

THE FOREIGN BEOWULF AND THE “FIGHT AT FINNSBURG”

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For George Hardin Brown

More or less covering lines 1071a–1159a (not counting the introductory verses),¹ the Finnsburg digression comprises the longest and most intensively studied episode in *Beowulf*. Its context in the poem may be summarized briefly. Beowulf has mortally wounded Grendel. War-leaders from surrounding territories follow Grendel’s tracks to the mere, now boiling with gore. On the way back a warrior sings of Sigemund and Heremod. Horse races are held, and the *Danes* and their guests gawk at Grendel’s arm, which has been hung from a beam in Heorot. Hroðgar acknowledges Beowulf as an adoptive “son,” and a lavish celebration honors the hero, who secures five dynastic treasures not only in recognition of his valor and but also as confirmation

¹ Few agree on where the digression begins: “The *Episode* is generally printed within marks of quotation. Holthausen, Wyatt, Sedgefield begin this quotation with 1068 *Finnes eafterum* (or *eafteran*); Schücking with 1071 *Nē hūru Hildeburg*; the old Heyne-Socin text (1903) with 1069, *Hæleð Healþdena*, so also Trautmann, loc. cit., p. 30. Gering, Child, Tinker, and Clark Hall begin with 1068; Lesslie Hall with 1069” (W. W. Lawrence, “Beowulf and the Tragedy of Finnsburg,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 30 [1915]: 372–431, at 399–400). Alexander Green later elaborated: “Marks of quotation are placed before [line] 1068, ‘*Finnes . . .*’ by Etmüller, Grein, Wülcker, Bugge, Wyatt, Holder, Arnold, Holthausen, Sedgefield, and Chambers; before [line] 1069, ‘*Hæleð . . .*’ by Heyne, Socin and Trautmann; before [line] 1071, ‘*Nē hūru Hildeburh . . .*’ by Schücking and Holthausen; whilst Kemble, Thorpe, and Grundtvig — the latter assumes a considerable gap after *Scyldinga* — print no signs of division or of quotation. Among the translators, [line] 1068 forms the commencement of the quotation in Etmüller, Grein, Garnett, Clark Hall, Child, Tinker (based on Wyatt’s text), Wyatt-Morris, and Gering; [line] 1069 in Lesslie Hall, Earle, and Trautmann, and [line] 1071 in Gering. As against all of these, Gummere has no marks of quotation, but a simple indentation in [line] 1069” (“The Opening of the Episode of Finn in *Beowulf*,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 31 [1916]: 759–97, at 777–78).

Beowulf is throughout cited from *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, ed. R. D. Fulk et al. (Toronto, 2008). Other Old English poems are cited from *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York, 1931–). The abbreviation “DOE” stands for *Dictionary of Old English*, ed. Angus Cameron et al. (Toronto, 2003–). All translations are my own.

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of retainership and possibly of Hroðgar's adoption.² Immediately following the bestowal of these gifts, a poet recites Finnsburg "fore Healfdenes / hildewisan" ("before Healfdene's warriors," 1064). The tale commemorates a Danish victory over Frisians, a triumph which all agree should compliment Danish resolve. In fact, just before the episode opens, the Scylding Hnæf is called a "hæleð Healf-Dena" ("hero of the Half-Danes," 1069a), an epithet explicitly linking audience and characters.³

Even if the Anglo-Saxons did not all share details of the Finnsburg episode as narrated, the audience plausibly knew of some events rehearsed in the digression, since the story was popular. Its main figure Hengest arguably inaugurated the Anglo-Saxon migration.⁴ The earliest versions of Hengest's

² Some (Klaeber included) have questioned whether Beowulf actually gets Healf-Dene's sword, as he does Healf-Dene's saddle. Klaeber emended MS *brand Healfdenes* "Half-Dane's sword" of 1020b to *bearn Healfdenes* "Healfdene's son." Opposed to this emendation are Sherman M. Kuhn, "The Sword of Healfdene," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 42 (1943): 82–95 and "Further Thoughts on *Brand Healfdenes*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 76 (1977): 231–37; Bruce Mitchell, "Beowulf 1020b: brand or bearn?" *Romanobarbarica* 10 (1988–89): 283–92; Hideki Watanabe, "Final Words on *Beowulf* 1020b: *Brand Healfdenes*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 101 (2000): 51–57. This *brand* of Healf-Dene's is almost certainly the weapon once owned by Heorogar and given to Hygelac (2155a).

³ Healf-Dene (literally "Half-Dane") was a Danish king, Hroðgar's father, whose name engendered the dynastic term "Half-Danes"; see J. R. R. Tolkien, *Finn and Hengest: The Fragment and the Episode*, ed. Alan Bliss (Boston, 1983), 37–45. Although "Widsið" 29a calls Hnæf a leader of "Hocings," Klaeber has alleged that Hnæf and his party represent "a minor branch of the great Danish nation" ("Observations on the Finn Episode," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 14 [1915]: 544–49, at 544). Hoc is father to Hildeburg in *Beowulf* 1076b, and since Hildeburg is deprived of a brother and son (1073a–74a), Hnæf must be her brother.

⁴ See Nellie Slayton Aurner, "Hengest: A Study in Early English Hero Legend," *University of Iowa Humanistic Studies* 2 (1921): 1–76, at 57–58: "In the earlier translations of [*Beowulf* and the "Finnsburg Fragment"] it was generally taken for granted that this Hengest was identical with the well-known figure in the chronicles. Grundtvig, the first to give a complete interpretation of these passages, assumed as a matter of course that the Hengest in the tale was the only Hengest referred to in heroic tradition. . . . This understanding of Hengest's identity was not only accepted but was definitely reaffirmed by Price and Kemble. Kemble, however, changed the translation of the important lines 1142–44, making them tell of the death of Hengest. . . . It was this translation apparently, that raised the first doubt of Hengest's identity. . . . But it was the compelling influence of Grein [*Eberl's Jahrbuch* 1862] that caused general acceptance of the theory that the Hengest of the Finnsburg tragedy was a person entirely distinct from the one in Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle." See also J. E. Turville-Petre, "Hengest and Horsa," *Saga Book of the Viking Society* 14 (1953–57): 273–90; Brian D. Joseph, "Using Indo-European Comparative Mythology to Solve Literary Problems: The Case of Old English Hengest," *Papers in Comparative Studies* 2 (1982–83): 177–86; Jan de Vries, "Die Beiden Hengeste," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 72 (1953): 125–43; C. F. C. Hawkes, "The Jutes of Kent," in *Dark-Age Britain: Studies Presented to E. D. Leeds*, ed. Donald B. Harden and E. Thurlow Leeds

deeds in sub-Roman Britain are chronicled in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* and the *Historia Brittonum* of “Nennius.”⁵ Elsewhere “Widsith” records that “Finn son of Folcwalda ruled the Frisians,”⁶ and the events recounted in *Beowulf* formed the subject of an independent lay now designated “The Fight at Finnsburg.”⁷ In fact, neither telling conflicts with the other except in the names Ordlaf (fragment) and Oslaf (*Beowulf*) and in one other detail (discussed below), although omissions in the digression and the fact that two men share the same name in the lay make the plot of both subject to ample *disagreement*. In the following *précis* the Finnsburg versions in *Beowulf* and the fragment have been reconciled to provide a schematic outline of events, not all of which will enjoy universal agreement:

A Dane named Hnæf travels to Finnsburg — a stronghold of the Frisian king, Finn. Finn has married Hildeburg, Hnæf’s sister, probably to reconcile a feud between Frisians and Danes. The Frisians apparently attack Hnæf’s retinue at night, and the fragment concerns the Danish defense of Finn’s hall. Hnæf falls during the fight, and Hengest, possibly a Jute or Angle, becomes leader of the Danes. Finn’s unnamed son, who fought either with the Danish party as Hnæf’s foster-son or with his father, is also killed. Given Hengest’s advantageous position and Finn’s losses, the conflict cannot be resolved. An uneasy truce is established: Finn’s party may not taunt Hengest’s over the indignity of following their lord’s killer, Finn shares his hall with Hengest and the Danish squad, and Finn swears binding oaths, accepting Hengest as bondsman and the Danes as coequals with his own Frisian retinue. Gold is produced: either Finn’s oaths are sworn on the god Ing’s sacred relics, or Finn pays wergild for the slaughtered men. Hildeburg laments the killing of brother and son, and Finn’s retinue disperses for the winter. Hengest stays on. Apparently goaded by his own party and given a sword by one Hunlafing (“son of Hunlaf”), Hengest engineers the dissolution of his vow, kills Finn, and takes both Hildeburg and the Frisian treasury to Denmark.

(London, 1956), 91–111. Nicholas Howe avers, “the Hengest of *Beowulf* may be the Hengest who led the Anglo-Saxon Migration” (*Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* [New Haven, 1989], 145), although John D. Niles (“Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History,” *Exemplaria* 5 [1993]: 79–109, at 98) is more direct: “To take this Hengest to be the Hengest of the Migration Myth seems only natural.” Richard North accepts the identification unconditionally in “Tribal Loyalties in the *Finnsburh Fragment* and Episode” (*Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 21 [1990]: 13–43). He repeats the same position in *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature* (Cambridge, 1997), 65–77. Here I must mention the judgment of Bruce Mitchell, that the “modern identification of . . . Hengest with the Hengest (of Hengest and Horsa)” rests on highly “tenuous” evidence (“1947–1987: Forty Years On,” in *Bruce Mitchell on Old English*, ed. Bruce Mitchell [Oxford, 1988], 325–44, at 338).

⁵ Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), 50, 150; David N. Dumville, *The Historia Brittonum*, 3: *The “Vatican” Recension* (Cambridge, 1985), §§20, 24–27.

⁶ Line 27: “Fin Folcwalding / Fresna cynne [weald]. . . .”

⁷ Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, 283–85.

The digression almost certainly represents the narrator's abridgment of the *scop's* performance, a conjecture accounting for a number of missing details that might otherwise clarify the scenario.⁸

FINNSBURG AND THE "PRECARIOUS PEACE"

Critics have repeatedly sought to explain how Finnsburg relates to *Beowulf*, and most conclude that details in the story parallel situations, events, or themes in the larger narrative context, the moment of celebration in Hroðgar's hall. Since 1915, in fact, nearly every critic reflecting on the Finnsburg episode has "analogized" its characters and plot in just this way.⁹ One widespread interpretation has emerged since 1950, when Adrien Bonjour proposed that Finnsburg illustrated the social discord inevitably arising from vengeance or retribution — a "precarious peace": "the irresistible force of tribal enmity sooner or later sweeps aside with its imperative all human

⁸ Some have wondered whether the digression in *Beowulf* represents an actual performance (synoptic or otherwise) or the poet-narrator's summary of events as recited at that moment in Hroðgar's hall; see R. A. Williams, *The Finn Episode in Beowulf: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1924), 15–16. Alistair Campbell suggested that evidence of an underlying lay of Finn could be observed in the *scop's* summary ("The Old English Epic Style," *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn [London, 1962], 13–26; see also Roberta Frank, "Germanic Legend in Old English Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Michael Godden and Michael Lapidge [Cambridge, 1991], 88–106, at 101).

⁹ The earliest commentators saw no relevance in Finnsburg, or else deemed it an example of Danish resolve. Green calls it an "interlude" ("Opening," 782). Williams (*Finn Episode*, 10–11) went further than most of the nineteenth-century philologists, suggesting that the poet wished to describe "momentous events" in another hall. He paraphrased: "Now in the evening, gathered together in Heorot, which still shows plain traces of the terrific struggle, they wonder whether in any other hall such a game had e'er been played as *Beowulf* played there with Grendel. Can any other hall compare with theirs as the scene of events so momentous?" (see also Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf: An Edition with Relevant Shorter Texts* [Oxford, 1998], 20: "appropriate parallel between [the Danes'] deliverance from the longstanding depredations of Grendel and this earlier occasion [Finnsburg], when the Danes . . . finally prevail."). A. G. Brodeur wrote, "the circumstances under which the minstrel sang his lay have no bearing whatever on the interpretation of the Finn Episode. Our poet introduces the Episode simply as an illustration of the songs which furnished entertainment for Hroðgar's feasting warriors" ("Design and Motive in the Finn Episode," *University of California Publications in English* 14 [1943]: 1–42, at 41–42). Kemp Malone queries, "Why does the poet treat as he does this great story of the English heroic age?" and goes on to conclude weakly that the poet had an interest in Hengest's repentance for his hesitation in taking vengeance ("The Finn Episode in *Beowulf*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 25 [1926]: 157–72, at 171).

attempts at a compromise."¹⁰ Bonjour related this deduction to Finnsburg in two ways. First, he made the case that Finnsburg emphasized the latent hostility between Wealhþeow's sons Hreðric and Hroðmund and their cousin Hroþulf, a situation that Saxo Grammaticus records in a fuller but more convoluted form in the *Gesta Danorum*:¹¹ "wene ic þæt he mid gode / gyldan wille // uncran eaferan" [I expect that he intends to reward our son with bounty] (1184a–85a). Wealhþeow's expectation that Hroþulf will support his cousins after Hroðgar's death sounds apprehensive.¹² In fact, the poet adumbrates discord between Hroþulf and Hroðgar, a rivalry that apparently involves Hreðric and Hroðmund:¹³

	. . . fægere geþægōn
medoful manig	magas þara
swiðhicgende	on sele þam hean,

¹⁰ Adrien Bonjour, *The Digressions in Beowulf* (Oxford, 1950), 57.

¹¹ Gregor Sarrazin, "Miscellen: I. Rolf Krake und sein Vetter im Beowulfliede," *Englische Studien* 24 (1898): 144–45. R. W. Chambers (*Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn*, third edition revised by C. L. Wrenn [Cambridge, 1959], 26–27) expounded on this evidence of Hroþulf's treachery in the *Gesta Danorum*, and his argument deserves summarizing. Drawing on the now lost *Bjarkamál*, Saxo reports that "Roluo" (OE Hroþulf) slew a king named Røricus (OE Hreðric). Saxo calls Røricus the "son of the covetous Bøkus," hypothetically translating the Old Icelandic epithet *hnøggvanbaugi* or "?greedy for rings (i.e. treasure)." Coincidentally, the *Langfjðgatal*, a genealogy of the ancient Danish kings, calls this Røricus "Hrærek Hnauggvanbaugi" and records his succession after Rolf (=Hroþulf). Chambers asserts that the genealogy identifies Hrærek as Hroðgar's son and further reasons, "Hrærek has been moved from his proper place in order to clear Rolf of any suspicion of usurpation" (*Beowulf*, 26 n. 3). Chambers's clever speculation is ultimately unnecessary to demonstrate Hroþulf's future plans (not his current intentions), for the intimations in *Beowulf* and "Widsith" present the case convincingly enough. However, Gerald Morgan disagrees with Hroþulf's implication in treachery ("The Treachery of Hrothulf," *English Studies* 53 [1972]: 23–39).

¹² Hroþulf is Hroðgar's nephew, son of Halga "the Good" ("Halga til," 61b). The succession in Germanic lands, as in post-migration England, generally followed on seniority and often generated strife between uncles and nephews. Hroðgar himself seems to have shared in this tradition, for Heorowearð did not rule after his father Heorogar's death. The poet specifically mentions Beowulf's receipt of Heorogar's sword. For the subtleties of Wealhþeow's reply, see Gale R. Owen-Crocker, "'Gracious' Hrothulf, 'Gracious' Hrothgar: A Reassessment," *English Language Notes* 38 (2001): 1–9, at 4–5 and below, 193–95.

¹³ These words mirror the ominous tone in "Widsið," where Hroðgar and Hroþulf are said to have held their peace until after they had "devastated Ingeld's army":

Hroþwulf ond Hroðgar	heoldon lengest
sibbe ætsomne	suhtorfædran,
sipþan hy forwræcon	wicinga cynn
ond Ingeldes	ord forbigdan,
forheowan æt Heorote	Heaðobeardna þrym.

(45a–49b)

Hroðgar ond Hroþulf. Heorot innan wæs
 freondum afylled; nalles facenstafas
 Peod-Scyldingas þenden fremedon.

(1014b–19b)

[Their stouthearted kinsmen, Hroðgar ond Hroþulf, joyfully relished many a mead-cup in the high hall. Heorot was filled with friends within. Not yet had the Scylding countrymen planned malicious plots.]

Because (the argument goes) human relations will always deteriorate and because even the sincerest pledges will fail, Hroþulf will ultimately kill his cousins, and Wealhþeow and her kin will suffer. This future exists in ironic juxtaposition to the present hall-joy and to Wealhþeow's (misplaced?) trust in her nephew,¹⁴ and Hroðgar's failed adoption of the Geat Beowulf is seen as enhancing the dramatic irony. Although these terms contradict the specific "tribal enmity" of the "precarious peace" that Bonjour established, they do underscore the focus of Finnsburg on social upheaval between intratribal factions.

Bonjour's second application of the "precarious peace" invoked intertribal conflict, pure and simple. Linking Hengest to Ingeld in the Heaðobearð digression, Bonjour reasoned that the social imperative of Ingeld's retribution would supersede any claim of harmony, including sworn reconciliation. So highly is vengeance prized that peace consistently fails in the face of *any* incitement, no matter how trivial. In these terms, Ingeld's marriage to Freawaru answers to Hengest's pledge:

Beowulf's prophecy concerning Freawaru is in fact but another effective illustration of the theme of the precarious peace. Ingeld's tragic dilemma is almost the exact counterpart of Hengest's, and in both cases the aspect of the sword . . . meant the decisive "call to action" resulting in the victory of the urge for revenge and the outbreak of fresh hostilities. We said "almost," because, if compared with the situation of Hengest, Ingeld's represents an even greater concentration of the dramatic element: not only does the claim of vengeance force him to break the compact with the former enemy, as in Hengest's case, but he is now connected by the bonds of marriage with Freawaru, the Danish princess, and such bonds render the dilemma even more-tragic. It is, to a certain extent, as if he had been married to a Frisian

¹⁴ Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Woodbridge, 2003), 180–81. Yet Hill has admirably shown that Wealhþeow is not "a passive onlooker in a much wider and more vicious game" (J. M. Hill, "Beowulf and the Danish Succession: Gift Giving as an Occasion for Complex Gesture," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s., 11 [1992]: 177–97, at 181). Bonjour (*Digressions*, 60) ultimately contrasted Hengest's successful vengeance in Finnsburg and the anticipated war at Heorot: "the allusion to the future tragedy of the Danish royal house is clear enough and its effect is obviously heightened by its double contrast with the brilliant scene of splendour and rejoicings in the Hall, and with the glorious Danish victory over their enemies at Finnsburg."

princess, say a daughter of Finn! And yet vengeance triumphs, again emphasizing how fateful indeed was a renewal of the enmity between the two tribes.¹⁵

In the episode Bonjour saw a "very similar contrast wrought between present harmony (the fine picture of Freawaru amid the rejoicing guests in the Hall), and future calamity."¹⁶ His explanation of the episode entails the inevitability of violence in defiance of fragile human compacts.

