

*Sir Gawain:*  
*Eleven Romances and Tales*

*Edited by*  
Thomas Hahn

Published for TEAMS  
(The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages)  
in Association with the University of Rochester

by

Medieval Institute Publications

---

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Kalamazoo, Michigan — 1995

### *Abbreviations*

The following short titles are used to refer to the poems edited in this volume:

<i>Arousyng</i>	<i>The Arousyng of Arthur</i>
<i>Awestys</i>	<i>The Awstyres off Arthur</i>
<i>Carle</i>	<i>The Carle of Carlisle</i>
<i>Carlisle</i>	<i>Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle</i>
<i>Cornwall</i>	<i>King Arthur and King Cornwall</i>
<i>Gologras</i>	<i>The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain</i>
<i>Greene Knight</i>	<i>The Greene Knight</i>
<i>Jeanne</i>	<i>The Jeaste of Sir Gawain</i>
<i>Marriage</i>	<i>The Marriage of Sir Gawain</i>
<i>Ragnelle</i>	<i>The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle</i>
<i>Turke</i>	<i>The Turke and Sir Gawain</i>

Other common abbreviations include:

OE	Old English
ME	Middle English
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
EETS o.s.	Early English Text Society, original series
EETS e.s.	Early English Text Society, extra series
EETS s.s.	Early English Text Society, supplemental series



## *Introduction*

### *Sir Gawain and Popular Chivalric Romance*

#### *Sir Gawain as Hero*

All the glamour, mystery, and moral authority that chivalry might command were invested for late medieval audiences in the charismatic figure of Sir Gawain. Perhaps the most delightful and memorable testimonial to his celebrity is offered by Lady Bertilak the first morning she visits the knight in his bedroom, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. He alone, she says, possesses "The pris and the proues that plese al other" [line 1249: the worship and daring that gives everyone pleasure]:

For I wene wel, iwyse, Sir Woven ye are,  
That alle the worlde worshippez quereso ye ride;  
Your honour, your handeslyk is handely prayzed  
With lordes, wyth ladies, with alle that lyf bese

[lines 1226-29: for I know it well, you are Sir Gawain, whom all the world honors wherever you ride; your honor, your graciousness is courteously praised among lords and ladies, among all who are alive].<sup>1</sup> Though Lady Bertilak may intend to flatter (and perhaps compromise) Gawain by telling him that every living soul knows and admires his reputation for knightly virtue, it is hardly an exaggeration as far as late medieval readers and listeners were concerned; most English audiences, both courtly and popular, would think of Sir Gawain as the chief ornament of "Arthures hōss . . . That al the rōes renes of thurgh ryalmes so many" [*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 309-10: Arthur's household, whose extravagant fame runs through so many kingdoms]. Chaucer, always attuned to popular taste despite

<sup>1</sup> All citations of medieval texts in the Introduction and in the introductions and notes to the individual poems refer to the editions listed in the Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited. I have usually provided line numbers in the text. Citations of editions or commentary specific to the poems edited in the present volume appear in the individual bibliographies preceding each poem.

### *The Gawain Romances*

his extraordinary bookishness, pays an equally telling tribute to the universality of Gawain's status as the paragon of knighthood. That most sentimentally chivalric of narrators, the Squire, praises the "reverence and obeisance / As wel in speche as in countenaunce" of a "strange knyght" by suggesting he is like "Gawyn, with his olde curteisye . . . comen ayeyn [again] out of Faireye" (lines 89 ff.). To equal Gawain was to be a knight indeed, though it's worth noting that even the Squire links such ideal chivalry to magic and fairy tale.

Gawain's stature and renown — if not in his own mythical lifetime, then among the flesh and blood listeners and readers of late medieval England — had as its source and substance the popular romances that make up the present volume. Almost all of these were composed or written down in the fifteenth century or later. Before these romances appeared, Gawain already enjoyed a reputation in England through two early fourteenth-century verse translations based upon twelfth-century French romances (Chrétien de Troyes' *Traist* [c. 1175] and Renaud de Beaujeu's *Le bel inconnu* [c. 1190]). Moreover, the only surviving copy of a Latin pedigree produced for Gawain — *De ortu Walassoni* (The Origins of Gawain), an account (from the twelfth or thirteenth century) of his youth and early exploits modeled after the pseudo-history of Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1136) — was apparently copied in England in the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (second half of the fourteenth century) extends the chronicle tradition of Geoffrey and Layamon's *Brut* (thirteenth century), exalting Gawain as a fierce and impetuous warrior, the greatest fighter in Arthur's troop. His slayer and half-brother Mordred eulogizes Gawain as "makles one molde," "the graciouseste gone . . . man hardyest of hande . . . the hendelest in hawle . . . , the lordeliest of ledynge" (lines 3875–80; matchless on earth, the most courageous knight, hardest in strength, most affable in hall, most gentle in conduct). When King Arthur hears the news of Gawain's death, he cries, "thou was worthy to be kyng, thoſt [though] I the corowne bare [bore] . . . I am attlyndone" (lines 3962, 3966). *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* elaborates upon this reputation, establishing its hero as the sterling example of chivalry even as it probes the contradictory links between courtesy and violent death, private conscience and public honor, within the ethos of knighthood.

The glowing testimonials of the Gawain-poet and Chaucer do not, however, primarily pay tribute to a fame conferred upon Gawain by books and translations. The

<sup>2</sup> Again, the Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited provides full information for editions of poems mentioned here but not included in the present volume (except for Renaud's *Le bel inconnu*, which is not relevant to the traditions discussed here).

## Introduction

casual quality of their allusions depends for its resonance not upon reading knowledge, but upon pervasive recognition that the name of Gawain was the proverbial equivalent of courtesy itself. The exploits, gallantries, and preternatural encounters rehearsed in the eleven romances and ballads gathered here make plain the nature and the extent of Gawain's appeal as all things knightly to all people of late medieval England. Gawain's perfect courtesy does not, however, endow him with a coherent identity; it simply serves as a touchstone, revealing the true or false chivalry of the various antagonists who test him. To see this as deriving from some original core of myth, or to argue that Gawain's charisma springs from his being before all else an archetypal hero or solar deity, seriously distorts the miscellaneous character of these adventures, ignores their deep and tangled roots in the social and cultural life of late medieval England, and, perhaps worst of all, represses the episodic surges and performative energy that animate these narratives and songs.<sup>2</sup>

Gawain's celebrity nonetheless stretches far back, beyond his appearances in high medieval literary romances, or in later popular romances and ballads like those collected here.<sup>3</sup> He appears initially to have been a legendary Celtic hero with supernatural powers, though the precise origins of the figure who becomes the knightly Sir Gawain are shrouded by typical Arthurian ambiguities. The waxing of Gawain's strength before noon, and its waning thereafter (as in the *Stanzeic Morte Arthur* and Malory) may reflect some prehistoric link with a sun god.<sup>4</sup> In his earliest

<sup>2</sup> Two notable monographs in English on Gawain as hero both relentlessly attempt to reach back to an "original" meaning for the hero, and therefore regard the late medieval romances as without significance except insofar as they provide pieces of evidence for the archetype. See Jesse L. Weston, *The Legend of Sir Gawain: Studies upon Its Original Scope and Significance*, Grima Library, 7 (London: David Nutt, 1897), and John Matthews, *Gawain: Knight of the Goddess — Restoring an Archetype* (Wellingborough, UK: The Aquarian Press, 1990). A brief and reliable summary of surviving evidence is given in the entry for "Gawain," *New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1991). The same volume contains helpful entries for most of the poems in the present volume, and for the characters and places they mention. The most thorough survey of Gawain's appearances in French and English narratives remains R. J. Whiting, "Gawain, His Reputation, His Courtesy and His Appearance in Chaucer's Squire's Tale," *Medieval Studies* 9 (1947), 189–234.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Barber offers a concise yet reliable account of Gawain's identity and his place within larger Arthurian traditions in *King Arthur: Hero and Legend* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> This special power is described in the *Stanzeic Morte Arthur*, lines 2802 ff., and Malory, Works, pp. 1216–17.

### The Gawain Romances

adventures, Gawain seems to have had northern, often Scottish, affinities; he is the son of King Lot of Lothian and Orkney, connecting him through this ancestry with Edinburgh in the heart of Midlothian and with the Northern Isles. These associations may explain why the popular English Gawain romances consistently and distinctively set their action near the northern city of Carlisle, close to the border with Scotland.<sup>4</sup> Whether the earliest oral traditions (now lost) constituted a separate cycle of stories, or whether they associated him with Arthur, the legendary British warlord who fought against continental Germanic invaders in the fifth century, is not clear. Written versions of Welsh tales, including "Calwch and Olwen," make Gwalchmai a companion of Arthur (the king's sister's son) and a figure equivalent to Gawain. Welsh translations of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *History of the Kings of Britain* (c. 1136) endorse this identity of Gwalchmai with Geoffrey's Walwanus, nephew of Arthur. Gawain's heroism had, by the early twelfth century, become increasingly well known; a sculpture (dated before 1109) at the Cathedral in Modena,

<sup>4</sup> For both medieval and modern writers, considerable ambiguity, overlap, and confusion surround Arthurian place names. Carlisle is specified as a setting for *Wedding*, *Carlisle*, *Aroveng Awynes*, *Greene Knighe*, *Marriage*, and *Castle*. *Lancelot of the Lake*, the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, Malory, and perhaps *Liberius Descomes* — all featuring Gawain's exploits, and linked with the popular romance tradition — are the only other Middle English romances to mention Carlisle. (*The Boy and the Maner*, a Percy Folio MS ballad, also locates Arthur's court at Carlisle; see Child, 1.257-274.) The remarkable geographical unity of the Middle English Gawain poems is discussed further below, pp. 29-33. In *Yvain* and *Pereceval*, Chrétien places Arthur's court at "Carduel at Gales" indicating Carlisle, but in accord with ancient tradition locating this in Wales; *Yvain* and *Gawain*, the Middle English version of *Yvain*, casts Arthur as "Kyng of Yngland," conqueror of Wales and Scotland, and sets the romance "At Kerdyf [Cardiff] that is in Wales" (line 17). Other French romances also place Arthur's court at Caerduff/Carlisle. The designation of Carlisle as the seat of Arthurian adventure in Middle English romances has sometimes been taken as a misnomer for, or corruption of, Caerleon-on-Usk, Monmouthshire (in the south of Wales, near the mouth of the Severn). Caerleon is prominently mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth (perhaps following Welsh oral traditions), and appears in both French romance and popular English tales, such as *Sir Laufaf*. On the one hand, William of Malmesbury's remarks about the hero's tomb, which he places in Pembrokeshire, west of Caerleon on the coast of Wales, provide a further Welsh linkage for Gawain; yet in the same passage he identifies Gawain as the "miles" (knight) who ruled in that part of Britain hitherto called "Walesha" (Galloway), confirming his northern, Scott affinity. (For this passage in William, see the following note.) Malory has Gawain buried "in a chappell within Dover castell . . . [where] yet all men may se the skulle of hym" (Works, 1232), and the sixteenth-century antiquary John Leland claimed to have seen Gawain's bones at Dover, and on this basis rejected the authenticity of the tomb in Pembrokeshire.

### *Introduction*

Italy, depicts Gawain undertaking a siege, together with Arthur and two other knights, and the historian William of Malmesbury (c. 1125) mentions Gawain in a way that assumes his learned readers' familiarity with this hero's adventures.<sup>7</sup> The transforming event in the literary history of Arthur and his knights, however, was the completion of *The History of the Kings of Britain* by the Welshman Geoffrey of Monmouth; in summarizing, synthesizing, and inventing a wide range of traditions, the *History* made available to learned and popular writers and their audiences the fundamental stories of the Round Table, in which Gawain figures prominently.<sup>8</sup> As the son of Arthur's sister (Morgause, or, in some accounts, Anna), he enjoys with the king the privileged relationship of mother's brother-sister's son (like Hygelac-Beowulf, or Charlemagne-Roland). Unlike Arthur, whose place at the center of things as the source of law and order sometimes makes him seem immobile — a *reif fowan* or do-nothing king — Gawain possesses the youthful freedom to take on strange adventures and exotic journeys, and can turn these exploits to his uncle's glory. In this crucial supporting role he stands in profound contrast to his dangerously restless brother Mordred (sister's son and biological son to the king through incest), who in many versions initiates an Oedipal, generational conflict that results in the downfall of the king, his father-uncle.

As knightly prowess, chivalric honor, and sexual love become central motifs in Arthurian narrative, Sir Gawain (Walwanus in Latin, Gasvain in French, with initial *G* and *W* sounds interchangeable in Middle English) becomes an increasingly favored hero. In the enormously influential and highly polished French romances of Chrétien de Troyes (late twelfth century), Gawain often serves as a companion and foil to the hero; his single-minded devotion to physical conquest, in combat and in love, makes him a less than ideal knight, in contrast to Perceval, Yvain, or even

<sup>7</sup> For the Modena archive, see *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. S. Loomis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 60–62. In his remarks on Arthur and on Gawain's fourteen-foot long tomb by the seashore in Pembrokeshire in Wales, William of Malmesbury takes for granted his readers' interest in (and knowledge of) Gawain. William provocatively describes Gawain as occupying the undegenerate ("nauid degener") relation to Arthur of mother's brother-sister's son, and as sharing properly in his uncle's fame, clearly indicating that by the early twelfth century the nephew was already a celebrity in his own right. See *De Rebus Gestis Regum Anglorum*, Book 3, section 287, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series no. 90, vol. 2 (London, 1889), p. 342.

<sup>8</sup> For Geoffrey of Monmouth's portrayal of Gawain, see *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth: I: A Single Manuscript Edition from Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 568*, ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1984), pp. 144 ff., and *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1966), pp. 221 ff.

### *The Gawain Romances*

Lancelot. In later French medieval narratives, his character varies from comic inadequacy to moral imperfection (as in the *Queste del Saint Graal*) to complicity in the downfall of the Round Table, to outright villainy.<sup>9</sup> Sir Gawain's character in other medieval vernaculars was generally more favorable than in the French Arthurian romances that were their source. In German stories, for example, he plays a mixed role, and in romances from the Netherlands he enjoys an almost entirely positive portrayal.

Only in the popular romances in English, however, does a genuine cult of Sir Gawain emerge, making him the unsurpassed flower of chivalry. Like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, these poems celebrate Arthurian chivalry in its glorious, even reckless youth, and the vigorous exploits of Sir Gawain offer only an occasional glimpse of the eventual downfall of the Round Table. Gawain's singular renown in these popular narratives — often drawn from traditional tales and oral stories, either with no known sources or with only a distant relation to a literary text — contrasts with the relatively minor role he plays in the two Gawain romances based directly upon French originals, both dating from the earlier fourteenth century. *Ywain and Gawayne* condenses Gawain's role from Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, leaving him less active both as a partisan of chivalry and as an obstacle to true love; *Libessac Desconys* casts Gawain as the absent father and sometime instructor of Gingelein, "The Fair Unknown." The only other notable appearance of Sir Gawain in medieval English romance occurs in the three sustained chronicles of Arthur's death: the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, and Malory's prose *Morte D'Arthur* (which makes use of the two poems). Gawain's character parallels the later French tradition; though his courtesy and prowess remain prominent, he ap-

<sup>9</sup> Gawain's reputation in French romance as lover and sometime rake may account for his otherwise odd appearance as the hero of an academic satire in Latin verse, "On Not Taking a Wife" (before 1250). Here Gawain, planning marriage, has the spirits of three clerks attempt to dissuade him; they draw their arguments from biblical and classical exempla and from Latin misogynist writings, though their focus is not the virtues of celibacy but the disastrous results of secular marriage. The choice of Gawain as protagonist seems therefore something of a scholar's inside joke, though his role here suggests just how extensive his reputation was, reaching even to the precincts of learning. The poem survives in more than fifty manuscripts, and there are adaptations in French and Middle English. See A. G. Rigg, *Gawain on Marriage: The Textual Tradition of the "De Coniuge Non Duocanda"* with Critical Edition and Translation, *Texts and Studies*, 79 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986). The most comprehensive study of Gawain's role in Old French literature (with much attention to texts in other languages as well) is Keith Busby, *Gawain in Old French Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980).

## *Introduction*

pears as frequently truculent, vindictive, and reckless, and takes a central part in the tragedy of the Round Table.

For the last one hundred and fifty years readers have come to know the medieval Sir Gawain through *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. This fourteenth-century alliterative poem (roughly contemporary with *A-wstyrr*, the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, and the *Stanzeic Morte Arthur*) presents the most elegant and subtle portrait of his chivalric courtesy and valor. Although the composer possessed extensive knowledge of Arthurian story, he only hints at the downfall of the fellowship. In this, he follows the almost unswervingly favorable view taken in the popular *Gawain* romances, which by far surpass in number those on any other Arthurian (or non-Arthurian) hero, and all of which are collected in this volume.<sup>20</sup>

### *Romance and Chivalry*

The Middle English word *knight* derives from Old English *cniht*, a noun with a broad and variable range of meaning, including boy, servant, attendant, warrior. The abstract noun *knighthood* did not exist in Old English, for the social role and the code of values it describes did not come into being until the High Middle Ages (after the year 1000). *Knighthood* is the English equivalent for the French *chivalrie*, which in its primary sense meant a troop of mounted warriors; through the use of stirrups, swords, and lances, these fighters on horseback had awesomely increased the level of damage a warrior might inflict, and conferred upon knights as a group undisputed preeminence among the secular, land-holding aristocracy. But more and more, *chivalrie* came to mean the ideals — self-consciously proclaimed, but acknowledged by other classes in society as well — that gave a *chevalier* or knight his identity.<sup>21</sup> *Knighthood* did not just entail prowess or success as a fighter (mainly this was required, but sometimes not); it demanded as well the distinctive and deliberate

<sup>20</sup> I here follow the division already set out in the introduction, which separates the "popular" romances (gathered here) from those with a pronounced literary character or a notable textual source — namely, *Tweiss and Gwain*, *Libeaus Desconus*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* — as well as the chronicle narratives — *Layamon*, the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, the *Stanzeic Morte Arthur*, and *Malory*. In all of these but *Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Gawain* plays roles of varying but subsidiary importance.

<sup>21</sup> On the historical development of knighthood, see the essays collected in Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (1977; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), and Maurice Keen's *Chivalry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).

### *The Gawain Romances*

identification with a code that virtually all members of society endorsed as a source of privilege. So powerfully did the moral and social authority of this role enhance the identity of the secular aristocracy that by the later Middle Ages even kings and emperors considered themselves first of all knights.

Chivalry (or knighthood) therefore emerged as a code when those who already possessed power claimed this identity for themselves as proper, desirable, and exclusive. Though the first documents to mention knights ("milites," the Roman word for soldiers) occur in Latin, the official language of the Church, knighthood is clearly a secular or lay aristocratic form of life. The deeds of famous knights seem first to have been memorialized in vernacular oral poetry, like *The Song of Roland*, and great lords and noble fighters must have supported composers and singers who celebrated a warrior ethos in their own tongue before their own entourage. In this way, chivalry worked to define group consciousness, and so consisted not simply in great deeds but in their communal preservation. But chivalry as an identity possessed exclusively by members of a specific class is a social and historical impossibility, for any group's identity depends upon its place in a larger society where those outside validate its existence by acknowledging — adopting, or even rejecting — its distinctive values. The earliest literary versions of chivalry in themselves demonstrate that the leap had already taken place from oral, memorial poetry, celebrating a hero among his own group, to a culturally endorsed chivalry, presenting a hero whom an entire society, with its different estates and diverse interests, might celebrate as its ideal representative.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The question of precisely whose ideals or interests chivalric literature serves, whether asked openly or ignored, shadows every discussion of knightly romance, and admits no simple answer. Kings and powerful knights obviously perceived the value of romance and pageantry as a kind of "top-down" propaganda for their privileged political and economic position, as the proclamation of Edward III (see note 16, below) reveals, and one might therefore accurately claim that such tales were "popular" among this elite class because they maintained its hegemonic position. Yet the romances merit the label "popular" in the more common sense in that many (like *Ragnelle* and *Cardair*) indisputably originate, become embellished and revised, and circulate among "the people," that is, broad and diverse audiences of various classes with overlapping and often conflicting interests. Moreover, as I suggest below (pp. 19–23), far from simply reproducing the values of the reigning culture, the romances open a space for satire or resistance in relation to elite values. Crucial questions concerning the nature of "popular" culture in the Middle Ages — about the social make-up of the audiences for medieval texts, the processes and effects of consuming romance, the overlaps of oral and literate, the determinants of taste for varying groups — have received relatively little extended historical analysis from critics and scholars. See Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudtow, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, ed. Mukerji and

## Introduction

From its earliest historical origins, those concerned with chivalry as a code, including knights themselves, thought of it as stemming from some ideal, and therefore prehistoric and unhistorical, golden age. These ancient roots sanctioned its existence and strengthened its prerogatives, but also made every chivalric deed no more than a pale imitation of some lost perfection. Even the earliest Arthurian writings feature this element of nostalgia, and so present chivalry as a normative fantasy. This idealizing tendency continues to shape late medieval aristocratic institutionalization of chivalry as a class code, through the establishment of national and international Orders of Knights with written statutes. This legendary and literary influence is especially clear in Britain, the land of Arthur. In the late thirteenth century, when King Edward I wished to increase his prestige and power as a national figure and military leader in his struggles with the Welsh, he associated himself with Arthur, and held a number of tournaments and feasts that made the Round Table a central feature.<sup>11</sup> His grandson, Edward III, proposed to formalize this connection between knighthood and the Arthurian ethos: in 1344, influenced by the modern establishment of Orders of Knights in France and Spain, he proposed to initiate an English Order based upon the model of King Arthur, a "refounding" of the Round Table. Though Edward eventually abandoned these explicit Arthurian parallels in founding the Order of the Garter (1349), the interplay between social reality and literary mythification continued throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern era, as the *Morte D'Arthur* and *Don Quixote*, for example, make clear.<sup>12</sup> The matter of Britain gave stirring articulation to the ideals of knighthood, and these idealizations in turn articulated for their audiences a sense of common

Schudaa (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991) for a recent and helpful overview; and on the *Gawain* romances in particular, see comments below, pp. 19 ff. and 27 ff.

<sup>11</sup> It was during one of these Round Tables, while his courtiers were masquerading as Arthurian knights, that a loathly lady appeared to demand deeds of chivalry; see the Introduction to *Ragvald*, and more particularly, R. S. Loomis, "Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast," *Speculum* 28 (1953), 114-27.

<sup>12</sup> For an account of the Order of the Garter, and its place within the ideals and politics of late medieval chivalry, see D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Late Medieval Europe, 1325-1520* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 96-166. Boulton does not mention Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, with its appropriation of the Garter motto at its conclusion, though whoever added the phrase, "Hors soy qui mal pense" (may he be shamed who evil thinks) certainly wished to associate chivalric romance with the codes and institutions of secular knighthood.

### *The Gawain Romances*

national interests and natural class divisions. In offering a vision of chivalry that is both timeless and nostalgic, the romances actively worked to mediate or veil the various conflicts embedded in such interests, at least for their most enthusiastic audiences. The motto at the end of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in this way invokes the historical Order of the Garter as at once a prototype and a product of the poem's chivalry, and its derivative, *The Greene Knight*, similarly provides a "history" for the post-medieval Order of the Knights of the Bath.<sup>12</sup>

The historical Orders of knighthood, together with other less formal structures, were attempts to organize and regulate the behavior of a particular group, but they warmly invited the interest and affirmation of other classes. Knights, starting with the king, recognized the power of knightly spectacle to produce chivalric sentiment in all audiences. Edward III, "remembering the deeds of the ancients, and considering how much the use and love of arms has exalted the name and glory of knightly men, and how much the royal throne would be strengthened and dissensions reduced," offered his endorsement of a tournament as a festivity beneficial for all members of society.<sup>13</sup> Knightly conduct and ritual thus entailed the staged celebration of chivalry, and the appeal of knighthood as spectacle clearly extended beyond the class of knights themselves. Popular romances, in substituting idealizations of knightly conduct for the conduct itself, may have had greater impact in creating and reinforcing chivalric sentiment (in particular, among non-chivalric audiences) than anything knights did for themselves. In this way, stories like those of Sir Gawain perform social and political functions, making identification with chivalric values possible for a much wider spectrum of the king's subjects than an elite Order or an actual tournament might ever affect.

### *The Popular Appeal of Chivalric Romance*

The dozen or more surviving Gawain romances form a unity not simply through their shared hero, but, perhaps even more, through their character as more popular than literary. As narratives, they manifest the features of romance in all its meanings: chivalry, Arthurian legend, prowess in combat, personal love, intrigues, encounters with the marvelous, and the decisive resolution of every seal or potential conflict. These tales celebrate the idealized chivalry of some distant Arthurian past, but in so

<sup>12</sup> See Introduction to *Greene Knight*, together with the note at line 502 of that poem, for discussion of its connection to the Order of the Bath.

<sup>13</sup> Rolls of Parliament 18 Edward III, p. 1, m. 44; I quote here the translation published in Boutton, *Knight of the Crown* (note 14, above), p. 199.

### *Introduction*

doing they inevitably enhance the stature and prerogative of late medieval knighthood — an elite, aristocratic, warrior and land-owning class that largely controlled social, political, and military life. Yet the poems themselves do not originate in that class. These romances were composed for broad consumption, perhaps sometimes for audiences including knights, perhaps sometimes for readers, but mainly for listeners in large, diverse, and mixed groups. The manuscripts (and the single printed edition) in which they occur were not produced for the great households: they are in no way deluxe, but at best serviceable, and sometimes downright shabby.<sup>17</sup> The survival of individual romances must often have been chancy, depending upon the impulse of an unusually literate and literary listener — like the post-medieval compiler of the *Percy Folio* — who, for whatever reason, wished a record of such popular entertainment. The texts themselves are marked for oral recitation, with cues for the audience and reciter and conventional rhyme schemes associated with minstrelsy and oral performance. The narratives unfold through traditional plots and reiterated motifs, glorify a popular hero whom everyone knew, and eventuate in happy endings which bring the characters within the story to terms with one another, and which reconcile the audience outside the story to the structures and ideals epitomized by a "chivalric" (or hierarchically ordered) society.

The volume of surviving material, and the number of allusions in every kind of writing, make plain that the legends of *Gawain's courtesy* were widely known. Yet the precise nature and extent of this popularity within specific social contexts has remained vague. Two pieces of evidence (not much commented upon in the context of these *Gawain* stories) help to clarify the environment in which popular chivalric romances flourished — how, when, and by whom they were composed, performed, listened to, read, and copied. In the later 1470s Sir John Paston commissioned an "Inventori off Englyshe bokis" from his own library.<sup>18</sup> These included religious

<sup>17</sup> One other exception — besides *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* — to the non-aristocratic context in which *Gawain's legend* prospers occurs in a heraldic roll with royal associations, which shows a figure labeled, "Sir Gwyn Mautravers," connecting this hero with the Mautravers family, whose leading members were prominently connected to Edward II and Edward III. See Gerard J. Brault, *Early Blazon: Heraldic Terminology in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries with Special Reference to Arthurian Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 43. See also the coats of arms attributed to *Gawain* in a fifteenth-century armorial album, referenced below in note 21.

<sup>18</sup> Sir John Paston of Norfolk (1442–79) is best known through the numerous letters he and other members of his family wrote. These have mainly to do with retaining and increasing the family holdings, and are usually considered as having little to do with, or as being diametrically opposed to, the world of chivalric romance. See, for example, the remarks of Larry D.

### The Gawain Romances

and devotional works, "a boke off nyw statutys from [King] Edward the iii," Christine de Pisan's *Epistle of Othea*, some treatises by Cicero, an impressive collection of Chaucer's writings, and various romances; among the latter were *Guy of Warwick*, *Kyng Richard Cure de Lyon* (i.e., "the Lionheart"), and *Guy and Colbronde* (perhaps in Lydgate's version). A series of volumes attests Paston's dedication to heraldry and chivalry: "myn olde boke off blasonyngs," "the newe boke portrayed and blasonyd," "a copy off blasonyngs off armys," "a boke wthyh armys portayed in paper" — altogether, an encyclopedia of coats of arms, which must have held urgent interest for the first member of a socially mobile family elevated to a knighthood.<sup>19</sup>

The list records as well "my boke off knyghtihod and therin . . . off making off knyghtyns, off justyns, off tornaments, off] fyghtyng in lytyn . . . and chalengys, statutys off weor [war]." For our purposes the crowning items in this collection are two other romances: the first title, "A boke . . . off the Deth off Arthur," and, in the third group, "the Greene Knyght." The appearance of a narrative on the "Deth off Arthur" in Paston's library is especially arresting since Malory composed his *Morte Darthur* less than a decade earlier (1469 or 1470), and Caxton published "thys noble and joyous book entytled le morte Darthur" only a few years after the compilation of this inventory, in 1485.<sup>20</sup> The pride of place awarded this volume within

Benson, Malory's "Morte Darthur" (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 137–201. For the inventory of books discussed here, see *Passion Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Norman Davis, Part I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 516–18. Madden, with his usual encyclopedic knowledge, makes a passing reference to this inventory in his note to the *Greene Knight* (p. 352). G. A. Lester has discussed the inventory, and provided valuable commentary and background, in "The Books of a Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman, Sir John Paston," *Neophilologische Monatsschriften* 58 (1987), 200–17.

<sup>19</sup> The most notable of these heraldic miscellanies has been described in great detail by G. A. Lester, *Sir John Paston's "Great Boke": A Descriptive Catalogue, with an Introduction, of British Library MS Lansdowne 285* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984). It contains, among many other items, a formulary (pp. 80–3) for creating Knights of the Bath (mentioned at the end of *Greene Knight*), descriptions of armor, accounts of particular battles (historical and fictional), passages from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Histroy*, proclamations for tournaments, and so on. For a more fanciful armorial album, recording two coats of arms associated with Sir Gawain, see note 21 below.

<sup>20</sup> This is the title Caxton gives in his colophon, Works, p. 1260. The notation that Paston's *Deth off Arthur* has its "begyntyng at Cassab . . ." suggests that he owned some English version of the Arthurian story ultimately derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniarum*, which began with the conflicts between Julius Caesar and Cassivelaunus or Cassibelanus, King of the Britons — Shakespeare's Cymbeline — (section fifty three of the Latin

### *Introduction*

the inventory perhaps implies the special value or interest that Arthurian romance held for Sir John (though it's unlikely that he actually possessed the Winchester Manuscript or any other copy of Malory's prose romance). The "Greene Knighȝ" which Paston had collected is almost certainly a retelling of the greatest of all English Arthurian poems. Nonetheless, the romance mentioned here as a single, anthologized item in "a blak boke" was probably neither *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* nor the *Greene Knighȝ*, but another, intermediary version of this *Gawain* story, probably more literary than the poem published in the present volume. Its place within Paston's library shows that the story circulated more widely than scholars have usually allowed, and that it was preserved through the interests of readers whose disparate tastes might range from folk narratives to proto-humanist translations of Cicero.

As a reader, as owner, and thereby even a sponsor of popular Arthurian romance, Sir John Paston represents a telling segment of the audience for such stories. Paston was a member of an influential and wealthy family, and may have studied at Cambridge University. Though perhaps less dedicated to the acquisition of property than his father, his possession of state-of-the-art books and albums of armorial bearings reveals that his interest in knighthood was by no means anchored in fanciful romance.<sup>21</sup> His careful attention to the law and his jealous regard for his family

text). See *The Historia Regum Britanniarum*, pp. 46–58, and *The History of the Kings of Britain*, pp. 106–19 (full citations in note 8, above). Among the English translations that Paston might have owned was that made at the end of the twelfth century by Layamon, though there is otherwise little evidence that Layamon influenced other Arthurian writers, or even found occasional readers, after his own time. For Layamon's account of the struggle see *Layamon's Brut*, ed. G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, EHHS o.s. 290, 277 (London: 1963, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 214 ff. G. A. Lester has pointed out that the truncated spelling of Paston's inventory would also fit the *Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, that of Robert Manning, or the prose version of the *Brut*; see "The Books . . .," note 18, above, p. 203.

<sup>21</sup> The link between armorial bearings as the guarantor of identity, status, and entitlement to landed wealth and the celebration of arms in chivalric romance is apparent to some degree in Paston's own "Grete Boke" (see note 19, above). The mix of chivalric reality and fiction is much more striking and suggestive in the somewhat informal collection of "Auncient Coates" that occurs in British Library MS Harley 2169; here alongside recognizably historical and coronationist bearings appear the arms of the Nine Worthies, the Three Kings of Cologne, and other chivalric celebrities. Of greatest interest in the present context are the arms attributed to "Uter Pendragon," King Arthur, "Sir Lawncelot de Lake," and the two devices given to *Gawain*. The first of *Gawain*'s arms consists of a green field with three golden griffins passant (number 29); the second, in an arane field with three golden lions' heads (number 39). The

### *The Gawain Romances*

arms (and for those of others in power or on the move) show his energetic engagement with the harshly competitive life of the courts, both legal and royal. At the same time, life as a courtier made him a devotee of chivalry: in 1473 he had himself fitted for a complete suit of armor by the outfitter of the Bastard of Burgundy. Earlier, in 1467, he took part in a tournament at Eltham on the King's side (slightly injuring his hand), and later that year he made his own account of the jousting between Lord Scales and the Bastard of Burgundy. Paston's enthusiasm for popular chivalric romance seems then not to have been divorced from, but to have complemented his personal, familial, and public ambitions. In glorifying a fabulous Arthurian past, tales like Paston's "Greene Knyght" glorified the present as well, and their stylized, even fantasized ideals of knighthood simply reinforced his own sense of knightly identity and social order.<sup>22</sup>

A second private document, this one a description written some hundred years after Paston's inventory, supplies still more striking clues about the social processes that ensured the preservation and enjoyment of popular chivalric romances. Robert Lancham published *A Letter* describing "the entertainment" presented before Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle in 1575.<sup>23</sup> Among the festivities arranged by the Earl of Leicester — the central theme of which was King Arthur and the Table Round — was an "old storiall shew . . . expressed in actions and rymes," an historical and carnivalesque pageant which ends with English women taking the invading Danes captive. This was performed by players from neighboring Coventry, led by Captain Cox, a mason by day who seems also to have been a performance artist of sorts — "an od man I promis yoo . . . very cunning in sens, and hardy as Gawin," blustering about with his sword, acting, impersonating, singing, reciting, with "great

first device corresponds closely to descriptions in various of the *Gawain* romances; see for example Caxton, lines 55 ff. A description of the arms in Harley 2169, together with rough facsimiles, is provided in *The Arctosur* 3 (1902), 185–213; see especially numbers 27–49.

<sup>22</sup> Benson (note 18, above) provides a stimulating and informative discussion of the contexts of late medieval chivalric romance in *Malory's "Morte Darthur,"* pp. 137–201.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Lancham, *A Letter: Wherin part of the entertainment unto the Queene Maistry . . . [1575]*, ed. R. C. Alston (Merton, UK: Scotor, 1968). The description of the festivities and Captain Cox occurs on pp. 34–36 of this facsimile edition; I have imposed modern conventions of orthography, capitalization, and word division in my quotations of the *Letter*. The Captain's reputation as a performer was sufficiently extensive for Ben Jonson to mention him and "his Hobbyhorse" in his *Masque of Owls* (1624); in his novel *Kenilworth* (1821), Sir Walter Scott gives an account of the festivities. Madden also notes Lancham's mention of *Gawain* in his *Letter*, and takes this as a reference to *Jesse* (p. 349).

### *Introduction*

oversight . . . in matters of storie." Lanham's unthinking comparison of the Captain to Gawain asserts that his popularity as the proverbial epitome of noble English manhood continued from Chaucer's time through Shakespeare's.<sup>21</sup>

So impressed was Lanham that he devoted several pages of his letter to the Captain's repertoire. These included an enormous "busch of ballets [ballads] and songs all auncient," which Lanham records by their familiar first lines; "a hundred more [which] he hath fair wrapt up in Parchment and bound with a whicoord"; traditional tales like "Robin Hood," "Adam Bel," "Clim of the Clough," "The King and the Tanner," "The Sergeant that became a Fryar," "Skogas," and "The Nat-brocoun Maid"; more current stories such as "Gargantua," "Collyn Cloost," "The Sheperds Kalender," and "The Ship of Fools"; and matters of "Philosophy both morall and naturall." The Captain could also draw upon a huge store of medieval chivalric romances — "Bevys of Hampton," "The Squire of Lo Deger," "Syr Eglamoour," "Sir Tryamoour," "Syr Isenbras" — and he seems to have had particular knowledge of Arthurian narratives, namely "King Arthurs book" and "Syr Gawayn."<sup>22</sup> Although J. C. Holt has assumed that the last named romance was *Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight*, it seems quite unlikely that a performance artist like Captain Cox would have access to, or any interest in, so highly literate a text.<sup>23</sup> On

<sup>21</sup> Lanham's descriptive phrase was surely proverbial. Though B. J. Whiting, *Proverbs and Proverbial Sentences . . .* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968) gives no instances, passing references to Gawain's reputation for hardihood occur in "The Thrush and the Nightingale," *Sir Degrevant*, *The Squire of Lo Deger*, and *Squire Meldrum*. See also the list of some one hundred thirty-five Arthurian allusions in non-Arthurian texts compiled by Christopher Dean, *Arthur of England* (full citation, below, note 26), pp. 130–56. The number and character of these allusions suggest that Gawain's proverbial stature may have been greater outside the literate tradition, within popular oral discourse.

<sup>22</sup> One striking title in the Captain's repertoire was "The Knight of Courtesy and the Lady Fagwell" — not a version of *Gawain and Ragnell*, but a sentimental romance that survives in an Elizabethan print; see *The Knight of Courtesy and the Fair Lady of Fagwell*, ed. Elizabeth McCausland, Smith College Studies in Modern Languages (Northampton, Massachusetts: Smith College, n.d. [1922]).

<sup>23</sup> J. C. Holt, *Robin Hood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), p. 140 and note 12. Madden (p. 349) also noted this reference, concluding "It is no doubt this romance [the *Ancrene of Syr Gawayne*, edited below, and not *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*] which is alluded to . . ." Christopher Dean, *Arthur of England: English Attitudes to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), who mentions Cox, also assumes this is the *Ancrene*. For further bibliographical information on *Ancrene*, see the introduction to that romance.

### *The Gawain Romances*

the other hand, the skills and repertoire of the Captain and the mixed character of his audience — aristocratic, urban, and rural, consisting of women and men from the Queen to commoners — might well be taken as a heightened rendition of the diverse social environments in which *Gawain* romances like those in the present volume would thrive.

Lancham presents the Captain as capable of reciting not only romances like "Syr *Gawyn*," but "many moe [tales] then I rehears heere: I believe bee have them all at his fingers ends." Lancham refers to the bundle of written ballads that Cox carries, to the "omberly [abundance] of his books," and to his having "as fair a library for . . . sciences" as foreign competitors like "Nostradam of Fressus." On their face, these remarks seem to imply that Cox's performances were scripted and textual (though in the latter comments Lancham may have meant the abundance of titles in the "library" that Cox could reproduce memorially, "at his fingers ends"). Nonetheless, it is clear that what most impressed Lancham was the Captain's resources as an oral performer who could spontaneously produce "many goodly monumeants both in prose and poetry and at afternoons can talk as much without book, as ony Inholder [inn keeper] betwixt Brailford and Bagshot, what degree soever he be."<sup>17</sup> The surviving copies of *Gawain* romances collected in this volume for the most part reflect

<sup>17</sup> William Matthews some time ago pointed out the features of orality — archaic diction, formulaic phrasing, alliterative linking, and so on — in the "sollem song" of an "auncient minstrele" of Islington, whose performance during the royal entertainment at Kenilworth in 1575, like that of Captain Cox, was described in Lancham's *Letter* (pp. 46–56; see above, note 23, for citation). His recital of "King Arthurz acts" was apparently based upon the published text of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, though whether he had read it for himself or heard it read is unspecified. His performance in any case unmistakably involved improvisation, and Matthews shrewdly adduced this as evidence that traditional techniques and materials (which may or may not have been written down) remained vital through the end of the sixteenth century. What is striking above all is the mixed character of the event — at once literate and oral, modern and traditional, reflecting French verse forms and native poetic practice, a popular improvisation yet part of a royal command performance. The avid interest — Lancham was a London merchant and courtier — attracted by Arthurian narrative in this mixed form perhaps offers a model for the kinds of responses medieval chivalric romances excited; in particular, it points to the diversity of audiences and occasions, and the range of feelings, from unselfconscious glee to patronizing sneeziness, that listeners might experience. See Matthews, "Alliterative Song of an Elizabethan Minstrel," *Research Studies* 32 (1964), 134–46.

### Introduction

just such a combined oral-literate context of performance.<sup>20</sup> The missing lines, gaps in the narratives, and the well-used (not to say dilapidated) quality of the manuscripts suggest that reciters must have carried them about — perhaps “bound with a whipcord” — and worked from them, beginning at the time of their composition and circulation in the fourteenth century, through the time of Captain Cox, and at least until the compiling of the Percy Folio Manuscript in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup> And Laseham’s elaborate tribute makes clear that for the occasional literate

<sup>20</sup> See Derek Pearsall, “Middle English Romance and its Audiences,” *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Early Modern English for Johan Gerritsen*, ed. Mary-Jo Aern and Hanneke Wijtjes with Hans Jansen (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, n.d. [?1985]), pp. 37–47, whose summary remarks on oral and literate preservation, on “re-composition” and improvisation in performance, and the “range of possible audiences” complement the presentation I offer here. In “The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript,” *Spectulum* 66 (1991), 43–73, Andrew Taylor offers a careful review of surviving manuscript evidence for popular performance, emphasizing the interdependence of oral and written, official and unofficial cultural elements. Taylor does not consider the mixed nature of the Buntington minstrel’s performance of Arthurian romance (see Matthews’ essay cited in the previous note), or the odd example of such mixed literate-oral material printed by Russell Hope Robbins, “A *Gawain* Epigone,” *Modern Language Notes* 58 (1943), 361–66; this comprises a fifty-three line fragment in garbled alliterative verse, apparently composed by Humphrey Newton. The formulaic phrasing seems repeatedly to imitate lines in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (with parallels as well in *Awenydd* and *Gologros* not noted by Robbins); it is not clear whether this is a purely literary extension or a feeble record of some performance, but the deployment of alliterative linking is so mechanical and haphazard that the fragment seems completely incoherent.

<sup>21</sup> While I emphasize in this account the performance tradition that gave continuing life to the medieval chivalric romances, the sixteenth century also produced a significant number of printed romances that circulated among readers. Beginning with the materials produced by Caxton and his successors noted above, a string of knightly narratives issued from the presses, though relatively few were Arthurian. The two surviving fragments of the *Leiste*, together with a license to issue another edition of the poem (dating from about 1529 to 1559), seem to be the only publication of verse romances; see the introduction to *Leiste* in this volume for a full account. Maiory’s prose *Morte Darthur* was issued a number of times during the century, and a prose *History of . . . Arthur of lyvill Brynnyse*, translated by Lord Berners, appeared sometime before 1566. See Ronald S. Crane, *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance During the English Renaissance* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta, 1919), who lists all editions chronologically. Dean, *Arthur of England* (note 24, above), offers a selective overview.

### *The Gawain Romances*

listener like himself, as well as for large audiences from all ranks and areas, their appeal remained undiminished into the lifetime of Shakespeare.<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, evidence that this appeal was not universal, that popular romance might be openly resisted, especially by those identified with high, literate, or official culture, survives in reactions from a variety of sources. Already in the mid-fourteenth century Robert Mannyng complained that "disours," "seggers," and "harpours" — reciters, story-tellers, minstrels, performance artists all — distorted some presumed authentic or original text ("But I here it no man so say / That of som copple some is away" [I never hear a performer speak, except that some part is missing]).<sup>21</sup> The *Speculum virae*, versified instruction intended for oral presentation to (presumably non-literate) laity, starts out,

I warne yow first at the beginnyng,  
I wil make no vayn spekyng  
Of dedis of armes ne of armours,  
As done mynscreis and gestours,  
That makyn spekyng in many place  
Of Octayneas and Iambrace,  
And of many other gestis,  
And namely when thei come to Iesu —  
Ne of the tyme of Bevis of Hamois  
That was a knyght of grete rescoun  
Ne of Oy of Warwick . . .<sup>22</sup>

Yet one manuscript of the *Speculum*, apparently intended for the urban bourgeoisie, contains as well (together with other tales) complete copies of *Octavian*, *Beves*, and

<sup>20</sup> The preservation and lively performance of chivalric romances among urban working people — Captain Cox was "by profession a Mason, and that right skilfull" — recalls Shakespeare's cast of performers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Coventry and Kenilworth are not far distant from Stratford-upon-Avon, and Cox was likely only one of the more notable of workers who could perform even classical stories, like "Virgil's Life" or "Lucres and Euripides."

<sup>21</sup> *The Story of England* by Robert Mannyng, ed. F. J. Furnivall, Rolls Series 34 (London: 1887), lines 101-02. Mannyng wrote his *Chronicle* in 1338.

<sup>22</sup> See Cambridge University Library Manuscript Ff. 2.38, ed. Frances McSparran and P. R. Robinson (London: Scolar Press, 1979). For discussion of the context of the shared and conflicted interests of popular religion and popular romance, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 69-71.

### *Introduction*

Guy, the very chivalric romances denounced in this prologue. Clerical disdain found a counterpart in the literary scorn of popular narratives of knighthood that occurs in self-consciously artistic writers like Chaucer. "Sir Thopas," Chaucer's parodic narrative "Of bataille and of chivalry, And of ladyes love-drury [passios]," takes specific aim at the further layer of contradiction that "bourgeois" or "urban" brings to the already paradoxical genre of popular chivalric romance. Thopas, the improbable "fleur [flower] / Of roial chivalry" shares his pedigree with other heroes of "romances of prys [great worth]," including "Hoyn Child," "Ypotys," "Beves," "Sir Gy," "Sir Lybeux," and "Pleydalanour." Satires like Chaucer's did not, however, discourage collectors like Sir John Paston from acquiring copies of *Guy of Warwyk*, *Guy and Colbronde*, and *Chylde Ypovir*; moreover, Caxton and his successors mass-produced such romances as *Beves*, *Eglamour*, *Guy*, *Ynglyndre*, and *Tryamour* (as well as Malory's prose chronicle of Arthur), and a centuary after Caxton, Captain Cox still featured these chivalric tales in his repertoire of performances.<sup>13</sup> The scorn and satire that constitute a rejection of popular chivalric romance certainly did not end their vogue, and in themselves may be taken as a proof and tribute to their continuing power over audiences.

Evidence that Gawain romances were much enjoyed in the late Middle Ages is abundant in the extensive allusions to his knightly courtesy, in the multiple production of copies (for *Aventys* and *Golograv*), and in the multiple versions and retellings that survive (*Greene Knight*, *Marriage*, and *Carle* all reprise earlier medieval romances, and the other renditions of *Ragnell* together with the ballad-style narratives of *Turke* and *Cornwall* prove the wide circulation of these stories). Moreover, the worn state of several of the manuscripts that contain single surviving copies of these poems suggests that they were literally read to death, perhaps often before live

<sup>13</sup> Among all the verse romances printed by Caxton and his immediate successors for English readers, none are Arthurian. (Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, though it appropriates at least two English verse romances — the alliterative and statuary poems on the death of Arthur — is in prose.) Likewise, none of the poems satirized by Chaucer or dismissed in the *Speculum virie* has Arthurian connections. The Gawain romances, and other popular Arthurian tales, seem therefore to have held sway mainly outside the world of print, and beyond the notice of literate and official culture (whether because more admired or beneath contempt seems unclear). Except for the print of *Golograv* and *Gawain*, and the two surviving fragments of *Ancre*, all of the Gawain romances — including those in multiple copies and multiple versions — survive in manuscript copies only.

### *The Gawain Romances*

audiences.<sup>14</sup> But however broad their appreciation, can chivalric romances ever be taken as in any sense the literature of the people? Must we regard the celebration of knighthood as an imposition of the dominant culture, by which those largely outside political power are brought to celebrate secular society's most potent institution, and its symbol of the unequal division of estates or classes? When Captain Cox (or any one of his nameless predecessors) performed his "Sir Gawyn" before the Queen, a great lord, or even the Lord Mayor of Coventry, was he reinforcing the position of an elite class over him, or was he giving shape to an identity he as a stone mason shared with other workers, who must have constituted his chief audience?<sup>15</sup>

Such questions point to the elusive character of "popular" culture, and the difficulties that stand in the way of defining it in terms of the historical interests or lived experience of any distinct or exclusive social group or class. The censure of chivalric romance in high literary writing (Chaucer), popular burlesque (*The Tournament of Tornesham*), or ecclesiastical chastisement presents an emphatically negative view of popular culture; these imply that only the most simple and undemanding audience could sit through the exaggerations, absurdities, and contradictions of these tales, thereby making "popular" equivalent to ignorant or just plain bad. Yet the persistence of hostility towards chivalric romances from various quarters in itself proves that popular culture did not simply and irresistibly reproduce the values of a dominant order for mindless reception by a passive audience. Some medieval people — especially those in official positions, and those committed to refined or elite literacy — reacted to these tales as potentially subversive, and this

<sup>14</sup> For histories of medieval romance, and the place of chivalric romance in that larger context, see the individual books listed in the Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited by Barron, Mehl, Ramsey, Richardson, and Wittig.

<sup>15</sup> Questions surrounding romance as a literary genre, the nature of popular writing, and its relation to the reigning values of a society have been considered in a number of publications, none of which directly address medieval chivalric romance. These include Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Colin MacCabe, "Defining Popular Culture," *High Theory / Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, ed. MacCabe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 1–10; and Bob Ashley, *The Study of Popular Fiction: A Source Book* (London and Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), which contains a number of classic analytical essays, with introductions and bibliographies.

### *Introduction*

rejection marks out one space for resistant or alternative readings and responses.<sup>24</sup> Modern readers have often followed this negative assessment of popular culture in their own reaction to the romances. A recent translator of the *Gawain* stories, for example, remarks that they are "primitive," "rustic," and "crude," though at times "charming" or "touching."<sup>25</sup> This critical perspective, in making the romances out to be failed attempts at psychological realism, too easily dismisses the potential in these narratives for laughter and disruption. The mixed character of the romances, their open disavowal of literary credibility in favor of the fantastic, their frequent comic tone and resort to extravagance and hyperbole, all have the effect of highlighting the absurdities, inequalities, and contradictions of a feudal order or chivalric ideals, even as they are idealized or celebrated. These seemingly naive and artless Arthurian stories, in giving pleasure and simple assurance to listeners at diverse social levels, exploit the paradoxical impulses that motivate the adventures of a bourgeois knight or a barger king, and in doing so they foreshadow the ultimate satire of this typically medieval hybrid, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

A fuller appreciation of the *Gawain* romances' popularity requires, then, a more vivid sense of the pleasure they gave to their sponsoring audiences. Though they may have appeared lacking in sophistication to committed readers of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the broad support for these stories among late medieval people reflects a deep enjoyment in listening or reading as

<sup>24</sup> Reactions to the romances as worthless or potentially damaging to one's character or soul come mainly from those associated with literacy — church officials, "serious" writers — rather than from the secular nobility. As Sir John Paston's literary interests imply, everyone within the gentry, from local knights to the royal household, enjoyed chivalric tales, and kings (and their image-makers) continued to see the useful connections between Arthurian legend and monarchical prestige throughout the late Middle Ages. In addition to the comments on the Arthurian interests of Edward I and Edward III above, which make clear the uses of chivalric pageantry in consolidating the interests of a dominant group and in naturalizing estate or class differences as a feature of cohesive national identity, see David Carlson, "King Arthur and Court Poems for the Birth of Arthur Tudor in 1486," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 36 (1987), 147–83.

