowulf. Similarly, it shows how they remain in the latest versions of the poem.

On one hand, in order to avoid Christian dogmatism to his characters, the poet has consciously decided that his character would not be Christian (CHAMBERS, 1959). On the other hand, Chambers (1959) also claimed that it is established that Beowulf is a historical document because it gives a framework of the period in which the pagan faith was tempered by Christian beliefs.

Regarding the creatures, the fights against them have a socio-economic context: exchange, or, in other words, to give and receive gifts and services (HILL, 1991). This author also asserted that reciprocity of exchange is crucial to understand the poem. For instance, Grendel, one of the antagonists of the story, refuses to trade with the Danes or to pay for murders. Although “Grendel, to be sure, is an unusual, serial murderer, perhaps a zombie” (HILL, 1991, p. 113), the adventurous world makes him mundanely human (HILL, 1991).

In Sharma (2005), certain vocabulary about the monsters and Beowulf himself in the original version of the poem were analyzed. The author discussed that the places where the monster was situated contributed to the narrative construction as the battles were taken in and outdoors. Sharma (2005) went further and concluded that the dichotomy “human-monster” causes an inconstancy in the situations described in the poem, because the physical bodies risk the steadiness of places with highly elastic borders, such as a castle, considering Beowulf’s and the monsters’ strength during a battle. One explanation is that, having an internal pressure of excessive vitality, monstrous and heroic bodies swell unnaturally (SHARMA, 2005).

With this in mind, the dragon is understood as a creature of four main characteristics in Beowulf: (i) imagery of fire; (ii) protection of its treasure; (iii) nighttime habits; and (iv) inquisitiveness (RAUER, 2000). None of these features is at random, and they are deeply involved in the plot. For instance, the dragon’s curiousness explains why it found treasures and the Geats, Beowulf’s homeland people (RAUER, 2000). Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the monsters in Beowulf are externalized human impulses (HILL, 1991), since they have human desires and passions. Moreover, throughout the poem, it is noticed that the monsters had become a kind of dark holiness. To put it in another way, they became rulers of someone’s destiny (HILL, 1991) as they, to some extent, decided who lives and who dies.

Since the poem shows battles against supernatural beings and it has elements from Christianity and pagan rituals, the lexicon for the supernatural is important and meaningful throughout the poem. It also suggests “[...] that the monsters are not an inexplicable blunder of taste; they are essential, fundamentally allied to the underlying ideas of the poem, which give it its tone and high seriousness.” (TOLKIEN, 2000). This literary production also raises the feature of being a historical heritage of early stages of the English language. Therefore, taking into consideration the significance of this lexical group in Beowulf, investigating how translators made this movement from Old English

towards Modern English is essential to see how the word choice influences the description of supernatural beings.

### 3 LEXICON AND FIELDS

The experiences we go through and the way we portray them through language are embodied, that is, humans' view of the world is species-specific due to the unique nature of our bodies (EVANS; GREEN, 2006). According to these authors, particularly, our construal of reality is, thus, likely to be moderated by the nature of our physical bodies. Similarly, they argue that how our body is shaped, together with where we interact, determine other realms of our experience. For instance, the dragon, as described in *Beowulf*, can unleash fire through its mouth (RAUER, 2000). For this reason, the relation the dragon had towards fire was very much distinct from the relation humans had with it. It is very likely that this influence may be conveyed during the poem, because the way the human characters interact with their monsters enemies are closely related to their bodies

It is strongly argued that culture, cognition and language are elements that are connected in the same way that languages are socially and historically situated and present in the mind of the participants of a linguistic community (PAULA *et al.*, 2016). The lexicon is one of the language dimensions that a community expresses its culture and norms. From this perspective, Lexicology analyses the relations that the lexicon has with other parts of language, such as morphology and semantics, as well as the relations within the lexicon itself (BIDERMAN, 2001). In general, the Science of Lexicon can be a vital tool in the study of social and linguistic history of a certain group (ABBADÉ, 2011).

Being part of our mental grammar, and consequently part of our cognition, the lexical concepts are units of the semantic structure (EVANS, 2009). The semantic structure is "(...) that part of semantic representation encoded by the linguistic system (...)" (EVANS, 2009, p. 107). The lexical concepts encode the linguistic content and promote access to the conceptual knowledge. (EVANS, 2009). Since the goal of this research relies on representations and their origins, the lexical dimension of the language makes itself very useful.