Later critics have enthusiastically embraced Bonjour's subtle homologies and extended the "precarious peace" to the social relations profiled throughout *Beowulf*. In a general discussion of the Finnsburg and Heaðobeard digressions, for example, Edward B. Irving, Jr. concluded that "fidelity and courage lead to the destruction rather than the preservation of society."¹⁷ Elsewhere in an article devoted specifically to Finnsburg, Martin Camargo reiterated Bonjour's "precarious peace" in both of its applications:

The disaster at Finnsburg casts its pall over Wealhtheow's ministrations, creating an ironic distance between her hopes for the future and the bloodshed [i.e. caused by Hroþulf] that every member of the audience knows will follow. The same theme is again expressed . . . in *Beowulf's* later prophecy concerning Freawaru and Ingeld.¹⁸

Emphasizing Hildeburg's losses, Freawaru's misery, and Æschere's death, Camargo focused more narrowly on the collateral suffering prompted by revenge ("injustice" is his term). Again, he universalizes the "precarious peace," confirming the view that the *Beowulf* poet sometimes condemns heroic retaliation. Harry Berger, Jr. and H. Marshall Leicester, Jr. had earlier made much the same point about the prospects for political amity in the poem: "As the Finn and Ingeld episodes suggest . . . sooner or later peace-weaving will become war-making."¹⁹ Insistently trained on Hildeburg's sorrow and consequently suspicious of revenge, these and other similar voices

¹⁵ Bonjour, *Digressions*, 61–62. Bonjour closes his argument by reading the dragon's revenge (for the theft of a cup) as symbolic of "the great epic prophecy of the downfall of the Geatish people" — a consequence which the narrator himself never confirms.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁷ Edward B. Irving, Jr., *A Reading of Beowulf* (New Haven, 1968), 178–79.

¹⁸ Martin Camargo, "The Finn Episode and the Tragedy of Revenge in *Beowulf*," *Studies in Philology* 78 (1981): 120–34, at 127. Camargo summarizes, "The function of the Finn episode, in short, is to cast doubt on the revenge ethic at the very point in the narrative where such a code [of vengeance] appears most glorious" (132).

¹⁹ Harry Berger, Jr. and H. Marshall Leicester, Jr., "Social Structure as Doom: The Limits of Heroism in *Beowulf*," in *Old English Studies in Honor of John C. Pope*, ed. Robert B. Burlin and Edward B. Irving, Jr. (Toronto, 1974), 37–79, at 43; these critics envision Grendel's mother's revenge as symbolic of Hroþulf's future treachery. See also John M. Leyerle, "Beowulf the Hero and the King," *Medium Ævum* 34 (1965): 89–102.

could be said to impugn the status of the digression as Danish triumph.²⁰ At the very least, they contemplate a cultural, and arguably ethical, distance between the narrator and his subjects, Beowulf included.

A second, less conventional claim made about the relevance of Finnsburg also acknowledges Bonjour's "precarious peace" but centers on Grendel's mother. In confirming Bonjour's proposition, Bruce Moore gathered a number of parallels between events in Beowulf's purview and in the *scop's* broader narrative scope: "treachery and its association with the world of monsters, kinship relationships (particularly those between uncle and nephew), the hall, treasure, and more general questions concerning political and social order."²¹ Moore compared Hroþulf's duplicity to Finn's, underscored the persistence of feuds, and reflected on the negative value of treasure-giving as a kind of institutionalized bribery. More importantly, his paper yielded the influential observation that Finnsburg alluded to Grendel's mother's revenge. Grendel's mother is said to indulge in the blood feud in a way analogous to Hengest's retribution, and Æschere, Hroðgar's counselor, dies from this sanctioned violence: "Between the defeat of Grendel and the fight with Grendel's Dam, a significant change of perspective occurs: disorder is located in the human world as much as in the world of monsters. This breakdown of order is felt most strongly in the Finnsburg Episode."²² Hildeburg's grief stands for the suffering of all the collateral victims of the revenge ethic, and the "precarious peace" becomes universalized, just as other commentators have intuited.

Although *Beowulf* critics have endorsed these cogent analyses of the Finnsburg episode, a problem of focalization ultimately challenges the "Hroþulf" and "Grendel's mother" approaches to the "precarious peace": both readings are irreconcilable with the characters' internal perspective. Critics have deduced that the *Beowulf* poet formulated a dual perspective by distinguishing between the benighted pagan audience in the world of the poem and the enlightened Christian Anglo-Saxon audience external to it.²³

²⁰ As John M. Hill acknowledges in a different context (*The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic* [Gainesville, FL, 2000], 67): "We have . . . failed to understand the extent to which Hildeburh's bitter appropriation of the funeral pyre is a mute demand for retribution." Robert A. Albano would go further and implicate Hildeburg in the revenge ("The Role of Women in Anglo-Saxon Culture: Hildeburh in *Beowulf* and a Curious Counterpart in the *Volsunga Saga*," *English Language Notes* 32 [1994]: 1–10).

²¹ Bruce Moore, "The Relevance of the Finnsburgh Episode," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 75 (1976): 317–29, at 317.

²² *Ibid.*, 329.

²³ The poem's dual consciousness has been explored in a series of publications: R. M. Lumiansky, "The Dramatic Audience in *Beowulf*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 51 (1952): 545–50; Alain Renoir, "The Heroic Oath in *Beowulf*, the *Chanson de Roland*, and the *Nibelungenlied*," in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Bro-*

For example, when analyzing the passage that describes Hroðgar’s “decipherment” of the runic inscriptions on the sword-hilt from Grendel’s mere, Marijane Osborn observed how the poet validates the superior Christian consciousness of his audience. Her argument exposed a “double point of view in *Beowulf* — what they know in the poem and what we know outside it” — and this discrepant awareness generates the poem’s situational ironies.²⁴ This differential outlook also applies to intradiegetic narration, which may have as distinct a motivation for Anglo-Saxon Christian listeners as it does for Danes lacking their omniscience. Both solutions to Finnsburg overlook this prominent dichotomy. They focus exclusively on the narrator’s point of view and neglect why the episode might be relevant *for the Danes*. In other words, the interpretations proposed for Finnsburg which are based on the “precarious peace” are unknowable to the characters, a circumstance leaving the episode irrelevant — or as yet unclarified — in the world of the poem. Of course, any such interpretation of Finnsburg may also explain the Anglo-Saxon audience’s reaction, in supplement to the observations generated by Bonjour’s “precarious peace.”

Analyses of Finnsburg based on the “precarious peace” do not apply to the characters’ level of knowledge. In the case of Hroþulf’s opportunism, it is alleged that Hroþulf intends to usurp the Danish throne from his cousins. Hroðgar wants to appoint Beowulf as regent, but Wealhþeow thinks Hroþulf is a better candidate. Yet many critics have sensed anxiety in Wealhþeow’s statements,

Ic minne can
glædne Hroþulf, þæt he þa geogoðe wile
arum healdan . . .

(1180b–82a)

[I know that my gracious Hroþulf intends to treat the youths honorably. . .]

and

. . . wene ic þæt he mid gode gyldan wille
uncran eaferan gif he þæt eal gemon,
hwæt wit to willan ond to worðmyndum
umborwesendum ær arna gefremedon.

(1184a–87b)

deur, ed. Stanley B. Greenfield (Eugene, OR, 1963), 237–66, at 245; Marijane Osborn, “The Great Feud: Scriptural History and Strife in *Beowulf*,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 93 (1978): 973–81; and Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, TN, 1985). Robinson convincingly extended Osborn’s findings to the entire poem and made the case for the duality of linguistic perception as well.

²⁴ Osborn, “Great Feud,” 974.

[I expect that he will reward our kinsmen with kindness, if he bears in mind all that: what honors we two awarded him as a child, both for his desire and his prestige.]

The first claim may be guardedly optimistic: Wealhþeow *knows* (“can”) that Hroþulf intends (“wile”) to act honorably (“arum”). If Wealhþeow seems unsure, she may be recognizing the *potential* for violent rivalries among patrilineal kin that Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr. has investigated in the poem,²⁵ but she supports Hroþulf because he is obligated to her and Hroðgar. In this context OE *glæd* has recently been translated “appreciative.”²⁶ Wealhþeow therefore highlights Hroþulf’s consideration: she knows that he *appreciates* Hroðgar’s generosity to him when he was a boy and understands the duty to reciprocate. Wealhþeow’s trust mitigates the suspicion implied in the second quotation, that Hroþulf might forget the honors (“hwæt . . . arna”) once bestowed on him: “I believe that Hroþulf will reward . . . *if* he bears in mind. . . .” Wealhþeow here stresses Hroþulf’s duty to protect her children in return for Hroðgar’s past generosity,²⁷ a benefit that Beowulf cannot lay claim to. In effect, she observes that the foreigner Beowulf cannot “bear in mind” any longstanding debt of personal generosity. Although some misgivings have been conceded, Wealhþeow does not know that Hroþulf will *inevitably* usurp Hreðric’s place. On the contrary, she finds Hroþulf more trustworthy because he is an appreciative kinsman and socially indebted to Hroðgar.²⁸ John M. Hill has explained how Beowulf negotiates the competing interests in the scene, especially Wealhþeow’s appeal to Beowulf to serve instead as an ally to her family instead of a king.²⁹ Her bestowal of a precious torque counters Hroðgar’s gift of family heirlooms. Wealhþeow’s gift therefore encumbers Hroðgar’s plan to enthrone Beowulf and highlights the conviction that *native* kinsmen have more trustworthy allegiances than outsiders.³⁰

²⁵ Rolf H. Bremmer, “The Importance of Kinship: Uncle and Nephew in ‘Beowulf,’” *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 15 (1980): 21–38; see also Tom Shippey, “Wicked Queens and Cousin Strategies in *Beowulf* and Elsewhere,” *The Heroic Age* 5 (2001–2), <http://www.heroicage.org/>.

²⁶ Owen-Crocker, “‘Gracious’ Hrothulf” (n. 13 above), 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Helen Damico, *Beowulf’s Wealhtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition* (Madison, WI, 1984), 128.

²⁹ Hill, “Beowulf and the Danish Succession” (n. 14 above), 177–97; *idem*, *The Cultural World in Beowulf* (Toronto, 1995), 100–104.

³⁰ Alfred Bammesberger’s interpretation of “druncne dryhtguman / doð swa ic bidde” (1231) as “oh retainers, having drunk [the royal mead], do as I ask!” (Bammesberger’s brackets) accords with this view (“The Conclusion of Wealhtheow’s Speech [*Beowulf* 1231],” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 91 [1990]: 207–8). On Wealhþeow’s status, see the

Ultimately, Wealhþeow's coy remarks about Hroþulf in lines 1185–87 become unusually apprehensive in light of the *narrator's* comments,

. . . þær þa godan twegen [Hroðgar and Hroþulf]
 sæton suhtergefæderan; þa gyt wæs hiera sib ætgædere,
 æghwylc oðrum trywe.

(1163b–65a)

[. . . where the two good men [Hroðgar and Hroþulf] sat, uncle and nephew. At that time they were still united in goodwill, each loyal to the other.]

and

. . . nalles facenstafas
 Peod-Scyldingas þenden fremedon.

(1018b–19b)

[. . . *not yet* had those countrymen-Scyldings prepared malicious plots. (My emphasis)]

The dramatic irony could not be plainer: the narrator confirms Hroþulf's present loyalty. In fact, the poet further justifies Wealhþeow's confidence in him: "Heorot innan wæs // freondum afylled" ("Heorot was filled with friends within," 1017b–18a). If Wealhþeow expects no betrayal, what is the relevance of the "precarious peace" imputed to Finnsburg for the Danish audience? The chances are remote that the *scop* reciting Finnsburg intended his audience to compare Hildeburg and Wealhþeow as failed peace-weavers, since no plot at Heorot yet exists. Hroþulf's "expected" usurpation therefore does not emerge from Finnsburg as an example of inevitable violence in the world of the poem, even if an external audience familiar with Germanic legend might recall Hroþulf's role in the Scylding feud.

Nor would Hengest's vengeance in Finnsburg prophetically explain Grendel's mother's retaliation, since the Danes do not expect any attack from Grendel's mother. She takes them completely by surprise, as the narrator attests: "Wyrð ne cuþon, // geosceaft grimme, / swa hit agangen wearð // eorla manegum" ("they did not know of their fate, their grim destiny, as it had been ordained for many an earl," 1233b–35a).³¹ Unless it could be shown that the Danish *scop* foresees Grendel's mother's "inevitable" venge-

remarks of Thomas D. Hill, "'Wealththeow' as a Foreign Slave: Some Continental Analogues," *Philological Quarterly* 69 (1990): 106–12.

³¹ Donald K. Fry avoids the problem of perspective by alleging that Grendel is expected to return ("*Finnsburh*: A New Interpretation," *Chaucer Review* 9 [1974]: 1–14, at 2). Ward Parks reveals the poet's opinion that the mother's aim was revenge ("wolde . . . sunu deað wrecan," 1277b–78b), but her method predation ("Prey Tell: How Heroes Perceive Monsters in *Beowulf*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 92 [1993]: 1–16, at 13). He writes, "In keeping with the habits of her clan, [Grendel's mother] too introduces herself to

ance and that the Danes fail to grasp the *scop's* subliminal warning, the Finnsburg digression could not be said to predict Grendel's mother's revenge for the Danes. In this second derivation of the "precarious peace" the simple question arises how Hengest's revenge might be relevant to the Danes' present circumstances — their restricted perspective — rather than to the narrator's omniscient horizon shared in part by his audience.

The interpretations of Finnsburg I have discussed do not resolve the episode's significance for the characters in *Beowulf* because alternative comparanda have not been considered. Notwithstanding Hildeburg's emotional agony and Finn's duplicity, Finnsburg unquestionably focuses on Hengest. In keeping with the prevailing "analogous" approach that critics have settled on for the digressions as a whole, it seems reasonable that Hengest could be compared to another hero of similar or potential renown. Since Hengest is the central figure of Finnsburg, and Beowulf the central figure of the epic, especially at this moment, the episode logically pertains to Beowulf, in the same way that the Sigemund / Heremod and Herebeald / Hæðcyn digressions do.³² For the Danes at least, Finnsburg may not depict an abstract motivation like vengeance but a more immediate circumstance: Beowulf's elevation as Hroðgar's successor. In my view, Beowulf is being compared to Hengest, a figure of past heroic eminence. Alarming reservations emerge from the *scop's* analogous story about another foreign-born leader of Danes, and Finnsburg subtly reflects the unease felt for Beowulf's appointment as Hroðgar's heir.

the Danes predatorially. . . . All the same, while her behavior is predatory, her motives are not."

³² For Sigemund / Heremod see: Bonjour, *Digressions*, 47; Peter Clemons, *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1995), 195; Eric G. Stanley, "The Narrative Art of *Beowulf*," reprinted in *A Collection of Papers with Emphasis on Old English Literature*, ed. Eric G. Stanley (Toronto, 1987), 170–91, at 175; R. Barton Palmer, "In his End is His Beginning: *Beowulf* 2177–2199 and the Question of Unity," *Annuaire Médiévale* 17 (1976): 5–21, at 16; M. S. Griffith, "Some Difficulties in *Beowulf*, Lines 874–902: Sigemund Reconsidered," *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1995): 11–24; Howell Chickering, *Beowulf: A Dual Language Edition* (Garden City, NY, 1977), 318; Stephen C. Bandy, "Cain, Grendel, and the Giants of *Beowulf*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 9 (1973): 235–49, at 243; Kemp Malone, "Coming Back from the Mere," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 69 (1954): 1292–99, at 1296. For Herebeald/Hæðcyn: Dorothy Whitelock, "*Beowulf* 2444–2471," *Medium Ævum* 8 (1939): 198–204 and eadem, "Anglo-Saxon Poetry and the Historian," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., 31 (1949): 75–94; Laurence N. De Looze, "Frame Narratives and Fictionalization: *Beowulf* as Narrator," reprinted in *Interpretations of Beowulf: A Critical Anthology*, ed. R. D. Fulk (Bloomington, IN, 1991), 242–50; Stanley B. Greenfield, "Geatish History: Poetic Art and Epic Quality in *Beowulf*," reprinted in *Interpretations of Beowulf*, 120–26; Walter John Sedgfield, *Beowulf* (Manchester, 1910), 177; and Lois Bragg, *The Lyric Speakers of Old English Poetry* (Rutherford, NJ, 1991), 82.

READING FINNSBURG AGAINST THE HEAÐOBEARD DIGRESSION

Bonjour's thesis of the "precarious peace" equated Hengest's situation in Finnsburg with Ingeld's in the Heaðobeard digression, an inference ultimately deriving from William Lawrence's views that Hildeburh, Freawaru and Wealhþeow are to be equated.³³ Bonjour reasoned: "The Wealhtheow scene is thus, in a way, the link connecting — in their striking analogy — the situation of Hildeburh in the Finnsburg Episode, and that of Wealhtheow's daughter Freawaru in the Heathobards Episode."³⁴ The situations are indeed similar: Hengest parallels Ingeld in the Heaðobeard digression, since both men are now confronted with breaking a truce. Hengest must fight his king and benefactor, while Ingeld confronts his father-in-law. Both do so with supreme reluctance because each confrontation means voiding a sworn treaty. Ingeld is forced into confrontation because the murderer of the young Dane cannot be found and punished, and (one imagines) the animosity grows on both sides. It takes time for the humiliation to become intolerable, as Beowulf says, "ond him wiflufan // æfter ceawwælmum / colran weorðað" ("and his affection for his wife will cool after these seethings of anxiety," 2065b–66b). Furthermore, both Hengest (as I shall argue) and Ingeld are forced to honor the wishes of their men in a situation of shame.