<sup>25</sup> See Valerie Krajcik, *Five Middle English Arthurian Romances* (New York: Garland, 1991), pp. 24–26 (on *Carlisle*); though elsewhere in the introduction the point is made that these romances require appropriate standards for a proper appreciation, these remarks are on the whole representative. Similar assessments occur in the summary accounts of these tales in standard literary histories and in the *Manual of the Writings in Middle English* (see Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited).

### *The Gawain Romances*

a social (rather than solitary) event.<sup>28</sup> The circumstances of public performance make "audience" itself perhaps too confining a term, since listeners must have taken some active part in such readings (as implied by the frequent injunctions that the audience behave), or become storytellers in their own right on other occasions. Performance artists must have given boisterous and flamboyantly histrionic recitals, impersonating roles through change of voice and gesture, playing the melodramatic sentimentality and violence to the utmost, priming and inciting their listeners' responses to the wondrous (and perhaps even more, to the incredible) elements in their plots. Chivalric romances achieved popularity by combining the narrative obviousness of a television sit-com with the ambience of a professional wrestling match. Having to read these romances, rather than hear and watch them performed, makes their participatory spontaneity difficult for modern audiences to relish, all the more so because they are in Middle English. Yet it was clearly as popular performance art, with strong elements of mimicry and burlesque, that they initially brought pleasure to the majority of their earliest listeners.<sup>29</sup>

The performance-oriented character of these romances emerges also in their narrative technique and narrative content. Self-conscious writers considered the apparently simple meter of tail-rhyme and alliterative narratives to be chief among their literary offenses; Chaucer has his Host declare the romance of Thopas "tym dogeref" and "drasty ryming . . . nat worth a toord," and his Parson refuses to

<sup>28</sup> The popular, or at least non-literary, character of the romances in the present volume appears strikingly in their complete lack of allusion to any other literary text. Though occasionally a poem refers to another Arthurian character or story, these narratives never demand, or even assume, that an imagined audience be prepared to make the textual associations that Chaucer, for example, assumed his readers would enjoy, and indeed would need to see any value in his writing. Even Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, which for all its length makes no reference to a non-Arthurian text, is more literary than these romances simply because Malory created it in writing out of an encyclopedic array of French books (together with a handful of English poems).

<sup>29</sup> *Awynes* and *Gologrus* in many respects constitute exceptions to the general remarks made here about the popular character of the Gawain romances. As their individual introductions make clear, both seem to have been produced by a self-conscious and literate composer, working from a written source, who made the fullest use of alliteration and formulas traditionally associated with native poetic traditions. Both poems enjoyed popularity in being reproduced in multiple copies — four manuscript versions of *Awynes* survive, and *Gologrus* was one of the first Gawain romances in print — but the exceptional artificiality of their meter, verse forms, and descriptive detail separate them from the unchecked narrative movement of the other poems in this volume.

### *Introduction*

"geeste 'rum, ram, raf' by lettre" — that is, to use the linking alliterative formulas of chivalric gests or tales. But partisans of popular romance did not seek the novelty of plot, individualized character, verbal ambiguities, subtle allusion, or variation in theme and image so dear to Chaucer. Like those who attend live musical concerts, they expected to hear lyrics they already knew, performed to a memorable beat that allowed them to vocalize along with the performer. Anyone who has attended a sporting event easily understands the power of rhythmic clapping, whether initiated by the crowd, the scoreboard, or the piped-in music of Queen ("We will, we will, rock you"). It was just this kind of participatory and moving experience that made the reading event so enjoyable for the audiences of chivalric romances, and made the romances so disreputable with the keepers of high culture.

The power of such simple tactics remains obvious if one reads aloud the dense and richly echoic alliterative verse of *Awysys* or *Gologus*. There are elements of such alliteration in *Avowing* as well as in some of the other romances, and a live performance (even by a solitary modern reader) softens the imputation of doggerel in the tail-rhyme romances as well. The strong beat that underlies the narrative and activates the audience is a striking residue of the orality that marks medieval (and later) popular culture. The performer's calls for order and participatory attention, the cues offered at narrative shifts or to control audience response, the relentless emphasis on surface description of clothing, accessories, armor, weapons, and other details demonstrate the public and social nature of these poems' reception. Just as the words of these tales try to present a vivid picture to listeners who can't review the text, so the words in the tales emphasize the importance of seeing and being seen; the array of synonyms for face, look, demeanor, appearance (which cannot be matched in the modern English glosses) helps convey the importance of direct contact and public self-presentation in the honor/shame culture of knighthood that the romances purport to describe. In the fiction as in its performance, identity abides in what one is seen to be or heard to say. What characters do or wear must be "hal clere" to all, and they must speak "on highe" so that all can hear, and so these frequently repeated phrases are hardly fillers; instead, they define the communal acknowledgment necessary for any action to have meaning or worth. The privileged role of spectacle within orality attaches as well to the rituals of combat, honor, and courtesy enacted by Sir Gwain and the other knights. In a chivalric context, all speech and gesture (including, for example, laughter) require a proper form and an immediate response, or insult follows; knightly conduct therefore resembles the closed code of military speech, where each act demands a prescribed response, and only the unchivalric — Sir Kay, the Carle, Ragselle — dare to overstep its limits, or speak out of turn.

## *The Gawain Romances*

### *The Gawain Romances and Tales as a Group*

In drawing together all but a few of the romances that feature Sir Gawain, the present volume to some degree assumes that the force of the hero's character is sufficient to overshadow the differences in texts produced over the course of several hundred years. This anthology omits the three earliest Gawain romances in Middle English, *Libeaus Desconys* (before 1350), *Ywain and Gwain* (before 1350), and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (about 1375). All of these have impressive literary pedigrees and an ease of accessibility for the modern reader that separates them from most of the other Gawain tales. Yet even among the "popular" poems published here there are striking degrees of difference in literariness: in particular, *Aenys* and *Golograth* depend directly on literary sources, manifest intensely self-conscious artifice, and push traditional, oral poetic forms to the point of hyper-development. Nonetheless, these two poems share in the popularity of their hero, for *Aenys* survives in four copies (an exceptional number for a romance) and *Golograth* was among the first printed books from the Scottish press.

Gawain does, then, represent the central presence in these romances. It is crucial to note, however, that he holds these narratives together not through some novelistic sense of "character," as a unique and consistent personality with individualized traits, complexly drawn motives, or psychologized feelings. Instead, Gawain plays a role; he routinely facilitates the extravagant adventures that happen around him, and does so to such an extent that one might even think of him almost as a narrative function. The romances emphatically mark out, in social as well as narrative terms, just what this role encompasses: Gawain is a generation removed from the father-figure of the king, to whom he stands in the crucial relation of mother's brother-sister's son. Gawain shares this slot in the social order with his brothers, Aggravayne and the illegitimate Mordred, but he is clearly the "good son"; despite his exuberance and superior physical prowess, he is unwilling to challenge the fatherly authority of the king. Gawain's courtesy, in both martial and domestic situations, in this way makes him the chief mediator of the father's law, the young man who offers the ultimate reassurance about the status quo in demonstrating the suppleness and strength of the rules governing the social order.

As the exemplary Young Man, Gawain remains unfettered by trammels of authority, the need to think hard about the future or make decisions of political consequence; he is on the loose, constantly ready for adventure. Over and over, Gawain proves the worth of familiar values by facing the marvelous or unknown, and rendering it manageable for the rest of his society. But his preeminence does not simply consist in unhesitating courage or unparalleled ability. Again it is Gawain's courtesy — perfect composure in moments of crisis — that endows him with heroic

### *Introduction*

stature. Repeatedly, Gawain exhibits a willing restraint of available force or a refusal of the authority of position, which separates him from non-chivalrous opponents and also from the arbitrary bullying or domineering impertinence of Sir Kay. Each courteous conquest stages the general triumph of civility, ensuring that the rituals that organize social meaning prevail in spite of confusion or even threat to life. Gawain's exceptional performance of the precepts that bind everyday social existence thus conveys a stirring endorsement of the rightness of things as they are. Moreover, his courtesy makes his conquests all the more complete, for they entail not annihilation or brute suppression, but the ungrudging concession of Gawain's superiority by some previously hostile or unknown Other. Gawain's role in the romances works therefore to effect the reconciliation or reappropriation, rather than the destruction, of the strange or alien, and this happy resolution in turn secures the audience's identification with the hero, and with the naturalness of the social order he represents.

The two other characters who figure prominently in the Gawain romances are King Arthur and Sir Kay, Arthur's Steward. As the great king, Arthur establishes Gawain's heroic stature and authorizes what might otherwise seem capricious escapades as knightly quests. Yet in playing this background role to reckless adventure, Arthur seems sometimes less than dynamic and often ambiguous. If he remains apart from the action, he appears either inessential (as in *Carlisle* or *Jeante*) or bordering on the ineffectual and ludicrous (as in *Ragnelle* and *Marriage*). If he joins in the action, he runs the risk of appearing silly or "childgered" (as in *Arnewyng*) or tyrannical (as in *Gologras* and perhaps in *Aventyrz*).<sup>4</sup> His most kingly function is to appear in finales, confirming Gawain's successes and presiding over the reconciliation of conflict. Sir Kay cuts a still more ambiguous figure: he appears ambivalently aligned to both the older generation of King Arthur, and the reckless younger generation of Gawain, and is made to embody the worst tendencies of both. As Steward, he attempts to exploit the aristocratic privilege conferred through birth and position; he serves as Gawain's foil, trampling on courtesy and showing an arbitrary, impotent crabbedness to all he encounters. Kay lurches through each episode as an image of nobility out of control and in danger of self-destructing, as a character he is saved by unfailingly (and hilariously) receiving the concupiscence he so richly deserves, and by this same device the romances create a vision of chivalry as governed (and governing) through a rough but humane natural justice.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur is characterized as "childgered" in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (line 86), as he anticipates adventures before the great feast. The word may imply a boyish merriness or a childish recklessness, or some combination of these traits.

### *The Gawain Romances*

The *Gawain* romances achieve an obvious cohesion, then, through the name recognition of these central characters, through their repeated appearance and distinctive traits, and through the Arthurian associations most listeners would carry with them as part of their cultural baggage. Within the narratives predictable roles serve as powerful, stabilizing links that join rapid-fire episodes of marvel, violence, and mysterious confrontation, or extended and detailed description. The headlong sequencing of events, often apparently unmotivated or non-causal, and the lavish attention to surface realities equips the storytelling with a kinetic and spectacular quality that may leave a deeper impression on audiences than the characters themselves. This eruption of unforeseen wonders and threats is not, however, without pattern: these provide *Gawain* with the indispensable opportunity for heroic triumph, but they also illustrate recurrent settings, themes, and processes crucial to the social meaning of the romances. The unity that the poems attain is consequently often more the outcome of structural repetition and thematic variation than of character or event.

Among the scenes that the romances characteristically reproduce are encounters in the forest, on the battlefield, and in the bedroom. Unlike Dante's dark wood, Ingewood Forest is no thicket of inner spiritual crisis haunted by symbolic beasts; here hunters pursue English wild boar and deer, and occasionally meet up with weird or preternatural beings like Sir Gromer, the Carl, or the ghost of Guenevere's mother. Six of the poems in this collection begin with a forest episode; these clearly function as prologues, providing a familiar narrative space for the audience to quiet down and settle in. In each case, the woods at first are a place of aristocratic leisure and self-display, where members of the royal entourage can test their prowess against wild creatures and show their knowledge of hunting lore.<sup>41</sup> The holiday

<sup>41</sup> From the time of William the Conqueror, the forests were regarded as the special preserve of the king; by the time of Henry II, one third of England was subject to forest law. Hunting was at the king's prerogative only, and large game — specifically deer (the animals pursued in *Ragnell*, *Carlile*, *Awestys*, and *Marriage*), and wild boar (hunted in *Arwylng*, and together with deer and foxes, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Greene Knight*) — were reserved solely for the king. The *Dialogue of the Exchequer* (late twelfth century) describes the forests as "the sanctuary and special delight of kings, where . . . away from the tumult inherent in a court, they breathe the pleasure of natural freedom"; justice in the forest comes not from the law, but from "the will and whim of the king." Any adventure occurring in a forest would therefore inevitably constitute a fundamental confrontation with the power invested in the person and the office of the king. See *Dialogus de Scaccario*, revised edition, edited and translated by Charles Johnson and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); I have modified the translation slightly.

### *Introduction*

atmosphere furnishes, however, a pretext for adventure; the temporary respite from martial rigors and constant vigilance opens the court (and its great hero) to a test not simply of prowess but of mettle, and the unconstrained environs give the unexpected challenger a chance to probe the Arthurian ensemble in unguarded moments.

Battlefield encounters are an expected feature of chivalric romance, and so it is perhaps surprising that many of these poems contain no actual scenes of combat, or furnish only a bare, allusive description of fighting. Only *Awntyrs*, *Gologrus*, and *Jeante* offer sustained accounts of knightly struggle. Typically, all battles take the form of duels, enabling participants to prove their skill and expand their reputations, and giving the audience a concrete portrayal of armed violence. In all the romances, however, fighting constitutes primarily a symbolic, rather than a simply physical, activity; it insists upon the rule-bound character of mortal combat, stretches the limits of courtesy to the extremities of life, and demonstrates the overlaps between masculine rivalry and bonding, and between enmity and reconciliation within a politics of national cohesion. Bedroom scenes, on the other hand, may at first seem out of place in these martial romances, but events staged in this intimate, domestic space work similarly to strengthen the bonds of male solidarity. Pivotal or climactic episodes take place in women's beds in *Raguelle*, *Carlisté*, and *Arwysyng* (as well as in *Marriege*, *Cartle*, and *Jeante*), yet none of these have to do primarily with heterosexual passion; instead, these private spaces take on a theatrical ambience, making a trial of social ties — in the marriage contract between a woman and her husband, and even more in the ties between men within a fictionalized chivalric code. Courtesy's definition depends upon Gawain's response to the Earl's control of his wife's and daughter's sexual availability, or upon Baldwin's response to Arthur's bed trick, and the resolution of societal disruption comes about through the courteous and rule-bound exchange of women among men.

In *Raguelle*, Orwain's bedroom scene enacts this reconciliation — between female and male, private and public, old and young, wretched and handsome, peasant and noble — through the outright physical transformation of the loathly lady into a beautiful young woman. Sympathetic audiences, medieval and modern, surely find pleasure in the singular improbability and the poetic justice of this spectacular turn of events. Just as surely, however, audiences recognize, if only subliminally, that such satisfying endings depend on the anticipation and endorsement of normative integration that these marvelous transformations symbolize; their reiteration in story after story is irrefutable evidence that they arise from the desire of listeners and readers, even as they assist in producing this desire. In *Raguelle* and *Carlisté*, the threatening figures of hag and churl — rough, ugly, ignoble, menacing — are literally transformed by Gawain's gentleness into refined, handsome figures who "naturally" take their place among the ruling elite. This plot recurs, with only slight

### The Gawain Romances

structural variations, in *Marriage and Carle*, as well as in *Greene Knight and Turke*, which introduce elements of the exotic to the characterization of the outsider. In *Gologrus* (and to a lesser extent in *Arowing, Cornwall, and Jeause*), the happy ending is achieved not through shape-shifting but through the transformative submission of enemies to the chivalric ethos.

These happy endings produce a "magical resolution" typical of romance: in this world of unmotivated marvels and fulfilled wishes, social interests quite opposed in the "real world" move into alignment. The stirring portrayals of triumphant courtesy and justice vindicated that mark the conclusions of romances potentially work to hold their diverse audiences together, to reproduce in them the feeling of integration that the narrated transformations dramatize, and to effect a sense of social cohesion (not at all dependent on social reality) that enables the established order to prevail.<sup>42</sup> In its crudest formulation, such a view of the romances would give them a crucial function in the conspiratorial imposition of dominant values upon a docile and homogeneous public; their reading would dull perceptions of social inequities and diminish the potential for political change. Yet spectacularly decisive resolutions, like those of the Gawain romances, do not inevitably or uniformly support the ruling order. As the magical realism of Latin American writers like Borges, García Marquez, or Esquivel demonstrates, fantastic narratives can open a space for political critique; contradictions and absurdities, rather than being swallowed whole, constitute a basis upon which audiences — starting from a broad range of social positions — may formulate alternative or subversive understandings. Moreover, the romances themselves incorporate divergent, sometimes openly censoring, interpretations of knighthood: in *Aways* Gawain self-consciously asks about the potential culpability of chivalric violence, and this romance and *Gologrus* take a troublingly ambiguous outlook on the royal and aristocratic assumptions that underlie individual combat and the enterprise of warfare. Finally, the motifs of magical transformation that so strongly characterize the romances find social corollaries in the hybrid character of the poems. Their composition and consumption — as narratives about the nobility that circulate and are profoundly modified in popular milieux — imply a storytelling transmigration across elite, bourgeois, and laboring audiences, re-

<sup>42</sup> Raymond Williams employs the term "magical resolution" (as a kind of false consciousness that entraps those without power into agreement with social relations contrary to their interests) in his discussion of the social function of literature in the Industrial Revolution; see *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 65–71. For a general discussion of some of the main issues surrounding the analysis of popular culture from a social and historical perspective, together with excerpts from classic essays, see Ashby, *The Study of Popular Fiction* (note 35, above).

### *Introduction*

enacting the metamorphoses by which characters in the plots cross the boundaries of otherwise circumscribed groups.

A last characteristic that marks the *Gawain* romances as a unified group, and that again exemplifies the intersection of disparate elements within them, centers on their frequent resort to geography to locate their meaning. Almost all the poems explicitly set their adventures in or near Carlisle, a city with long-standing Arthurian associations, located in Cumbria (the north-westernmost territory of England, sharing the border with Scotland). Carlisle was in turn a Celtic and British stronghold, a Roman fortification, part of the area populated by Scandinavian invaders, and an outpost marking the edge of English (and Anglo-Norman) political claims. "Inglewood," the name of the forest in which so many encounters take place in the poems, seems originally to have signified "the woods or enclave of the Angles," a contested English foothold within mainly Celtic territories. A study of the personal names given in Cumberland indicates that the mixed character of the population carried through the central and late Middle Ages, with Celtic, Scandinavian, and English names all continuously in use.<sup>42</sup> In short, Carlisle with its environs is pre-eminently a border territory, a contested area of mixed populations and of shifting and changing alliances. The people of Cumbria — knights, clerks, peasants — were constantly exposed to feuding and factionalization, fueled by fiercely competitive local and national identities and by the struggle for land ownership as a means of social mobility.<sup>43</sup> Frontier society, prepared for war at all times and bred on tales of military prowess and conquest transformed into a nostalgic chivalry, made an ideal fictional setting for the marvels and adventures of romance.

These Arthurian romances themselves constitute a "border writing" of sorts, not so much because they are "about" Carlisle and the Anglo-Scottish marches as because they give literary expression to contending interests that intersect late medieval social, political, and intellectual life.<sup>44</sup> In specifically geographical terms,

<sup>42</sup> See John Insley, "Some Aspects of Regional Variation in Early Middle English Personal Nomenclature," *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 18 (1987), 183–99, which provides evidence that surviving names exactly reflect "the heterogeneous nature of settlement patterns in this northern borderland" (p. 183).

<sup>43</sup> On the character of late medieval border territories, see Anthony Goodman, "Religion and Warfare in the Anglo-Scottish Marches," *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 245–66.

<sup>44</sup> I borrow the term "border writing" here from D. Emily Hicks, *Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); for its usefulness in describing cultural situations of the medieval West, I am indebted to Katharine Biddick, *Border*

### *The Gawain Romances*

poems oscillate between centripetal and centrifugal views of human activity. Almost every one of the *Gawain* romances shows a remarkably detailed and concentrated attention to Carlisle and adjoining areas.<sup>6</sup> Many choose Inglewood Forest or its famous lake, the Tarn Wathelene, as the setting of their principal action; from here, adventures move along the old Roman road, through local villages and to specific manors, whose names are sometimes still recognizable. Turke crosses to the Isle of Man, off the coast of Cumberland in the Solway Firth, and Galloway, the Scots territory north of the border, is frequently mentioned. This profusion of localizing detail furnishes the romances a setting that is at once compact and familiar-seeming, yet remote and wild.<sup>7</sup> Cumbria's reputation as romance territory may carry traces of earlier oral tales and of unrecorded border ballads; it continued in popular stories like that of the outlaw Adam Bell, and received belated tribute in Romantic attempts by Wordsworth and other Lake Poets to preserve popular traditions.<sup>8</sup>

The surviving *Gawain* romances, even those that appear only in a single manuscript, do not record the dialect of the composer, but are instead copies; nonetheless, linguistic evidence in the poems points to the northwest, and perhaps Cumber-

---

writing helps to suggest the ways in which popular chivalric romance joins discreet forms, miscellaneous subject matters, and potentially antagonistic audiences, and splits what might otherwise seem unified interests and groups. In this way, the romances define a border site of intersections and possible resistance to established regimes. Yet their crossover status consists chiefly in their openness to appropriation; in different ways and in differing situations they may well have offered a cheerful reinforcement of the status quo for many, perhaps most, audiences.

<sup>6</sup> The notable exceptions are *Gologrus*, which sets its action on the continent, Cornwall, which takes place in Little Britain, and *Fraser*.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed description of the place of geography and geology in the economic, political, and social life of the area of the *Gawain* romances, see Angus J. L. Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> The earliest copy of the ballad of Adam Bell is a fragment of a print from 1536; it survives in five additional versions, including one in the Percy Folio manuscript (which contains *Greene Knight*, *Turke*, *Marriage*, *Cornwall*, and other narratives). At the outset of the ballad, Adam and his companions are, like Robin Hood, "outlawed for vereson" and "swore them beethen upon a day / To Englysshe-wood for to gone"; the odd spelling preserves the original sense of an English enclave in Celtic territories. See *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child (1888; rpt. New York: Dover, 1963), vol. 3, pp. 22 ff. (stanza 4). In the context of such popular tales, it is worth noting that one of the Robin Hood ballads, *Queen Katherine*, has the knight whom Robin befriended, Sir Richard Lee, descend "from *Gawins* blood"; see Child, vol. 3, p. 199 (stanza 22). This ballad also survives in the Percy Folio manuscript.

### *Introduction*

land itself, as the likely place of origin for several of them. Even if they reflect knowledge of a local landscape, however, their setting must be regarded as mainly fictional: it represents the centripetal tendency in these narratives to concentrate all meaningful action on the person of the king, and on the seat of royal power at Carlisle (however eccentric such a locale must have seemed in comparison to Westminster). At the same time, the romances provide a strong counterbalance to this tendency in the extraordinarily centrifugal thrust they project for Arthurian territorial ambitions. If Carlisle operates as the indispensable endpoint in the plots, the centralized narrative site where everything is brought home and made secure, then all the other marginal, far-flung locations the romances name are the key symbols in the fantasy of world conquest. Gawain's role as the hero who faces the unknown and renders it manageable for the rest of his society is repeatedly figured in geographical terms; in a showdown at the court, or through a journey to a far-off realm, Gawain brings the socially or exotically monstrous under lawful rule, makes the strange recognizable, returns the outlying to the center. Yet, as fantasies of limitless monarchical control, these poems do not take an undifferentiated view of conquered kingdoms, but instead offer a precise, undeviating agenda for just which lands require subduing and colonization: all are Celtic territories that make up the periphery of England — Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Brittany. Their peripheral location defines a symbolic geography, and their conquest consequently enhances the myth of England's centrality and political dominion.<sup>6</sup> In locating fantasies of triumph in exoticized Celtic realms, the Gawain romances render these marginal spaces a proving ground for the superiority of centralized royal prerogative (in preference to any claims of local autonomy). Moreover, for English audiences at least, their combination of local and exotic (together with their other hybrid qualities) must have intensified the perception of a coherent and compelling national identity that crossed traditional boundaries of class and estate; in this way, nostalgic idealizations of chivalry and rousing tales of derring-do solicited enthusiastic engagement in an imagined community of the realm.

The efflorescence of Arthurian romance in England during the later Middle Ages, and in particular its regional association with the north, has provoked several attempts at explanation. William Matthews, confining his argument to alliterative

<sup>6</sup> Robert Bartlett has recently argued that armed expansion might be taken as a defining characteristic of European identity in the high Middle Ages; see *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). The extensive documentation Bartlett provides for this earlier period provides useful contexts for understanding the romances and their historical impact during the following two centuries and beyond.

### *The Gawain Romances*

poetry, claimed that the romances enunciated a coherent moral and political critique of contemporary conditions, most powerfully epitomized in the Alliterative *Morte Arthur*.<sup>20</sup> This poem, followed by *Awntyrs*, *Gologros*, and other non-chivalric romances, articulates a self-consciously anti-courtly, anti-national position, rejecting the centralization of power in a strong king and government bureaucracy, and rejecting the ambitions of a foreign policy based on warfare and increased taxation. *Awntyrs* and *Gologros*, according to Matthews, advance an ideal pattern of knighthood as a reproof against the appropriation of chivalric forms to justify territorial expansion, imperialistic foreign policy, and the abuse of feudal and governmental powers. Matthews' interpretation makes a strong case for the potential political dimension of chivalric romance, and for the possibility of reading these poems against the grain, thus turning them against the very institutions they purport to celebrate. Implicitly, his treatment makes clear the linkage of chivalric romance not merely to political interests, but to underlying ideological structures, and in emphasizing the regional character of the poems, Matthews reveals the splits that mark what might otherwise appear a unified noble estate. Matthews' arguments, however, leave a great deal out of account: they do not address non-alliterative poetry, and, by equating the value of poetry with high moral purpose, they effectively dismiss all "non-serious" poetry like *Ragnelle*, *Carlisle*, or even *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Moreover, they imbue chivalric romance with a potent ethical vision without establishing any base in social history that would support such a critique, and they posit a geographical locus — the border country or simply the north — that is finally much less defined in terms of local realities than even the Cumbria of the *Gawain* romances.

Michael Bennett, in a detailed examination of the changing structure and mobility within county society in northwest England, describes circumstances that might well bear upon the hybrid character of chivalric romance.<sup>21</sup> According to Bennett, new modes affecting military service, the Church, and governmental administration multiplied the links between local society and the capital, and produced a new, relatively large class of educated careerists. The visible growth of cultural activities in the shires, and the increasing sophistication of architectural and literary productions, depend upon the cultural resources of Westminster and London, brought back to outlying districts by those with associations in the capital, and reshaped by

<sup>20</sup> William Matthews, *The Tragedy of Arthur: A Study of the Alliterative "Morte Arthur"* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960). Matthews' passing commentary on the language and texture of the alliterative poetry is an invaluable feature of his study.

<sup>21</sup> Michael J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careers: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

### *Introduction*

local energies and interests. This interplay between national and local identities, cosmopolitan and provincial styles inevitably resulted in artifacts of mixed character, potentially including such border writing as the *Gawain romances*, which — given their mixed character and content, and their divergent audiences — might in themselves be taken as evidence of opposites in contact. Bennett, however, confines his scrutiny to the upper nobility, elite administrative personnel, and only the greatest of cultural monuments (such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), in part because surviving documents do not shed much light on the activities of those below this social rank. His study consequently leaves unexamined and unexplained what must certainly have been the most commonly enjoyed poetry of northwest England. Bennett's presentation of an emergent regional self-consciousness, of new classes of readers, writers, and patrons, and even of new modes of knighthood, give a vivid impression of the changes within an outlying society; yet it gives virtually no sense of how these significant changes correspond to a taste (differing with different audiences) for popular romance — perhaps the broadest medium for voicing local and national identities, for recycling traditional stories in new literary forms, and for trumpeting the ethos of chivalry.

Though the studies by Matthews and Bennett offer previously unexplored contexts for regional vernacular literature, they adhere, in their general outlook and in their specific critiques, to canonical assumptions about great writing as an integral feature of elite, literate culture. As a result, their approaches inevitably exclude even mention of popular chivalric romance, and make no attempt to assess, as a formative source of literary activity, the relations between the several official and popular cultures of the English Middle Ages. These gaps underscore the need to produce models of historical analysis that will address the miscellaneous traits that make chivalric romance border writing. But the relation of literature and history is elusive, especially when it attempts to specify the intersections of non-traditional narratives that must often have been presented as performances, or to articulate the experiences these narratives furnished people at different levels of society. A final case may help illustrate the impossibility of simple positions, either in reading romance as direct reflection of reality, or in insisting on its complete divorce from reality.

The life of Sir John Stanley (c. 1350–1414) helps clarify the familiarity and appeal of chivalric romance as both history and fantasy.<sup>52</sup> Stanley was a younger (and

<sup>52</sup> Bennett takes Sir John Stanley as one of the central figures in his discussion of "Power, Patronage and Provincial Culture," in *Community, Class and Cavarism*, pp. 193–235, especially 215 ff. See also Bennett's discussion of the Stanleys in "'Good Lords' and 'King Makes': The Stanleys of Lathom in English Politics, 1385–1485," *History Today* 31 (1981), 12–17, and

### *The Gawain Romances*

(therefore landless) son in a prominent northwest family, whose holdings included the forestship of Wirral (which Gawain traverses in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). Through success in arms (whose highlights included an indictment for manslaughter), foreign adventure — at the court of the Grand Turk, for example — and tournament victories, Sir John won himself a knighthood and royal notice. Through his gallantry, he won the hand of the heiress Isabella, a crucial link in securing property rights and bonding him to other powerful men. From the 1380s, Stanley advanced the national ambitions of English kings, serving with distinction at the fringes of the kingdom — as an official on the Welsh and Scottish borders, as Lieutenant of Ireland on three separate occasions, and finally through the hereditary title of King of Mann (the office Gawain refuses in *Turke*). At various points in his career, Sir John was Constable of Windsor, a member of the Order of the Garter (whose motto occurs at the end of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), Steward to the Prince of Wales, and (for almost the entire last decade of his life), Steward of the King's household, the role traditionally held by Sir Kay in Arthurian romance. Though Stanley hardly rose to his high eminence from the dust, his splendid and astonishing career illustrates a remarkable mobility and fame achieved through the characteristic forms of knighthood.<sup>12</sup> Sir John might stand as a paragon of chivalric ideals and achievement, and in fact a late sixteenth-century poem celebrates his deeds as founder of this branch of the family. At the same time, it's possible to imagine a figure with such powerful connections in the county and the court not simply as the subject but as a patron of literary activity; Sir John might have supported, like Richard II or John of Gaunt, the elite and prestigious writings of poets like Chaucer or the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. But one wonders as well whether such a knight would not have enjoyed on many an unrecorded occasion performances of narratives like *Ragnelle and Carufle*, or *Awayres and Gologras*,

the information on Sir John is *The Dictionary of National Biography*, entry for Thomas Stanley, Earl of Derby. The poem on the Stanleys appears in the *Palarine Anthology: A collection of Ancient Poems and Ballads relating to Lancashire and Cheshire*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London, 1850), pp. 210–22.

<sup>12</sup> From the twelfth century, knights descended from non-noble families (especially those whose positions depended upon the favor of the king) frequently were attacked as "raised from the dust" (in the words of the twelfth-century historian Orderic Vitalis). Qualification for knighthood, or at least for membership in a formal Order of Knighthood, increasingly required proof of lineage stretching back for two generations; as chivalric romances became more broadly popular, therefore, the highest aristocracy consciously intensified the exclusivity governing its ranks. See Keen, Chivalry, pp. 143 ff.

### *Introduction*

and whether he would not have patronized their makers for the pleasure of the court and countryside? Increased reading and discussion of romances like those in this volume may begin the process of answering such questions.

All but one of the tales contained in this collection, along with *Sir Gawain* and the *Green Knight*, were brought together more than one hundred fifty years ago in one of the monumental works of Victorian scholarship, Sir Frederic Madden's *Syr Gawayne*. Though *Ragwell* has been reprinted in paperback, and several of the others have received modern editions, it is a striking irony that these popular romances have remained generally inaccessible. Madden's volume has been difficult and expensive to come by, and the scholarly editions are neither inviting nor easily obtainable for general readers. To some degree, then, this gathering of *Gawain* romances is a redoing and updating of Madden's volume; its intention, however, is to make this group of popular stories newly accessible and enjoyable, and not just to antiquarian or scholarly audiences. The texts, introductions, and notes attempt to give reliable, accurate versions of the poems that survive from the Middle Ages, together with literary and historical information that will aid in their reading. I have tried to take account of all scholarly material relevant to these romances, from Madden's edition through the present. No doubt some of this will seem either too detailed or too general for different readers. Through the glosses, however, I have attempted to make the text of each poem completely accessible on its own.



### *Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited*

- Arthurian Encyclopedia.* See *New Arthurian Encyclopedia.*
- Aerden, Henk, and Alasdair A. MacDonald, eds. *Companion to Middle English Romance.* Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1990.
- Alliterative Morte Arthure.* See Beeson, *King Arthur's Death.*
- Amours, F[rancis] J[joseph], ed. *Scottish Alliterative Poems.* Scottish Text Society Publications, nos. 27, 38. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1897. [Contains *Awsoyr* (pp. 115-71) and *Gofograv* (pp. 1-46).]
- Barber, Richard W. *The Knight and Chivalry.* New York: Scribner, 1970.
- . *King Arthur: Hero and Legend.* Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986.
- Barron, W. R. J. *English Medieval Romance.* London and New York: Longman, 1987.
- Beeson, Larry D. *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure.* Revised by Edward E. Foster. TEAMS Middle English Texts Series. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994.
- Chanson de Roland.* See *The Song of Roland.*
- Child, Francis James. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads.* 5 vols. New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1884-98; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1965. [Contains editions of *Cornwall* (I.274-88) and *Marriage* (I.288-96).]
- Chrétien de Troyes. *Arthurian Romances.* Trans. D. D. R. Owen. Everyman's Library. London: J. M. Dent Ltd.; Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1987.
- De ortu Weleswini regoris Arturi.* See *The Rise of Gawain.*

### Bibliography

- Hales, John W., and Frederick J. Furnivall. *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances*. 3 vols. London: N. Trübner and Company, 1868; rpt. Detroit, Michigan: Singing Tree Press, 1968. [Contains Cornwall (I.59-73); Turke (I.88-102); Marriage (I.103-118); Greene Knight (II.56-77); Carle (III.275-294).]
- Hall, Louis B., trans. *The Knightly Tales of Sir Gawain*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976. [Contains prose modernizations of Avowing, Awntyrs, Carlisle, Golograv, Ragnelle.]
- Keen, Maurice. *Chivalry*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Krishna, Valerie, trans. *Five Middle English Arthurian Romances*. Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series B, Vol. 29. New York: Garland, 1991. [Contains verse translations of the editions identified within brackets: Awntyrs [Hanna] (pp. 153-173); Anewyng [Dahood] (pp. 175-208); Ragnelle [Wilhelm] (pp. 209-234); Carlisle [Sands] (pp. 235-254). This edition contains no explanatory or textual notes, but does include a brief introduction (pp. 1-26) that summarizes the plots of each of the four poems, as well as a select bibliography.]
- Lancelot of the Laik: A Scottish Metrical Romance*. Ed. W. W. Skeat. EETS o.s. 6. London: Oxford University Press, 1865.
- Layamon. *Brav*. Eds. G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie. 2 vols. EETS o.s. 250 and 277. London: Oxford University Press, 1963 (Vol. I) and 1978 (Vol. II).
- Libreas Descomus*. See *Lybeus Descomes*.
- Loomis, Roger Sherman, ed. *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1959.
- Lybeus Descomes*. Ed. M. Mills. EETS o.s. 261. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Madden, Frederic, ed. *Syr Gawayne: A Collection of Ancient Romance-Poems by Scottish and English Authors Relating to That Celebrated Knight of the Round Table*. London: Bannatyne Club, 1839. [Contains Awntyrs (pp. 95-128), Carlisle (pp. 187-206), Golograv (pp. 131-183), Ragnelle (pp. 298-298y), Jeane (pp. 207-223), Greene Knight (pp. 224-242), Turke (pp. 243-255), Carle (pp. 256-274), Cornwall (pp. 275-287), and Marriage (pp. 288-297).]

### Bibliography

- Malory, Sir Thomas. Works. Ed. Eugene Vinaver. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1967.
- A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*. See Newstead, "Arthurian Legends."
- Matthews, William. *The Tragedy of Arthur: A Study of the Alliterative "Morit Arthuris"*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.
- Mehl, Dieter. *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. [Trans. of *Mittelenglischen Romanzen des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts*.] London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
- New Arthurian Encyclopedia*. Ed. Norris J. Lacy. New York and London: Garland, 1991.
- Newstead, Helaine. "Arthurian Legends." In *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500: Fascicule I: Romances*. New Haven, Connecticut: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967. Pp. 224-56.
- The Quest of the Holy Grail*. [*La Queste del Saint Graal*.] Trans. F. M. Matarasso. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Queste del Saint Graal*. See *The Quest of the Holy Grail*.
- Ramsey, Lee C. *Chivalric Romances: Popular Literature in Medieval England*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.
- Richmond, Velma E. Bourgeois. *The Popularity of Middle English Romance*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975.
- The Rise of Gwain, Nephew of Arthur* (*De ortu Wahuanii nepotis Arturi*), ed. and trans. Mildred Leake Day. Garland Library of Medieval Literature, vol. 15, series A. New York and London: Garland, 1984.
- Robson, John, ed. *Three Early English Metrical Romances*. London, Printed for the Camden Society: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1842. [Contains *Arwining* (pp. 57-93) and *Awntyrs* (pp. 1-96).]

### Bibliography

- Sands, Donald B., ed. *Middle English Verse Romances*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966. [Contains *Carlivit* (pp. 348-71) and *Ragnelle* (pp. 323-47).]
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon. 2nd. ed. Rev. Norman Davis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- The Song of Roland*. [Chanson de Roland.] Trans. Frederick Godlin. New York: Norton, 1978.
- Stanzeit More Arthur*. See Benson, *King Arthur's Death*.
- Weston, Jessie Laidlay. *The Legend of Sir Gawain: Studies upon Its Original Scope and Significance*. Grimm Library, 7. London: David Nutt, 1897.
- Wittig, Susan. *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the Middle English Romances*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978.
- Ywain and Gawain*. Ed. Albert B. Friedman and Norman T. Harrington. EETS o.s. 254. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.

## *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

### *Introduction*

The episode that makes up the plot of *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* is one of the most popular stories of late medieval England. The transformation of the loathly lady — a story common in folktales, and here combined with motifs of fairy tales like the frog prince and sleeping beauty — occurs in a popular ballad (see *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, below), and in more polished literary renditions from the late fourteenth century by Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower. The story also served for the plot of an interlude performed at one of Edward I's Round Tables in 1299: a loathly lady, with foot-long nose, donkey ears, neck sores, a gaping mouth, and blackened teeth, rode into the hall and demanded of Sir Perceval and Sir Gawain (Edward's knights had assumed Arthurian identities for the occasion) that they recover lost territory and end the strife between commons and lords. The author of the interlude evidently assumed that Edward's court would recognize the story in its outlines.

Ragnelle may in fact have had its origins in some distant and lost Arthurian narrative, for both Chrétien de Troyes in the *Perceval* and Wolfram von Eschenbach in the *Parzival* describe a Grail messenger who is an ugly hag. A variety of early European vernacular stories retell the plot of a loathly lady who, in return for certain crucial information or power, demands some sign of sexual favor from a hero, and is then transformed by the hero's compliance. In the earliest Old Irish versions, the reward for the hero's offering his favor or making the right choice is kingship or political dominance; the late medieval English versions recast the tales' setting, from the realm of epic exploits to a domestic environment of personal love characteristic of romance. Sir Gawain's reputation as a chivalric hero rides to a large extent on his talent for "laf talkyng" (as in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 927) and courtesy towards women, though according to Ragnelle these in turn are motivated by his fealty to the king.

At the heart of Ragnelle lies the question of how the unknown, the marvelous, or the threatening is brought into line with legitimate, normative, idealized chivalric society. Perhaps even more than the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Sir Gromet Somer Joure represents the forces of wildness and incivility; he

### *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

appears suddenly in the midst of the forest, he behaves in ways that violate knightly protocols, and, most of all, he has a name that connects him with the licensed anarchy of Midsummer's Day. But Ragnelle represents these threats no less than her brother. Her seemingly omnivorous appetite marks her as an outsider, both sexually and socially, to the aristocratic court. Despite the counsels of her betters, she will have Gawain, and the entire court, led by Arthur and perhaps including Gawain, fears she is a sexual predator (lines 722 ff.). Her appearance and behavior — her raggedness, poverty, and general unkemptness, and her antisocial and indiscriminate consumption of vast quantities of food at the wedding feast — make clear that her repulsiveness is a function of her low estate and not simply a wild monstrosity. What brands Ragnelle as a *hag* is, in the terms defined by the central question of the poem, a form of desire or lack — a lack of manners, beauty, deference; what certifies her as a lady at the end is her possession of these qualities and of Sir Gawain. Though for the bewitched Ragnelle a good man is hard to find, once found he satisfies all her heart's desire.

The plot of *Ragnelle*, then, turns on the transformation of its heroine both physically and symbolically, from an ugly hag to a beautiful lady, and from an enigmatic threat to a fulfilled woman. Her double role — both Beauty and the Beast — endows her with a deep ambiguity, enmeshing both attraction and revulsion, fatal danger and life-giving knowledge; such worrisome duplicity often attaches itself to women (and to femininity generally) in popular romance, and throughout Western culture. The poem proceeds to establish a stable and benign identity for Ragnelle by providing a satisfying answer to Gawain's rather frantic question, "What ar ye?" (line 644). This inquiry unmistakably rephrases Ragnelle's pivotal question: "whate [do] wemen love best" (line 91), "whate [do] wemen desyren most" (line 406), what do "wemen desyren moste speciale" (line 465) — which itself uncannily anticipates the notorious formulation of Freud: "Was will der Wrib?" — "What does Woman want?" It has sometimes been said that the fascination of this question and the wish to solve the enigma of Woman that it conveys express interests that are typically male (or, in more abstract, cultural terms, masculine). In the case of *Ragnelle*, the narrative unfolds in ways that have the heroine clearly serve the interests of the male chivalric society that the poem good-humoredly celebrates.

Through her relations with the various male characters — her kinship with Gromer, her compact with Arthur, her union with Gawain — Ragnelle literally holds the poem together, for she is their link with each other. She undoes the threat her brother poses for the court, and then reconciles him to the Round Table; she knows the answer to Arthur's problem and so saves his life and his kingship; she presents Gawain with opportunities to place his spectacular courtesy on display, first towards Arthur, and then towards women. Although Gawain performs his usual service as

### *Introduction*

mediator, taming the strange (Ragnelle) and bringing it safely within the sphere of the court, even his success depends upon the more pervasive mediation of Ragnelle. By passing among these male characters, she becomes the nexus that ties them together and makes possible the fraternal and hierarchic bonds of chivalric solidarity.

*Ragnelle* explores the ties of chivalry through a structured repetition and variation of a fundamental pattern. This consists of a series of linked and interlocking oaths and commitments (a plotting device that distantly recalls the staggeringly complex interlacing of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). In the first place, Arthur agrees (under duress) to a compact with Sir Gromer, though Gromer claims he imposes this trial because the king had already broken an obligation to him. Arthur then agrees with Ragnelle upon a second compact which will enable him to escape the first, though its fulfillment depends entirely upon Gawain's compliance. Gawain then agrees to the terms of the second compact, thereby obligating himself to Arthur and to Ragnelle. Ragnelle fulfills her promise, providing Arthur the knowledge that puts him out of Gromer's control (and puts Gromer in danger from Arthur and the court); Gawain fulfills his promise, marrying Ragnelle in a public ceremony and then agreeing to consummate the marriage. When Gawain, faced with what seems an impossible choice concerning Ragnelle's transformation, agrees to allow her to decide, he unwittingly fulfills the terms for setting her free from her enchantment. This outcome not only unites Ragnelle to Gawain, but to the King and Queen; she then uses this amity to bring Arthur and Gromer to reconciliation. *Ragnelle* ends therefore with everyone established in her or his proper place, and with courtesy restoring the Round Table's customary mutuality and hierarchy. Unmotivated marvels — meetings in the woods, monstrous apparitions, sudden transformations — work to bring about what everyone always wanted or expected, so that the link of fantasy and necessity seems (as it should in romance) inevitable.

*Ragnelle* deploys another common romance convention by setting the marvelous — especially the unanticipated but fatefully indispensable encounters and compacts that begin the poem — within a wood. The forest is a place for both recreation and mystery, where Arthur and his court go on holiday but where anything can happen. The hunt that starts the action constitutes a characteristic pastime for the English nobility of the late Middle Ages, an activity in which the necessities of survival are turned into a hierarchically nuanced display of strength and knowledge; the king is most a king when he sets off "wodmanly" (line 32) to stalk, kill, and then butcher the deer, conspicuously heedless of danger. Carlisle, Awowyng, and Awntys similarly begin with a hunt. The game or compact that Sir Gromer forces upon Arthur succeeds the chase. Though Sir Gromer's may seem an unchivalrous bargain, once Arthur has openly sworn his oath (line 99) he must abide by its rules on his honor, just as he must hold his word to Ragnelle (lines 294 ff.). In this way the romance

### *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

orders events so that the force of civility and courtesy prevails, and the challenge of the wild is answered within the safe precincts of bedroom and court at the conclusion.

Although Sir Gromer alleges the justice of his complaint against King Arthur — like Sir Galeron in *Awntyrs*, he says that the king has unjustly stripped him of lands and given these to Sir Gawain (lines 58 ff.) — *Ragnelle* never stipulates the location of his estates. It does, however, identify the mysterious woods where he makes his appearance: he and his bewitched sister inhabit Eaglewood Forest (lines 16, 152, 764, 835), the Cumberland setting for *Awwyng, Awntyrs*, and, by implication, for *Marriage*. In addition, the Round Table resides at Carlisle (lines 127, 132, 325), a center for Arthurian adventures in *Carlisle, Awwyng, Awntyrs, Greene Knight, Marriage*, and *Carle*. These allusions connect *Ragnelle* with other Gawain romances, and confer on the whole group a remarkable regional coherence.

#### *Text*

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* survives in a sixteenth-century manuscript now in Oxford (Bodleian 11951, formerly Rawlinson C.86). Madden, in 1839, characterized the text of *Ragnelle* as recorded "in a negligent hand," "very carelessly written" (pp. lxiv, lxvii). The scribe leaves unclear whether he employs a word-ending stroke simply as a flourish, or as indication of final unstressed -e. Even more confusing is his formation of i and y, which are often indistinguishable; the interchangeability of y for i in Middle English writing often makes it impossible or pointless to choose between them in a modern transcription of this manuscript. Earlier editions have varied considerably on this score. I have transcribed as y those characters that seem clearly y; when the letter form appears ambiguous, I have rendered it as i in conformity with standard conventions of modern spelling. I have usually transcribed the scribe's frequent use of "Ff" and "ff" as "F," though occasionally in mid-line I have given lower case. Capitalization and punctuation are almost entirely editorial.

In the manuscript, *Ragnelle* appears without stanza breaks. Nonetheless, the poem clearly employs a tail-rhyme stanza common to many other Middle English romances. This consists of six lines rhyming abccb, with the a and c couplets written in longer lines (often containing ten syllables, usually four stresses), and the b-lines shorter (usually three stresses). The surviving copy of the poem lacks a significant number of individual lines (many of which are tail-rhyme c-lines), and these absences make stanza divisions irregular and uneven. It would be possible to maintain a format of six-line stanzas, and to suggest where omissions fall (as Hartwell does in his edition). However, both the convenience of the reader and the sense of narrative movement seem better served by an editorial division into twelve-line stanzas. This is the

### *Introduction*

format I have chosen, though missing lines do produce several stanzas of irregular length. The manuscript seems also to be lacking at least one leaf (after line 628), but the progress of the story remains clear nonetheless.

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscript*

Oxford, Bodleian Library MS 11951.

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Summer, Laura, ed. *The Weddynge of Sir Gawayn and Dame Ragnell*. Smith College Studies in Modern Language 5, no. 4. Northampton, Massachusetts: Smith College Departments of Modern Languages, 1924.

Saul, G. H. *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1934. [Modernization with Introduction.]

Whiting, Bartlett J. *The Weddynge of Sir Gawayn and Dame Ragnell*. In *Sources and Analogues in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales."* Ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster. New York: Humanities Press, 1958. Pp. 242-64. [Reprint of Summer's edition with "a few trifling misprints" corrected.]

Sands, Donald B. 1966. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Hartwell, David Geddes. *The Wedding of Sir Gawayn and Dame Ragnell: An Edition*. Columbia University Dissertation, 1973. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 34:3343A.

*Sir Gawayn and the Loathly Lady*. Retold by Selina Hastings. Illustrations by Juan Wijngaard. London: Methuen, 1981; Walker, 1988. New York: Lothrop, 1981; Lee and Shepard, 1985. [Children's version.]

Shibata, Yoshitaka. "The Weddysge of Sir Gawayn and Dame Ragnell." *Tohoku Gakuen University Review: Essays and Studies in English Language and Literature* (*Tohoku Gakuen Daigaku Ronshu, Eigo-Eibungaku*) 72 (1982), 374-82. [Japanese translation.]

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

Garbáty, Thomas J., ed. *Medieval English Literature*. Boston: Heath, 1984. [Contains an edition of *Ragnelle* (pp. 418-39), based apparently on the published text of Whiting.]

Wilhelm, James J., ed. *Romance of Arthur III: Works from Russia to Spain, Norway to Italy*. New York: Garland, 1988. [Contains an edition of *Ragnelle* (pp. 99-116), apparently reprinted from Garbáty's text of Whiting.]

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*. Ed. J. Withrington. Lancaster Modern Spelling Test 2. Lancaster: Department of English, Lancaster University, 1991. [I have not been able to examine a copy of this edition.]

Shepherd, Stephen H. A., ed. *Middle English Romances*. New York: Norton, 1995. Pp. 243-67. [I have not been able to examine a copy of this edition.]

**Criticism**

Bolley, Julia, and Carol M. Meale. "Selecting the Text: Rawlinson C.86 and Some Other Books for London Readers." In *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*. Ed. Felicity Riddy. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991. Pp. 143-69.

Coomaraswamy, A. K. "On the Loathly Bride." *Speculum* 20 (1945), 391-404.

Crane, Susan. "Alison's Incapacity and Poetic Instability in the Wife of Bath's Tale." *PMLA* 102 (1987), 20-28.

Danssenbaum, Susan [Crane]. "The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle: Line 48." *Explicator* 40 (1982), 3-4.

Eissner, Sigmund. *A Tale of Wonder: A Source Study of "The Wife of Bath's Tale."* Wexford, Ireland: John English, 1957.

Field, P. J. C. "Malory and The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle." *Archiv* 219 (1982), 374-81.

Fradenburg, Louise. "The Wife of Bath's Passing Fancy." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 8 (1986), 31-58.

Griffiths, J. J. "A Re-examination of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson c.86." *Archiv* 219 (1982), 381-88.