In recent years, linguists have become aware of the significance of lexical structure as a means of ascertaining and exploring the organization of concepts in the mind. It is our belief that analyzing lexical items in terms of their location and interrelationships in semantic space makes the lexicon of a language doubly meaningful. Instead of a random list of lexical items and their idiosyncratic properties, the lexicon becomes an intricate network of elements interconnected by cohesive, associative, lexical and encyclopedic functions, which are themselves representations of categorizing relationships. (FABER; USÓN, 1997-1998)



The theory of Lexical Fields is closely related to Jost Trier's theory of Linguistic Fields, since Trier's approach understood that words are connected through a structured set, in which their meanings are dependent on each other (ABBADÉ, 2012). Therefore, words in the same field have mutual dependence: they acquire a meaning according to the structure of the whole field (ABBADÉ, 2012). In the case of lexical fields, the sets are similar to a mosaic. Moreover, the elements expressed in a lexical field may help in reconstructing the conceptual field (GEVAERT, 2007). In other words, they produce a structure, in which the relation of coordination and hierarchy are integrated between the significations of words (ABBADÉ, 2011).

In Lipka (1980), the lexical field is discussed within three characteristics: (i) direct opposition in the same syntactic slot; (ii) at least one specific semantic aspect in common; and (iii) object procedures in order to make a field-membership. Again, looking at these criteria, it is possible to realize how the co-dependence between words is important in lexical fields. For example, in (i) "the dragon is strong" and in (ii) "the giant is weak", we could put "dragon" and "giant" in the same group, because they share the supernatural quality of a monster and they are both in subject position. On the other hand, "strong" and "weak" could be inserted in the same group as they refers to a scale of strength and both are subject complement.

Both Abbade (2011) and Lipka (1980) highlight that the elements in the same lexical field are susceptible to each other. In addition, they also agree that lexical fields should be grouped through objective processes, not randomly. Lipka (1980) goes further and says that "(...) externally, the field is clearly delimited by either an archilexeme or, in its absence, the intersection of features of certain lexemes yielding a common set of features." (p. 99). Regarding internal delimitation, the author argues that the field should be homogenous and upheld; "however, idiolect and other variations are more difficult to grasp. There are no sharp borderlines, and the problems related to the distinction between [center] and periphery in lexical structure also might be considered." (LIPKA, 1980, p. 99).

Likewise, in Coseriu's theory of Lexical Field, the opposition factor is very present. He proposed a structural analysis of vocabulary, in which lexemes should be placed in the system of contrast (ABBADÉ, 2011). The author continues claiming that the internal association of a lexical field is ruled by the semantic divergence as long as it remains as a content component. Therefore, the lexical fields are paradigmatic schemes. Thus, when checking the meaning of a word within a lexical field, we should compare it with the other words in the same set. For example, the word "demon" is inserted in the "religious field" and has as its counterparts: "god" and "angel".

Although the borders between fields may change, their study is still vital to understand a certain community's language representations. Because the Science of Lexicon can provide a large framework of social, cultural and linguistic aspects that may not appear in other language dimensions. As for the study of Beowulf, the

lexical studies may give hints of cognitive and linguistic features of the Middle Ages people.

## 4 ANALYSIS

The texts were read in chronological descending order once. After understanding the content in each version, the poems were read again and the occurrences of lexical words describing the supernatural were marked. Taking these highlighted words into account, they were gathered in fields according to their meaning, which was consulted in dictionaries, within the poem.

The four chants with supernatural characters in the four versions were part of the analysis. They are the following: *Beowulf fights Grendel*; *Beowulf fights Grendel's mother*; *Beowulf cuts off Grendel's head*; and *Beowulf and Wiglaf kill the dragon*. To have accurate fields, meanings of words that represent the supernatural were searched in some online dictionaries: Lexicon of Early Modern English (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS, 2019), American Dictionary of English Language (WEBSTER, 2019), and Cambridge Dictionary (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2019).

### 4.1 The texts and the reading

In order to analyze the words for the supernatural in modern versions of Beowulf, four modern versions of Beowulf from different years<sup>44</sup> were chosen. The versions analyzed were:

- (i) A.D. Wackerbarth – 1849
- (ii) James M. Garnett – 1882
- (iii) Francis B. Gummere – 1910
- (iv) John McNamara – 2005

In the following extracts, the words that were considered part of the analysis are underlined. In passage 1, taking the dragon as a supernatural being, the nouns and adjectives directly related to this creature conveyed the focal point in the dragon's fear inducement (“threatening” and “frightful”) and ability (“fire”, highlighting that the dragon is capable of throwing fire).