Three other parallels are obvious. First, both Freawaru's and Hildeburg's marriages confirm truces made between Danes and their non-Danish adversaries.³⁵ At least one collocation in the Heaðobeard episode clearly evokes the Finnsburg context: "on ba healfe" ("on both sides," 2063b) recalls "on twa healfa" ("on two sides") of Finnsburg (1095b). The Heaðobeards and Danes are sworn enemies. Second, the fact that Danes are visiting their national enemies the Heaðobeards closely matches the events of Finnsburg, in which Danes are visiting their rivals, the Frisians. My final parallel is frequently alleged, but my reading of its significance differs from others'. The central moment in the Heaðobeard digression, extending for over

³³ Lawrence reasoned in 1915, "so far as the woman is concerned, the general situation underlying both stories [Finn and Ingeld] is much the same" ("Tragedy of Finnsburg" [n. 1 above], 382); see also Ritchie Girvan, *Finnsburuh*, British Academy: Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture [1940] (London, 1941), 15; Henry Morgan Ayres, "The Tragedy of Hengest in *Beowulf*," *Journal of English and German Philology* 16 (1917): 282–95, at 289: "The tragic situations both of Hildeburg and of Freawaru are keenly present to [the poet's] mind."

³⁴ Bonjour, *Digressions* (n. 10 above), 61. There is no reason to assume that Freawaru is Wealhþeow's daughter.

³⁵ In Finnsburg, Danes and Frisians are said to share a "fæste frioðuwære" ("firm compact of peace," 1096a), whereas the Heaðobeard digression refers to a "freondscipe fæstne" ("firm friendship," 2069a).

twenty lines, describes Freawaru's attendant flaunting a sword taken from a defeated Heaðobeard warrior named "Wiðergyld."³⁶

Because *Hengest* receives a sword in Finnsburg and, as I shall argue, flaunts it, the swords themselves are strong parallels in both episodes. The attendant is murdered on account of this sword, and the delicate alliance, the motivation for the wedding itself, disintegrates. Since a sword will reignite the enmity of Danes and Frisians in the Finnsburg digression, details from the Heaðobeard digression have particular relevance for Finnsburg.³⁷ In fact, I think the parallel answers an enduring crux.

The situational parallels between the Finnsburg and Heaðobeard digressions imply that Beowulf may have had the Finnsburg digression in mind when he predicts the outcome of Freawaru's marriage, since he imagines the Heaðobeard scenario as the consequence of a failed alliance. Some additional evidence may support the conjecture. Just before the Finnsburg performance the narrator admits that a *gidd* or "poetic utterance of sober character" was often recited at the gathering ("gid oft wrecen," 1065b),³⁸ when the poet "had to recite the hall-joy along the mead-bench" ("healgamen . . . // æfter medobence / mænan scolde," 1066a–67b). This is a common rendering of some corrupt verses.³⁹ The manuscript would require emendation in the next verse, "[be] Finnes eaferum" ("about the son of Finn," 1068a), apparently in need of a preposition to govern "Finnes eaferum."⁴⁰ An anon-

³⁶ The name is elsewhere known only from "Widsið" 124a, in context with Hama, mentioned in *Beowulf* 1198b. Wiðergyld ("Retribution") may not be the Heaðobeard's father's name; the connection was first proposed by Gilbert W. Mead, "Wiðergyld of *Beowulf*, 2051," *Modern Language Notes* 32 (1917): 435–36. Bonjour (*Digressions*, 38) also expatiates on the swords in both episodes and connects them to Wiglaf's sword. He expects that Eanmund's sword, now in Wiglaf's hands, will induce a conflict with the Swedes, ruled by Eanmund's brother Eadgils; Dennis Cronan rejects the position in "Wiglaf's Sword," *Studia Neophilologica* 65 (1993): 129–39.

³⁷ Bernard F. Huppé, "A Reconsideration of the Ingeld Passage in *Beowulf*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 38 (1939): 217–25, at 221; cf. Ayres, "Tragedy of Hengest," 293: "Suppose, now, the son of Hunlaf offered the sword to Hengest with egging words similar to those of the *eald æsc-wiga* in Beowulf's account of the Ingeld-Freawaru episode. . . . Such a hint would do much to teach Hengest his course."

³⁸ On the meaning of OE *gidd*, see Karl Reichl, "Old English *giedd*, Middle English *yedding* as Genre Terms," in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge, 1992), 349–70; Richard North, *Pagan Words and Christian Meanings* (Amsterdam, 1991), 39–62; David R. Howlett, "Form and Genre in *Beowulf*," *Studia Neophilologica* 46 (1974): 309–25.

³⁹ Kemp Malone, "Hildeburg and Hengest," *ELH: A Journal of English Literary History* 10 (1943): 257–84, at 261: "had to lament the hall-play along the mead-bench."

⁴⁰ Klaeber, "Observations" (n. 3 above), 547–48. Note that plural "eaferum" would require a singular meaning, "son." Alexander Green wrote extensively on this emendation, first proposed by Benjamin Thorpe as adopted in Kemble's 1835 edition; cf. Birte Kelly, "The Formative Stages of *Beowulf* Scholarship: Part II," *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983):

ymous poet recites “hall-joy” (“healgamen,” a poem) about Finn’s son. Elsewhere in Old English one may recite a *gidd* about (“be”) someone, so this emendation — among the earliest ever proposed — is at least idiomatically satisfying.⁴¹ More creatively (and perhaps resolving one lexical problem), R. D. Fulk has lately proposed that “Healgamen” is the name of Hroðgar’s *scop*.⁴² If one emended “eaferum” to “eaferan,” the *scop* Healgamen “laments Finn’s son.” Directly following the Finnsburg digression, the poet acknowledges the genre *gidd* by concluding, “the poem, the singer’s *gidd*, was sung” (“Leoð wæs asungen, / gleomannes gyd,” 1159b–60a). Finnsburg apparently represents the “gleomannes gyd” just referred to.

While the *Beowulf* poet undoubtedly intended his *audience* to identify Finnsburg as a *gidd*, a problem lies in determining whether the characters in the world of *Beowulf* recognize it as one. On the one hand, we may simply assume that the poet’s use of the word *gidd* implies that no such justification is necessary. A “gid wrecen” could acknowledge the narrator’s omniscient reporting. On the other hand, *Beowulf* appears to realize that Finnsburg is a *gidd*, from which he draws a lesson when addressing Hygelac. After he returns to the Geats, *Beowulf* reports that *gidd* were recited in Heorot (“Ðær wæs gidd ond gleo,” 2105a) *specifically* in celebration of Grendel’s end, and that more than once a *gidd* was uttered (“hwilum gyd awræc,” 2108b; cf. “gidd oft wrecen,” 1065b):⁴³

239–75, at 244 and 268. Green suggests that *eaferum* in 1068a is a “dative-instrumental of personal agency” (“Opening” [n. 1 above], 770) and translates, “By Finn’s battle-fighters . . . Hnæf of the Scyldings . . . was fated to fall” (*ibid.*, 792). Bruce Mitchell calls the emendation “disputed” and voices doubts about the formulation (*Old English Syntax*, 1 [Oxford, 1985]: §§ 1371–78). Yet “[be] Finnes eaferum” creates an ambiguity whereby the poet may lament “about Finn’s men” or lament that Hnæf was destined to die “by Finn’s men.”

⁴¹ E.g. *Beowulf*, 1724b–25a: “Ic þis gid be þe, // awræc wintrum frod” (“Wise in years, I recited this *gidd* about you”); “The Wife’s Lament,” (ASPR III 210–11) 1: “Ic þis giedd wrece / bi me ful geomorre” (“I recite this *gidd* about my fully wretched self”).

⁴² “Six Cruces in the Finnsburg Fragment and Episode,” *Medium Ævum* 74 (2005): 191–204, at 195–97.

⁴³ On such examples of “incremental repetition,” see Orchard, *Critical Companion* (n. 14 above), 58 n. 10. Kemp Malone sees multiple performances leading up to the recitation of Finnsburg and attributes them to “amateurs or lesser artists” (“Hildeburg and Hengest,” 260). Karl Reichl (“Old English *giedd*,” 363) does not clarify whether the narrator or the characters in this digression call it a *gidd*: “Although it is not clear whether *giedd* here refers to the *Lay of Finnsburh*, which follows, the end of that lay in *Beowulf* makes it clear that this kind of narrative can be called a *giedd* (as well as a *leoð*).” It has often been noticed that *Beowulf*’s recollection seems muddled (see Robin Waugh, “Competitive Narrators in the Homecoming Scene of *Beowulf*,” *Journal of Narrative Technique* 25 [1995]: 202–22, at 210–12).

Ʒær wæs gidd ond gleo;	gomela Scilding,
felafricgende	feorran rehte;
hwilum hildedeor	heapan wynne,
gomenwudu grette,	hwilum gyd awræc
soðond sarlic,	hwilum syllic spell
rehte æfter rihte	rumheort cyning;
hwilum eft ongan	eldo gebunden,
gomel guðwiga	gioguðe cwiðan,
hildestrengo;	hreðer inne weoll
þonne he wintrum frod	worn gemunde.

(2105a–14b)

[There was *gidd* and mirth. (An, The) old Scylding recited things inquired of from far back in time. Sometimes (a, the) battle-brave man greeted the play-wood, harp's joy; sometimes he recited a *gidd*, true and sorrowful; sometimes the big-hearted king recited a marvelous story according to custom. Sometimes, bound by age, the old battle-warrior began to lament his (lost) youth, his war-strength. His breast welled up from within, whenever, wise in years, he recalled so much.]

Beowulf's reflection on the "gidd ond gleo" in Heorot comes directly after his narration of Grendel's death. One could assume that Beowulf has Finnsburg in mind when speaking of *gidd* — the only one we know to have been recited at length. Furthermore, in *Beowulf* the collocations "gomenwudu gretan" and "gidd (a)wrecan" describe *only* the *scop*'s performance of Finnsburg and Beowulf's recapitulation of the entertainment at Heorot. Even so, the narrator describes the "gomenwudu greted" (1065a) just before Finnsburg, and Beowulf's recollection might memorialize Hroðgar's performance, not the *scop*'s.

Heeding the syntactic parallelism of "hwilum," Klaeber punctuated in a way that attributes all of the recitations to Hroðgar, the "old Scylding" ("gomela Scilding," 2105b), "big-hearted king" ("rumheort cyning," 2110b) and "old battle-warrior" ("gomel guðwiga," 2112a). In fact modern editors adopting this punctuation implicitly identify Hroðgar as the "hildedeor" of line 2107a.⁴⁴ "The old battle-warrior began to lament his (lost) youth and war-strength" evokes the content of *gidd*, and the verb *cwiðan* ("lament," 2112b) is often collocated with *gidd*. The problem arises that we have not seen Hroðgar play the harp before, although he does recite at least one *gidd*,

⁴⁴ On this conundrum see Jeff Opland, "Beowulf on the Poet," *Mediaeval Studies* 38 (1976): 442–67, at 455–57 and Robert P. Creed, "The Singer Looks at his Sources," *Comparative Literature* 14 (1962): 44–52, at 47. Citing Kock and Hoops, Klaeber in his third edition of *Beowulf* (Boston, 1950) conceded, "hildedeor 2107 may be taken as an epithet relating to an unnamed retainer" (205). Earlier in his note he posed the question, "was the *gyd* recited by Hrothgar?" (ibid.). The editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf* prefer to identify Hroðgar as the performer.

his "sermon." While the phrase "gomela Scilding" may refer just as much to "an old Scylding" as to "the old Scylding," elsewhere it does describe Hroðgar (1792a). Yet OE *hildedeor*, which means "battle-brave (man)," is used seven other times in the poem, three times of unnamed warriors (312a, 834a, 3169b), three times of Beowulf (1646a, 1816a, 2183a), and once of Wiglaf (3111a). The related compound *heapodeor*, used twice, refers once to Beowulf (688a) and once to Beowulf and Grendel together (772a). Describing Hroðgar as "battle-brave" seems incongruous, especially when *hildedeor* so often denotes *anonymous* but distinguished and youthful fighters, such as the coast warden. As I see it, no clear solution to this problem presents itself, but Beowulf may be attributing the *gidd* mentioned here to an anonymous warrior.⁴⁵ The indebtedness could be important, because, as I claim, Beowulf seems to acknowledge Finnsburg when he tells the Heaðobeard digression, and events in the Heaðobeard feud might therefore elucidate obscurities in Finnsburg.

THE HEAÐOBEARD DIGRESSION

The narrative homologies outlined above and Beowulf's alleged recollection of the Finnsburg *gidd* suggest that the Heaðobeard digression could be used to elucidate Finnsburg. The Heaðobeard digression is more transparent than Finnsburg, and most readers would agree on the following summary:

Beowulf observes that Hroðgar's daughter Freawaru will marry the Heaðobeard king Ingeld, presumably to settle a feud. At the wedding a Danish attendant wearing a captured Heaðobeard sword offends the Heaðobeards. An old warrior will incite a young Heaðobeard to kill this offender and take the sword. The murderer runs away. After the killing, Ingeld's love for Freawaru will cool, and hostilities are expected to resume.

The alliance seems doomed from the start. Ingeld and his thanes are said to dislike ("ofþyncan," 2032a) the marriage to Freawaru, to exhibit discomfort over an enforced peace. Escalating the humiliation, the Danish *dryhtbearn* or "noble sons" sport the "gomelra lafe" or "heirlooms of their *elders*," not of Danes, however, but of Heaðobeards.⁴⁶ Slain in war by Danes, the former

⁴⁵ Samuel M. Riley identifies this singer as the anonymous reciter of the Sigemund/Here-mod digression ("The Contrast between Beowulf and Hygelac," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 10 [1980]: 186–97, at 189).

⁴⁶ The syntax here is strained; I prefer to take the line "dryhtbearn Dena, / duguða biwenede" as a loose appositive to *þæs* (2032a) particularizing the annoyance to Ingeld and his troop, and referring to "him" (2036a): "noble sons of Danes, honored hosts — on them the weapons of elders shine." "He" therefore refers to Ingeld. OE *dryhtbearn* may be an equivalent of *dryhtguma* or *dryhtealdor* in the sense of "bride's attendant(s)" (D. H. Green, *The Carolingian Lord: Semantic Studies on Four Old High German Words: balder, frô, truh-*

Heaðobeard owners were once “dear companions” (“swæse gesiðas,” 2040a), their weapons “hard and ring-adorned treasures of *Heaðobeards*,” (“heard ond hringmæl / Heaða-Beardna gestreon,” 2037). Now the narrator, Beowulf contrasts the immaturity of the Danish owners with the glory of the former fallen possessors. Possibly because Grendel has killed all the experienced warriors, these *boys* are “duguða biwenede,” the accompanying (or “honored”) “senior retainers.”⁴⁷ Unless we see the Danish youth as particularly callow, they must be deliberately taunting the Heaðobeards by wearing such trophies.⁴⁸ Beowulf uses the locution “on him gladiað” to describe the gear. The verb *gladian* means “to shine” in poetry, but other meanings common to prose overlap, “to gratify” especially.⁴⁹ The weapons shine on the Danes and unavoidably attract the eye. Beowulf underscores the deliberate indignity, as well as the irony.

The humiliation annoys the Heaðobeards. An “old spear-warrior” (“eald æscwiga,” 2042a) then “begins to test the spirit of a young fighter through the thought of his breast.”⁵⁰ A young Dane is singled out, and his youth and dubious birthright emphasized. The *æscwiga* calls him a *byre* or “lad” of unknown parentage: “a lad of I know not which of those slayers” (“þara banena / byre nathwylces,” 2053).⁵¹ The boy is said to “exult” in the trappings, a sword in particular, and here Beowulf deploys the adjective “hremig” typically used of booty in *Beowulf*.⁵² Thus, Grendel is *hremig* in his Danish corpses (124a), and Beowulf *hremig* in the twelve treasures awarded

tin, hērro [Cambridge, 1965], 270, 274). Some read *dryhtbeorn* as singular and connect it to “fæmnan þegn” of 2059a and “he” of 2034a because of the repetition of *fæmne* and of “on flett gæð” (2034b) and “on flet gæð” (2054b) (Huppé, “Reconsideration,” 220; and Ritchie Girvan, review of *Beowulfstudien* by J. Hoops, *Modern Language Review* 28 (1933): 244–46, at 246). This Dane is described as a “fæmnan þegn” or “lady’s thane,” not “untried warrior” as Kemp Malone proposes (“Ingeld,” *Modern Philology* 27 [1930]: 257–76, at 259), but the warrior accompanying a bride; see Girvan, review of Hoops, *Beowulfstudien*, 246, where *se fæmnan þegn* is compared to Bede’s description of Bishop Paulinus as *comes copulae carnalis* (*Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 164).

⁴⁷ On the difficult phrase “duguða biwenede” see Bruce Mitchell, “Two Syntactical Notes on *Beowulf*,” *Neophilologus* 52 (1968): 292–99, at 297.

⁴⁸ Huppé, “Reconsideration” (n. 37 above), 223.

⁴⁹ Owen-Crocker, “‘Gracious’ Hrothulf” (n. 12 above), 4–5. The *Beowulf* poet calls Ingeld the “glæd son of Froda” (2025b), underscoring an ironic *appreciation* for his marriage to Freawaru.

⁵⁰ “onginneð geomormod higes cunnian,
wigebealu weccan . . .” (2044a–45a).

⁵¹ OE *byre* designates a “youth,” a “lad” or “boy”; see Hilding Bäck, *The Synonyms for “Child,” “Boy,” “Girl” in Old English* (Lund, 1934), 66.

⁵² Anita Riedinger, “The Old English Formula in Context,” *Speculum* 60 (1985): 294–317, at 309–11 (310: “a thematic formula whose function it is to signify ‘the victor’s reward’”).

by Hroðgar (1882a). The unnamed Danish boy's father killed the Heaðo-beard's father Wiðergyld, and took the sword from him as a prize. The old champion claims that the young Dane "boasts of the murder": "morðres gylpeð," 2055a. OE *morðor* does not typically describe a "noble" battlefield killing but a deceitful, anonymous one.

