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"Naming is basic to all poetry, but perhaps most so to Germanic alliterative verse, which has its presumed origins in magic and ritual." Introducing *Beowulf*, Howell D. Chickering, Jr., further remarks that "the heavy nominalism of the poetic lexicon was doubtless inherited. However, the poet utilized it more fully than other Old English poets."[1] Indeed, for Beowulf alone, some one hundred and twenty terms or phrases have been recorded, with occurrences totalling well over two hundred. These figures are based on the lists provided by William Whallon in three successive publications where the "epithets" of Homeric diction are contrasted with the "kennings" of Old English poetry.[2] Ranging from single terms such as *cyning* or *hlaford* to phrases that may be longer than a half-line, e. g., *wilgeofa Wedra leoda*, not to mention such vocatives as *wine min Beowulf*, where the actual name of the hero is uttered, these appellations may not all be regarded as "kennings". Neither R. Meissner's definition, "any two membered substitution for a substantive of common speech," nor A. Heusler's, "a metaphor with an associating link,"[3] can always be appropriate; the items recorded by Whallon, which will be used in the present analysis,[4] are therefore more suitably referred to as "namings" for Beowulf.

[1] *"Beowulf": A Dual-Language Edition* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), p. 6.

[2] "The Diction of *Beowulf*," *PMLA*, 76 (1961) 309–19, "Formulas for Heroes in the *Iliad* and in *Beowulf*," *MPh*, 63 (1965), 95–104, and *Formula, Character, and Context: Studies in Homeric, Old English, and Old Testament Poetry* (Washington, D. C.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969).

[3] Meissner (1921) and Heusler (1922) are quoted by Thomas Gardner in "The Application of the Term 'Kenning'," *Neoph.*, 56 (1972), 464 and 465.

[4] The convenient, but decidedly too broad definition of "kenning" used by James W. Rankin in "A Study of the Kennings in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,"

Alliterating sound, length, position within the line, and frequency are objective features that have enabled clear classification in Whallon's publications. More subjective is the relationships that each of these namings establishes with the hero himself; here is a feature that suggests another, more progressive, type of grouping.

As a "center of attraction," an expression found in Joan Blomfield's analysis of the structure of *Beowulf*,[5] the hero is surrounded by namings in concentric circles. Closest to the center, since they could not possibly apply to any other character, are repetitions of the name itself with further specification, such as *Beowulf Geata* or *wine min Beowulf*. Next are patronymic epithets, with *bearn*, *maga* or *sunu* repeatedly followed by the genitive *Ecgþeowes* (twelve occurrences altogether). As for *mæg Higelaces*, which is potentially applicable to other members of the Geat dynasty, its five occurrences apply to Beowulf; the "king's nephew", a regal version of the "sister's son" relationship, is made prominent in *Beowulf* as it is privileged in the context of several other early societies.[6]

Higelaces þegn, which first introduces Beowulf in the epic (l. 194b) and is once repeated for him just before the beheading of Grendel (1574b), also applies to Eofor (2977b), the son of Wonred, who has distinguished himself among the Geats by killing Ongentheow the Swedish king, for which deed of valour he is given in marriage Hygelac's only daughter as a pledge of friendship. This naming, through its application to a character other than Beowulf, introduces another group revolving around the hero; its circle, if one elaborates on the metaphor of elements gravitating around a central unit, is now wide enough to come into contact with the circle it also draws around another character.

While the shift from namings that shut out other characters to those that may admit them is hard to define, distinction within this second group is made clear through respective occurrences. Among all the different namings recorded for Beowulf – some one hundred and twenty according to Whallon's listing – about two thirds do not occur for any other character. When used exclusively for Beowulf, namings that do not repeat his name or refer to a family tie set off various particularities

JEGP, 8 (1909), 357–422, could include all of Whallon's listings, which, though most useful, have not always proved utterly reliable, as will be mentioned occasionally below.

[5] "The Style and Structure of *Beowulf*," *RES* 14 (1938), 396–403.