#### ***Passage 1: Beowulf and Wiglaf kill the Dragon (McNAMARA, 2005)***

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<sup>44</sup> The texts are available on <http://www.paddletrips.net/beowulf/index.html>. Access on 21 jun.2020.

*Then for the third time, the threatening monster,  
the frightful fire-dragon, [...]  
with fierce sharp fangs, digging into his flesh  
to drain life from his body, as the blood streamed out.*

In passage 2, the translator decided to establish a family relationship (“Grendel’s mother”), considering that the monster had a son (Grendel). The next expression is related to causing death (“deadly”), while the word “foe” focuses on the relation of being opponents. It is interesting to see how in the same stanza the translator could approach two different images, one bringing a motherly figure and other bringing a combat imagery.

***Passage 2: Beowulf fights Grendel's Mother (GUMMERE, 1910)***

*Seized then by shoulder, shrank not from combat,  
the Geatish war-prince Grendel's mother.  
Flung then the fierce one, filled with wrath,  
his deadly foe, that she fell to ground. [...]*

These different references to describe the supernatural characters show how they were represented not only with their supernatural quality, such as “dragon” and “monster”, but also with humans traits, for instance “mother” and “son”.

While reading each chant, the nouns and adjectives that indicate a mystical being or environment were highlighted and counted. Table 1 shows some examples of the lexemes highlighted, their frequency and in which version they appeared.

**Table 1 - Lexemes and their frequency**

Lexemes (# occurrences)	Wackerbarth (1849)	Garnett (1882);	Gummere (1910)	McNamara (2005)
Spirit (4)	1	1	X	2
Demon (5)	2	2	X	1
Holy (4)	1	1	1	1

God (7)	1	2	2	2
(Fire) dragon (9)	1	1	3	4
Monster (6)	3	1	X	2
Grendel (4)	X	1	1	2
Grendel's mother (2)	X	1	1	X
Deadly (2)	X	X	1	1
(Folk-) Foe (11)	3	4	2	1
Loathsome (2)	1	X	1	X
Foul (1)	1	X	X	X

Source: Author's elaboration

Some words must be discussed, such as “(folk-)foe”. This lexeme brings the idea of conflict, more specifically, as put in the poem, a deadly fight. The word “monster” represents some characters’ non-human features. Some instances of the lexeme “God” (and other noun phrases related to it) were addressed as if God was a victory provider and a fortune symbol, as in the example below.

***Passage 3: Beowulf Fights Grendel's Mother (GUMMERE, 1910)***

*Life would have ended for Ecgtheow's son,*

*under wide earth for that earl of Geats,*

*had his armor of war not aided him,*

*battle-net hard, and holy God*

*wielded the victory, wisest Maker.*

*The Lord of Heaven allowed his cause;*

*and easily rose the earl erect.*

One aspect to mention in Garnett’s version is the use of the word “serpent” to describe a dragon. As discussed by Rauer (2000), the dragon was sometimes described as a snake-like creature. This feature was very much present in the Middle Ages when describing a dragon (RAUER, 2000).

Markedly, Gummere’s version does not have the word “demon” to describe the supernatural beings, unlike the adaptations analyzed so far. However, it uses

the word “fiend”, which is, according to the website Lexicons of Early Modern English (2019), an old-fashioned word to refer to demons or to the devil. This word was also commonly used in religious writing and speech; therefore, it gives more prominence to the religious influence into the story.

In the next subsection, we will show what criteria were used in order to do the lexical field creation and association.

## 4.2 The lexical fields

Despite each translator having preferences towards word choice, it was possible to create five main lexical fields for the studied versions. The War field concerns death, rivalry, fear and destruction. The Hatred field relates to disgust, rancor and scorn. The Religion field deals with holiness, sacrilege and sacredness, in its broad meaning. The Name and Kinship field has references to family heritage, relationships and signatures. The Creatures field associates to beasts and to animals. Table 2 demonstrates the association made with the lexical fields