A verb linking this section with the Finnsburg episode is *myndgian* "to remind" and (*ge*)*munan* "to recall." The veteran "remembers all" ("eall geman," 2042b) and "reminds" ("myndgað," 2057a). In *Beowulf* OE *myndgian* is found only here and in Finnsburg, attested as *myndgiend wære* ("calling to mind," 1105b), specifically used in context of the oath: a disgrace someone should *not* call to mind or hostilities would erupt. In the Heaðo-beard digression the *cempa* or "warrior" emphasizes the disrupted inheritance. The young Heaðo-beard should own the sword "mid rihte" ("by right," 56a). He ultimately kills the Dane — an act predicated on an event from a previous generation that nevertheless results in the dissolution of Ingeld's marriage. This situation, I shall argue, explains precisely what happens in the Finnsburg episode and incidentally explains how Finnsburg functions in its dramatic context. For the time being, therefore, we must turn from the Heaðo-beard episode and examine Finnsburg in greater detail.

TECHNICALITIES OF THE FINNSBURG EPISODE

Finnsburg concerns a dishonorable night attack on guests and an honorable defense leading to a sworn truce between Hengest and Finn. The truce has often seemed suspicious, to William Lawrence, among others: "If Finn's men were too few to prevail over the Danes, why did the latter assent to a condition which, according to Germanic ideas, was in the highest degree dishonorable?"⁵³ R. W. Chambers likewise questioned Finn's complicity in the attack, asserting that he was the dupe of a Jutish faction in his warband rather than the principal conspirator. In part, this deduction stems from Chambers's examination of Germanic story, where enemies accept quarter from attackers. Yet Chambers also bases his interpretation on the meaning of the word *eoten* in the verses, "Ne huru Hildeburh / herian þorfte // Eotena treowe" ("Indeed, Hildeburh did not have need to praise the faith of the *eotena*," 1071a–72a). I shall defer my discussion of this word momentarily, while I show why Finn must be the leading villain in the tale.⁵⁴ He is,

⁵³ Lawrence, "Tragedy of Finnsburg" (n. 1 above), 403.

⁵⁴ Many others have alleged Finn's innocence, e. g., Brodeur: "[Finn's] failure to make adequate preparation for a surprise attack suffices to establish a probability against malicious intent" ("Design and Motive" [n. 9 above], 37) and "[Finn] had been compelled to support his troops once the battle at Finnsburg had been joined" (*ibid.*, 39).

after all, called Hnæf's "bana" ("slayer," 1102b), and the narrator explains that *Finn* cannot conclude his *war* against Hengest:

. . . þæt he [Finn] ne mehte on þæm meðelstede
wig Hengeste wiht gefeohtan . . .

(1082a–83b)

[. . . that he (Finn) might not at all win his battle against Hengest in the meeting-place.]

According to the fragment, the battle lasts five days, during which span it is hardly conceivable that King Finn could not manage his own retinue. And finally, retribution meted out to the fierce ("ferhðfrecan," 1146a) Finn seems to have been deserved, and in his own home, to boot ("æt his selfes ham," 1147b).⁵⁵ In Chambers's argument, the Danes would appear to have *wronged* Finn by disregarding his "innocence" in the clash — leaving us with a besmirched Danish victory. Much backpedaling and special pleading disappear, however, if we simply acknowledge that Finn attacks his Danish guests duplicitously.

To return to the "problematic" truce, the poet explains why the settlement is reached. On the one hand, Hengest's retinue is called a "woeful remnant" ("wealafe," 1084a and 1098a) after the fight, belying the evidence of the fragment that few Danes had been killed.⁵⁶ But because Finn has lost so many men (1080b–81b), the Danish survivors cannot be "dislodged" (*forþringan*) from their defensive position.⁵⁷ Kemp Malone supplied one possible interpretation of the facts:⁵⁸

⁵⁵ OE *ferhðfrecan* is a hapax, but *frec* / *freca* are often attested in *Beowulf*, where they mean "fierce," "terrible," or "dangerous." The repetition of *begeat* ("befell," 1146b), used to describe Finn's attack against Hnæf (1068b), highlights Finn's death as retributive.

⁵⁶ "Wig ealle fornam // Finnes þegnas / nemne feaum anum . . ." (1080b–81b).

⁵⁷ A very close verbal parallel is narrated in the Old English *Boethius*. The Goths demolish the Romans: "Ne meahte þa seo wealaf / wige forstandan // Gotan mid Guðe" *MB* 1.22a–23a [ASPR V 154]. In this case the Romans give treasure and land, and swear oaths — the same capitulations that Finn has to make: "giomonna gestrion // sealdon unwillum / ebelweardas, // halige aðas" (1.23b–25a). A passage from Wulfstan's homily "Be godcundre warnunge" (Dorothy Bethurum Loomis, *The Homilies of Wulfstan* [Oxford, 1957], 253, 68–71: "And þonne land wyrðeð for synnum forworden 7 þæs folces dugoð swyþost fordwineþ, þonne fehð seo wealaf sorhful 7 sarimod geomrigendum mode bemænan 7 sarlice syfian . . .") confirms the sense of a diminished war-band. For a highly heterodox view of lines 1085b–96a, see John Gray ("The Finn Episode in *Beowulf*: Line 1085(b) *ac hig him gepingo budon*," in *Words and Wordsmiths: A Volume for H. L. Rogers*, ed. Geraldine Barnes et al. [Sydney, 1989], 32–39), arguing that the Danes offer terms to Finn.

⁵⁸ "Finn's Stronghold," *Modern Philology* 43 (1945): 83–85, at 85; see also Hans-Jürgen Diller, "Literacy and Orality in *Beowulf*: The Problem of Reference," in *Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im englischen Mittelalter*, ed. Willi Erzgräber and Sabine Volk (Tübingen, 1988), 15–25, at 18.

Finn could not expel the Danes from the hall by force and could not set fire to the hall without destroying his whole burh; the Danes could not hold out indefinitely because in time they would run short of food and drink. . . . Finn offered the Danes the best of terms because, above all, he did not wish to drive them to desperation: as desperate men they could do him the gravest damage.

Hengest emerges as leader of the Danes, and he negotiates the peace that they are constrained to accept:⁵⁹

. . . ðeah hie hira beaggyfan	banan folgedon
ðeodenlease,	þa him swa geþearfod wæs . . .
	(1102a–3b)

[Though lordless they followed the slayer of their ring-giver, when it had been made necessary for them to do so.]

OE *geþearfian* is extremely rare in Old English, occurring just this once in verse. The poet relays the unique situation by the prosaic verb and Danish blamelessness by the passive construction. The Danes had to compromise at an impasse, and nothing but the circumstances dictated their truce.

In 1917 Henry Morgan Ayres declared that the Finnsburg digression precipitated a tragic situation for Hengest,⁶⁰ since he follows his lord's killer after swearing a binding oath.⁶¹ The poet affirms, "those on the two sides trusted in the firm compact of peace" ("Ða hie getruwedon / on twa healfa // fæste frioðuwære," 1095a–96a). This agreement is "solemnized with oaths renouncing competition" ("elne unflitme / aðum benemde," 1097). OE *flitm*

⁵⁹ Malone, "Hildeburh and Hengest" (n. 39 above), 267: "the poet gives Hengest credit (1) for the fact that the Frisians offer terms of peace at all, and (2) for the highly favorable nature of these terms." In fact, Arthur G. Brodeur criticized Malone's view of Hengest as a "craven weakling" by praising Hengest's negotiation which "[saved] his men from needless slaughter" ("Design and Motive" [n. 9 above], 7).

⁶⁰ Ayres, "Tragedy of Hengest" (n. 33 above); see also Eric G. Stanley, "The Narrative Art of *Beowulf*," reprinted in *Collection of Papers* (n. 32 above), 170–91, at 177.

⁶¹ North has argued that Finn pledges on the god Ing's sacred relics, possibly a boar-idol taken from the Frisian treasury. He understands the lines "Að was geæfnod / ond icge gold // ahæfen of horde" ("an oath was performed and [Ing's] gold was taken from the treasury," 1107a–8a) to refer to an oath sworn on a golden artifact ("Tribal Loyalties" [n. 4 above], 32–38). It also seems plausible that gold taken from the hoard is meant to be shared among Hengest's retinue in compensation of Hnæf's death (see lines 1089a–94b and Lawrence, "Tragedy of Finnesburg," 406 n. 22). Coming right after the oath ("að was geæfned," 1107a), it seems most convenient to speculate that wergild is being paid out. R. D. Fulk has also suggested that *icge* and *incge* disguise *idge* "shining" ("Old English *icge* and *incge*," *English Studies* 59 [1978]: 255–56). Klaeber emended *að* "oath" to *ad* "pyre" and translated "the pyre was prepared" [*Beowulf*, 173], and this emendation has been retained in *Klaeber's Beowulf*.

is no doubt related to OE *flitan* “to compete,”⁶² and Richard North underscores two legal parallels — both from Ine’s *Laws* — which James L. Rosier once noted: “unceases [\langle un+ceast] ađ” = “oath setting aside quarrel” and “aðas unfæhða” = “oaths renouncing feud.”⁶³ Finn’s oath is sworn “with zeal renouncing *competition*.” In other words, Finn and his men will not compete adversarially for superiority with Hengest and the Danes, a stipulation that reinforces the terms of the agreement, that Finn will encourage (“byldan”) the Danes just as much as (“efne swa swiðe”) his own men:

. . . ond æt feohgyftum	Folcwaldan sunu
dogra gehwylce	Dene weorþode,
Hengestes heap	hringum wenede
efne swa swiðe	sincgestreorum
fættan goldes	swa he Fresena cyn
on beorsele	byldan wolde.

(1089a–94b)

[And in gift-giving the son of Folcwald [Finn] would honor the Danes, Hengest’s heap, every day, would ennoble them with rings, jeweled treasures, and plated gold just as much as he would encourage Frisians in the beer-hall.]

No cavil endangers this agreement. OE *benemnan* “to solemnize” is used only twice in *Beowulf*, here at 1097 (“solemnize with oaths renouncing competition”) and when the ancient warriors “solemnly declared” their intentions for the treasure later claimed by the dragon (3069b).⁶⁴ Few critics

⁶² Not all agree on the meaning, and some prefer to read “unhlitme” here; James L. Rosier summarized the history of this reading in “The *Unhlitm* of Finn and Hengest,” *Review of English Studies* 17 (1966): 171–74; but see now Paul Beekman Taylor, “*Beowulf* 1130, 1875 and 2006: In Defense of the Manuscript,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 82 (1981): 357–59, at 357–58 and Robert Boenig, “Time Markers and Treachery: The Crux at *Beowulf* 1130,” *English Language Notes* 24 (1987): 1–9. W. S. Mackie (“Notes upon the Text and the Interpretation of ‘Beowulf,’” *Modern Language Review* 34 [1939]: 515–24, at 521) proposed emending *unflitme* to **unflitne*, and the reading suggests how *unflitme* has almost universally been thought to modify “ellen,” as in “with undisputed zeal” instead of “with zeal renouncing dispute.”

⁶³ North, “Tribal Loyalties,” 22 (“Finn would thus forswear vengeance for his son by cancelling him out with Hnæf”) and Rosier, “*Unhlitm* of Finn and Hengest,” 173. The language is exotic, but *ceast* is attested in the Antwerp Glossary (Lowell Kindschi, “The Latin-Old English Glossaries in Plantin-Moretus MS 32 and British Museum MS Additional 32.246” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1955), 64: “*Seditio*, floclsite [leg. folclsite] uel æswicung, sacu, ceast”), and *ceas* in Aldhelm glosses (Scott Gwara, ed., *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa de Virginitate cum Glosa Latina alque Anglosaxonica*, CCL 143–143A [Turnhout, 2001], 124A, 430: “INSECTATIONES] i. persecutiones, rixas uel *cæsa*”). The context makes it clear that an oath sworn “unceas” would mean that no guile would be tolerated. An oath of “unfæhð” means forgoing vengeance.

⁶⁴ I realize that the usage of “benemdon” in this passage is disputed, but I agree with Alan Bliss’s reasoning as laid out in “*Beowulf*, Lines 3074–75,” in *J. R. R. Tolkien, Scholar*

doubt that the oath is binding — indeed, that breaking oaths in general is unendurably disgraceful.⁶⁵ Beowulf says, "Ic . . . // ne me swor fela // aða on unriht" ("I never swore many oaths wrongfully," 2736b–39a); of this Klaeber commented, "a conspicuous example of litotes." Although Robert A. Albano thinks "the Anglo-Saxons would break any pledge if the greater commitment to revenge was already in force," his argument contradicts what we know of oaths.⁶⁶ Albano finds vengeance "ethical" and concludes, "if Hengest sees himself as doing his duty and by doing that duty there is no breach of ethics, then there is no dilemma."⁶⁷ This argument evokes Brodeur's regard for the *friððowær* as the "mere abstract sanctity of an oath."⁶⁸ If so, this position renders Hengest despicable, given all the evidence to suggest that Hengest does not want to break the truce. These critics and others would deny any heroic choice for Hengest.⁶⁹ On the contrary, the difficulty for Hengest becomes *whether* and *how* to escape the truce, but he arrives at his decision to act with the greatest reluctance, and even then he seems to doubt his plan.⁷⁰

The articles of the oath are given in detail. The poet emphasizes the Frisian side of the agreement: "Fin Hengeste // . . . aðum benemde" or "Finn solemnized with oaths to Hengest" (1096b–97b). Thereafter follow the stipulations:

- (1) "þæt he þa wealafe / weotena dome // arum heolde," 1097a–99a: "that Finn would govern Hengest's retinue honorably according to the judgment of his [Finn's] counselors";
- (2) "þæt ðær ænig mon // wordum ne worcum / wære ne bræce," 1099b–1100b: "that no one there would break the covenant by word or deed";
- (3) "ne þurh inwitsearo / æfre gemænden," 1101: "nor would 'they' ever *mention* it through malicious cunning."

and *Storyteller*, ed. Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell (Ithaca, NY, 1979), 41–63; and with John Tanke, "Beowulf, Gold-Luck, and God's Will," *Studies in Philology* 99 (2002): 356–79.

⁶⁵ Renoir, "Heroic Oath" (n. 23 above), 237–38, 242, 252; on the sanctity of Germanic oaths, see North, "Tribal Loyalties," 32–33.

⁶⁶ Albano, "Role of Women" (n. 20 above), 4. Other remarks of Albano's also require substantiation: "Once a bond of loyalty was established in either Anglo-Saxon or Old Norse culture, such loyalty would last indefinitely" (*ibid.*). Albano ultimately denies Hengest's "dilemma": "Both Hildeburh and Hengest probably already had their minds made up as to what action to take in connection with Finn" (3–4). By this reading, Finn was foolish to trust Hengest's oath.

⁶⁷ Albano, "Role of Women," 4.

⁶⁸ Brodeur, "Design and Motive," 38.

⁶⁹ Such as Fry, "New Interpretation" (n. 31 above), 10: "I interpret Hengest as awaiting his chance to avenge Hnæf. . . . Hengest must break his oath to Finn. . . ."

⁷⁰ Although Hengest takes his oath so seriously he will not break it, references to him as a "traitor" are somewhat overstated; cf. Eric G. Stanley, "'Hengestes heap,' *Beowulf* 1091," in *Britain 400–600: Language and History*, ed. Alfred Bammesberger and Alfred Wollmann (Heidelberg, 1990), 51–63.

The referent of the unstated plural subject “they” of *gemænden* (1101b) has been disputed. North thinks it refers to Danes because the stated subject *hie* of 1102a certainly does:⁷¹ “ðeah hie hira beaggyfan / banan folgedon” (“although they served the slayer of their ring-giver,” 1102). It makes far better sense, however, that the unstated subject of 1101b refers to the subjects, Frisians, already under discussion, but that the stated pronoun *hie* then refers to Danes.⁷² Emphasis also justifies the reading: no Frisian would break the agreement in word or deed, *nor would they even mention it*, however subtly.⁷³ Furthermore, the passage as a whole focuses on Finn’s oath. Since he perpetrated the assault on Hnæf, as I claim, he is under pressure to prove that no such attack would ever take place again. He must hold everyone accountable. The passage naturally concludes by discussing a Frisian violation:

gyf þonne Frysna hwylc	frecnen spræce
ðæs morþorhetes	myndgiend wære,
þonne hit sweordes ecg	syððan scede.

(1104a–5b)

[If any Frisian should ever recall the murderous hatred with bold speech, the sword’s edge would afterwards settle it.]⁷⁴

The concluding phrase “Frysna hwylc” keeps us in mind that these are the terms of Finn’s oath to Hengest, so that “ænic man” (1099b) means “any Frisian.”

⁷¹ North, “Tribal Loyalties,” 23.

⁷² Alois Pogatscher, “Unausgedrücktes Subjekt im Altenglischen,” *Anglia* 23 (1901): 261–301.

⁷³ The element *searo* denotes skillful artifice, and in prose always has a negative sense; see Paul Beekman Taylor, “*Searoniðas*: Old Norse Magic and Old English Verse,” *Studies in Philology* 80 (1983): 109–25, at 114–15; Thomas D. Hill, “The Confession of Beowulf and the Structure of *Volsunga Saga*,” in *The Vikings*, ed. Robert T. Farrell (London, 1982), 165–79, at 173.

⁷⁴ Klaeber’s “seðan scolde” (1106b) has been emended here in consideration of R. D. Fulk’s reading “syððan scede” (“Cruces in the Finnsburg Fragment”), where “scede” is the preterite subjunctive of OE *scadan* “decide.” The sense is not substantially changed from that of Klaeber’s reading, but the syntax, phrasal parallelism, and metrical expectations are far superior. Malone thought that the clause “þonne hit sweordes ecg / seðan scolde” meant that “the *man* [“guilty of trouble-making”] will be put to death” (“Finn Episode,” 163, my emphasis), but the fact that the “sword’s edge” should settle “it” rather implies that the entire episode of “morþorhete” would be settled by all-out war, the sort of risk that would prevent any baiting. Here the ingenious solution proposed by Fred C. Robinson (“Textual Notes on *Beowulf*,” in *Anglo-Saxonica: Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte der englischen Sprache und zur allenglischen Literatur*, ed. Hans Schabram, Klaus R. Grinda, and Claus-Dieter Wetzel [Munich, 1993], 107–12, at 111) should also be mentioned, in light of many cogent parallels. Retention of *syððan* would yield “it will be left to the sword. . . .”

