

## Korean Translation of *Beowulf*: Variety and Limitation of Archaic Words\*

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My first encounter with *Beowulf* goes back to my undergraduate course in Korea, one of the topics I studied was called 'the History of English Literature'. At that time I was drawn to this epic poem simply because the epic was called 'one of the greatest epic poems in western literature', or 'the first masterpiece of English literature'. However much my curiosity was aroused, my endeavours to look into the world of *Beowulf* were not successful for the simple fact that I was not given the opportunity to read *Beowulf* in old English. When my reading of *Beowulf* in Old English began at King's College London, studying with Professor Jane Roberts, Professor Janet Bately, that initial curiosity began

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to transform into wonder as I began to understand those literary devices and archaic vocabulary embedded in the *Beowulf*. It was great joy to encounter archaic compound nouns such as swanrad meaning 'swan's riding place' and which is now referred to as the 'sea'. I was fascinated by such descriptive words which could evoke strong visual images.

Once again enthused by the charm of *Beowulf* I resolved to proceed with my Ph. D dissertation on *Beowulf* under the supervision of Dr. Richard North at the University College London. During my Ph. D studies I found myself being drawn to the exquisite beauty of archaic words or 'winged words' which are able to transcend normal human imagination. I marvelled at the combination of archaic words and alliteration, which still remains a mystery to me.

In the meantime I was mindful of completing a Korean translation of *Beowulf* during my Ph. D studies. Soon I began to doubt my capability and questions arose continuously. Am I capable of catching the real meanings of such 'winged words' and rendering them into Korean? The idiom and diction of old English verse is not easy. To find the exact meaning of any archaic word or expression needs strenuous efforts since it requires the studies both of etymology and ethical background. I strongly believe that the poetic effects in *Beowulf* depends less on the story or plot and more upon the magnificence of its style and diction.

We must keep in mind that the *Beowulf*-poet (scop) was able to employ a highly formalized and artificial diction because his audience was well trained and accustomed to that diction. Its manner, conventions, and meter are unlike those of modern English verse. If I wished to translate *Beowulf* into Korean I felt strongly that my language had to be both literary and traditional, not because of the length of time since the poem's composition, nor because it spoke of things that had since become ancient; but because the diction of

*Beowulf* was poetical, archaic, and artificial at the time that the poem was composed. With reference to poetic, archaic, and artificial forms of diction, I was quite fortunate because Korean literature has a long history, and therefore includes many well developed literary and poetic devices. I was not greatly concerned about the terms of archaic vocabulary since Korean literary tradition has been influenced from a very early period by Chinese literature. This has a much longer history than that of Korea. The literary influence of China does not necessarily mean Korean readers are easily able to comprehend the meanings of archaic words in *Beowulf*, when rendered into Korean. In practice, Korean readers are not familiar with Korean equivalents of archaic vocabulary in *Beowulf*, but they do not seem to feel a sense of distance. This is because Koreans see archaic words influenced by Chinese literacy and pure Korean characters in every day life.

My Korean translation of *Beowulf* was primarily designed to introduce Korean readers to 1) the world of the western epic in which heroism is highly praised 2) the beauty and subtlety of 'winged words' which are embedded in compound nouns, epithet, formulaic expression, and appositive style. On the other hand, however much I wished to convey the elevated tone of alliteration, which pervades the whole poem, except for several hyper-metrical lines, I was unable to achieve this as alliteration is not common in the Korean language. I deeply regret not being able to convey the metrical characteristic of alliteration.