[6] Mentioned by Tacitus (*Germania*, ch. 20), male kinship through the wombs of mother and sister is indeed venerated outside Germanic tribes and therefore cross-cultural – see for instance early Hebrew, Slavic, even South-American societies.

of his: warlike dispositions, for instance, are magnified through such terms and expressions as *se hearda, mære cempa, guþrinc goldwlanc,* or the superlatives *secg betsta* and *wigena strengest,* whereas *freodryhten, þioden þristhydig,* or *wigena strengel* exemplify the exaltation of leadership, and more precisely that of a Geat, as proclaimed with *goldwine Geata* or *Wedra þeoden.* Such a pool of namings has led Whallon to conclude that "The kennings for Beowulf rank high in relevance to context, but low in economy ..."[7] The second half of that assertion may be questioned when namings used not exclusively for Beowulf are examined; the case of *Higelaces þegn,* introduced above, would rather hint at economy: through its mere repetition for another character, is not the poet comparing Eofor with Beowulf, implying that through similar valiance both deserve in turn to be called "the follower of Hygelac"?

In fact the forty or so namings that Beowulf shares with other characters in the epic do establish connections; terms or phrases heard for more than one character "ring a bell" and thus make the audience aware of links between different parts of the epic. The structure of *Beowulf* – which has now been so beautifully evidenced by the scholarship of half a century – is underlined by these repetitions; they condition the listener, leading him to draw parallels between characters, hence between various passages in the poem. Shared namings, as they may be called, unify the work through the implicit ties that they establish; they allude to otherwise unworded similarities or contrasts around the central figure of Beowulf.

The namings shared with Hrothgar are not few, as will be shown through the following list:

	for Beowulf, ll.	for Hrothgar, ll.
– *æþeling ærgod*	2342a	130a
– *eald eþelweard*	2210a	1702a
– *eorla dryhten*	2338b	1050b
– *har hilderinc*	3136a	1307a
– *hildfruma*	2649a, 2835a	1678a
– *hlaford*	2375, 2634b, 2642b, 3142b, 3179b	267b
– *hordweard haleþa*	1852a	1047a
– *mære þeoden*	797a, 2572a, 2788b, 3141b	129b, 201a, 345a, 1046b, 1598a, 1992a
– *rices hyrde*	3080a	2027a

[7] *Formula, Character, and Context,* p. 71.

	for Beowulf, ll.	for Hrothgar, ll.
– *se wisa*	2329a	1698b
– *þeoden mære*	2721a	353a
– *wigendra hleo*	1972b, 2337b	429b
– *winedrihten*	1604b, 2722a	360b, 862a.[8]

For Beowulf, a large majority of them occur after line 2200, whereas all those recorded for Hrothgar are before. The accumulation of repeated namings, besides linking the two characters with each other, sets off the binary architecture of the poem, as first revealed by J. R. R. Tolkien.[9] Part A, which ends at line 2199, is echoed by Part B through the portraying of an aging king; yet symmetry does not exclude contrast, since Hrothgar's impotence is succeeded by Beowulf's valiant, though fated, efficiency. Wrenn asserts: "A Germanic hero ... shows his highest greatness not alone in winning glory by victory, but rather by finding his supremely noble qualities especially in the moment of death in battle."[10] Similar trying circumstances do not produce similar responses; Beowulf's heroism is found to be of a higher order.

Four of the namings listed above are also shared by other characters. Heremod, the Danish king who is traditionally opposed to Hrothgar for his infamous ruling after a promising youth, is equally called *mære þeoden* (1715a); put in the mouth of Hrothgar panegyrizing Beowulf, this is a phrase that links a digression (the second concerning Heremod) with the main story while contrasting characters. "Heremod is made to serve as a foil to the exemplary Beowulf," Klaeber wrote,[11] and the digression is meant to make the young and promising Geat feel that, in Adrien Bonjour's words, "he has yet to show greater moral qualities than Heremod to escape a similar disastrous reversal."[12]

Onela is also called *mære þeoden* (2384a), which may be surprising; why should a Swedish king, an enemy, be graced with a naming so

[8] Whenever recorded for more than one occurrence, namings are given uninflected, with the spellings of lemmas in the Glossary of Klaeber's edition; emendations suggested by standard editions are tacitly accepted. Among the namings shared by Beowulf and Hrothgar, *rices hyrde*, at line 2027a, has been erroneously ascribed to Ingeld by Whallon, both in "Formulas for *Beowulf*," (p. 97) and in *Formula, Character, and Context* (p. 99).