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- Lythe and listenythe the lit of a lord riche,  
The while that he lyvid was none hym liche,  
Nether in bowes ne in halle.  
In the tyme of Arthoure thys adventure betyd,  
And of the greatt adventure that he hymself dyd,  
That Kyng curseys and royalle.  
Of alle kynges Arture berythe the flowys,  
And of alle knyghtod he bare away the horose,  
Wheresoever he went.
- 5  
10  
15  
20  
25  
30
- Nowe wylle ye lyt a whyle to my talkyn.  
I shalle you telle of Arthoure the Kyng.  
Howe ones hym befelle.  
On hantys he was in Ingleswood,  
With alle his bold knyghtes good –  
Nowe herkes to my spelle!  
The Kyng was sett att his trestylle-tree  
With hys bowe to sic the wynde veard  
And hys boodes were sett hym besyde.  
As the Kyng stode, then was he ware  
Where a greatt harri was and a fayre,  
And forthe fast dyd he glyde.
- Harken; dinne to; noble  
like  
private room nor  
occurred  
And [you will hear] of  
*bears the prize*  
*knighthood*  
*brave /warrior/*  
*disgraced*  
*/If you dinne; performance*  
*/adventure/ once*  
*Inglewood*  
*story (spel)*  
*hunting station*  
*slay; game*  
*wailed; aware*  
*move*  
*fern thicket*  
*hand; mill*  
*motionless*
- The harri was in a beaken ferne,  
And hard the boundes, and stode falle done:  
Alle that sawe the Kyng.  
"Hold you stille, every man,  
And I wolle goo myself, yf I can,  
With crafte of stalkyng."  
The Kyng in hys hand toke a bowe

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- |  |  |                            |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| And wodmanly he stowpyd lowe<br>To stalk unto that dere.   | at a woodman's<br>deer   |                            |
| When that he cam the dere falle nere,<br>35      The dere leapt forthe into a briere,<br>And ever the Kyng went nere and nere.   | quite<br>brier patch<br>closer   |                            |
| So Kyng Arthure went a whyle<br>After the dere, I trowe, half a myle,<br>And no man with hym went.   | for a time<br>I guess  |                            |
| 40      And am the last to the dere he lett flye<br>And smote hym sore and sewerly —<br>Suche grace God hym sent,<br>Down the dere tumbyd so theron,<br>And felle into a greatt brake of fern;                                     | as took a shot<br>sorely; surely<br>on that spot<br>thicker fern                       |                            |
| 45      The Kyng folowyd felle fast.<br>Anon the Kyng bothe ferce and felle<br>Was with the dere and dyd hym serve well,<br>And after the grasse he taste.   | very quickly<br>fierce; eager<br>butcher properly<br>afterwards; grease (fat); assayed |                            |
| As the Kyng was with the dere alone,<br>50      Streyghte ther cam to hym a quaynt grome,<br>Armyd weile and sure,<br>A knyght felle strong and of greatt myghtie.<br>And grymly wordes to the Kyng he sayd:                       | while<br>strange man   |                            |
| "Welle imet, Kyng Arthour!<br>55      Thou hast me done wrong many a yee,<br>And wofully I shall quytte the here;<br>I hold thy lyde days nyghe done.<br>Thou hast gevyn my landes in certayn<br>With greatt wrong unto Sir Gawen. | fancifully<br>ever<br>year<br>repaire you<br>lifetime nearly<br>indeed                 |                            |
| 60      Whate sayest thou, Kyng alone?"  |  |                            |
| "Syr Knyghte, whate is thy name with honour?"  |  |                            |
| "Syr Kyng," he sayd, "Gromer Somer Jouare,<br>I telle the nowe with ryghte."   |  | by right                   |
| "A, Sir Gromer Somer, bethynk the wellie;<br>65      To sle me here honour getyst thou no delle.<br>Bethynk the thou art a knyghte:<br>Yf thou sle me nowe in thy case,  |  | consider<br>sle; not a bit |

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- Alle knyghtes wolle refuse the in every place;  
 That shame shalle nevere the froo.  
 Lett be thy wylle and folowe wyt;  
 And that is amys I shalle amend iiii.  
 And thou wolt, or that I goo."
- "Nay," sayd Sir Geomer Somer, "by Hevyn Kyng!  
 So shalt thou noit skape, withoute layng;  
 I have the bowe att avaylie.  
 Yf I shold lett the thus goo with mokery,  
 Anoder tyme thou wolt me defye;  
 Of that I shalle noit faylie."
- "Now," sayd the Kyng, "so God me save,  
 Save my lyfe, and whate thou most crave,  
 I shalle now graunt iiii the;  
 Shame thou shalt have to sle me in venere,  
 Thou armyd and I clothyd butt in grene, perde."
- "Alle thys shalle bott help the, sekyrly,  
 For I wolle nother load ne gold, truly,  
 Butt yf thou graunt me att a certeyn day  
 Suche as I shallic sett, and in thys same araye."  
 "Yes," sayd the Kyng, "Lo, here my haad."  
 "Ye, beth abyde, Kyng, and here me a stound.  
 Pyrst thou shalt swere upon my sword broun  
 To shewe me att thy comyng whane wemen love best in fold and town  
 And thou shalt mete me here withouten send  
 Esyn att this day twelle monethes end;  
 And thou shalt swere upon my sword good  
 That of thy knyghtes shalle none com with the, by the Rood,  
 Nowther fremde ne freynd.
- "And yf thou bring nost awerene withoute frylie,  
 Thync hed thou shalt lose for thy travaylie —  
 Thys shalle nowe be thyse othe.  
 Whate says thou, Kyng? Lett se, have done!"  
 "Syr, I graunt to thys! Now lett me gone.  
 Thoughe iiii be to me falle loshe,  
 I ensure the, as I am true kyng.

leave you  
recklessness; reason  
whatever  
if you wish before

escape; no lie  
or [my] advantage  
after mocking [you]  
Another; challenge in combat  
in [preventing] that  
whatever  
in hunting  
green, by God

surely  
west  
Unless; agree [to meet] me  
specify; gear

bear; moment  
bright  
women  
summons  
bedevil

Cross  
stranger nor

head; effort  
oath  
Come on, do it  
agree; [be] gone  
disastrous  
assure

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 105 To com agayn att thys twelle monethes endyng  
And bryng the thyne answer."  
"Now go thy way, Kyng Arthur.  
Thy lyfe is in my hand, I am fulle sace;  
Of thy sorowe thou art nott ware. plight; aware
- 110 "Abyde, Kyng Arthur, a lytell whyle:  
Loke nott today thou me begyle,  
And kepe alle thyng in close —  
For and I wyst, by Mary mylde,  
Thou woldyst betray me in the feld,  
Thy lyf fyrt sholdyst thou lose." trick  
to yourself  
if I knew
- 115 "Nay," sayd Kyng Arthur, "that may nott be.  
Untrewe knyght shalt thou nevere fynde me —  
To dye yett were me lever.  
Farwelle, Sir Knyght, and evyll mett.  
I wolle com, and I be on lyve att the day sett,  
120 Thoughe I shold scape nevere." would even be preferable to me  
met through bad luck  
if I'm alive; appointed  
escape [alive]
- 125 The Kyng his bugle gas blowe.  
That haed every knyght and iit gas knowe;  
Unto hym can they rake.  
Thor they sond the Kyng and the dere,  
With semblanç sad and hevy chere. did  
heard; did know  
did; hasten
- 130 That had no lust to layk.  
"Go we home nowe to Carlylle;  
Thys hustyngh lykys me nott welle,"  
So sayd Kyng Arthur.  
Alle the lordes knewe by his countenaunce  
That the Kyng had mett with same disturbance. countenaunce; distressed look  
Who: desire to play  
Carlile  
please
- 135 Unto Carlylle then the Kyng cam,  
Butt of his hevynesse knewe no man; [the cause] of his sadness  
Hys herte was wonder hevy. heart; exceedingly
- In this hevynesse he dyd abyde  
That many of his kryghtes mervelyd that tyde,  
Tyll att the last Sir Gawan  
To the Kyng he sayd that: So that; at that time  
then
- "Syr, me marvaylythe ryghte sore [it] puzzles me greatly

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 140 Whate thyng that thou sorowyst fore."
- Then answeryd the Kyng as tyghte:  
 "I shall the telle, gentylle Gawen knyghte.  
 In the Forest as I was this daye,  
 Ther I mett with a knyght in his araye,  
 145 And sercyna wordes to me he gan saye  
 And chargyd me I shold hym nott bewrayne;  
 Hys councelle must I kepe therfore,  
 Or els I am forswore."
- "Nay, dreste you nocht, Lord! By Mary flower,  
 150 I am nocht that man that wold you dishonour  
 Nother by evyn ne by moron."  
 "Feesothe I was on hunting in Ingleswood;  
 Thowe knowest welle I slewe an haritt, by the Rode,  
 Alle mysyld alon.
- 155 Ther mett I with a knyght armyd sare,  
 His name he told me was Sir Gromer Somer Joure;  
 Therfor I make my moise.
- "Ther that knyght fast dyd me threte  
 And wold have slayn me with greatt heurt,  
 160 But I spak fayte agayn.  
 Wepyns with me ther had I none;  
 Alas! My worshypp therfor is nowe gone."  
 "What therof?" sayd Gawen.  
 "Whatt nedys more? I shalle sotil lye:  
 165 He wold have slayn me ther withoute mercy —  
 And that me was fulle lothe.  
 He made me to swere that all the twelue monethes end  
 That I shold mete hym ther in the same kynde;  
 To that I pylghte my trowithe.
- 170 "And also I shold telle hym att the same day  
 Whate wemen desyred moise, in good fayre;  
 My lyf els shold I lose.  
 This othe I made unto that knyghte,  
 And that I shold nevere telle it to no wight;
- immediately  
 while  
 in full armor  
 certain; did say  
 not give him away  
 confidence  
 forsworn
- fear  
 evening morning  
 In fact  
 Cross
- hastily  
 lament
- pressingly; threaten  
 passion  
 Except that; in turn  
 Weapons  
 honor  
 What came of it  
 can I say
- to me was most hateful  
 twelve  
 manner  
 pledged my troth (good faith)
- fath  
 otherwise; lose  
 men

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 175 Of thys I myghte nott chese.  
 And also I shold com in none oder araye,  
 Butt evyn as I was the same daye.  
 And yf I faylyd of myne answeres,  
 I wot I shal be slayn ryghte there.  
 180 Blame me nott thoughte I be a wofalle man;  
 Alle thys is my drede and fere."
- "Ye, Sir, make good chere.  
 Lett make your hors redy  
 To ryde into straunge contrey;  
 185 And evere wheras ye mose oþer man or woman, in faye,  
 Ask of theym whate thay thereto saye,  
 And I shalle also ryde anoder waye  
 And enquire of every man and woman and gett whatt I may  
 Of every man and womans answeres;  
 190 And in a boke I shalle theym wryte."  
 "I graunt," sayd the Kyng as ryte;  
 "Ytt is welle advysed, Gawan the good,  
 Evyn by the Holy Rood."
- Sone were they boþe redy,  
 195 Gawan and the Kyng, wynterly.  
 The Kyng rode on way and Gawan anoder  
 And evere enquyred of man, woman, and other,  
 Whate wemen desyred mosie dere.  
 Somme sayd they loyld to be welle arrayd,  
 200 Somme sayd they loyld to be dayre prayed,  
 Somme sayd they loyld a basty man  
 That in theyr armys can clipp them and kysse them than.  
 Somme sayd one, somme sayd other;  
 And so had Gawan getyn many an answeres.  
 205 By that Gawan had gotten whate he maye  
 And come agayn by a certeyn daye.
- Syr Gawan had gotten answerys so many  
 That had made a boke greatt, wynterly.  
 To the courte he cam agayn.  
 210 By that was the Kyng comyn with his boke,
- In this [matter]; choose  
 oder gear  
 first day*  
*know*  
*Chide; if*  
*[the cause off] my doubt*
- Have prepared*
- either; fath  
 to that [question]*
- inquire; learn*
- book*  
*immediately  
 considered*  
*Cross*
- study*  
*one*  
*others*  
*dearly*  
*accostured*  
*beseched*
- Jug*  
*one [thing]*
- Finally  
 returned*
- for sure*
- At the same time; had come*

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
|     | And eyther on others pamphletz dyd loke.  | pamphlet   |
|     | "Thys may nott faylle," sayd Gawen.   |  |
|     | "By God," sayd the Kyng, "I drede me sore;  | fear greatly   |
|     | I cast me to sele a lytel more  | resolve; seek  |
| 215 | In Yngleswod Forest.  |  |
|     | I have butt a monethe to my day seit;   |  |
|     | I may hopen on somme good tydinges to hitt —  | hir fypow/   |
|     | Thys thynkythe me nowe best."   | seem to  |
|     | "Do as ye lyst," then Gawen sayd,   | please   |
| 220 | "Whatesoevere ye do I hold me payd;   | satisfied  |
|     | Hytt is good to be spyrting.  | inquiring  |
|     | Doute you nott, Lord, ye shalle welle spede;  | Fear; fare   |
|     | Some of your sawes shalle help att nede,  | sayings  |
|     | Els int were yllie lykynge."  | Otherwise; unlikely                                    |
| 225 | Kyng Arthoure rode forthe on the other day<br>Into Yngleswod as his gate laye,<br>And ther he mett with a Lady.                           | next   |
|     | She was as ungodly a creature   | smooth   |
|     | As evere man sawe, withoute mesure.   | beyond measure   |
| 230 | Kyng Arthoure mervaylyd securly.  | marveled transfixed                                    |
|     | Her face was red, her nose snotyd withalle,<br>Her mowithe wyde, her teethe yallowe overe alle,<br>With bleryd eyen gretter then a balle. | snotted as well<br>mouth; teeth yellow<br>blinny; than |
|     | Her mowithe was nott to lak:  | oversmall  |
| 235 | Her teethe lyng overe her lyppes,<br>Her chekys syde as wemens hipps.<br>A late she bare upon her bak;                                    | hung   |
|     | Her nek long and therso greatt;   | broad; hips  |
|     | Her here clostertyd on an hepe.   | hump; back   |
| 240 | In the sholders she was a yard brode.<br>Hanging paprys to be an hores lode,<br>And lyke a barellie she was made.                         | equally broad<br>hair closed; hoop                     |
|     | And to reberse the fowlnesse of that Lady,  | breast large enough/                                   |
|     | There is no tang may tellle, securly;   | recount  |
| 245 | Of lothynesse inowghe she had.  | nearly   |
|     | She sait on a palfray was gay begon,  | ugliness enough  |
|     | palfray [that] was richly dresed  |  |

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
|     | With gold besett and many a precious stone.  | adorned                                     |
|     | Ther was an unseemely syght:   | incongruous                                 |
|     | So fowle a creature withoutic measure  |   |
| 250 | To ryde so gayly, I yoa enure,<br>Yit was no reason se ryghte.   | handsomely; assure<br>neither proper nor    |
|     | She rode to Arthoure and thus she sayd:  |   |
|     | "God spede, Sir Kyng! I am welle payd  | satisfied                                   |
|     | That I have with the men;  |   |
| 255 | Speke with me, I rede, or thou goo,<br>For thy lyfe is in my hand, I warn the socc;<br>That shalt thou fynde, and I litt nott lett." | advise before<br>promise you<br>(I prevent) |
|     | "Why, what wold ye, Lady, nowe with me?"   | what do you desire                          |
|     | "Syr, I wold fayn nowe speke with the  | eagerly                                     |
| 260 | And tellie the tydylges good.<br>For alle the awyerys that thou canst yelpe,   | Despite; sing out                           |
|     | None of theym alle shallie the helpe.  |   |
|     | That shalt thou knowe, by the Rood.  | Cross                                       |
|     | Thou wenyst I knowe nott thy councelle,  | think; secret                               |
| 265 | Butt I warn the, I knowe litt every deallie.<br>Yf I help the nott, thou art butt dead.  | promise; bit<br>all but                     |
|     | Grant me, Sir Kyng, butt one thyng,  |   |
|     | And for thy lyfe I make warrantysng,   | stand as guarantor                          |
|     | Or elles thou shalt lose thy bed."   |   |
| 270 | "Whare mean you, Lady? Tellie me tyghte,<br>For of thy wordes I have great disperte;   | quickly<br>indignation                      |
|     | To you I have no rede.   | of  |
|     | Whate is your desyre, fayre Lady?  |   |
|     | Let me wese shortly —  | know right away                             |
| 275 | Whate is your meanyng?<br>And why my lyfe is in your hand?   |   |
|     | Tellie me, and I shallic you warrant   | guarantee                                   |
|     | Alle your own askyng."   | own   |
|     | "Forsythe," sayd the Lady, "I am no qued.  | wicked person                               |
| 280 | Thou must graunt me a knyght to wed:<br>His name is Sir Gacea.<br>And sache coveraunce I wolle make the,                             |   |

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- Batt thorowc myne awere thy lyf savyd be,  
Elles lett my desyre be in vaync.  
285 And yf myne awere save thy lyf,  
Graunt me to be Gawens wyl.  
Advyse the nowe, Sir Kyng.  
For iit must be so, or thou art batt dead;  
Chose nowe, for thou mayste sone lose thyne bed.  
290 Tell me nowe in byng."
- "Mary!" sayd the Kyng, "I maye nott graunt the  
To make warrant Sir Gawen to wed the;  
Alle lythe in hym alon.  
Batt and iit be so, I wolle do my labour  
295 In sawyng of my lyfe to make iit secur;  
To Gawen wolle I make my mone."  
"Welle," sayd she, "nowe go home agays  
And fayre wordes speke to Sir Gawen,  
For thy lyf I may save.  
300 Thoughe I be foulle, yet am I gaye;  
Thoughe me thy lyfe save he maye  
Or sewer thy deth to have."
- "Alas!" he sayd; "Nowe woo is me  
That I shold cause Gawen to wed the.  
305 For he wot be lothe to saye naye.  
So foulle a Lady as ye ar nowe one  
Saws I nevere in my lyfe on ground gone;  
I nott whate I do may."  
"No force, Sir Kyng, thoughe I be foulle;  
310 Choyce for a make hathe an owlle.  
Thou getest of me no more.  
When thou comyst agays to thyne awere  
Ryghte in this place I shal lete the here,  
Or elles I wott thou artt lone."  
315 "Now farewelie," sayd the Kyng, "Lady."  
"Ye, Sir," she sayd, "ther is a byrd men calle an owlle...  
And yet a Lady I am."  
"Whate is your name, I pray you, tell me?"
- Except that through  
Otherwise*
- Consider  
are as good as  
may  
haste*
- "Good hevens!"  
guarantee  
rests with him  
if it may be  
(that outcome) secure  
lament*
- gracious  
ensure*
- you are  
to go  
do not know  
No matter  
make (is allowed even to)  
for your  
know; last*

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 320 "Syr Kyng, I highte Dame Ragnelle, truly,  
That never yett begylid man." *am named Lady  
deceived a man*
- "Dame Ragnelle, now have good daye."  
"Syr Kyng, God spede the on thy way!  
Ryghte here I shalle the mete." *you meet*
- 325 Thus they departyd fayre and welle.  
The Kyng falle sone com to Carlyle,  
And his hart hevy and grevall. *soon came  
painful*
- The fyrt man he mett was Sir Gawen,  
That unto the Kyng thus gan sayn. *did say*  
"Syr, howe have ye sped?" *you fared*
- 330 "Porsythe," sayd the Kyng, "nevere so yile!  
Alas, I am in poynt myself to spyllie,  
For nedely I most be ded." *ready; destroy  
of necessity*
- "Nay," sayd Gawen, "that may nott be!  
I had never myself be dead, so most I the.  
335 Thys is ille tydand." *rather; may I prosper  
bad news*
- "Gawen, I mett today with the fowlyst Lady  
That evere I sawe, settynly. *certainly*
- She sayd to me my lyfe she wold save —  
Batt fyrt she wold the to husband have,  
340 Wherfor I am wo-begon — *desire you as*  
Thus in my hart I make my moane." *lament*
- "Ys this alle?" then sayd Gawen;  
"I shalle wed her and wed her agayn,  
Thowghe she were a fende; *fiend*
- 345 Thowghe she were as fosile as Belsabub,  
Her shalle I wed, by the Rood,  
Or elles were nott I your frende. *the devil  
Cross*
- "For ye ar my Kyng with honour  
And have worshyp me in many a stowne; *honored; battle*
- 350 Therfor shalle I nott lese.  
To save your lyfe, Lorde, hit were my partie,  
Or were I false and a greatt coward;  
And my worshypp is the best." *hesitate  
role*
- "Iwys, Gawen, I mett her in Inglyswod. *honor; more  
Indeed*

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 355 She told me her name, by the Rode:  
That hit was Dame Ragnelle. Cross  
She told me butt I had of her answere,  
Elles alle my laboure is nevere the nere — unless; from  
Thus she gan me tellie. Otherwise; never [success]  
did
- 360 "And butt yf her answere help me welle  
Elles let her have her desyre so dele —  
This was her covenant.  
And yf her answere help me, and none other,  
Then wold she have you: here is alle togeder  
365 That made she warrant." no other [answer]  
"As for this," sayd Gawan, "hit shalle nott lett:  
I wolle wed her all whate tyme ye wolle sett.  
I pray you, make no care.  
For and she were the mouse fowlyst wyghoe  
370 That evere men myghte se with syghte,  
For your love I wolle nott spare." stint
- "Garamercy, Gawan," then sayd Kyng Arthur;  
"Of alle knyghtes thou berest the flowre  
That evere yett I fond.  
375 My worshypp and my lyf thou savyst forevere;  
Therefore my love shalle nott fr منه the dysavvyt,  
As I am Kyng in Iond."  
Then within five or six days  
The Kyng must sedys goo his ways  
380 To bere his answere.  
The Kyng and Sir Gawan rode oute of town —  
No man with them, butt they alone,  
Neder ferre se nore. Neither far; near
- When the Kyng was within the Forest:  
385 "Syr Gawan, farewelie, I must go west;  
Thou shalt no furder goo." (he said)  
"My Lord, God spede you on your journey.  
I wold I shold nowe ryde your way,  
For to departe I am ryghte wo."  
390 The Kyng had rydden butt a while.

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- Lytele moe then the space of a myle,  
Or he mett Dame Ragnelle. Before
- "A, Sir Kyng! Ye arre nowe welcum here.  
I wolt ye ryde to bere your answere;  
That wolle avayle you no dele." perceive  
will; nor or all
- "Nowe," sayd the Kyng, "sithe hit wolle none other be,  
Telle me your answere nowe, and my lyfe save me;  
Gawen shalle you wed.
- So he hathe promysed me my lyf to save,  
And your desyre nowe shalle ye have,  
Bothe in bowre and in bed. in order to save
- Therfor telle me nowe alle in hast —  
Whate wolle help now att last?  
Have done, I may noot tary." chamber  
haste  
Be quick
- "Syr," quod Dame Ragnelle, "nowe shalt thou knowe  
Whare wemen desyren moste of highe and lowe;  
From this I wolle noot varayen; high and low rank  
deviate
- "Summe men sayn we desyre to be fayre;  
Also we desyre to have repayne  
Of diverse straunge men; traffic  
Wish
- Also we love to have lust in bed;  
And often we desyre to wed.  
Thus ye men noot ken do not understand
- Yet we desyre another maner thyng:  
To be holden noot old, butt fresshe and yong,  
With flatteryng and glosyng and quaynt gyn — Also; another  
regarded as  
cajolery and special art
- So ye men may us wemen evere wyn  
Of whate ye wolle crave. whatever; will
- "Ye goo fulle nyse, I wolle noot lye;  
Butt there is one thyng is alle oure fantasye,  
And that nowe shalle ye knowe.  
We desyren of men above alle maner thyng  
To have the sovereynit, withoute lesyng.  
Of alle, bothe hyghe and lowe. mastery, no lie
- For where we have sovereynit, alle is ours,  
Thoughte a knyght be nevere so ferly, fierce

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

	And evere the mastry wynse.	mastry
	Of the mosie manlyest is oure desyre:	
	To have the sovereynté of suche a syre,	a lord
430	Suche is oure cratle and gyane.	skill; art
	"Therfore wend, Sir Kyng, on thy way,	go
	And telle than knyght, as I the saye,	you tell
	That iit is as we desyres mōste.	What
	He wol be wrothe and unsoughte	angry; bitter
435	And curse her fast that iit the taughte,	mostly; you
	For his laboure is lost.	
	Go forthe, Sir Kyng, and hold peomysē,	keep [your]
	For thy lyfe is sure nowe in alle wyne,	secure; ways
	That dare I welle undertake."	well declare
440	The Kyng rode forthe a greatt shake,	at headlong speed
	As fast as he myghte gate	go
	Thorowe myre, more, and fenne,	moor; bog
	Whereas the place was sygnyd and sett then.	assigned
	Evyn there with Sir Gromer he mett,	Right
445	And stert wordes to the Kyng he spak with that:	right away
	"Com of, Sir Kyng, nowe lett se	Come on
	Of thyne answere, whane iit shal be,	
	For I am redy grathyd."	all prepared
	The Kyng pullyd oute bokes twayne:	two books
450	"Syr, ther is myne answer, I dare saye;	say
	For somme wolle helpe all node."	one [of these] will have to help
	Syr Gromer lokyd on theym everychon:	every one
	"Nay, nay, Sir Kyng, thou art butt a dead man;	as good as
	Therfor nowe shalt thou blende."	blond
455	"Abide, Sir Gromer," said Kyng Arthoare,	
	"I have one answere shalle make alle sure."	make everything
	"Lett se," then sayd Sir Gromer,	see
	"Or ellis, so God me help, as I the say,	tell
	Thy dethe thou shalt have with large paye,	to my great pleasure
460	I telle the nowe ensure."	surely
	"Now," sayd the Kyng, "I se, as I gesse,	think
	In the is butt a lytell gentilnesse,	

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- By God that ay is helpan.  
Here is oure answere, and that is alle  
That wemen desyres moste specialle,  
Bothe of fre and bond:  
  
 ever; helping  
 especially  
 unfree
- "I saye no more, bair above al thyng  
Wemen desyre sovereynté, for that is theyr lykyng.  
And that is ther moste desyre.  
To have the rewle of the manlyest men,  
And then at theyr welle. Thus they me dyd ken  
To rule the, Gromer Syre."  
"And she that told the nowe, Sir Arthoure,  
I pray to God, I maye se her been on a fyse;  
For that was my suster, Dame Ragnelle.  
That old scott, God geve her shame.  
Ellics had I made the fulle tame;  
Nowe have I lost moche travaylle.  
  
 their pleasure  
 control  
 Thus they did teach me  
 burn  
 nag  
 Otherwise  
 effort
- "Go where thou wolt, Kyng Arthoure,  
For of me thou maist be evere sure.  
Alas, that I evere se this day!  
Nowe, welle I wolt, myne enimé thou wolt be.  
And art such a pryk shall I nevere gett the;  
My song may be 'Welle-awaye!'"  
"No," sayd the Kyng, "that make I warraunce:  
Some harmys I wolle have to make me defendant,  
That make I God avowe!  
In such a plighe shal thou nevere me fynde;  
And yf thou do, lett me bete and bynde,  
As is for thy best peouf."  
  
 you wish  
 may rest assured  
 know  
 plighe  
 alas  
 [off] thic; guarantee  
 armor; ready for combat  
 an oath  
 have me beaten  
 As living proof
- "Nowe have good day," sayd Sir Gromer.  
"Farewele," sayd Sir Arthoure; "so mott I the,  
I am glad I have so sped."  
Kyng Arthoure turnyd his hors into the playn,  
And soone he mett with Dame Ragnelle agayn,  
In the same place and stede.  
"Syr Kyng, I am glad ye have sped welle,  
I told howe itt wold be, every dellic;  
  
 as I prosper  
 fared  
 spot  
 part

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- Nowe hold that ye have hyghte:  
 500 Since I have sayd your lyf, and nose other,  
 Gawen must me wed, Sir Arthoure,  
 That is a fulle gentillic knyght." Who
- "No, Lady; that I you hyghte I shallie nott faylle.  
 So ye wol be rulyd by my councelle.  
 Your wille then shallie ye have." what; promised  
 As long as
- "Nay, Sir Kyng, nowe wolle I nott so;  
 Openly I wol be weddyd, or I parte the froo  
 Elles shame wolle ye have.  
 Ryde before, and I wolle com after,  
 510 Unto thy courte, Syr Kyng Arthoure.  
 Of no man I wolle shame; Upon; [do] I wish  
 Bethynk you howe I have sayd your lyf.  
 Therfor with me nowe shallie ye nott styrfe,  
 For and ye do, ye be to blame." strive  
 If
- 515 The Kyng of her had greatt shame,  
 Butt forth she rood, thoughte he were grevyd;  
 Tyllie they cam to Karlyle forth they mesyd.  
 Into the courte she rode hym by;  
 For no man wold she spare, securly — was ashamed  
 520 Ilt likyd the Kyng fullle ylle.  
 Alle the contrayre had wonder greatt  
 Fro whens she com, that foulle unswete;  
 They sawe nevere of so lowlie a thynge.  
 Into the halle she went, in certen. indeed
- 525 "Arthoure, Kyng, lett fetche me Sir Gawayn.  
 Before the knyghtes, alle in byng.  
 Have summoned [for] me  
 hast
- "That I may nowe be made sekyn.  
 In welle and wo trowithe pylghte us togeder  
 Before alle thy chivalry.  
 530 This is your geaunt; lett se, have done.  
 Sett forthe Sir Gawayn, my love, anon,  
 For longer taryng kepe nott I."  
 Then cam forthe Sir Gawayn the knyght:  
 "Syr, I am redy of that I you hyghte,  
 have surely  
 let us pledge [our] truthe  
 knyghts  
 pledge; come on, do it  
 Bring  
 longer; suffer  
 for what; promised

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 535 Alle forwardes so fulylle." agreement  
 "God have mercy!" sayd Dame Ragnelle then;  
 "For thy sake I wold I were a fayre woman,  
 For thou art of so good wylle."
- 540 Ther Sir Gawen to her his trowthe phyghe  
 In welle and in woo, as he was a true knyght;  
 Then was Dame Ragnelle dayn. troth  
 "Alas!" then sayd Dame Gaynor; glad  
 So sayd alle the ladies in her bower,  
 And wept for Sir Gawen. Gunnerere  
 545 "Alas!" then sayd bothe Kyng and knyght,  
 That evere he shold wed such a wyfhe. chamber  
 She was so fowle and horible.  
 She had two tethe on every syde person  
 As borys taskes, I wolle sot: hyde. each  
 550 Of lengthe a lage handfull. boar's; dissemble  
In; hand's breadth
- The one task went up and the other down.  
 A mowthe fullle wyde and fowle igrown,  
 With grey herys many on. fouly grown  
 Her lyppes layc lampryd on her chyn; hair; one  
 555 Nek forsothe on her was rose iseen — larpish  
 She was a lothly on! one  
 She wold sot: be weddyd in no maner  
 Butt there were made a krye in all the shyre, Except; proclamation  
 Bothe in town and in borow. borough
- 560 Alle the ladies nowe of the land,  
 She lett kry to com to hand did summon; to visit  
 To kepe that brydale thowte. wedding feast
- So int betylle after on a daye  
 That maryed shold be that fowle maye  
 565 Unto Sir Gawen. date had arrived [when]  
 The daye was comyn the daye shold be;  
 Theroft the ladies had greatt pitey.  
 "Alas!" then gan they sayn.  
 The Queen prayd Dame Ragnelle sekerly — mendantly  
 570 "To be maryed in the mornynge erly.

The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle

"Nay!" she sayd; "By Hevys Kyng,  
That wolle I nevere, for no thyng.  
For ought that ye can saye,

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 575 | "I wol be weddyd alle openly,<br>For with the Kyng suche covenant made I.<br>I putt you ouste of dowsic,<br>I wolle sott to churche tyll Highe Masse tyme<br>And in the open halle I wolle dyne,<br>In myddys of alle the rowte."<br>"I am greed," sayd Dame Gaynour;<br>"Butt me wold thynk moe honour<br>And your worshypp moste."<br>"Ye, as for that, Lady, God you save,<br>This daye my worshypp wolle I have,<br>I tellie you withoutte bose." | <i>ensure you</i><br><i>mid; company</i><br><i>agreed</i><br><i>Only I am thinking about</i><br><i>worship</i><br><i>honor</i><br><i>boast</i> |
| 585 |   |  |

*As did all those of noble rank  
no lie*

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 590 | She was arrayd in the richest maner,<br>More fresher than Dame Gaynor;<br>Her arrayment was worthc thre thousand mark<br>Of good red nobles, styff and stark,<br>So rychely she was begon. | cole; hard<br>done up                          |
| 595 | For alle her rayment, she bare the belle<br>Of fowlinesse, that evere I heard tellie —<br>So fowlic a sowle sawc nevere man.   | Despise; took the prize<br>For; heard<br>sowle |

	For to make a shorrt conclusion, When she was weddyd, they hyed theym home;	<i>At soon as; hastened</i>
600	To messe alle they went.	<i>dinner</i>
	This fowlie Lady bygan the highe dese; She was falle foalle and nott curteys,	<i>occupied first place on the dais</i>
	So sayd they alle verament.	<i>conscious</i>
	When the servyce cam her before,	<i>truly</i>
605	She eate as moche as six that ther woe;	<i>platters</i>
	That mervaylyd many a man.	<i>were there</i>
		<i>(Ad)</i>

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- Her mayles were long yndys thre,  
Therwith she beeke her mete ungodly;  
Therefore she eate alone.
- inches three  
broke her bread unmannery  
she didn't wait for anyone
- 610 She ette thre capons, and also curles thre,  
And greait bake metes she eate up, perde,  
Al men therof had mervaylle.  
Ther was no mete cam her beforee  
Butt she eate hit up, less and more,  
615 That praty, fowle dameselle.  
Alle men then that evere her sawe  
Bad the deville her boorys gnawe,  
Bothe knyght and squyre.  
So she eate tylle mete was done,  
620 Tylle they drewe clothes and had washen,  
As is the gye and maner.
- carlens  
roast; By God  
*But she did not*  
*cruelly*  
*blade; bones*  
*cleared tables*  
*custom*
- Many men wold speke of diverse service;  
I trowe ye may wete knowghe ther was,  
Bothe of tame and wylde.
- 625 In Kyng Arthours court ther was no wonth  
That myghte be gotten with manrys hond,  
Noder in Forest ne in feld.  
Ther were myastralies of diverse countrey.
- various courses  
trust; know enough  
{means}  
luck  
{Off} what  
Neither

[The manuscript is here missing one leaf, containing about seventy lines; the narrative continues at the moment of Ragnelle's and Gawain's wedding night.]

- "A, Sir Gawan, syn I have you wed,  
630 Shewe me your cortesy in bed;  
With ryghte hit may not be denied.
- since  
By
- "Awysse, Sir Gawan," that Lady sayd,  
"And I were fayre ye wold do another brayd,  
Bett of wedlok ye take no bed.
- 635 Yet for Arthours sake lysse me att the leste;  
I pray you do this att my request.  
Lett se howe ye can spede."
- Surely  
(if) take another task  
Unless; regard  
least
- Sir Gawan sayd, "I wolle do more
- fare  
will / undertake to/ do

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- Then for to kyse, and God before!"  
 640 He turnyd hym her unteile. *alward*  
 He sawe her the fayrest creature  
 That evere he sawe, withoute mesure. *compar*  
 She sayd, "Whatt is your wylle?"
- "A, Jhesu!" he sayd; "Whare ar ye?"  
 645 "Sir, I am your wyf, securly. *without doute*  
 Why ar ye so unkynde?" *clouf (unnatural)*  
 "A, Lady, I am to blame.  
 I cry you mercy, my fayre madame —  
 Itt was nott in my mynde. *(I was not thinking)*
- 650 A Lady ye ar fayre in my syghte.  
 And today ye were the fowlyst wyghte *person*  
 That evere I sawe with mise ic. *eye*  
 Wele is me, my Lady, I have you thus" —  
 And brasyd her in his armys and gas her kyse *embraced; did*  
 655 And made geaunt joye, sycurly. *surely*
- "Syr," she sayd, "thus shalle ye me have:  
 Chese of the one, so God me save, *Choose*  
 My beawty wolle nott hold —  
 Wheder ye wolle have me fayre on nyghtes *Whether*  
 660 And as fowle on days to alle men sightes,  
 Or els to have me fayre on days  
 And on nyghtes on the fowlyst wyfe — *wife [of all] of necessity*  
 The one ye must nodes have.  
 Chese the one or the oder.
- 665 Chese on, Sir Knyght, whiche you is levere,  
 Your worshypp for to save." *one; preferable honor*
- "Alas!" sayd Gawan. "The choyse is hard.  
 To chese the best, hit is foward, *confounding*  
 Wheder choyse that I chese:  
 670 To have you fayre on nyghtes and no more,  
 That wold greve my harri ryghis sore,  
 And my worshypp shold I lese. *lose*  
 And yf I desyre on days to have you fayre,  
 Then on nyghtes I shold have a symple repaire. *dissent relations*

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 675 Now fayn wold I chose the best:  
I ne wot in this world whan I shalle saye,  
But do as ye lyt nowe, my Lady gaye.  
The choyse I putt in your fyst:
- happily  
don't know  
*(it) pleases you*  
hand
- 680 "Iwys as ye wolle, I putt it in your hand.  
Lose me when ye lyt, for I am bound;  
I putt the choyse in you.  
Bothe body and goodes, harit, and every dale,  
Ys alle your oan, for to by and sellie —  
That make I God avowe!"
- just  
*Release; bound*  
part  
buy
- 685 "Garamercy, corteys Knyght," sayd the Lady;  
"Of alle erthal knyghies bliswyd most thou be,  
For now am I worshypyd.  
Thou shalle have me fayre bothe day and nyghte  
And evere whyle I lyve as fayre and bryghte;  
Therefore be not greved.
- Many thanks courteous*  
*may*  
*honored properly*  
grieved
- 690 "For I was shapen by nygramancy,  
With my stepdame, God have on her mercy,  
And by enchaustement;  
And shold have bene oderwyse understand,  
Evyn tylle the best of Englaund  
Had weswyd me veramest,  
And also he shold geve me the sovereynté  
Of alle his body and goodes, sycurly.  
Thus was I disformyd;
- transformed; necromancy  
By  
otherwise *for a hag/ perceived*  
*Until best [knight]*  
*truly*  
*mastery*  
*surely*  
On such conditions
- 700 And thou, Sir Knyght, carreyss Gawen,  
Has gevyn me the sovereynté serveya,  
That woll not wrothe the erly ne late.
- What hurt
- 705 "Kyse me, Sir Knyght, evyn now here;  
I pray the, be glad and make good cheare,  
For well is me begon."
- I am well-off*
- Ther they made joye oure of mynde,  
So was it reason and cours of kynde,  
They two theymself alone.  
She thankyd God and Mary mylde
- beyond imagining*  
*So far as it accorded with nature*
- 710 She was recovered of that that she was defoylyd:
- which had defiled her*

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- So dyd Sir Gawen.  
 He made mythe alle in her boore  
 And thankyd of alle Oure Savyoare,  
 I telle you, in certeyn.
- chamber  
 for everything
- 715 With joye and mythe they wakyd tyll daye  
 And than wold ryse that fayre maye.  
 "Ye shalle son," Sir Gawen sayd;  
 "We wolle lyve and slepe tyll pryme  
 And then lett the Kyng calle us to dynne."  
 mid-morning
- 720 "I am greed," then sayd the mayd.  
 Thus lit pasyd forth tyll middaye.  
 "Syr," quod the Kyng, "lett us go and assayc  
 Yf Sir Gawen be on lyve.  
 I am fulle lord of Sir Gawen,
- agreed  
 find out  
 alive  
 fearful for  
 friend  
 gladly make sure
- 725 Nowe lett the fende have hym slayn;  
 Nowe wold I frys preve.
- "Go we nowe," sayd Arthoure the Kyng.  
 "We wolle go se theys upryng,  
 Howe welle that he hathe spod."
- 730 They cam to the chamber, alle incerneyn.  
 "Aryse," sayd the Kyng to Sir Gawen;  
 "Why slepyst thou so long in bed?"  
 "Mary," quod Gawen, "Sir Kyng, sickerly,  
 I wold be glad, and ye wold lett me be,  
 735 For I am fulle welle all eas.  
 Aryde, ye shalle se the dore undone!  
 I trouwe that ye wolle say I am welle去做;  
 I am fulle lothe to rysc."
- measure  
 surely  
 if you would  
 ease  
 trust; well-off  
 completely averse
- 740 Syr Gawen rose, and in his hand he toke  
 His fayr Lady, and to the dore he shoke,  
 And opynyd the doore fulle fayre.  
 She stod in her smok alle by that fyre;  
 Her here was to her knees as red as gold wyre.  
 "Lo, this is my repayee!
- 745 Lo!" sayd Gawen Arthoure untille —  
 "Syr, this is my wyfe, Dame Ragnelle,  
 That sayd oys your lyfe."
- hastened  
 widely  
 night dress right by  
 hair  
 source of comfort  
 unto  
 once

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- He told the Kyng and the Queen hem beforne  
 Howe sodenly from her shap she dyd tornie —  
 "My Lord, nowe be yore leve" —
- in their presence  
 suddenness; never  
 by
- And whate was the cause she forshapen was  
 Syr Gawan told the Kyng both more and lesse.  
 "I thank God," sayd the Queen;  
 "I weryd, Sir Gawan, she wold the have myscaryed;  
 Therefore in my harti I was sore agrevyd.  
 Butt the contrary is here seen!"
- transformed  
 in all details
- thought; harmed
- Ther was game, revelle, and playe,  
 And every man to other gan saye,  
 "She is a fayre wyfie."  
 Than the Kyng them alle gan tolle  
 How did help hym att node Dame Ragnelle,  
 "Or my dethe had bene dyghte."
- did  
 person
- assured
- Ther the Kyng told the Queen, by the Rood,  
 Howe he was bestad in Ingleswod  
 With Sir Geomer Somer Joure,  
 And whate othe the knyght mad hym swere,  
 "Or elles he had slays me ryghte there  
 Withoute mercy or mesure.  
 This same Lady, Dame Ragnelle,  
 From my dethe she dyd help me ryght well,  
 Alle for the love of Gawaen."  
 Then Gawan told the Kyng alle togeder  
 Howe forshapen she was with her stepmoder  
 Tylle a knyght had holpen her agayn.
- Cross  
 bese
- oath
- fully  
 transformed by  
 helped
- Ther she told the Kyng fayre and welle  
 Howe Gawan gave her the sovereynté every delle,  
 And whate choyse she gave to hym.  
 "God thank hym of his curtesye;  
 He savid me from chaunce and vilony  
 That was fulle foulle and grym.  
 Therfore, curteys Knyght and bend Gawan,  
 Shalle I nevere wrathe the serveya,  
 That promysse nowe here I make.
- part
- mischance; evil
- gracious  
 but you surely

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- Whilles that I lyve I shal be obaysaunt; obedient  
785 To God above I shalbe iiii warraunt,  
And severe with you to debate." Great thanks  
  
"Gatamercy, Lady," then sayd Gawan;  
"With you I hold me fulle welle content  
And that I trust to fynde." will ever be the case  
790 He sayd, "My love shalle she have.  
Therafter node she nevere more crave,  
For she hathe bene to me so kynde."  
The Queen sayd, and the ladyes alle,  
"She is the fayrest nowe in this halle,  
795 I swere by Seynt John!  
My love, Lady, ye shalle have evere  
For that ye savid my Lord Arthoure,  
As I am a gentilwoman."
- Syr Gawan gatt on her Gyngolyn  
800 That was a good knyght of strengthe and kynn  
And of the Table Round.  
All every great fest that Lady shold be.  
Of fayraesse she bare away the bewtye,  
Wher she yed on the ground.  
805 Gawan loyd that Lady, Dame Ragnelle;  
In alle his lyfe he loyd nose so welle,  
I tellle you withoute liesyng.  
As a coward he lay by her bothe day and nyghte.  
Nevere wold he haent justyng aysyghte;  
810 Therait mervaylyd Arthoure the Kyng.
- She prayd the Kyng for his gentilnes,  
"To be good lord to Sir Gromer, iwyse,  
Of that to you he hathe offendyd." intend  
815 "Yes, Lady, that shalle I nowe for your sake,  
For I wott welle he may nott amedes make:  
He dyd to me fulle unhead."  
Nowe for to make you a short conclusyon,  
I cast me for to make an end fulle sone  
Of this gentylle Lady.

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 820 She lyyd with Sir Gawen batt yersa five; *five years*  
 That grevid Gawen alle his lyf,  
 I tellle you securly.
- In her lyfe she grevyd hym nevere; *offended*  
 Therfor was nevere woman to hym lever. *dearer*  
 825 Thus leves my talkyng. *end; performance*  
 She was the fayrest Lady of alle Englaund,  
 When she was on lyve, I understand; *dare say*  
 So sayd Arthoure the Kyng.  
 Thus endythe the adventure of Kyng Arthoure.
- 830 That oft in his days was grevyd sore, *sorely harassed*  
 And of the weddynge of Gawan.  
 Gawan was weddyd oft in his days;  
 Batt so well he nevere lovd woman always, *constantly*  
 As I have haed men sayn. *heard*
- 835 This adventure befalle in Ingleswod,  
 As good Kyng Arthoure oa banting yod; *went*  
 Thus have I hard men tellle.  
 Nowe God, as thou were in Bethieme born,  
 Suffer nevere her soules be foloene *their; lost*  
 840 In the brynyng fyre of helle! *burning*
- And, Jhesu, as thou were borne of a virgyn,  
 Help hym oute of sorowe that this tale dyd devyne, *make up*  
 And that nowe is alle hast, *[do] that*  
 For he is besett with gaylours many *jailors*  
 845 That kepen hym fulle sewerly,  
 With wyles wrong and wrastie. *guard; securely*  
 Nowe God, as thou art veray Kyng Royalle,  
 Help hym oute of daunger that made this tale *tricks; powerful*  
 For therin he hathe bene long. *true*
- 850 And of greatt pety help thy seruaunt,  
 For body and soull I yeld into thyne hand, *out of pity*  
 For paynes he hathe strong.

Here endythe the weddynge of  
 Syr Gawan and Dame Ragnelle  
 For helping of Kyng Arthoure.

### Notes

As I have mentioned in the introduction to the text, the scribe's lesser forms are often interchangeable, and strokes ambiguous. Often transcription will therefore be somewhat arbitrary. Where the scribe's forms are clear, I have reproduced them in my readings; where they are unclear, I have opted for forms closer to modern conventions of spelling. This has resulted in some inconsistencies, such as a mix of spellings like *hir* and *hyr*. In general, I have regarded final flourishes as meaningless, and so given, for example, *knyghr* and *witc* (in agreement with Madden and Hartwell) in preference to *knyghe* and *withe* (the usual readings in Sumner, Whiting, and Sands). In cases of double *l* with a stroke, I have retained a final *e* (i.e., *welle*, *falle*, *Ragnelle*). These ambiguities of writing practice are not uncommon in medieval and Renaissance vernacular manuscripts, and the scribe certainly did not regard them as affecting the meaning of the text in any essential way. Consequently I have not recorded in these notes all the instances where spelling differs from edition to edition because the scribe's forms can legitimately be read in a variety of ways. *Ragnelle* has been edited more times than most other Middle English romances; I have benefitted greatly by consulting these earlier editions, and at the same time I have had to make choices among confusing, confused, and sometimes contradictory readings. These differences among editions have the effect of making the text of *Ragnelle* seem even more unpredictable in its orthography than it actually is. This has been complicated by attempts at editorial "normalization"; this is especially the case with Sands (likely the best known print of the poem), where standardization is itself inconsistent, and new spellings and word forms are added to the manuscript's readings. The present edition tries to offer a readable text that leaves the manuscript readings unaltered wherever possible. I have modernized spellings, giving "j" for "ȝ," "u" for "v" and "w," "ȝ" for "u" and "w," and "w" for "u" and "v" in accord with current usage.

Abbreviations: R = Rawlinson MS, M = Madden, S = Sumner, W = Whiting, Sands = Sands, H = Hartwell. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

11      *belovid by ther*. R: *belovid thar*; M adds *by* for sense, which I follow.

16      *Inglewood*. The story is set in Inglewood Forest, near Carlisle (see lines 127, 132, 325) in Cumberland, in northwest England, on the border of Scotland. Inglewood Forest (whose Anglo-Saxon name, meaning "the wood of the

### *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

Angles," suggests an English settlement in contested British territory) ceased to exist in the nineteenth century. Its mention connects *Ragnelle* with the settings for *Arowing* (line 65) and *Awntys* (line 709). The Tarn Wathelene (mentioned in *Arowing*, *Awntys*, and *Marriage*) was located within Ingewood Forest; see *Awntys*, line 2 and note. For these tales of Sir Gawain, the woods and lakes of Ingewood and the environs of Carlisle were locales with strong Arthurian and marvelous associations.

- 26 *hounder*. R: *gounder*; M reads as *hounder*, H reads as *houndr*; S, W emend to *gf(r)founder*.
- 43 *dheron*. R: *deron*. The manuscript reading has presented a puzzle to editors. Most have taken *deron* (see line 26) to mean "covertly," though such a spelling is not, so far as I know, attested elsewhere. Again, *deron* might seem a past participle of *deren*, "to wound," though, likewise, no spellings resembling *deron* occur. I have taken it therefore as a case in which the scribe substitutes *d* for *th*; other instances occur at lines 176 (*oder*), 196 (*amoder*), 383 (*Neder*), 386 (*fader*), and so on, though in all of these cases the scribe substitutes *d* for a voiced, intervocalic *th*, not for an initial unvoiced sound. I take the line to mean that the wounded deer fell down on the spot. To read this as a form of *deme* would suggest either that the deer fell blindly into a thicket, or fell into a blind thicket (which concealed Sir Gromer).
- 47 *serve well*. R: *avel*. The scribe writes *s* with -er abbreviation stroke over the letter, followed by *well* with a stroke through the ascenders. M reads *serve well*, which makes good sense in this context; I follow scribal spelling of this reading as in S, W. H reads *zirwell*, and emends to *quell*.
- 48 *greuse*. S derives the meaning of this word from the Old English word for "grass," and is followed by W. Sands calls it "a puzzling line," and, following S, suggests the deer touched the grass (i.e., died). It seems certain, however, that this scene is an "assay," in which the hunter measures the deer's fat (*grasse*, meaning grease or fat) as a preliminary to the ritualized "beheading" or butchering of the animal. Such scenes occur in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, in which the hero proves his royal identity by demonstrating his knowledge of the ritual, and in the Middle English *Parlement of the Thre Ages* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Instructions for the assay are given in several hunting manuals; see notes to lines 1325 ff. of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the Tolkien-Gordon-Davis edition, where the "gres" of the "fowlest" deer is

### Notes

two fingers in breadth. H also notes this connection, as does Susan Dannerbaum [Crane] in her note on the line (*Explicator* 40 [1982], 3-4).

- 62 *Gromer Somer Joure.* H reads *Jouer* (with expanded abbreviation) and emends to *Jour*. The name seems less connected with chivalry than with folklore. Malory in the *Morte Darthur* names Sir Gromore Somyr Jouer (or Sir Gromoreson in the Winchester manuscript) among the faction of twelve knights who align themselves with Gawain's brothers Mordred and Aggravayne in the ambush of Lancelot (see Works, p. 1164, and also pp. 343, 346, 1148). Among the others in the faction are Sir Gyngolyne, the son of Sir Gawain and (according to the present romance) Ragnelle (see line 799). In *Turke* (see text and notes at lines 320 ff. in this volume), Sir Gawain transforms the pagan "Turk" by beheading him, and he becomes Sir Gromer. But here his dangerousness, his sudden appearance deep in the woods, and his name would seem to connect Sir Gromer Somer Jouer to the festivities of midsummer's day and night, and to the spirits and the "great and ugly gyanis marching as if they were alive" associated with this occasion in England through the sixteenth century (George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936], p. 153). In this respect, he shares some traits with the Green Knight, in *Greene Knight* (text and notes in this volume) and still more with the eerie intruder of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, who exhibits striking similarities to the participants at celebrations of the agricultural year. The name *Gromer* may simply be a version of "groom," i.e., "man," as in "bridegroom" (compare line 50, where this term is applied to Sir Gromer), or a derivative from "gram," "angry." In *Marriage*, the lady tells Gawain that her wicked stepmother not only cast a spell on her, but "witched my brother to a cartish" shape (line 179). In *Ragnelle*, there's no evidence that Sir Gromer is bewitched, and he is without doubt a knight, as Arthur's greetings and descriptions make clear. See also note on Gyngolyne, line 799 below.
- 75 *I have the nowe art avayle.* For the use of this phrase to express triumph, see OED, "avail," sb., 1b.
- 77 *defye.* The word *defye* carries a quasi-technical meaning in the context of chivalric honor; it implies a public challenge, which is simultaneously a denunciation and a demand for open, physical vindication of one's honor, and is therefore quite the opposite of what Sir Gromer Somer Jouer does here. See MED, "defien" v. 1, 2.