Hengest and the Danes now obey a new lord — Finn — since half of Finn's hall is given over to the Danes, and Finn dispenses treasure to them as he would his own Frisians. While OE *flett* can mean "hall," as part of Finn's terms it has a specific meaning: the platform of a hall where retainers eat and sleep.⁷⁵ The verb "gerymdon" ("made room," 1086b) confirms this sense: Finn will "clear" one of two platforms for Hengest and the Danes. Nothing suggests that Finn fails to treat the Danes like his own men. For the Danes, however, loyalty to this oath means serving Hnæf's killer, a situation that compromises Hengest's allegiance to the Danish retinue. Indeed, the poet unconditionally condemns Hnæf's death, calling it "morþorbealo" (1079b) or "grief resulting from murder." OE *morþor* usually has a precise meaning: an ignoble killing, one for which no culprit or motive can be identified.⁷⁶ Hildeburg's grief likewise reminds the Danes of their suffering and humiliation, as John Hill points out.⁷⁷ It has to be a sign of profound reluctance that *any* provocation endangering such a precarious detente *will* be punished by death.

Although binding, the truce becomes deeply shameful. In such a situation vengeance would not simply be imperative but righteous or "jural," among the most sacred obligations for kin and retainers. A common impulse has therefore been to exonerate Hengest whose service to Finn dishonors Hnæf's emory: "one cannot blame the Danes overmuch . . . unheroic though their submission to Finn undoubtedly remains."⁷⁸ In part, the claim responds to episode's triumphal mood as entertainment for Hroðgar's company. Rebutting the allegation of Hengest's impiety, Rosemary Woolf identifies an "ideal of effective vengeance" in the Finnsburg episode, part of an extensive argument questioning the pointlessness of *dying* with one's lord in revenge.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ DOE s.v. *flett* (1); the editors cite this passage under (2) "dwelling, house, hall."

⁷⁶ OE *morþorbealu* and its morphological equivalent *morþbealu* are used only three times in *Beowulf*. Grendel commits "more *murderous* destruction" ("morðbeala mare," 136a), because he is an indiscriminate killer without motive. The second attestation comes during the Herebeald / Hæðcyn digression: Hæðcyn's killing is called "murder," not because the crime was secretly committed but because it was both heinous and motiveless. On compounds with the second element in *-bealu*, see T. A. Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge, 1976), 130 n. 6.

⁷⁷ Hill, *Cultural World* (n. 29 above), 26; idem, *Warrior Ethic* (n. 20 above), 64–65. Many have observed how central Hildeburg is in the digression but without noting that her appearances manifest the extent of Danish distress and absolute necessity for revenge, as Orchard has concluded in *Critical Companion*, 177–78: "The *Beowulf*-poet is at particular pains to highlight her impotence and passivity, as well as her innocence: she is portrayed purely as a victim."

⁷⁸ Malone, "Hildeburg and Hengest" (n. 39 above), 270.

⁷⁹ Rosemary Woolf, "The Ideal of Men Dying with Their Lord in the *Germania* and in *The Battle of Maldon*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976): 63–81, at 69.

The claim imposes a positive slant on Hengest's behavior, that his service must be a temporary expedient, his revenge already planned.⁸⁰ The case cannot be true, however, since Finn trusts not only the wording of the oath but also Hengest's allegiance to it. Finn is vulnerable. His men have gone home for the winter, presumably leaving him only a bodyguard:

Gewiton him ða wigend wica neosian
 freondum befeallen, Frysland geseon,
 hamas ond heaburh.

(1125a–27a)

[The warriors departed to seek out the towns, to see Frisia (now bereft of friends),⁸¹ homes and high-dwellings.]

Yet as I shall argue, Hengest never intends to break his oath, the conditions of which he and Finn understand to be completely secure. Therefore, Hengest's *reluctance* to break the oath not only exposes him as dishonorable but calls into doubt his role in accepting a shameful peace in the first place.

William Lawrence has questioned why Hengest accepted the brokered compromise, but the episode sidesteps this issue entirely and asks instead why he should *abide* by the oath at all. One explanation bears on his ambitions, another on his nationality. Hengest has competing allegiances as a *wrecca* (1137b), a “mercenary” warrior or “gist” (“guest,” 1138a),⁸² and Finn takes advantage of Hengest's self-interest. The words of D. H. Green, who has written extensively on early Germanic lordship, perfectly describe Hengest's role in Hnæf's retinue: “a leader who had proved successful could attract warriors from outside his own tribe, lured by the prospect of further success. . . . However, in thus cutting across the boundaries between tribes the war-band was also a disruptive force in Germanic society.”⁸³ Finnsburg depicts such a disruption. In a single enterprise Hengest vaults from subaltern, to Danish warband leader, to coequal with one of the celebrated kings of Germania. Hengest cannot bring himself to sanction an obviously right-

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 71. Others have also suggested that the truce is only temporary (e.g., Fry, “New Interpretation” [n. 69 above]; Boenig, “Time Markers” [n. 63 above]), but I prefer North's argument (“Tribal Loyalties”) that Finn intends to supplement his diminished warband with Hengest's recruits.

⁸¹ On this reading of “freondum befeallen,” see Alfred Bammesberger, “OE *befeallen* in *Beowulf*, line 1126a,” *Notes and Queries* 248 (2003): 156–58; Bruce Mitchell rejects Bammesberger's position in “OE *befeallen* in *Beowulf*, Line 1126a,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 105 (2004): 187–89. Kemp Malone (“Finn Episode,” 165) conjectured that the Danes were allowed to wander about Frisia, but the locution “hamas ond heaburh” would then make little sense: why would Danes wish to see their enemies' homes?

⁸² Griffith, “Some Difficulties” (n. 31 above), 37–38.

⁸³ Dennis Howard Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge, 1998), 108.

eous act because he has retailed his loyalty to the Frisian king Finn. Like Beowulf, who advances from untried adventurer to great hero to royal heir, Hengest must be feeling gratified by his fresh prominence. Another parallel between Hengest and Beowulf also emerges. Hengest ultimately becomes a leader of Danes in a time of crisis, when Hnæf is killed, and Beowulf waits to be elevated now that Grendel is dead. Hroðgar's Danes may be unhappy with this situation (at least *Wealhþeow* and *Hunferð* are), just as Hnæf's Danes seem to exhibit annoyance over following Finn. However, my reading of their reaction to Hengest's delayed retribution derives from a context for which the chronology requires justification.

The verses following Finn's death describe the complaints of Guðlaf and Oslaf, the chief Danes in Hengest's retinue:

Swylce ferhðfrecan	Fin eft begeat
sweordbealo sliðen	æt his selfes ham,
sipðan grimne gripe	Guðlaf ond Oslaf
æfter sæsiðe	sorge mændon,
æt witon weana dæl . . .	

(1146a–50a)

[So (such?) cruel sword-killing again befell the fierce Finn in his own home once Guðlaf and Oslaf lamented the sorrow — the grim assault — following their sea journey, and censured the number of their woes.]

Two problems have puzzled readers here. Lawrence reasoned that Guðlaf and Oslaf had traveled home to Denmark and returned with a larger force.⁸⁴ This is entirely unnecessary, if we accept these lines as a recapitulation and consider "æfter sæsiðe" in reference to the original sea voyage that brought Hnæf's party to Finnsburg. In such a way *æfter* could simply mean either "following" or "attendant to / following from":⁸⁵ Guðlaf and Oslaf bemoan the sorrow following their sea voyage to Frisia. If they had sailed home for fresh recruits, as Lawrence and others alleged, Guðlaf and Oslaf must be lamenting to their Danish friends. In this event, Hengest would need no urging to make up his mind. Of course, the problems with this reading abound. First, where else are the fresh recruits mentioned, and is Finn so naive that he never suspects a Danish reprisal of such magnitude? Second, why would Hengest exhibit such scruples over the truce, then break it so flagrantly? T. A. Shippey suggests that "genuine Heroic Ages often throw

⁸⁴ Lawrence, "Tragedy of Finnsburg" (n. 1 above), 415–16; see also Malone, "Finn's Stronghold" (n. 58 above), 85 ("the whole *wealaf* presumably left Frisia with them"); idem, "Hildeburg and Hengest," 282; Brodeur, "Design and Motive" (n. 9 above), 26; Tolkien, *Finn and Hengest* (n. 3 above), 138.

⁸⁵ DOE s.v. (I.L.C.1) "following (someone/something) in succession, succeeding, after"; (I.L.C.7) "subsequent to and in consequence of, as a result of, because of."

up a streak of cunning and ruthlessness disliked in gentler eras,”⁸⁶ but here Shippey imagines that Hengest breaks the oath: “Hengest goes back on it by attacking Finn as treacherously as Finn attacked Hnaef.”⁸⁷ In fact, the choice to act has lain with Hengest all along.

A further complication concerns the subject of Guðlaf’s and Oslaf’s complaint. Some readers have seen them prematurely breaking Finn’s truce by enticing the Frisians to break their oath.⁸⁸ These critics read “ætwithon weana dæl” in reference to Finn, that Guðlaf and Oslaf baited Finn and therefore broke the agreement. North proposes, however, that Guðlaf and Oslaf “lament” their woes in a performance given before an assembly of Frisians and Danes: “without warning they chant of the ‘fierce attack’ the treaty forbids them to mention, making their taunts, and signal to Danes, Jutes and others to fall on the Frisians.”⁸⁹ The problem with such readings as these is, again, they do not acknowledge that breaking a sworn truce would be reprehensible. The Danes should be praised for a just action, but how can betrayal ever be praiseworthy? Furthermore, if Guðlaf and Oslaf break the truce, what good could be said of Hengest, whose role as *agent provocateur* has been diminished?

Another view may be easier to accept. Hengest decides to bring about a conflict only after complaints from the highest quarters. Guðlaf and Oslaf therefore recount the sufferings that follow on their venture, the “sea-journey” to Frisia. For the sake of argument, let me suggest that Hengest’s vacillation disgusts them, and that their criticism is piercing. Yet agreeing that the Danish party criticizes Hengest means agreeing that Hengest has earned their reproach. I think he has. Admittedly polysemous, OE *mænan* generically means “bewail” in *Beowulf*, and in the passage it varies OE *ætwithan* “to reproach”: Guðlaf and Oslaf reproach Hengest for the number of woes they have suffered. In vernacular poetry, even poetry not contemporaneous with

⁸⁶ T. A. Shippey, *Old English Verse* (London, 1972), 25. Ritchie Girvan also dislikes the duplicity, but the suggestion that the episode praises the Danes disturbs him more (*Finnsburuh* [n. 33 above], 11). Phillip Pulsiano argues that Danes especially were known for verbal duplicity (“Danish Men’s Words Are Worse than Murder: Viking Guile and *The Battle of Maldon*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 96 [1997]: 13–25).

⁸⁷ Shippey, *Old English Verse*, 25.

⁸⁸ Fulk, *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, 190 note to lines 1148 ff.; Orchard, *Critical Companion* (n. 14 above), 185–86; Brodeur, “Design and Motive” (n. 9 above), 27: “Guðlaf and Oslaf cast in Finn’s teeth all the woes that had befallen them *since that first fateful journey across the sea, to Finnsburg*” (Brodeur’s emphasis); Earl R. Anderson, “Formulaic Typescene Survival: Finn, Ingeld, and the *Niebelungenlied*,” *English Studies* 61 (1980): 293–301, at 295.

⁸⁹ North, “Tribal Loyalties” (n. 4 above), 31. Fry suggests that “Guthlaf and Oslaf embolden the Danish spirits by reciting all their woes since the original voyage to Frisia” (“New Interpretation” [n. 31 above], 12).

Beowulf, OE *ætwtitan* describes the reprehensible behavior of a retinue that fails to avenge its fallen lord, as in “The Battle of Maldon”:⁹⁰

Ne sceolon me on þære þeode þegenas ætwtitan
 þæt ic of ðisse fyrde feran wille,
 eard gesecan, nu min ealdor ligeð
 forheawen æt hilde.

(220a–23a)

[Retainers among my countrymen shall not reproach me, that I intend to leave this host to seek my homeland, now that my lord lies dead, cut down in battle.]

Ne þurfon me embe Sturmere stedefæste hælæð
 wordum ætwtitan, nu min wine gecranc,
 þæt ic hlafordleas ham siðie . . .

(249a–51b)

[Steadfast heroes from Sturmer need not reproach me with words, that I would go home lordless now that my friend has fallen.]

Guðlaf and Oslaf accuse Hengest of the worst dereliction. Only when his Danish cohort threatens mutiny does Hengest finally concede the warband’s charge, and even then the planned revenge must accommodate Hengest’s sacred oath of allegiance to Finn.

Yet this criticism of Hengest has dismayed some readers, such as Kemp Malone: “A Hengest who hangs back, reluctant to take action and in need of prodding by his more heroic fellows, has no proper place in heroic poetry.”⁹¹ Furthermore, Finn’s apparent trust in Hengest — he must at least *seem* utterly devoted to the Frisian camp for Finn to suspect no retribution — further impugns Hengest’s character. Some have seen Finn’s innocence in his trust of Hengest, especially Chambers — one obvious reason why Hildeburg is *thought* to have no faith in “Jutes.” Rather, Finn places his trust in the solemn oaths that Hengest swears.

Hengest is quite clearly the leader of Danes, principal to Guðlaf and Oslaf, who demand revenge. Yet Hengest has no *tribal* — let alone *blood* — ties making revenge imperative, and as I have pointed out, he has everything to gain from an alliance with Finn. The explicit terms of the sworn oath reveal Hengest’s position: “ðeah hie hira beaggyfan / banan folgedon // ðeodenleas” (“although, lordless, they followed their ring-giver’s slayer,” 1102a–3a). OE *ðeodenleas* can be translated “lordless,” but it literally means

⁹⁰ There are only five occurrences of OE *ætwtitan* in verse. It translates *exprobraverunt* (“they accused”) twice in the *Paris Psalter* (73.16, 88.45 [ASPR V 35, 60]).

⁹¹ Malone, “Hildeburg and Hengest” (n. 39 above), 278 (see also 282–83). This is also the opinion of Taylor, “*Beowulf* 1130” (n. 63 above), 358.

“without a *national* leader or head of the *ðeod*,”⁹² the *present circumstances* of Hengest’s followers. The Danes still follow Hengest, neither a member of their *ðeod* nor, by extension, of their blood.⁹³

Like Beowulf he may be said to be “elþeodig” or “belonging to another *ðeod*” (336b). Since Germanic *national* revenge devolves on the *ðeod*, just as feud does on the kin, Hengest’s position becomes confrontational within his own faction. As Richard North acknowledges, “there is no evidence in this text that Hengest has any duty to avenge a leader who was not a blood-relative.”⁹⁴ Perhaps this fact explains why the Cynewulf and Cyneheard episode from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* poorly reflects the motivations of Finnsburg, even though it is frequently used to support claims of Hengest’s duty to avenge Hnæf. Allegiance to one’s king could apparently override duty to one’s kin. Yet Hengest is no king but a war-leader, maybe even of a mercenary band.⁹⁵

JUTES AND GIANTS IN FINNSBURG

As impossible as it is to know Hengest’s nationality, I would argue that, at the very least, he cannot be Danish. Relying on the testimony of the *Historia Brittonum*, two recent critics have alleged that Hengest was an Angle, designating a relatively small tribe occupying the territory of present-day Angeln, between the Schlei river and Flensburg Fjord. Most, however, would claim Hengest as a Jute on the basis of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* and alleged evidence from *Beowulf*.⁹⁶ Bede tells that Kent was settled by Jutes and that Hengest ruled in Kent, so by inference Hengest could have been a Jute.⁹⁷ In fact, it seems certain that Hengest is the orig-

⁹² Just as *dryhten* means leader of a *dryht* (war-band), *ðeoden* means leader of a *ðeod* (nation or tribe in a quite restricted sense); see Green, *Language and History* (n. 83 above), 126–27; G. Storms, “The Subjectivity of the Style of *Beowulf*,” in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, ed. Stanley B. Greenfield (Eugene, OR, 1963), 171–86, at 178.

⁹³ The point is emphasized in the expression “þeodnes ðegne” (1085a) in reference to Hengest; see Carleton Brown, “*Beowulf* 1080–1106,” *Modern Language Notes* 34 (1919): 181–83.

⁹⁴ North, “Tribal Loyalties,” 25.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18, 28. North suggests that Hengest transfers power and responsibility for the oath to the Danes. While I do not follow his argument about the transfer of power, his remarks on Hengest’s role in the confederacy are germane. The problem is, of course, that Hengest seems to hold sway over the Danes as more than a leader in name alone.

⁹⁶ Orchard, *Critical Companion* (n. 14 above), 183.

⁹⁷ The archaeology supports Bede; see J. N. L. Myres, “The Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes,” *Proc. Brit. Acad.* 56 (1972 for 1970): 145–74; Seiichi Suzuki, *The Quoit Brooch Style and Anglo-Saxon Settlement: A Casting and Recasting of Cultural Identity Symbols* (Woodbridge, 2000), 103–21. However, Hengest is never called a Jute, and it makes sense that he

inary Germanic settler of Kent, as stated in Bede. Yet Jutes, I contend, are nowhere mentioned in *Beowulf*, and neither is Hengest's nationality.

The matter has been thought important, because the word *eotena* ("of the giants / Jutes") appears throughout the Finnsburg digression, and much has been made of its meaning. The Old English word for "Jute" was the weak feminine *eote*, with plural forms: nominative / accusative *eotan*, genitive *eotena* and dative *eotum*.⁹⁸ OE *eoten*, a noun denoting a creature like a "giant," is found only four times in *Beowulf*, and twice in the Trinity College Psalter, where it glosses Latin "gigas" ("giant").⁹⁹ As Robert Kaske observes, three additional attestations preserve the grammatically ambiguous genitive plural form, *eotena*. All three come from the Finnsburg digression: "eotena treowe" (1072a) and "eotena bearn" (1088a, 1141a). Although weak *eote* ("Jute") is morphologically distinct from the strong *eoten* ("giant"), some still allege that *eotenas* in *Beowulf* means "Jutes." How this happened can be summarized from the commentary in J. R. R. Tolkien's posthumous lectures on Finnsburg, edited by Alan Bliss:

I have no hesitation in saying at once that "Jutes" are undoubtedly referred to. The argument on which this conclusion is based is essentially bound up with the identification of Hengest — and also, for all these problems are intricately bound up with traditions concerning early Danish history, with the identification of Heremod and the explanation of the dark allusions in *Beowulf* 898–915 and 1709–22.¹⁰⁰

By perfectly logical reasoning, Tolkien identified Heremod as the Danish king Lotharus, who had been deposed by his barons for belligerence in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. We learn in *Beowulf* that Heremod had been driven "mid eotenum" (902b). Tolkien then invoked Johannes Messenius's remark in the *Scandia Illustrata* that Lotharus had been driven "in Jutiam."¹⁰¹ He

could be an Angle, as Alan Bliss proposed on the evidence of *Historia Brittonum* (Tolkien, *Finn and Hengest* [n. 3 above], 168–80). On the impossibility of discovering facts of Anglo-Saxon settlement history from the written sources, see Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983): 1–41.