The social background of *Beowulf* is the society of Germanic heroic ideology, conventionally known as the *comitatus*, in which duties of loyalty and revenge become a binding force on the individual. The modern term of 'individuality' appears to have no place in the heroic ideology of the *comitatus*; the lives of members of Germanic society are defined 'only in terms of their functions in relation to God and to the kindred and dryht, in whose social fabric

their lives have meaning'. The core of this moral principle, as Smithes says, appears to be the 'nexus between fate on the one hand, and a man's honour and unremitting exercise of courage on the other'. In this society, heroes are constantly called on to respond in this way to an unavoidable obligation to prove themselves in war. However, it is possible that this action-oriented morality generated some irrationality and irresponsibility. This kind of moral principle in *comitatus* was not unfamiliar to ancient Oriental countries. Though we cannot trace the exact same heroic ideology expressed in *Beowulf* back to Oriental history, we can appreciate to some extent that social ethos. The Hwarangdo, the elite warrior group flourished in the Kingdom of Unified Shilla in ancient Korea, and the Samurai the warrior band in Medieval Japan preserved that sort of heroic ideology although not in an identical way.

I strongly believe that the poem *Beowulf* is based on the heroic ideology. The precise meaning and full significance of archaic words are not always easy to define. Of that there is no question. However I felt during the preparation of my Ph. D thesis that many words and phrases are mistakenly rendered by modern English translators simply because they appeared to overlook the heroic ideology, and conducted insufficient philological research. I believe many words and formulaic expressions such as heard under helme, wlenco, oferhygd, dolgilp, mabelian can be accurately defined with the aid of philological examination and close textual reading in accordance with this heroic ideology.

In this paper, whilst focusing on some key words and expressions, I will demonstrate how such definitions and meanings can be drawn out and can be translated into their appropriate Korean equivalents.

### 1. The Implication and Real Meaning of heard under helme

Beowulf's presentation is frequently characterized by the use of helm, 'helmet'. At three crucial stages, Beowulf is introduced with the formula heard under helme, 'hardy under helmet', which evokes a strong image of warrior ready to act with undaunted resolve (Beo 342a, 404a, 2539a). Firstly, confronted by Wiglaf's verbal challenge, Beowulf delivers his speech with confidence and resolution as a formal courtly speech. But the insertion of heard under helme before this speech foretells that Wiglaf will be impressed also by Beowulf's physical appearance:

wlanc Wedera leod,      word æfter spræc

**heard under helme:**      (Beo 341-42a)

[the proud leader of the Geats, valiant (revealing his martial resolution) under his helmet, spoke these words]

This introductory sentence emphasizes Beowulf's strength and tough soldierly appearance by means of the formulaic use of heard under helme. This image of stout warriorship continues as Beowulf faces a more crucial meeting with Hrothgar in the heart of Heorot. This time the image comes more alive as the active verb eode is added:

heāporinc eode,

**heard under helme,**      þæt he on heorðe gestod. (Beo 403b-404)

[the valiant one advanced, hardy (revealing his martial resolution) under his helmet, until he stood on the hearth]

In this way, rapid action probably becomes a major attribute of Beowulf's heroic virtue. This action is more effectively described in the following silent movement:

Aras ða bi ronde      rof oretta,

**heard under helme,**      hiorosercean bær (Beo 2538-2539)

[Then rose the doughty champion by his shield; bold(showing his resolution) under his helmet, he went in his war-corslet]

Here the formula heard under helme is placed right in between two active verbs: aras, 'arose', and bær, 'went'. In this scene, Beowulf's advancement is expressed with two simple movement. However, given the situation, there is something more substantial in this expression than mere movement. This third scene occurs just before Beowulf advances to the cave and challenges the dragon. In the face of the Dragon's sudden attack, Beowulf's breast(heart, mind) is troubled with gloomy thoughts, which was not customary for him. He appears to feel doomed, but resolves to go forth at once to fight. Beowulf's tragic resolution to risk his life for the sake of his people is embedded implicitly in heard under helme. In this context, heard under helme is used as a metaphor for true warlike prowess.

