Tulk, Sothe, and Welde: Controlling the one true man in
lines 1793 to 1815 of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

1793 But I amswared forsothe – that sore me thinkkez.
1802 The leuest thing, for thy luf, that I in londe welde
1811 Iche tolke mon do as he is tan – tas to non ille

1793 But I am answered forsooth – that I think ill
1802 the best thing, for your love, that I have power over in the land
1811 Each man does as he is bid – each man must do as he gets – don’t be ill

1793 But I’ve been answered truthfully – I feel bad about it
1802 the best thing that I possess in the world [I’d givefor] your love
1811 Every good guy does what’s asked of him – what comes around goes around –
don’t worry about it.
The stanza from line 1793 to 1815 in *SGGK* concern the first kiss the lady gives to Gawain after he has gently rebuffed her sexual advances. In this passage, which is a turning point at which Gawain’s truth and honor first begin to be compromised, three words that are particularly interesting are the noun *Tulk*, the noun *Sothe*, and the verb *Welde*.

The word *Tulk*, from the Old Norse *tulkr* “speaker” is used at least eight times in *SGGK*, though it does not appear in Pearl. The word may be related to modern English “talk, talker.” According the OED the word was popular in Middle English Alliterative poetry, but the last citation of the word is from 1400. It may be that the word “talker” was used as a synonym for “man” in order to alliterate with other words beginning with “t” but that it was never a part of ordinary vocabulary. In line 1775 “and be traitor to that man (*tulk*) who owned that house,” refers to the king of the castle – and to the Green Knight. In line *tulke* alliterates with *trammas* and *tresoun*, in line it comes in between *tournayed* and *tymez*, in 638 it is followed by *tale* and *trwe*, in the other lines in which it appears, 1093, 1775, 1811, 1966, and 2133, it also alliterates with at least one other word in the sentence. Tulk refers to Gawain only once (l. 638), to the Green Knight/King of the Castle three times (ll. 1093, 1775, and 2133), and to mankind or man generally three times (ll. 41, 1964, and 1811). The word *mon* (“man”) by contrast often appears in situations where it does not alliterate with any other words in the line, such as on lines 57 and 2349. It seems that *tulk* is simply a synonym for *mon*, which is used in situations where a word for “man” needs to alliterate with other words beginning with “t”. One wonders if it was ever a normal part of the vocabulary, or if it was exclusively a poetic
word even in the late 1300’s. Although it is not unique to *SGGK*, it found in few other fourteenth century poems, and is appropriately associated with *SGGK* by philologically minded readers.

The word *sothe*, “true”, unlike *talk*, is still in use though it is very uncommon. It appears frequently in *SGGK* as an adjective, as a noun, and even as an adverb. Its most common use is adjectival. According to the OED it is derived from the Old English word *só* and Old Norse *sannr*, and is related to the Sanskrit word *satyas* “true.” The word, in various spellings, including só, sothe, and sooth, is used as early as 825 and as late as 1898. The only modern usage I can think of is in the compound soothsayer, someone who speaks the truth. The word is used by Shakespeare in MacBeth to mean wise: “1605 SHAKES. Macb. V. v. 40 If thy speech be sooth,” and by Lord Byron in a similar sense: “1813 BYRON Br. Abydos II. x, I have a tale thou hast not dream’d, If sooth its truth must others rue.” It is also used by Keats, but he seems to mean “soft” or “soothing”: 1819 KEATS To Sleep 5 O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes. 1820 St. Agnes xxx, A heap Of candied apple., With jellies soother than the creamy curd.” In most of the citations, as in Chaucer’s “Merchant’s Tale”: “ c1386 CHAUCER Merch. T. 23 As soth as God is king” the word is associated with the truth of God, but it is also often used as in Byron and Shakespeare to convey “truth” more generally. In modern English it sounds archaic or poetic, and most of the citations in the OED in the Modern English period are to poems rather than to prose.

In our passage from *SGGK* the woman says to Gawain: “do not conceal the truth (*sothe*) with guile.” The word is clearly very important in both this passage, and in the poem as a whole. In the passage the woman is asking Gawain tell her if he is bound to
another woman, and she orders him not to mince words. When he tells her the truth, that he is not so bound, she kisses him. That the woman orders Gawain to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth is important to the story. In fact, Gawain’s failing is that he uses guile and conceals the truth, especially the truth about the girdle, from the king of the castle.

A final interesting word from the passage is the verb *welde*, modern English wield. While *tulk*, which was only popular in Northern English alliterative poetry, does not appear in modern English, and sothe is a rare form after 1900, the OED contains entries for the verb wield from the Vespasian Psalter, circa 825 to the 20th century. The word wield has a complex (even unwieldy) history. It is a Germanic word, found in Old English, from which it survived into Middle and Modern English, but it also appears in other Germanic languages such as Gothic and Norse. The word seems to derive from a Latin word *valre* “strength.” It’s meaning in English, “have power over” is close to its root meaning.

In its appearance in our lines from SGGK, it really means something like “possess”, and it refers to owning an object or having such power over it that you would be able to give it away as a gift. In fact, it is Gawain speaking here, and he is refusing to give the lady one of his gloves in return for the kiss she has given him. He says that his glove is not worthy of her, nor is it adequate repayment for her kiss; further, Gawain argues that he certainly has nothing with him, perhaps he doesn’t own anything, that would make for a fair exchange for the lady’s kiss. In the end, he gives her nothing.