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 80 where thou most crave. Arthur's offer to Sir Gromer anticipates the riddle the latter poses to the King — to name "whate wemen love best" (line 91). In the same way, Sir Gromer's remark — "Thy lyfe is in my hand" (line 107) is directly echoed in Ragnelle's identical claim (line 256).
- 86 *covsyn.* M, S, W, Sands: *censyn*.
- 91 *best in feld and town* is written into margin; this hypermetrical tag may be part of a lost line.
- 96 *fremde.* R: *frendir*; M reads *fremde*, which I follow.
- 104 *endyng.* R: *end*; I emend for the sake of rhyme.
- 128 *huryng.* W misprints *hysyng*.
- 149 *By Mary flower.* This is an elliptical phrase, meaning, "Mary, flower among women," or "flower of womankind."
- 172 *lese.* R: *leve*; M reads *lese*. H reads R as *lose*, but follows M's emendation, as I do.
- 194 *they.* R: *the*; M reads *they*, which I follow.
- 212 *joylle.* R: *ffayld*; M reads *joyll*, which I follow.
- 235 *her.* R: *he*; M reads *her*, which I follow.
- 256 ff. Ragnelle's warning here precisely repeats the boast her brother, Sir Gromer, had made to Arthur at line 107 and so emphasizes the parallel between the compacts into which the king is forced. See also line 80 and note.
- 266 *If I help the nott, thow art butt dead.* R: *Batt I warn the if I help the nott, thou art butt dead;* I follow M in omitting the phrase repeated from previous line, as a probable copyist's error.
- 273 *Whare is your deyree, faire Lady.* Arthur's question ironically solicits from Ragnelle a concrete reply to the enigma Sir Gromer has set for him. In fulfil-

*Notes*

- ing her desire for Gawain, Arthur presumably obtains the answer to what all women desire, and answers Sir Groser's challenge as well (see lines 467-72).
- 280     *a knyght to wed*. The line involves a pun: a knight to marry, and a knight as pledge of good faith ("to wed"). See OED, *wed* sb., 2a.
- 293     *Allr byske ic hym also*. In making individual consent — rather than family or state interests, or priestly authority — the ultimate basis for a valid marriage, the poem reflects central doctrinal positions taught from the twelfth century; see R. H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974). Ragnelle makes the same point, concerning her own right to choose, at line 310.
- 302     *sewer*. S (followed by Sands) glosses this word adverbially, as "varely," but it seems more likely a form of the verb *swe*, "to assure": through me Gawain may save your life, or assure that your death comes about.
- 314     *lore*. R: *lore fowit*; I follow M in omitting the final word, which seems a confused rhyme.
- 316     *ther ic a byrd men calle an owle*. The precise import of this line is unclear; it may be that a part of the text is missing here. In echoing herself from line 310, Ragnelle seems to mean owl to refer both to her own monstrousness (the owl was chiefly a negative symbol in late medieval writings) and to her natural rights as a human being, or to her repellent appearance and her assertion that she is in reality a *Lady* (line 315).
- 319     *Dame Ragnelle*. The name is otherwise unknown in Arthurian romance. In *Patience*, a poetic version of the Jonah story usually attributed to the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the gentile sailors on whose ship the Hebrew prophet tries to escape from the Lord curse him by "Ragnell" (line 188), apparently intended to be taken as the name of a pagan god or devil. See the note in J. J. Anderson's edition (Manchester, 1969), p. 59. In the Digby play of *Mary Magdalene* a heathen priest and his servant perform a comic exorcism in broken Latin, and then call on the gods "Ragnell and Roffyn" (line 1200; *Late Medieval Religious Plays of . . . Digby 133*, ed. Donald C. Baker and others, EETS o.s. 283 [Oxford, 1982], p. 64). The Chester play of "Balaam" has that gentile prophet invoke his gods "Raffyn and Reynell" (line 213); the latter is

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

given as "Ragnell" in one manuscript. Likewise, the Chester play of "Anti-christ" has Antichrist call for aid:

Help, Sathanas and Lucyfere!  
Belzebubb, bould bachelere!  
Ragnell, Ragnell, thou art my deare! (lines 645-47)

(*The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills, EETS s.s. 3 [Oxford, 1974], pp. 87 and 434; see also commentary by the same editors, EETS s.s. 9 [Oxford, 1986], pp. 69 and 347.) This widespread equivalence between the name Ragnelle and an exotic pagan god or devil may be echoed in Gawain's intentionally exaggerated comparison of Ragnelle to "a fende" and "Belsabub" (lines 344-45), or Arthur's reference to "the fende" (line 725), by which he may mean that he takes Ragnelle to be an evil spirit. In *Marriage*, the lady does not have a name, but she says her stepmother "witched me" so that "I must walke in womans liknesse, / Most like a fende of hell" (lines 181-82). These associations may have made Ragnelle seem more spectral and frightening for a late medieval audience (like the ghost of Guenvere's mother in *Awatyr*), and may have increased the ambiguity that surrounds her in the poem.

- 342 ff. Gawain's vow to "wed her and wed her agayn" out of friendship and fealty to Arthur gives the motive of male chivalric loyalty precedence over romantic personal love, and makes clear how women operate in romance as the intermediate term in the bonds between men.
- 366 *itt.* M supplies it before shallr as necessary for grammar and sense; the present emendation follows M's suggestion, though the spelling has been brought into accord with the scribe's convention.
- 419 *Ye goo full syne, I wolle noot lyre.* H emends the line to echo more fully Chaucer, Wife of Bath's Tale (line 931): "He gooth ful sy the sothe, I wol nat lyre." This resemblance is one of the most striking evidences of direct connection between the two versions of the story.
- 439 *welle.* M, S, W, Sands emend to *well*.
- 440 *shake.* S takes the word to mean distance, and is followed by Sands. H rearranges lines 440-42, so that *shake* becomes a verb, "to go" (compare *shoke*, line 740).

### Notes

But the phrase seems clearly adverbial, a variation on the still-current idiom, "no great shakes," and means "quickly"; see OED, "shake," sb. 1, L.

- 456 alle. R: ale; M reads all; I follow S, W in preserving the usual spelling.
- 476 her. R: he; M reads her, which I follow.
- 499 *that ye have*. Sands misprints *that he have*.
- 508 *wolle ye have*. W misprints *wolle y have*; Sands misreads *welle ye have*.
- 525 ff. Ragnelle here addresses Arthur.
- 528 *an togeder*. Sands misreads *an togeder*.
- 536 *God have mercy*. R: Godhavemercy, written as one word.
- 548 ff. The description of Ragnelle here complements the initial portrait (lines 231 ff.) in its extravagant hideousness, though the specific details are sometimes at odds ("Her nek long," line 238, as against no neck at all, line 555, for example).
- 562 *shorowe*. S glosses this word as "thoroughly," and Sands and H reproduce this. It is certainly a form of *shrow*, meaning a specific time, an interval, or an occasion; see OED, *shrow* sb. 1.
- 564 *fowle maye*. R: *fowle*; M inserts *lady* for rhyme and sense, followed by S, W, Sands. I follow H's insertion of *maye*, which duplicates the rhyme at lines 715–16 and better maintains the meter.
- 571 *ye*. R: *we*; I emend for the sake of sense.
- 592 *thr thousand mark*. R: *thr milie mark*. I have expanded the abbreviation (a form of Latin *mille*). The figure (about two thousand pounds) signifies not a specific amount, but simply the extravagance of Ragnelle's clothing.
- 612 *All*. W: *All*.
- 635 *for Arthours*. Sands misreads *of Arthours*.

*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

- 644 *he.* R: *she;* M reads *he,* which I follow.
- 650 *or.* W: *are.*
- 652 *ir.* R: *im* (plural); M reads *ir,* which I follow.
- 656 ff. The choice offered by Ragnelle — "layre on syghtes" (line 659) or "fayre on days" (line 661) — is the same in *Marriage* and in Gower's "Tale of Florent" (See G. C. Macaulay, *Confessio Amantis* in *The English Works of John Gower*, EETS o.s. 81, Vol. 1 [Oxford, 1900], 13411 ff.) The choice in the Wife of Bath's *Tale* is "foal and old" and "true, humble wyf" or "yong and fair" and "take yoare adventure" on sexual faithfulness (lines 1220 ff.). Chaucer's version makes more explicit the conflict embedded in the other three versions, namely public vs. private male enjoyment of the lady's sexual attractions. The happy ending allows the hero (putting it crudely) to have his cake and eat it too.
- 659 *syghter.* R: *nyght;* M reads *nygtes,* which I follow.
- 672 *lise.* R: *lose;* M reads *lise,* followed by S, W, H.
- 677 *do as ye lise.* Gawain's disposing himself to Ragnelle's desire brings to convergence a crucial array of themes and verbal echoes in the poem. By this accord, Ragnelle has *sovereynté* (line 697), which breaks the spell; Ragnelle had said to Arthur that women most desire *sovereynté*, and Arthur in turn had promised her fulfillment of her "desyre" (line 400). This knowledge of women's "rewle" had given Arthur "rule" over Gromer (lines 470, 472), whose own desire of Arthur was to know "what wemen love best" (line 91). When Gawain has given "her *sovereynté* every delice" (line 776), Ragnelle puts her desire at his will (line 784), just as Arthur (at Ragnelle's wish) makes peace with Gromer (lines 811 ff.).
- 691 *sygramancy.* This use of a learned word to give credibility to the magical transformation is repeated in Carle, line 405, suggesting that even specialized Latin terms might be appropriated for specific functions within the popular romances.
- 716 *maye.* R: *maysd;* M reads *maye,* followed by S, W, H.
- 722 *Syrs.* R: *syr;* M reads *syrs,* followed by S, W, H.

### Notes

- 730 *incerteyn*. Previous editors have taken *in certeyn* as two words (meaning "without doubt"), partly because of the slight gap between them in the manuscript. Such a space often occurs between components that modern print conventions present as unbroken words (i.e., *be foly*, line 15, *be shirk*, line 66, *I wyr*, line 354), just as separate forms are joined (*Aþmen*, line 612). The form *incertaine* is unusual but not rare, and makes good sense as specifying the state of mind of the royal entourage at this point. See OED, *incertain*, and MED, *incertain(e)*.
- 737 *goor*. Sands reads *gow*, perhaps emended for sake of rhyme.
- 743 *here*. R: *herd*; M (followed by S, W, Sands, H): *her*; I adjust spelling for scribal convention.
- 759 *is a fayre*. Sands misprints *is faire*.
- 761 *help*. R: *held*; so M, S, W, Sands. I emend to the common idiom on the basis of sense, as does H.
- 773 The responsibility of Ragnelle's stepmother for her enchantment links the romance to traditions of domestic intrigue and intergenerational, interfamilial hostility characteristic of fairy tales. Marriage and Gower's "Tale of Florest" also assign the responsibility to the "Stepmoder for an hate" (Macaulay [see note on line 656 above], *Confessio Amantis* I.1844), while the Wife of Bath's Tale seems to imply that the lady acts on her own.
- 799 Gyngelyn. Sir Gawain's son (French *Guinglain*) is the hero of the Middle English romance *Libessus Desconas* (the Englingish of "Le bel inconnu," The Fair Unknown), which survives in six different versions (ed. M. Mills, EETS 261 [Oxford, 1969]). In the romance, the hero is begotten by Gawain "be [by] a forest syde" (line 9); his mother, who is unnamed, rears him in secret, not revealing his identity. "For douate of wykkode loos" (line 17) — for fear of shame attaching itself to her or to her son. The Lambeth version contains a title: "A tretys of one Gyngalyne . . . that was Bastard sos to sir Gawayne" (ed. Mills, p. 75). In Malory, "sir Gyngelyn, Gawaynes sonne" is defeated by Tristram in his madness (Works, pp. 494-95); in the climactic action of the story, syr Gyngalyne makes one of the twelve accompanying his uncles Mordred and Aggravayne in the ambush of Lancelot (Works, p. 1164). Among the other knights in this group are Gawain's other sons, Florence and Lovell (who, according to Malory, "were begotyn uppon Sir Braundes syster"; Works, p.

### *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*

1147, and see *Jeanie* line 320 and note), Sir Galleron of Galway (see *Carlisle*, line 43 and *Awnyrs*, line 417 and note), and Sir Gronose Somryt Joure, the antagonist of the present romance whom Malory's Gawain brings to the Round Table. As Malory notes, all of Lancelot's antagonists "were of Scotlande, other ellis of sir Gawaynes kynne, other wel willers to his beþtheren."

805      Gawain's unflagging devotion here contrasts with his behavior in French stories, where he tirelessly pursues knightly adventure, as in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*; in the latter poem, Gawain's taste for exploits disrupts the hero's love of his lady. *As a coward* (line 808) ironically recalls line 12 above, "For cowardes were evermore shent"; Ragnelle's transformation has also changed the nature of chivalric virtue, or at least the court's view of it.

810      *mervaylyd*. S. W read *movaylyd* and emend to present reading; I follow M. H in transcribing as *m* with superior abbreviation stroke.

*Arthoure the Kyng*. R: *kyng Arthoure*; M reads *Arthoure the kyng*, which I follow.

832      This reference to Owain's many liaisons obliquely recalls his reputation as *roué* in French romance, which appears in *Jeanie* as well.

838      *bore*. Sans misprints *boren*.

844      *beferr* with *gylours*. The claim that the composer of *Ragnelle* is imprisoned recalls Malory's description of himself as "a knyght prisoner," and his request that readers "praye for me . . . that God sende me good delyveraunce" (*Works*, pp. 180, 1260). Field (see Select Bibliography, above) suggests that Malory may have been the author of this poem.

847      *Royalle*. R: *Ryoall*.

## *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

### *Introduction*

The romance of *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle* demonstrates Gawain's surpassing chivalry in what seems a most unlikely setting, a carl's castle. *Carl* (from Old Norse) means simply "man" in Middle English, but is almost always used in a condescending or condescending way, identifying someone who is not only low on the social scale, but often also crude and physically violent: Chaucer's drunken Miller, who knocks doors off their hinges with his head, is a "stout carl." *Carl* is a cognate of the Old English *charf*, a word meaning the opposite of "noble" or "gentle," and referring to someone of low estate, without rank or consequence — a boor, or a "boy" (see, for example, lines 193, 209, 216, and so on in *Turke*). A "carl's castle" is therefore as much a contradiction in terms as "popular chivalric romance," and such a locale could only exist inside this hybrid literary form. As an imaginative space, however, it turns out to be a wonderful place for deflating popular notions of chivalric conduct, for it shows that Gawain retains his knightly courtesy even when he is not exclusively among gentles — or at least when he *seems* not to be among his noble peers, for the Castle of Carlisle turns out to be a gentle knight after all.

The adventure of Carlisle begins with a royal hunt (as in *Ragnelle*, *Marriage*, *Arowing*, and *Awazyn*). The pursuit of a deer leads Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin (the trio linked by oaths in *Arowing*) to become lost in a wood, and then to seek an unlikely refuge with the Carle. Even the knights' initial conversations, among themselves and with the porter, set up contrasts between Baldwin's apprehensive uncertainty, Kay's haughty sense of the rights of lordship, and Gawain's unwavering courtesy. The Carle presents several tests, implicit and explicit, of the Arthurian knights' chivalry; these include the knights' reactions to the porter and to the Carle's wild menagerie, Gawain's courteous greeting before the Carle, the treatment of the horse at the barn, the hurling of the deadly spear, the drinking and feasting, and the love scenes (first with the wife, then the daughter). The last and most important of these episodes is missing in *Carlisle*, though it appears in the later *Carle of Carlisle* (in this volume); in this crucial scene, Gawain courteously accedes to the Carle's request for beheading, which breaks the spell that had bound him to "caribus cortesey" (line 278) and transforms him to a gentle knight. Gawain's success in

### *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

these tests consists in the conspicuous restraint he exercises over his own powers and prerogatives, his perfect willingness to concede the Carle's rights of property and control within his own domain, even when his fellow knights see no need to do so. As in *Ragnelle*, the hero gains control over his situation by giving up the power that he apparently possesses. *Carlisle* makes a glowing testimonial to the ineluctable rightness of chivalric values as practiced by a true knight (as opposed to the reckless Kay and Baldwin).

Sir Gawain's mediation of the tension between the knightly prerogatives of the Round Table and the local power of an individual subject makes up the central story of *Golognar*, and arises as well in *Ragnelle* and *Awynys*. But *Carlisle* shapes its plot so that such issues are not defined in terms of lordship, territorial control, or individual knightly prowess, but rather within a peculiar framework of personal or even domestic chivalry. The bedroom scene, where (under the Carle's watchful instruction) Gawain restrains himself from making sexual advances to the naked wife (lines 445 ff.), epitomizes this emphasis in *Carlisle*. It resembles the episode with Baldwin's wife in *Avowyng*, the wedding night in *Ragnelle*, or the bedroom encounters — more masked and more suggestive — in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Here in *Carlisle*, the bed temptation enacts a crude but unmistakable demonstration of Sir Gawain's courteous respect for the Carle and for his proprietary rights over his wife and household. The ensuing union between Gawain and the Carle's daughter confirms the relationship of equality between the two men: it establishes the Carle's right to give her in marriage to a noble husband, and Gawain's acceptance of her as a legal and proper wife (lines 565 ff.) makes clear that the match entails no "disparagement" or social disparity between husband and wife.

The woman gives in marriage reconciles father and husband; the wedding formally draws Gawain from Arthur's family into the Carle's household, marks the restoration of the Carle to his proper identity, and looks forward to the more elaborate feast that rounds off the poem (lines 591 ff.), where the former Carle courteously kneels to King Arthur and becomes a knight of the Round Table. Because *Carlisle* does not contain a beheading-disenchantment scene (like that in *Carle*, *Turke*, *Greene Knight*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), the knight's initial transformation or restoration appears less striking and less motivated. Yet through the Carle's vow to establish a chantry for the souls of his slain victims (lines 517 ff.), the romance makes his changeover a part of its overall drive towards reunion and communal solidarity; his desire to effect a reconciliation with the dead gives shape to his rejection of his former behavior, or, in fact, his entire former identity as the "charlish" Carle. As in the two episodes of *Awynys*, the memorialization of the dead, as both a religious and chivalric act, demonstrates and even increases the honorable renown of the living.

### *Introduction*

The monstrous bearing of the Carle, his wild animal companions, and the challenges he poses to the Arthurian knights may all have been associated in earlier narratives with a preternatural or mythic figure. In *Carlile*, however, these details function to make him appear an antagonist of chivalry, as does his social status as *carl* in the views of Kay and Baldwin. The poem begins with Arthur's court at Cardiff in Wales (lines 19 ff.); again, an English popular romance places the King in residence in a peripheral Celtic territory. The Carle's castle seems remote and mysterious, surrounded by "myst" and "mor" (line 121), though it turns out he is lord of Carlisle in Cumberland, a center for Arthurian adventure (and Arthur's own court) in so many of the Gawain romances. As usual, Gawain's role is to bring the strange, the threatening, and the resistant within the ambit of the Round Table; he does this by acting out his "olde curteisye" (as Chaucer's Squire calls it), imposing home values on the unfamiliar, making the antagonists of chivalry its allies. In the course of its narrative, however, *Carlile* makes clear that the Carle was never the enemy of proper leadership or genuine courtesy; the deference performed within his household and family reproduces an ideal version of the values that prevail at Arthur's court. Gawain's courtesy therefore does not so much convert the strange into the familiar, as show how the uncourtly mistake the universality of the familiar: the Carle turns out to be a proper knight and lord awaiting the transformation that will make his true nature and status visible to all.

The codes of conduct practiced in the court of the greatest king of Britain and the "castle" of a carl could fundamentally agree only in a chivalric romance. The unity of *Sir Gawain* and the *Carle of Carlile* consists in its coherently popular rendition of ostensibly aristocratic, chivalric values, embodied equally in Sir Gawain and a metamorphosed carl. Moreover, the poem is stylistically all of a piece, so that Arthur's call to the hunt, the somewhat spurious roster of knights of the Round Table, Kay's crassness, Baldwin's mincingness, Gawain's steadfastness, the Carle's bluntness, or the daughter's frank concern about her noble sexual partner — all are given in the same lively register. The boisterous and blunt manner of the Carle and his household is itself a central feature of the poem's narrative effect, and this is in turn a main source of enjoyment for readers of *Carlile*.

### *Text*

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlile* was probably composed in the northwest of England around 1400, and copied by a scribe from the northwest midlands. It survives in a single manuscript, Porkington MS 10 (also known as Harlech MS 10, and Beogynlyn MS), in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth; this copy, made perhaps in Shropshire, dates from about 1460 or a little later. *Carlile* occurs near

### *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

the beginning, at folios 12-26v. The manuscript is truly a miscellany, containing lyrics, Christmas carols, prophecies, prognostications, a chronicle, meteorological, astrological, botanical, and agricultural tracts, moral, devotional, and instructional writings, a saint's life, popular bawdy tales, and a prose romance. The scribe of *Carlisle* has drawn lines and brackets to mark the standard three-line unit (couplet plus tail-rhyme); these markings are themselves sometimes irregular, however, and do not give clear guidance for larger units or stanza breaks. Nonetheless, the rhyme scheme and the movement of the narrative clearly indicate that *Carlisle* is written in twelve-line tail-rhyme stanzas, ordered abccbdibeeb, though rhymes are sometimes defective and stanzas irregular. I have followed the practice of earlier editors in inserting stanza breaks, though because of the text's uncertainties the present edition sometimes differs in where stanzas begin or end.

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscript*

National Library of Wales, Porthcawl MS 10 (also known as Harlech MS 10 or Brugyni MS).

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Ackerman, Robert W., ed. *Syr Gawayne and the Carle of Carelyle*. University of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology, 8. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1947.

Kurvinen, Aavo, ed. *Sir Gawayne and the Carle of Carlisle: In Two Versions*. Suomalais-Ugrilaisen Seuran Toimituksia (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae). Series B.71.2. Helsinki, 1951.

Sands, Donald B. 1966. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Shibata, Yoshitaka. "Sir Gawayne and the Carle of Carlisle: A Japanese Translation." *Tohoku Gakuen University Review: Essays and Studies in English Language and Literature* (*Tohoku Gakuen Daigaku Ronshu, Eigo-Eibangaku*) 75 (1984), 1-37.

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- Lystosmyth, lordyngas, a lyttil stonde  
Of on that was sekor and sounde  
And doughty in his dede.  
He was as meke as mayde in hour  
5 And thereto styfe in every stour;  
Was non so doughty in dede.  
Dedus of armas wytlost lese  
Seche he wolde in war and pees  
In mony a strange lede.  
10 Certaynly, wytlostyn fabull  
He was wytt Artier at the Rounde Tabell,  
In romans as we reede.
- Listen; while  
one; sure and true  
strong  
Humble; chamber  
in addition unyielding; basic
- Dread; lie  
Seek; peace  
strange country  
Certainly; falsehood  
with  
romance; read
- His name was Syr Gawene:  
Moche woeschepe in Bretten he wan,  
15 And hardy he was and wyghte.  
The Yle of Breteyn cleppyd ys  
Betwyn Skotland and Ynglande iways,  
In storri iwryte aryghte.  
Wallys ys an angull of that yle;  
20 At Candyf sojornde the Kynge a whylle  
Wytt mony a gentyll knyghte  
That wolde to Ynglande to hontie,  
As grete lordys dothe and be wonte,  
Wytt hardy lordys and wygghte.
- honor; Britain; earned  
strong  
Ile; [the area] is called  
(That takes in); indeed  
history written  
Wales; corner  
Cardiff sojourned  
With  
wished to go; hunt  
are accustomed  
With; strong
- Kynge Arvur to his lordis gan saye  
As a lorde ryall that well maye,  
"Do us to have a Masse.  
Byschope Baldwin schall hit don;  
Then to the forrest woll we gon,  
25 All that evyr her ys,  
For nowe is grece-tyme of the yeer,
- did  
royal  
Let there be  
Baldwin; perform  
will; go  
have  
{animals'} sleep time

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- That barons bolde schulde hoot the der,  
And reysse hem of her reste."  
Wondor glad was Syr Mowrke;  
35 So was the knyght Sir Key Caratocke,  
And other mor and lase.
- Glade was Launcelet de Lacke,  
So was Syr Percivall, I undortake  
And Lanfallie, I wene.  
40 So was Syr Eweyn the Uyttyras  
And Syr Lot of Laudya.  
That hardy was and kene;  
Syr Gaytefer and Syr Galerowne,  
Syr Costantys and Syr Raynbrown,  
45 The Knyght of Armas Grene.  
Syr Gawen was Stwarde of the halle;  
He was master of hem all  
And buskyte hem bedenne.
- The Kyngas uncul, Syr Mordred,  
50 Nobull knyghtnes wyt hym gan lede,  
In romans as men rode.  
Syr Yngelis, that gentylle knyghte,  
Wyst hym be lede houndys wygght  
That well coude do her dede.  
55 Syr Lebyus Dyskonus was thare  
Wytt proude men les and mare  
To make the donec der bledc;  
Syr Petrypas of Wynchylise,  
A nobull knyght of chevalte,  
60 And stost was on a stede.
- Syr Grandos and Syr Ferr Unknowthe,  
Meryly they sewyde wyn mouthe.  
Wytt hounds that wer wyght;  
Syr Biaschelis and Ironsyde,  
65 Monny a doughty that day con ryde  
On hoes fayt and lyghte,  
Ironsidge, as I wene,
- barons; deer  
start them from their cover  
Exceedingly; Marrok  
Key Coradoc  
greater (in rank); less
- Lancelot of the Lake  
Perceval; dare say  
Lanval; think  
Eweyn son of Urien  
Lothian
- Goffier; Galleron  
Constantine; Reinbrun  
Grene  
Steward  
them  
readied them right away
- King's uncle; Mordred  
with; did lead
- Engely  
strong  
perform their work  
Le Bel Inconnu
- dun deer blood  
Petipace; Winchelsea  
chivalry  
reed
- Fair Unknown  
pursued with shoun
- Broadbyle; Ironside  
Many; warrior; did  
twif  
understand

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

	Gat the Kayght of Armes Grene	Begot; Green
	On a lady beygght —	
70	Sertenly, as I understande,	Certainly; dare say
	That fayr may of Blanche Loande,	maid; Blanchland
	In boar that lovely wyghte.	chamber; person
	Ironsye, as I wene,	understand
	Iarmyd he wolde ryde full clesse,	Armed; completely
75	Wer the soone nevyr so hoot.	Were; sun; hot
	In wynste he wolde armes bere;	bear
	Gyantus and he wer ever at were	Giant; were; war
	And alway at the debate.	always; strife
	Fawcile Honde byght ys stede.	"Tawnyfoot" is named his steed
80	His armys and his odir wede	other gear
	Full fayr and goode hit was:	
	Of asur for sothe he bare	[A shield] of azure truly
	A gryffyn of golde full feyr	[Displaying] a griffin; fair
	Iset full of golde floarrus.	Embellished; fleurs-de-lis
85	He coade mot of vencry and of wer	knew; hunting; war
	Then all the kynges that wer ther;	Than
	Full oft asy hem he wolde.	put them to trial
	Brennyng dragons hadde he slayn,	Piety
	And wylde ballas mony wos	many overcome
90	That gresely wer iholde.	grisly; regarded
	Byge barrons he hadde iholde.	Strong; captured
	A hardyer knygght myght not be fonde;	found
	Full herdy he was and bolde.	courageous
	Therfor ha was callyd, as I hard say,	he; heard
95	The Kynges fellowe by his day,	in his time
	Wyt worthy kayghtes iholde.	Among; reputed
	A lyon of golde was his creste;	
	He spake reyson out of reste;	reason beyond the
	Lystyns and ye may her.	bear
100	Wherever he went, be est or weste,	by east
	He nold forsay man nor best	would not forego [the chance]; best
	To fylght fer or fer.	far

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- Knighthus kene fast they rane;  
The Kynge followyd wyt moray a man,  
Pife handend and moo, I wenc.  
Folke followyd wyt fedyrt floris,  
Noball archarrus for the nons,  
To fell the fallow der so cleyn.
- run [on the hunt]  
more  
People; feathered arrows  
archers for that occasion  
kill; cleanly
- Barrons gan her horneus blowe;  
The der cam reykynge on a rowe,  
Bothe hert and eke heynde.  
Be that tym was pryme of the day  
Pife handerd der dede on a lond lay  
Alone under a lynde.
- did their horns  
running in a crowd  
hart; also hind  
By: [it] was mid-morning  
dead; clearing  
in a row; linden tree
- Then Syr Gawan and Syr Key  
And Beschope Basdewyn, as I yow say,  
After a raynder they rode.  
Frowe that tym was pryme of the day  
Tyl myde-under-nos, as I yow saye,  
Never styl hit abode.  
A myst gan ryse in a mor;  
Barrons blowe her horais store.  
Meche mon Syr Key made:
- wil  
reindeer  
late afternoon  
stayed  
morn  
blew their; loudly  
Great lament
- The reyneder wolde sot dwelle.  
Herkon what aventure hem befelle;  
Herbow they wolde fayn have hade.
- stop  
Listen; adventure them  
Lodging; gladly
- Then sayde the gentyll knyght Syr Gawan,  
"All this labur ys in vayne,  
For certes, trowe hit me.  
The dere is passyd out of our syght;  
We mete no mor wyt hym tosyght,  
Hende, herkon to me.  
I neede that we of our hors alight  
And byde in this woode all nyght,  
And loge under this tree."  
"Ryde we hem," quod Keye ason;
- labor  
For sure; believe  
meet  
Gentle sir; hearken  
advise; off  
stay  
lodge  
away said; then

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- "We schall have harbrowe or we gon.  
Dar no man wern hit me." *before we go [for]  
Dare; refuse it to me*
- 140 Then sayd the Beschope: "I knowe hit well —  
A Carle her is a castell *(i.e., non-noble warrior) [lives] here*  
A lytyll her her honde. *here nearby*  
The Karl of Carlill ys his nam:  
He may us herborow, be Sent Jame,  
As I understande. *name*  
145 Was ther nevyr haran so holde  
That ever myght gaytyn in his holde  
But evyll harbrowe he fonde.  
He schall be bette, as I harde say.  
And yefe he go wytt lyfe away  
150 Hit wer but Goddus sonde. *give us lodgyn by Saint James  
dare say  
follow  
be a guest; household  
experienced  
(The guest) will be overcome  
if; alive  
only through; will*
- "Nowe ryde we thedyr all thre." *thither*  
Therto sayd Key, "I grant hit the,  
Also mot I well far;  
And as thou seyst, hit schall be holde. *go along with you  
And may I prosper  
it; done*
- 155 Be the Carle never so holde,  
I count hym not worthe an ha.  
And yef he be never so stoute,  
We woll hym bette all about  
And make his beggyng ha.  
160 Suche as he brewythe, seche schall he drenke;  
He schall be bette than he schall stynke,  
And agenst his wyll be that." *consider; hair  
if  
bear thoroughly  
stronghold have  
brewer neck  
beaten (so fiercely); stink  
(i.e., won't wish to stay)*
- Syr Gaway sayd, "So hav I blyse,  
I woll not geystyn ther magre ys.  
165 Thow I myght never so well,  
Yefe anny fayr wordus may us gayn  
To make the lande of us full fayn  
In his oan castell.  
Key, let be thy boutfull fare;  
170 Thow gest about to warke care,  
I say, so have I helle.  
I woll pray the good lord, as I yow saye,  
*bless (i.e., by heaven)  
say; against his will  
Though; easily  
if; avail  
lord with us pleased  
behavior  
make trouble  
health (i.e., may I prosper)*

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

	Of herborow tyll tomorrow daye And of met and melle."	morning food for a meal
175	On her way fast they rode. At the castell yat they abode — The portter call they schulde. Ther bynge a hommyr by a cheyn.	their gate; stopped needed to hang hammer
180	To knocke therat Syr Key toke dayn; The hommyr away he wold have hold. The portter come wytt a prevey fare And hem forde he ther.	with that; fel disdain pulled MORT sup them examined asked
185	He axid what they wolde. Then sayd Gawen curtesly, "We beseche the lorde of herbory, The good leod of this holde."	for lodg household
190	The portter answerd hem agays, "Your message wold I do full fayn; And ye have harme, thanks hyt not me. Ye be so fayr, lyne and lythe,	back undertake with pleasure if; don't blame me limb and body
195	And therto comly, glad therwytt, That commely hyt ys to see. My lorde cas no cortessye; Ye schappyth botte wyntout a vellony.	moreover agreeable knows escape; villainy believe
200	Truly srow ye mee. Me rewyth sor ye came this waye, And as ye go, so woll ye say, But yele mor grace be."	I sorely regret before Unless; special dispensation
205	"Portter," sayde Key, "let be thy care; Thow sesst we may no farther fare — Thow jappyst, as I wene. But thow wolt on our message gos,	put aside say; go joke; guess Unless; with
210	The kyngus keyis woll we tane And draw hem dous cleyn."	king's; take them (the gates)
215	The portter sayde, "So mot I thryfe, Ther be not thee knyghtus alvyc That doest do hit, I wene. Wyst my lorde your wordys greve,	As I may prosper dare; it; guess (if) knew; lofy

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- 210 Some your lyvys ye schold forlese  
Or ellus fall fast to flen." *Several [off] you; give up  
else; flee*
- The portier went into the hall;  
Wynn his Lord he mett wynnall,  
That haedy was and holde.  
"Carl of Carlilly, God leke the!  
At the yart be barnasus thre,  
Semley armes to weide:  
To knyghtus of Asterys in,  
A beschope, and no mor men,  
Sertayn, as they me tolde."
- 215 Then sayd the Carle, "Be Sent Myghell,  
That tythingas lykyth me ryght well.  
Seyth thei this way woldē." *watch over you  
gate; men  
Capable; wield  
Two; Arthur's house*
- 220 Then sayd the Carle, "By Saint Michael  
That tythingas lykyth me ryght well.  
Seyth thei this way woldē." *By Saint Michael  
tidings phrases  
should come*
- When they came befor that syr,  
They foud four whelpas lay about his fyre,  
That gresly was for to see:  
A wyld bole and a fellon boor,  
A lyon that wold bytis sor —  
Therof they had grote ferly.  
A bege ber lay loose unbounde.
- 225 230 Seche four whelpas ther they founde  
About the Carles kne.  
They rose and came the knyghtus agayn,  
And soan thei wold hem have slayn;  
The Carle bade hem let bee.  
*young animals; fire  
grisly  
bole; lethal boar  
bite  
wonder  
big bear; loose  
knee  
towards  
immediately; them  
commanded; hold off*
- "Ly doan," he sayd, "my whelpys four."  
Then the lyon began to lowr  
And glowyd as a glede,  
The ber to ramy, the boole to groun,  
The bole he whett his toskos soone  
Fast and that good spedē.
- 235 240 Then sayd the Carle, "Ly style! Hard yn!"  
They fell adoun for feir of hym,  
So sor they gan hym drede.  
For a word the Carle gan say  
*glowed; coal  
growl; snort  
roar; at once  
immediately  
Lie still! Stay back!  
fear  
did fear him  
For a single word*

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- 245 Under the tabell they creyd away;  
Therof Syr Key toke hede. *beend*
- The Carle the knyghtis cat behoide,  
Wytt a stout vesage and a bolde.  
He semyd a dreadfull man:  
250 Wytt chekus longe and vesage brade;  
Cambar nose and all ful made;  
Betwyne his browas a large spane;  
Hys moght moche, his berd graye;  
Over his brest his lockas lay  
255 As breed as any fane;  
Betwen his schuldors, whos ryght can rede,  
He was two tayllors yardas a brede.  
Syr Key merveild gretly than.
- Nine taylloris yerdas he was byght  
260 And thereto leggas longe and wyghti,  
Or ellus wonder hit wer.  
Ther was no post in that hall,  
Grettyst growand of hem all,  
Bet his theys wer thycker.  
265 His armas wer gres, wythouyn lese,  
His fingeris also, tweys.  
As anny lege that we ber.  
Whos stowd a stroke of his honde,  
He was not wecke, I understand,  
270 That dar I safly swer.
- Then Syr Gawan began to cnele;  
The Carle sayd he myght be knyght wylie,  
And had hym stand spe anon.  
"Leit be thy knellynge, gentyll knyght;  
275 Thow logost wytt a carill tonyght,  
I swer, by Seant John.  
For her so cortessy thou schalt have,  
Bet carilles cortessy, so God me save —  
For certes I can non."
- 280 He had bryngynge wyn in gold so der;
- in bright  
Wish; powerful  
Amazing as it sounds  
tree-post  
gown; them  
slight  
be  
narely  
leg; have  
Whoever withstood  
weak I dare say  
safely swear
- amerl  
indeed
- Craze  
lodge; churl
- Except  
Surely; know  
wine; precious result

*Sir Gwain and the Carle of Carlisle*

	Asow hit cam in coppas cler — As aswy sons hit schon.	cope bright sun
	Four gallons held a cop and more; He bad bryngge forthe a gretnor —	one cup bigger
285	"What schall this lytyll cope doun? This to lytyll a cope for me. Whens I sytt by the fyre ons by By myself alone.	What (good); do and fire; high
	Bryngge us a gretter bole of wyn;	bowl
290	Let us drenke and play synne Tyll we to supper gone." The botteler brought a cope of golde — Nine gallons hit gane holde —	then go did
	And toke hit the Carle anon.	
295	Nine gallons he byld and mare; He was not weke that hit bare In his wos hondre.	is held; more weak one
	The knyghtus drokken fast about, And sethe arose and went hem out	all around then; made their exit
300	To se her hors stond. Corne and hey thei had reydy. A lytyll folle stod hem bye Wytt her hors fast etand.	see how their horses were stabled hay; nearly small horse (foal); by them their; eating
	The Beschope put the sole away; "Thow schalt not be felio wynn my palfrey Whyll I am beschope in londe."	moved equal; saddle-horse
	The Carle then cam wytt a gret sped And askyde, "Who hathe doun this dede?"	
	The Beschope seyd, "That was I."	
310	"Therfor a bodes thou schalt have, I swer, so God me save, And hit schall be sell, wytherly."	bitter
	"I am a clarke of ordors byghe."	made ever, truly
	"Yett canyst thou nocht of cortesoyghc,	cleric of high orders
315	I swer, so mott I trye!"	know; courtesy so far as I can tell

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

	He gafe the Beschope a boffett tho That to the ground he gan goo; I sorynge he gana lyghe.	gave; then did go <i>In a faint (swoon) he did lie</i>
320	Syr Key came in the same cas To se his stede ther he was; The foll feed he hym by. Out att the dor he drof hym out And on the backe yafe hym a clost. The Carle se that wyll hys yghe.	way steed where war horse give saw; eye give swifly; dropped faint; lie
325	The Carle gaffe hym seche a boffett That smerty ons the grond hym sett; In sorynge gan he lyghe. "Evyll-taught knyghtitus," the Carle gan sey. "I schall teche the or thou wend away Sum of my contessye."	before you go off
	Then they arose and went to hall, The Beschope and Syr Key wytall, That worthy was iwright. Syr Gawan axyd wer they had bync; They seyd, "Our horsys we have seeno, And us see forthoght."	in company impressively; built asked; been seen to we are sorely grieved
335	Then answerd Gawan full carriesly, "Syr, wytt your leyf then wyll I." The Carle knewe his thought.	leave; <i>(take stock)</i> desire
340	Herr reynayd and blew stornus felle That well was hym, be bocke and belle, That herboorow hadde caught.	It rained; fierce by hook lodging had obtained
	Wytout the stabull dor the foll gan stand. Gawan put hym in agayn wytt his honde;	Outside
345	He was all wett, I wene, As the foll had stand in rayne. Then keveryd he hym, Sir Gawan, Wytt his manuell of grene: "Stand up, fool, and ette thy mette;	gan stood covered green eat your fodder
350	We spend her that thy master dothe gott, Whyll that we her bync."	use here what; provide are here

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

The Carle stode hym fast by  
And thankyd hym full curtislye  
Manny sythis, I wene.

*simes I gane*

- 355 Be that tyme her soper was redy dyght:  
The tabullas wer hafte upe an hyght;  
Iewert they were full tyte.  
Forthwytt, thei woldc not blyanc:  
The Besschope gan the tabull begynne  
360 Wytt a gret delyne.  
Syr Key was sett on the tother syde  
Agenst the Carles wylfe so full of peyde,  
That was so feyr and whyte:  
Her armes small, her mydill gent,  
365 Her yghen grey, her browes beate;  
Of curtessy sche was perfette.
- By; their; prepared  
raised up on high (on trellis)  
Covered; quickly  
And then; pause  
(at in first place)  
delight  
other  
Opposite; grandeur  
Who  
waist delicate  
eyes; arched  
complete
- Her roode was reede, her chekes rosnde,  
A feyrror myght not goo on grosnde,  
Ne loveliur of syghe.  
370 Sche was so gloryis and soo gay:  
I can not rekou her araye.  
Sche was so gayly dyghte.  
"Alas," thought Key, "thou Lady fre,  
That thou schuldyst this ipereschde be  
375 Wytt seche a foule weghtht!"  
"Synt styl," quod the Carle, "and eete thy mette;  
Thow thinkost mor then thou darst speke,  
Sritten, I the hyght."
- compilation; ready  
fairer; go (enjoy)  
to see  
handsome  
describe; clothing  
decked out  
noble  
that last  
person
- I do yow all well to wette  
380 Ther was noo man hade Gawaen sittie,  
But in the halle flor gass he stonde.  
The Carle sayde, "Fellowe, ansoun!  
Loke my byddyngage be well idoun!  
Go take a sper in thy hande
- give; understand  
on; did  
quick  
done  
spear
- 385 And at the bottredor goo take thy passe  
And hitt me evyn in the face;  
Do as I the commande.
- to the pantry door pass over  
right  
you

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- And yeife thou ber me agenst the wall  
Thow schalt not heot me wytalle,  
390 Whyll I am gyuant in losse." *if; drive  
hurt me at all  
berealour*
- Syr Gawens was a gladic man witt that;  
At the boitredor a sper he game  
And in his honde hit hente.  
Syr Gawen came witt a gret ire.  
395 Dous he helde his hede, that syre,  
Tyll he hadde geve his desse.  
He yafe the ston wall seche a rappe  
That the goode sper all tobeake;  
The fyer flewe out of the feste.  
400 The Carle sayde to hym ful soone,  
"Ocnyll knyght, thou hast well dounce,"  
And he the honde hym hente. *good humored at that  
got  
grasped  
moved; favor  
given; blow  
gave  
shamed  
fire; flame  
at once  
by him grasped*
- A cher was fette for Syr Grawene,  
That worthy knyght of Brytayne;  
405 Befor the Carles wylde was he sett.  
So moche his love was on her lyght,  
Of all the soper he no myght.  
Nodyr drynke nor ette.  
The Carle sayde, "Gawen, comfort the,  
410 For syn ys swete, and that I se.  
Serten, I the hente,  
Sche ys myn thou woldyst wer thyan.  
Love seche thoughtas and dreake the wynne,  
For her thou schalt nott geyst." *chair; fatched  
fixed  
Neither; eat  
console yourself  
sin is  
assure you  
fekom; you wish; yours  
Leave such  
have*
- 415 Syr Gawen was aschemmyde in his thowght,  
The Carles daughter forthe was brought,  
That was so foyr and bryght.  
As gold wyre schynyde her here.  
Hit cost a thousand pound and mor,  
420 Her aparell pertly pyghte.  
Wytt ryche stonnes her clothas wer sett,  
Wytt ryche perlitas about her frete,  
So semly was that sygne. *ashamed  
wire shone her hair  
more  
beautifully adorned  
jewels  
all over adorned*

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
| 425 | Oyrr all the hall gann sche leme<br>As hit were a sonbene —<br>That stonous schone so beyght.  | radiant<br>sunbeam  |
|     | Thea seyde the Carle to that bryght of blc,<br>"Wher ys thi harpe thou schaldist have bright wytt the?<br>Why hast thou hit forgette?"   | {woman}; face   |
| 430 | Anon hit was fett into the hall,<br>And a feyr cher wytfull<br>Befor her fader was sett.<br>The harpe was of maser fyne;<br>The pynays wer of golde, I wene;   | Soon; fatched<br>chair as well<br>father<br>maple wood<br>tuning pins |
| 435 | Serten, wyttout lett<br>Fwest sche haryd, and sethe songe<br>Of love and of Arderus armes amone,<br>How they togeydon mett.  | pause<br>then<br>all the while<br>fit                                 |
| 440 | When they hadde scrupyd and mad hem glade<br>The Beschope into his chamber was lade,<br>Wytt hym Syr Key the kene.<br>They toke Syr Gawen, wyttout lessyng;<br>To the Carles chamber thei ga hym bryngc. | themselves<br>led<br>(And); bold<br>lie                               |
|     | That was so bryght and schene.   | splendid  |
| 445 | They hadde Syr Gawen go to bode,<br>Wytt clothe of golde so feyr sprede,<br>That was so feyr and bryght.<br>When the bode was made wytt wynn,<br>The Carle hadde his own Lady go in,                     | fair<br>joy<br>own; get   |
| 450 | That lofesom was of syghte.<br>A squyer came wytt a prevey far<br>And he unarmede Gawen ther;<br>Schaply he was undyght.<br>The Carle seyde, "Syr Gawene,  | lovely; to see<br>secret step<br>disarmed<br>Duly; disrobed           |
| 455 | Go take my wyfe in thi armes tweyne<br>And kys her in my syghte."  | two<br>kiss   |
|     | Syr Gawen answeerde hymc anon,<br>"Syr, thi byddyngc schall be douse,  |   |

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
| 460 | Sertaynly in dede,<br>Kyll or sley, or laye adoune."   | <i>indeed</i><br><i>strike [me]; knock [me]</i>   |
| 465 | To the bede he went full sone,<br>Fast and that good spedie,<br>For softnes of that Ladys vyde<br>Made Gawen do his wyll that tyde;<br>Thereof Gawen tolke the Carle goode bede.   | <i>[the Carle's] will; time</i><br><i>Then; heed</i><br><i>private act (intercourse)</i><br><i>Whoo there</i><br><i>engagement; forbid</i>              |
| 470 | When Gawen wolde have doan the prevey far,<br>Then seyd the Carle, "Whoo ther!<br>That game I the forbode.   |   |
| 475 | "But, Gawen, sethe thou hast do my byddynge,<br>Som kyndnis I most schewe the in anny thinge,<br>As ferforthe as I maye.<br>Thow schalt have woun to so bryght<br>Schall play wytt the all this nyght<br>Tyll tomorrowwe daye."          | <i>since</i><br><i>kindness; in some way</i><br><i>Insofar</i><br><i>one woman; just as</i><br><i>/Who/</i><br><i>at daylight</i><br><i>immediately</i> |
| 480 | To his doughter chamber he went full ryght,<br>And bade her aryste and go to the knyght.<br>And wern hymen non to playe.<br>Sche doest not agenst his byddynge down,<br>But to Gawen sche cam full sone<br>And style down be hymen laye. | <i>not hinder him from [sexual]</i><br><i>command act</i><br><i>right away</i><br><i>softly; by</i>   |
| 485 | "Now, Gawen," quod the Carle, "holst the well payde?" <sup>1</sup><br>"Ye, for Gode, lordie," he sayde,<br>"Ryght well as I myghte!"   | <i>before</i><br><i>as completely</i>   |
| 490 | "Nowe," quod the Carle, "I woll to chamber go;<br>My blesynge I geyfe yow bouthe to,<br>And play togeyder all this nyght."<br>A glad man was Syr Gawen<br>Sertenly, as I yowé sayne,<br>Of this Lady bryght.                             | <i>give; both two</i><br><i>Because of</i>  |
|     | Sertenly, sothely for to say,<br>So, I hope, was that feyn maye<br>Of that gentilly knyght.  | <i>dare say; woman</i>  |

<sup>1</sup> "Now, Gawain," said the Carle, "do you hold yourself well paid (pleased)?"

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- "Mary, mercy," thought that Lady bryght,  
 "Her come never such a knyght  
 Of all that her hathe bense." Here come  
 495 Syr Key arose upon the morrow  
 And toke his hors and wolde a gounce  
 Homwarde, as I wenne. have gone  
 have gounce  
 "Nay, Syr Key," the Beschope gass seye,  
 500 "We woll not so wende our waye  
 Tyll we Syr Gawen have sene."  
 The Carle arose on morrow ason  
 And toke his byddynge ready dounce; command already done  
 His dyser idylght full cleyne. prepared completely
- 505 To a Mass they lett knelle; For a Mass; commanded the knell  
 Syr Gawen arose and went theryll  
 And kyst that Lady bryght and cler.  
 "Maré, marot," seye that Lady bryght,  
 "Wher I schall se enny mor this knyght Mary  
 510 That hathe ley my body so ner?" Wherever; any  
 When the Mese was dounce to ende, Mass  
 Syr Gawen toke his leue to wende go  
 And thonkyde hym of his cher. hospitality  
 "Furst," sayde the Carle, "ye schall dynn  
 515 And on my blesmyng wende home sync, done  
 Homward al ye fere. upon receiving; afterwards  
together
- "Hit is twentyn wynter gon," sayde the Karel, "nowe  
 That God I maked a vowe, years ago  
 Therfore I was falle sad: [no]  
 520 Ther schalde never man logge in my wonys For which  
 But he schalde be slayne, iwy, judge; dwelling  
 But he did as I hym bad. Except that; surely  
 But he wolde do my byddynge bowne, Unless; bade  
 He schalde be slayne and layde adowne, Unless; quickly  
 525 Whedir he were lorde or lad. low  
 Fonde I never, Gawen, none but the. servant  
 Nowe Godc of hevyn yelde hit the; Found [true]; but you  
 Therfore I am falle glade. reward you for it

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- 530 "He yeilde the," sayde the Carle, "that the dore boughte,<sup>1</sup> misery  
 For al my bale to blysse is broughte  
 Throughe helpe of Mary queene."<sup>the queen</sup>
- He late Gawen ynto a wosome wotys,  
 There as lay ten fodir of dede mens bonys.  
 Al ya blode, as I wene,  
 Ther hynge many a blody serke,<sup>bleeding</sup>  
 And ech of hem a dyvers marke.<sup>cardinals; bones</sup>  
 Grete doole hit was to sene.<sup>bloody</sup>  
<sup>sorrow</sup>
- "This slowe I, Gawen, and my helpis,  
 I, and also my fourc whelpis.  
 For sothe, as I the say,  
 Nowe walle I forsake my wyckyd lawys;  
 Ther schall no mo men her be slawe, iwyg,<sup>customs</sup>  
 As ferthforthe as I may.  
 Gawen, for the love of the  
 545 Al schal be welcome to me  
 That comythe here by this way.  
 And for alle these sowlys, I usdirtake,  
 A chauntry here wul I lete make,  
 Ten prestis syngynge til domysday."<sup>more; stain</sup>  
<sup>Assofar</sup>  
<sup>everyone</sup>  
<sup>along</sup>  
<sup>soul; make promise</sup>  
<sup>church; have made</sup>  
<sup>(Wish)</sup>
- 550 Be that tyme her dyner was redy dyghte:  
 Tables wer hovyn up an hryghte;  
 Ikeverid thei were fulle clene.  
 Syr Gawen and this Lady clere,  
 They were iservyd bothe ifere.<sup>By; their; all prepared</sup>  
<sup>raised up</sup>  
<sup>Covered</sup>  
<sup>(the Carle's daughter)</sup>  
<sup>served; together</sup>  
<sup>Much</sup>
- 555 Myche myrtle was thone bytwene;  
 Therfore the Carle was full glade.  
 The Byschop and Syr Kay he had  
 Mery that thei scholde bene.  
 He yaf the Bischop to his blesmyng  
 560 A cros, a myter, and a ryngt,  
 A clothe of golde, I wene.  
 He yaf Syr Kay, the angory knyght,<sup>bade</sup>  
<sup>gave; for</sup>  
<sup>more</sup>  
<sup>gave</sup>  
<sup>gave; invincible</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "May He reward you," said the Carle, "who you dearly redeemed."