Whereas heard under helme indirectly suggests warlike prowess, the expression hæleð under helmum, 'heroes in their helmets'(Judith 203a) achieves the same result, but more explicitly as hæleð, 'heroes' or 'warriors' replaces heard, 'hardy, sturdy'. This close similarity between these two expressions is evidence that under helme, 'under helmet' is a formulaic expression that can represent true warriorship explicitly or implicitly depending on the word that precedes it. The image of true warlike prowess is more frequently evoked

through direct expressions denoting stout-heartedness in *Beowulf*. These expressions are normally made by in the form of an adjective plus a noun or the present participle of the verb *hycgan*, 'to think', 'to mind': *stið*, *swið*, *heard*, *guð* plus *mod*, *ferhð*, *hicgende*. Their complete forms are found in the following lines: *stiðmod*, 'stout hearted' (Beo 2566a), *swiðmod*, 'strong minded' (Beo 1624a), *guðmod*, 'of warlike mind', *swiðferhð*, 'strong minded' (Beo 826a, 908a, 493a, 173a), *swiðhicgende*, 'strong minded' (Beo 919a, 1016a), *heardhicgende*, 'bold in mind' (Beo 394a, 799a). As is shown above, the image of warlike prowess is conceived through the direct use of 'mind'. Outside *Beowulf*, similar expressions denoting 'stout mind' or 'heart' are found in relation to the use of *hy(i)ge*, 'mind' or heart'. *Hyge* is so often alliterated with *heard* that *heard under helme* suggests the quality of *hyge*, 'courage, resolution'.

The poet of *Beowulf* is thus keenly aware of the correlation between his desired image and the implications of words, together with their metrical value. Considering the implication of the situation, the word combination and the emphatic use of alliteration I feel the rendering *heard under helme* as 'hard under helmet' seems inadequate in bringing its real meaning alive. The true interpretation of *heard under helme* should be more than literal translation 'hardy under helmet'.

In all three occasions the adjective *heard* is alliterated with the key words in other half line without exception:

**heard** under **helme**, We synt **Higelaces** (Beo 342) 'We are Hygelac's'

**Heard** under **helme**, þæt he on **heoðe** gestod. (Beo 404) 'so that he stood in hall'

**Heard** under **helme**, **hiorsercean** bær (Beo 2539) 'wore sword-sark'

By relying on the constant use of alliteration, I believe, the poet intends to

build up the image of true warrior in ways surpassing its literal sense. In addition, we can find double alliteration in the lines quoted in which the key word heard alliterates with helm. In heroic poetry the implication of helm, 'helmet' exceeds far beyond the image of armory. I quite agree with Andreas Alfoldis's view on the importance of the helmet as 'a symbol of lordship' among the Germanic peoples.

I rendered the following lines as

342: 투구 밑으로 결의를 내비치며- revealing his resolution beneath his helmet,

404: 굳센 기질을 투구 사이로 엿보이며- showing or revealing his prowess between his helmet,

2539: 투구 아래로 비장한 각오를 발하는- emitting a grim (heroic resolve) under his helmet

## 2. The Interpretation of Mabelian

The meaning of 'to say', 'to tell', 'to speak' can be found in old English words such as 1) cweþan, 'to say' 2) gieddian, 'to speak formally', 'sing', 'recite' 3) hleodrian, 'to sound', 'to speak', 'to sing' 4) (ge)mælan, 'to speak', 'to talk' 5) mabelian, 'to make a formal speech', 'to say', 'to speak' 6) secgan, 'to say', 'to mention', 'to ascribe' 7) sprecan, 'to speak', 'to say', 'to utter' 8) tellan, 'to tell', 'to state', 'to announce' 9) ðingian, 'to ask', 'to speak', 'to talk', 'to harangue'. So far the meaning 'to say' or 'to tell' is explicitly expressed whilst the following verbs contain the sense of 'to say' though not explicitly but roundabout way: 10) andswarian, 'to answer' 11) brecan, 'to break', 'to burst' hine fyrwytt bræc, 'broke him question' (Beo 232, Elene 86) 12) fricgan, 'to ask', 'to inquire' 13) onbindan, 'to loosen', 'to unbind', 'to disclose' 14) onlucan, 'to



disclose', 'to unlock' 15) onspannan, 'to open', 'to unfasten', 'to disclose'.