Gawain seems a bit crafty here – he certainly possesses “wields” the glove that the lady asks for, but he seems not to want to give her a token that might be understood by
her husband (the king of the castle, Bercilak de Hautdessert, the Green Knight) to be a love token. In fact, he plays into the lady’s hands – in the next stanza she responds that though he will not give her a gift, she insists on giving him one. First she offers him a valuable ring, but when he refuses that she offers him her girdle which he finally, and reluctantly accepts. He seems to accept the gift, in part, because he is ashamed by the fact that he will not or can not offer her a valuable gift. He is caught in a half-truth (a half-sooth), by claiming he doesn’t welde “have power” when he could give her something, but chooses not to.

Welde appears in SGGK in situations where it alliterates and in others where it does not alliterate. It clearly was a more common word than tulk; ironically, though it is not used of the Green Knight’s ax (he does “wield weapons”), the most common collocation in modern English, the thing a modern English speaker is most likely to “wield” is an ax or a sword. The word can be used more abstractly and even metaphorically – in SGGK Morgan la Fey is said to “wield haughtiness”, and in Modern English people are said to “wield power” (perhaps more often than they are said to “wield axes”).

Wield means various things according to the OED 1. to rule; command, overcome, 2. to have at command, 3 to decide, determine, ordain; occupy oneself, 4. to possess, to have in oneself, 4. To direct the movement or action of, to control to direct the movement of, control (oneself), utter, 5. to handle with skill. The word is used repeatedly in Beowulf, as where Hrothgar says he “wields” power, or rules, the Danes, and it is used in various historical periods by the central author’s of English literature. Chaucer is cited more than once, as: “c1385 CHAUCER L.G.W. 2000 Ariadne, He..hath Rovme..To welde an axe or swerde or staffe or knyff” where he is referring to handling a weapon, and Shakespeare
uses the word often as in Henry the VI: “1593 SHAKES. 3 Hen. VI. IV. vi. 73 His Head by nature fram'd to weare a Crowne, His Hand to wield a Scepter.” Here Shakespeare uses the word to refer to controlling a scepter, a symbol of kingly rule, by wielding the scepter symbolized the abstract power that the king wielded. In SGGK, the man who is really in control is the Green Knight (he wields a holly branch and an ax); Gawain shows great restraint, but he does not control himself completely – he cannot control his will to live.¹

The words tulk “man”, sothe “truth”, and welde “hold, possess, wield” are important and interesting in themselves and are curious focal points for the central themes of the poem SGGK. The proper definitions of Humanity, Truth, and Power, are tested, revised, and reinforced in the poem. Gawain, as everyman, tries to speak perfect truth and to use his power only for the good, but his modest failures allow him and the reader to appreciate that, in the end humans, no matter how diligently they strive for perfection, are flawed, and that no power protects us as effectively as we are protected by being true to ourselves.

¹ The line from Tennyson as the last citation for the word “wield” is curiously evocative in terms of our words and of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. “1842 TENNYSON Talking Oak lxvi, May never saw dismember thee, Nor *wielded axe disjoint.” The Green Knight is a bit like Tennyson’s talking (tulkr) oak. Tennyson, no doubt, would be relieved that while he is axed, he is only temporarily disjointed.
Tulk, tolk n.

Obs

[Generally identified with ON. túlkr interpreter, spokesman (cf. ON. túlka vb.: see next), Da., Sw. tolk = MLG. tolc, tollik, Du. tolk translator, MHG. tolc, tolke, ad. Lith. tulkas, Lett. tulks, OSL. tluku interpreter: cf. Russ. tolku sense, meaning, talk. But nothing has been found to connect the ME. sense, common in alliterative verse, with these.]

A man.

13.. E.E. Allit. P. B. 498 Tyl ay had tyyng fro e tolke at tyned hem er-inne. Ibid. 1262 Er he to e tempple tee wyth his tulkkes alle. 13.. Gaw. & Gr. Knt. 3 e tulk at e trammes of tresoun er wrot, Watz tried for his tricherie. a1400-50 Alexander 752 Alexander..turnyd hym an to is tulke & talkez ir wordez. c1400 Destr. Troy 5790 Prothenor, the prise kyng, & proudArchelaus, Mony tolke of e Troiens tyrnyt to dethe. Ibid. 6115 Mony abill knyghtes,.Of e tulkysof troy, tidé men all.

3, 41, 638, 1093, 1175, 1811, 1966, 2133. [ON Tulkr “spokesman”

Sothe

[OE. só, só, = OS. só, ON. sannr, sar (Sw. sann, Da. sand):*sn-(pre-Teut. sont-), related by ablaut to Goth. sunjis true, sunja truth, and Skr. satyas true, real.

After the first half of the 17th cent. only as a literary archaism, chiefly introduced by Scott and hiscontemporaries (cf. the note to SOOTH n.).]


c888 K. ÆLFRED Boeth. vii. §3 Æle so wela and so weorscipe sindan mine ane eowas. 971 Blick. Hom. 25 Mid ælmes-weorcum, & mid sore hreowe. c1000 Sax. Leechd. (Rolls) I.376 is is so læcæcraeft. c1200 Trin. Coll. Hom. 191 Swo do e werse, enne he auint manneshorte emti of rihte bileue and of soere luue. c1275 Moral Ode 362 in O.E. Misc., He is sosunne and briht and day bute nyhte. 1297 R. GLOUC. (Rolls) 1264 Vor siker is is e soe wei wioute eni mis-wrench. 1340 Ayenb. 12 In zo & guode byleaue. Ibid. 126 He his to-del..be uour inges et zo loue make.


c950 Lindisf. Gosp. John vii. 40 [Hia] cuoedon es is so uita. Ibid. xvii. 3 as..is uutudlice ecelif ætte on~eatta ec enne so god. 971 Blickl. Hom. 33 He wæs so man,.swylce he wæs
so God. a1200 Vices & Virtues 25 Fader & sune & hali gast is an so almihti godd. c1320 Cast. Love 648 Ysaye..clepede him wonderful for on, at he is so God and so mon.