[9] "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics," *PBA* 22 (1936), 245–95.

[10] *Beowulf With the Finnesburg Fragment*, 2nd ed. (London: Harrap, 1958), p. 41.

[11] In the Notes of *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1950), p. 164.

[12] *The Digressions in "Beowulf"* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1950), p. 49.

characteristic – ten occurrences for the two of them – of both Hrothgar and Beowulf? Perhaps this is a reminder of Beowulf's family link with the Swedes, through the Wægmundings, a relationship that must have been important enough for Onela to favour his accession to the Geatish throne (and yet not close enough for Beowulf to be prevented from avenging his kinsman Heardred through the death of Onela).[13]

The inverted form *þeoden mære,* which enables alliteration with thorn, applies once to Hrothgar, later once to Beowulf, and, as a plural, also to the former owners of the treasure kept by the dragon (3070a). Besides establishing a connection with Beowulf, whose involvement with the maleficent heirloom has proved fatal, this repetition of the naming may allude to the lordly origin of those who had their treasure buried, and consequently to the great wealth at stake.

Wigendra hleo (899b), too, is shared by another character, here Sigemund. The bard who improvises the tale of Beowulf's exploits at the Danish court appropriately compares the victorious opponent of Grendel with a traditionally famous killer of giants, who are other descendants of Cain. His digression further mentions Sigemund's reputation as a dragon-slayer, which is ominous of Beowulf's last fight and therefore tightens the link between Part A and Part B of the poem.

As for *winedrihten,* its occurrence at line 3175a refers to Beowulf, but also applies to any 'beloved lord' mourned over by his *heorðgeneatas* (3179b), a generalization that befits the solemn, even religious, close of the poem.

There are, furthermore, namings for Beowulf and for Hrothgar that are used for Hygelac as well. They are listed as follows:

	Beowulf	Hrothgar	Hygelac
– *eorla hleo*	791a	1035a, 1866a, 2142a	1967a, 2190a
– *folces hyrde*	2644b	610a	1832a, 1849a
– *guþcyning*	2563a, 2677b, 3036b	199b	1969a
– *mondryhten*	1229b, 1249b, 2604b, 2647a, 2849a, 2865a, 3149b	1229b	436a, 1978b
– *se goda*	205a, 675a 758a	355a	2944b, 2949a
– *se rica*	399a	310b	1975b.

[13] See Norman E. Eliason, "Beowulf, Wiglaf and the Wægmundings," *Anglo-Saxon England,* 7 (1978), 95–105, esp. 100–01.

A triangular pattern is thus developed between Beowulf and two other major characters. With *eorla hleo* and *se rica*, this pattern is circumscribed in Part A of the poem, which means that the young Beowulf is readily raised to the stature of his elders. It is the case too with *se goda*, although the two occurrences for Hygelac are in Part B, and more precisely in the digression of the Battle at Ravenswood, where the victorious behaviour of the Geat leading a body of retainers recalls that of his nephew at the Danish court; the triangle of a shared naming here bridges the two parts and, moreover, tightens the bond between a significant digression and the whole.

Folces hyrde, also used once for the Swedish king Ongentheow (2891a),[14] and *guþcyning* specifically evoke kingly virtues; it is therefore not surprising to hear them applied to Beowulf in Part B only, after his accession to the throne of the Geats. King Beowulf recalls both King Hrothgar and King Hygelac, in a threefold structure that complements the binary composition of the poem.