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- A Nodre rode stede and a whight;  
Sache on had he never sene. blood red; powerful  
a one
- 565 He gad Syr Gawan, sothe to say,  
His daughter, and a whighte palfrey,  
A somer ichargid wuth golde.  
Sche was so gloriouſ and so gay  
I kowde not nekyn here aray, white riding horse  
570 So bryghe was non on molde. describe her cloathing  
"Nowe ryde forthe, Gawan, on my blesyng,  
And grete wel Artyr, that is your Kyng,  
And pray hym that he wolde,  
For His love that yn Bedlem was borne,  
575 That he wulde dyne wuth me to morwe," love of HIm; Bethlehem  
will  
Gawan seyde he scholde.
- Then thei rode sygynge away  
Wyth this yonge Lady on her palfrey,  
That was so fayre and bryghe.
- 580 They tolde Kynge Artur wher thei had bene,  
And what wondres thei had sene  
Serteynly, in here syght. their  
"Nowe thankyd be God, cosyn Gawyn,  
585 That thou scapist alve unslayne,  
Serteyne wyth alle my myght." kinman  
escaped  
"And I, Syr Kynge," sayd Syr Kay agayne,  
"That ever I scapid away unslayne  
My hert was never so lyght.
- 590 "The Carle prayde you, for His love that yn Bedlem was borne, Bethlehem  
That ye wolde dyne wuth hym to morwe."  
Kynge Artur sone hym lyght. immediately; promised  
In the dawnyng forthe they rade; rode  
A ryalle metynge ther was imade royal; took place  
Of many a jentylle knyght. gentle
- 595 Trompetis mecte hem at the gate,  
Clarions of silver redy therate,  
Serteyne wythoutyn leste — greeted them  
Harpe, fedille, and sawtry. right there  
ceasing  
fiddle; poultry

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- 600 Late, geteron, and meastracy.  
Into the halle knyghtis hem fett. *gittern; ministerily  
fetched them*
- The Carle kaelyd downe on his kne  
And welcomyd the Kynge worthyly  
Wyth wordis ware and wyse. *prudent*
- When the Kynge to the halle was brought,  
Nothyng ther ne wantyd nought  
That any man kowde devyse. *was lacking  
mention*
- 605 The wallys glomyd as any glasse;  
Wyth dyapir colour wroughte hit was — *varied [rich]*
- 610 Of golde, asere, and byse;  
Wyth tabernacles was the halle aboughte,  
Wyth pynnacles of golde sterre and stoune;  
Ther cowde no man hem preyse. *shore; gray  
canopies; (trimmed all) about  
spires; sturdy  
praise (sufficiently)*
- Trompettis trompid up in grete hete;  
The Kynge lete sey grace and weate to mete,  
615 And was iservyde wythoute leste. *had grace said; the meal  
a stag*
- Swansys, fesauantys, and crays,  
Partrigis, plovers, and curlewys  
Before the Kynge was sette. *pheasants; cranes  
Partridges*
- 620 The Carle seyde to the Kynge, "Dothe gladly!  
Here get ye so bothir cartesy,  
As I undirstonde." *Enjoy  
other  
dare say*
- Wyth that come ys bollys of golde, so grete  
Ther was no knyght sat at the mete  
Myght lyfie hem wyth his on hoode. *bowl  
meal  
one*
- 625 The Kynge swore, "By Seynt Myghelle,  
This dynor lykythe me as well  
As any that evyr Y fonde." *Michael  
pleases  
experienced*
- A dubbyd hym knyght on the morn;  
The consté of Carelyle he gafe hym sone  
630 To be lorde of that londe. *He  
gave; or once*
- "Here I make the ys this stowadē  
A knyght of the Table Rownde:  
Karlyle thi name schall be." *you; moment*

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- 635 On the morne when hit was daylyght  
Syr Gawen wedysid that Lady bryght,  
That semely was to se.
- Than the Carle was glade and blythe  
And thonkyd the Kyng fele sythe, many a tyme  
For sothe, as I you say.
- 640 A ryche fest had he idyght  
That lastyd holy a forenyght  
Wyth game, myrthe, and playe.  
The mynstrellis had gestys fre  
That they myght the better be feast: prepared  
an entir (i.e., wholly)  
645 To spende many a day.  
And when the feste was broughte to ende,  
Lordis toke here leue to wende their leue to go  
Homwarde on here way.
- 650 A ryche abbey the Carle gan make  
To synge and rede for Goddis sake did build  
In wurschip of Oure Lady.  
In the towne of mery Carelyle  
He lete hit bylde stronge and wele; caised; to be built  
Hit is a byschoppis see. (i.e., a cathedral)
- 655 And theryn monkys gray  
To rede and syng eillie domysday,  
As men tolde hit me,  
For the men that he had slayne, iwis.  
Jesu Cryste, bryng us to Thy blis On behalfe of; indeed
- 660 Above in hevyn, yn Thy see. on Your throne

Amen.

### Notes

I have normalized orthography (giving "th" for thorn; "ȝ," "ȝ," or "ȝ" for yogh as appropriate; "j" for "i," "u" for "v" and "w," "v" for "u" and "w," and "w" for "u" and "v") to accord with modern usage. I have expanded numerals and abbreviations ("wt" as "wytt," "&" as "and," and so on). Punctuation (including capitalization) is editorial, and word division reflects current standard use ("under stonde" is given as "undersonde," for example). Some of the scribal abbreviations are ambiguous; I follow Kurvinen in rendering terminating flourishes as "us" (rather than "ys," as Ackerman represents them). I have also interpreted the ambiguous series of four minims (usually following "o") as "us" (following Kurvinen) rather than as "an" (as Ackerman renders them). I have interpreted the ambiguous superior stroke at word endings as "e" in cases where rhyme or usage make it seem appropriate, though for the most part I have disregarded this sign.

Abbreviations: P = Porkington MS; M = Madden's edition; A = Ackerman's edition; K = Kurvinen's edition; S = Sands' edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

1 *Lystoneth*. A reads *lystenneth*.

3 *doughtry*. P gives *doughtry*, with 3 added above line.

20 *At Cardiffe*. Cardiff, just southwest of Caerleon at the mouth of the River Severn, has some Arthurian associations; its great distance from Carlisle, however, makes the geography of the poem impossible to imagine. In order to restore geographical coherence, K suggests changing *Cardiffe* to *Carlill*, and *Yglonde* to *Ylverwode*.

21 *gentyl*. M reads *gentylle*.

28 *Bychope Bowdewyn*. This Baldwin differs from the Bowdewyne of *Bretan* whose exploits are celebrated in *Avowyng* (line 74) in being an ordained clerk and a high church official; yet it seems likely that the popular romances meant "Bawdewys" and "Bowdewyane" to name the same prominent companion of Arthur. In Malory, Arthur names as his "chieftains" before undertaking the

### Notes

campaign against Laius "Sir Basden of Bretayne" and "Sir Cadore," father of "Sir Constantyn that aftir was kynge, aftir Arthurs dayes" (Works, p. 195; see also *Arowing*, line 914 and note); see below, line 44 and note. Malory also has Lancelot cured of a deadly wound by "the ermyte [hermit], sir Baldwin of Bretayne" (Works, p. 1086), who says of himself, "sometyme I was one of the felyship" of the Round Table (Works, p. 1075). That Malory takes these two Baldwins, knight and holy man, as identical seems clear in his further remark that "there were nose ermytis in tho dayes but that they had bene men of worship and of prosesse, and tho ermytes hylde grete householdis and refreysched people that were in distresse" (Works, p. 1076). In *Arowing* Baldwin is distinguished for the great household he keeps and for his willingness to refresh all who come to him. In *Turke* (lines 152 ff.; see note at line 154), the King of Man scorns equally Gawain's "uncle King Arthur" and "that Bisopp Sir Bodwine," who by this title seems both church official and knight.

- 31      *grece-tyme of the year*. The hunting season for the buck or hart (or stag) — the male deer — ran from about midsummer (or perhaps a bit earlier) to the middle of September; its height seems to have come in August, when deer have fattened and can be hunted without danger to the herd. (The hind and doe — the female deer — were hunted from September through February, according to medieval hunting manorial.) In *Rognelle*, after Arthur has taken his deer, he "dyd hym serve wellie, / And after the grasse he taste" (lines 47–48; see note). Arthur's butchering of the deer (see *Carle*, line 20) and his assay of its fat is appropriate to the "grece tyme." *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* contains similar references to the hunt and the woodman's knowledge of the ritual of "breaking" the deer.
- 34      *Syr Mewroke*. Here begins a catalogue of Arthurian knights whose names are drawn from a variety of sources. Some of the most prominent companions of the Round Table — Gawain above, Kay, Lancelot, Pescivale, Ywain, Lot, Mordred — are named. Many of these became the central figures in popular Middle English verse romances, as did Launfal, Libeaus Desconus (line 55), and Galerowne (line 43 and note). Some of the names mentioned here are not identifiable as Arthurian characters, and may be completely improvised for a performance of *Carlisle*, or legendary names garbled beyond recognition. *Arowing* mentions Mervake as one of the knights who rushes to the aid of Galerous and Gawain; see line 655, and note at lines 654 ff.
- 35      *Carstocke*. A reads *costocke*.

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- 43 *Syr Gaytefer and Syr Galerowne.* Golognes several times mentions Gwadifer as a companion of Arthur; see line 545 and note. Sir Galeron of Galloway plays a major role as Gawain's opponent in the second episode of *Aventyrr* (see line 417 and note). In Malory, Galeron is numbered among the knights of Scotland affiliated with Gawain's kin and the other "wel willers" of his brothers Aggravayne and Mordred, who oppose Lancelot. These knights include Sir Petipace (line 58 and note), Sir Gremer Somyr Joure (see *Ragnelle*, line 62 and note, and *Tark*, line 320 and note), and Gawain's sons Gyngalyne, Florence and Lovell (the latter two also being nephews of Brandis, line 64 and note below). See Works, p. 1164.
- 44 *Syr Costanyr.* Perhaps the son of Sir Cador and king after Arthur's days; see above, line 28 and note, and *Arwyng*, line 914 and note.
- 48 *bedenne.* A reads *bedene*.
- 49 *The Kyngas usall, Syr Mordred.* A mistake for *cousyn* (K) or "nephew" (A), which potentially inverts the crucial relation of mothers' brother - sister's son between Arthur and Mordred. In some narratives, Mordred is not merely Arthur's nephew by his sister Morgawse, wife of King Lot of Orkney, but Arthur's own son through incest. Mordred causes the dissension that turns his brother Gawain against Lancelot, and begins the disintegration of the Round Table; he attempts to overthrow the rule of his uncle (in some versions taking Guenevere as his own wife), and fatally wounds Arthur in the combat that brings about his own death. *Carlisle*, in celebrating Gawain's chivalry, seems little concerned with the ultimate fall of the Round Table, and making Mordred Arthur's uncle (whether a mistake or a conscious change) further distances those dire events to which *Aventyrr*, for example, deliberately alludes (lines 286 ff.). *Carle* (line 31) groups Arthur with "his cozen Mordred," and *Marriage* (line 24) refers to Arthur's "cozen Sir Gawayne"; in both cases, *cozen* simply means kinsman, and might easily include the relation of a nephew.
- 55 *Dyskomaz.* K reads *dyskomir*. *Libeaus Desconys* (Old French "Li Biaus Descouzeus," French "Le Bel Incognu," English "The Fair Unknown") is Gawain's son Gyngalyne. *Ragnelle* makes the heroine of that poem his mother; see line 799 and note. His mysterious identity seems to have led to his being presented in *Carlisle* as two different knights, for he appears again at line 61 as "Syr Ferr Unknowthe." See line 43 above and note for his associates in Malory.

### Notes

- 58      *Syr Petyper*. Another of the knights identified by Malory (*Works*, p. 1164) as "of Scoticade" or aligned with Gawain's brothers Aggravayne and Mordred. See lines 43 and 55 and notes.
- 64      *Syr Blancheles*. Though *Carlike* provides no details, this is almost surely *Sir Brundel*, Gawain's chief opponent in *Jeante* (see introduction to that poem, and line 320 and note). Malory names Sir Braundel the uncle of Gawain's sons Florence and Lovell (*Works*, p. 1147), clearly drawing upon a version of the story that lies behind *Jeante*. See also *Ragnelle*, line 799 and note. Madden (p. 347) noted this possible connection.
- Ironsode*. In Malory, Sir Ironsyde is the last of the knights Gawain's brother Sir Gareth of Orkney encounters on his quest. He presents himself as the Rede Knyght of the Rede Laundis, but reveals his true identity at Arthur's court (*Works*, pp. 319, 336-37); he is the father (or brother) of the other knights in colored liveries, including the Grene Knyght, whom Gareth defeats. *Carlike*, in making him the father of "the Knyght of Armes Grene" (lines 45, 68), perhaps relies upon a popular story, now lost, that Malory (whose source for the adventures of Gareth remains unknown) had read as well — a story that, among other things, connected Gawain's family with Green Knights. See also introduction to *Greene Knight* in the present volume.
- 79      *Favelle Honde*. P gives *Fabele Honde*; the emendation is suggested by A.
- 80 ff.     Sir Ironside's arms consist of a golden griffin on a field of blue, surrounded by fleurs-de-lis. Ironside bears arms that strongly resemble those traditionally associated with Gawain and his kin. In one album of arms, Gawain's device is said to have been three golden lions' heads on an azure field, or, alternatively, three golden griffins on a green field; Ironside's arms combine these elements. (See the details provided in the Introduction, note 21). It may be that Ironside's armorial bearings have been confused in the transmission of *Carlike* with those of "Syr Ferr Unknowthe" (line 61), Gawain's son Libeaus Descoenus or the Fair Unknown; see especially *Carle* lines 55 ff. and note, as well as *Aventys*, line 509 and note.
- 86      *kyngar*. M emends to *knyghts*.
- 99      *Lystyn*. M reads *lystyn*.

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- 145 *barns*. A reads *borsas* ("barbs").
- 154 *thou*. A reads *tha*, here and in lines 202, 277, 310, 329, 373, 374, 388, and 401.
- 160 Kay here uses a proverb meaning he'll get what he asks for, or, he'll take the consequences of his own actions. See B. J. Whiting and H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), B259.
- 162 *thar*. A reads *thor*; M reads *there*.
- 167 *lende*. M reads *londe*.
- 177 *calf*. P gives *callyd*.
- 202 *wolt*. M reads *wolfe*.
- 203 *kyngas keyis*. The meaning of this phrase remains a puzzle; the most convincing suggestion is that this is a popular, sarcastic idiom for the crowbars and other tools used by the king's agents in making a forcible entry while serving a warrant.
- 204 *cleyn*. M reads *cerneyn*.
- 215 *barnas*. M: *barnant*; A: *barnays*.
- 218 *beschope*. A reads *beschape*.
- 222 *thri*. A reads *thi*, here and in lines 233, 301, 358, and 443.
- 233 *slayn*. A reads *slynn*.
- 241 *Herd yn!* P gives *hardyn* as one word; a space is inserted by K. "Stay back!" or some similar command seems appropriate here, though this meaning is not attested. Another possibility would be *Herd, it!*
- 251 *ful*. P gives *full*. I follow the emendation K suggests in her note.
- 257 *jardas a brede*. P gives *jardas brede*; I follow K's emendation.

### Notes

taillors yardes. A tailor's yard is the common measure of three feet, making the Carle six feet across the shoulders and twenty-seven feet tall — a true giant, but a dwarf next to the hero of Carle, who is nine feet broad and seventy-five feet tall.

- 259 *hyghthr.* P gives *hyphear*; emended by M.
- 261 The point of this line — literally, "Or else it would be a wonder" — seems to be that, given his bulk, if the Carle's limbs were any smaller, that would be still more astonishing.
- 263 I have glossed *growand* as past (rather than the present) participle of *growen*.
- 267 *any.* M reads *any.*
- 271 *Gawen.* P gives only *G*; I have expanded to *Gawen* here and in lines 337, 344, 380, 394, 415, 442, 445, 457, 464, 465, 469, 479, 481, 501, 512, 526, 532, 538, 544, 553, 565.
- 290 *syne.* P: *selysc*; I adopt *syne* (suggested in K's note) for the sake of rhyme.
- 314 The Carle's judgment on Bishop Baldwin here contrasts ironically with his own regulations (lines 193 ff.) and outright claim (lines 277 ff.) that he "can no cortessaye."
- 315 *mye.* P: *syne.* For this meaning of *my*, see OED, "try," s. 13.
- 337 *answend.* A reads *answered*.
- 341 *be bocke and belle.* This proverbial phrase derives ultimately from the rite for excommunication; see *Awntyrs*, line 30 and note.
- 342 *That.* P gives *The*; emended by K.
- 349 *Stond.* P gives *Ssstand*; A reads *G[awain]: stond*.
- 356 *havfe.* A reads *hovft*.
- 374 *That.* M suggests emending to *Thur*.

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

- 377 This line is proverbial, as K points out, though Whiting, in his *Proverbs*, offers no medieval instances.
- 379 ff. The narrator makes a pointed contrast between Gawain's courteous refusal to sit at table before he is invited, and Baldwin's and Kay's impulsive indulgence of their hunger (lines 358 ff.).
- 385 *pase*. A form of *paece*, so that the phrase means, "make your way," "go so."
- 396 *donne*. P gives *dette*; emended by M.
- 435 ff. The subject celebrated in the Carle's daughter's performance — the convergence of love and war in true courtesy — is typical of elite chivalric romance, as in the works of Chrétien de Troyes, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parsifal*, or (with added tension) in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Popular chivalric romances typically present such idealized if improbable performances, simultaneously masking and making plain the contradictory impulses of the genre in this way. These tales almost never offer a detailed account of a performance event resembling the sort of production the romances themselves must have entailed; the closest one comes to such carnivalesque, interactive, kinetic events are the vague references to *fest*, *game*, *myrthe*, *playe*, and *mynstrellis* (lines 640 ff.).
- 465 *Therof Gawen toke the Carle goode hede*. K drops the scribe's abbreviation for Gawen (apparently taking it as a mistaken anticipation of the following line), and so emends to *Therof toke the Carle goode hede*.
- hede*. P gives *hed*; M reads *hede*.
- 466 *fur*. Now illegible in P, but so read by M.
- 500 *We*. M reads *Ne*.
- 508 *Mari*, *marci*. A reads *More merci*.
- 514 *schall*. M reads *schaly*.
- 517 ff. The Carle's "transformation" here consists in his confession to Gawain, and his vow to reform. Carlisle seems to omit at this point a scene of physical action — a beheading, like those in *Carle*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Greene*

### Notes

*Knight, and Turke* — that would account for the sudden change. In shedding a former evil identity that was perhaps imposed on him by sorcery, the Carle resembles Ragnelle; compare the remark of the lady in *Marriage*, that her wicked stepmother had "witched my brother to a carlish" shape (line 179).

518 *maked*. A reads *make*.

524 *schalde*. A reads *schuld*.

535 *bloody serke*. *Carlife* seems here to preserve a snatch of popular verse, familiar through some lost narrative of desperate love. The phrase survives only in two adaptations to religious contexts. The English translation of the *Gesta Romanorum* tells of a knight who asks that, if he should die in battle, his lady "sette out my bloody serke on a perch afore," so that she will think of him always. The story is then allegorized, so that the knight is Christ, and the bloody sark the emblem of his sacrifice. (See *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS o.s. 33 [London, 1879], pp. 23-26, at p. 24.) Robert Henryson tells a similar story, with strong ballad emphases, of a "lusty lady yng [young]" rescued by a "knyche"; dying from his effort, the knight asks that she take "my sark that is blady / And hing it sorrow [before] yow" as a memento. Henryson allegorizes the story identically to the *Gesta*, and concludes, "Think on the bludy serk." (See *Robert Henryson: Poems*, ed. Charles Elliott [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963], pp. 115-18.) In this passage *Carlife* imposes a similar religious moralization upon this emblem of heroic devotion.

537 *sene*. P gives *see*; I follow K's emendation for the sake of rhyme.

552 *lkeverid*. M reads *louverid*.

553 *clore*. M reads *dore*.

570 *war non on molde*. P gives *war alle here molde*. The reading makes little sense, despite philological arguments notwithstanding. I adopt what seems an obvious emendation, suggested in K's notes. The previous two lines repeat the formalistic description of the Carle's wife, at lines 370-71.

595 ff. The first two items mentioned here are brass instruments, and the remaining six are stringed. A *sawtry* was an ancestor of the zither; a *geiron* was a kind of guitar. Except for the bowed *fodyle*, all these instruments were plucked. Mes-

*Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*

strely here probably refers not to the players themselves, or their performance, but to a further group of instruments; compare Chaucer, Manciple's Tale, line 113: "Pleyen he kaude on every mynstralcie."

- 599 *menstrely*. P gives *merely*; K reads *menstracy*. I emend in accordance with scribal spelling (compare line 643).
- 600 *fett*. P gives *zett*; K emends to *halfe hem fett*.
- 619 *seyde*. A reads *seyde*.
- 620 The Carle's understandment ironically reverses (and echoes) his earlier chastisements of Arthurian chivalry (see lines 193, 275 ff., 314 ff., and 329 ff.).
- 629 *geſte*. M reads *geſte*.
- 640 *idylght*. P gives *idylgt*; M reads *idylght*, followed by K.
- 643 *geſtys*. P gives *peſtys*.
- 650 *rede*. P gives *redeſe*; M reads *rede*, followed by K.
- 655 *monkyr gray*. Monks of different orders were often referred to by the distinctive color of their habits: Benedictines were known as Black Monks, and Cistercians as White Monks or Gray Monks (as opposed to the Gray Friars, the title for the Franciscan mendicant order). The Cistercians, however, had no establishment in Carlisle, and the reference may be to the priory of Augustinian Canons (Black Canons), which became the site of the cathedral church after Carlisle was made a bishop's seat in 1133. K offers additional information in her notes.
- 659 *Jew*. A reads *Dju*.

## *The Avowyng of Arthur*

### *Introduction*

*The Avowyng of Arthur* takes as both its starting point and the substance of its story a series of knightly vows. In many romances, chivalric identity — worship and honor — turns upon a hero's living up to his own established reputation, or to the general ideals of knightly behavior, such as courtesy. In particular cases, a knight's renown may be established or tested in intimate circumstances, through his giving and keeping his private word, as in the "forwards" or agreements of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Greene Knight*, or through a delicate pact like that entered into by Gawain in *Gologras*. But much more frequently, a knight's worship rests entirely upon a public utterance — an extravagant vow — and upon the fit between that formulaic self-description and his consequent actions. The "gabs" sworn in Cornwall, the oaths made before the court at the Christmas feast in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Greene Knight*, or the ill-considered boasts of Carlisle all illustrate this pattern.

*The Avowyng* begins when Arthur, Kay, Gawain, and Baldwin leave the court at Carlisle in order to hunt a great boar in Ingewood Forest. Once there, they utter vows that determine the unfolding of the poem's plot. The first three propose to undertake some immediate adventure within the Forest: Arthur will hunt the marauding boar, Gawain will maintain a "wake" or watch at the Tarn Wathelene all night, and Kay will ride the Forest in search of battle (lines 114 ff.). Fulfilling these vows takes up precisely half of *Avowyng* — that is, thirty-six of the poem's seventy-two stanzas (though the eighteenth stanza lacks four lines following line 284). The vows that Baldwin swears differ from those of the other heroes in number and kind: while the three oaths he pronounces equal the total for the others, they commit him to no peremptory action. In fact, they more resemble prohibitions than promises of achievement, committing Baldwin to avoid certain reactive behaviors rather than to undertake risk or knightly deeds: he swears never to be jealous of a woman, never to refuse anyone his hospitality or food, and never to fear violent death. The testing out and explanation of Baldwin's vows take up the second half of *Avowyng*.

As in *Ragnelle*, Arthur goes off by himself on a hunt, but in *Avowyng* the emphasis falls upon his successful skills as a woodsman rather than upon any unanticipated

### *The Awowyng of Arthur*

adventure in Inglewood. After a strenuous pursuit, the King kills this "Satan" or "fiend" of a boar, and then expertly butchers him (lines 161 ff., 257 ff.). The episode ends almost as a dream-vision: the King falls asleep and remains in the Forest until dawn (line 468), though he has no visitors, supernatural or otherwise. In the meantime, Kay in his travels through Inglewood meets a knight who holds a maiden captive (lines 273 ff.). Heeding the calls of the woman, Kay challenges the knight to battle; he turns out to be Sir Menealfe of the Mountayn (line 307), a name (with its -elf component) that perhaps connects him to the enchanted realms of fairy. Despite his bold challenge, Kay is predictably defeated by the strange knight (lines 321 ff.), but he then asks that Menealfe seek ransom for him from Sir Gawain at the Tarn Wathelene.

Through Kay's petition, Gawain's encounter with Menealfe and the unnamed woman comes to constitute Gawain's adventure at the Tarn. He fulfills his vow by unseating his opponent twice, once for the ransoming of Kay and a second time for mastery over the fate of Menealfe and of the maiden as well (lines 381, 417 ff.). He swears Menealfe and the woman to abide by the judgment of Queen Guenevere. Accompanied by these two, Kay and Gawain then rejoin the King, and they return to Carlisle bringing "Bothe the birde and the brede" (i.e., "the woman and the meat," line 491). After a favorable interview with the King, Menealfe presents himself to the Queen, who resigns him to the King's power (lines 513 ff.); on the basis of his prowess in the combat with Gawain, he is made a Knight of the Round Table (lines 565 ff.). The first part ends with all parties reconciled and all vows fulfilled — except for Baldwin's.

The second half of *Awowyng* — poetically equal to part one, except for its missing quatrain — divides into two further sections, the testing out of Baldwin's vows and then the rationalization of their meaning. At Arthur's instigation, Kay gathers a force of a half dozen knights and blocks Baldwin's way on his return to Carlisle (lines 585 ff.). Baldwin, without hesitation, prepares to joust, unhorses each knight in his turn, and proceeds to dice with Arthur. When the King asks about his journey, he reports he encountered nothing "butte gode" (line 683); the King marvels all the more when he hears of the beating Kay and the others sustained (lines 689 ff.). Arthur next sends his minstrel as a spy to Baldwin's household, enjoining him to observe the nature of the knight's hospitality; the minstrel finds that all guests — "the grete and the smalle," "knygge, squyer, yomas, [and] knave" — are served without distinction and to their complete satisfaction (lines 717 ff.). Arthur marvels at Baldwin's largesse, and then devises a test for the remaining vow. Arthur sends Baldwin on a hunt, arranging for him to spend the night in the forest (lines 781 ff.); back at the manor house, the King orchestrates matters so that one of his retainers literally spends the night in bed next to, but completely apart from, Baldwin's wife

### *Introduction*

(lines 813 ff.). When Baldwin is brought in to witness the scene and is told the facts of the case, he shows neither anger nor shame, accepting the propriety of the situation because it must have come about "ane har aven wille" (line 897).

Arthur's expressed surprise at Baldwin's complete lack of reaction — not merely in this bedroom scene, but in the first two "tests" as well — leads Baldwin to explain how his vows stem from principles of his behavior. These explanations take the form of three further stories, all ostensibly based upon Baldwin's experience as a veteran of chivalric warfare. The anecdotes do not however add depth to Baldwin's character, or offer the audience insight into any deeper motives. Instead they work almost as sermon exempla, and offer the etiology for an unusual variety of chivalric pragmatism. Baldwin first tells a brutally misogynistic variant of Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale, in which three washerwomen plot to murder one another, though here one survives (lines 925–88). In this story, the focus of the women's desire is not the defeat of death or even a bushel of gold, but masculine attention, in the form of collective physical violation by five hundred men. Besides working as laundresses, the women service the sexual needs of an entire barracks, and successively kill one another out of jealousy for the men's desire. The lesson Baldwin draws from this incident is not altogether clear, but it seems to be that a man should stay clear of a woman's jealousy, for women are dangerous when they feel discontent. Versions of this story appear elsewhere in medieval literature, both in learned sources (John of Garland's *Latin Poetria*) and fablia narrative, though the precise source used by the *Arowing* poet remains uncertain.

Baldwin's second anecdote offers a rationalization for his not ever fearing for his life (lines 1013–45). While in charge of his castle, Baldwin and others sortie out into fierce combat; they return to find that one of their knights, who had hidden in a barrel to avoid the fighting, has been killed by a stray missile. Baldwin's final illustration resembles a story that recurs in a number of medieval chronicles (lines 1053–1126). Baldwin's besieged garrison, at the point of being starved out, welcomes an emissary from the opposing forces with a lavishness that exhausts their last bit of food and drink. Upon returning to his own troops, the emissary reports that the garrison's supplies remain so abundant that they will never surrender, and the siege is lifted.

Arthur's hunt and the chivalric combats of Kay and Gawain, together with the boasts that motivate them, operate as self-explanatory chivalric pursuits in the first part of *Arowing*. Baldwin's boasts and behavior, on the other hand, insist on their need for explanation, and thus raise suspicions about their proper chivalric status. On the one hand, all three episodes unarguably address central virtues of chivalry: the first assays Baldwin's physical courage and prowess, and the other two prove his courtesy, both public (in the mason hall) and private (in his Lady's bedroom). Yet

### *The Awowyng of Arthur*

their unshakable, downright practicality appears far removed from the idealizations of knighthood associated with both aristocratic and popular celebrations of chivalry. The stimulating arguments of Barrow and Johnson that Baldwin's character represents the mature view of a seasoned knight perhaps credits *Awowyng* with a fuller chivalric ethos than it actually possesses; in tethering apparent daring and recklessness to rationality and calculation, the poem effects a transformation of knighthood that may have rendered it especially appealing to a bourgeois audience.

Barrow and Johnson have also properly and convincingly redirected readers' attention to the remarkable symmetries of *Awowyng*. Each half of the poem contains thirty-six tail-rhyme stanzas; moreover, the three vows of three heroes in the first part are countered by the three vows and three anecdotal explanations of a single hero in the second. Perhaps even more than *Awestyrs*, *Awowyng* structures itself as a diptych. In Burrow's view, the poem contrasts the boldly active life of youthful chivalry with the more sedate geniality of Baldwin's mid-elde existence; Johnson argues that the diptych more precisely opposes an impractical and idealistic chivalry to a "real-world, socially-grounded system of values" that reflects "the actuality of warfare" as a "flesh-and-blood fifteenth-century Englishman" would have known it. Yet, like Baldwin's explanations, the structure of *Awowyng* seems finally too rigid. The poem notably lacks the gothic spikiness that Spearing identifies in the framework of *Awestyrs*, and which in that poem and in *Golgotha* excite so much ready response. *Awowyng*, in providing so shapely a narrative, rounds off all its corners; its alignment of incident and explanation suggests that all mysteries have their reasons, and that, as in Baldwin's case, all motives are self-interested or at least justifiable.

*Awowyng* is composed in sixteen-line tail-rhyme stanzas, rhyming aaabccchddbheneb. Its lines are made up not of regular metric feet, but contain varying numbers of stresses; the triplets contain from three to five beats, and the linking b-lines two or three stresses. Some of the individual stanzas are linked through verbal concatenation, but in a way that is much less consistent and structurally telling than in *Awestyrs* or *Pearl*. Alliteration is common throughout, but is not a structural feature of the verse, as in *Awestyrs* and *Golgotha*. Though the surviving copy contains linguistic features associated with the Midlands, these appear to be scribal, and the original version was produced in the northwest of England, with Cumberland itself — the county in which Ingelwood Forest and the Tarn Wathclene are located — a possible place of origin.

#### Text

*Awowyng* survives in a single manuscript, Ireland Blackburn, fol. 35r-59r; the manuscript is now in the Robert H. Taylor Collection at Princeton University. The

### *Introduction*

extant version dates from about the third quarter of the fifteenth century, though *Avowyng* may have been composed as early as the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Like many other late Middle English texts, *Avowyng* is written in a hand that often does not distinguish decisively between letter forms (especially *a* and *ei*, and *e* and *o*), and that does not indicate clearly when strokes added to the middle or end of words are significant. Different readings in earlier editions often reflect this ambiguity. The present edition in general disregards scribal strokes and flourishes, rather than transcribing them as unstressed -e. Exceptions, differences from earlier editions, and puzzling cases are recorded in the notes.

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscript*

Ireland Blackbarts MS, Robert H. Taylor Collection, Princeton, New Jersey.

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Robson, John. 1842. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Smith, James A., ed. "The *Avowynge of King Arthur, Sir Gawayn, Sir Kaye and Sir Bawdewyn of Bresen*": A Middle English Romance from the Ireland MS. Leeds University Master's Thesis, 1938.

French, Walter Hoyt, and Charles Brockway Hale, eds. *Middle English Metrical Romances*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1930. Rpt. in two volumes, Russell and Russell, 1964. Pp. 605-46.

Brookhouse, Christopher, ed. "Sir *Amadace*" and "The *Awowing of Arthur*," Two Romances from the Ireland MS. *Anglistica*, 25. Copenhagen: Rosenskilde and Dager, 1968.

Dahood, Roger, ed. *The Awowing of King Arthur*. New York: Garland, 1984.

Dass, Nirmal. *The Awowing of King Arthur: A Modern Verse Translation*. New York: University Press of America, 1987.

*The Avowyng of Arthur*

*Criticism*

BURROW, J. A. "The Avowing of King Arthur." In *Medieval Literature and Antiquities: Studies in Honor of Basil Cowle*, Ed. Myra Stokes and T. L. Barton. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1987. Pp. 99-109.

GREENLAW, E. A. "The Vows of Baldwin: A Study in Mediaeval Fiction." *PMLA* 21 (1906), 575-636.

JOHNSON, David. "The Real and the Ideal: Attitudes to Love and Chivalry in *The Avowing of King Arthur*." In *Companion to Middle English Romance*, eds. Henk Aertsen and Alasdair A. MacDonald. Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1990. Pp. 189-208.

KITTREDGE, George L. "The Avowing of Arthur." *Modern Language Notes* 8 (1893), 251-52.

*The Awyng of Arthur*

	He that made us on the malde, And fair fourmet the folde, Ane His will, as He wold, The see and the sande,	earth <i>shaped the firmament</i> would
5	Giffe hem joy that will here Of doughti men and of deere, Of holders that before us were, That lidd in this lande.	<i>Give them; bear</i> <i>doughty; fierce</i> <i>elders</i> <i>lived</i>
10	Onc was Arther the Kinge, Wytowtun any letting; Wyth him was mosy lordinge Hardi of hondre.	contradiction
15	Wicc and war ofte thay were, Bold undur basene, And wighte weppans wold were. And stilly wold stand.	hand War; wary <i>powerful weapons did bear</i> <i>manfully</i>
20	This is no faurum ne no fabull; Ye wote wele of the Rowus Taball, Of prest men and privcaball, Was holdun in pris:	<i>fantasy</i> You know well ready; worthy high esteem <i>Paragon</i>
25	Chevetan of chivalry, Kyndeneise and certesey, Hunting full warly, As wayt men and wise.	expertly hardy go back; boar hart
30	To the forest thay farr To hunte atte buk and atte bare, To the herte and to the hare, That bredus in the rise. The King atte Cartile he lay; The hunte cammys on a day — Said, "Sir, ther walkes in my way A well grim gryse."	breed; woods Cartilic; stopped comes one day very formidable boar

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

- "He is a balefull bane —  
Seche on segh I nevyr are:  
35 He hase wroghne me mycall care  
And harte of my howandes,  
Slayn horn downe slyly  
Wynth feghting full furcely,  
Wasse ther none so hardi  
40 Durstide bide in his bandas.  
On him spild I my spre  
And mycall of my nothir gere.  
Ther mowt no dintas him dere,  
Ne wurche him no wawndas.  
45 He is masly made —  
All offellus that he bade.  
Ther is no bulle so brade  
That in frith foundes.
- "He is hegher thenne a horse,  
50 That uncumly come;  
In fayth, him faylis no force  
Quen that he schalle feght!  
And thereto, blake as a bere,  
Feye folk will be fere:  
55 Ther may no dyntas him dere,  
Ne him to dethe dighte.  
Quen he quettas his basshes,  
Thenne he betus on the basshes:  
All he rives and he russhes,  
60 That the rote is varyghte.  
He hase a lythelich luffe:  
Quen he castas appē his stulle,  
Quo duest abide him a buffe,  
Iwisse he were wighte."
- 65 He sais, "In Ingulwode is hee."  
The other biddas, "Lette him bee.  
We schall that Satnace see,  
Giffe that he be thare."  
The King callist on knyghtis the:
- frightening boar  
Such a one none before  
caused; great  
show; cunningly  
fighting; fiercely  
Dared finger; vicinity  
lost  
much of my other equipment  
may; blow; wound  
Nor cause  
hugely  
*He destroys all that he has encountered*  
broad  
wood moves about  
higher  
ugly creature  
he lacks  
When  
in addition; bear  
faint; scare off  
blows; aim; harm  
bring  
When he whets; ranks  
tears; breaks  
root; disturbed  
hateful force  
task  
*Who dares endure from his attack*  
Indeed; strong  
Inglewood Forest  
other commands  
Fiendish creature  
If  
summoned

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 70  | Hisselfun wold the fayrthe be.<br>He sayd, "There schalke no mo mead<br>Wynde to the boee."                                 | fourth<br>group<br>Go  |
| 75  | Bothe Kay and Sir Gauas<br>And Bowdewynse of Bretan,<br>The hunter and the howundus squayn                                  | keeper   |
| 80  | Hase yarker hom yare.<br>The Kinge hase armst him in hic,<br>And tho thre bairnes hym bie;<br>Now at thay fawre alle redie, | <i>Bredid themselves quickly</i><br><i>armed himself in haste</i><br><i>those three knyghts [are] by him</i>     |
| 85  | And furthe conne thay fare.   | <i>four</i><br><i>did they go</i>  |
| <p>Unto the forest thay weyndo<br/>That was hardy and beynde.<br/>The hunter atte the nothe ende<br/>His bugall con he blow,</p>      |   |  |
| 90  | Uncospalt knewis as he coathe;<br>Wittarly thay soghte the southe —<br>Raches wth opon mouthe<br>Renzyng on a raw           | travelled<br>Who were; gracious  |
| 95  | Fande fate of the bore,<br>Fante folutie to him thore.<br>Quen that he herd, he hadde care;<br>To the denne conne he draw;  | bugle did<br>(and) released dogs; knew how<br>Without fail they headed   |
| 100   | He sloghe hom downe sley<br>Wyth feghting full fayrsly;<br>But witt ye, sirs, wittarly,<br>He stode bune litull awe.        | Dogs [yelping]<br>in a pack<br>Discovered the track<br>Quickly were on to him there<br>When; took fight          |
| <p>Thay held him fast in his hold;<br/>He leittust berceletras bold,<br/>Bothe the yunge and the old,<br/>And rafte hom the rest.</p> |   |  |
| 105   | The raches comun renzyng him by,<br>And bayet him fall boldely.<br>Butt ther was non so hardy<br>Darsoe on the fynde fast.  | covered; fair<br>slashed bounds<br>stripped them of comfort<br>dogs came running up to him<br>brought him to bay |
| 110   | Thenne the hunter sayd, "Lo, him thare!<br>Yow thar, such him so mare!"   | Dared; fiend attack<br>Beware of him there<br>You; seek  |

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- Now may ye sone to him fare;  
Lette see quo dose bestie.  
Yow that, such him nevys more?  
110 Batte sethe my hed opon a store  
Batte giffle he flasy yo all fire,  
That grislich geste!"  
at once; go  
who performs  
You; seek  
set my head; make  
if he doesn't flay; four  
grisly ghost
- Thenne the hanter turnsome agays.  
The King callus on Sir Gawan,  
115 On Bawdewin of Bretan,  
And on kene Kay.  
He sayd, "Sirs, in your company,  
Mync avow make I:  
Were he nevyr so hardy,  
120 Yose Satanas to say —  
To beittus him and downc bringe,  
Wythoute any helpinge,  
And I may have my levynge  
Hes till to morne alle day!  
125 And now, sirs, I cummaunde yo  
To do as I have done nowe:  
Ichone make your avowe."  
Gladdely grawestume thay.  
*Fiend to annoy*  
*[I] rowf to butcher him and bring him down*  
*If; keep my life*  
*From now until tomorrow morning*  
*Each one*  
*agreed*
- Then unsquarat Gawan  
130 And sayd godeley agays,  
"I avowe, to Tarse Wathelan,  
To wake hit all nyghte."  
"And I avow," sayd Kaye,  
135 "To ride this forest or daye,  
Quoso wernes me the waye,  
Hym to dethe dighse."  
Quod Baudewyn, "To stynte owne strife,  
I avow bi my life  
Nevr to be jelous of my wife,  
140 Ne of no birde bryghte;  
Nere werne no mon my mete  
Quen I gode may gete;  
Ne drede my dethe for no threwe  
Naunthir of king ner knyghte."  
*answered*  
*in return*  
*of*  
*watch over it*  
*[throughout]; before*  
*[and] whoever denies*  
*To fight him to the death*  
*make end to; consume*  
*jealous*  
*attractive woman*  
*Nor to deny; person; food*  
*When; goods; possess*  
*fear; threat*  
*Neither; nor*

*The Awesynge of Arthur*

- 145 Butte now thay have thayre vowed made,  
Thay baskutte horn and furth rade  
To hold that thay behghe hade.  
Ichone sere way.
- 150 The King turns to the boar;  
Gasan, wyt horsan any more,  
To the tarme con he fore,  
To wake hit to day.
- 155 Thenne Kay, as I come rouse,  
He rode the forest uppe and dowsse.  
Broadwynne turns to touse  
Sum that his gate lay,
- 160 And sethan to bed bowwas he;  
Butte carpe we now of ther othr thre,  
How thay prevyd her wedde-fee,  
The sothe for to say.
- 165 Farst, to carpe of oure Kinge,  
Hit is a kyndelich thinge —  
Ame his begynsyng.  
Howe he dedde his dede.
- 170 Till his howandas con he hold;  
The boar, wyt his brode schilde,  
Folot hom fast in the filde  
And spilitte horn on gode sped.
- 175 Then the Kinge con crye,  
And carputic of vererie  
To make his howandas hardi —  
Hovut on a stede.
- 180 Als sore as he come thare,  
Agaynus him rebowndet the bare;  
He se nevir no syghte are  
So sore gerutte him to drede.
- He hade drede and doute  
Of him that was stirran and strowte;  
He began to romy and rowte,  
And gapes and goes.
- Men myghte soghe his cowch kerne
- now that  
made themselves ready  
promised  
Each in a different  
boar  
without further ado  
like did he go  
watch; until  
may relax
- As his way (home) lay  
then; goes  
speak; those other three  
pledge  
truth
- did  
To; did take his course  
protective skin  
Followed them; field  
injured them quickly
- called out as a hunter  
bold  
*[He]* remained on horseback
- Against; charged  
now; before  
caused; be afraid
- worry  
(the boar); fierce; strong  
bite; growl  
open his mouth; bares teeth  
lair see clearly

*The Awyng of Arthur*

		<i>Became of</i>
	For howandes and for slayn mea That he hadde deaun to his dene And brittum all to bonas.	ripped; bones
185	Thenne his tusshes con he quetse, Open the Kinge for to sene; He liftis uppe, wythoutus leue, Stokkes and stonis.	tusks; what attack
	Wyth wrathe he begyanas to wrene: He ruskes uppe mony a rote Wyth tusshes of thre fote, So grisly he grawns.	comes aside; pause branches fury; root ripe; root tusks; three feet growls
	Thenne the Kinge spanos his spere Open that bore for to bere;	grasp
195	Ther may no dyntus him dene, So sekir was his schilde. The greve schaft that was longe All to spilidus hit spronge;	to encounter stroke; wound
	The gode stede that was stronge Was fallus in the filde.	strong; protective skin
200	As the bore had meane, He gave the King such a dinte, Or he myghte his bridall hente, That he myghte evyr hit felde.	spear-shaft splinters horse field
	205 His stede was stonet starke ded: He sturd nevyr owte of that sted. To thens a bone he bode, Fro wotnes hym weyde.	just as; meant How Before; get hold forever feel it
	Thenne the King in his sadal sene, And wightely wan on his fete, He prayes to Sayn Margarete Fro wotnes him warc;	stunned stone dead
210	Did as a deughty knyghte — Brayd oure a beand bryghte And heve his schild open highte, For spild was his spere.	/The King/ stirred; saddle
	Sethan he buskette him yare, Squithe, wythoutus any mare,	favor; prayed
215		From sorrow; protect
		straightened himself
		agilely gained
		From harm to protect him
		bold
		Drew; sword
		raised; on high
		destroyed
		Then he readied himself quickly
		Right away; more [delay]

*The Awesynge of Arthur*

- 220 Agaynus the fynde for to face  
 That he doth was of hiere.  
 So thay cowentur in the fild:  
 For all the weppans that he myghte wold,  
 The bore briddur his schild  
 On brest he conne bore.
- 225 There downe knelus he  
 And prayus till Him that was so fre:  
 "Send me the victore!  
 This Satanas me sekes."  
 All wroth wox that swyne.
- 230 Blis, and brayd uppe his brynd;  
 As kyng other kechene,  
 Thus rudely he rekes.  
 The Kyng myghte him noȝt see,  
 Butte lenyt hym downe bi a tree,
- 235 So syghe discumfoord wan hee  
 For smelle other smekis.  
 And as he neghet bi a noke,  
 The King stertenly him stroke,  
 That both his brees con blake;
- 240 His maistry he mekes.
- Thus his maistry mekes he  
 Wyth dynus that werut dughed.  
 Were he nevyr so hardy,<sup>1</sup>  
 Thus bidus that brothe.
- 245 The Kinge, wyth a noball brande,  
 He mette the boar comande:  
 On his squrd, till his hande,  
 He renes full rathe.
- He bare him inne aȝe the throte:  
 250 He hade no mynþ of that mote —  
 He began to dote and dote  
 Os he hade keghet scathe.
- fiend; go  
 hideous; pelt (hair)  
 clashed  
 Despite; wield  
 sore apart  
 (which) over his breast; did
- knells  
 God; gracious  
 banner  
 furious became; swine  
 Snorted; raised; eyebrows  
 furnace (kiln) or kitchen  
 foully he reeks (smells)  
 could [the boar]  
 leaned himself over by  
 nearly undone was [the King]  
 or flames  
 (the boar) came near to an oak  
 struck  
 brows did darken  
 prowess [the king] shew
- blow; doughty  
 sword  
 met; straight on (coming)  
 Against his sword; up to  
 quickly  
 drove [the sword] in  
 (The boar); encincer  
 dodder; maggier  
 Since (as); caught great harm

<sup>1</sup> Lines 243-44: *No maner how force he (the boar) might be, / The bold hunter woteth him not*

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- Wyth sit siles he adowne.  
To brittan him the King was towne,  
And sandur in that seun  
His brode schildus bothe.
- The King coethe of vesery:  
Colur him full kynedly.  
The hed of that hardy  
He sette on a stake.  
Sethun brittus he the best  
As venesus in forest;  
Bothe the thonge and lees  
He hongas on a noke.
- There downe knelys hee  
That loves her that is free;  
Said, "This socur thou hase send me  
For thi Son's sake!"  
If he were in a dale depe,  
He hadde no knyghte him to kepe.  
Forwornē, slidus he on slepe:  
No lengur myghte he wake.
- The King hase fillit his avowe.  
Of Kay carpe we nowe —  
How that he come for his prowe  
Ye schall here more.  
Als he rode in the nyghte  
In the forest he mette a knyghte  
Ledand a birde bryghte;  
Ho weppende wundur sore.  
Ho said, "Sayn Maré myghte me spede  
And save me my madenhede,  
And gifte the knyghte for his dede  
Bothe soro and care!"
- Thus ho talkes him tille  
Quille ho hadde sayd all her wille,  
And Kay held him full stille,  
And in the holte hoves.
- pain sinks  
butcher; eager  
divided (sundered); moment  
shoulder quarters
- was expert in hunting lare*  
*(He) collared; properly*  
*bold beast*
- Thus cut up; beast  
stain deer  
strips and slices  
hangs on an oak
- (the Virgin Mary); gracious*  
*help*  
*Son's*
- Not only was he; valley desolate*  
*accompany*  
*Completely worn out; slides*
- fulfilled  
speak
- fared with regard to his prowess*
- At; through
- Leading a beautiful woman*  
*She wept; sorrowfully*  
*She; May Saint Mary help me*  
*for me*  
*grant; deed*
- she speaks; to  
Until; desire  
quietly  
wood fingers

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

- He prekat oste prestely  
290 And asreichet him radly.  
And on the kryghte conne cry,  
And perielty him reproves,  
And sayd, "Recraian& kryghte,  
Here I profar the to fighte  
295 Be chesus of that biurde brighte!  
I bede the my gloves."  
The other ansquarat him wyt skille  
And sayd, "I am redy atte thi wille  
That forward to fulfille  
300 In alle that me behoves."
- "Now, quethen art thou?" quod Kay,  
"Or quethur is thou on way?  
Thi righte name thou me say!  
Quere was thou that wighte?"  
305 The other ansquarat him agayn:  
"Mi righte name is noghte to layn:  
Sir Menealfe of the Mountayn  
My gode fadur highte.  
And this Lady sum I the tellle:  
310 I fochet her ame Ledelle,  
Ther her frindes con I felte  
As foes in a fighte.  
So I talket hem till  
That muche blode conne I spille,  
315 And all agaynyn thayre awne willc  
There wan I this wighte."
- Quod Kay, "The batell I take  
Be chesus of the biderus sake,  
And I schalle wurch the wreke" —  
320 And sqwithelth cos square.  
Theane thay rode togedur ryghte  
As frekes redy to fighte  
Be chesus of that biderus bryghte,  
Gay in hor gonne.  
325 Menealfe was the more myghty:
- galloped; rapidly  
overtook; quickly  
did call  
openly upbraids him  
Renegade  
challenge  
*By reason; lovely woman*  
offer: gloves (throw down the gauntlet)  
other answered; in proper form  
challenge  
is proper for me  
from where  
whither  
proper; tell  
Where captured; person  
in arms  
to be concealed  
*father was named*  
(of) this Lady something you  
captured  
Where; friends; did; defeat  
*In such ways I talked to them (egged them on)*  
against  
wife; person  
undertake  
*By reason; woman's*  
do you have  
on the spot did swear his word  
jousted  
bold men  
*Radiant in her gown*