In *Beowulf* the poet quite consistently relies on the use of maþelode more than any other synonyms when introducing main characters before their speeches. The formulaic system that uses maþelode appears in several forms in Old English Poetry, of which the most common is 'X, son of Y' spoke (made a speech). This form appears in *Beowulf* in these examples: Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecgþeowes, 'Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, made a speech'(Beo 529); Unferð maþelode, Ecglafes bearn, 'Unferth, the son of Ecglaf, made a speech' (Beo 499). In addition maþelode is used in connection with the location of the speaker: the coastguard spoke formally where he sat on the horse, weard maþelode, ðær on wicge sæt, 'The watchman spoke sitting there on his horse'(Beo 286). Maþelode is also employed in connection with the state of mind of the speaker. This method is prominent in Elene: Elene maþelade ond him yrre oncwæð, 'Helen spoke and, angry, said to them'(El 573), 'Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan, spoke out, the man, sad at heart'(Beo 2862-63a) Wiglaf maþelode, Weohstanes sunu, secg sarigferð.

Maþelode is also used when the contents of the following speech are indicated in the form of word-riht, 'right word', and beot-word, 'boastful speech': Beowulf maþelode, beotwordum spræc, 'Beowulf made a speech, spoke with words of boasting'(Beo 2510). In this way, maþelode in *Beowulf* is widely used to identify 1) the speaker 2) the audience 3) the location of the speaker 4) the state of mind of the speaker 5) the physical state of the speaker and 6) the contents of the speech.

The other form of maþelian can be used as tautology with other verbs of speech such as spræc, sægde and the noun form of the andswarian:

- 1) Wealhðeow maþelode, heo fore þæm werede spræc (Beo 1215)

[Wealhtheow made a speech, she said before the companion]

Korean Translation: 웨알데오우는 그 무리 앞에서 **예법에 맞춰 말을** 했노라.

Literal meaning: Wealhtheow made a formal speech according to courtly manner before the companion.

2) Beowulf mæpelode, beotwordum spræc (Beo 2510)

[Beowulf made a speech, spoke with words of boasting]

Korean Translation: 베오울프는 영웅적인 맹세를 토하였노라.

3) Biowulf mæpelode he ofer benne spræc, (Beo 2724)

[Beowulf made a formal speech, he spoke despite his wound]

Korean translation: 몸의 부상에도 불구하고 베오울프는 장엄한 어조로 말했다.  
노라.

4) Wiglaf mæpelode, wordrihta fela sægde gesiðum (Beo 2631-2632a)

[Wiglaf made a speech, said many right words to his companions]

Korean Translation: 위글라프는 당당히 진실한 많은 말들을 했노라.

In the Korean translations above except for 1), I did not apply the sense of 'made a formal speech(according to heroic or courtly manner)' to mæpelian because the key contents are focused in half line b.

Mæpelian shares the same root as mæpel, which has the meanings 'assembly, council, judicial meeting, speech, address, conversation', according to BT. With regard to public meetings, speeches made there may be assumed to be formal and to have eloquence and ceremonial dignity. Mæpelian is characterized by its frequent use in Old English Poetry in public speech with a high degree of formality in Old English poetry. This public form of mæpelian is clearly exemplified in Cynewulf's Elene, in which mæpelode is first employed to introduce the speech of Elene to one thousand wise men. This speech is

regarded as her most formal one to the meeting:

Elene mæpelode ond for eorlum spræc (El 332)

[Elene made a speech, spoke before the noblemen]

This form of publicity is fairly typical of *Beowulf*, in which speeches delivered at court and before a public audience are introduced by mæpelode in *Beowulf* 499, 529. However, a public audience is not always implied in *Beowulf* when mæpelode is employed as seen in lines 360, 371, 2724. Warriors are constantly requested to make a pledge or vow in front of their lord accompanied by many warriors. Making a vow in the heroic society(*comitatus*) is regarded as ritual ceremony and becomes an essential prerequisite of heroic virtue. If the warrior carries out his vow in battle through his heroic deeds, he is praised as a true hero. Hence the companions present at the time of making a vow act as witnesses who judge whether the utterance (vows) in a public place and the deeds in battle are one and the same. Being conscious of the importance of his public speech the warrior is to utter his vows in a heroic manner- such formality as required by heroic society and the contents reflecting heroic spirit.