⁹⁸ R. W. Chambers, *Widsith: A Study in Old English Heroic Legend* (Cambridge, 1912), 237–41.

⁹⁹ In *Beowulf*, alongside the adjective *eotenisc* ("made by giants, giant") and compound noun *eotonweard* ("watch against a giant"); see DOE s.v. *eoten*. This word is marked in *Klaeber's Beowulf* with the symbol denoting its exceptional rarity in prose (s.v.). On the poet's linguistic precision in using *eoten* and *gigant*, see Stephen C. Bandy, "Cain, Grendel, and the Giants of *Beowulf*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 9 (1973): 235–49, at 240. Eric G. Stanley facetiously proposes "Jutish giants" in his translation of "eotena cynnes," 883b ("Notes on Old English Poetry," *Leeds Studies in English* 20 [1989]: 319–44, at 333).

¹⁰⁰ *Finn and Hengest*, 53–54.

¹⁰¹ Johannes Messenius, *Scandia Illustrata, seu Chronologia de rebus Scandiae* (Stockholm, 1700–1705).

concludes that *eotenum* therefore means “Jutes,” both here and elsewhere in *Beowulf*. Tolkien tried to rationalize the genealogical evidence with the philological — supporting the form as a late morphological development along the lines of OE *oxnum*¹⁰² — but even Alan Bliss demurred in a footnote: “Actually, no such late forms are found . . . with proper nouns.”¹⁰³ Although “exile” may be unintended in the passage,¹⁰⁴ the mere substitution of “ene-

¹⁰² Cf. Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), § 619.

¹⁰³ *Finn and Hengest*, 62 n. 64. Bliss does offer an unlikely parallel in Old Icelandic *gotnar, gotna, gotnum* (“Goths, men”).

¹⁰⁴ Heremod’s “exile” has been inferred from the following lines:

	He mid eotenum wearð	
on feonda geweald	forð forlacen,	
snude forsended.		(902b–4a)

Most interpret “wearð forð forlacen” as “was betrayed” or “lured” by his people. The agent goes unstated, however, and the adverb is difficult. To be “betrayed forth” or “lured away” may mean to be utterly betrayed, i.e., unto death. While OE *forlacan* is attested only four times, one attestation in “Andreas” reveals that fate also “deceives” or “seduces”: “Hie seo wyrd beswac, // forleolc and forlærde” (“that destiny betrayed them, deceived and misled,” 613a–14a); cf. N. F. Blake, “The Heremod Digressions in *Beowulf*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 61 (1962): 278–87, at 284; on the simplex *lacan*, see Elena Afros, “Linguistic Ambiguities in Some Exeter Book *Riddles*,” *Notes and Queries* 250 (2005): 431–37, at 436. The expression “forð forlacen” is varied by “snude forsended” (“quickly exiled”), and OE *forsendan* (attested only seven times) does describe banishment. Yet adverb *snude* suggests that *forsended* may not express Heremod’s exile at the hands of his people, since they lived with his tyranny for a long time: his people “very often” lamented his “sið,” sorrow lamed him “too long,” and he was a “life-long anxiety” (*Beowulf* 904b–8b). In fact, to be quickly “forsended” means to die right away, the effect of being “lured forth,” as in *Beowulf* 2265b–66b: “Bealocwealm hafað // fela feorhcynna / forð onsended!” (“Baleful death has banished the lives of many men!”). In the *Old English Martyrology* the collocation *gast + onsendan* commonly describes death, and Juliana characterizes martyrdom as an exile in “Juliana” 438a–b: “Ðonne ic beom onsended / wið soðfæstum”; “When I am exiled amongst the righteous.” The *Martyrology* also confirms that, in the case of the tyrant Æodric, one could be “sent off” into “everlasting fire”: “Ðæt wæs swiðe riht þæt he from þæm mannum twæm wære sended on þæt ece fyr þa he ær unrihtlic ofsloh in þyssum life” (Günter Kotzor, *Das altenglische Martyrologium* [Munich, 1981], My 18, A.22). This reading of OE *forsendan* explains a second difficulty in the passage. The phrase “wearð forð forlacen” is modified by a circumlocution “on feonda geweald,” which elsewhere seems to describe Grendel’s spirit passing to hell after his combat with Beowulf: “se ellorgast // on feonda geweald / feor siðian” (“the foreign spirit / guest traveled far into the power of enemies,” 807b–8b). (Blake unnecessarily suggests that “on feonda geweald” describes the Christian hell, but the locution may simply mean “he died” [“Heremod Digressions,” 284].) Ernst A. Kock and Kemp Malone propose that Heremod fell under the power of his “enemies”; cf. resp. “Interpretations and Emendations of Early English Texts VIII,” *Anglia* 45 (1921): 105–31, at 117; “Ealhild,” *Anglia* 55 (1931): 266–72, at 268: “he was betrayed into the power of his enemies the Euts.’ Here *mid Eotenum* is a variation of *feonda*.” Finally, in “Andreas” 1619a–b, the expression “in feonda geweald / gefered ne wurdon” (“was not brought into the power of enemies”) refers both to death and to the damnation

mies" for "Jutes" proves the equivocation: Heremod could have been dispatched amongst his "enemies" just as much as he could amongst "Jutes."

By reading *eoten* as "Jute," Tolkien (and many others besides) have seriously complicated the action in the Finnsburg episode. Richard North extended Tolkien's observations, which seem now to have been widely accepted.¹⁰⁵ Tolkien made much of the phrase "on twa healfa" ("on the two sides," 1095b) describing the truce, sensing that the poet could not say "on ba healfa" ("on both sides," 1305a) because more than two parties were involved.¹⁰⁶ It has therefore been theorized that Jutes served with Hnæf and Finn, and that Finn's Jutes attacked Hnæf's.¹⁰⁷ Thus, North imagines Finn's Jutes to have been resident in Frisia long enough to have adopted a Frisian identity. This incipient loyalty to Finn is the "Eotena treowe" that Hildeburh should not have trusted. North likewise argues that the terms of the treaty include establishing a second "hall" where Hengest would rule the Jutes in both factions, Hnæf's and Finn's, as North translates the verses "þæt hie healfre geweald // wið Eotena bearn / agan moston" ("in such a way that they were allowed to have power of half [the hall] facing the sons of the Jutes," 1087b–88b).¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, the complications of reading *eotena bearn* as "sons of the Jutes" in the episode means, first, that Finn could be absolved of responsibility for Hnæf's death, an unlikely position. Second, if Hengest took revenge on Jutes rather than Frisians, why would Finn have to die? Killing Finn would make the Danes appear unprincipled.

A competing interpretation of OE *eoten* disregards "Jutes" altogether and greatly simplifies Tolkien's complex version of events in Finnsburg. In 1967

of "gastas" or "souls" (1617a). Heremod might therefore have been betrayed into the hands of devils by death. Like Grendel, Heremod metaphorically "travels" in death, a figure confirmed in "Fortunes of Men," 26b, where "feorð bið on siðe" ("his spirit is/will be on a journey") is said of a dying man. If to be "lured away and quickly dispatched into the power of fiends" describes Heremod's death as an exile, "mid eotenum" becomes important. Ernst A. Kock has compared the half-line to a clause in the Old English *Orosius*: "hie sendon . . . þone consul mid him mid firde" ("they sent the consul against him with an army") ("Interpretations and Emendations," 117); cf. Janet Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, EETS, s.s., 6 (London, 1980), 120 (line 18). By this logic, if we construed *eoten* ("giant") as a locution for "enemy," we could read: "among his enemies he was misled right away into the power of fiends, quickly subdued."

¹⁰⁵ Suzuki, *Quoit Brooch Style*, 116–17.

¹⁰⁶ This does not seem to be the case, however, in *Beowulf* 1305a ("on ba healfa"), describing the Danes' and Grendel's "sides." The genitive singular adjective "healfre" in the phrase "þæt hie healfre geweald . . . agan moston" modifies a feminine noun, almost certainly "heal."

¹⁰⁷ Grimur Jónsson Thorkelin first identified the *eotenas* as "Jutes" in his 1815 translation of *Beowulf*: "Jutorum foedus / Injuste fuit / Fractum adversus dominum."

¹⁰⁸ North, "Tribal Loyalties" (n. 4 above), 21.

R. E. Kaske argued that *eoten* throughout *Beowulf* means “giant,” either “enemy” or “Frisian,” and that Hengest’s Danes ridicule the Frisians with the epithet.¹⁰⁹ Giants were the traditional enemies of the Æsir and Vanir in the Scandinavian cosmology, and the familiarization seems as natural as calling someone a “devil” today. Kaske’s view has gained some recent strong support from John F. Vickrey, who alleges that “eorðcyniges” in *Beowulf* 1155b and “eorðbuendra” in the Fragment 32b denote figurative earth-dwellers or giants.¹¹⁰ Jacqueline Stuhmiller, moreover, observes that *Beowulf* has just trounced Grendel, by extension an *eoten* of sorts.¹¹¹ She suggests that *Beowulf*, like Hengest, is an *eoten*-slayer. Kaske’s work was less context-specific, however. He noted that “Skáldskaparmál” attests that “giant terms” (“jötnaheiti”) are insulting designations for men. Yet another recension of the text claims that a man can be called a “jötunn” (“kent er ok til irtna”), the Old Icelandic cognate of *eoten*, and exemplifies the *heiti* with a verse.¹¹² Þjóðólfr of Hvinir’s late ninth-century “Haustlǫng” deploys the phrase “enemy of Thor” for “giant.”¹¹³ Interestingly, the Frisians seem to have been reputed for their size. Kaske observes that Þjóðólfr’s expression, “á fjalla Finns ilja brú minni” (“on my bridge of the foot-soles of the Lapp [= “Finns”] of the Fells”), refers to the giant Hrungnir, who protects himself from the god Thor by standing on his own shield.¹¹⁴ “Finnr” has to mean “giant” here.¹¹⁵ To continue, the runic “Rök Stone” seems to refer to a man

¹⁰⁹ R. E. Kaske, “The Eotenas in *Beowulf*,” in *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays*, ed. Robert P. Creed (Providence, RI, 1967), 285–310; see also Friedrich Holthausen, “Zu altenglischen Denkmälern,” *Englische Studien* 51 (1917–18): 180–88, at 180; Lawrence, “Tragedy of Finnsburg” (n. 1 above), 393: “Frisians, the men of King Finn, who are also called *Eotenas* . . .”; Malone, “Finn Episode” (n. 9 above), 161: “Euts and Frisians are equivalent terms, for our poet, and from that we may infer that the treachery was on the Frisian side.”

¹¹⁰ John F. Vickrey, “On the *Eorð*-Compounds in the Old English Finn-Stories,” *Studia Neophilologica* 65 (1993): 19–27.

¹¹¹ Jacqueline Stuhmiller, “On the Identity of the *Eotenas*,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 100 (1999): 7–14. Her point is that “the Geats may have vanquished this particular *eotena* [Grendel], but the Danes have eradicated whole hosts of them in the past, against tremendous odds” (11). Stuhmiller concludes with an observation similar to mine: “it is no less important to acknowledge that *Beowulf* himself, from a Danish viewpoint at least, is a rapacious *eoten* of sorts” (12).

¹¹² Kaske, “Eotenas in *Beowulf*,” 289.

¹¹³ Richard North, *The Haustlǫng of Þjóðólfr of Hvinir* (Middlesex, 1997), 8, 69.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹¹⁵ See the comments of A. Russchen, “Finnsburg — A Critical Approach,” in *Miscellanea Frisica*, ed. N. R. Århammar (Assen, 1984), 349–56, at 351 and Ommo Wilts, “Die Friesen im *Beowulf* — Rezeption und epische Grundlage,” *Nordfriesisches Jahrbuch* 15 (1979): 131–44.

as a killer of "giants," *very* tentatively identified as Frisians. Finally, Kaske brings forward some medieval Italian references to the height of Frisians — implying that Frisians were known in Dante's circles for their size. Here I must mention that details about Hygelac in the English *Liber monstrorum* have been attributed to Frisian oral tales — perhaps accounting for the morbid interest in the *dimensions* of Hygelac's bones.¹¹⁶ On the basis of Kaske's Norse evidence, then, OE *eoten* could mean "giant" in the Finnsburg contexts. If so, it may denote an "enemy" or specifically a Frisian, should one wish to emphasize the slender evidence of Frisian gigantism. Ultimately, reading *eoten* as a Frisian or enemy fits the context I furnish for the poem. In this context Hengest's position is "tragic," as Brodeur alleges. He must choose service to Finn or vengeance for Hnæf regardless of the cost to his personal reputation. Hengest can either break a sworn oath or deny vengeance to his lord. While the Danes censure Hengest for following Finn, Hengest does find a solution to his predicament, one that preserves his honor.

HENGEST'S RESOLUTION

Malone does attend, for reasons contrary to my own,¹¹⁷ the poet's accusation of Hengest's "failure":

Hengest, however eager, was unable to fulfil his obligation of taking vengeance. . . . We are told, not that Hengest left Finn's court, but that he was *eager* to leave; not that he brought on a battle, but that he had it in *mind* to bring one on; not that he took vengeance, but that he *thought* of taking it. This is surely apologetic material: the poet lays so much stress on his hero's good intentions that we must suspect the hero of failing to carry them out.¹¹⁸

Malone calls Hengest a "sinner," a judgment raising the issue of blame for Hengest's delay: "The poet warms to him . . . because he repents of his sin, even though he is unable to make amends."¹¹⁹ Malone makes this claim because he sees Guðlaf and Oslaf, not Hengest, as Hnæf's avengers. Hengest's resignation incriminates his resolve, but he *does* make amends in my

¹¹⁶ Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "Beowulf and King Hygelac in the Netherlands: Lost Anglo-Saxon Verse-Stories about This Event," *English Studies* 35 (1954): 193–204; Suzanne Backx, "Sur la date et l'origine du De monstris, belluis et serpentibus," *Latomus* 3 (1939): 61; L. G. Whitbread, "The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*," *Mediaeval Studies* 36 (1974): 434–71, at 463.

¹¹⁷ Brodeur is especially dismissive of the view that Hengest "made no [heroic] choice at all . . . between duty linked with desire to avenge . . . and his own weak irresolution"; see "Design and Motive" (n. 9 above), 4.

¹¹⁸ Malone, "Finn Episode," 168.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

reading of the episode. Yet Malone reasonably detects Hengest's equivocation, as some evidence discloses Hengest's hesitation to pursue vengeance for Hnæf. As Brodeur avers, "Hengest's followers were separated from him by an abyss of incomprehension and mistrust; the trust and comradeship which he had shared with them were dissolved."¹²⁰

Determining how Hengest feels about his conflicting obligations and especially his contemptible deference can be found in the passage equating his wintry mood with the bleak weather of the sea in winter.¹²¹

wælfagne winter	Hengest ða gyt
[ea]l unhlitme;	wunode mid Finne,
þeah þe he [sic MS] meahte	eard gemunde,
hringedstefnan, —	on mere drifan
won wið wind,	holm storme weol,
isgebinde . . .	winter yþe beleac

(1127b–33a)

[Hengest then voluntarily dwelled with Finn for a slaughter-stained winter; he recalled a homeland, although he might drive his ring-prowed ship on the sea. The ocean weltered in storm, struggled against the wind, winter locked the wave, the ice-fetter.]

The winter Hengest spends with Finn is "wælfag," stained by the remembered slaughter. Hengest's growing discomfort with his position is demonstrated by the expression "eard gemunde" (1129b): Hengest "remembered [his, a, the] homeland."

The precise meaning of *eal unhlitme* has been contested (the manuscript reads "finnel unhlitme"), but nearly all views connect it to OE *hlitm* and translate "not by lot."¹²² Donald K. Fry takes *eal unhlitme* as "voluntar-

¹²⁰ Brodeur, "Design and Motive" (n. 3 above), 23. Brodeur, however, thinks that Hengest resolves to *break* his oath.

¹²¹ Eric G. Stanley, "Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer* and *The Penitent's Prayer*," reprinted in *Collection of Papers* (n. 32 above), 234–80, at 252, 257; Robert B. Burlin, "Inner Weather and Interlace: A Note on the Semantic Value of Structure in *Beowulf*," in *Old English Studies in Honor of John C. Pope*, ed. Robert B. Burlin and Edward B. Irving, Jr. (Toronto, 1974), 81–89. Burlin exonerates Hengest ("the aim of the episode is clearly not to cast blame," 83) and suggests that Hengest succumbs to "the way things are" [*ibid.*].

¹²² While many have offered reconstructions of the text, the solution "(Finn) *eal unhlitme*" has found favor, the last two words being translated "not at all by lot," hence "without reluctance." This reading connects *unhlitme* to OE *hleotan* "to cast lots," and OE *hlit* "chance, lot, share"; cf. "on hlytme," *Beowulf* 3126: "Næs ða on hlytme / hwa þæt hord strude" ("It was by no means [decided] according to lot who plunder that hoard"). Orchard translates "ill-fated" (*Critical Companion* [n. 14 above], 186). *Klaeber's Beowulf* (notes to line 1128b–29a) offers the reading "he unflitme" introducing a new clause; see below, n. 124.

ily"¹²³ and John F. Vickrey renders it "not by necessity."¹²⁴ They jointly argue that Hengest *willingly* (even eagerly) stays in Frisia to avenge Hnæf, and Vickrey extends the case by reading *eard gemunde* as "'bore in mind' where disaster had befallen his lord."¹²⁵ North connects the curious expression to Gildas's remark that the Germanic invaders read omens before venturing to Britannia. Gildas's words are "omen" and "auguria."¹²⁶ *Historia Brittonum* records that Hengest was forced to leave his homeland, although omens as such are not mentioned: "Interea tres ceolae, a Germania in exilium expulsae, Bryttanniam aduenerunt."¹²⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth explained Hengest's exile by reference to a "lottery":

Fueramus etenim expulsi a patria nostra nec ob aliud nisi quia consuetudo regni expetebat. Consuetudo nanque in patria nostra est ut, cum habundantia hominum in eadem superuenerit, conueniunt ex diuersis prouintiis principes et totius regni iuuenes coram se uenire precipiunt. Deinde proiecta sorte potiores atque fortiores eligunt qui extera regna petituri uictum sibi perquirant [ut] patria ex qua orti sunt a superflua multitudine liberetur. Superfluentia igitur nouiter in regno nostro hominum copia conuenienter principes nostri sortemque proicientes elegerunt iuuentutem istam quam in presentia tua cernis; preceperunt ut consuetudini ab antiquo statute parent.¹²⁸

¹²³ Fry, *Finnsburh* (n. 31 above), 22.