Parallelism between the two Geatish rulers is further evidenced with:

	Beowulf	Hygelac
– *Geata dryhten*	2560b, 2576a	1484b, 1831a, 2991b.

This is again a naming found only in Part B for Beowulf, where he is also twice called *dryhten Geata*, a reversal that introduces an alliteration on "d" (2402a, 2901a). All these occurrences, which echo those heard for Hygelac in Part A, as well as in the Ravenswood digression, and for Hygelac's elder brother Hæthcyn (2483a), duly relate Beowulf to the royal house of the Geats and repeatedly present him as the legitimate successor of his maternal uncle.

As for *mondryhten*, it is a naming that may apply indiscriminately to Beowulf and to Hrothgar at line 1229b and, in that respect, is shared in the most literal sense of the word. Both are indeed implied in Wealhtheow's self-reassuring, and therefore sweeping, statement about each nobleman at Heorot being faithful to his liege. Yet it must be acknowledged that the compound, with its strikingly unbalanced distribution (seven occurrences for Beowulf, against two for Hygelac and one, even a shared one, for Hrothgar), becomes much more characteristic of the main hero than of the two others.

Though applied to two, and not to three characters, *hlaford* is distrib-

[14] Ibid. As Onela's father, Ongentheow may be accepted to share a naming with Beowulf, whose family ties with the Swedes are irrefutable.

uted with a similar lack of balance: one single occurrence for Hrothgar is followed, in Part B of the poem, by five consecutive references to Beowulf (see listing above), and the only compounded form, *ealdhlaford* (2778b), also refers to the Geat. Here is again a naming that is less shared than essentially ascribed to one individual.

In retrospect, then, since they occur earlier in Part B, both *mondryhten* (2281b) and, only three half-lines below, *hlaford* (2283a), may be likewise ascribed to Beowulf; the two namings, through their repeated, and in Part B otherwise exclusive, use for him, make it possible to identify with some confidence Beowulf as the lord of the slave who rifled the dragon's hoard. Because he is answerable for his servant, who may indeed have been prompted by his master's lust for wealth when he stole the cursed cup,[15] Beowulf does not show ignorance, as Joseph L. Baird contends,[16] but rather a due sense of responsibility, upon hearing about the disaster; his guilty feelings need no other explanation than his own involvement in the matter of angering God *ofer ealde riht* (2330a).

Also related to *hlaford,* and consequently to Beowulf, is the adjective *hlafordleas,* with its single occurrence, at line 2935b. In the relation of the Battle at Ravenswood, the killing of the Geatish prince Hæthcyn occasions its use for the Geats, yet this adjective may be heard as an echo of their even greater destitution through the recent death of their lord Beowulf. Calling the Geats *hlafordleas,* the poet establishes another link between a digression and the main plot.

Shared namings, besides establishing a parallel with his elders Hrothgar and Hygelac, also compare Beowulf with his young retainer Wiglaf. Three are heard in turn for the two characters:

	Beowulf	Wiglaf
– *feþecempa*	1544[17]	2853a
– *hæle hildedeor*	1646a, 1816a	3111a
– *secg on searwum*	249a	2700a.

[15] Bernard F. Huppé, in *The Hero in the Earthly City: A Reading of Beowulf* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984), esp. pp. 38–39, holds the view that the hero is no longer truly heroic in Part B, where he is led to his fate through his pursuit of gold and glory.

[16] "The Uses of Ignorance: 'Beowulf' 435, 2330," *Notes and Queries,* n. s. 14 (1967), 6–8, esp. 7–8.

[17] Whallon suggests that "it might have been slightly handsomer for him [Beowulf] here to be named *folces hyrde* (as he is in line 2644), since *feþecempa* [typographical error not reproduced] is in line 2853 used for Wiglaf" ("The Diction of *Beowulf,*" 318), which seems irrelevant, perhaps all the more so since the two occurrences are collocated with cognates in the preceding lines: *werigmod* (1543a), for Beowulf, is echoed by *gewergad* (2852b) for Wiglaf,

All of them first describe Beowulf in his youth and are then repeated for the youthful Wægmunding whose behaviour during the last fight recalls that of his lord fifty years earlier. They are neatly distributed, in Part A for Beowulf, and in Part B for Wiglaf; their function in building up the symmetry of the poem could hardly be questioned.