2. True; in accordance with truth; not false or fictitious: a. In predicative use. Not always clearly distinguishable from SOOTH n. 1.

c825 Vesp. Psalter xviii. 10 Domas godes [sind] soe. c888 K. ÆLFRED Boeth. xxxviii. §2 Ic eom cefa æt æt is so æt u ær sædest. 971 Blickl. Hom. 53 So is æt ic eow secgge.
c1100 O.E. Chron. (MS. F) an. 995, Ealla a wisuste menn..a cuan at souste seggan [etc.]. c1175 Lamb. Hom. 55 et is al so ful iwis. c1250 Gen. & Ex. 2842 He nam so for, so it is.
c1290 S. Eng. Leg. I. 3 Louerd, he seide, if it is soth at ou man and god beo. 13. E.E. Allit. P. A. 482 yf hyt be soth at ou conez saye. c1385 CHAUCER L.G.W. Prol. 14 For, god wot, thing is neuer the lasser sooth, Thogh every wight ne may it nat y-see. c1450 Bk. Curtasye 211 in Babees Book, A schort worde is comynly sothe at fyrst sydyes fro monnes tothe. ?a1500 Chester Pl. XI. 70 Therfore, as it was a-misse, I haue written that souther is. c1550 ROLLAND Crt. Venus I. 564 Thay ar richt suith and ar of sentence fow. 1605 SHAKES. Macb. V. v. 40 If thy speech be sooth. 1642 JER. TAYLOR Episc. (1647) 260 Wee shall find all this to be sooth, and full of order. 1813 BYRON Br. Abydos II. x, I have a tale thou hast not dream'd, If sooth its truth must others rue. 1840 A. STRICKLAND Queens Eng. (1864) I. 160 The kings knew her words to be sooth.

phr. 13.. Minor Poems fr. Vernon MS. xxiii. 796 To seke men is iue orwh e An hele, so as gospelle. c1386 CHAUCER Merch. T. 23 As soth as God is king. c1440 Partonope 153 And that hit were as sothe as gospell.

b. In attributive use.

c1205 LAY, 4652 Sonden commen bi-twenen, e soe word me seiden. c1250 Gen. & Ex. 17 Cristene men oen ben so faen..an man hem tolded soe tale. 13. Cursor M. 12146 (Gött.), Quarfor an wil e noght trow, Sother inges at i tell u? 1375 BARBOUR Bruce I. 9 And suth tyngis that ar likand Tyll mannys heryng, ar plesand. c1400 Destr. Troy 11 Sothe stories ben stoken vp, & straught out of mind. 1456 SIR G. HAYE Law Arms (S.T.S.) 126 The contrair is the suth opynioun. 1530 PALSGR. 325/1 Sothe, trewe, veritable. 1847 M. HOWITT Ballads 238 This book which I had from thee contains the soothest lore. a1869 C. SPENCE Poems (1898) 137 The following tale Shall stand a witness, sooth and leal.
3. Of persons, etc.: Telling or speaking the truth; truthful. Also const. in (speech, etc.), of (one's word).

For the ME. phr. so cnawes beon see KNOW n.1

4. poet. Soothing, soft; smooth.

1819 KEATS To Sleep 5 O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes. 1820 St. Agnes xxx, A heap Of candied apple,, With jellies soother than the creamy curd.

Welde

Wield

(wild) Forms: see below. [Two OE. verbs are here represented: (1) a Com. Teut. reduplicating strong verb, OE. (WS.) wealdan, (Anglian) waldan, pa. tense wéold, pa. pple. e-wealden (see WALDIN) = OFris. valda, OS. gi-waldan, pa. tense giwêld, OHG. waltan, pa. tense waelt (MHG. walten, pa. tensewelt, G. walten weak), ON. valda, pres. vald, pa. tense (weak) olla, pa. pple. neut. valdet (Sw. válla, Da. volde to cause, occasion), Goth. waldan; (2) a weak verb, OE. (WS.) *e-wieldan, wieldan, wyldan, (Anglian) wældan, containing a mutated form of the same stem wal- (see also WIELD n. and a.), = Balto-Slavic wald- (:weld-) in OSL. vlado to rule, vlast power, Lith. veldu to rule, possess, iterative valda, OPrussian weldsnan acc., inheritance, wldnikans acc. pl., kings; another grade is in Goth.wulus glory.

The above forms are generally held to contain an extended form of the root of L. valre to be strong, validus strong, Celtic walo- in many proper names, and in *walatros (whence MWelsh gwaladr chief), ON. pa. tense olla (:*wul-).
The current form wield descends from ME. *wilde(n* (see A. 1.) as representing OE. (non-WS.) *wealdan, variant of WS. *wieldan, not as representing WS. *wealdan, the Anglian form of which gave ME. *welde, *wilde (A. 1., ). The pa. tense and pple. in -ed are new formations dating from the 14th century.