*The Awysynge of Arthur*

- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
|     | He stroke Kay stilly —                   | stroke; firmly                                  |
|     | Witte ye, sirs, witturly —               | Understand; clearly                             |
|     | Wyth a scharpe spere.                    |   |
|     | All toschildur his schilde,              |   |
| 330 | And ase his sadall gerut him to held,    |   |
|     | And felte him flate in the filde,        |   |
|     | And toke him uppon were.                 |   |
|     |  | [Mmealfe] splintered [Kay's] over; caused; fall |
|     |  | knocked   |
|     |  | captured; by laws of war                        |
|     | Thus hase he wonun Kay on were,          |   |
|     | And all tospild is his spere,            |   |
| 335 | And mckill of his oþir genc              |   |
|     | Is holden to the poes.                   |   |
|     | Thense unsquarel Kay agays               |   |
|     | And sayd, "Sir, ante Tarse Wathelan      |   |
|     | Bidus me Sir Gauan,                      |   |
|     |  | awaits  |
| 340 | Is derwarthe on dese;                    | most worthy on dais (among other knights)       |
|     | Wold ye thether be bowne                 | thither be bound                                |
|     | Or ye turnat to the towne,               | Before; go                                      |
|     | Hic wold pay my rawunsonc                |   |
|     | Wythowtyn delees."                       |   |
|     |  | delay   |
| 345 | He sayd, "Sir Kay, thi lyle I the heghte | promise you                                     |
|     | For a cowrice of that kryghte!"          | sib (course) with                               |
|     | Yette Mesealfe, or the mydryghte,        | But; before                                     |
|     | Him ruci all his rocs.                   | regretted; have                                 |
|     |  |   |
|     | Thus thay turnat to the Tarse            | traveled; Turn (lake)                           |
| 350 | Wyth the thrivand thorne.                | bargaining thorn tree                           |
|     | Kay callat on Gauan yorne;               | angrily   |
|     | Asshes, "Quo is there?"                  |   |
|     | He sayd, "I, Kay, that thou knawes       | [Gawain] asks, "Who                             |
|     | That owte of tyme bostas and blawus;     | whom  |
| 355 | Batte thou me lese wyth thi lawes,       |   |
|     | I lif nevir more.                        | at the wrong times boasts and brags             |
|     | For as I rode in the nyghte,             | Unless; release; courtesy                       |
|     | in the forest I mette a kryghte          | I am dead                                       |
|     | Ledand a bird bryghte;                   |   |
| 360 | Ho weppat wundur sore.                   | Leading a beautiful woman                       |
|     | There togedur faghic we                  | She   |
|     | Be chesun of that Lady free;             | fought  |
|     |  | For the sake of                                 |

*The Awaking of Arthur*

- On were thus base he wanan me,  
Gif that me lothe ware.
- In combat; captured  
*Though for me baseful it were*
- 365 "This knyghte that is of senowus  
Hase takyn me to presowan,  
And thos man pay my rauansun,  
Gawan, wylth thi leue."  
Then unsquarelme Gawan  
370 And sayd godeley agayn,  
"I wille, wudar fayne:  
Quan schall I geve?"  
"Quen thou art armut in thi gere,  
Take thi schild and thi spere  
375 And ride to him a course on were;  
Hit schall the nocht greve."  
Gawan ashes, "Is hit soe?" —  
The other knyght grauntis, "Yoe";  
He sayd, "Then togeder schall we goe  
380 Howsanevyr hit cheve!"
- honorable  
as prisoner  
must  
by your leave  
agreably in return  
most gladly  
What; do (to proceed)  
Where; armed; gear  
with him; joust  
you not at all hurt  
ask, "Is that right?"
- [Gawain]*  
Whatever happens
- And these knyghtus kithus hor crachte,  
And aythir gripus a schafte  
Was als rude as a rafte;  
So runnen they togedar.  
385 So somen conise they hic  
That nauthir scapat forbye;  
Gif Menealfe was the more myghtie,  
Yette dynnes gerat him to dedar:  
He stroke him saddle and sore.  
390 Squithe squonut he thore;  
The blonke him aboate bore,  
Whare he nevir quodur.  
Quod Kay, "Thos huse that thou huse soghie!  
Mi rauansun is all redy boghte;  
395 Gif thos were ded, I ne roghtel!  
Forthi come I hedur."
- demonstrate their (knightly) prowess  
each one  
large as a beam  
charged  
So (fiercely) did they charge together  
neither escaped at all  
If  
Blows counted; dodder  
(Gawain) struck; grievously  
Quickly he passed over there  
horse; carried  
Knew; in what direction  
You got what you asked for  
completely paid  
If you (Menealfe); wouldn't care  
This is what I came for
- Thus Kay scornus the knyghte,  
And Gawan rydus to him ryghte.
- riders; directly

*The Awesynge of Arthur*

- 400 In his sadul sette him on highte,  
Speke gif he may.  
Of his helme con he draw,  
Let the wynde on him blaw;  
He speke syth a voin law —  
“Delyveryt hase thos Kay.”
- 405 Wyth thi laa hase made him leye,  
Battie him is lothe to be in pece.  
And thou was aye cartane  
And pris of ich play.  
Wold thou here a stowunde bide,  
410 A nother courte wold I ride;  
This that hoves by my side,  
In wedde I wold her lay.”
- Therne unsquarel Gauan,  
Said godely agayn,  
415 “I am wundre fayn  
For her for to fighte.”  
These knyghtes kithen theyre gere  
And aythir gripus a spere;  
Rusnan togodur on were
- 420 Os hardy and wighte,  
So somera ther thay yode  
That Gauan bare him from his stede,  
That both his trees con bledde  
On grownde quef he lighte.
- 425 Therne Kay con on him calle  
And sayd, “Sir, thou hadde a falle,  
And thi wench lost wythalie,  
Mi traushe I the plighe!”
- Quod Kay, “Thi love hase thou losse  
For all thi trag or thi boste;  
If thou have oughte on thi cosic,  
I tellle hit for tene.”
- 430 Therne speke Gauan to Kay,  
“A mons happe is notte ay,  
Is none so sekur of assay
- [Gauan]* straightened him upright  
*So that he might speak*  
*Off*  
*Let*  
*low*  
*Rescued*  
*swordplay; free*  
*Although to him it is hateful; peace*  
*were unfailingly courteous*  
*chief in each combat*  
*[ff]: short time wait*  
*second*  
*This [woman] who remains*  
*At pledge; offer*
- answered*  
*agreeably in turn*  
*glad*
- readied*
- As; powerful*  
*(violently) together; went*  
*thrust*  
*browe did bleed*  
*when he landed*
- You havef lost in addition*  
*My swithe I pledge to you*
- beloved*
- spent*  
*consider; as lost*
- good fortune; everlasting*  
*ace of maste*

*The Awesynge of Arthur*

- Battle he may harmes hente." receive  
Gawan rydas to him ryghte directly  
And toke uppe the tother knyghte  
That was diffally dyghte  
440 And stonet in that stynte. sorrowfully dealt with  
Kaw wardas tenat him mare  
Thenne all the harmes that he hente thare;  
He sayd, "And we allone ware,  
This styf schuld I mynte."  
manned at that break (in combat)  
words grieved him more  
Than; mischance; received  
If  
spite; snap
- 445 "Ye, hardely," quod Kay; scarcely  
"Butte thou hast lost thi fayre may  
And thi tiff, I dae lay." maiden  
Thus talkes he him tiff.  
And Gawan sayd, "God forbede,  
450 For he is dughti in dede."  
Prayes the knyghte god spede  
To take hit to none illc  
If Kay speke wardes kene.  
"Take thou this damesell schene;  
455 Lode her to Gaynor the Quene,  
This forward to fulfille;  
And say that Gawan, her knyghte,  
Sende her this byurde brighte;  
And rawunstan the asos righte  
460 Atte her awne wille."  
bold  
(He); with good wishes  
without offense  
sharp  
beautiful  
Gaweney  
compact  
her  
beautiful woman  
yourself forthwith  
(Gaweney's) own
- Therio grawuntas the keyghte  
And truly his traunte pligte,  
Inne savward that byurde bryghte  
To Carleto to bringe.  
465 And as they bovet and abode,  
He squere on the squard brode.  
Be he his othe hade made.  
Thenne waknat the King.  
470 Thenne the day begane to daw,  
The Kinge his begall con blaw,  
His knyghtus coust hitte wellic knew,  
Hit was a sekur thinge.  
agrees  
trueh pledges  
As safeguard
- stood; waited  
mow; sword  
Just at the moment  
awakened  
down  
did  
could it easily recognize  
a sure thing

*The Awyng of Arthur*

- 475 Sethan thay basket hom yare,  
Squith, wylbowtan any mare,  
To wete the Kingus welefare,  
Wylbowtun letting.
- Then; hastened quickly  
Immediately; more [time]  
ascertain  
delay*

PRIMUS PASSUS

*[End off] First Part*

- To the forest thay take the way —  
Bothe Gawan and Kay.  
Menealfe, and the fare may  
480 Coman to the Kinge.
- The bore brilliant thay funde,  
Was colur of the Kingus hande;  
If he were leod of that londe,  
He hadde no horsing.
- 485 Downe thay take that birde bryghte,  
Sette her ose, behinde the knyghte;  
Her horse for the King was dyghte,  
Wylbowtun letting.
- Gave Kay the venuess to lede,  
490 And hert hanward, gode spede;  
Bothe the birde and the brede  
To Carlele thay bringe.
- Now as thay rode atte the way,  
The Kyng himselfun con say  
495 Bothe to Gawan and to Kay.  
"Quere wan ye this wighte?"
- Thensc Kay to the King spake;  
He sayd, "Sir, in the forest as I con wake  
Ane the asturis hoke,
- 500 Ther mette me this knyghte.  
Ther togedur fughte we  
Be chesan of this Lady fre;  
On were hase he thus wonnen me.  
Wylbowtun letting.
- 505 And Gawan hase my rawunnen made  
For a course that he rode
- fair woman  
Come  
butchered  
carved by  
Even though he were  
mount  
lovely woman  
her upon (horseback)  
made ready  
delay  
met to take charge of  
harrowed homeward, happily  
woman; meat*
- on  
did  
Where won; person  
watch  
marvelous oak  
fought  
reason  
In just combat; defeated  
joust*

*The Awomyng of Arthur*

- And felle him in the fild brode;  
He wanne this blude bryghe. woman
- 510 "He toke him there to presannere" —  
Then loghe that damessell dere  
And lovet wyth a mylde chere  
God and Sir Gawan.  
Theane sayd the King opon highte,  
All swithe to the knyghte,  
515 "Quat is thi rawansus, opon ryghte?  
The soth thou me says."  
The tothir unsquarut him wyth skille,  
"I come none say the thertile:  
Hit is atte the Quene wille;  
520 Qwi schuld I layne?  
Bothe my derthe and my lyfe  
Is inne the wille of thi wife,  
Quethur bo walle stynce me of my strife  
Or putte me to Payne." Why; lie  
Whether she; make an end  
set me some penalty
- 525 "Grete God," quod the King,  
"Gif Gawan gode endinge,  
For he is seker in alle kynne thinge.  
To cowunstur wyth a knyghte!  
Of all playus he berus the prise,  
530 Loos of ther ladise.  
Mensealife, and thou be wise,  
Hold that thou beheghe,  
And I schall helpe that I maye,"  
The King himselfan con saye.  
535 To Carlele they take the waye,  
And inne the course is lighte.  
He toke this damessell gentil;  
Before the Quene is he wenche,  
And sayd, "Medame, I am hedar sente  
540 Pro Gawan, your knyghte."  
He sayd, "Medame, Gawan, your knyghte,  
On were base wemen me tobyghte, defeated

*The Avowyng of Arthur*

- Be chesan of this bire brighte;  
Mi pride conne he spile,  
545 And gerat me squaret squyfely  
To bringe the this Lady  
And my towne body,  
To do hit is thi wille.  
And I have done as he me bade."
- 550 Now quod the Qeene, "And I am glad.  
Sethan thou art in my wille stade,  
To spare or to spile,  
I giffle the to my Lord the Kinge —  
For he base mestur of such a thinge,  
555 Of knyghtus in a cowursturinge —  
This forward to fullfile."
- Now the Quene sayd, "God almyghte,  
Save me Gawan, my knyghte,  
That thus for wemen cos fighte —  
560 Fro wothus him were!"
- Gawan sayd, "Medame, as God me spede,  
He is daghti of dode,  
A blithe barse on a stede,  
And grayth in his gere."
- 565 Thenne thay fochet furth a boke,  
All thayre laes for to loke,  
The Kinge sone his othe toke  
And squithely gerat him squaret;  
And sekirly, wythouten fabull,  
570 Thus dwelles he alle the Rowan Tabell,  
As prest knyghte and pricabull,  
Wyth schild and wyth spere.
- Nowe gode frindes ar thay.  
Then carpes Sir Kay —  
575 To the King cos he say:  
"Sire, a mervaeill thinke me  
Of Bowdewyns avowyng,  
Yesterevyn in the evwyng,  
Wythowtan any lettynge.
- For the sake of  
did; undo  
caused; swear swiftly  
you  
my own  
submit*
- Since; placed  
save; dispose of  
give  
sovereignty over  
combat  
compact*
- for me  
Who; women does  
From harm protect him*
- [Meneaſſr]  
warrior on horseback  
accomplished  
reached  
law (custom); review  
administered  
right away caused him to swear  
surely, without lie*
- ready; worthy*
- friends  
says  
wonder it seems to me  
vow  
Yesterday  
Without lie*

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

580	Wele more thenne we thes."	Even
	Quod the King, "Sothe to sayn, I kepe no leagur for to lays: I wold wete wunder fays How best myghte be."	allow [it]; to [be] concealed know gladly <i>[The nature of the oath] as fully as possible</i>
585	Quod Kay, "And ye wold gif me leve, And sithen take hit o no greve, Now schuld I properly prove, As evyr myghte I thes!"	If you; give; permission after; not in insult positively show proper
	"Ynse," quod the King, "on that comande, That o pays on life and on londe That ye do him no wrunge, Butte save wele my knyghte.	provision on pain of
	As men mosly him mete, And sithen forsent him the stree: Ye fynde him noghie on his fete! Be warre, for he is wyghte.	As knightes manly (chivalrously); accost then bar the road feet (i.e., he will mount and challenge)
595	For he is horsame full wele And clene clad in steele; Is none of yo but that he mus fete That he may on lyghte.	powerful well-horsed armor you (excepted); (may not) overcome Whom; light upon
	Ye wyndan him noghie owte of his way." The King himselfvan con say: "Him is fete, I dar lay, To hold that he heughte."	drive him not from his course <i>To him it is precious; bet hold to what he promised</i>
605	Thenne sex ar atle on assenie, Hase armur hom and furthe wenne, Brayd owte asre a bensie Bawdewyn to mete, Wyth scharpe weppan and schene, Gay gowans of grene	six are together in one compact armed themselves Set out over a field encounter bright robes
610	To hold thyare armur clene. And were hille fro the wete. There was sette on ich side To werne him the wayus wide — Quere the knyghte schuld furth ride,	To keep; maintained protect it; wet (weatherly) There; each To deny (Baldwin); ready
615	Forsent hym the stree.	Bar

*The Awyng of Arthur*

- Wyth capes covet thay hom thenne,  
Ryghte as thay hadde bene unowthe men,  
For that thay wold noght be knownet —  
620      Evyn downe to thayre fete.  
  
Now as thay hovut and thay byld,  
Thay se a schene undur schild  
Come prekand fast aare the flide  
On a fayre stede;  
625      Wele armut, and dyghte  
As freke ready to fighie,  
Toward Castile rygthe  
He bies gode sped.  
He see ther size in his way;  
630      Thenne to thaymselvun con thay say,  
"Now he is feed, I dar lay,  
And of his lyfe adrede."  
Then Kay criss opon heghte,  
All squyth to the ksyghte:  
635      "Othir flee or fighie:  
The towe behovus the nede!"  
  
Thenne thay kost thayre capes hom fro.  
Sir Bawdewyn se that hit wasse so.  
And sayd, "And ye were als mony mo,  
640      Ye gerutte me nothe to flee.  
I have my ways for to weynde  
For to speke wyth a frynde;  
As ye ar herdmens hinde —  
Ye marre nothe me!"  
645      Thenne the sex sembait hom in fere  
And square by Him that boghte us dere,  
"Thou passan nevyr away here  
Banne gif thou dede be!"  
"Yme, hardely," quod Kay,  
650      "He may take anothit way —  
And ther schall no man do nere say  
That schall greve the!"
- capes they covered themselves  
unknown (of no renown)  
recognized
- Angered; hid [themselves]  
bright [knights] armed  
galloping; over
- equipped  
warrior  
directly
- assisted with  
saw those sit  
did
- frightened; but  
for; worries  
about
- Right away
- Either
- One of these you must needs do
- threw; capes from them  
it was (as Kay said)  
as many more [again]  
would not have caused me
- travel  
friend
- boorish shepherds  
may not harm me
- gathered themselves together  
more
- passes; through
- Except if  
Yes, indeed  
choose
- And in that case; nor  
(Anything)

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

- "Gode the forylde," quod the knyghte,  
"For I am in my wain righte;  
655 Yistarevyn I the King highte  
To comme to my mene.  
I warne yo, frekes, be ye bold,  
My ryghte ways willc I holde!"  
A spere in fewtre he folde,  
660 A gode and a grete.  
Kay stode neche him in his way:  
He joppat him auct on his play;  
That hevy horse on him lay —  
He squonet in that squalte.  
665 He rode to there oþer fyve:  
Thayne schene schildes cou he rive,  
And faure felle he belyve,  
In hie in that hene.
- reward you; [Baldwin]  
proper  
promised  
for dinner  
you, fighters, even if you are  
in socket (for jousting); places  
roppled; over with his shear  
[Kay]  
swooned; struggle  
those  
handsome; did he shred  
four overcame; quickly  
in hause; beat (miller)
- Hardely wythouten delay,  
670 The set to hom base takyn uppe Kay;  
And thenne Sir Barnewin cou say,  
"Will ye any more?"  
The other ansuarinte him therille,  
675 Sayd, "Thou may weynd quere thou wille,  
For thou base done us noghte batte skille,  
Gif we be wowlundut sore."  
He beyd auct to the Kinge,  
Wythowtan any letting;  
680 He assed if he had herd any tithing  
In thayre holtus hore.  
The knyghte smedit and stode;  
Sayd, "Sir, as I come thro yondur wode,  
I herd ne se batte gode  
685 Quere I schuld furthe fare."  
Thanne was the Kinge amervaylet there  
That he wold tellle him no more.  
Als squither they ar yare,  
To Masse ar they wente.  
By the Masse wasse done,
- With scarcely any pause  
air to themselves  
Do you want any more  
other (youth) unanswered  
go where  
shown toward us; except mastery  
Although  
[Baldwin] hastened over  
hindrance  
[The King] asked; now  
woods have  
paused  
come  
[neither] heard nor saw  
go forth  
astonished  
As soon as; ready  
did they go  
By [the time]

*The Awyng of Arthur*

- 690 Kay come home sono,  
Told the King before sono,  
    "We ar all schente  
    Of Sir Baudewyn, your knyghte:  
He is noball in the fighte,  
695 Bold, hardy, and wighte  
    To bide on a bente.  
Fle will he nevyr more:  
Him is much leuyr dee thore.  
I may banne her that him boe,  
700     Suche harmes have I hente!"
- Nose the King sayd, "Fle he ne can,  
Ne werne his mete to no man:  
Gife any bairne schuld him ban,  
    A mervail hit ware."
- 705 Thenne the King calld his mynstrelle  
And told him holly his wille:  
Bede him layne atne hit were stille,  
    That he schuld forth fare  
To Baudewins of Beatan:
- 710 "I cummawunde the, or thou cum agayse,  
Faurty days, o payse.  
Loke that thou daellie there,  
And were me prevely to say  
If any mon go meteles away;
- 715 For thi waeson for ay,  
    Do thou me nevyr more."
- Then the mynstrell weyndus on his way  
Als fast as he may.
- 720 He funde thaym atne the mete,  
The Lady and her mené  
And gentes grete please.  
Bane porner none feode he  
    To werne him the gate;
- 725 Bette rayket into the halle  
Emunge the grete and the smalle,
- in early afternoon  
done in  
By
- powerful  
deal with on the battlefield
- To him; preferable to die there  
curse her  
received
- Now; Fle  
deny; food  
If; fighter; curse  
it were
- completely his wish  
Bid him dissemble so that it were secret
- Baldwin's [manor]  
command; before; return  
Forty; upon penalty  
See  
inform; secretly  
without food
- To ensure your well-being always  
for me nothing more [than this]
- none (about 3 p.m.)  
at table  
household  
guests in great number  
met  
turn him away  
he proceeded  
Among

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

	And ioket aboate him ause alle. He herd of no threie, Butte riall servys and fyse: In bollas birlutte thay the wyse, And cocus is the kechise Squyfelli con sqaete.	overall (all around) constraint royal service bowls poured cooks <i>Readily did sweat</i>
T30	Then the Ladi come he lowe, And the blordes all aboate; Both wythinse and wythoute, No frate he ther fonde. Knyghe, squyer, yomas, ne knave, Hom iacket noȝtis that they schuld have; Thay nedut noȝtis after hit to crave: Hit come to hot hondis.	did he bow to women
T35	Theane he wente to the dece, Before the pruddast in peice. That Lady was certeine, And bede him stille stonde.	To them [there] lacked to make request to their hand [unbidden] dair most noble in the group
T40	He sayd he was known and couthe, And was comen fro þe southe. And ho had myrr of his mouthe, To here his tithand.	renowned and celebrated the south she; joy palms
T45	A sennight duellist he thare. Ther was no spense for to spare: Burdes thay were nevyr bare, Butte evyr covret clese. Bothe knyghe and sqaire, Mynstrelle and messyngere, Pilgreme and palmerc Was welcam, I wene.	A week stayed luxury Boards (tables) covered completely [with food]
T50	Ther was plenty of fode: Pore men hadde thayre gode, Mene and drinke or thay yode, To wete withoutyn wene.	messenger wayfarer understand
T55	The lord lenge wold noȝtis, Bane come home qwen him gode thoghtis,	goods for themselves were off again To understand; doubt <i>[Baldwin] singer [at Arthur's court] when [to] him good [it] seemed</i>
T60		

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

And both he hase wylt him broghte  
The Kinge and the Queene.

A FITTE

*Segment (i.e., end of second section)*

- 765 Now ther come fro the kechinc  
Riall service and fine;  
Ther was no wanting of wine  
To lause ne to mare.  
Thay hadde atte thayre sopere  
Riche meses and dere.  
The King, wylt a blythe chere,  
Blude hore sic care.  
Than sayd the Kinge opon highte,  
All squithe to the knyghte:  
"Such a service on a nyghte  
Se I nevyr are."  
Therne Bawdewyn smyllit and on him logh;  
Sayed, "Sir, God hase a god plughet!  
He may send us all enaugh:  
Qwy schuld we spare?"
- "Now I cunnawunde the," quod the King,  
"Tomorne in the morwyng  
That thou weynde os hanwyng,  
To wynne us the dere.  
Fare furthe to the scand;  
Take wylt the howundus and men,  
For thou come hom best kenne:  
Thou knowest best here.  
For all day tomorne will I bide,  
And no forthir will I ride,  
Banne wylt the laddis of pride  
To make me god chere."  
To bed bownst thay that nyghte,  
And atte the moran, atte days lighte,  
Thay blew hornys opon highte  
And ferd furthe in fere.
- kitchen  
Royal  
luck  
*lower; greater [in rank]*
- glad look  
them stay anxiety  
aloud  
*Right away*  
*on a single night*  
*Saw; before*  
*laughed to himself*  
*plow [i.e., God provides well]*
- Why
- command  
take for us  
*Go directly; wilderness*
- can best appraise them*  
know; (in your own home)  
await
- noble ladies
- went off
- over land  
went; together

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

	Thenne the Kyng cald his hantere,	hanteman
	And sayd, "Felaw, come here!"	
	The other, wthy a Nithe chere,	
800	Knellet on his knc:	
	Dowen to the Kinge cou be lowre.	
	"I commawunde the to be all myghte oone;	
	Bawdewyn, that is sturun and stowte,	
	Wthy the schall he be.	
805	Ery in the dawyng	
	Loke that ye come fro hantysg:	
	If ye no venesun bring,	
	Fall littill rechis me."	
	The other unsquarul him therille,	
810	Sayd, "Sir, that is ase your ause wille:	
	That hold I resun and skille,	
	As evyr myghte I the."	
	And atte evyn the King cou him dyghte	did make himself ready
	And callut to him a kraygne;	
815	And to the chamber full ryghte	
	He hices gode waye	
	Qwere the Lady of the howse	
	And maydyns fal beateowse	
	Were, curtase and curiouse,	
820	Peesothe in bed lay.	
	The Kyng bede, "Undo!"	
	The Lady ashes, "Querto?"	
	He sayd, "I am coman here, lye,	
	In derse for to play."	
825	Ho sayd, "Have ye notte your ause Quene here,	
	And I my lord to my fere?	
	Tonyghte more seghe ye me nere,	
	In sayth, gif I may!"	
	"Undo the dar," quod the Kinge,	door
830	"For bi Him that made all thinge,	
	Thou schall have no harmynge	
	Battie in thi none wille."	
	Uppe rose a damesell splete,	
		But /all will be/ at your own will sweet

*The Awesynge of Arthur*

- 835 In the Kinge that ho lete.  
He sette him downe on her beddes lete,  
And talkes so but tille,  
Said, "Madame, my knyghte  
Mun lye wuth the all syghte  
Til somorne atte daye lighte —
- 840 Take hit on non illc.  
For al evyr myghte I the,  
Thos schall harmelis be:  
We do hit for a wedde fee,  
The strye for so styllie."
- 845 Thense the Kyng sayd to his knyghte,  
"Sone that thou were undyghte,  
And in yondur bedde ryghte!  
Hie the gad spedē!"  
The knyghte did as he him bade,
- 850 And qwenne ho se him uncled,  
Then the Lady wex drode,  
Worlyke in wode.  
He sayd, "Lye downe prevely her by,  
Butte neghe noghte thou that Lady;
- 855 For and thou do, thou schall dey  
For thi derfe dede;  
Ne noghte so hardy thou ster,  
Ne onus terbe the to her."  
The tother sayd, "Nay, var?"
- 860 For him hadc he drode.
- Thense the Kyng asobet a chekkere,  
And cald a damesel dere;  
Downe thay sette hem in fere  
Upon the bodyde.
- 865 Torches was ther mony lighte,  
And laumpas brennyng full brighte;  
Bane none so hardy was that knyghte  
His hede onus to hide.  
Butte fro thay began to play
- 870 Quyle on the morus that hit was day.
- So that she might let in the King  
in this way to her  
Must lie with you  
is no bad way  
thrive (i.e., on my life)  
blameless  
her  
contest; put an end to
- [*if command*] immediately; undressed  
*Hasten with all speed*
- when she saw
- Excellent among women (lit., "in clothe")  
close by her  
touch not  
if; die  
grievous
- Nor be so bold that you become aroused  
Nor once make advances
- Of him; are
- called for a chessboard  
themselves together
- lighted
- once to get under the bedclothes  
from the time  
Until; when it was daylight

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- 875 Evyr he lokette as he lay,  
    Baudewynne to byde.  
    And erly in the dawyng  
    Come thay home from hantyng.  
    And hertis come thay home bring,  
        And buckes of pride.
- 880 Thay toke this veneson fyse  
    And hadde hit to kechise;  
    The Kinge sende after Bawdewyne,  
        And bede him com see.  
    To the chaumber he takes the way:  
        He fyndes the King atte his play.  
    A knyghte in his bedde lay  
        Wyth his Lady.
- 885 Thenanc sayd the King opon highte,  
    "Totyghte myssane I my knyghte.  
    And hithir folat I him ryghte.  
        Here funden is hee;  
    And here I held hem bothe stille  
        For to do hem in thi wille.  
    And gif thou take hit now till ille,  
        No selcouthe thinge me!"
- 895 Then the King assed, "Art thou weoth?"  
    "Nay, Sir," he sayd, "wythouten othe,  
    Ne wille the Lady no lothe.  
        I tellie yo as quy —  
    For hitte was atte her awen wille:  
        Els thurt no man comus her tille.  
    And gif I take hitte thenanc so ille,  
        Mache mangreve have I.  
    For moty wynbar togedar we have bene,  
        And yette ho dyd me nevyr so sene:  
    And ich syn schall be sene  
        And sene full sorely."
- 905 The King sayd, "And I hadde thoughte  
    Quy that thou wrathis the noghte,
- watched over  
await
- did  
outstanding
- had it brought
- playing chess
- aloud  
missed  
trailed; directly  
discovered  
in their places  
with them according to  
if; badly (i.e., as an insult)  
wonder fit would seem to]
- asked; angry
- wilt; any injury  
the reason why  
by her own
- Otherwise no man would dare; to her
- dishonor incur
- she; injury
- For each offense must be examined  
established; solemnly
- For; curiosity
- [To know] why you are not angry

*The Awyng of Arthur*

And fyndas him in bed broghtie  
By thi Laydy."

- Quod Bawdewyn, "And ye will sitte,  
I schall do yo wele to witte."  
"Yisac!" quod the King, "I the hete,  
And thou will noghte layne."  
"Hit befelle in your fader tyme,  
That was the Kyng of Costantyne,  
Purvayed a grete oure and a fyse  
And weate into Spayne.  
We werret on a sawdan  
And all his lordus we wan,  
And himselfva, or we blan.  
Then were we full fayn.  
I won so ludd wylth the King,  
He gaf me to my leding —  
Lordus atte my bidding  
Was baxam and bayne.
- "He gafe me a castell to gese,  
Wyth all the lordschippes grete.  
I hadc men atte my mete,  
Pyve handryth and mo,  
And no wemen batte thre,  
That owe servandis schild be.  
One was beygthurst of ble  
Then ther othir too.  
Toe were atte one assere:  
The third felow have thy hense;  
Unto a well ar thy wente,  
And says har alio:  
"Sithin all the loce in the lise,  
Thou schall tyne thine aprise."  
And wurchan as the utwise,  
And tire conne har sloe.
- "And for tho werkes were we wo,  
Gart threthe tho othir for to slo.

*If; sorry*  
*make you understand fully*  
*promise you*  
*If; dissemble*  
*time of your fathers (ancestors)*  
*by the name of*  
*Assembled; army*

*made war; taken*  
*captured*  
*before we left off*  
*glad*  
*Honored by*  
*a command*  
*Knights*  
*ready and eager*

*hold*  
*attached rights of lordship*  
*in my household*

*should*  
*handsomer in looks*  
*those; two*  
*Two were of a single will*  
*third companion; seized*  
*did they go*  
*as follows*  
*praise in you lies*  
*lose your renown*  
*{they} acted foolishly*  
*quickly did her slay*

*because of those acts; aggrieved*  
*{And} made a threat; to put to death*

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Thenne sayd the tōne of tho,<br>‘Lete us have oure līfe,<br>945 And we schall atte your bidding be<br>As mycall as we all thre;<br>Is nose of yaw in prevent<br>Schall have wonyng of wylē.’<br>Thay held us welc that thay heghte,<br>950 And dighte us on the daylīte,<br>And thayre body ich nyghte,<br>Wytoutan any stryve.<br>The tone was more lovely<br>That the other hadde eavy:<br>955 Her throte in sundur prevely<br>Ho cutte hitte wyt a knyf.   | <i>the one</i><br><i>be at your pleasure</i><br><i>As much; (were before)</i><br><i>None of you in the privacy of your bed</i><br><i>sexual deprivation</i><br><i>carried out for us; promised</i><br><i>arrived</i><br><i>(gave) each</i><br><i>complaint</i><br><i>The one</i><br><i>So that</i><br><i>anunder in secret</i><br><i>She; it</i>                   |
| “Muche besenes hadde we<br>How that best nyghte be;<br>Thay assched cowsnecell ame me<br>To do hit to dede.<br>And I unsquaret and sayd, ‘Nay!<br>960 Leke ffirst quatt harselvan will say,<br>Quether ho may serve us all to pay;<br>That is a bettur rode.’<br>Ther ho hemme us in that halie<br>To do all that a woman schild fall,<br>965 Wele for to serve us all<br>That stode in that stode.<br>Ho held us welc that ho heghte,<br>And dighte us on the daylīte,<br>And his body ich nyghte<br>970 Intill oure bed beod. | <i>Many pains</i><br><i>be reached</i><br><i>asked advice</i><br><i>To put her to death</i><br><i>answered</i><br><i>what she herself</i><br><i>Whether she; with satisfaction</i><br><i>plan</i><br><i>promised</i><br><i>be proper to</i><br><i>place</i><br><i>she performed for us; promised</i><br><i>served</i><br><i>each night</i><br><i>(she) offered</i> |
| “And bi this tale I understande,<br>Wemen that is of mylde mode<br>975 And syse giffes hom to gode,<br>Mecull may ho mende;<br>And tho that giffes hom to the ille,<br>And sithin thayre folis will fullfill,<br>I tellle yo welc, be proper skille,  | <i>pleasant disposition</i><br><i>then occupy themselves with</i><br><i>Much; she improve</i><br><i>those; occupy themselves</i><br><i>then; faults; carry out</i><br><i>with full assurance</i>   |

*The Awesynge of Arthur*

- 980 No lufle will iane hom leade. *longer*  
 Wyth gode wille grathely hom gete,<sup>1</sup> *happilyc without distress*  
 Meke and mylde attē hor meie, *(There will be) joy at all events*  
 And thryvandly, wythoutan threse, *Therefore jealous*  
 Joy attē iche ende.
- 985 Forthi jetius schall I never be  
 For no sighte that I see,  
 Ne no biardes brighte of ble;  
 Ich crtheil thinke hase ende.” *Nor for no woman with good looks*  
*Each; thing*
- 990 The King sayd, “Thou says wole.  
 Sir,” he sayd, “as have I seie,  
 I will thou wote hit iche dele.  
 Therfore come I.  
 Thi Lady greet me to square squyfteil,  
 Or I myghte gete eated,  
 995 That ho schuld harmelis be,  
 And all har campaity.  
 Then gerut I my knyghte  
 To go in bed wyth the biarde bryghoe,  
 On the fur syde of the lighte,  
 1000 And lay har downan by.  
 I sette me doune hom besyde.  
 Here the for to abide;  
 He neghit novyr so naked syde  
 Of thi Lady.
- 1005 “Forthi, of jelousnes, be thou bold,<sup>2</sup>  
 Thine avow may thou hold.  
 Baite of tho othir things that thou me told  
 I wold wete more:  
 Quy thou dredus notte thi dede  
 1010 Ne non that binas on thi brede?  
 As evyr brok I my hedo.” *made*  
*woman*  
*(i.e., a distance from her)*  
*beside her*  
*them*  
*you to await*  
*got near*
- I wish you to understand each detail*  
*Then, [when] I came*  
*implored; swear immediately*  
*Before*  
*untouched*
- know*  
*Why; fear; death*  
*Nor none who eat*  
*At ever I keep my head (i.e., on my life)*

<sup>1</sup> Lines 981-82: Wish good will, keep them firmly under supervision, / Meek and mild at home (at their meals).

<sup>2</sup> Therefore, as far as jealousy is concerned, be assured.

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

	Thi yatis are evyr yare!" Quod Bawdewyn, "I schall yo telle: Ane the same castell 1015 Queere this artur beffelle, Beseghte we ware. On a day we ushet oure And toke presoneras stourte; The tone of owre feloys hadde doute, 1020 And durst nōtis furthe fare.	Your gates; ready [for game] Where this adventure Beseiged One day; issued one; companions became fearful forth
	"The caytef crope into a tunne That was settel therowte in the sunne. And there come fland a gunne, And lemer as the levyn. 1025 Lyghte opon hitte, atte the last, That was fastnat so fast; All in sundar hit brast, In six or in sevyn. And there hit slaye him al —	coward crepe; barrel outside flying a missile glanced; lightning (And) landed on it closed up killed; at well
1030	And his hert was so fali! Sose the hed fro the hals, Hit lyputt full evyn. And we come fro the feghting Sownde, wþoutan hurting.	Immediately; neck jumped right off Uninjured
1035	And then we loyld the King That heghhest was in hevyn.	praised
	"Then owre feloys onn say, Schall no mon dee or his day, Baſte he cast himselfe away 1040 Throgh wortyng of wiſe." And there myne awow made I — So dyd all that campany — For dede nevyr to be drery: Welcum is hit —	companions did die before Escape; threw lack resolution death; anxious
1045	Hit is a kyndely thing." "Thou says soth," quod the King, "Baſte of thi thryd awowyng Telle me quych is hit,	It; natural how it is

*The Avowyng of Arthur*

1050	Quy thi more thou will note worse To no levand barse?"	Why; food; doy living person lose (miss the point)
	"Ther is no man that may hit tharne — Lord, ye schall welc wete.	understand
	"For the sege aboute us lay stille; We hadde note all att our wille" <sup>1</sup>	siege; remained yet
1055	Mete and drinke us to fille: Us wontatte the fode. So come in a mesyngere, Bade, "Yeld uppe all that is here!" And speke wylt a sturis schere <sup>2</sup>	For us food was lacking <i>[And] commanded, "Yield</i>
1060	"I myl, by the Rode!" I gerutte him hide to none, Called the stuard sonne, Told him all as he schuld done, As counsell is god:	had him wait till afternoon <i>[H]e</i> ; steward immediately that he should do
1065	Cerutte trumpe on the wall, And covered barden in the hall; And I myself ensange hem all As a king stode.	<i>[H]e</i> staged a fanfare had tables set among them
1070	"I gerat hem wasshe; to mete wente. After the stuard then I sente: I bode that he schuld take entente That all schuld well fare — Bede bringe brod pleate,	had them wash up; to the meal <i>[we]</i> went commanded; care eat well
	And wine in bottis of tre, That no wontyng schuld be To lasse ac to mare.	roast meat wood Jack less
1075	We hadde no mete butow for on day — Hit come in a nobull array. The mesyngere lokit ay And se hem sle care.	food; one came (was served) was ever watchful saw them put care aside
1080	He toke his leve atti mete.	at (after) the meal

<sup>1</sup> Lines 1054-55: *By no means were we able to fulfill / Our need for meat and drink*

<sup>2</sup> Lines 1059-60: *And [H]e replied in a stern manner, / I will not, by the Cross!*

*The Awyng of Arthur*

- We gerutte him driske atte the gate,  
And gafe him giftus grete,  
And furthe con he fare.  
*desired he  
did; go*
- 1085 "But quen the messyngere was gone,  
These officers ichone  
To me made they grete mone,  
And dresely con say —  
Sayd, 'In this howse is no bread,  
No quyte wine nyl red;  
Yo behoves yild uppe this stid  
And for oure lyvys pray.'  
Yesse God helpus ay his man!  
The messyngere come agayn than  
1095 Wythoote to the chevyan,  
And sone conne he say:  
'Thoghe ye sege this sevyn yere,  
Castell gote ye none here,  
For they make als mary chere  
1100 Als hit were Yole Day!'  
*when  
each one  
complaint  
gloomily did  
white; nor  
You must yield; castle  
lives  
always  
returned then  
Outside to his captain  
immediately did  
lay siege  
at merry festivity  
At if; Yule*
- "Then the messyngere con say,  
'I rede yo, hie yo hethin away,  
For in your oure is no play.  
Butte hongar and thurst.'  
1105 Thenne the king con his knyghtis calle.  
Sethin to cowansell wenic they all —  
'Sythin no better may befall,  
This halid I the best.'  
Evys aye the mydynghtie,  
1110 Hor lordis sembelot to a syghte,  
That were hardy and wighte:  
Thay remysyt of hor resa.  
Mete laynes mony latke:  
And there mete hor sege brake,  
1115 And geest hem to gille us the bake;  
To preke they were full preste.  
*did  
advise; hasten you from here  
your own army; abundance  
did  
Then  
(He said) Since nothing better may come  
This (course)  
Just  
There; assembled at a place  
Who; powerful  
moved from their resting place  
Food covers over many a lack  
broke down their siege  
caused them to turn their backs on us  
To gallop off; eager*

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- "And then we lokit were thay lay  
And see oure emeys away.  
And then oure felawis con say,  
1120      The lasse and the more,  
'He that gode may gone  
And wernys men of his mete,  
Gud Gode that is grete  
    Gil him sory care!
- 1125 For the mete of the messyngere,  
Hit mendatte all ourt chere."  
Then sayd the King, that thay myghte here,  
    And swythele con square,  
"In the come we fynde no fabull;  
1130 Thise avowes arne peodtabull."  
And thus recordas the Rownde Tabull,  
    The lasse and the more.
- Thenne the Kinge and his knyghtis all,  
They madun myrthe in that haile.  
1135 And then the Lady come thay calle,  
    The fayrist to fold.  
Sayde Bawdewyn, "And thou be wise,  
Take thou this Lady of price —  
For muche love is har lyce —  
1140      To thise hert hold.  
Ho is a biarde full bryghe,  
And thereto semely to thy sighte.  
And thou hase holdin all that thoa highte,  
    As a knyghte schulde!"
- 1145 Now Ihessa Lord, Hevyn Kynge,  
He graunt us all His blesyngc,  
And gifte us all gode endinge.  
    That made us on the mulde.
- where they had been  
did  
who goods may possess  
denies  
feeding  
made better; outlook  
vehemently did swear  
Is you do we; falsehood  
well taken  
bears witness  
did  
embrace  
(The King) said (to); If  
wordly  
kes  
kind (her)  
She; woman; handsome  
carried out; promised  
(May) He  
earth

Amen.

### Notes

Abbreviations: Ir = Ireland MS; R = Robson's edition; FH = French and Hale's edition; B = Brookhouse's edition; D = Dahood's edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

- 1 *He that made us on the munde.* This first line of *Awryng* virtually repeats the final line of the poem (*That made us on the munde*), linking its beginning to its ending and emphasizing the symmetries of structure. Such echoic repetition occurs as well in *Awntyrs* (see lines 1 and 714-15 and notes), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, and *Patience*.
- 2 *fair.* FH: *fore*.
- 13 *wice.* R, B: *wire*.
- 22 *Kyndenesse and.* Ir: *Kyndenesse of;* I emend for sense.
- 24 *wayt men and wive.* D emends to *waythmen* (i.e., "huniers") *wive*.
- 25 *thay.* Ir: *the;* FH, B emend to *thay*; D retains Ir's reading.
- 29 *Carlile.* Many of the Arthurian verse romances, and especially those involving Gawain, name Carlisle as a habitual northern court for the Knights of the Round Table. The mention of Hagewood Forest (line 65) and Gawain's vow to keep watch at the Tarn Wathelene (line 132) further localize the action in Cumberland. *Ragnelle*, *Carlile*, *Awryng*, *Greene Knight*, as well as the ballad versions of the first two, all mention Carlisle as the seat of Arthur's court, as do Malory, *Lancelot of the Laik*, and the two poems on Arthur's death, the *Stanzeis Morte Arthur* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*.
- 40 *bandur.* D emends to *boundas* for sake of rhyme.

*The Awrayng of Arthur*

- 43 *mose*. R, FH, B: *mose*. The letter formation makes either "u" or "n" plausible; I follow D's reading.
- 46 *offillas*. It: *of filias*; D reads the latter as one word, and so makes sense of the line.
- 48 *frið*. R, B read *friðe*. R and B frequently read final scribal stroke as "e"; I have usually indicated such readings only where at least one other edition agrees.
- 54 *he*. B prints *be* without explanation.
- 61 *Auffe*. D emends to *huse* in this line, and to *huse* and *buse* in lines 62 and 63. While his emendations are ingenious and to a large degree persuasive, they are not necessary. The manuscript readings make more than minimal sense, and the position of the three words as rhymes gives their forms additional authority.
- 74 *Bowdewynne of Bretayn*. I assume that the popular romances mean this character to be identical with the "Byschope Bowdewyn" who appears in *Carlisle*, in the same way that Malory seems to understand Sir Baudwen of Bretayne and "the ermyte [hermit], sir Bowdewyn of Bretayne" as the same person. See line 914 and note below, and notes at *Carlisle*, line 28 and *Turke*, line 54.
- 78 *biarnes*. The three strokes that make up "uf" can be read as several possible letter combinations; R, B give *biarnes* here and at 703. The spelling at line 563 (*buse*) confirms the present reading.
- 79 *alle*. B, D read *all*.
- 83 *hunter*. Here and at line 105 the word ending is abbreviated; at line 113 the full form is given as *haster*. Though the usual scribal spelling for this termination is -ur (as in *undur*, *sekur*, *wyntur*, and so on), I follow D in expanding the word as *haster*.
- 100 *nafir*. It: *nare*, so R, B; I follow emendation of FH, which D prints without comment.
- 101 *rennyng*. It: *rengrayng*, with a mark under the first g to indicate excision.

#### Notes

- 110 *Bane sette my hed.* FH emends to *I sette my hed.* The buster uses an emphatic phrase, similar to "I'll stake my neck on it."
- 118 *Myne avow make I.* Arthur's vow and the subsequent hunt apparently have no specific sources in other romances, though boar hunts occur in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and other popular narratives.
- 127 *make your avowe.* The act of making a public vow (or boast, or "gab"), often in competition with other knights, occurs in twelfth-century *chansons de geste* such as *Le Pelerinage de Charlemagne* (perhaps imitated in Cornwall), as well as in a well-known scene in Jacques de Longuyon's *Les Voies de Peotr* [The Vows of the Peacock], an early fourteenth-century romance. On the connection of vows to chivalric practice and literary portrayals, see Gail Orgelfinger, "The Vows of the Pheasant and Late Chivalric Ritual," pp. 611–43 in *The Study of Chivalry*, ed. Howell Chickering and Thomas H. Seiler, TEAMS publications (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1988); Orgelfinger provides translations of vows made by actual and fictional knights, as well as a full discussion of their contexts.
- 131 *Tarn Wathelene.* The Tarn Wathelene was a lake within Eaglewood Forest; see line 29 above and note, and *Aways*, line 2 and note.
- 132 *To wakē hir all nyght.* Gawain's vow to watch, or carry out an all-night "wake," at the Tarn implies a willingness to encounter supernatural forces. The ghost of Guenevere's mother rises to meet Gawain and Guenevere from the Tarn in *Aways*; *Gawain* means strange doings at water crossings in other romances, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Chrétien's *Yvain* (and in the Middle English version, *Ywain and Gawain*).
- 133 ff. Kay's windy recklessness, and his seemingly inevitable humiliation, are a stock motif in popular Arthurian romances; in the present volume, this pattern occurs in *Carlisle*, *Carle*, *Gologyar*, *Tarke*, and *Marriage*.
- 135 *Quoso.* Ir. D: *Quose.* I commend the form since it is inconsistent with scribal spelling, though it is at times difficult to distinguish scribal *e* from *o*; compare note at line 160.
- 137 ff. Baldwin's vows, offered merely to close off the exchange, have a proverbial ring, and recall a number of literary and folk traditions; D (p. 33) connects them

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

specifically to the cycle of the Three Wise Counsels, a widespread motif of three oaths or admissions.

- 143 *Nr.* R, FH, B read *Ir* as *Nr*; D gives *Ovr* without comment.
- 149 *bore.* FH: *bare.*
- 150 *wythoutan ary.* Ir: *wyth ary*; FH, B, D all emend for sense. I follow D's scribal spelling.
- 151 *fore.* D emends to *fore.*
- 156 *Sun that.* FH emends to *Quer that.*
- 160 *The Ir: Tho;* so R, B; FH emends for sense. D reads apparent *o* here and elsewhere as *e*.
- 165 *Aold.* D, arguing that scribal *e* and *o* are difficult to distinguish from one another, reads *Aold*, which fits the rhyme slightly better.
- 168 *spillite how on gode spede.* Ir: *spillate on how gode spede.* I emend the word order on the basis of sense and syntax since *spill* almost never occurs as a verbal phrase with a preposition, and *on (or in)* (*good*) *speed* is a common phrase (see OED, *speed* sb. 7a).
- 193 *spasos.* D: *spases.*
- 196 *nakir.* FH reads *nakir.*
- 204 *he myghte evyr hit fele.* D, following suggestion of FH, emends to *he evyr hit feild*, for the sake of rhyme and meter.
- 206 *He stard.* I understand the subject here to be Arthur, caught in his saddle as his horse falls to the ground. It would be possible, however, to take *He* as referring to the mount, with the implication that the horse never returned from the bust.
- 207 *hens.* Here and at line 1145 D reads *less.*
- 212 *were.* D emends to *were.*

*Notes*

- 218 *Squithe*. D reads *Squith*.
- 227 *vicord*. R, B read *vittore*.
- 229 *wroch*. B: wrote.
- 231 Medieval religious exposition and popular narrative both connect the devil (and the eternal fires of hell) with kitchens and cooking.
- 243 *nevyr*. B: *hevyr*.
- 250 *Aude*. Ir: *Aude*, though unclear (so R, FH); B: *made*; D: *had* (without comment).
- 254 ff. Arthur's eagerness to *brittan him* corresponds to the "assay" or breaking of the deer, described in detail in *Ragnelle* (lines 46 ff., and line 48 and note), *Carlisle* (line 31 and note), and *Sir Gowain and the Green Knight* (lines 1325 ff.). The ritual of butchering is not simply a matter of technical knowledge, but a display of the rule-bound nature of the hunt that makes it a hallmark of aristocratic identity; Arthur's performance here, within the precincts of the royal forests, is an exemplary demonstration of his kingly demeanor.
- 258 *Colarr*. B: *Tholarr*. The precise meaning of this verb is not clear, though it would appear to describe some feature of the ritual butchering — perhaps the removal of the head, or the carving of the shoulders; the word occurs again (*colarr*) at line 482.
- 263 *thonge*. Ir: *yonge*; so R, FH. B, D: D's long discussion of the *cra* reaches no conclusion, and I emend (according to suggestion in FH) to *thonge* as offering the best sense.
- 266 *har*. R, B read *her*.
- 267 *Sayd*. FH reads *Says*.
- 273 ff. This stanza clearly lacks one quatrain, with the consequence that the *Arrowyng*'s perfectly symmetrical division into two parts (lines 1-572, and lines 573-1048) is off by four lines. Spearing, Barrow, and Johnos have drawn attention to this feature of the poem's structural meaning.