When mathelian is used independently I rendered it 'to make a formal speech(according to heroic manner)'. Korean translation: '(영웅주의)격식을 갖춰 말문을 열었노라,

Hroðgar mæpelode, helm Scyldinga (Beo 456)

[Hrothgar made a formal speech, the helm of Scyldings]

Korean translation: 덴마크인들의 수호자이신 호로드가르 왕은 격식을 갖춰 말문을 열었노라.

Quite fittingly those speeches introduced with mæpelode contain typical heroic resolution in *Beowulf*.

### 3. The Interpretation of wlence, ‘자부심’ and dolgilpe, ‘과도한 허세’

ðær git for **wlence** wada cunnedon  
 ond for **dolgilpe** on deop wæter  
 aldrum neþdon? Ne inc ænig mon,  
 ne leof ne laþ, belean mihte  
 sorhfullne sið, þa git on sund reon;  
 þær git eagorstream earmum þehton,  
 mæton merestræta, mundum brugdon,  
 glidon ofer garsecg; geofon ypum weol,  
 wintrys wylm[um]. Git on wæteres æht  
 seofon niht swuncon;

(Beo 508-517a)

[you two ventured the flood for the sake of **pride(자부심)**, and risked your lives in deep water for audacious boasting(**과도한 허세**) No one, friend or foe, could dissuade you two from that sorrowful venture (disaster), when you two swam (rowed) out to sea, made quick movements with your hands, and glided over the ocean; the sea surged with waves, the winters billows. You two toiled in the waters realm for seven nights]

On the surface a series of words seems to be used to increase the sense of rashness and foolhardiness in Beowulf's swimming-contest: for wlence, for dolgilpe. In the context of Unferth's superficially scurrilous tone, wlenco can be interpreted as vainglory of foolish pride. Beowulf (Wrenn, 287). However, throughout the poem either wlence, wlenco, or its adjectival form wlonc, is used to elicit a positive feeling of heroic pride. On the arrival of Beowulf's band, Wulfgar admires their war-gear and concludes by using the term for wlenco

(Beo 338a) that they have visited Hrothgar, not as fugitives and exiles, but for some brave purpose:

Ne seah ic elþeodige  
þus manige men modiglicran.  
Wenic þat go for wlenco, nalles for wræcsiðum,  
Ac for highþrymmum Hroðgar sohton.

(Beo 336b-339)

[I have never seen so many foreigners as bold. I expect that you have sought out Hrothgar, not from exile, but from high-spirits]

It is very clear that wlenco here is used in a decisively praiseworthy sense, meaning bravery, courage, or high-spirit. However, wlenco is also used equivocally in two cases in Beowulf which I shall discuss in the following pages. Meanwhile I will examine the term as it appears in Unferth's utterance here and in the description of Hygelac's fatal expedition against the Frisians:

hyne wyrd fornam,  
syþðan he for wlenco wean ahsode,  
fæhðe to Frysum.

(Beo 1205b-1207a)

[Fate took him off, when he sought for misery, feud with the Frisians by his proud courage] I agree with the translation his proud courage by G. N. Garmonsway and Jacqueline Simpson.