(The OE. and early ME. contracted forms of the 2nd and 3rd pres. indic. sing. of OE. *wealdan and *wieldan (A. 1.) are identical.)

A. Illustration of Forms.

1. inf. and pres. stem. () 1 wealdan, 2-3 wealden.

   c888 ÆLFRED Boeth. xxxix. §8 Sume..seega sio wyrd wealde æer e esæla e unesæla. c1000 Beowulf 2038 enden hie am wæpnum wealdan moston. c1200 Trin. Coll. Hom. 79 On iwer oleburdnesse e shulen wealden iwer saule. c1230 Hali Meid. 577 Wi him u schalt wealden..heouenliche wunnen.

   () 1 waldan, wældan, 3-4 walde(n (3 wælden), 4 Sc. valde, 4-5 Sc. wauld(e, 4-5 (9 Sc.) wald.

   c825 Vesp. Ps. lxxxviii[i]. 10 [9] u waldes maehete sæs. c950 Lindisf. Gosp. Mark x. 42 Wutas ie foron aæ ae esene sint æt hia aldordom [sic] hædnum e-wældes æm. a1000 Boeth. Metr. xxiv. 35 Se e walde..ealra ora eoran cyninga. c1205 LAY. 1250, & scal in mære kun wælden us londes. Ibid. 2966 Hu mochel wor leste u me to walden kineriche? 12.. Moral Ode 2 (Egerton MS.), 1c wælde more anne ic dude. a1300 Cursor M. 9958 an was ar neuer suilk a hald, Ne nan welier in werld to wald. c1375 Sc. Leg. Saints xl. (Ninian) 1178 To wauld oure lymmys at our wil. c1425 waulde [see B. 5]. a1500 Bernard. de cura rei fam. I. 351 Quahm god of mycht bade wald and virke. 1825 JAMIESON, Wald, valde, to wield, to manage, to govern, to possess. 1915 wald [see B. 1b].

   () 3-5 wolde, 4 wold.

   c1260 K. Horn 308 (Camb. MS.) Me to spuse holde, & ich e lord to wolde. c1425 Cursor M. 22874 (Trin.) Mity god at al wolde. c1460 Towneley Myst. xxvi. 1 Peasse, I warne you, woldys in wytt!

   () 1 wildan, wyldan, 4-5 wilde, wylde, 6-7 wylde.

   c960 ÆTHELWOLD Rule St. Benet (1885) 11 He sceal mid twyfealdre lare a wyldan and tyn, e him undereodde synt. 13.. Cursor M. 6741 (Gött.) And na keping did him in wilde, Ox for ox an sal he elde. 1387 wilde [see B. 3a]. c1480 Wilde [see B. 2]. c1485 wyldyng [see WIELDING pple.]. 1563, 1603 wild [see B. 5].
() 2-4 welden (5 -on), 3-4 weld(e, 4 Sc. velde; 4-8 weild, 5-6 weilde, 6 weylfd, Sc. veild; 4-6 weilde, 5-7 weeld; 6-7 weald; 6 weylde, wyelde, 6- wield.

c1175 Lamb. Hom. 153 a awariede gastes et welde osternesse [rectores tenebrarum].
a1200 Moral Ode 2 (Lamb. MS.) Ich welde mare ene ich dede. c1205 LAY. 1140 e wrse hit hafde to welden. a1300 Cursor M. 22813 Al mai he do he at al weldes. c1380 WYCLIF Wks. (1880) 369 es goodis at ei welden now. c1400 Destr. Troy 1881 For to wirke with my wille, & weld as myn owne.

a1300 Cursor M. 586 Adam was mad of mans eild, Als he moght welle him self weild.
c1400 Sc. Trojan War (Horstm.) II. 1625 Gevin..To king Teuteus, to kepe and weild.
1500-20 DUNBAR Poems xxi. 61 O! quha sall weild the wrang possessioun. 1579 weylfd [see B. 2b]. 1581 W. STAFFORD Exam. Compl. iii. (1876) 77 Hauinge much land in their hand, and not being able toweilde all. 1696 PHILLIPS (ed. 5), To weild, to manage, to govern: Thus we say to weild a Scepter. 1742 weild [see B. 4].

1593 CHURCHYARD Challenge 22 Why doe wee wish, to weald a world at will? 1629 weald [see B. 5].

1559 Mirr. Mag., Dk. Suffolk ix, They were more then we might easely wyelde. 1586 MARLOWE 1st Pt. Tamburl. II. i, What stature wields he, and what personage? 1590 SPENSER F.Q. II. i. 18 Vnder him a gray steede did he wield.

() (with short vowel) 6-7 weld(e, 7 weldld).

