Scyldings’ champion’. J. R. R. Tolkien’s private working translation shows unsurpassed care in specifying the hero’s allegiance, aligning Beowulf explicitly with a purpose, not a people: ‘that champion of the Scyldings’ cause’. It is striking that Clark Hall would adopt this nuance of the epithet’s nuance among the poem’s translators, I call for Old English lexicographers and editors to do the same.

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27 J. R. Clark Hall, Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment: A Translation into Modern English Prose (Northampton, 1950), 100; R. M. Liuzza (trans.), Beowulf, 2nd edn (Toronto, 2013), 96. It is striking that Clark Hall would translate the title, ‘the Scyldings’ daring champion’; Stanley B. Greenfield, ‘the Danes’ defender’; and Kevin Crossley-Holland, ‘the defender of the Scyldings’. Swanton exhaustive survey of translators who have strayed from the lexicographically-sanctioned path: see n. 6, above. See also the following non-


29 Many thanks are due to Roberta Frank and to the readers at Notes and Queries for their helpful comments.

BEOWULF 2910A ‘LEOFES OND LADES’

Wiglaf siteð
ofer Biowulf, byre Wihstanes,
eor ofer oðrum unligendum,
healdeð higemæðum heafodwearde
leofes ond laðes.

(Beowulf 2906b–2910a)

CRITICAL discussion of this passage has focused on the form and referent of the rare word higemæðum. The word is traditionally interpreted either as an adjective with the poetically understated meaning ‘weary of mind (i.e. dead)’, parallel with unligendum ‘not living (i.e. dead)’, or as an otherwise unattested noun higemæð(u) ‘weariness of mind’ or ‘mind-honor’, used quasi-adverbially to describe Wiglaf’s state of mind. Eduard Sievers proposed emendation to nominative singular higemeðe ‘weary of mind’, applying the adjective to Wiglaf. Sievers’s suggestion was accepted by a few editors before being withdrawn by Sievers himself. In their textual note, the editors of Klaeber’s Beowulf wisely resist the temptation to posit a hapax legomenon or engage in an ad hoc emendation in order to solve a difficult passage. The precise agreement in syntax, sense, and poetic connotation between unligendum and higemæðum, and the undoubted use of the same adjective elsewhere in Beowulf (2442a hygimeðe), strongly support the adjectival interpretation. In 2442a, hygimeðe must mean ‘wearying the mind’ rather than ‘weary of mind’. However, as the editors of Klaeber’s Beowulf observe, ‘many poetic compounds are nonce constructions rather than fixed terms, and thus they need not have the same meaning in all contexts’. Indeed, as the editors also note, ‘weary of mind’ would be the expected meaning for an adjective hygimeðe and ‘wearying the mind’ the more unusual one.

There is an additional difficulty in this passage which has gone unrecognized, but which affects the interpretation of higemæðum. The editors of Klaeber’s Beowulf follow previous commentators in taking leofes ond laðes to refer to Beowulf and the dragon, ‘the beloved (one) and the hated (one)’. Yet this interpretation causes at least three problems. First, leofes ond laðes is unlikely to be an objective genitive dependent on heafodweard ‘guard, watch (over a lord)’. Elsewhere (-)weard ‘guard, watch’ does not take a genitive of the

1 All quotations of Beowulf are fr. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles (eds), Klaeber’s Beowulf, 4th edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

2 For the latter interpretation see W. J. Sedgefield, ‘Further Emendations of the “Beowulf” Text’, MLR, xxviii (1933), 226–30, at p. 229. See also Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, rev. edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1898), ‘hyge-mêo’ (‘Honour that is shewn with the heart or mind, reverence; or fitness that is determined by the mind’).


4 Fulk et al. (eds), Klaeber’s Beowulf, n. to 2909 f.
person(s) or thing(s) guarded. Nor can leofes ond ladæs be a possessive genitive dependent on heafod-. Such an interpretation assumes that heafod- in this compound signifies ‘head’ (rather than ‘chief’ or ‘special’) and that this meaning was sufficiently prominent for heafod- to govern the genitive unilaterally. In general, leofes ond ladæs ought not depend on heafod- or heafodwearde, since heafodwearde itself is embedded in the idiomatic phrase healdan heafodwearde ‘keep watch (over a lord)’, which takes the dative of the person(s) guarded (higemæðum). Second, even if the objective or possessive genitive constructions were syntactically possible, it would be stylistically clumsy for the coreferent phrases higemæðum and leofes ond ladæs to bear two different syntactical relationships to healdæð … heafodwearde. Poetic variation of a dative with two genitives would be unique in the poem. Datives are varied by datives and genitives by genitives in Beowulf and elsewhere in Old English poetry, notwithstanding Frederick Klaeber’s judgement that the mixture of case usages is ‘syntactically admissible’ here. Third, it seems inappropriate for Wiglaf to hold heafodwearde over the dragon’s body. In the Old English Rectitudines singularum personarum, heafodweard refers to a special obligation owed by a thane or tenant to his lord. The poem gives no reason, social or emotional, why Wiglaf should keep watch over the corpse of the monster who has killed his lord. To the contrary, the dragon’s body will soon be unceremoniously shoved off the cliff (3131b–3133). To summarize, the traditional interpretation of Beowulf 2910a is syntactically tenuous, out of keeping with the conventions of Old English poetic style, and inappropriate to the wider narrative context. The first and third objections are particularly telling, because they do not depend on the interpretation of the problematic word higemæðum.

