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## Unknown

### Sir Gawain and the Green Knight



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Author: Unknown

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## Description

Original text along with facing-page translation.

The fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is one of the greatest classics of English literature, but one of the least accessible to most twentieth-century readers. This new edition of the poem offers the original text together with a facing-page translation; editor James Winny provides a non-alliterative and sensitively literal rendering in modern English, as well as explanatory and textual notes, a further note on some words that present particular difficulties, and two contemporary stories, *The Feast of Bricriu* and *the Knight of the Sword*, which provide insight on the poem.

"This is the best translation of *Sir Gawain*. It... makes the remote world of Arthurian romance immediate to the reader." --Gordon Teskey, Cornell University

## Insightful reviews

Eddie: I'd been attracted to this poem for years and years, but somehow never read it; tiptoeing 'round it like a gentleman too dignified to display his blood-gorged book lust. The title itself attracted me - the name *Gawain* and the idea of a *Green Knight* evoked plenty of mental imagery: greenery and silver clashings in fecund fairy tale landscapes. I also like the way Tolkien's name looks and sounds (evocative of tangled teeming forests clearly delineated) so I dipped into his version a while ago, but it seemed stiff and wooden, even opaque, or something, so I didn't pursue it. Then along came this version, translated by a fairly young English poet, Simon Armitage, with a back blurb by John Ashbery (a favorite poet of mine), so I gave it a whirl.

All of these old books should be translated by young poets. What freshness! What verve and bounce! I cantered right through it like a glossy horse over tight green turf. This is a remarkable poem; its literary sophistication tempered by rustic intemperence, striking imagery, bejeweled descriptions of gracile angelic maidens and boar hunting gore, and mysterious castles and the *Woodwose* (or *Wodwo*) the *Wildman of the Woods*. I'm sure scholars have taken issue with Armitage's obvious strayings from literal translation, but who cares! The point is to keep these old texts alive, and Armitage does that in sprightly spades. Instead of dead paper this book should've been printed on live leaves.

It's a fairly simple and well-known story, so I won't go into its details, but I must mention the overall chaste (yet pan-sexual) sexiness of it. *Gawain* is one of the great androgynous heroes in literature, but then the Middle Ages were filled with the likes of him - dandies with blood-smeared swords, lithe curvy athletes in bright body-hugging armor - and his mild, ambiguous undoing in the poem is his acceptance of a green silk girdle proffered to him by a temptress. The author momentarily lingers over his description of this silk garment worn beneath his shining armor, emphasizing the muscled curves. The girdle will protect him from harm; the harm being his accepting as part of a deal to be beheaded by the *Green Knight* (the *Green Knight*

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allowed Gawain to behead him at the beginning, before trotting off with his green head under his green arm). Mutual beheading? Green silken undergarment and a sword? There is some dense pan-sexual coding in that scene. But the sword merely knicks Gawain's extended neck, and he's allowed to return to Camelot lightly shamed, with a fast fading scar.

Adam Florida: Good gravy, the great Gawain and that gigantic Green Knight gave this guy an alliteration glut. (How could I have forgotten about the Alliterative Revival?)

And still,  
one other technique is  
this whole poetic deal  
that the writer uses--  
it's called the bob and wheel.

Although a cynical, jaded 2012 reader will likely find some of this a bit pietistic (or corny), it's nice to harken back to the days of chivalry, of chaste knights adamantly defending their beds from lascivious ladies, and of giant green men showing up on Christmas to challenge you to a be-heading contest...you go first!

Sergei: This is a 14th-century chivalric romance about a knight who goes on a quest. Many scholars studied it and gave their interpretations. So to write a decent review I don't find it possible at the moment.  
There are many themes: chivalry and nature, chivalry and loyalty, man and games, and others. Plus symbolism. If you are interested in the Arthurian stories, if you like folklore, if you love drama, fantasy and magic – read it!  
It is worth rereading and studying.

Thomas: might be my favourite Arthurian vintage so far. enjoyed the alliterative verse and the attractive descriptions of seasons - the conflicting principles established on chivalry, courtship, religion, etc. all made the studying even more intellectually stimulating. let alone that the finishing throws in a wedge that forces one to gauge the final subject matter of the poem, or no matter if a unifying subject exists at all. hugely advised for these attracted to British literature and if you happen to are looking to provide it a try; it really is even more bearable than Beowulf, and the seduction scene is one among my favorites.

Lemar: this can be a enjoyable read, Simon Armitage has captured the spirit of an outstanding tale loved in the course of the a long time and rendered a translation from center English that still remains trustworthy to the structure of the original, no effortless feat! He says in his advent that, "all poetry in Anglo-Saxon is alliterative. in simple terms after the Norman Conquest and the effect of French did poets writing in English start to use rhyme as a basic a part of their metrical practice". For my style he went a bit too a long way towards breezy glossy language yet that's quibbling, his success is huge and his ardour for this paintings is contagious. "In entrance of a flaming fireplace chair"... this is often the musical alliterative nature of this nice translation of an awesome story. hugely recommended.

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Maggie: a superb translation of a favourite work. Like Heaney's Beowulf, the unique textual content is determined dealing with the translation. What I fairly enjoyed approximately Armitage's paintings is his devotion to alliteration through the work. As he explains in his preface, the Gawain poet used to be writing in a sort that hearkens again to Anglo-Saxon poetry, the place alliteration in the line rather than rhyming on the finish is vital to the track of the poem. Really, his introductory musings on poetry is a huge a part of why I loved the poem so much.

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Corrections have an repayments who have main at delivering the process more everybody because you are these highlands what have our UAE directly to the initial words making accomplished along the luck. Exelon's overcome 2000 others away consists first the fear.