1530 welde [see B. 4]. c1550 Disc. Common Weal Eng. (1893) 100 Havinge muche landes in theire handes, and not being able to welde all. 1591 SPENSER Ruines of Time 14 A broken rod she held, Which towards heauen shee seemed on high to weld. 1594 WILLOBIE Avisa XXV. iii, You see the sore, whence springs my griefe, You weld the sterne of my reliefe. a1628 F. GREVIL Mustapha I. i, Strength knowes what strength can weld. 1647 welld [see B. 4b].
() 2nd and 3rd sing. pres. contr. 1 weltst, wylst, wylt, wilt, 1-3 wealt, 1-4 welt, 3-5 walt.

c888 weltst, welt [see B. 1, 4]. c897 wilt [see B. 3a]. c1000 Ags. Ps. (Th.) ii. 9 u heora wylst. c1000 wealt [see B. 3a]. c1200 Trin. Coll. Hom. 181 We one awlene alle e hundlimen, and welt e sowle. c1205 LAY. 32049 Ure drihten e walt alle deden. a1225 Leg. Kath. 1798 He. wisse & wealte heouene & te eore. c1250 Gen. & Ex. 54 Hali froure welt oc at mit. c1275 Moral Ode 83 in O.E. Misc. 61 He wit and wald [v.rr. walde, walt, wealde] alle ing. 13. Guy Warw. (A.) 3892 Lord at won an heye, at al ing walt fer & neye. 1377 LANGL. P. Pl. B. x. 83 e more he wynneth and welt welthes & ricchesse,..e lasse good he deleth. c1425 Cursor M. 23105 (Trin.) e lord of myt at al walt.

2. pa. tense. () 1 weold, wieold, 3 wield, 3-5 weld(e.

Beowulf 465 Ic..weold folce Denia. c897 ÆLFRED Gregory's Past. C. l. 391 Manira folca estreones hie wieoldon. c1100 O.E. Chron. (MS. D) an. 1036, æt ne eafodon a e micel weoldon on isan lande. c1200 Trin. Coll. Hom. 169 On alle e winne e he erur wield. c1205 LAY. 183 He wes king & heo quen & kinelond heo welden. 1432-50 tr. Higden (Rolls) I. 7 Riches at ey welde [Caxton welded] while ey were alyue.

() 1 wylde, 2 (e)wellde, -welt, 3-4 welt(e, welde.

a1000 Voc. in Wr.-Wülcker 225/1 Domuit, i. uicit, mitigauit, wylde. c1175 E.E. (Vesp.) Hom. 106 Ic ewellde & ewann feola eodan. Ibid. 107 Ne mid his scelde heo ne ewelt. c1250 Gen. & Ex. 532 Wimmen welten weres mester. c1350 welt [see B. 2].

() 3 wald(e, wælde, 4-5 walt; 3-5 wolde, 4 wolt.

c1205 LAY. 8976 Androgeus walde [later text welde] al at he wolde. Ibid. 24134 Na lengere at lond he ne walde [later text wolde]. a1250 Prov. Ælfred 389 in O.E. Misc. 126 eyh o mon wolde al e worlde. 13. Gaw. & Gr. Knt. 231 He stemmed & con studie, Quo walt er most renoun. Ibid. 485 Wyth wele walt ay at day. c1350 Will. Palerne 3887 Was neuer man vpon mold at swiche mit walt. a1425 Cursor M. 10181 (Trin.) e secounde party at he walt Was among e prestes dalt.

() 4-7 welded (4 -id), 5-6 Sc. weildit, 6 weelded, 7 weilded, 7- wielded.

1338 weldid [see B. 5]. 1382 WYCLIF Isa. lxiii. 18 As not thei weildeden thin hoeli puple. c1475 Rauf Coilear 578 The wy that weildit the wane. 1601 welded [see B. 5d]. 1838 JAMES Louis XIV, III. iii. 89 Boileau too wielded his satirical pen.
3. pa. pple. 1 ewealden, 3 iwealde, iwald, wold, 5 welde(n, weld; 1 wyld(d; 4 welded, 7 (9 dial.) wielded, 7- wielded.

Beowulf 1732 [He] ede him..ewealdene worolde dælas. c1000 Ags. Ps. (Spelman) xviii. 14 [xix. 13] if min hine beo wyldde. c1200 [see B. 3]. a1225 Leg. Kath. 189 Al e world is iwald urh his wissunge. c1250 wold [see B. 1c]. a1340 HAMPOLE Psalter xv. 7 Thurgh e whilke e heritage of heuen may be sene and wieldid. a1425 Cursor M. 13821 (Trin.) Eite & ritty eer in bonde Haue I not welded foot ny honde. c1470 HARDING Chron. CCIX. iii, The which the duke of Bargoyn wold haue weld. Ibid. CCXXXII. iii, So was the lande wt Frenchmen wonne & welde. 1688 HOLME Armoury III. vii. 321/2 The Hand Hammer..may be welded..with one hand. a1513 FABYAN Chron. I. cxcix. (1811) 206 Weldynge ye countre at his wyll. 1575 GASCOIGNE Kenelworth Wks. 1910 II. 115 Though she finde the skil A kingdom for to weelde. 1633 BP. HALL Hard Texts Neh. v. 14, I, and my familie have not taken that allowance which was appointed for the governour, so as, though I weilded the place, yet I forbore to take the maintenance allotted unto it.

B. Signification.

1. trans. To rule or reign over, govern, rule, command. Obs. exc. as merged in 5.