I propose that the genitives leofes and ladæs do not refer to Beowulf and the dragon at all. Instead, they refer abstractly to ‘the pleasing and the displeasing’, or more colourlessly ‘the good and the bad’. The same abstract meaning can be seen in the other occurrence of the phrase in Old English (Beowulf 1061a) and in a cognate phrase in Old High German (leides ioh liebes). Under this interpretation, leofes ond ladæs does not refer to the person(s) guarded by Wiglaf but the things he guards against. In other occurrences of the phrase healdan wearde and its derivatives, the thing guarded against is expressed by a dependent clause (Beowulf 241b–243), a prepositional phrase (Beowulf 318b–19), or both (Christ II 766–70a and Juliana 662b–665). However, the genitive is used to express the thing protected against with gefriþan ‘protect’ (Blicking Homily IX), ahreddan ‘rescue’ (Paris Psalter 58.1.1), generian ‘save; defend’ (Paris Psalter 118.169.5, 118.170.4, and 123.6.1–2a), and awerian ‘defend’ (Paris Psalter 63.2.1 and 105.24.1), among other usages with these verbs. Closely related is the use of wip governing the genitive with hleo ‘protector’ (Elene 616a) and gefriþan (Judith 4b–5a). The phrase healdan heafodwearde, roughly synonymous with gefriþan, ahreddan, generian, and awerian, appears to take the same rare genitive usage here. In context, leofes ond ladæs signifies that Wiglaf guards Beowulf’s body ‘against the pleasing and the displeasing’ or ‘against the good and the bad’, so, by implication, against anything that might come. The meaning is similar to the modern idiom

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5 Frederick Klaeber (ed.), Beowulf, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), n. to 2909 f., paraphrased in Fulk et al. (eds), Klaeber’s Beowulf, n. to 2909 f. Ernst A. Kock, ‘Interpretations and Emendations of Early English Texts.—IX’, Anglia, xlv (1922), 63–96, at p. 78, adduces two gen./dat. variations from the Helland. In both cases the gen. usage seems to me more explicit, more grammatically obvious, and less strictly parallel to the dat. than in Beowulf 2909–10a if leofes ond ladæs is taken to refer to Beowulf and the dragon.


‘through thick and thin’. Translate ‘Wiglaf, son of Wihstan, sits over Beowulf, one nobleman over another who is not living (i.e., dead); (he) guards one who is weary of mind (i.e., dead) against the good and the bad’.

This alternative explanation of *leofes ond laðes* is satisfactory in several respects. First, it independently supports the conclusion that *higemæðum* is an adjective, since *higemæðum* is now the only available reference to the person guarded by Wiglaf. Second, the genitives in 2910a now have a plausible syntactical function. While the genitive of the thing guarded against is not elsewhere attested with *healdan wearder* and its derivatives, four synonymous verbs and a related prepositional usage provide close parallels. This syntactical interpretation is also superior to the traditional one in that it preserves the integrity of the set phrase *healdan heafodwearder*. Third, Wiglaf is exonerated of rendering a thane’s service to the dragon’s corpse. Wiglaf guards Beowulf’s body alone. Hence *higemæðum* is not the dative plural but the dative singular, as the editors of *Klaeber’s Beowulf* already suspected.9 Taking *higemæðum* as dative singular, in turn, increases the parallelism with *unlifigendum*. Fourth, the interpretation preferred here brings 2910a into accord with the other occurrence of *leofes ond laðes* in Old English, also in *Beowulf*. That passage runs, ‘*fela sceal gebidan/ leofes ond laðes* | se þe longe her/ on dyssum windagum | worołde bruceo’ ‘He shall undergo much, of (both) the good and the bad, who for a long time enjoys the world (i.e. lives) here in these days of strife’ (1060b–1062). In both passages, the adjectives *leof* and *lād* are used substantively and abstractly to define in the most colourless terms the full range of human experience to come. The metaphorical connotations of 1060b–1062 also suit the image of a thane dutifully watching over his dead king. Finally, 2910a now makes a more logical partner for 2910b and the succeeding section of the messenger’s speech: ‘*Nu ys leodum wen/ orleghwile, | syðdan underne/ Froncum ond Frysum | fyll cyninges/ wide weordæ* ‘Now people expect a period of war, once the death of the king is generally made known to the Franks and Frisians’ (2910b–2913a). The transition from the description of Wiglaf to the prediction of war makes more thematic sense if 2910a refers to expected future tribulations rather than to the bodies of Beowulf and the dragon. If this interpretation of *leofes ond laðes* holds, the poet does not suggest an equivalence between Beowulf and the dragon to the extent that some scholars have supposed.10

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THE Gnomes of Cotton MS Tiberius B.I

1. Introduction, and Henry Pe(a)cham on gnomes

*OED*, s.v. Gnome n.1, an *NED* entry published in 1900,1 directs the reader to Henry Pe(a)cham (1577), who opens an elegant chapter on gnomes with a good definition quoted by *OED*: ‘Gnome, a saying pertaining to the maners and common practises of men, which declareth by an apte breuity, what in this our lyfe ought to be done or not done.’ Peacham’s chapter has several memorable phrases (I quote them in the order in which they appear): ‘an apte breuity’; ‘euyry sentence is not a fygure’; ‘a sentence vniuersall’; ‘a sentence standing on contraries’; ‘a pure sentence, not myred with any figure else’; ‘in a sentence heede must be taken, that it be not false, straunge, light, or without pyth’.

1 Henry Pe(a)cham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London: by H. Jackson, 1577), sig. Viii The next quotation in *OED* is mid-nineteenth century, but, no doubt, when the entry is revised the use dated 1656 in *OED* s.v. Sentence n., 4.a. will, among others, fill the gap.

9 Fulk et al. (eds), *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, n. to 2909 f.: ‘[The word *higemæðum*] may, after all, describe Beowulf alone, just as *unlifigendum* does in the preceding verse’.