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

- 275 *fōr*. Ir: *fro*; I follow emendation of FH.
- 279 *bīndr*. FH: *bredr*.
- 280 *Ho*. R, FH, B read *Ho*; D reads *He* and emends to *Ho*.
- 286 *al*. R, FH read *alle*.
- 295 *būnde*. D: *būnde*, but scribal spelling at lines 458, 463 (*būnde*) makes *būnde* preferable here (so R, FH, B) and in other occurrences at lines 508, 734, 987, 998, and 1141.
- 297 *skille*. B, D: *skill*. Here and elsewhere D reads the characteristic final flourish by the scribe as without significance, and so prints *skill*; the flourish here differs very little from other cases — e.g., *nile* (line 285) and its rhymes, or *Quille* (line 286) — and so I follow earlier editors in retaining final *e* in some cases where D has rejected it. Compare also lines 966, 967, where omission of final *e* seems scribal.
- 298 *ane thi wille*. Scribal letter forms and strokes are especially hard to distinguish in the final phrase; R: *at thi wille*; FH: *ane thi wille*; B: *at the will*; D: *ane thi will*.
- 300 *that*. Ir: *the*; so R, B, D. FH emends to *that*.
- 305 *soher*. FH reads *soher*.
- 307 ff. *Sir Meneaffe of the Mountain / My gode fadur highte*. No other character, knightly or otherwise, named Meneaffe occurs in medieval Arthurian literature. D notes the possible components (*man* + *elf*), and this resonant hybrid connects Meneaffe with other Arthurian opponents, like Sir Gromer Somer Jour in *Ragnelle* and *Turke*, who seem to have prenatural or folk antecedents. D also points out that the encounter at the Tarn or lake resembles Celtic ford combats, though these proliferate in chivalric romance, as when Gawain faces strange opponents at almost every water crossing in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: "At uche warthe other water ther the wyghe passed, / He fonde a foo hym byfoore, bot ferly it were" (lines 715-16: At each ford or stream where he passed, it was a wonder if he did not face a foe in front of him). See also note on line 132 above. The syntax and word formation leave the meaning of line

### Notes

- 308 unclear; it can mean "Menealfe my godfather named [me]" (as D interprets the line), or "Menealfe my good father was named," implying an hereditary title of sorts and an identical name for the present speaker (as understood here).
- 310 *Ledelle.* D identifies this with Liddel Strength (or Liddel Mote), a fortification about ten miles north of Carlisle, on the Liddel River, at the border of Scotland and England.
- 311 *I felle.* Ir: *he felle*, corrected from *hur sellr*; R, FH, D, give the former, B the latter. I emend to *I* to maintain the first-person character of the statement and the continuity of the speech (which D repunctuates).
- 313 ff. Menealfe's "talk," which leads to fighting and bloodshed, is itself another clear instance of the knightly speech acts that are at the center of *Arowing*. Menealfe's words deliberately offended the honor of the woman's kin, leading to combat and the "capture" of the woman.
- 319 *wurch.* R, B: *warche*.
- 333 *woman.* So Ir, followed by R, B, D; FH: *wonnan*.
- 335 *of his othr.* Ir: *of othr*; I follow emendation suggested by FH.
- 349 *Tome.* D: *Teme*, for the sake of rhyme and phonology.
- 350 *thorne.* D reads *thorne*.
- 351 *jorne.* D reads *yerne*.
- 352 *thare.* D omits to *thare*.
- 355 *lawer.* This word has presented problems to readers, since its conventional meaning does not seem appropriate here. The form does not invite emendation because of its position in the rhyme. FH suggests the meaning "surety," or it might be possible to construe it as a reference to Gawain's reputation as "Tyne fader of nurture" (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 919), the father or source of the laws of courtesy. D's solution is to see *lawer* as a plural of *lae* (line 405).

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- 378 *The tother.* Ir: *To tother*, so R, FH, B; I follow D's emendation, reflecting scribal phrasing at lines 517 and 799.
- 380 *hit cheve.* Ir: *hit chvix*, so R, FH, B; I follow D in emending for rhyme.
- 381 *kithare.* Ir: *kithare*; so R, B, D. FH reads *kithian*. I emend to normalized form, as in line 417.
- 382 *aythir.* B: *aathir*.
- 385 *shay.* Ir: *she*, so R, D; FH, B emend.
- 390 *Squithe.* D reads *Squith*.
- 394 *raumnum.* R, B, D read the ambiguous set of minims as *raumnum*; FH gives *raumnum*. I offer what seems the more likely scribal spelling.
- 417 *kithare.* Ir: *kithare*; I emend as in line 381.
- shayre.* Ir: *shay*, so R; FH, B, D emend.
- 419 *rogedar.* So R, B, D; FH adds final *e* which is not legible.
- 421 *rher.* Ir: *that*, so R, B; FH, D emend.
- 422 *from.* R, B read *fro*.
- 425 ff. Kay's taunting of Meneagle here, earlier at lines 393 ff., and later at lines 429 ff. and 445 ff., constitutes a vivid if ungracious example of the linkage between knightly honor and speech acts. Kay "talkes . . . him tille" with "wordes kene" (lines 448, 453) in order to assert his superiority over the fallen knight, if only through Gawain's agency. Gawain's own reserve and his implicit rebuke of Kay (lines 433 ff. and 449 ff.) demonstrate his own understated courtesy. See lines 313 ff. and note.
- 432 *for nose.* B glosses as "intent," which seems not at all to fit the context. D reads the two words as one, *fortenote*, and glosses as "utterly lost." I understand *nose* as from the same root (meaning "lost"), but as past participle used as adjective; see OED, *nose* v.2, and *nose* p.p.a.

### Notes

- 442 *harmer*. FH reads *happnes* (i.e., "chances").
- 472 *Hir*. Ir: *Hir*; so R, FH, B, D. I emend for the sake of sense and idiom.
- 477 Next to this line at the right margin the scribe has written *Primur Passus*, and then left a gap of two lines to indicate a break. A similar rubric occurs at line 765 (see note). These markers divide *Aisowyng* into sections of 476, 288, and 384 lines, perhaps indicating convenient performance sessions. They do not, however, correspond to the striking structural divisions of the poem, in particular to the decisive break at the precise mid-point (line 573). See introduction and lines 273 ff. and note.
- 481 *fande*. So Ir, R, B, D; FH emends to *fande* for rhyme.
- 482 *Aonde*. Ir: *Aonde*, so R, B; FH, D emend.
- 489 *Kay the venesian*. Ir: *Kay to the venesian*, with *to* marked for excision.
- 491 ff. The conjunction here of *the bird* and *the brede* that *To Cartile* thay bringe as trophies suggests clearly the status of this nameless woman as a marker of chivalric honor among famous men. Menealfe first told Kay how he had "wan" her (line 316), provoking Kay to try to win her for himself. After ransoming Kay, Gawain gladly agrees to a second course "For her for to fighte" (line 416); when he wins, he consigns the woman's fate to the judgment of Queen Guenevere (lines 454 ff.), though she remains in Menealfe's custody. As the prize of Kay's and Gawain's forest adventures, she is bracketed here with the dead man of the King's hunt. Though noble and a "lasye may" (line 446), she stands as a direct counterpart to the laundress exchanged among the five hundred soldiers in Balowis's barracks story (lines 909 ff.).
- 499 *anwris*. The scribe's letter combinations are sometimes ambiguous, especially -ras and -ris (e.g., *berar*, line 529); here, however, the compression of the writing seems to indicate *anwris*, though FH gives *ostarur*.
- 503 *woman*. FH: *women*.
- 511 *wyth a mylde cheire*. B: *wyth mylde cheire*, omitting the article.

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- 516 *shou me sayn.* D emends to *shou mon sayn* (i.e., "you must say"), for the sake of sense.
- 529 *berus.* FH reads *beris.*
- 530 *fadise.* B: *fadiis.*
- 537 ff. Menealfe's submission to the judgment of Queen Guenevere recalls the situation of the knight-rapist of Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale (a version of the *Ragnelle* story), whose fate is determined by Arthur's Queen and her ladies.
- 542 *werre.* B: *were.*
- 567 *The.* FH reads *Tho.*
- 571 *privaball.* The scribe abbreviates the prefix, and the indistinct scribal spelling has produced a variety of editorial readings: R: *presabball;* D: *preraball;* FH: *privaball;* B: *presaball.* I follow FH in expanding according to the scribal spelling at line 19.
- 573 *ar.* FH reads *are.*
- 573 ff. The first test of Baldwin's vows, the ambush devised by Kay, parallels episodes in Malory and other popular romances.
- 584 *How best nyghte be.* Just what Arthur wishes for here is unclear: how he might best find out the meaning of Baldwin's oath, or what plan would be most satisfactory, or how things might be arranged for the best in general, are all plausible readings for the line.
- 589 *comande.* R, B read *coandre.*
- 591 *no strunge.* D emends to *no schande* (i.e., "shame") to preserve the rhyme.
- 599 *jelle.* I take this as a form of *jellon*, "to overcome or kill," as in line 311, *jelle*, rather than as a form of *jelle*, "to feel or perceive." The constraints of the rhyme help to account for the unusual spelling, and what amounts to a double negative in *none . . . bar* complicates the lines' meaning. The import is, "Any

*Notes*

one of you, no one excepted, he may overcome, whom he happens to light upon."

610 *gownas*. R, B: *gownas*.

610 ff. The decision by Kay and his five accomplices to wear *Gay gownas of grene* in setting up the ambush of Baldwin suggests that they intend to disguise themselves; their further attempt to cover themselves with capes, as *ancowthe men*, confirms this. The choice of green costumes may correspond to the conventional garb of highwaymen and forest outlaws like Robin Hood, who are said to dress in green. In any case, the unchivalrous assault in uneven numbers, the attempt to hide (line 621), and the assumption of an ignoble identity (*ancowthe men*) make clear that this is not, like the combat between Kay and Menealfe and Gawain and Menealfe, a knightly encounter; see also line 643 and note.

622 *se*. R, FH, B: *so*; D reads *se* (FH's suggested emendation).

623 *Come*. B: *Thome*, mistaking (as at line 258) the scribe's initial *C*.

632 *adrede*. Ir: *dredas*, so R, FH, B. D emends to *adrede*; I follow FH's suggested emendation.

643 *Aerdnes hind*. FH glosses as "gentle retainers"; B glosses neither word; D's separate glosses give "valiant knights." This seems not a compliment, but fighting words on Baldwin's part as he prepares to fight six antagonists; as an insult, it strips those disguised knights who far outnumber him of any claim to noble status, and deprives them of any possible honor in the combat that ensues. Baldwin's affront is an instance of the specialized insult to honor that precipitates and defines chivalric conflict; Sir Menealfe refers to this earlier (line 313 f.): "So I talket hom tille / That mache blode come I spille." MED, *Aise n.*, gives only one instance of the spelling *hind* (in a Chaucer text); by the sixteenth century this was the common spelling, and the contemptuous phrase *Aired Aines*, often in association with *herdir* or *herdsman*, was common in Middle English.

659 *folde*. Ir: *foldes*. I follow D in emending to *folde* for the sake of rhyme.

668 *In hir in*. B: *In Air in*.

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

- 671 *Bawdewin*. Ir: *Bewewin*; R, B: *Bawdewin* without note; FH, D emend to *Bawdewin*.
- 687 *Ais squithar*. D emends to *Ais squith* as for the sake of grammatical convention.
- 691 before *nose*. Here and at lines 719 and 1061, I take *nose* to mean not "noos," but "none," one of the seven canonical hours (or prescribed times of daily prayer), often used colloquially to designate a time of day. *Nose* was the ninth hour (counting from matins at 6 a.m.), or 3 p.m., so that *before nose* would indicate early afternoon rather than late morning.
- 701 ff. The test of Baldwin's largesse resembles the spectacle of public courtesy portrayed in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Carlisle*, and the two episodes of *Gologras*, though these other romances make the event as much a test of the guest's courtesy as of the host's.
- 703 *biurne*. R, B: *bürne*.
- 710 *cammawunde*. D reads *camowunde*.
- 712 *therre*. D emends to *there* for the sake of rhyme.
- 715 *For thi wareson*. FH glosses as "on your eternal welfare"; Arthur's injunction here seems to be much more limited, referring to his own favor.
- 765 The scribe again indicates a division in the narrative; "tunc" occurs in popular narratives as the equivalent of "passus" (see line 477 and note). It marks a division or apportioning of the story, though whether it signals a less decisive turn than "passus" (as D remarks, line 476 and note) seems unclear.
- 777 on *him logh*. In a chivalric shame culture, any public gesture constitutes socially meaningful behavior. To laugh aloud might therefore either be an act of gracious inclusiveness (as in the recurrent laughter of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), or of scornful exclusion. That Baldwin laughs on *him* — privately — removes his act from the public forum of chivalric honor; this stands in contrast, for example, to the spectacle of the speech act Arthur has just performed, "wyth a blythe cheere" and "opon highte."

### Notes

- 781 ff. The far-fetched prank that Arthur devises to test Baldwin's private courtesy appears to be an inversion of the bed trick. Rather than secretly introducing a substitute for the anticipated lover on the wedding night (as when Isolde induces Brangane to take her place in bed with King Mark), Arthur's trick consists in an overt supplanting of the husband in the marital act. Though the retainer has spent the entire night in Baldwin's wife's bed, rendering her technically unfaithful, there are no sexual relations. The situation resembles the test imposed by the Earle of Carlisle, who puts Gawain in bed with his own wife (Carlisle, lines 445 ff.), and to a lesser extent Lady Bertilak's "capture" of Gawain in bed in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which takes place while her lord (like Baldwin) is off on a hunt.
- 787 *bent*. D reads *bene*.
- 808 *fult reche*. FH reads *fille reche*.
- 818 *fal*. B: *fult*.
- 821 *Undo*. Ir: *Uno*; emended as in the present text by all editors.
- 827 ff. This statement by Baldwin's wife combines her wish and determination; reversing the lines, she says in effect, "In faith, if I have any sway in the matter, tonight you should not be (any) more near to me (than you are right now)."
- 829 *dar*. FH reads *dore*.
- 830 B misnumbers line 831, so that from here to end his numeration is off by one line; references to B in these notes are to actual (not misnumbered) lines.
- 837 *Soyd*. D reads *Soyde*.
- 856 *dode*. B: *dod*.
- 876 *And buckes*. FH: *And x buckes* (ten bucks), indicating in a note that the Roman numeral is uncertain.
- 879 *sonde*. Ir: *sonde*, so R, FH, B. D claims this is an ambiguous letter form, and reads as *sende*. I emend for sense.
- after. R, B: *after*.

*The Avowyng of Arthur*

- 895 Baldwin's remark implies that he sees here no obligation to redress an insult to his honor. Arthur's elaborately staged "infidelity" — in which the wife literally spends the night in bed with another man — attempts to compromise Baldwin's manly honor as a husband. Baldwin rejects the public character of the act — in which his wife's conduct would be an extension of his own social identity — insisting instead that it is a private matter, where she acts as a free agent on her own behalf. This seeming rejection of the values associated with a chivalric honor culture turns out not to be an assertion of women's autonomy, but (in the brutally misogynistic anecdote that follows) an assertion of women's unaccountable treachery.
- 900 *I. Ir:* Y. I have similarly normalized the first-person singular pronoun at line 992.
- 903 *And ich syn zchall be sene.* I take this to be a statement of anti-feminist domestic prudence on Baldwin's part, not a moralizing claim for eternal justice (as FH, D).
- 909 *sine.* D emends to *seine* on phonological grounds.
- 909 ff. Versions of Baldwin's anecdote of the murderous laundresses occur in a fabliau, and in John of Garland's *Parisiana poetria* (ed. Traugott Lawler [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974]). John (c. 1195 – c. 1258) was born in England and taught at Paris and Toulouse; the *Poetria* apparently dates from between 1220 and 1235. John provides a twelve-line summary of the story in prose, and then uses this plot to compose what he designates a representative instance of tragedy in verse, running one hundred twenty-six lines in hexameters (Lawler, pp. 136–43, with facing translation and notes).
- 914 Constantyne. There are two notable Constantines in Arthurian legend: one is Arthur's grandfather, the other the son of Sir Cador. I assume Baldwin's remark does not confuse Constantine with Arthur's father, but simply means "a generation or two ago." In Malory, before leaving for the campaign against Lucius, Arthur appoints as his two regents "Sir Baudwen of Bretayne, an auncient and an honorable keyght" and "Sir Cadore," father of "Sir Constantyne that aftir was kyng, aftir Arthurs dayes" (Works, p. 195). This link between Baldwin and Constantine's father in one version of Arthurian chronicle may account for the association between Baldwin and the other

*Notes*

- Constantine (Arthur's grandfather) mentioned here. Carlisle also mentions a "Syr Costasyn" among its roster of Arthurius knights (line 44 and note).
- 922 *leding*. See OED, *leading* sb.1, 2, for the technical sense of this word as "command" in a martial context.
- 943 *sayd*. FH reads *sayn*.
- 944 *owr*. D reads *our*.
- 951 *ack*. R, FH, B: *ache*.
- 956 *Ho*. D reads *He* and emends to *Ho*, the reading of R, FH, B.
- 965 *ther*. Ir: *ther*; so R; B: *the*; FH, D emend to *that*.
- 966 *fall*. R, FH read *falle*.
- 967 *all*. R, FH read *alle*.
- 971 *ich*. R, FH, B read *iche*.
- 976 *ho*. D emends to *tha* to preserve consistency of number.
- 980 *lende*. Ir: *lenge*; so R, FH, B. I follow D's emendation, for the sake of rhyme.
- 982 *alle hor mete*. R, B read *alle her mete*.
- 983 *And thryvandly*. Ir: *Thryvandly*. I follow FH in adding the conjunction to preserve continuity. See note on line 984.
- 984 *Joy*. Ir: *And joy*. I follow FH in removing *and* to beginning of previous line. See note on line 983.
- 985 *jelur*. FH: *jelair*.
- 996 *fur*. FH reads *fire*.
- 998 *beyghie*. D prints *brighte* without comment.

*The Awonyng of Arthur*

- 999 *far*. FH reads *far*.
- 1003 The double negative seems here to underscore that the nameless knight was neither in proximity to the wife's naked body, nor anywhere near any particular part (*naked syde*) of her body.
- 1007 *shinges*. FH reads *shingas*.
- 1009 *shou*. B: u, apparently missing the initial letters.
- 1010 *No*. FH reads *No*.
- 1011 *evyr*. FH, B indicate that the first two letters are indecipherable (as they see on microfilm), and emend; D states that the letter impressions are visible on the parchment, and gives this as his reading.
- 1013 ff. This moralizing story on the fate of the timid apparently has no specific source.
- 1019 *feloyz*. D reads *feloyz*; R, FH, B read *feloyz* and emend.
- 1040 *Throgh*. R, FH, B read *Throgh*; I follow D in not reading final e.
- 1051 D punctuates to make this line part of Arthur's speech. My punctuation makes it the beginning of Baldwin's reply to the king.
- 1051 ff. The episode of the dappled emissary has many parallels; D (p. 33) points out examples from classical history and poetry, and from medieval chronicles and tales.
- 1057 *come in a*. in appears inserted above line in Ir; R, B: *come a*.
- 1077 *for on day*. B reads *for one day*.
- 1079 *messyngere*. FH: *messangere*.
- 1081 *more*. Ir, FH: *me*; R, B, D emend for sense to *meir*. D offers a phonological justification for the seeming off-rhyme.

### Notes

- 1090 *nyf red.* FH emends to *ner red* (i.e., "nor red"), a more common form of the phrase.
- 1098 *Casteil.* R, FH: *Castelle*; though again the scribe's final flourish is ambiguous, I follow the reading of B and D.
- 1099 *mary.* R, B: *mirry*.
- 1102 *Aethin.* R, B: *aethinne*; FH reads *aethine*. I follow D's reading.
- 1105 *calle.* D reads *call* without comment.
- 1106 *Seshin.* Here, and in the following line, editors differ in their reading of *sethin* and *zythin* as in *Aethin* (line 1102).
- all. R, FH read *alle*.
- 1107 *befall.* R, FH read *befalle*.
- 1110 *so a ryghte.* FH, B, D take this phrase to mean "in plain view"; I take it to mean "on a site." Lydgate uses a similar spelling; see OED sive sb.2, 1.a.
- 1113 *Mete laynes many lalke.* A proverbial line (noted also by D); see B. J. and J. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), M472.
- 1126 *all.* R, FH read *alle*.
- 1128 *con square.* Ir: *con squerr*, so R, FH, B. I follow D in emending to *square* for the sake of rhyme, though not in dropping *con*.
- 1131 *Tabull.* R, FH read *Tabaille*.
- 1133 *all.* R, FH read *alle*.
- 1134 *mynthe.* D: *myrh*, without comment.
- 1137 *Seyde.* FH: *Seyd*.

*The Awowyng of Arthur*

- 1139 *muche.* D: *much*, without comment.
- 1143 *holdin.* Editors differ in their readings here; see lines 1102, 1106 and notes, as well as scribal and editorial confusion at lines 333, 381, 417, and so on.
- 1146 *all.* R. reads *alle.*
- 1147 *all.* R., FH read *alle.*
- 1148 This final line substantively repeats the first line of *Awowyng*, giving the poem a circular structure; see line 1 and note.

## *The Awntyrs off Arthur*

### *Introduction*

*The Awntyrs off Arthur* survives complete in four separate medieval manuscripts, none of which is based upon any of the other extant copies. Though its language and meter indisputably indicate northern composition — perhaps in Cumberland, whose seat is Carlisle — the four copies were made in different parts of England, including Yorkshire, the Midlands, and the London area. The number and patterns of surviving copies constitute material evidence that *Awntyrs* enjoyed a remarkable popularity outside (and also presumably within) the region in which it originated. Such popularity seems even more extraordinary since the poem did not begin as an oral tale, like *Ragnelle*, *Carlisle*, *Turke*, or the ballads. While its supernatural and chivalric story-lines have affinities with popular tales, the complex rhyme scheme, narrative structure, written sources, allusions, and content demonstrate that *Awntyrs* was a distinctively literary effort. *Awntyrs* emerges from a transitional cultural context, in which a literate author has fully exploited oral stylistics and techniques.

Until fairly recently, editors and critics have regarded *Awntyrs* (meaning "adventures") as deficient in structural and thematic unity. The poem divides neatly — almost perfectly, according to Spearing's arguments — into two halves: the first part (lines 1–338) transforms a popular legend associated with Pope Gregory the Great — the Mass or Tressal of Saint Gregory — into a chivalric episode. *Awntyrs* begins with the standard opening for a *Gawain* romance: as in *Ragnelle*, *Carlisle*, *Awowyng*, and other tales, Arthur and his companions go off to hunt in Ingleswood Forest. The "adventure" of *Awntyrs*, its encounter with the alien, takes the form of a gothic fantasy: a ghost, described in screeching and grotesque detail, appears to *Gawain* and *Guenevere* at the Tarn Wathelene. The specter turns out to be the tormented soul of *Guenevere*'s mother, who suffers now for the hidden sins of the flesh she committed on earth. The ghost laments the split within her own life, between a brilliant, splendid appearance and a fetid inner corruption, and then goes on to commend her own condition as a general warning to the entire court. She cautions *Gawain* and *Guenevere*, as representatives of the Round Table, that the conduct of knights and ladies must conform to Christian precept, and that the court must narrow the chasm between its excessive consumption and the desperate poverty that besets others in

### *The Awntyrs off Arthur*

the community: material and spiritual concerns must coincide. Her own visitation typifies this link, in her ghostly intervention into the worldly life of the court, and, perhaps more strikingly, in her requesting Masses for her soul, making clear that those still in the flesh may affect the fate of those in the spirit world.

The apparition passes and the hunt ends, and the second part (lines 339-702) follows a scenario familiar in chivalric romance: as Arthur and the Round Table are seated at dinner in Rendoles Halle, a strange knight enters, accuses Arthur and Gawain of being in false possession of his lands, and demands an honorable combat. Sir Galeron of Galloway's challenge falls to Sir Gawain — a fitting outcome, given Gawain's popular title as the Lord of Galloway during the Middle Ages and after. The narrative lingers over the courage, skill, and ferocity of the fight; neither knight can gain early victory, and each does great damage to his opponent. Just as Gawain seems at the point of a lethal triumph, Galeron's lady and then Guenevere intervene, and Arthur halts the combat. Galeron submits to Gawain's prowess (and to Arthur's lordship), but the king composes the dispute by assigning other lands to Gawain, and having his nephew restore lands to Galeron. Galeron marries his lady and becomes a knight of the Round Table. In the last stanza of *Awntyrs*, Guenevere arranges the Masses for her mother, and the poem ends with a verbal repetition of its opening line.

Though each part of *Awntyrs* presents a self-contained episode, they can be read not as autonomous, unconnected units, artificially or arbitrarily joined, but as narrative elements thematically linked by contrast and complementarity. Spearing has elegantly compared *Awntyrs* to a diptych — a conventional medieval form, in which two separate framed subjects are physically joined into a unity by a hinge; in such a doubled structure, meaning is produced not simply through a continuous harmony of parts, but through the collision this manifestly split structure sets up. A dialogic vision of this sort produces no rigidly moralized or single meaning, but "a potentiality for meaning," "a creative gesture in which the spectator or reader himself participates. Sparks leap across the gap between the two parts, and the on-looker's mind is set alight by them" (Spearing 1981, pp. 186-87).

The interactive reading strategy necessitated by this doubled structure locates the coherence of *Awntyrs* in the first part's unresolved conflicts of value, and in the way these conflicts then suffuse the battle of the second part. The physical grandeur of chivalric prowess and display appears projected through the filter of the spiritual imperatives stipulated by the ghost of Guenevere's mother. The first part exemplifies this allusive and contrastive dynamic even in its treatment of sources, for it recasts a popular tale of religious devotion (in which a monk-pope rescues his mother's soul from eternal torment) as a critique of the ideals and practice of the highest secular aristocracy. This dialogic process of meaning within the poem's structure and sources

### *Introduction*

plays out at the thematic level as well: in both its halves, *Awntyrs* presents a view of social and spiritual interdependency that reflects common medieval notions of society as a unified political and sacred body. *Awntyrs* assumes, and gives vital expression to, a sense of corporate religiosity, in which the living and the dead are directly in touch with each other, so that those in heaven, on earth, and in hell (or limbo) act together in securing their mutual welfare. The care of the rich for the poor, of the living for the "very special dead" — and the converse, the powerful claims of the poor on the propertied, and of the ghost world on the flesh — define the contours of a cosmic community; within this framework matter and spirit are features of a single, continuous spectrum, and the individual's life can have final meaning only inside this corporate identity.

The ethos of chivalry participates in a similar corporate sensibility. The knight's honor exists only as it is publicly ratified by a community. First and foremost, of course, this consists in the medieval world of the elite caste of other knights, who can best judge chivalric worth and extend fellowship. But in principle it includes the entire Christian community (represented in this instance by the broad audience for chivalric romance), and *Awntyrs* throws a searching light on this larger set of connections. With astonishing bluntness, Gawain raises the question of chivalry as a sponsor of violence, rather than a protection against it:

"How shal we fare," quod the freke, "that foden to fight,  
And thus defoules the folke on fele kinges londes,  
And riches over reymes withoutes ey right,  
Wynnes worshipp in were thorg wightnesse of hondes?"

(lines 261-64)

The ghost answers with her allusive but frightening and peremptory prophecy of the downfall of the Round Table (lines 265-312). The shortcomings of golden-age chivalry should in consequence seem distressingly obvious for Gawain, let alone for a late medieval and decidedly post-Arthurian audience, and they are all the more thrilling and portentous for coming from beyond the grave. Yet this narrow vision of chivalry from hell applies to knighthood not the general community standards of late medieval chivalry, but the austere strictures typical of Christianity's most otherworldly strain. Moreover, the almost certainly clerical composer embeds these ghostly condemnations within a lavish expenditure of sound and phrase, so that even at the level of its most fundamental units *Awntyrs* insists upon the compound nature of its meaning.

One of the remarkable achievements of *Awntyrs*' doubled and dialogic style is its capacity to move from a consciousness of the contradictions within the ethos of

### *The Awntyrs off Arthur*

knighthood and the fatal history of Arthur's court to a celebration of the magnificence of chivalric ideals and practices. The antagonism of Galeron and Gawain begins as a quarrel over proper title to lands, but from the outset it is clear that even chivalric "enemies" are bound by a framework of forms and values that transcend individual hostilities. The plot and themes of *Awntyrs*' second episode strongly resemble the subtle and striking twist that controls the second part of *Gologras*; the poem manages their combat so that the outcome increases the honor of each knight, and thereby still further exalts the worship of chivalry. Through the daunting prowess and courtesy of Gawain, and the magnanimity of Arthur and the Round Table, Galeron — the intruder of the second part — is accorded a proper identity within the fellowship at Carlisle. He reconciles with Gawain, marries his lady, and becomes one with the other knights. This romance ending has as both its cause and effect the harmonious affirmation of Arthur's lordship at the head of a peaceable pan-Britannic community. The particular instance — the integration of the initially truculent Scots knight Galeron — sets out the fundamental pattern within the Gawain romances, whereby outlying Celtic territories are assimilated to a centralizing English perspective; Arthur's kingship consists in his power to control and redistribute the lands — Scotland, Wales, Brittany, perhaps Ireland — that mark the borders of the body politic. The final stanza of *Awntyrs* projects this romance drive towards restored identity and inclusiveness onto the communion of the saints: the Masses arranged for the soul of Gwenevere's mother bring heaven and earth together, and promise her full reconciliation with God.

*Awntyrs* is composed in one of the most demanding and richly echoic verse forms in the English language. Each stanza contains thirteen lines, rhymed ababababccdfc. The first nine verses are alliterative long lines, structurally bound by four stresses in addition to the end rhyme. The last four verses of each stanza form a "wheel"; each line contains two (sometimes three) stresses, while the first three rhyme on the same sound, and the last (often the shortest) line rhymes with the long ninth line. The density of alliteration in *Awntyrs* is higher than that of any other Middle English poem, with almost half its long lines containing four alliterating stresses. Moreover, more than half the stanzas begin with a couplet bound by identical alliteration (and six stanzas extend this identical alliteration through the first three couplets). In addition to this bonding within the stanza through repeated sound patterns, each stanza is linked to the preceding and following stanza through verbal concatenation: the first line of every stanza incorporates a word or phrase from the last line of the previous stanza. (In some stanzas the ninth line additionally repeats a phrase from earlier in the stanza, further linking these words with the last line of the wheel.) Finally, the last lines of *Awntyrs* repeat the first line, linking these two stanzas and thereby imposing a circular, iterative structure on the entire poem.

### *Introduction*

The features fundamental to *Awntyrs*'s distinctive achievement have baffled readers in precisely opposite ways, producing complaints of deficiency — its discontinuity of plot, its lack of thematic unity — and excess — its proliferation of throw-away phrases, its formulaic and metric gymnastics. The spectacle that *Awntyrs* makes through its story and its language differs in kind from the qualities we associate with learned, high literate forms — for example, a Shakespearian sonnet or Dante's *avvia rima*. The effects achieved by these latter forms are directed almost exclusively to readers — often solitary, non-vocalizing readers — and they solicit from such readers a highly intellectualized, intertextually informed, reflective response. The lapidary brilliance and density of poems like *Awntyrs* put formal manipulation of language to a different use: the cloisonné surface gives preeminence to pattern, to exteriority as meaning. The poem's profligate consumption of formulaic phrases and type scenes, of nearly fetishized objects like tapestries, dress, swords, helmets, shields, or coats of arms, urges an audience not to extract a unique, internalized meaning, but to take delight in the structural, narrative, thematic, and stylistic variations that constitute the substance of such a performance.

Such delight is a special taste, and grows from the intersection of popular interests in chivalric ideals, the remnants of an aristocratic ethos or aesthetic available to a wider audience, and the talents of a learned (clerical) writer who could bring these together in a work like *Awntyrs*. The profligate quality that marks the poem does not simply use up words, but functionally extends the poem's cultural contacts at several levels: for a full appreciation, *Awntyrs* assumes on the part of its audience unthinking access to a long-absorbed store of words and phrases, and (on the model of the diptych structure) a continuously interactive response. Like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and other alliterative poems, *Awntyrs* relies upon a remarkably literate improvisation, activating what is already inside the audience through its established formulas; devoted listeners to such poetry — whether literate or not, like those for improvisational jazz, opera and romantic lieder, or MTV — imperceptibly become attuned to conventions, cues, and repeats that themselves turn into the source of pleasure in such performances. The repetitions within *Awntyrs* at the level of phrase, line, stanza, and episode are calculated not to appear novel, but to resonate with what the audience brings to the poem, at the level of conscious memory and of a cultural unconscious.

The fusion of popular and learned, native and Latin, oral and literate in *Awntyrs* accurately conveys the transitional context in which a mixed chivalric romance of this sort participated and was performed. To view the jewel-like surface of *Awntyrs* as superficial misses, then, the compacted quality of the poem's language and its narrative. Just as we need to abandon expectations of narrative unity in favor of the contingent understandings produced by a diptych structure, so is unpacking the

### *The Awntyrs off Arthur*

meanings and effects the romance might have had in its own time, we need to abandon surface/depth or exterior/interior metaphors, which apply to exegesis, allegory, and other traditional high-literate interpretive strategies. The decorated qualities of *Awntyrs* ask to be understood as a cultural event for listeners and readers already stocked with phrases and themes. In its place between literate and oral traditions, its surface is its substance, and performance — whether religious ritual, chivalric courtesy and prowess, or poetic composition — is a crucial part of its meaning.

#### *Text*

The survival of *Awntyrs* in four transcriptions, all of which contain distinctive features (and defects) ensures that any edition misrepresents the "original." The poem's sources, its subtlety of structure and thought, and the complexity of its verse forms make almost certain that *Awntyrs* was a written, rather than an oral, composition. This means that there may actually have been an "original" on which (at various remove(s)) the surviving copies are based. Yet a modern editorial search for "authentic" or even "correct" readings based on such a lost "original" would not necessarily reflect the expectations or experience of the original audiences. The practice of medieval scribes and amateur copyists/readers, in routinely and consciously altering, editing, and adding to their texts, suggests that (to rephrase a cliché of postmodernism) in the Middle Ages there were no "copies," only originals. Allen has recently argued the corollary of this proposition, that there can be no "final" edition, in relation to *Awntyrs*. Faced with these multiple transcriptions, an editor may choose to offer a "synthetic" or eclectic text, that makes best use (in the editor's own judgment) of the surviving variants or that even reconstructs the lost readings of the hypothetical undefective version, based on the witness of these variants. (Hanna's edition largely attempts this, and produces a text that is satisfactorily coherent; its readings are exceptionally learned, occasionally ingenious and sometimes inspired, and often convincing.) At the other extreme, an editor might simply transcribe without alteration one (or all) of the four existing manuscripts; this would present a text (or texts) that would at times be puzzling or nonsensical (especially to inexperienced readers), but that would give an accurate sense of a medieval reader's situation. The present edition offers what may seem an unsatisfying compromise: I have given the text as it reads in the Douce MS, though in those instances where it is defective — either because lines are clearly missing or repeated, or because the passage makes no sense to me — I have emended, usually basing my changes on the readings of the other manuscripts. (These emendations generally rely on the copy in the Leeland MS.) What I have aimed to produce is a text of *Awntyrs* that accurately

### *Introduction*

reflects what has survived for us from the Middle Ages, and that nonetheless tells a coherent and enjoyable story, even for a reader new to Middle English.

Oxford MS Douce 324 (Bodleian MS 21898) dates from the third quarter of the fifteenth century. Its scribe wrote in a northwest Midlands dialect, though linguistic traces in the four surviving transcriptions locate the poem's area of composition on the northwest border of England and Scotland; given the setting of the action in Carlisle, Cumberland seems a likely place of origin. In its present form, the Douce MS contains only *Awestyr*; formerly, however, it was part of a collection that included poetical excerpts from Gower, Hoccleve, Lydgate, and others, and prose digests of *Mundeville's Travels* and the stories of *Thebes* and *Troy* (see Kathleen Smith, "A Fifteenth-Century Vernacular Manuscript Reconstructed," *Bodleian Library Record* 7 [1966], pp. 234-41; also Hanna, pp. 8-9). I have regularized orthography, so that *u/v/w* and *i/j* appear according to modern usage; abbreviations have been expanded, numerals spelled out, and modern punctuation and capitalization added. I have followed Hanna in his decision not to transcribe flourishes as medial or final *r*, though I have inconsistently taken this scribal notation as signifying a vowel where common practice indicates its presence (e.g., lines 489, 566, 591).

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscripts*

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324.

Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491.B.

Thornton MS, Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91.

Ireland Blackburn MS, Robert H. Taylor Collection, Princeton, New Jersey.

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Robson, John. 1842. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Amours, F. J. 1897. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

### *The Awntyrs off Arthur*

Gates, Robert J., ed. *The Awntyrs off Arthur at the Terne Wathelyne: A Critical Edition*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969.

Hanna, Ralph, III, ed. *The Awntyrs off Arthur at the Terne Wathelyn: An Edition Based on Bodleian Library MS. Douce 324*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974.

Phillips, H., ed. *The Awntyrs of Arthur*. Lancaster Modern Spelling Texts, I. Lancaster: Lancaster University Department of English, 1988. [I have not been able to examine a copy of this edition.]

Mills, Maldwyn, ed. *Ywain and Gwain, Sir Percyvall of Galis, The Awntys of Arther*. Everyman's Library. London: J. M. Dent Ltd.; Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1992. Pp. 161-82.

Shepherd, Stephen H. A., ed. *Middle English Romances*. New York: Norton, 1995. Pp. 219-42. [I have not been able to examine a copy of this edition.]

#### Criticism

Alles, Rosamund. "Some Sceptical Observations on the Editing of *The Awntyrs off Arthur*." In *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature: Essays from the 1985 Conference at the University of York*. Ed. Derek Pearsall. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987. Pp. 5-25.

Eadie, John. "Two Notes on *The Awntyrs of Arthur*." *English Language Notes* 21.2 (1983), 3-7.

Fichter, J. O. "The Awntyrs off Arthur: An Unconscious Change of the Paradigm of Adventure." In *The Living Middle Ages: Studies in Mediæval English Literature and its Tradition: A Festschrift for Karl Heinz Göller*. Ed. Uwe Böker, Manfred Markus, and Rainer Schöwerling. Belear Stuttgart: Mittelbayerische Druckerei- und Verlags-Gesellschaft, 1989. Pp 129-36.

Hanna, Ralph, III. "The Awntyrs off Arthur: An Interpretation." *Modern Language Quarterly* 31 (1970), 275-97.

\_\_\_\_\_. "À la Recherche du temps bien perdu: The Text of *The Awntyrs off Arthur*." *Text* 4 (1988), 189-205.

### *Introduction*

- Klaussner, David N. "Exemplia and *The Awntyrs of Arthure*." *Medieval Studies* 34 (1972), 307-25.
- Lowe, Virginia A. P. "Folklore as Unifying Factor in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*." *Folklore Forum* 13 (1980), 199-223.
- Mathewson, Jeanne T. "Displacement of the Feminine in *Golagros* and *Gawane* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*." *Arthurian Interpretations* 1.2 (1987), 23-28.
- Spearing, A. C. "The *Awntyrs off Arthure*." In *The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century*. Ed. Bernard S. Levy and Paul E. Szarmach. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1981. Pp. 183-202.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Central and Displaced Sovereignty in Three Medieval Poems." *Review of English Studies* 33 (1982), 247-61, esp. 248-52.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Pp. 121-42.

*The Awatys off Arthur*

	In the tyme of Arthur an awter bytydde,	adventure occurred
	By the Tarse Wathelan, as the boke telles,	relates
	Whan he to Cartle was comen, that conquerour kydde,	famous
	With dukes and duxiperes that with the dere dwelles.	companions; beloved King
5	To hame at the herdes that longe had been hydde,	Hidde (i.e., in the wild)
	On a day thei hem dight to the depe delles,	themselves went off; valleys
	To fall of the femaleis in forest were frydde,	slay; does; enclosed
	Fayre by the fermesones in frithes and felles. <sup>1</sup>	
	Thus to wode arn thei went, the wonkest in wedes,	most splendid in apparel
10	Bothe the Kyng and the Quene,	
	And al the doughti bydene,	brave ones together
	Sir Gawayn, gayest on grene,	the most polished of all
	Dame Gaynor he ledes.	Guinevere
	Thus Sir Gawayn the gay Gaynor he ledes,	
15	In a glisterand gide that glemed full gay —	gleaming gown
	With riche ribaynes reverset, ho so right redes, <sup>2</sup>	
	Rayled with rybees of riall array;	Ornamented; rubies; royal
	Her hode of a hawe huwe, ho that here hede hedes,	
	Of pilour, of palwerk, of perré to pay; <sup>3</sup>	
20	Schurde in a short cloke that the rayne shedes,	Clothed; repels
	Set over with saffres sothely to say,	sapphires truly
	With saffres and celidynes set by the sides;	celidomies studded at
	Here sadel sette of that like,	Her; same
	Saude with sambutes of silke;	Covered; saddle-clothes
25	On a mule as the mylke,	as [white as] milk
	Gailli she glides.	

<sup>1</sup> Thriving because of the close season in the woods and hills

<sup>2</sup> With rich strands of material reversed to show their colors, whoever takes proper notice

<sup>3</sup> Lines 18-19: Her hood [is] a shade of aqua, [as] anyone who pays attention to her head [will note]. / With fur, rich cloth, and jewels most pleasingly arranged

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	Al is gletterand golde, gayly ho glides The gates with Sir Gawayn, bi the grene welle.	<i>she passes falangj</i> <i>path</i>
30	And that burne on his blanke with the Quene bides That borne was in Borgoyne, by boke and by bell. <sup>1</sup> He laddle that Lady so longe by the lawe sides; Under a loren they light, loghe by a felle. And Arthur with his erles ernestly rides,	<i>knight; horse; stays</i> <i>along; hill sides</i> <i>laurel; low; ridge</i>
35	To teche hem to her tristres, the trouthe for to tell. <sup>2</sup> To here tristres he hem taught, ho the trouthe trowes. Eche londe withouten lette To an oke he hem sette, With bowe and with barreleme,	<i>stations; who; believes</i> <i>hesitation</i> <i>At an oak</i> <i>bow; bound</i> <i>boughs</i>
40	Under the bowes thei bode, thes barnes so boldē, To byker at thes baraynes in bonkes so bare. There might hatholes in high herdes beholde, Herken hunting in hast, in holtes so hare. Thei kest of here couples in clifffes so colde,	<i>wait; warriors</i> <i>shoot; fawnlike does; hills</i> <i>nobles in haste; eopy</i> <i>Take note; hastie; woods; frosty</i>
45	Condore her ketettes to kele hem of care. Thei fel of the femayles fel thikfolde; With fresh houndes and fele, thei folowen her fare.	<i>cast off their [dogs'] leashes</i> <i>their bounds; cool them of agitation</i> <i>killed; manyfold</i> <i>many; pursue their trail</i>
50	With gret questes and quelles, Both in frethes and felles. All the dure in the delles, Thei durken and dare.	<i>assault; kill</i> <i>woods; ridges</i> <i>deer; valleys</i> <i>hide; cringe</i>
55	Then darken the dere in the dynme skawes, That for drede of the deth decouper the do. And by the stremys so strange that swifly swoghes Thai werray the wilde and worches hem wo. The hantes thei halowe, in herstes and hurves,	<i>cover; dark woods</i> <i>[So] that; goes to ground; doe</i> <i>rapids so strong rush</i> <i>make war on; cause them woe</i> <i>hunsty; show; hillside; cliff</i>

<sup>1</sup> Who was born in Burgundy. [*I swear*] by book and by bell

<sup>2</sup> To assign them to their hunting stations, to tell the truth

<sup>3</sup> And at their hiding places the hounds set on the deer

*The Awairy off Arthur*

60	They gaf to no gamos grythe that on grounde gruwes. The grete gruwes in the greves so glady thei go; So glady thei gon in greves so grese.	game quarter; lines greyhounds; thickets thickets
	The King blowe rechans And followed fast on the tras With many sergeant of mas,	blows "rechane" (see note) track mace
65	That solas to sene.	<i>That pleasant sight to [go] see</i>
	With solas thei semble, the pruddest in palle, And swen to the Soverayn within schaghes schene. Al but Sir Gawayn, gayest of all,	pleasure; gather; noblest; dress meet up with; wood; bright (knight) most gracious
	Beloves with Dame Guynour in greves so grese.	[Who] stays behind; groves
70	By a lorer he was light, under a lelesale Of box and of berber bigged fal bese. Fast byfore undre this ferly con fall	lured; the remained; arbor box tree; barberry amply made Just; mid-morning; marvel did occur
	And this mikel mervaille that I shal of messe. Now wol I of this mervaille mele, if I mote.	great; tell speak; might
75	The day wex als dirke As hit were mynsight myrke; Thereof the King was irke And light on his fose.	became as dark murky dissressed alighted [from his horse]
	Thus to fose ar thei fares, the frekes unsayn. And fleon fro the forest to the fawe felle.	have proceeded the troubled knights moated hill
80	Thay casse faste to the roches, for reddeore of the rayne For the sneterand swawe shartly hem smelles.	rocks; severity; rain driving hail keenly them stings
	There come a lowe one the loughe — in londe is not to layne — <sup>1</sup>	
85	In the lyknes of Lucyfere, laytheuse in Helle, And glides to Sir Gawayn the gates to gayne. Yauland and yomerand, with many loude yelle.	most hateful path to block Howling and wailing
	Hit yasles, hit yameres, with waymynges wete, And seid, with siking sare, "I has the body me bare!"	cries out; lamentations marful sighing sore
90	Alas! Now kindeles my care; I gloppes and I gretel!"	came; [that] me bore kindles despair; wail

<sup>1</sup> There appeared a fire in the lake — not to conceal a word

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	Then gloppeset and grete Gaynour the gay	became fearful and waited
	And seid to Sir Gawes, "What is thi good rede?"	best advice
	"Hit ar the clippes of the sun, I herd a clerk say,"	<i>It is an eclipse of the sun</i>
95	And thus he confortes the Quene for his knighthode.	chivalrously
	"Sir Cadour, Sir Clegis, Sir Costardyne, Sir Cay —	
	These knyghtes are uncurtays, by Crouse and by Crode,	are unpallant
	That thus oonly have me left on my dethday	<i>all alone; left (abandoned)</i>
	With the grisselis goost that ever herd I gredē."	grisliest; most
100	"Of the goost," quod the grome, "geve you no mare,	knight; worry; more
	For I shal speke with the sprete,	<i>sprise</i>
	And of the wayes I shall wete,	<i>in paine; inquire</i>
	What may the bales bete	<i>torments relieve</i>
	Of the bodi bare."	<i>body bare</i>
105	Bare was the body and blak to the bose, Al biclagged in clay uncomly cladde.	<i>closed with earth finally covered</i>
	Hit waried, hit wayment as a woman,	<i>cursed; waited</i>
	But on hide ne on huwe no heling hit hadde.	skin; complexion; cover
	Hit stempered, hit stonayde, hit stode as a stone,	<i>mannered; was stunned</i>
110	Hit marred, hit memered, hit mused for madde. <sup>1</sup>	
	Agayn the grisly goost Sir Gawayn is gone;	Towards
	He rayked oure at a res, for he was never drad.	<i>moved; in a rush; frightened</i>
	Drad was he never, ho so right redes.	<i>whoever correctly understands</i>
	On the chef of the cholle,	<i>top; neck</i>
115	A pade pikes on the pollie,	<i>toad bites into the shaft</i>
	With eighen holked ful holle	<i>eyes naked; hollow</i>
	That gloed as the gledes.	<i>glowed; coal</i>
	Al glowed as a glede the geste there bo glides,	<i>the</i>
	Unbdecked in a cloade of clethyng unclere,	<i>Enclosed; shroud unfashionable</i>
120	Serkelled with serpentes all aboute the sides —	<i>Encircled; on all sides</i>
	To tell the todes theron my tonge wer fall tere. <sup>2</sup>	
	The burne braides oure the bronde, and the body bides; <sup>3</sup>	
	Therefor the chevalous knight changed no chere.	<i>At that; expression</i>

<sup>1</sup> It grieved, it mourned, it groaned as a mad person

<sup>2</sup> To account [the number off the toads clinging to her would be too tedious for my tongue]

<sup>3</sup> The knight pulls out his sword and the corpse stands still

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 125 | The boundes highe to the holtes, and her hede hides,<br>For the grisly goost made a gym bere.<br>The grete gründes wer agast of the gym bere.<br>The birdes in the bowes,<br>That on the goost glowes,<br>Thei skryke in the shewes<br>That hathelies may here.   | <i>hastes; their heads hide<br/>cuckoo<br/>greyhounds; corpse<br/>branches<br/>stare<br/>screech; woody<br/>noble men may hear</i>                         |
| 130 |   |  |
| 135 | Hathelese might here, the henede in halle,<br>How chattered the cholle, the chafis and the chynse.<br>Then conjured the knyght — on Crist con he calle:<br>"As thou was crucified on Croys to cleane us of syn:<br>That thou sei me the sothe whether thou shalle,"<br>And whi thou walkest thos wayes the wodes withia." | <i>Nobles; hear; handmest<br/>jowl; jowl; chin<br/>implored; did<br/>cleanse</i>   |
| 140 | "I was of figure and face fairest of alle,<br>Cristened and knownen with kinges in my kynse;<br>I have kinges in my kyn knownen for kene.<br>God has me geven of his grace<br>To dre my paynes in this place.<br>I am comen in this case<br>To speke with your Quene.   | <i>on these paths<br/>appearance<br/>Baptized and renowned; family<br/>celebrated for bold deeds<br/>suffer through<br/>at this time</i>                   |
| 145 | "Quene was I somwile, brighter of bowes.<br>Then Berell or Brangwayn, thes bedes so bolde;<br>Of al gamen or gle that on grounde growes<br>Gretter then Dame Gaynor, of ganson and golde,<br>Of palaces, of parkes, of pondes, of plowes,<br>Of townes, of toses, of tresour unboldc,                                     | <i>formerly in looks<br/>those women<br/>pleasures or mirth; occurs on earth<br/>More if enjoyed than treasure<br/>enclosures; estates<br/>strongholds</i> |
| 150 | Of castelles, of costreyes, of cragges, of cloves.<br>Now am I caught out of kide to care so colde;<br>Into care am I caught and couched in clay.<br>Lo, sir cartays knyght,<br>How delifull deth has me dight!   | <i>lands; mountains; valleys<br/>snared without kin in<br/>laid out</i>  |
| 155 | Lete me onys have a sight<br>Of Gaynor the gay."  | <i>doleful; treated<br/>once</i>   |

<sup>1</sup> *If demand] that you tell me the truth [about] where you intend to go*

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	After Gaynour the gay Sir Gawayn is gon, And to the body he her brought, the burde bright.	ghostly corpse; woman
	"Welcom, Waynour, iwis, worthi in won. Lo, how delthal doth has thi dame dight!	indeed, among your people Behold; grievous; your mother left
160	I was radder of rede then rose in the ros, My leu as the lele loathed on hight. Now am I a graces gost, and grisly I gnos;	radder of complexion; branch face; lily blomed deep; rank
	With Lacyfer in a lake logh am I light. Thus am I lyke to Lucefere: takis wittes by meel	take warning for garment
165	For al thi freshal foroure, Muse on my mirour, For, king and emperour, Thus dight shal ye be.	Think so treated
170	"Thus deathe wil you dight, thace you not doaste; Therecon heartly take hede while thou art here. Whan thou art richest arrayed and ridest in thi route, Have pitie on the poer — thou art of power. <sup>1</sup>	treat you, of that heartily; all alive decked out; company
175	Burnes and bresdes that ben the aboute, When thi body is bamed and brought on a ber, Then lie wy the light that now wil the losse. <sup>2</sup> For then the helpes no thing but holy praeier.	Servants and women; you embalmed; borne on a bier nothing helps you for you peace
	The praeier of poer may purchas the pes — Of that thou yeves at the yene. <sup>3</sup>	
180	Whan thou art set in thi sese, With al merthes at mete And dayntes on des.	seat of honor joys; meal delicacies; dainties
185	"With riche dayntes on des thi dotes ar dight, And I, in danger and doel, in dongone I dwelle, Nasté and nedefull, naked on sight. Ther folo me a ferde of feades of belle;	frank are furnished sorrow; in bondage I languish Nasty follow; troop
	They bark me unhendely, thei harme me in hight; In bras and in brymston I been as a belle.	rudely; lacerate me violently braus (cauldron); burn; bonfire

<sup>1</sup> Have pity on the poor — you have the power [to do so]