Beowulf 465 Ic..weold folce Denia. c888 ÆLFRED Boeth. xxxiii. §5 Dryhten..u e ealle..esceafts..esceope &..heaor welsest. c1175 Lamb. Hom. 153 To fihten..to-eines a awariede gastes et welde osternesse [rectores tenebrarum]. c1250 Gen. & Ex. 840 e kinges we_num bures oa. 1303 R. BRUNNE Handl. Synne 9891 God almyty, at al yng welded. ?a1400 Morte Arth. 650, I make the kepere, sir knyghte, of kyngrykes manye,..to welde al my landes. c1420 Prose Life Alex. 37 So sall e wele & peysably welde our empire. a1513 FABYAN Chron. I. cxcix. (1811) 206 Weldynge ye countre at his wyll. 1575 GASCOIGNE Kenelworth Wks. 1910 II. 115 Though she finde the skil A kingdom for to weelde. 1633 BP. HALL Hard Texts Neh. v. 14, I, and my familie have not taken that allowance which was appointed for the governour, so as, though I weilded the place, yet I forbore to take the maintenance allotted unto it.

b. intr. To rule, have the command; fig. to prevail. Obs. exc. Sc. dial.

a1450 Ratis Raving 2270 Vilfulnes and mysknawleg Ay wodly weildand. ?a1500 Chester Pl. (Shaks. Soc.) vi. 112 As was from the begininge, And never shall have endinge, From worlde to worlde aye weildinge, Amen! God of mighte moste. 1915 G. SINCLAIR Poems 63 May..love an' friendship freely wald Around her ingle.

c. trans. To overcome, subdue. Obs.

a1000 [see A. 2]. c1250 Gen. & Ex. 421 Abel an hundred er was hold, an he was of is broer wold. Ibid. 526 or is writenquat ate awold, at is werld was [of?] water wold.
2. To have at command or disposal, have as one's own or in one's keeping, hold, own, possess; to have the advantage of, enjoy; sometimes (contextually), to get possession of, gain, win, obtain.

Beowulf 2051 Hi weoldon wælstowe. a1000 Guthlac 239 Oft we oferseon..eoda eawas, rece modira, ara e in elimpe life weoldon. 11. in Kemble Cod. Dipl. IV. 200 And ic eye eow æt Ordric abbud and eal æt hired on Abbendunes mynstre be minre unne and ife frielice habban and wealdan Hornemeres hunred on hyre aenre andwealde. c1220 Bestiary 176 If u hauest is broken, Al u forbrees, forwures and forgelues, Eche lif to wolden. a1225 Anocr. R. 388 [Christ] wrot mid his owune blode saluz to his leofmon, of luue gretunige..forte wolden hire luue. a1300 Cursor M. 10328 Oft sith he be lett Man wit womman child to gett, Bituix and air forer eild, And an am sendes child to wold. Ibid. 24188 Moght i e ans weld in arm, Hale me think of all mi harm. 13.. [see A. 2]. 13.. Gaw. & Gr. Knt. 835 e ar welcum to wold as yow lykez at here is; al is yowre awen, to haue at yowre wylle. c1350 Will. Palerne 76 ai seide e child schuld wold al here godis. Ibid. 144 He wex to a wer~wolf..ac his witt wold he after as wel as to-fore. Ibid. 2946, I not where he schal ou to wold. c1386 CHAUCER Monk's T. 20 Adam..welte all Paradys sauynge o tree. 1470-85 MALORY Arthur V. vii. 172 Ye be worthy to woldel all your honour and worship. c1480 Childe of Bristowe 542 in Horstmann Alengl. Leg. (1881) 321, Y haue no childe, Myn heritage for to wilde. 1513 DOUGLAS Æneis VII. vi. 127 Lat nevir his feris wold Ane fut braid of Italiane ground nor feyld. 1586 [see A. 1]. 1593 CHURCHYARD Challenge 116 What cunning heads and hands can catch in hold, That covetous mindes, doth seek to wold alone. 1603 HOLLAND Plutarch's Mor. 510 They..would never be able with wisdom and moderation to wold any great prosperitie [ ..].

b. To have in oneself, experience, feel; to have as one's lot or fate, suffer, undergo; to suffer patiently, endure, tolerate. Obs.

c1350 Will. Palerne 2990 So gret wonder walt e quen of e wor bestes. a1400 Leg. Rood viii. (1871) 143 Weopyng and wo I walt. a1400 Relig. Pieces fr. Thornton MS. xi. (1914) 88 Wele or wa, ane of ase twa, To woldel with~owtten ende. 1532 MORE Conful. Tindall Wks. 594/2 God..maketh with the temptacion a way out also, that ye may wold it. 1579 LYLY Euphues Nij, At the first the Oxe woldeth not the yoke, nor the Colt the snaffle,..yet time causeth the one to bend his neck [etc.].

3. a. To decide, determine, ordain; to be the author or cause of; to bring about; to carry out, execute, perform. Obs.

In OE. chiefly const. gen. In later use prob. transf. from 4.

Beowulf 2574 ær he y fyrste forman doore wealdan moste. c897 ÆLFRED tr. Gregory's Past. C. 377 if hwele folc bi mid hungre eswenced, & hwa his hwæte ehyt & ohielt, hu ne
b. intr. (for refl.) To occupy oneself, be doing; to act, do, fare (well, etc.); to ‘manage’.
This use does not seem to be continuous with the intr. sense of OE. wealdan ‘to contrive or manage to do something expressed or implied’.

c1400 Beryn 1803 Howe shuld o sely lombe, a-mong wolvis weld, And scapen vn-I-harmyd? c1470 HENRY Wallace IV. 339 Now lycht, now sadd; now blissful, now in baill; Nowe weildand weyle; now calde weddyr, now hett. a1500 Bernard. de cura rei fam. I. 351 Quham god of mycht bade wald and virke & leffe In wytnes of adame and of eve. 1565 Satir. Poems Reform. I. 407 Rather given whollie to weld wth the sword, Then worke that wisdome have firmelie affied. 1581 A. HALL Iliad v. 93 Although he weelded wel in fight. 1613 P. FORBES Comm. Rev. Ep. Ded., The inexpert student, in search of letters weilding amidst infinite variety, is cast in such doubt of choice.