The fact that it is also uttered by Beowulf addressing all his close retainers before his heroic challenge of the dragon, at line 2530a, does not lessen the value of *secg on searwum* as a link between the two warriors: after the fight has begun, Wiglaf alone proves worthy of sharing this naming with his lord.

The parallelism between the two noblemen in their youth could be expected to extend to their relationship with their respective lords, with Hygelac for the young Beowulf and, symmetrically enough, with the old Beowulf for Wiglaf. Is *mæg Ælfheres* (2604a) to be understood then as equivalent, for Wiglaf, to *mæg Higelaces* for Beowulf? In Part A of the epic, as seen above, this naming characterizes the hero and, furthermore, stresses the privileged position of "sister's son". Eliason has postulated the existence of Beowulf's sister as a mother for Wiglaf, "a logical necessity," it seems, to make out family links that the poet would have deliberately obscured in consideration of the artistic design of his work.[18] Forms of *mæg*, in *Beowulf*, essentially express close, even blood relationships; besides, when alliterating and connected with the genitive of a proper name, they are limited to the parallel namings mentioned above, with the inclusion of *Higelaces/ mæg and magoðegn* (407b–8a), which also designates Beowulf.[19] Since six out of seven occurrences undoubtedly refer to a blood tie with a maternal uncle, will not the seventh, and last, too? But, as Ælfhere's nephew, could Wiglaf also be Beowulf's? A most satisfactory solution is provided through the identification of the two uncles as one single character. Kemp Malone thought it possible that Ælfhere would be "an isolated survival of the hero's true name, which elsewhere had been completely driven out by the nick-

which confers similar "weariness" on the two "foot-warriors". Another similarity of mood is expressed by *collenferhð*, wrongly ascribed twice to Beowulf by Whallon (ibid., 316), and deliberately left out here since "bold of spirit, excited," that qualifies successively Beowulf (1806a) and Wiglaf (2785a) is adjectival and therefore ruled out as a "naming" (or "kenning" in Whallon's terminology).

[18] "Beowulf, Wiglaf and the Wægmundings," esp. 104.

[19] Though the exact nature of his blood tie with Beowulf is not revealed before line 1485a, "It looks as if ... Hygelac was meant to be familiar already." T. A. Shippey, *Beowulf* (London: Arnold, 1978), p. 31.

name,"[20] and sound arguments in favour of that hypothesis, which explains away the apparent lack of alliteration between father and son, have been set forth by Henry B. Woolf.[21] Instead of *mæg Beowulfes*, a predictably modified echo of the naming *mæg Higelaces*, what is heard must have been most palatable to an initiate audience, who would know both Beowulf's true identity and the nature of his kinship with Wiglaf, and could therefore appreciate the poet's mastery. With *mæg Ælfheres*, a symmetry is kept, while the family link between Beowulf and Wiglaf, though identical to the one between Hygelac and Beowulf, is toned down, both through a limitation to one occurrence as a match for the often repeated *mæg Hygelaces* and through a subtle substitution of names. Wiglaf is indeed introduced as a "sister's son", but in such a subdued way that he never stands as a potential successor to the throne, so that "the epic sweep and grandeur imparted to the poem by the realization that the death of Bewoulf spelled the doom of the Geatish nation"[22] is skilfully maintained.

Among other shared namings that appear to be used as a function of a general structure, worth mentioning is

	Beowulf	Scyld
– *leof þeoden*	3079b	34b.

The poem opens and closes with a funeral. A reference to the two deceased leaders of their people through the repetition of the same naming enhances the circularity that bestows upon the work a unifying elegiac quality.