As regards wlenco, Shippey interprets the use of this word in line 508, as a strong condemnation rather than being used in a praiseworthy sense as in Wulfgar's speech (Beo 338a) (Shippey, 28). However he is very cautious in

interpreting wlenco as arrogance or as courage in heroic verse, preferring the more neutral sense of a mans readiness to risk edwenden. (Shippey, 39). I agree with Shippeys concept of the neutrality of wlenco except for line 508. In the context of Unferths narrative, the neutral meaning of wlenco as **high-spiritedness** fits well into the progression of Unferths narrative. Breca is one of git you two, and is therefore a subject of wlenco. This means the negative sense of foolhardiness is not applicable, because later Breca is eulogized for the swimming contest, which had been motivated by wlenco. In this way, Unferth is not criticizing the nature of the swimming contest, which might be possibly motivated by boyish exuberance, but is instead blaming Beowulf for not living up to that wlenco, high-spirit.

However, the ambivalence of wlenco seems less important earlier in the poem, when Beowulf is ready to participate in a swimming contest without carrying any kind of social and political burden. Thus, Beowulf's rashness in the Breca episode is clearly distinguished from a traditional heroic flaw, which has long been the subject of a controversial argument concerning the characterization of heroic figures such as Byrhtnoth (his ofermod), Hygelac (his last adventure) and old Beowulf (his fight with the dragon).

It should be pointed out that in *Beowulf*, another synonym is used for wlenco when he intends to convey a derogatory meaning: Hrothgar uses oferhygd, to describe the moral deterioration of Heremod:

oð þæt on innan oferhygda dæl

weaxeð ond wridað; (Beo: 1740-1741)

[until a measure of overbearing pride grows and flourishes in him]

However, this favourable interpretation of wlenco appears to be challenged

as the following line contains dolgilpe, which appears to convey a more negative sense of foolish boasting. The compound word dolgilpe combines two meanings: 'foolish', 'silly', in dol and 'boasting', 'pride', 'arrogance', 'glory' in gielp. In Genesis B the meaning of dol and the adverb dollice has a sense of the presumptuous or audacious rather than foolish. Being inflated by excessive pride, the fallen angel believes in his own power and determines to be equal to God. Consequently, the rebellious angel resolves not to praise and serve God any more. In this circumstance, the angel's attitude towards God is more appropriately understood as 'audaciously' rather than 'foolishly':

and spræc healic word

dollice wið Drihten sinne, (Genesis B: 294-295b)

[and the angel spoke haughty words, audaciously against his Lord]

In a heroic context, daring bravery or a presumptuous mind can hardly be regarded as heroic weakness: in particular when heroes are called to actions to prove their true prowess, which might risk their lives. Surprisingly enough, the positive meaning of heroic bravery is found in another example of dollice in *Beowulf*:

forðam he manna mæst mærdða gefremede,

dæda dollicra. (Beo: 2645-2646a)

[because he above all other men had achieved the most glorious acts, daring deeds]

Garmonsway's interpretation 'rash deeds' here seems quite inappropriate, since this part of Wiglaf's speech is entirely devoted to Beowulf's past glorious

achievements. Thus the meaning of dol or dollice here can be interpreted differently to the sense of 'foolish'. Likewise the interpretation of gylp varies according to context. In the Christian context the concept of gylp does not seem to contain any positive value. The poet of Genesis B regards those blasphemous remarks of the fallen angel as gylpword:

ne mihte him bedyrned weorðan  
 þæt his engyl ongan ofermod wesán,  
 ahof hine wið his herran, sohte hetespræce,  
gylpword ongean, nolde Gode þeowian; (Genesis B: 260a-263)

[it could not be concealed to him that his angel became presumptuous, raised him up against his master, sought hateful speech, made a boastful speech against him, would not serve God]

Though the angel Lucifer is presented as a warrior fighting with God, the sense of gylp here is by no means 'heroic spirit' since his words are motivated by a rebellious intention against God. However, in secular poetry the meaning gylp can be reversed. In Hrothgar's description of Heremod's history, gylp is clearly used to indicate a crucial moral attribute of the heroic disposition. Heremod becomes a failure as a leader of the *comitatus* when he refuses to dispense treasures proudly to his followers:

nallas on gylp seleð  
 fætte beagas, (Beo: 1749b-1750a)  
 [he never gives away gold-plated circlets in proud vaunt]