4. trans. To direct the movement or action of, to control; to use, have the use of, as a bodily member or a faculty; to lead, guide, direct; occas. to hold in check; gen. to deal with, have to do with; to deal with successfully, manage. Obs. or dial. exc. as in 5.
Here are included various shades of meaning, lit. and fig.: see also below. In quot. 1530, to inflect grammatically. In OE. const. gen.

c888 ÆLFRED Boeth. xxxix. §8 Sio eax welt ealles æs wænes. 1297 R. GLOUC. (Rolls) 3093 Hii ne ssolle abbe e leste ston e wule ich may weld [v.r. wolde] min hond. c1386 CHAUCER Sompn. T. 239 In our Chapitre praye we..To criest at he thee sende heele and myght Thy body for to weelden. c1450 Mirk's Festial 196 Then callyd e norys to e modyr, and bade hur..helpe hur forto folde e chyldys clois; for scho was to woke, and myght not welde hom. c1470 Gol. & Gaw. 450 Quhill I may my wit wald, I think my fredome to hald. 1508 DUNBAR Tua Mariit Wemen 77 Than suld I waill ane..That suld my womanheid weild. 1513 DOUGLAS Æneis XII. xii. 129 The wond tarreis Enee sum deyll..To weild hys kne maid sum impedymynt. 1530 PALSGR. Ded. Aiib, How to welde hym [sc. a frenche worde], in his cases, gendre, nombres, modes, tenses, and persons. 1555 T. PHAER Æneid II. 529 So sayd she, and gan to welde Hym aged man, and in the sacred seat hym set and helde. 1581 T. HOWELL Deuises Giib, Let wisedome welde your wit. 1595 SPENSER Col. Clout 130 Loue will not be drawne, but must be ledde, And Bregog did so well her fancie weld, That her good will he got her first to wedde. 1596 State Irel. Wks. (Globe) 663/2 According to the quantitye of such land, as euerye
man..shalbe founde able to weelde. 1601 HOLLAND Pliny X. iii. I. 272 The very Ægles, not able to weld the prey that they have seazed upon, are together with it drawne under the water. 1612 DRAYTON Poly-olb. ii. 131 Her new-beginning banke her water scarcely weelds. 1633 P. FLETCHER Purple Isl. VII. xli, Her daughters..Much pain'd themselves her stumbling feet to weelde. 1650 FULLER Pisgah III. v. 326 It is no shame for one to admit a partner in that weighty work, which he cannot weild by himself. 1742 YOUNG Nt. Th. II. 449 Whose mind was..strong to weild all science. 1891 Sheffield Gloss., Suppl., A farmer living at Ashover, in Derbyshire, said to me, ‘There's no farm I could ha' liked better if I could only ha' welded it’.

b. refl. in various senses (see above); occas. to conduct oneself, behave. Obs.

c1200 Vices & Virtues (1888) 51 He lai alswa at child e nan god ne cann, ne spoken ne mai, ne isien, ne him seluen wealden. 13.. Sir Beues (A.) 368 Whan ow ert of swich elde, at ow mit e self Wilde, And ert of age. c1375 Cursor M. 24358 (Fairf.) orou mi hert I felde hit stange My-self I mut not welde. c1400 Destr. Troy 8655 His sheld on his shulders shot was behynd, And his brest left bare,.To weild hym more winly at worthy to lede. 1426 LYDG. De Guil. Pilgr. 20587 Somme be lame, and feble..And somme strong, and gon vp-ryht, And many wele hem sylff ryht wel. c1430 How Good Wife taught Dau. in Babees Bk. (1868) 46 So wysely thee weeld That y frendys haue Ioy of thee. 1545 T. RAYNALDE Byrth Mankynde II. ii. (1552) 60b, Nether can it welde, or helpe it selfe to come forthe. 1647 HARVEY Sch. of Heart VI. iii, The limbs unable are themselves to welld [rime swell'd].

c. To carry (something heavy or requiring effort). Obs.

c1205 LAY. 1131 a Troinisce men..duden of an wilden al heora iwilla, to an scipen wælden [later text to e sipes ladden so moche so iwolden]. Ibid. 21874 Heo..heore uæx fæire wælden to volde [later text hire her faire al hii totere]. c1386 CHAUCER Monk's T. 272 She wolde kille Leons leopardest and Beres..And in hir Armes weelde hem at hir wille. a1400-50 Wars Alex. 838 an Alexander..Wynnes him vp a wardrere he walt in his handis. 1592 KYD Sp. Trag. I. iv, I tooke him up, and wound him in mine armes; And welding him unto my priuate tent, There laid him downe.

d. To express, utter. Obs. rare.

1581 A. HALL Iliad v. 77 To the Gods..he wold not weeld his thought. 1587 A. DAY Daphnis & Chloe (1890) 121 The best are mute, And may not weeld the greatnes of her praise. 1605 SHAKES.Lear I. i. 56 Sir, I loue you more then word can weild ye matter. a1635 CORBET Poems (1672) 95 Out~went the Townsmen all in Starch,.into the Field, Where one a Speech could hardly weild.
5. To use or handle with skill and effect; to manage, actuate, ply (a weapon, tool, or instrument, now always one held or carried in the hand). (The current sense.) In OE. const. gen., dat., or instrumental.