An exhaustive presentation of shared kennings should also include terms like *æþeling*, *cyning*, *dryhten*, *frea*, *rinc*, or *þeoden*. Yet, when heard neither in compounds nor with attributives, they sound far less specific than merely generic and, unless their distribution is noticeable enough to make them the appanage of individuals – as with *hlaford*, for instance –, they fail to hint at important relationships. Resorting again to the metaphor of circles drawn around names, one may consider the radius, or more precisely its length, as a function of specificity. The less distinctive a naming is, the longer its radius will be, and wide circles touching each other revolve around centers, that is to say characters, that are too far from each other to establish meaningful connections.

If Beowulf were connected with Grendel merely through the sharing

[20] *The Literary History of Hamlet* (Heidelberg, 1923), I, 236.
[21] "The Name of Beowulf," *Englische Studien*, 72 (1937–38), 7–9.
[22] Eliason, p. 105.

of *rinc,* which occurs also for other characters, the relevance of such a link might be questioned. It is reinforced, however, with the repetition of the compounded form

	Beowulf	Grendel
– *hilderinc*	1495a, 1576a	986b,

which is also used once for a group of retainers headed by Wiglaf (3124a) and, as seen above, parallels Beowulf with Hrothgar in the formulaic *har hilderinc.* Stanley B. Greenfield, refuting Whallon's suggestion that the work should be "explained from the limited resources of the traditional poetic wordhoard,"[23] demonstrates that *hilderinc* 'battle-warrior,' used for Grendel when his severed claw is described as a formidable weapon, belongs to terms that are judiciously selected by the poet and "contribute effectively to the emotional impact of his scenes."[24] And is not this impact further heightened by his use of identical namings for opponents? Bringing them together through the repetition of terms applied to both may increase the dramatic power of the tension developed between characters who are engaged in a fight against each other.

Though no naming is shared between the opponents during the second fight, it is worth mentioning that the two occurrences of *hilderinc* for Beowulf are actually heard then. Is a link that has been established between the hero and Grendel extended, then, to Grendel's dam? It must be conceded, moreover, that connections may be suggested between characters with the use of elements of speech other than proper namings.

Thus the relationship between Beowulf and the dragon is not only expressed through *bealohycgendra* (2565a) and *þa aglæcean* (2592a), two namings that refer to both at the same time and stress shared fierceness,[25] but also through the adjectival *stearcheort* qualifying successively *se wyrm* (2287a), at line 2288b, and *Weder-Geata leod* (2551a), at line 2552a. As for *hordweard,* a naming heard four times for the dragon (2293b, 2302b, 2554b, 2593a), if not shared as such, it recalls, with a significant omission, the full formula *hordweard hæleþa* heard previously for Hrothgar and for Beowulf (see listing above).

Repetitions with omissions, or with substitutions within formulaic systems – e. g. *fyrena hyrde* (750b) contrasting Grendel with *folces hyr-*

[23] "Formulas for *Beowulf,*" 100.

[24] "The Canons of Old English Criticism," *ELH,* 34 (1967), 148.

[25] See the elaborate analysis of the second of these shared namings by Doreen M. Gillam in "The Use of the Term 'Æglaeca' in *Beowulf* at lines 893 and 2592," *SGG,* 3 (1961), 145–69.

de, applied to no less than four kings (see listing above) – would provide a subject for research far beyond the scope of the present analysis of namings for Beowulf.[26] Yet through their mere distribution and repetition, these namings happen to 'ring bells' in rather subtle ways for the appreciative ears of an experienced audience and furthermore develop around the central character patterns that show the structure of the poem as reflected in its very texture.

[26] Concluding on the digressions concerning episodes of Beowulf's life and Geatish history, Bonjour had already stated that "the poet succeeds in reaching an artistic effect that generally transcends their immediate and tangible contents, and this by creating subtle links of relevance which are mostly suggested by means of delicate hints and very light touches rather than fully expressed and explicit statements," in *Digressions*, p. 43.