Here the adverbial use of on gylp, 'proudly' or 'honourably' has no negative



sense. Also the sense of an 'unreasonable boast' in Genesis B can not be found in Beowulf's resolution to fight with bare hands against Grendel:

gif ic wiste hu  
wið ðam aglæcean elles meahte  
gylpe wiðgripan, swa ic gio wið Grendle dyde; (Beo: 2519b-2521)

[if I knew how else I might come to grips with the monster in such a way as to fulfil my boast, as I did against Grendel long ago]

Here Beowulf proudly recalls his daring speech, charged with excessive heroic spirit, which was uttered at Heorot. In the context of heroic competitiveness, Beowulf's daring speech(or great words) can be regarded as foolhardy boasting by his opponent. Thus, in my translation, Beowulf's dolgylp, 'audacious boasting' can hardly be understood as foolish declaration, since it was originally conceived to express his heroic willingness to take on an exploit. Such a boastful speech in a heroic society can act as a binding verbal commitment to act in a heroic manner. This custom of boasting speech is mentioned in the first banquet scene, in which the old spirit of gladness comes back to the Danes in the hall:

Ða wæs eft swa ær inne on healle  
þryðword sprecen, ðeod on sælum, (Beo: 642-643)

[Then once again, as of old, there were brave words spoken within the hall, the people were in gladness]

Another example of this courtly custom of raising þryðword, 'brave words', which has the same meaning as gylpcwide or gylpword, is shown in Hrothgar's

description of his followers' efforts in the face of Grendel:

Ful oft gebeotedon beore druncne  
ofer ealowæge oretmecgas, (Beo: 480-481)

[Very often, champions, after the drinking of beer, made a boastful speech over the ale-cup]

Besides, 'boastful speeches', expressed in those terms gilpcwide, gylpword, þryðword, or gebeotian, can work as an inspiration to heroic action. In the middle of the fierce bare-handed fight with Grendel Beowulf is reminded of his evening speech, which seems to renew his strength:

Gemunde þa se goda, mæg Higelaces,  
æfenspræce, uplang astod  
ond him fæste wiðfeng; fingras burston; (Beo: 758-760)

[Then Hygelac's noble kinsman, calling to mind what he had said that evening, stood erect and grasped him tight, fingers were cracking]

Æfenspræce here refers either to gilpcwide in line 640 or to gylpword in 675. The gilpcwide, referring to the speech at feast, implies Beowulf's decisive resolution to show the courage of a hero, or to die in battle. The word gylpword, referring to the speech made before sleeping, indicates Beowulf's intention to meet Grendel without a sword. But, the exact reference of æfenspræce is not as important as the two occurrences of gilpcwide and gylpword which express Beowulf's heroic quality of showing his courage through a fair fight. Of paramount importance is the fact that Beowulf was mindful of gilpcwide or gylpword, 'boastful speech', at a time of desperate

fighting in which he was risking his life. A similar situation with regard to 'boastful speech' occurs in Wiglaf's speech, in which he rebukes his comrades for their ingratitude and cowardice in the hour of Beowulf's need:

Ic þæt mæl geman, þær we medu þegun,  
 þonne we geheton ussum hlaforde  
 in biorsele, ðe us ðas beagas geaf,  
 þæt we him ða guðgetawa gyldan woldon, (Beo: 2633-2636)

[I remember that time at which we drank the mead, how in the beer-hall we pledged ourselves to our lord, who gave us the rings, that we would repay him for the war-equipments]