**Table 2 - Lexemes and their lexical field**

<b>Lexemes (# occurrences)</b>	<b>Lexical field</b>
<b>Spirit (4)</b>	<b>RELIGION</b>
<b>Demon (5)</b>	<b>RELIGION</b>
<b>Holy (4)</b>	<b>RELIGION</b>
<b>God (8)</b>	<b>RELIGION</b>
<b>(Fire) dragon (9)</b>	<b>CREATURES</b>
<b>Monster (6)</b>	<b>CREATURES</b>
<b>Grendel (4)</b>	<b>NAME AND KINSHIP</b>
<b>Grendel's mother (2)</b>	<b>NAME AND KINSHIP</b>
<b>Deadly (2)</b>	<b>WAR</b>
<b>(Folk-) Foe (11)</b>	<b>WAR</b>
<b>Loathsome (2)</b>	<b>HATRED</b>
<b>Foul (1)</b>	<b>HATRED</b>

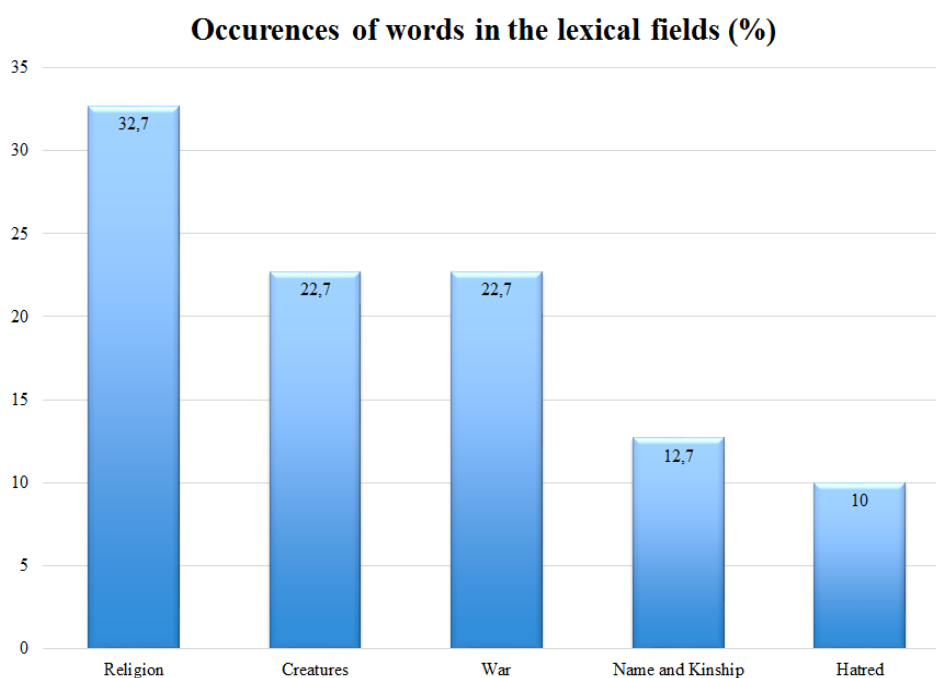
Source: Author's elaboration

The lexical fields were based on large-scale characteristics. For instance, demon and God were placed in the lexical group Religion, because both of them came from religious speech and beliefs, especially from Christianity. It is possible, however, to divide the macro lexical groups into smaller fields. For example, we can divide the Religion field into: (i) Hell field, in which “demon” would be inserted, and (ii) Heaven field, where “God” would be placed.

## 5 RESULTS

In total, 110 expressions referring to supernatural characters and environments were counted as seen in the graphic below. Within this number, 36 occurrences (32,7%) were placed in the Religion field, making it the largest group. The Hatred field, the smallest, has 11 occurrences (10%). In the Creatures and War fields, there are 25 occurrences (22,7%) each. The Name and kinship field is formed by 14 occurrences (12,7%). Graphic 1 shows the results from each field.