¹²⁴ John F. Vickrey, "The Narrative Structure of Hengest's Revenge in *Beowulf*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (1977): 91–103, at 91: "Any *hlitm*, 'casting of lots,' would imply 'choice' in the sense 'decision pursuant to lots and not to one's desires.' But the translation 'having no choice' means much more than this; it means 'unwillingly,' and shows that *-hlitm* here is really taken to imply 'free choice, choice pursuant to one's desires.'" The translation "voluntarily" may be euphemistic, as R. D. Fulk implies in his treatment of the term as "'not reluctantly,' 'eagerly,' 'fondly'" ("Six Cruces" [n. 42 above], 199). Having accepted the sense "eagerly," he applies "unhlitme" to the following half-line "eard gemunde," partly because the subsequent verses about the winter weather suggest the impossibility of travel. Fulk therefore accepts the emendation *ne* < MS *he* in 1130a. In proposing the clause onset, he also recommends emending *eal* to *he*. Given the telegraphic style of the passage, I do not think that the verses on the winter weather need to explain the reason for Hengest's predicament, as the punctuation (a dash) implies. One could intuit, "Hengest stayed happily, even though he could sail home . . . the winter squalls set in."

¹²⁵ Vickrey, "Narrative Structure," 95; Vickrey claims, "Hengest meditates a dire revenge" (ibid.). He further argues that Hengest's revenge is implicated twice in the telling. When the poet describes the dread winter he actually portrays Hengest's mood. The arrival of spring represents Hengest's revenge: "The first ending hints at rage and a slaughterous revenge; the second records the details of revenge" (101).

¹²⁶ North, "Tribal Loyalties," 27: "Hengest does not sail, therefore he does not look for omens . . . [he] plans to settle a new land [Britain], but his private feud takes precedence."

¹²⁷ Dumville, *Historia Brittonum* (n. 5 above), 82.

¹²⁸ Neil Wright, *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth: I. Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568* (Cambridge, 1985), 65 (emending "et" to "ut").

[We were expelled from our homeland for no other reason than our nation's custom required it. For the custom in our land is that when there is an abundance of men in it, the nobles from various districts meet and command the young men from the whole kingdom to come before them. Lots are then cast, and the powerful and strong choose those who will seek out foreign kingdoms to earn their bread, so that the homeland where they were born may be freed from an inordinate multitude. Since a superabundance of men has lately befallen our homeland, our princes, casting lots, selected the youth which you see in your presence; the nobles commanded that they adhere to the custom by ancient decree.]

Given Geoffrey's celebrity for invention, the sentiment may not express anything more than his impulse to amplify Gildas's remarks. If the "lottery" reflects an actual tradition, however, translating "eal unhlitme" as "not at all by lottery" could refer to the circumstances that made Hengest a *wrecca*: exile from his (Anglian or Jutish) homeland and service with Hnæf. The fact that Hengest stays *eal unhlitme* in this instance could mean one of two things: no lottery compelled Hengest's service to Finn or no lottery forced him to leave. Taking "not by lot" as "voluntarily" perfectly captures the sense of the expression.

From the parallels in Gildas, North ingeniously suggested that Hengest recalls *a* homeland: Britain.¹²⁹ Presumably Hengest stayed on to consummate his revenge, as lines 1137b–39b suggest:

	Fundode wrecca,
gist of gearдум;	he to gynnræce
swiðor þohte	þonne to sælade

[The *wrecca* was eager to set out, the guest from those precincts. He thought more about vengeance than his sea venture.]

Notwithstanding his ambitions, Hengest thinks more about striking back at the Frisians than about the expedition he seems to have planned. For some reason, however, he continues to honor his pledge to Finn. While he had the opportunity to go home, he is trapped in Finnsburg.¹³⁰ Something is holding him back.

In the end Hengest cannot restrain his "wæfre mod" (1150b) or "hesitant disposition." In *Beowulf's* action with the dragon the term *wæfre* seems to describe a psychic paralysis, an indecisiveness over a pending action. The sense "flickering," as of igniting a flame ("Daniel," 240a, might also be

¹²⁹ North, "Tribal Loyalties," 26–27. Another possibility is provided below, p. 230 note 156.

¹³⁰ The half-line "þeah þe he meahte" has often been emended to "þeah þe ne meahte," but the negation should be rejected; see Taylor, "*Beowulf* 1130" (n. 62 above), 357–58 and North, "Tribal Loyalties," 26.

defended here.¹³¹ Others have translated *wæfre* more vaguely by attributing an indistinct "restlessness" to the Danes. Translating the clause "ne meakte wæfre mod / forhabben in hrepre" as "the restless spirit [of the Danes] could not restrain itself in the breast" (1150b–51a), Kemp Malone simultaneously makes the verb reflexive and writes Hengest out of the Danish revenge.¹³² Yet Hengest's uncertainty finds direct expression in the clause,

. . . gif he torngemot þurhteon mihte,
 þæt he eotena bearn inne gemunde . . .

(1140a–41b)

[. . . if he could effect an angry meeting, that he might remind the sons of the giants within.]

The hapax legomenon *torngemot* consists of elements *torn*, "angry, indignant," plus *gemot*, "counsel, meeting, assembly." Others have interpreted *torngemot* as I do, but these critics insist that the Danes intend to hold such a meeting.¹³³ On the contrary, Hengest does *not* intend to break the oath, but he engineers an angry meeting where he goads the Frisians into breaking it. In this way "he might *remind* the sons of the giants [= enemies, Frisians] within." The semantic problem here is twofold: the meaning of adverb "inne" and of verb "gemunde." OE *inne* has occasionally been emended to *irne* ("with iron"), but *inne* may stand as an adverb of position.¹³⁴

¹³¹ OE *wæfre* is a difficult term because of its rarity: attested only four times in Old English, it occurs three times in *Beowulf*. In line 1331a Hroðgar says that a "wælgæst wæfre" ("hesitant slaughter-guest": Grendel's mother) slew Æschere — a detail confirmed by the poet's remarks:

Heo wæs on ofste, wolde ut þanon,
 feore beorgan, þa heo onfunden wæs . . .

(1292a–93b)

[She was in a hurry, wanted to get out of there and protect her life after she had been discovered.]

In *Beowulf*, then, "wæfre" plausibly means "hesitant," as in ModE "wavering." On the etymology, see Francis A. Wood, "Etymologies," *Modern Language Notes* 15 (1900): 95–101, at 98. Klaeber interpreted the word as "vagans" ("Die christlichen Elemente im Beowulf II," *Anglia* 35 [1911]: 249–70, at 256). G. N. Garmonsway argued that the term meant "furious, raging" and denied that Beowulf is "hesitant" ("Anglo-Saxon Heroic Attitudes," in *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.*, ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr. and Robert P. Creed [New York, 1965], 139–46, at 143–46).

¹³² Malone, "Finn Episode" (n. 32 above), 159.

¹³³ Fry, "New Interpretation" (n. 31 above), 11.

¹³⁴ Bruce Mitchell discusses this line in his "Two Syntactical Notes" (n. 47 above), 16–22.

North alone has argued that *inne* here means “within the nation,”¹³⁵ although “inwardly” (of a mental state) makes sense as well.¹³⁶ Yet the context is more specific: inside the hall. Adverb *inne* can be found seven other times in *Beowulf*, and in five of these it means “inside a hall.”¹³⁷ The best parallels occur in 1866b, where Hroðgar is said to have bestowed gifts “inside” (“inne gesealde”) and in 3059b, where the dragon is said to have hidden his treasure “inside” (“inne gehydde”). The context of *inne* “inside the hall or barrow” has to be inferred, since mention of either location is several lines away. A further parallel from “Vainglory” shows that *inne* can mean in a hall: “witan fundiaþ // hwylc æscstede, / inne in ræcede // mid werum wunige” (“Inside the building men are eager to know where the battlefield will be among men,” 16b–18a). This is exactly the circumstances of the passage in Finnsburg. Hengest makes Finn’s hall the scene of his revenge.

Hengest intends to *gemunan* the sons of the giants / enemies *inside the hall*, where he can press an advantage. OE *gemunan* generally means “to remember,” but how would one “remember the sons of giants / enemies”?¹³⁸ The collocation recalls Norse expressions meaning “take revenge,”¹³⁹ since the *Beowulf* poet uses *gemunan* to denote the promise of compensation for acts committed or pledged. “Ic þe þæs lean gemani!” (“I will remember a reward for you for that”) says Wealhþeow in 1220b when she asks Beowulf to protect her sons. Elsewhere Beowulf “remembered a requital” (“lean gemunde,” 2391b) for Heardred’s death: “Se ðæs leodhryres / lean gemunde” (“he remembered a requital for the prince’s [or nation’s] fall,” 2391). When Hengest says “eotena bearn . . . gemunde,” that he “means to remember the Frisians inside the hall,” he intends pay them back for their earlier attack. The understatement euphemizes Hengest’s determination.

¹³⁵ North, “Tribal Loyalties” (n. 4 above), 19–20.

¹³⁶ An excellent precedent for the sense “mental state” can be found in *Beowulf* 2113b.

¹³⁷ Lines 390b, 642b, 1281b (adverb of motion), 1570b, 1800b, 1866b; 3059b refers to the dragon’s lair. The phrase is highly formulaic. It occurs solely in the b-verse, and three times in *Beowulf* (I count “inne gemunde”) *inne* is found with a preterite verb form having prefix *ge-*.

¹³⁸ Orchard suspects that *gemunan* “remember” can also mean “call to mind” (*Critical Companion* [n. 14 above], 186), but this sense would require justification if it meant “call to (someone else’s) mind.” In *Beowulf* OE *myndgian* is used for the sense “remind” or “call to mind.” The form *gemunde* appears to be preterite subjunctive, but a translation would be crabbled: “might have remembered.”

¹³⁹ Richard Cleasby, Gudbrand Vigfusson, and William A. Craigie, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1957), s.v. *muna*, sense 2. It has to be conceded that in all the OIcel citations, one does not remember a person (as in *Beowulf*) but his doings. One “remembers” (humiliations or miseries) just before seeking revenge in *Beowulf* 1259b (Grendel’s mother remembers “yrmþe” or “humiliation”), and 2488 (Eofor’s hand remembered feuds). In the Heaðobeard digression the *eald æscwiga* “remembers all” and goads a youth to murder (2042b).

To this end, the Danish Hunlafing¹⁴⁰ presents Hengest with a sword whose edges are known "among the giants [that is, the Frisians]": "þæs wæron mid eotenum / ecge cuðe" (1145). While Kaske interprets this passage to mean that the sword was old — known among the ancient race of giants — he suggests the alternative "known among Frisians" as well. This reading is arguably preferable, since it has lately been established that the *Beowulf* poet uses *eoten* consistently for post-diluvian creatures.¹⁴¹ On the one hand, this sword may have been used to kill Frisians in the surprise attack, perhaps even Hnæf's, thereby making it "known."¹⁴² On the other hand, the sword may have an even older history, one I am prepared to argue for. My claim for the function of the sword in the episode derives from the parallel I noted above between the Finnsburg and Heaðobeard digressions.

In the Heaðobeard digression, a *byre* provocatively wears a Heaðobeard sword captured in a battle that had been waged in a prior generation.¹⁴³ The

¹⁴⁰ This character is the son of "Hunlaf" (see John R. Clark Hall, "A Note on *Beowulf* 1142–1145," *Modern Language Notes* 25 [1910]: 113–14) known from the pages of the lost *Skjoldunga saga* epitomized by Arngrímur Jónsson in his *Rerum Danicarum fragmenta*: "Hunleifus, Oddleifus, Gunnleifus," which correspond exactly to Hunlaf, Oddlaf (Ordlaf / Oslaf), and Guðlaf (ed. Axel Olrik, *Skjoldungasaga i Arngrim Jonssons Udtoq* [Copenhagen, 1894]); and from an important reference in Cotton Vespasian D. IV fol. 139v, deriving from an anonymous history "de Bruto et Brittonibus secundum Bedam" (Rudolf Imelmann, review of *Beowulf* by M. Heyne and L. Schücking, in *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 17 [April 1909], cols. 995–1000, at col. 999): "In diebus illis, imperante Valentiniano . . . regnum barbarorum et germanorum exortum est. Surgentesque populi et nationes per totam Europam conederunt. Hoc testantur gesta rudolphi et hunlapi, Unwini et Widie, Horsi et Hengisti, Waltef et hame, quorum quidam in Italia, quidam in Gallia, alii in britannia, ceteri vero in Germania armis et rebus bellicis claruerunt." Various readings have been proposed (for which see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, note to lines 1142–44), a heterodox one revived by Friend. Two questions arise if we accept the reading Hunlafing: Is Hunlafing the name of a sword (Axel Olrik, *Danmarks Heltedigtning: En Oldtidsstudie* [Copenhagen, 1903], vol. 1, 68; Kemp Malone, "Hunlafing," *Modern Language Notes* 43 [1928]: 300–304) — or a person? The question arises whether one can call a son "Hunlafing" without a full first name, but Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur seems to have resolved the question to the extent that it can be ("The Climax of the Finn Episode," *University of California Publications in English* 3 [1943]: 285–361, at 330–54). Girvan perversely identified Hengest as Hunlafing: "it was on his own lap he laid and wore the sword" (*Finnsburuh* [n. 32 above], 24).

¹⁴¹ Bandy, "Giants of *Beowulf*" (n. 32 above).

¹⁴² Although this is not the only explanation: David C. Van Meter ("The Ritualized Presentation of Weapons and the Ideology of Nobility in *Beowulf*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 95 [1996]: 175–89) recalls an earlier explanation (i.e., Girvan, *Finnsburuh*, 24) that the sword may have been Hnæf's and that a ritual of political legitimation renders Hengest fully responsible for blood vengeance (185; the notion of an heir seems implicit). If so, we would need to account for the delay of the ceremony, Hengest's own reluctance to break the treaty (does one require a ceremony to perform one's duty?) before and afterwards, and the ambiguity of the sword's history.

¹⁴³ Robert W. Hanning, "Poetic Emblems in Medieval Narrative Texts," in *Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lois Ebin (Kalamazoo, MI, 1984), 1–32, at 6, 8.

sword was passed from father to son. This is exactly the circumstances of Hunlafing's sword, already passed down from the previous generation. This explanation clarifies the patronymic "Hunlafing": the poet emphasizes the history of a weapon inherited from a famous father. The unusual patronymic draws attention to the generational focus, which the boy's actual name would obscure. From the parallels between the two episodes we can conclude that wearing the wrong weapon can arouse enmity over a past event which has no bearing on a present one. In short, an insensitivity recalls a past conflict, which in turn affects Ingeld's marriage, despite Ingeld's best efforts to prevent any breach of trust. Recall that the perpetrator escaped, making punishment or compensation for the slaughtered Dane impossible. Like Ingeld, Finn would not want one of his own men to breach his well-constructed treaty over an event from the distant past that had nothing to do with the Danish-Frisian feud. But to be faithful to the terms of the treaty, Hengest would want just this eventuality, since he expects the treaty to be breached by infuriated Frisians.

Hunlafing presents the sword not to bait Hengest but for him to wear it and precipitate an incendiary reaction among Frisians in the hall.¹⁴⁴ Hence, the verb *purhleon*, literally "to pull through" but here "to effect," highlights Hengest's ostensible conspiracy. This strategy answers the detail that Hengest wanted to provoke a *lorngemot* or "angry meeting." The point is to make the Frisians remember grievances against Danes, for which reason the poet emphasizes the Frisian oath. One must not say anything related to the settlement, but it might all emerge if emotions could be provoked. Hunlafing's sword must have had a transparent history if Hengest uses it to make the Frisians speak of remembered killings. It has been suggested that Hunlaf fell in the attack on the hall and that his son received the father's sword. This seems unlikely, since the prominent Hunlaf is not made the object of vengeance. More likely, it would violate the oath to bring up an issue related to the current feud, but the past is not off limits.

¹⁴⁴ Frank, "Germanic Legend" (n. 8 above), 90: "The silent placing of a sword on Hengest's lap screams out vengeance." Frank is not quite clear how the sword prompts Hengest, and neither is Klaeber, writing, "Hunlafing . . . presents Hengest with a famous sword with the stipulation . . . that the vengeance he is brooding over is to be carried into execution" ("Observations" [n. 3 above], 547). For Klaeber, it almost seems as if the sword were a gift — or bribe. Malone ("Hildeburg and Hengest" [n. 39 above], 276) proposes that receiving the sword signifies Hengest's intent: "On this earlier occasion the Eotens had got well acquainted with his sword; he is intent on having them renew this acquaintance"; see also Malone, "Finn Episode" (n. 9 above), 167. Brodeur alleges, "acceptance of the sword was a promise to Hengest's men; it restored him to unity with them, and ended his tragic isolation" ("Design and Motive" [n. 9 above], 24).