In this scene Wiglaf reminds his companions of their 'boastful speech' in front of their lord Beowulf. Here the main content of their 'boastful speech' is the promise that they would repay Beowulf for his generosity in dispensing treasures. To put it another way, Wiglaf recalls the almost sacred rule of the *comitatus*, in which warriors are obliged to serve their lord at the risk of their lives. In this sense, Wiglaf's companions fail by ignoring their obligations to their lord. In contrast, Wiglaf becomes a true hero not only by recalling his 'boastful speech' but by committing himself to heroic obligation through actual deeds. In this way, making a 'boastful speech' indicates a heroic disposition, but a warrior's decision to keep his promises and fulfil them by actions is what defines him as a true hero. In this context, Beowulf's recalling of his 'boastful speech' at his time of trial proves that he is a real hero committed to his pledge. In the same context, the concept of *gylp* 'can refer to great deeds as well as to great words'. (Wrenn, 189) This interpretation accords well with Einarsson's definition; 'gíelp stresses the glory of the adventure, something to boast

of(Stefan Einarsson, 976).

Nevertheless, that kind of heroic verbal manifestation can also be misunderstood by an opponent like Unferth, whose mind is charged with the consciousness of heroic competition. I agree with Ward Parks in believing that dolgilp implies a lack of judgement and mental control rather than a lack of prowess, yet the real reason (for using this term) is not to criticize Beowulf's foolish mind but to emphasize Beowulf's defeat at the swimming-contest(Parks, 111). Considering such heroic implication embedded in dolgilp I rendered it 'audacious boasting(과도한 허세)'in my Korean translation of *Beowulf*.

\*My translation is based on the editions of Klaeber and Wrenn.

주제어: Korean translation of *Beowulf*, heard under helme, wlenco, mabelode, dolgylp, archaic words

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## Korean Translation of *Beowulf*: Variety and Limitation of Archaic Words

Abstract

Dongill Lee

My Korean translation of *Beowulf* was primarily designed to introduce Korean readers to 1) the world of western epic in which heroism is highly praised 2) the beauty and subtlety of 'winged words' which are embedded in compound nouns, epithet, formulaic expression, and appositive style. In this paper, whilst focusing on some key words and expressions, I will demonstrate how such definitions and meanings can be drawn out and can be translated into their appropriate Korean equivalents.

I strongly believe that the poem *Beowulf* is based on the heroic ideology. The precise meaning and full significance of archaic words are not always easy to define. That is quite true. However I felt during the preparation of my Ph. D thesis that many words and phrases are mistakenly rendered by modern English translators simply because they appeared to overlook the heroic ideology, and conducted insufficient philological research. I believe many words and formulaic expressions such as heard under helme, wlenco, oferhygd, dolgilp, mabelian can be accurately defined with the aid of philological examination and close textual reading in accordance with this heroic ideology.

Considering the implication of the situation, the word combination and the emphatic use of alliteration I feel the rendering heard under helme as 'hard under helmet' seems insufficient in bringing its real meaning alive. The true interpretation of heard under helme should be more than literal translation 'hardy under helmet'.

Maþelian shares the same root as mæþel, which has the meanings 'assembly, council, judicial meeting, speech, address, conversation', according to BT. With regard to public meetings, speeches made there may be assumed to be formal and to have eloquence and ceremonial dignity. Maþelian is characterized by its frequent use in public speech with a high degree of formality in Old English poetry. This form of publicity is fairly typical of *Beowulf*, in which speeches delivered at court and before a public audience are introduced by maþelode in *Beowulf* 499, 529.

On the surface a series of words seems to be used to increase the sense of rashness and foolhardiness in Beowulf's seimming-contest: for wlence, for dolgilpe. Beowulf's dolgylp, 'audacious boasting' can hardly be understood as foolish declaration, since it was originally conceived to express his heroic willingness to take on an exploit. Such a boasting speech in a heroic society can act as a binding verbal commitment to act in a heroic manner. In the context of Unferth's narrative, the neutral meaning of wlenco as **high-spiritedness** fits well into the progression of Unferth's narrative.

Key words

Korean translation of *Beowulf*, heard under helme, wlenco, maþelode, dolgylp,  
archaic words