**Graphic 1**

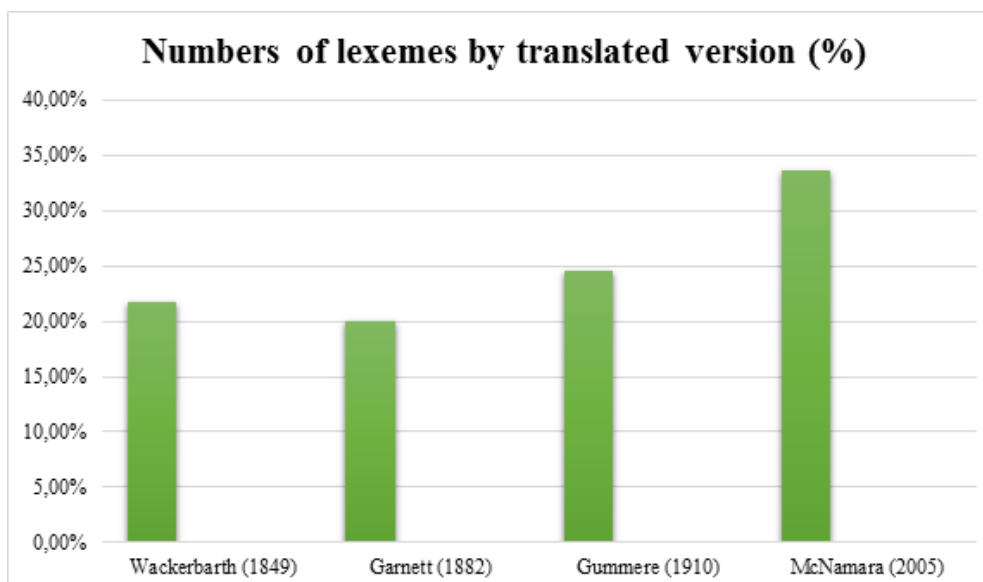


**Source: author's elaboration**

In Graphic 2, we can see the distribution in percentage of the number of lexemes associated with the supernatural, regardless of the lexical fields, present in each version. The translator with the largest number of occurrences is John

McNamara with 37 occurrences, making 33.6% from the total and with the shortest number is James M. Gannet with 22 occurrences (20%).

**Graphic 2 – Numbers of lexemes by translated version**



**Source: author's elaboration**

Among the four translators, Wackerbarth was the one who used more words from the Hatred field. Those occurrences appeared when the poetic speaker was describing the monsters while they were exchanging fight blows with Beowulf and his warriors.

The Religious field is the largest field in Wackerbarth's text. In particular, the words "demon" and "spirit" were used to describe Grendel; while the rest of them within this field were used to address God as a "guarantee of success". Such fact shows how this translator wanted to emphasize Grendel's evilness.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to examine the occurrences of nouns and adjectives referring to the supernatural. This study has identified 110 words to accomplish this aim. From the results obtained, one of the more significant findings to emerge from this study was that the representation of the supernatural in modern versions of Beowulf is highly associated with religious aspects. Such fact can be interpreted as an effect made by the contrast in the original Beowulf, in which pagan and Christian elements were fusing (GREENFIELD, 1966). Therefore,

in order to be loyal to the primary text, the translators might have chosen to maintain this opposition, leading to a higher number of religious aspects within the translations.

The second major finding was that the lexical representation for supernaturality is part of the psychosocial phenomenon discussed in Júnior (2001), in which the sacredness has degrees: God, angels, humans, animals and the Devil. As we can see, all lexical fields in this work are related to these elements. The elements God, angels and the Devil are closely related to the Religion field, for instance to the words “The Lord of Heaven”, “demon” and “holy”, as all of them came from religious beliefs. Then, for animals, there is the Creatures field, in which there are lexemes such as “serpent”. The War and Hatred fields are associated with humans, because they are caused and felt by humans respectively. The Name and kinship field is also linked to humankind, considering that naming things, people and relationships is a human process. Therefore, these results lead us to conclude that, in order to describe supernaturality, Beowulf’s poet used mostly religious aspects. This fact tells us that in medieval society people used to describe events and entities through religious elements, whether pagan or Christian.

Understanding the words that describe supernaturality is important to learn not only how old civilizations organize their relation with nature, but also how they conceptualized it. Therefore, analyzing new versions of Beowulf might give a hint of what it was not discovered yet in the original version.

In this work, lexical marks of supernaturality in four chants in modern versions of the Beowulf poem were analyzed. The conclusion obtained allows us to affirm that there are several studies about Beowulf plot and its monsters. However, especially within Cognitive Linguistics and within the Science of Lexicon, there is room to explore the linguistic aspect in the original and in the translated version of the poem.

It is worth mentioning that the lexicon for the supernatural is inherently a part of the medieval literary production. Besides that, there is also room for new research on the lexicon for the description of the main character in the text, which is Beowulf, and also on the supernatural representation in other modern versions of the Old English poem.

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## O autor

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**João Victor Pessoa Rocha** é graduando em Letras pela Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, integrante do Laboratório de Estudos Empíricos e Experimentais da Linguagem (LEEL/UFMG) e do Grupo de Estudos sobre Pragmática, Texto e Discurso (GEPTED/UFMG).