North follows some readers who allege that Hunlafing receives Hengest's rule over the Danes by placing his sword in Hengest's lap.¹⁴⁵ In this way, Hengest transfers his power and responsibility for the oath, presumably to Hunlafing. On the basis of four episodes (two from the sagas, one from *Beowulf*, and one from Saxo), North reasons that receiving a sword indicates vassalage. In each of North's cases, however, a *king* delivers the sword, whereas in Finnsburg a *subordinate* (Hunlafing) hands it over. Hunlafing would therefore have to be a king already — a status the alleged ceremony preempts. North's incongruent parallels yet raise as many questions as they answer: Why should the oath be binding only for Hengest and not for his troops? If Hengest yields power to Hunlafing, is an attack ethical by heroic standards? Why should the young Hunlafing become "king" and not Guðlaf or Oslaf? Why are the sword's edges "known among giants"? Two more questions emerge as well: Of what parallel relevance is the detail of the sword-wearer in the Heaðobeard digression — if it indeed echoes Finnsburg? If the Danes could slaughter Finn with impunity, why do they need Hengest to cede power? He need not break the oath if they assaulted Finn on their own. Finally, in yielding power does Hengest capitulate in his duty to seek revenge, as Malone charged, in effect turning over the responsibility to his subalterns and diminishing his own status? The moment seems unusually heightened not because it implies a transfer of authority but because it initiates Hengest's plot. North alleges Hengest's reluctance to break the oath, but the pledge *is broken* in his reading.

Handing over the sword is described by the idiom *don + on*, which generally means "put on" in Old English, a locution different from *aligan + on* in 2194 ("on Biowulfes / bearm alegde" or "laid in Beowulf's lap").¹⁴⁶ The phrase "on bearm" could mean "on his lap" by synecdoche but could equally represent attaching a sword to a baldric.¹⁴⁷ Most plausibly, Hunlafing puts his own famous sword on Hengest. This moment has a strong correlate with the Ingeld digression, in which a sword worn "innocently" provokes a murder. The parallel is being exploited: a sword is being used as provocation in

¹⁴⁵ North, "Tribal Loyalties," 28–29.

¹⁴⁶ Scott Gwara, "Second Language Acquisition and Anglo-Saxon Bilingualism: Negative Transfer and Avoidance in Elfric Bata's Latin *Colloquia*, ca. A.D. 1000," *Viator* 29 (1998): 1–24, at 14.

¹⁴⁷ Björn Collinder, "Beowulfskolier," in *Elias Wessén, 15 April 1954* (Lund, 1954), 16–25, at 20–21. A verse from *Max II* 25b bears on this question: "sweord seal on bearme." This occurs in a long section patterned "X seal on Y" describing where men or objects should be *positioned*. Thus, "a gem should stand in a ring" (22b–23a), "a mast on a ship's keel must support a sail-yard" (24b–25a), "a king should give rings in his hall" (28b–29a). The context (as well as the dative of position) here indicates that the sword be *attached* to the *bearm*, and there is every reason to think that Hunlafing places the sword where it belongs, and not on Hengest's lap.

a scene like that in Finn's hall. Interestingly, the sword mentioned in the Ingeld digression had been taken from Heaðobeards at some time prior to the marriage settlement. So, too, was Hunlafing's sword, almost certainly inherited from Hunlaf. Its edges are hypothetically "known among giants" because Hunlaf either killed many giants with it or took it from giants — *Frisians*, in other words. The expression simply suggests why Frisians would react when they see the weapon. In the Heaðobeard digression the tauntings of the *eald æscwiga* and the murder that incites war trigger this reaction.¹⁴⁸ Hengest wears the sword as provocation, thereby preserving the letter of his oath. Hengest expects that a *Frisian* will see the sword, recall a fatal incident unrelated to the current delicate situation, complain of it, and thereby bring up the feud. In fact, this strategy answers the specific clause in the treaty between Finn and Hengest:

gyf þonne Frysna hwylc	frecnen spræce
ðæs morþorhetes	myndgiend wære,
þonne hit sweordes ecg	syððan scede.

(1104a–6b)

[If some *Frisian* should call to mind through audacious talk the murderous hostility, then the sword's edge would afterwards settle it.]

Hengest makes the Frisians resort to such audacious talk, so that he may exploit this conspicuous provision and "settle" the dispute honorably. Hengest remains leader of the Danes throughout but only earns respect by making the Frisians break the oath — a situation identical to Ingeld's. Even so, Hengest *can* be faulted for making his decision only after Danish intimidation.

Hunlafing's act ultimately coincides with my reading of the passage mentioning Guðlaf and Oslaf. Hengest does not *refuse* "the counsel of the world" or "woroldrædenne" (1142b), which is often uselessly emended to "weorod-rædende" ("host-ruler, king"), but neither does he embrace it actively. His hesitation, which North also envisions, evokes the "tragic" sense often seen in the digression — that he is compelled to act against his better judgement (or self-interest, I argue) and break a truce.¹⁴⁹ Arthur Brodeur's paper on "The Climax of the Finn Episode" brilliantly clarified the meaning of *woroldræden* and demolished competing emendations.¹⁵⁰ In nearly all Old English compounds terminating in *-ræden*, the element *ræden* functions as

¹⁴⁸ Hill suggests — and there is no avoiding the realistic possibility of his reading — that Hengest then carried out his vengeance using the sword (*Warrior Ethic* [n. 20 above], 67).

¹⁴⁹ Burlin, "Inner Weather" (n. 121 above), 83–84.

¹⁵⁰ Brodeur, "Climax," 313–30.

an abstract suffix. However, in cases like *landræden* "law of the land," *sinræden* "widespread counsel," and *folcræden* "national law," the second element retains its meaning "counsel, stipulation, law, decree" and should be translated "counsel of the world."¹⁵¹ To my mind, the world's counsel could be as vague as "duty" or as specific as "vengeance," but many have offered other suggestions: "what pertains to the world,"¹⁵² "revenge and destruction,"¹⁵³ "the course 'suggested by public opinion.'"¹⁵⁴ Hengest apparently scorns a duty that the *world* demands. Why should he hesitate for so long? First, he is not a Dane and therefore not compelled to exact revenge to the extent the Danes are.¹⁵⁵ Second, Hengest has been elevated to a supremely high rank and capitalizes on his status. Third, he cannot imagine how the oath could be violated without an accusation of perfidy. But Guðlaf and Oslaf make Hengest see his duty, and Hengest redeems his vacillation.

BEOWULF THE FOREIGN KING OF DANES

This reading of multiple parallels between the Finnsburg and Heaðobeard digressions not only eases difficulties in Finnsburg but also has the virtue of greatly simplifying the plot, so that its meaning for the poem's internal audience (of Geats and Danes) becomes transparent. In essence Finnsburg describes reluctant but eventual revenge. Ambition and duty are its key terms. The episode dramatizes the ethical and social consequences of electing an outsider, someone "elþeodig," to defend the interests of one's people. Even when an obviously righteous choice lies before such a man, his duty to

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 328–29; see DOE, s.v. folcræden: "public policy" and "national legislation."

¹⁵² Lawrence, "Tragedy of Finnsburg" (n. 1 above), 418.

¹⁵³ Burlin, "Inner Weather," 83.

¹⁵⁴ Garmonsway, "Heroic Attitudes" (n. 131 above), 141. For a summary of the earliest suggestions and a few others not considered here, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 189 and George Sanderlin, "A Note on *Beowulf* 1142," *Modern Language Notes* 53 (1938): 501–3, at 501 n. 1: "worldly intercourse," "retainership," "way of the world," "destiny," "custom of the world," "condition," "worldly duty," "universal obligation."

¹⁵⁵ Malone's view ("Hildeburg and Hengest" [n. 39 above], 267) holds good in one respect: "In truth, all the Danes were in the same boat. Every man of them, when he entered Finn's service, made sacrifice of his honor. The tragedy of Hengest is representative; it is not his peculiar personal property." All suffer humiliation, but only the Danes represented by Guðlaf and Oslaf insist that the oath must be voided. For this reason, Malone proposes that Hunlafing must be a sword name: "In getting rid of [Hunlafing as a character] we also get rid of the hypothetical and inherently improbable difference of opinion (not to say ill feeling) between Hengest on the one hand and his fellow members of the *wealaf* on the other" (278). Malone then proceeds to vitiate his own theory when he says, "In my reconstruction, the other Danes became *unjustifiably* suspicious of Hengest because of his failure to act, and made their escape without him, under the leadership of Guthlaf and Oslaf" (284, my italics).

sworn allies is compromised by the prestige and wealth garnered even from treacherous enemies. A maxim transmitted in the Vespasian manuscript of the Old English “Dicts of Cato,” and untranslated from any Latin source, actually describes the calamity of foreign leadership voiced in Finnsburg:

Wa þære þeode þe hæfð ælðeodigne cyng — ungemetfæstne, feohgeorne, 7 unmildheortne — for on þære þeode byð his gitsung, 7 his modes gnornung on his eared.¹⁵⁶

[Woe to the nation that has a foreign king — immoderate, eager for treasure and pitiless — for his own rapacity will be among the people, and the sorrow of his spirit will be for his homeland.]

Finn gigs Hengest’s ambition with precisely these expectations. Hengest sacrifices Danish honor for his own self-interest, and he abuses the trust of his Danish subalterns — the men whose trust he supposedly safeguards. The very notion that he goes on to conquer territory in sub-Roman Britain suggests, in fact, that supreme glory rather than loyalty, kinship, or honor motivates him from the start. And, ironically, Hengest defends his own reputation, not the dignity of his men. Only Danish complaints force Hengest to retreat from his seemingly ironclad treaty, and he must devise a plan that will not contravene *his own* allegiance to Finn. The allegiance to Hnæf seems forgotten.

The Finnsburg poet poses questions of revenge and feuding, to be sure, but he centrally features a foreign-born leader whose interests lean towards self-promotion rather than an expected good, the natural retaliation for betrayal, murder, and humiliation. The *scop*’s narrative archetype Hengest must choose between two conflicting obligations, and Hengest’s choices disclose hesitation and compromise. This factitious comparison applies to Beowulf. In the same analogous terms that characterize all the Beowulfian digressions (in which Beowulf is compared to Sigemund or Heremod, for example),¹⁵⁷ Hroðgar’s minstrel compares Beowulf to Hengest, implicitly identifying Beowulf as a *wrecca*, a foreign adventurer like Sigeferþ, called “a *wrecca* known widely” (“wreccea wide cuð,” 25a) in the Finnsburg Frag-

¹⁵⁶ R. S. Cox, “The Old English Dicts of Cato,” *Anglia* 90 (1972): 1–42, at 15. London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D.xiv (s. xii med.) alone preserves this aphorism, which does not derive from the alleged source, the *Distichs* of Pseudo-Cato. The expression “his modes gnornung on his earde” may have some bearing on the phrase “eard gemunde” in *Beowulf* 1129b. Just as the tyrant laments for his homeland in a way that compromises his duty, Hengest may miss his people. By staying with Finn Hengest starts to resemble the rapacious foreign king.

¹⁵⁷ On reading the Sigemund and Heremod digressions as analogies, see, e.g., M. S. Griffith, “Some Difficulties in *Beowulf*, Lines 874–902: Sigemund Reconsidered,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1995): 11–24.

ment.¹⁵⁸ Hengest holds the title “wrecca” in the Beowulf episode — a trusted outsider whose sword and counsel are valued even above those of native kinsmen. While never called a *wrecca* himself, Beowulf resembles the soldiers of fortune found most abundantly in *Beowulf*: Hengest, Sigemund, Heremod, Hunferð, and Ecgþeow. Men like these are ambitious, competitive, and solitary — given to the singular pursuit of glory. While Beowulf belongs to this class of warriors more in imagination than in fact, the Finnsburg *scop* chooses to highlight Beowulf’s ostensible ambition. In fact, he opposes ambition to loyalty in a scenario analogous to Beowulf’s present circumstances as Hroðgar’s protégé.

Through this extended parable the *scop* imaginatively critiques Hroðgar’s intention to adopt Beowulf as his son and heir. Having praised Beowulf’s mother (lines 942b–46a) for producing such a man as Beowulf,¹⁵⁹ Hroðgar promises an emotional tie resembling fosterage:

	Nu ic, Beowulf, þec,
secg betsta,	me for sunu wylle
freogan on ferhþe;	heald forð tela
niwe sibbe.	

(946b–49a)

[Now I, Beowulf, best of men, will honor you in my heart like a son. Hold well this new kinship henceforth.]

The choked expression — I, you, me, son — confirms Hroðgar’s strong feelings. Beowulf is a new son in sentimental terms, though not yet a political successor. But when Hroðgar’s dynastic treasures are distributed, Beowulf’s position as heir becomes solidified politically. He receives five items: a standard, helmet, mailcoat, and sword, all formerly owned by Heorogar, so it seems — and Hroðgar’s war-saddle.¹⁶⁰ These status objects confirm Hroðgar’s intention to promote Beowulf as a regent, and this alarming development poses a threat to the social cohesion of Heorot and especially to solidarity of the Danish warband. After all, the foreigner Beowulf is unknown to any of them, and he is, even at his death, “lofgeornost” (“most

¹⁵⁸ George Hickes’s printed texts reads “wrecten,” probably in error for “wrecen” (*Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium Thesaurus Grammatico-Criticus et Archæologicus*, 2 vols. (London, 1708), 192–93). Sigeferþ and Hengest may plausibly have joined Hnæf either for national defense or for an “expedition,” to use the euphemism for piracy.

¹⁵⁹ Hill, “Danish Succession” (n. 14 above), 182: “The thought of Beowulf’s parent, his mother only, may have led Hroðgar to offer himself as a ‘father.’”

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 184. It is often noted that these four gifts are delivered to Hygelac in exactly the same order in which they are received (2152a–54a), and at that time Beowulf recounts that Heorogar once owned them. Apparently Beowulf keeps the saddle; see Orchard, *Critical Companion* (n. 14 above), 226.

desirous of praise,” 3182b).¹⁶¹ To the Danes celebrating Grendel’s defeat, Beowulf is an extraordinary fighter, but as their leader he might fail to heed the “world’s counsel” and become that rapacious foreign king mentioned in the *Vespasian maxim*.

Suspicious of Beowulf’s standing as Hroðgar’s designated heir, Queen Wealhþeow registers her own doubts about the Geat’s throne-worthiness. John M. Hill observes how Wealhþeow discerns Hroðgar’s intent to thrust Beowulf into the succession and that she counters the king’s gambit with a competing offer and admonition.¹⁶² For Hill, Wealhþeow suggests rewarding Beowulf with exceptional treasures received in tribute or won in war.¹⁶³ Beowulf, she observes, has no long-standing debt of gratitude and reciprocal obligation that would tie him to Hroðgar or the Danes. Having instead committed a glorious deed, he should be honored as a champion, the way heroes are recognized. Most significantly, however, Finnsburg intervenes before Wealhþeow presents her counter-offer. It is an odd disjunctive moment in the poem and in my view a direct reaction to Finnsburg, which rehearses the circumstances of potential Danish disgrace at the hands of a foreign leader. In other words, the Finnsburg *scop* recites a poem full of anxiety over righteous duty, and Wealhþeow may be seen to respond sympathetically.

The *gidd* of Finnsburg may criticize the “revenge ethic,” as many imagine, but for a Danish faction that includes Wealhþeow its relevance chills their conviviality. Beowulf’s loyalties may lie with strangers or adversaries and not with the nation to which he has little allegiance, or at least far less than Hroþulf has. This reading of Finnsburg means that subalterns in the poem fear Beowulf’s potential rule, and their anxiety may be found throughout the Beowulfian digressions, especially in the multiple parables concerning Heremod’s rapacity. Of course, these (mostly) anonymous diegetic characters may misjudge Beowulf’s motivations. Abundant evidence in *Beowulf* supports the hero’s generosity — at least in the service he gives Hroðgar and, in some instances to others, like the coast-warden. Even so, the Danish

¹⁶¹ On the equivocal meaning of OE *lofgeornost*, see Mary P. Richards, “A Reexamination of *Beowulf* ll. 3180–3182,” *English Language Notes* 10 (1973): 163–67; Eric G. Stanley, “*Hæþenra Hyht* in *Beowulf*,” reprinted in *A Collection of Papers with Emphasis on Old English Literature*, ed. Eric G. Stanley, 192–208 (Toronto, 1987), 198; Dennis Cronan, “*Lofgeorn*: Generosity and Praise,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 92 (1991): 187–94; Bruce Mitchell, “Literary Lapses: Six Notes on *Beowulf* and Its Critics,” *Review of English Studies* 43 (1992): 1–17, at 16–17.

¹⁶² Hill, “Danish Succession” (n. 14 above), 186–90. Hill reads suspicion and distrust in Wealhþeow’s reaction: “She seems to imply that Beowulf, much favored, might be unkind to her sons, that he might commit deeds against their interest and against his own present fame” (190).

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 186.

subalterns could legitimately *imagine* a future foreign king whose ambition *might* distort a righteous motivation, or else a Heremod type in whom *oferhygd* (1740b, 1760b) fosters recklessness. The danger of this moral debility seems axiomatic to this audience. By these terms, which identify and credit a subaltern perspective, Beowulf is not obviously malignant, only potentially so. Readers of the poem might see in this reaction the complexity of warband politics, if not a cynical reception of Beowulf's deeds.

To his credit, Beowulf perceives this admonition and understands the implications of Finnsburg. He tacitly rejects Hroðgar's offer of kingship but acknowledges the role of "son," emotionally, ceremonially, and politically. I claim that Wealhþeow and Beowulf both respond to Finnsburg as an analogy meant to convey the dangers of foreign leadership. In the renunciation of kingship it could be said that Beowulf takes the advice of a court poet as a much as that of a queen. For this reason, the Finnsburg digression represents the first time in English literature that characters can be shown to evaluate and react to intradiegetic narrative that analogizes their circumstances and guides their conduct — a common feature of epic.¹⁶⁴ In fact, the Heaðobeard digression confirms Beowulf's percipient appropriation of the Finnsburg *gidd*. He applies the *scop's* lessons to Ingeld's predicament when he anticipates how a past incident could ignite a feud, even when Ingeld's marriage was intended to settle hostilities. Just like Finn, Ingeld expects that his alliance is secure. Betrayed, however, by the heat of a boy who recognizes his father's sword, Ingeld will come to endure unexpected violence. For Beowulf, then, Finnsburg analogizes a pattern of oath-breaking, and the relevance of the Heaðobeard digression that I theorize for Finnsburg derives from Beowulf's deliberate and germane recollection of King Hroðgar's court entertainment.

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¹⁶⁴ On the use of analogous story in epic to give advice and impart past experience, see my "Misprision in the Para-Narratives of *Iliad* 9," *Arethusa* 40 (2007): 303–36.