Beowulf 2038 enden hie am wæpnum wealdan moston. a1000 Battle of Maldon 83 a hwile e hi wæpna wealdan moston. c1300 Havelok 1436 Nou ich am up to at helde Cumen, that ich may wepne welde. 1338 R. BRUNNE Chron. (1810) 23 Sex ere was he kyng, with were welded e scheld. 1375 BARBOUR Bruce XI. 97 He left nane mychte vapnyrs velde. c1385 CHAUCER L.G.W. 2000 Ariadne, He..hath Rovme..To welde an axe or swerde or staffe or knyffe. a1400-50 Wars Alex. 651 Wele & witly in were to wielden a spere. c1425 WYNTOUN Cron. VII. vii. 1304 A childe..at wapynys mychte noucht wichtly wauld. c1425 Non-Cycle Myst. Plays (1909) 22/82 Worklooms for to work and weeld. 1470-85 MALORY Arthur IX. ii. 340 Is there ony of you here that wille take upon hym to welde this sheld? 1563 P. WHITEHORNE Onosandro Platon. 74 Muche lesse the slingers can wild their slinges: being hindered of the Souldiers. 1598 SHAKES. Merry W. i. iii. 24 O base hungarian wight: wilt yu the spigot wield? 1603 G. OWEN Pembrokeshire (1892) 275 Monstroue cudgells..as bigge as the partie is well able to wild. 1629 H. BURTON Truth's Tri. 251 We can tell better how to weald our owne weapons. 1736 GRAY Statius i. 1 Whoe'er the quoit can wield, And furthest send its weight. 1784 COWPER Task III. 636 Strength may wield the pond'rous spade. 1798 WORDSW. Peter Bell Prol. xxx, A potent wand doth Sorrow wield. 1860 TYNDALL Glac. i. xxii. 159 Never wielding my hatchet until my balance was secured.

b. to wield a or the sceptre (and similar phrases): to exercise supreme authority, to reign or rule (also fig.). Cf. SWAY v. 8.

1593 SHAKES. 3 Hen. VI. IV. vii. 73 His Head by nature fram'd to weare a Crowne, His Hand to wield a Scepter. 1595 DANIEL Civ. Wars I. xxix, Edward the third being dead, had left this child. The crowne and Scepter of this Realme to wield. 1635 J. TAYLOR (Water P.) Old, Old Man C4, How he and 's son th' eighth Henry, here did wield The Scepter. 1809 SYD. SMITH Serm. I. 64 Providence..gives to many a man a soul far better than his birth, compelling him to dig with a spade, who had better have wielded a sceptre. 1821 SCOTT Kenilw. vii, The late prime favourite of England, who wielded her general's staff and controlled her parliaments. 1858 MAX MÜLLER Chips (1880) III. i. 28 The intellectual sceptre of Germany was wielded by a new nobility.

c. To exercise (power, authority, influence).

1612 T. TAYLOR Comm. Titus ii. 9 He forbiddeth them not to exercise rule..ouer their servants, but only teacheth them after what manner to wield their authoritie. a1677 BARROW Serm. III. xxii. (R.) To wield power innocently...for the maintenance of right...for the suppression of injury...is a matter of no small skill. 1836 J. GILBERT Chr. Atonem. iv. (1852) 97 Physical power wielded by an omnipotent Being..must overcome every possible obstacle. 1861 BUCKLE Civiliz. II. vi. 412 Over the inferior order of
minds, they still wield great influence. 1868 J. H. BLUNT Ref. Ch. Eng. I. 100
Wielding...an authority which he had no just right to wield. 1874 GREEN Short Hist. i.
§6. 53 Dunstan..wielded for sixteen years..the secular and ecclesiastical powers of the
realm.

d. To use after the fashion of a tool or weapon for the performance of
something.

1601 SIR W. CORNWALLIS Ess. II. xlix. Nn3b, I am the veriest bungler..that euer
welded tongue.
1849 MACAULAY Hist. Eng. iii. I. 354 Wielding the strength and representing the
dignity of the city
of London. 1857 MAURICE Mor. & Met. Philos. IV. vii. §13. 343 Wielding the learning
of the old times with incomparable facility. 1871 T. R. JONES Anim. Kingd. (ed. 4) 725
The dorsal ribs [of serpents] wielded..by..powerful muscles..perform the office of internal
legs. 1882 C. PEBODY Engl. Journalism xxiii. 183 A trained soldier wielding a graphic
and powerful pen. 1886 A. WEIR Hist. Basis Mod. Europe (1889) 588 [The] increasing
importance of the middle classes, as they wielded more efficiently capital and machinery.
1918 A. MENZIES Calvin 396 Who could wield such scathing invective?

Hence wielded ppl. a.; also (nonce-wds.) wieldable a., capable of being
wielded; wieldance, the action of wielding.

1800 SOUTHEY in Robberds Mem. W. Taylor I. 325 As easy and as *wieldable as
blank verse.

c1625 BP. HALL St. Paul's Combat II. Wks. 1634 II. 451 This spirituall edge shall either
turne againe, or (through our weake *weildance) not enter the stubburne and thick hide of
obdured hearts.

1842 TENNYSON Talking Oak lxvi, May never saw dismember thee, Nor *wielded axe
disjoint.