<sup>2</sup> Then little wish [they] to comfort you, who now will flatter you

<sup>3</sup> According to what you distribute [to the poor] at your gate

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- Was never wrought in this world a wofuller wight.  
 Hit were ful soee any tonge my torment so tellie;  
 Nowc wil Y of my torment tel or I go.  
 Thenk herly on this —  
 Fonde to mende thi mys.  
 Thou art warned ywys:  
 Be war be my wo."
- "Wo is me for thi wo," quod Waynour, "ywys!  
 But one thing wold I wite, if thi wil ware:  
 If auster matens or Mas might mende thi mys,  
 Or eny meble on molde? My merthe were the mase  
 If bedis of bisshoppes might bring the to blisse,  
 Or coveates in cloistre might kero the of care.  
 If thou be my modest, grete mervalle hit is  
 That al thi barly body is broughte to be so bare!"  
 "I bare the of my body; what bote is hit I layn?  
 I brak a solempne avowc,  
 And no man wist hit but thowc;  
 By that token thos trowc,  
 That sothely I sayn."
- "Say sothely what may the saven of thi sytis  
 And I shal make sere men to singe for thi sake.  
 But the balefull bones that on thi body bites  
 Al bleidis my bie — thi bones arn so blake!"<sup>1</sup>  
 "That is ful paramour, lites and delites  
 That has me light and left logh in a lake.  
 Al the welth of the world, that awey witis  
 With the wilde wormes that worche me wakte;  
 Wakte thei me wortchen, Waynour, iwyx.  
 Were thritty trentales dor  
 Bytwenc under and non,  
 Mi solele were socoured with sor  
 And broght to the blys."
- a more wofull person  
 sedions; torment  
 I; before  
 intensely  
 Try to amend your misdoing  
 for sure  
 by my wo
- Guenevere  
 know, if it were your will  
 either luxury or Mass; hardship  
 goods on earth; joy; more  
 prayers  
 clergy; deliver you from
- fair; has lost color  
 bone; profit; conceal it  
 broke; vow  
 known; you  
 believe  
 truthfully; speak
- you save; troubles  
 several (priests)  
 bones; your
- (The cause) is sexual love; pleasure  
 brought me low and left me deep  
 that [wealth] completely vanishes  
 work me pain
- Pain
- thirty series of masses said  
 morning and afternoon (in one day)  
 aided immediately

<sup>1</sup> All blanches (i.e., whitens) my countenance — [because] your skeleton is so black

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- "To blisse bring the the Barne that bought the on Rode,<sup>1</sup>  
 That was crucified on Croys and crowned with thorne.  
 As thos was cristened and crismed with candel and rode,      *chrism cloth*  
 225      Followed in forrestone on frely byforse —      *Baptized at first openly when young*  
 Mary the myghtil, myldest of mode,      *in spirit*  
 Of whom the blisful barse in Bedlem was borne,      *child; Bethlehem*  
 Lene me grace that I may grete the with gode      *Grant: commemorate you properly*  
 And mynge the with matens and Masses on mornse."      *remember you; each morning*  
 230      "To mende us with Masses, grete myster hit were.      *remember; need*  
 For Him that rest on the Rode,      *For the sake of Him who hung Cross*  
 Gyf fast of thi goode      *energetically*  
 To folke that falles the fode      *lack food*  
 While thou art here."  
 alive
- 235      "Here herly my honde thes beates to holde,      *I promise/ these vows to keep*  
 With a myllion of Masses to make the myanynge.      *multitude; you remembrance*  
 Bot one word," quod Waynour, "yt wesen i wolden:  
 What wrathed God most, at thi weting?"      *But; know about  
 240      "Pride with the appurtenaunce, as prophetes has tolde      *angry; according to your understanding*  
 Bifore the peple, apertly in her preching.  
 Hit beres bowes bitter: therof be thou bolde;  
 That makes burnes so boare to breke his bidding.  
 But to his bidding brekes, bare thei ben of blys;  
 But thei be salved of that sare,  
 245      Er they heithen face,  
 They mon weten of care.  
 Waynour, ywys."*
- 250      "Wynse me," quod Waynour, "som wey, if thou wolt,  
 What bedis might me best to the blisse bring?"      *Teach; know  
 prayers; best lead me*  
 "Mekenesse and mercy, thes arn the moost;      *are the greatest*  
 And sithen have pité on the poer, that pleses Heven king.  
 Sithen charité is chef, and then is chaunc,  
 And then almessede al other thing.  
 Thes arn the gracefull gifys of the Holy Goste  
 255      That enspires iche specke withoute spelling.      *Accordingly; paramount; charity  
 next abrogating above  
 inspires each soul; instruction*

<sup>1</sup> May the hero who redeemed you on the Cross bring you to blisse

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	Of this spiritual thing spate thou no mare.	doctrine dispense no further
	Als thou art Quene in thi quert,	court
	Hold thys wordes in hert.	Keep
	Thou shal leve but a stert;	live; for (i.e., a short time)
260	Hethen shal thou fare."	Hence
	"How shal we fare," quod the freke, "that foden to fight,	warrior; undertake
	And thus defoules the folke on fele kinges londes,	put down; diverse; countries
	And riches over reymes withouten ey right,	over; realms; any
	Wyanes worshipp in were thorgh wightnesse of bondes?" <sup>1</sup>	
265	"Your King is to covetous, I warne the sir knight.	too
	May no man stir him with strenght while his whel stondes. <sup>2</sup>	
	Whan he is in his mageist, moost in his myght,	[Just at the point] when
	He shal light ful lowe on the sesondes.	fall full low; seashore
	And this chivalrous Kinge chef shall a chansse:	shall receive his fate
270	Falsely Fortune in fight,	warlike
	That wonderfull wheelwright,	
	Shall make lordes to light —	to fall
	Take wittesse by Fraunce.	
	"Fraunce haf ye frely with your fight wonner;	completely; conquered
275	Frool and his folke, fey ar they leved.	Frolio; troop, dead; left
	Bretayne and Burgoyne al to you bowen.	Brittany and Burgundy; have yielded
	And al the Dussiperes of Fraunce with your dyn dieved.	marry are stunned
	Gya may gese the were was bigones;	Aquitaine; rue that war
	There ar no lordes on lyve in that londe leved.	no warriors alive; left
280	Yet shal the riche Romans with you be austroners,	by you be overthrown
	And with the Rounde Table the restes be reved;	And by; incomes be taken over
	Then shal a Tyber untra tumber you tene. <sup>3</sup>	
	Oete the, Sir Gawayn:	Take heed
	Turste the to Tuskayn.	Go quickly
285	For ye shal lese Bretayn	lose
	With a knight kene.	Through; bold

<sup>1</sup> Achieve renown in warfare through prowess of arms

<sup>2</sup> No man may overthrow him by force while Fortune holds him high on her wheel

<sup>3</sup> Then shall the treacherous Tiber (Rome) cause you woe

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- "This knight shal kelenly crosse the crowne,  
And at Cartle shal that comly be crowned as king.  
That sege shal be sesede at a sesone  
290 That myche baret and hale to Bretayn shal bring.  
Hit shal in Tuskan be tolde of the treson,  
And ye shallen tarse ayen for the tydye.  
Ther shal the Rounde Table lese the renoune:  
Beside Ramsey ful rad at a riding  
295 In Domeschire shal dy the doughtest of alle.  
Gete the, Sir Gawayn.  
The boldest of Bectayne;  
In a slake thou shal be slayne,  
Such ferlyes shall falle.
- boldly since office of king  
noblemen  
knight; empowered; come  
strife; sorrow  
announced  
come back; news  
lose its renown  
suddenly; burst  
die; boldest  
Take heed
- valley  
Such wonders; occur
- 300 "Sache ferlyes shall fal, withoute ey fable,  
Upon Cornawayle coost with a knight kene.  
Sir Arthur the honest, avenant and able,  
He shal be wounded, iwy — woethely, I wene.  
And al the rial rowte of the Rounde Table,  
305 Thei shallen dye on a day, the doughty bydene,  
Supprisit with a saget: he beris hit in sable,<sup>1</sup>  
With a sauter engrailed of silver full shene.  
He beris hit of sable, soethely to say,  
In riche Arthures halle,  
310 The barne playes at the baile  
That outray shall you alle,  
Delfally that day.
- wonders; befall; falsehood  
coast because of a knight fierce  
honorable, gracious and powerful  
indeed; lethally, I trust  
royal company  
one day the brave comes together
- cross showing a notched edge; bright  
black, truly
- child; with  
undo  
Sorrowfully
- "Have gode day, Gaynour, and Gawayn the gode;  
I have no lenger tyme tildinges to telle.  
315 I mot walke on my wey thorgt this wilde wode  
In my woyngystid in wo for to weile.  
Fore Him that rightwisly rose and rest on the Rode,  
Thenke on the danger and the dole that I ya dwell.  
Fede folke for my sake that fallen the fode  
320 And menge me with marives and Masso in melle.
- more time to give information  
more; wood  
dwelling place; woe; needful  
rightwisly; hung; Cross  
peril; sorrow; in  
who lack food  
remember; services; besides

<sup>1</sup>Overcome by a subject (i.e., one of the King's retainers); he bears a black coat of arms

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- Masses arn medecynes to us that bale bides;  
 Us thenke a Manne as swete  
 As eny spice that ever ye yese."  
 With a grisly gretc  
 325      The goost awey glides.
- With a grisly gretc the goost awey glides  
 And goes with groynge soe thorg the groves grene.  
 The wyndes, the weders, the welken unshides —  
 Then enclosed the cloudes, the sun con shene.
- 330      The King his bugle has blowen and on the bent bides;  
 His fare folke in the frith, thei flockkes bydese,  
 And al the riall route to the Quene ride;  
 She sayes hem the scicouthes that thei hadde ther seen.
- 335      The wise of the weder, forwondred they were.  
 Prince prodest in pale,  
 Dame Gaynor and alle,  
 West to Rosdoles Halle  
 To the suppre.
- The King to souper is set, served in sale,  
 Under a siller of silke dayntly dight  
 With al worshipp and wele, innewith the walle,  
 Briddes bravden and bead in bankers bright.<sup>1</sup>
- 345      There come in a soteler with a symbalie,  
 A lady labout of late ledand a knight;  
 Ho raykes up in a res bilor the Rialle  
 And haled Sir Arthur headly on hight.  
 Ho said to the Soverayne, whonkest in wede,  
 "Mon makoiles of might,  
 Here commes an errant knight.  
 350      Do him reson and right  
 For thi manshede."
- who torment endure  
 We think (i.e., so we know)  
 air  
 groan
- groves green  
 weathers; sky clears  
 parted; sun did  
 field waits  
 wood; flock together  
 royal company  
 tell them of the wonders  
 learned; utterly bewildered  
 robes  
 every one (else)
- seated; hall  
 canopy
- musician; cymbal  
 lovely of face leading  
 She moves quickly; King  
 saluted; courteously aloud  
 She; most radiant in clothing  
 Sir without equal  
 quenting
- Treat him with consideration and justice  
 manhood

<sup>1</sup> Lines 340-42: Under a canopy of silk, daintily wrought / With distinction and splendor, [a canopy located] up against the wall, / [with] birds embroidered and displayed on its brilliant panels

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- The mon in his mantell sittes at his messe  
 In gal pared to pay, peodly pight.  
 Trofelyne and traversie with trewloues in trese;<sup>1</sup>
- 355      The tauses were of topas that wer thereto tight.  
 He gliffed up with his eighen that grey wer and grete,  
 With his beverea bearde, on that burde bright.  
 He was the soveraynest of al sitting in scie  
 That ever segge had seen with his eye sight.
- 360      King crowned in kith carpes hir tille:  
 "Welcom, worthely wight —  
 He shal have reson and right!  
 Whethen is the comli knight,  
 If hit be thi willie?"
- 365      Ho was the worthiest wight that ey wy welide wolde;<sup>2</sup>  
 Here gide was glorious and gay, of a gresse grene.  
 Here belle was of blanket, with birdes ful bolde,  
 Braided with brende gold, and bokeled ful bese.<sup>3</sup>
- 370      Her fax in fyne perre was fretted in folde,  
 Contreflet and kelle coloured ful clene,  
 With a crowne craftly al of clene golde.  
 Here kercheves were curiose with many peude prese,  
 Her perre was prayded with peise men of might:<sup>4</sup>
- 375      Bright birdes and bolde  
 Had ynghe to beholde  
 Of that frely to folde,  
 And on the hende knight.
- The knight in his colours was armed ful clene.  
 With his comly crest clere to beholde.  
 His brend and his basnet burnished ful bese,  
 With a bordar abought al of brende golde.

<sup>1</sup>Decorated and crisscrossed with love-knots in a row

<sup>2</sup>She was the most worthy person that anyone might wish to have governance of

<sup>3</sup>Embroidered with burnished gold and fashioned most attractively

<sup>4</sup>Lines 372-73: *Her head-scarves were remarkable with many noble brooches, / Her clothing was admired by renowned warriors*

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	His mayles were mylke white, esclawet ful cleane;	[coat off mail; fastened in trappings of the same
	His horse trapped of that ilke, as true men me tolde;	bright
	His shelde on his sholdur of silver so shene,	bear heads; with brown
385	With bere bedes of blake browed ful boilde;	silk; draped; fer
	His horse in fyne sandel was trapped to the hele.	horse's head armor
	And, in his cheveron bilorse,	
	Stode as an unicorn,	
	Als sharp as a thorn,	
390	An anas of stede.	dagger
	In stede he was staffed, that stourne appon stede,	armor; warrior [mounted]
	Al of sternes of golde, that stanscid was one straye;	ware; patterned at random
	His gloves, his gamesons glowed as a gled;	outer coat; coat
	With graynes of rebé that graithed ben gay.	beads of ruby; fashioned; graciously
395	And his schene schynbaudes, that sharp wer to shrede,	
	His poleynas with pelydodis were poundred to pay.	
	With a lunce on loft that lovely con lode; <sup>1</sup>	
	A freke on a freson him followed, in fay.	squire; Friesland horse; in truth
	The freson was alred for dred of that fare,	spooked with fear of those going on
400	For he was selden wente to se	seldom accustomed
	The tablet fluré:	table so decorated with fleurs-de-lis
	Siche gamen ne gle	Such games or festivities
	Sagh he never are.	Saw; ere (i.e., before)
	Arthur asked on hight, herand him alle:	aloud all hearing him
405	"What woldes thou, wee, if hit be thi willie? <sup>2</sup>	
	Tel me what thou seches and whether thou shalle,	seek; whether you intend to go
	And whi thou, sturne on thi stede, stondes so stille?" <sup>3</sup>	
	He wayved up his viser fro his ventalle;	lifted; visor; helmet
	With a knighthly contenance, he carpes him telle:	chivalric manner; speaks to him
410	"Whether thou be cryser or king, her I the becalle	emperor; challenge
	Fore to finde me a freke to fight with my fille.	an opponent; to my satisfaction

<sup>1</sup> Lines 385-97: And his handsome greaves (skin guards), that were sharp for slashing. / His knee guards with gore were pleasingly spangled. / With his lance at rest that worthy [knight] presented himself

<sup>2</sup> What do you desire, knight, if you please

<sup>3</sup> And why you, fearsome on your horse (i.e., mounted for combat), abide here so silently?

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	Fighting to fraist I fondaſ fro home." <sup>1</sup>	
	Then said the King uppon hight.	said; aloud
	"If thou be curteys knight,	courteous
415	Late and lenge al nyght, And sel me thi nome."	Stay; tarry name
	"Mi name is Sir Galaron, withouten eny gile,	guile
	The gretnost of Galwey of greves and gyllis,	gretnor [knights]; thickets; ravines
	Of Connok, of Conyngham, and also Kyle,	[places in Scotland?]
420	Of Lomond, of Losex, of Loyan hilles.	
	Thou has wosen hem in weree with a wrange wile	taken; war; unjust trick
	And geven hem to Sir Gawayn — that my hert gyllis.	angers
	But he shal wring his boonde and warry the wyle,	hand(s); curse the time
	Er he wold hem, ywys, agayn myn uwylies. <sup>2</sup>	
425	Bi al the weith of the worlde, he shal hem never welle,	thou never rule
	While I the heide may here,	my head
	But if he wyna hem in weree,	Unless; combat
	With a shelde and a spere,	
	On a faire felde.	fair field (i.e., in equitable combat)
430	"I wet fight on a feide — therefo I make feith —	will; oath
	With eny froke uppon folde that frely is borne.	warrior; earth; nobly
	To lese sache a lordshipp me wolde theske laith, <sup>3</sup>	
	And icne lede opon lyve wold lagh me to scorne."	
	"We ar in the wode went to walke on oure waith, <sup>4</sup>	
435	To hunte at the heries with hounde and with horne.	deer
	We ar in oure gamen; we have no gone graithe, <sup>5</sup>	
	But yet thou shalt be matched be mynday tomoore.	
	Forthi I rede the, thenke rest al nyght."	Therefore I advise you take care to
	Gawayn, grathest of all,	most accomplished

<sup>1</sup> Fighting to demand (i.e., seeking combat) I set out from home

<sup>2</sup> Before he wold them, indeed, over my resistance

<sup>3</sup> Lines 432-33: To lose such lordship (i.e., dominion over those lands) to me would soon hateful, / And every warrior alive would laugh me to scorn

<sup>4</sup> We have come to the forest to proceed on our hunt (i.e., we are unprepared for combat)

<sup>5</sup> Lines 435-36: We are at our games (i.e., fixed out for the hunt); we have no champion ready, / Though nonetheless you shall be matched [with an opponent] by noon tomorrow

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 440 | Ledes him oure of the hall<br>Into a pavilion of pall<br>That proudly was pight.  | rich cloth<br>proudly made up  |
| 445 | Pight was it proudly with purpour and pale,<br>Birdes brasden above, in beend gold bright.<br>Inwith was a chapeil, a chambour, a haile, <sup>1</sup><br>A chymné with charcole to chaufe the knight.                     | Adorned; purple; rich cloth<br>Birds embroidered; burnished<br>chimney; coal; warm |
| 450 | His stede was stabled and led to the stable;<br>Hay hertly he had in haches on hight.<br>Sithen thei braide up a bordre, and clothes thei calle,<br>Sanapes and salers, semly to sight,                                   | piercfully; saddle-racks<br>set up a table; call for<br>Table-cloths; soft-clothes |
| 455 | Tooches and brochettes and standardes bitwene. <sup>2</sup><br>Thus thei served that knight<br>And his woethely wight,<br>With rich dayntees dight  | worthy companion<br>delicacies prepared<br>bright                                  |
| 460 | In silver so shene.<br><br>In silver so semely thei served of the bost,<br>With vernage in veres and cuppes ful clene.<br>And thus Sir Gawayn the good glades hour gest,<br>With riche dayntees endored in dishes bydene. | wine in glasses; brim full<br>entertain their guest<br>glazed; in succession       |
| 465 | Whan the riall reske was gone to his rest,<br>The King to coursaile has called his knighthos so knese.<br>"Loke nowe, lordes, oure lose be not lost."<br>Ho shal encontre with the knight? Kestes you bitwene."           | princely warrior had gone<br>grieve  |
|     | Then said Gawayn the goode, "Shal hit not grieve.<br>Here my hand I you bight,<br>I woll fight with the knight<br>In defense of my right,<br>Lorde, by your love."  | [with] my hand; promise  |

<sup>1</sup> Therein was a chapel, a chamber (i.e., a private room), *and* a hall (i.e., a public space)

<sup>2</sup> Candles and candleholders and tapers in the middle

<sup>3</sup> Lines 462-63: Look to it now (i.e., take care), lords, [that] our honor (reputation) is not lost. / Who shall join battle with the knight? Decide between yourselves

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

470	"I leve wel," quod the King. "Thi lates ar light, <sup>1</sup> But I nolde for no loodeshipp se thi life borne." <sup>2</sup>	would not for any; lost
	"Let go!" quod Sir Gawayn. "God stond with the right! <sup>3</sup> If he shape skathlesse, hit were a foule skorne." <sup>4</sup>	escape unscathed; insult
	If the daying of the day, the doughti were dight, <sup>5</sup> And henden matens and Massac crly on morn. <sup>6</sup>	dawning; bold men; outlined matins (i.e., early service)
475	By that on Plumton Land a palain was pight, Were never freke opos folde had foughten bilorse. <sup>7</sup>	Right after that; enclosure; pitched Where; warrior on earth
	Thei setten listes bylyve on the logh lande. <sup>8</sup>	
	Thre soppes demayn	Three pieces of fine bread soaked in wine
	Thei brought to Sir Gawayn	
480	For to confort his brayn, The King gared commande.	[At]: did
	The King commauded kindell the Ertis son of Kent:	Earl of Kent's son
	"Cartaysly in this case, take kepe to the knight." <sup>9</sup>	
	With riche dayntees or day he dyned in his tensse,	before daylight he (i.e., Galerone)
485	After buskes him in a brend that burnesched was bright. <sup>10</sup>	
	Sichon to Waynoar wily he went;	Afterwards to Guenevere prudently
	He left in here waerde his worthy wight.	left in her keeping his noble lady
	After aither in high hoar hoeses thei bent,	Then both hastily their horses setond
	And at the listes on the lande lordely done light	barriers onto; nobly did alight
490	Alle bot thes two barnes, baldest of blode.	warriors; boldest; blood (i.e., in spirit)
	The Kinges chaser is set	throne
	Abowee on a chacelet;	date
	Many gallard gret	Many a hardy [knight] called out
	For Gawayn the gode.	
495	Gawayn and Galerone garden her stedes;	gord (i.e., ready)
	Al in gleterand golde, gay was here gote,	glistening; equipment
	The lordes bylyve horne to list ledes.	promptly move to the barrier

<sup>1</sup> "I believe [that] easily," said the King. "Your sense of honor is quick."

<sup>2</sup> "Don't worry!" said Sir Gawayn. "May God stand with [uphold] the right!"

<sup>3</sup> They set [up] lists (i.e., jousting barriers) quickly on the level field

<sup>4</sup> With all courtesy proper to the circumstances [of the impending combat], see to [preparing] the knight (i.e., Galerone).

<sup>5</sup> Afterwards, he goes off in his armor that burnished was brightly

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	With many serjant of mace, as was the manere. <sup>1</sup>	
500	The burnes broched the blonkes that the side bledis;	<i>spurred the horses so that</i>
	Ayther freke opon folde has fastised his spere.	<i>Each warrior on the turf; fixed</i>
	Shaftes in shide wode thei shindre in shedes,	<i>split wood; splinter in shards</i>
	So joitil thes gentil justed on were!	<i>spiritedly; nobles jousted in combat</i>
	Shaftes thei shindre in shelles so shene,	<i>splinter upon; bright</i>
	And sithes, with brondes bright,	<i>after; swords</i>
505	Riche mayles thei right.	<i>armor; strike</i>
	These encontres the knight	<i>enters combat; (i.e., Galeron)</i>
	With Gawayn on grene.	<i>on fleshy grass</i>
	Gawayn was gally grathed in grene,	<i>splendidly equipped</i>
	With his griffons of golde engrailed fall gay.	<i>engraved</i>
510	Trifled with tranes and trueloves birwene;	<i>Adorned with devices; love-knots</i>
	On a startand stede he strikes on stray.	<i>rearing; hammers away</i>
	That other in his turnasyng, he talkes in esse:	<i>jousting; speaks in anger</i>
	"Whi drawes thou the on dregh and makes sicke deray?" <sup>2</sup>	
	He swappad him ys at the swyrc with a swerde kene;	<i>struck; neck; sharp</i>
515	That groved Sir Gawayn to his dethday.	
	The dystes of that doughty were dourwis bydene;	<i>blows; absolutely dreadful</i>
	Fifte mayles and mo	<i>mail-links and more</i>
	The swerde swapt in two,	<i>snapped</i>
	The canelbone also,	<i>collar bone</i>
520	And clef his sheldre shene.	<i>cleft (i.e., cut through)</i>
	He clef thorgh the castell that covered the knight.	<i>shield-cover; protected</i>
	Thorgh the shiand sheldre a shaftmon and mare.	<i>shining hand's-breadth; more</i>
	And then the lathele lord lowe uppon hight.	<i>fierce; laughed our lord</i>
	And Gawayn greches therwith and gremed ful sare:	<i>seethed at that; felt deep anger</i>
525	"I shal rewarde the thi route, if I con rede right." <sup>3</sup>	
	He followed is on the freke with a fresh fare;	<i>moved in; new thowz</i>
	Thorgh blason and bresé, that burneshed wer bright,	<i>shield; mail coat</i>
	With a burlich brondc thorgh him he bare.	<i>about sword into him he cut</i>

<sup>1</sup> With many a sergeant-at-arms (i.e., mace bearer), as was the custom.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you draw yourself back so far and make such a pass?

<sup>3</sup> I shall pay you back [for] your stroke, if I have anything to say [about it].

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	The bronde was blody that burneshed was bright. <sup>1</sup>	
530	Then gloppened that gay — Hit was no ferly, in fay. The sturne strikes on stray In stirrops stright.	was stunned that knight (Galeron) marvel, in much hardy (knight) (Galeron) hammers awry (standing) in his stirrups upright
	Streyte in his stirrops, stoutely he strikes, And waynes at Sir Gawayn als he were wode. Then his lemmans on lowde skirles and skrikes, <sup>2</sup> When that burly burne blanke on blode.	mailes; mad goodly knight shone with with that turnabout are pleased
	Lordes and ladies of that laike likes And thonked God of his grace for Gawayn the gode.	
540	With a swap of a swerde, that swithely him swykes; He stroke of the stede bode streite there he stode. <sup>3</sup> The faire sole fondred and fel, bi the Rode. Gawayn gloppened in bert;	foal (i.e., horse) stumbled; Cross was stunned intensely angry
	He was swithely smert. Oute of stirrops he stert Fro Grissell the gode.	jumped (his horse)
	"Grissell," quod Gawayn, "gou is, God wote!" He was the burlokest blanke that ever bote bode. By Him that in Bedelioem was borne ever to ben our bote, I shall venge the today, if I con right rede."	God knows hardiest horse; took food Bedelioem; remedy avenge (myself on) you
550	"Go feoche me my freson, fairest on fote; He may stonde the in stoutre in as mekle stede." "No more for the faire sole then for a rischrote. But for doel of the dombe best that thus shold be dede."	Frisian (horse); afoot serve you in combat just as well (I'll take) no more; weed
555	I mourne for no mostur, for I may gete mare." Als he stode by his stede, That was so goode at sede, Ner Gawayn wax wode,	grieve for; mount; more As
	So weppatne he sare.	Nearly; went mad sorrowfully

<sup>1</sup> The sword was bloody that polished had been brightly

<sup>2</sup> Then his beloved screamed aloud and shrieks

<sup>3</sup> Lines 540-41: With a stroke of a sword, that knight (Galeron) promptly calls him up short; / He struck off the horse's head right where it stood

<sup>4</sup> Except for the sadness over the dumb bison that died so (disgracefully)

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

560	Thus wepas for wo Wowsyn the wight, And wenys him to quyte, that wounded is sare. That other drogh him on dreight for drede of the knight <sup>1</sup> And boldely broched his blonk on the bent bare.	wepas; hardy intends to get revenge; sorely spurred his horse; field open "Thus may thou dryve forthe the day to the dark night!" The sun was passed by that mydday and mare. <sup>2</sup>
565	"Thus may thou dryve forthe the day to the dark night!" The sun was passed by that mydday and mare. <sup>2</sup> Within the lynes the lede lordly done light; Touzed the bursen with his bronde he banked him yare. <sup>3</sup>	throw away (past) warrior (i.e., Galeron); did dismount mail-coat stained with blood brave (warrior); afraid fiercely
570	To bataile they bowe with brondes so bright. Shenc sheldes wer shred, Bright brends bybled;	more bright; shredded mail-coat stained with blood
575	Many doughti were adred, So fersely thei fight.	brave (warriors); afraid fiercely
580	Thus thei fecht on fote on that fair felde As fresh as a lyon that frutes the fille. Wileld thes wight men their wepenes they welde;	fierce; lacks its fill Adroity; wield their weapons
585	Wyte ye wele, Sir Garwain wantis no will. He broached him yn with his bronde under the brode shelde Thorgh the waast of the body and wounded him ill. The swerd stent for so stuf — hit was so wel stieled. That other staetis on bak and stondis stonstille. <sup>4</sup>	Believe me; lacks no determination stabbed into him waist; seriously snapped; equipment; forged manned; moment
590	Though he were stonyed that stonde, he strikes fal sare — He gades to Sir Garwain Thorgh ventaille and pesayn; He wanted nought to be slain. <sup>5</sup>	pierces face and neck armor
595	The brede of an hare.	
600	Hardely then thes hathelise on helmes they hewe. Thei beten downe beriles and bordares bright;	Fiercely; warriors; helmets knock off beryls (gems) and trim

<sup>1</sup> The other (i.e., Galeron) drew himself away because of uncertainty about the knight (i.e., about the proper response to Gawain's want of a horse).

<sup>2</sup> The sun had passed by that [time] midday and more (i.e., it was after noon).

<sup>3</sup> Towards the knight (i.e., Gawain) with his [drawn] sword he (i.e., Galeron) moved quickly.

<sup>4</sup> That other (i.e., Galeron) falls back and stands still as a stone.

<sup>5</sup> Lines 584-85: He (i.e., Gawain) lacked nothing to be slain / [Only] the breadth of a hair (i.e., Gawain escaped death by a hair's breadth).

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

	Shildes on shildres that shese were to shewe, Fretted were in fyse goide, thei fallen is fight.	Shilds on shoulders; bright; look on <i>/Whiche/ adressed were; fall</i>
590	Soones of irl thay strenkel and strewel. Stithe stapeles of stele they strike done stright. Burnes banzen the tyme the bargan was brewe, The doughti with dyntes so dellally were dight.	rainbow colors; scatter Strong clasps; right off People curse; brewed (made)
	The dyntis of the doghty were dousous bydene.	<i>stroke so grievously were covered</i> <i>absolutely terrible</i>
595	Bothe Sir Leie and Sir Lake Miche mornyng thei make. Gaynor gret for her sake With her grey eyen.	Much <i>lamented for their</i>
600	Thus gretis Gaynor with bothe her grey yene For gref of Sir Gawayn, grisly was wound.	weeps; eyes <i>Out of distress for; [whaf</i> <i>/Gawain/</i>
	The knight of corage was cruel and leose, And, with a stiele bronde, that sturze oft stound;	<i>the bold /Galeron/ often stunned</i>
605	Al the cost of the knyght he carf downe clene. Thorgh the riche mailles that ronke were and rounde With a teneful touche he taght him in tene,	<i>side; carved through cleanly</i> <i>strong; round</i> <i>Hateful stroke; attacked him in anger</i>
	He gardes Sir Galeron groveling on gronde. Grisly on gronde, he groaned on grene.	<i>strikes; writhing to the ground</i> <i>Horribly; on [the] grass</i>
610	Ah wounded as he was, Sone unredely he ras And followed fast on his traſ	<i>readily he arose</i> <i>pursued /Gawain/ fast in his tracks</i>
	With a swerde kene.	
615	Kesely that cruel kevered on hight, <sup>1</sup> And with a cast of the carbosde in castil he strikes, And waynes at Sir Wawyn, that worthely wight. But him lymped the worse, and that me wel likes. <sup>2</sup>	<i>left hand; shield corner</i> <i>rushes; worthy warrior</i>
	He atteled with a stelen had slayn him in slight; <sup>3</sup> The swerd swapped on his swange and on the mayle slikes, And Gawayn bi the collar keppes the knyght.	<i>struck; thigh; sides</i> <i>by the collar takes captive</i>
	Then his leman on loft skrilles and skrikes —	<i>lover; screams and shrieks</i>

<sup>1</sup> Boldly that fierce knyght (i.e., Galeron) defended himself (i.e., retaliated) in haste

<sup>2</sup> But something worse befell him (i.e., Galeron), and that well pleases me

<sup>3</sup> He undertook a blow that would have slain him (i.e., Gawayn) through its skill

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 620 Ho gretes on Gaynour with groyning grylle:  
 "Lady makeles of myght,  
 Haf mercy on yondre knyght  
 That is so delfall dight,  
 If hit be thi wille."  
 She beseeches; groaning bitter  
 matchless in  
 woefully set upon
- 625 Than wilfully Dame Waynoar to the King went;  
 Ho caught of her coronall and kneled him tille:  
 "As thou art Royle roial, richest of rent,  
 And I thi wife wedded at thi owne wille —  
 Thys burnes in the bataile so blode on the bent,  
 They are weary, iwis, and wounded full ille.  
 Thorgh her shene sheldes, her sholdres ar sheat;  
 The grones of Sir Gawayn dos my hert grille.  
 Wodest thos leue, Lorde,  
 Make thys knyghtes accorde,  
 Hit were a grete conforde  
 For all that here ware."  
 removed her crown; to him  
 King majestic; most powerful overlord  
 weary, surely; wounded grievously  
 Through their; destroyed  
 torment  
 grieve  
 If you please  
 comfort  
 here ware
- Then spak Sir Galeroas to Gawayn the good:  
 "I wende never wee in this world had ben half so wight."<sup>1</sup>  
 spoke
- 640 Here I make the releyse, renke, by the Rode,  
 And, byfore these ryalle, resyng the my ryghte;<sup>2</sup>  
 And sithen make the monraden with a mylde mode  
 As man of mediert makeles of myght."<sup>3</sup>  
 He talkes towaerd the King on hic ther he stode,  
 And bede that barly his bronde that barneshed was bright:<sup>4</sup>  
 "Of reates and richesse I make the releyse."  
 Downe kneled the knyght  
 And carped wordes on hight;  
 grant you quit-claim, sir: Cross  
 after: homage; good will  
 aloud from where  
 aloud

<sup>1</sup> I never imagined [there was] of knight in the world [who] was half so powerful [as you are]

<sup>2</sup> And, before these royal [persons], [I] resign [to] you my right (i.e., all claims to lands and emoluments)

<sup>3</sup> [Insofar] as [you are] of man of middle earth matchless in strength (i.e., as a man without equal in this world)

<sup>4</sup> And offered that good [man] his sword that was brightly polished

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 650      The King stode upright  
And commanded pes.  
  
The King commanded pes and cried on hight,  
And Gawayn was goodly and laft for his sake.  
Then lordes to listes they lopea ful light —  
Sir Ewyan Fiz Uryayn and Arvak Fiz Lake,  
655      Marrake and Moylard, that most wer of might —  
Bothe thes travayled men they truly up take.  
Unneth might tho sturze stonde upright —  
'What, for buffetes and blode, her bles wex blak;<sup>1</sup>  
Her bles were brosed, for beting of broades.  
660      Withouten more lettynge,  
Dight was here saghtyng:  
Bifore the comly King.  
Thei held up her hondes.  
  
"Here I gif Sir Gawayn, with gerson and golde,  
665      Al the Glamergas londe with groves so grene.  
The worship of Wales at wil and at wolle,  
With Criffones Castelles carnellied ful clese;  
Eke Ulstar Halle to hafe and to holde,  
Wayford and Waterforde, wallede I wese;  
670      Two baronrees in Bretayne with burghes so bolde,  
That are batallied abought and bigged ful bese.<sup>2</sup>  
I shal doue the a duke and dubbe the with honde,  
Withthi thou saghtil with the knight  
That is so hardi and wight,  
675      And relese him his right,  
And graunte him his londe."
- "Here I gif Sir Galeron," quod Gawayn, "withouten any gile,  
Al the londes and the lites fro Lauer to Layre,  
Connike and Carlile, Conyngham and Kile;  
680      Yet, if he of chevalry chalange ham for aise,  
In addition; claims them as heir
- pesce (i.e., silence)  
gracious; left *leff*  
barriers; traps  
wearied; gave support  
Scarcely; those bold (*knightes*)  
faces were bruised  
goings on (*delay*)  
Prepared; reconciliation  
(in sign of agreement)  
together with measure  
Glamorganshire; groves  
lordship; at his command  
carnellied  
Also  
fortified towns; I garn  
fortified cities  
endow (*invest*)  
On condition you accord  
bold and strong  
give freely to

<sup>1</sup> What with the beatings and bleeding, their faces waxed black (i.e., had become darkened)

<sup>2</sup> That have surrounding battlements and have been very well built

*The Annals of Arthur*

- |     |   |                                       |
|-----|---|---------------------------------------|
|     | The Lother, the Lemnok, the Loynak, the Lile,<br>With frethis and forestes and fosses so faire. | woods; moats                          |
|     | Withthi under our lordship thou lenge here a while,   | If thou; you /will/ abide             |
| 685 | And to the Round Table make thy repaire,  | (i.e., join in the fellowship)        |
|     | I shal relleff the in feldc in forestes so fair."   | remain you on this field with         |
|     | Bothe the King and the Queene   | together                              |
|     | And at the doughti bydese,  | Through; groves                       |
|     | Thorgh the greves so grene,   | travel                                |
|     | To Cariele thei cair.   |                                       |
| 690 | The King to Cariele is comen with knighthes so kene,<br>And at the Rounde Table on rial array.  | royal                                 |
|     | The woes that weren wounded so wothely, I wene,   | knights; initially                    |
|     | Surgenes sone saned, sothely to say.  | Surgeons swiftly made [them] whole    |
|     | Bothe confortes the knighthes, the King and the Queene. <sup>1</sup>                            |                                       |
| 695 | Thei were dubbed dakes both on a day.   | a [single] day                        |
|     | There he wedded his wife, wlonkest I wene,  | most beautiful                        |
|     | With giftes and garsions, Sir Galeron the gay;  | treasures                             |
|     | Thus that hathel in high withholdes that hende. <sup>2</sup>                                    |                                       |
|     | Whan he was saned sondre,   | cured wholly                          |
| 700 | Thei made Sir Galeron that stonde   | They (i.e., the court); at that point |
|     | A knight of the Table Ronde   |                                       |
|     | To his lyves eade.  |                                       |
|     | Waysoar gared wisely write into the west <sup>3</sup>   |                                       |
|     | To al the religioun to rede and to singe.   |                                       |
| 705 | Prestes with procession to pray were peost,   | urged                                 |
|     | With a mylion of Masses to make the mynyng. <sup>4</sup>  | perform the memorials                 |
|     | Bokeleder men, bishops the best,  | Book-learned                          |
|     | Thorgh al Beetylne belles the burde gared ryng. <sup>4</sup>                                    |                                       |
|     | This ferely bilde in Ingilwod Forest,   | marrow occurred; Ingilwood            |
| 710 | Under a holte so bore at a hustynge —   | wood so bare                          |

<sup>1</sup> Book (royal persons) comfort the knight, the King and the Queen

<sup>†</sup> Thus our knight quickly takes to himself that gracious (woman).

<sup>3</sup> Lines 703-04: Guinevere commanded, wisely, [that] written messages be sent into the west (i.e., had word sent throughout the land) / To all the clergy to read and to sing (i.e., to celebrate masses).

<sup>4</sup> Throughout all Britain the Queen had (them) ring church bells.

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

Suche a hunting in holtis is nocht to be hide.  
Thus to forest they foee,  
Ther sterne knyghtes in store.  
In the tyme of Arthour  
This affer betide.

left unbold

went

brave; in battle

adventure occurred

### Notes

Unlike Hanna's edition, this text does not try to indicate the shape or intention of an author or original; and unlike Gates' edition, it does not attempt to document all variants and manuscript evidence. What I offer here is a conservative reading text, conservative in that it reproduces the readings of the Douce MS insofar as these make sense (or can be argued to make sense). I emend only when lexical, grammatical, metrical, or contextual lapses seem to demand it.

Abbreviations: D = Douce MS; Ir = Ireland MS; L = Lambeth MS; T = Thornton MS; A = Ammons' edition; G = Gates' edition; H = Hanna's edition. See Select Bibliography for these selections.

- 1     *In the tyme of Arthur.* This is the classic characterization for the setting of a Gawain narrative. Compare the first line of *Golograv*: "In the tyme of Arthur, as truw men me tald"; *Ragnelle*, line 4: "In the tyme of Arthoure thys adventure betyd"; and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 2522 (nine lines from the end): "Thus in Arthuras day this auerter bitidde." The last line of *Awntyrs* repeats this first line almost verbatim (see note).
- 2     *By the Tarn Wathelien.* *Tarn* or *terne* was a northern ME word for a small lake. The Tarn Wathelene (I adopt this spelling as common among local historians of Cumberland) was renowned out of all proportion to its size as a site for Arthurian adventure. It is mentioned in *Awowyng* ("Tarn Wathelias," lines 131 and 338, and notes at lines 29, 131, and 132), and in *Mariage* ("Tearne Wadling," line 32 and note), and its setting in Ingewood Forest is alluded to in *Ragnelle* (line 16 and note); *Greene Knight* may also invoke the Tarn (line 493 and note). The lake's name is given further variants in the colophon at the end of *Awntyrs* (see line 715 and note), and in the titles of editions by G and H.  
*at the boke tellis.* A conventional alliterative formula, though *Awyses* clearly draws upon literary sources.
- 3     *that.* D: *and*; Ir, T: *that*, so emended by A, G, and H.

### Notes

4 *dumperes*. The legendary twelve companions of Charlemagne. See line 277, and compare *Gologrus* line 1334 and note at line 1313.

7 *were*. D: *and*; L: *were*, so emended by G and H.

8 *fermesones*. D: *fermythamir*; Ir: *fermesones*; T: *ferysone tyme*; emended to *fermysone tyme* by A and G; to *fermyson* by H.

by the *fermesones*. A technical term for the closed season (approximately September to June), when hunting male deer was prohibited. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the first day's hunt for deer takes place "in fermyson tyme," when the lord has forbidden the taking of "the male dere" (lines 1156–57). Arthur serves the Roman senators "Flesch flurisie of fermysone" (*Alliterative Morte Arthure*, line 180), apparently fatted does taken in the closed season.

13 *Dame Gwynour*. In his novel *The Lyre of Orpheus* (recounting the production of a rediscovered opera, *Arthur of Brissin, or The Magnanimous Cuckold*), Robertson Davies suggests that in Welsh *Gwenevere*'s name signifies "white ghost" — which would give peculiar resonance to the queen's encounter with the blackened ghost of her mother. See *The Lyre of Orpheus* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 137. Kenneth G. T. Webster, in his *Guinevere: A Study of Her Abductions* (Milton, Massachusetts: Turtle Press, 1951), notes that "the name in Welsh is *Gwenhwyfar*, which may mean white ghost, or enchantress" (pp. 2–3).

18 *hewe*. D: *hendr*; Ir, T: *hewe*, so emended by A, G, and H. H inserts *ho* to regularize *hedes*.

22 *set by*. Ir, L: *sercket on*, followed by G and H. See phrase in line 120.

30 *Borgoyne*. Neither Gawain nor Guenevere have connections with Bargandy. Madden and A somewhat desperately suggest that Gawain's hoese (called Grissell at line 546) may have been born in France. H suggests that *Borgoyne* is a corrupted reading of "Orkney," connected to Gawain's birth.

*by boke and by bellv*. A conventional phrase indicating an oath sworn by the Holy Sacrament (celebrated by reading the sacred text and ringing bells at the elevation), or by the rite of excommunication, which entailed the ritual use of bell, book, and candle.

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 48 The rhyme scheme makes clear that a line is lacking here in all surviving manuscripts.
- 51 *dare*. D: *dunre*, with *er* abbreviated; *dare* given provisionally by G, unconditionally by H (disregarding G's note); emended to *dare* by A; I follow G's provisional reading of D as *dare*.
- 55 This line is omitted in D; supplied from T (following G).
- 56 *wilde*. D follows this word with *swyne* (agreeing with Ir, L, T); *swyne* is omitted by A, G, and H.
- 58 *And till thaire riste rachers relies on the ro*. D: *And blawre reches ryally, they ran to the ro*, which repeats line 62; like A, G, and H, I follow T, though I substitute D's *on the ro* for T's final phrase, *on thaire ray*.
- 59 *grythe*. Omitted by D, though it occurs in the other three manuscripts (spelling from T).
- 60 *grendes*. D: *gredes*; I follow G's emendation (adopted by H).
- 62 *rechar*. This is a technical hunting term for the horn note that signals hounds and hunters to reassemble. Gawain and Guenevere ignore the call (lines 68 ff.).
- 70 *By*. D: *Under*; *By* inserted from Ir, L, T.  
under a leftrale substituted from Ir (following G and H), for D, *ther lady so swal*, which seems a nonsensical tag rhyme (though it occurs in L and T as well).
- 74 *mele*. D: *meve*; Ir, L: *mele*, followed by G and H.
- 80 *fawe felle*. D: *fewe feller*; I follow emendation suggested by A, accepted by G and H.
- 81 This line omitted by D; supplied from T (following G).
- 82 *metterend answer*. This is a notable instance (among many) where *Awntyrs* directly imitates a memorable passage from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

### Notes

The snawe sustered ful smart, that snayped the wyde;  
The werbelande wynde wapped fro the byghe,  
And drof aiche date ful of dryfles ful grete.

(lines 2003-05)

- 83     *a lowe one the louthe*. D: *a lede of the lawe*; I follow T (with A).
- 84     This line omitted by D; I follow T (as do A, G, and H).
- 85     glides to Sir Gawayne. It, L, and T all have the ghost first approach Dame Gaymoure, and the opening of the next stanza, in giving Guenevere's horrified reaction, perhaps supports an initial address to the Queen by the apparition.
- 86     yelle. D: yellier; L, T: yellie, so emended by A, O, and H.
- The participles and verbs of this and the next line vividly recall the second day's hunt in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, when the hounds "Ful yomterly yale  
and yelle" (line 1453).
- 91     *I gloppen and I grete*. Guenevere's reaction here echoes the description of the fright Morgan Le Faye intended for the Queen in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: she hoped "to haf greved Gaymoure and gart hir to dyghe / With glopp-  
syng of that like gone that gostlyche spaked / With his heade in his honde  
before the byghe table" (She hoped to have grieved Guenevere and caused her  
to die from fright of that being that, like a ghost, spoke with his head in his  
hand before the high table; lines 2460-62).
- 94     cliper of the son. Gawain's quick-witted and protective rationalization of the  
horrible apparition (like his resilient efforts in his exchanges with Lady Bertilak  
in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where "he defended hym so fayr that no  
fawt seemed" line 1531) expresses the undaunting courtesy that upholds his  
"knighthede."
- 96     Sir Cadour, Sir Clepix, Sir Costandyne, Sir Cay. What these four knights, all  
familiar figures in Arthurian romance, have here in common seems mainly to  
be their alliterating names; see Carlisle, lines 35, 44, and notes. Costandyne  
seems to be a variant spelling of "Constantine," perhaps the son of Sir Cadour  
who succeeded Arthur as king; see also Anwyl line 914 and note.

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 112 *he.* Omitted by D; included by other manuscripts and editors.
- 114 *cholle.* D: *clolle*, clearly a misspelling, corrected by A, G, and H, according to Ir, L, and T.
- 119 *Umbeclipped in a cloude of clekyng ancire.* D: *Umbeclipped him with a cloude of clekyng*; A, G, and H follow Ir and T in substituting *him* and expanding to *clekyng*.
- 120 *Serkelad.* D: *skeled*; T: *serkeind*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 124 *holtes.* D: *wode*; alliteration demands *h* (as in Ir, L, and T). I follow Ir (with G).
- 131 *the hendeate in halle.* D: *so fer into halle*; A, G, and H substitute *hendeate* from T.
- 132 *the chafis and the chyne.* D: *the chaker on the chyne*; A, G, and H correct reduplication of *cholle* by substituting *chafis* and from T (H spells *chafis*).
- 134 ff. The syntax here is confusing because of the repeated *shou* (lines 134, 135 twice, 136). Gawain begins by calling upon Christ for aid, but then addresses the ghost in the same second-person singular. Having uttered his prayer directly to Christ, Gawain seems to feel authorized to make the demand of the ghost that follows (paraphrased in the footnote).
- 138 *known.* L agrees in this reading, while Ir and T read *kryommade*, adopted by A, G, and H to eliminate reduplication in the following line.
- 145-456X *Berell or Brangwyn.* I capitalize *Berell*, assuming that the phrase names two women (rather than comparing the speaker's brows to beryl). *Berell* is otherwise unknown in ME romance, and H suggests the line originally named the enchantress *Brusen* (see Malory, Works, pp. 794 ff.). *Brangwyn* is Isolde's servant in the Tristan stories, a look-alike who substitutes for the Queen on her wedding night.
- 158 *she burde bright.* D: *and to the burde*; I omit *and to* as intrusive.
- 162 *lonched.* D: *ouched* (so A and G read); H reads *lonched*, which I follow, though I retain *on fight* from D, in place of *so fight* (G, H).

### Notes

- 165 *Thus am I lyke to Lucefere: takis wiues by mee!* D: *Take truly tent right now by me.* The repetition of a key word, usual in the ninth line of each stanza, fails in D. I follow A and G (and H, with modification) in substituting T's line.
- 167 *Muse on my myroure.* Ir: *your;* L: *thy,* followed by H; T: *thir.* D's reading makes good sense within the tradition of the three living and the three dead, where the supernatural apparition forms a mirror of the ultimate fate of the living. In Gologras, the latter hero offers a commentary on his defeat by Girwain, and Girwain's pretense of submission, in which he invokes in passing Fortune and the Nine Worthy; in the course of the speech, Gologras suggests that each person, "Baith knyght, king and emprouer . . . [may] muse in his myroure" (lines 1230–31; see note). The recommendation of grisly, gracesome, and morbid subjects as useful mirrors of moral understanding to those in the midst of life occurs widely in ME poetry; in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, Elde admonishes (just before launching into a lengthy exposition of the Nine Worthy), "Makys youre myrosses bi me, men, bi youre troathe" (line 290; see M. Y. Offord's edition [EETS 246 (Oxford, 1959)], with note at line 290, and Introduction, pp. xi–xlii).
- 169 *dight.* This word is inserted from L, following H, for stanza linking.
- 170 *Thus deth wif.* D: *Thus dight wif;* *deth* inserted from Ir, L, and T (following G and H).
- 173 *thou art of power.* Ir, L add *whif,* and T adds *for* before this phrase.
- 174 *that bes the aboure.* Ir, L, T present variants of *are besye the aboure.*
- 179 *at the yere.* D: *at the thete;* Ir, L, T: *year;* emended for rhyme by G and H.
- 183 *ar.* D: *art.*
- 199 *meble on mesle.* Guenevere's spontaneous question — whether possessions on earth can aid those beyond the grave — and the ghost's grateful, affirmative reply underscores the profound bond in *Awngry* of material with spiritual, living with dead; in doctrinal terms, this is epitomized by the communion of the saints, which allows grace and merit to be redistributed among the saved. Communal prayer — *matus or Mer* — may thus undo temporal punishment (in some legends, even eternal punishment) due an individual's sinful acts, and the

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

individual's fate is beyond her own control. The phrase itself is a distinctive alliterative formula, occurring only here and in *Gologras*, line 807; compare line 499.

- 202     *mwavelle*. D: wonder; alliteration demands *mwavelle* (from T, though I take spelling from lines 73 and 74); so emended by A, G, and H (note).
- 209     *the raven of thi rynd*. D: *the swan yswr*; I emend with L's phrase for the sake of alliteration and rhyme, following A and G.
- 211     *body bites*. D: body is; rhyme demands bites, as in Ir, L, and T (so emended by A, G, and H).
- 212     *Mondis*. D: *Madir*; L, T: *Mondis*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 218     *thirty tensales*. A trental is a series of thirty Masses in memory of the dead; Guenevere's mother therefore requests that nine hundred Masses be said for her soul. The merit earned by these Masses (in the form of indulgences) frees her from the torment of *Helle* (line 84), which may actually mean Purgatory. See line 236 and note.
- 220     *were*. This word is inserted from Ir, L, following G, H.
- 227     *burne*. D: *barm*, an apparent misspelling; correctly given in Ir and L; emended by A (glossary) and H.
- 228     *grete*. This form seems to draw upon a collapsed sense of *gretan*, "greet, give honor" (MED, 2) and a different verb with identical form, *gretan*, "lament, cry out" (MED, 3), which can be transitive, as here. The variant in D of *the for thi soule* indicates that the verb takes an object, and is seen as salutation by the D scribe. Yet the passage suggests that *grete* here takes in both the formal features of honor and the personal dimension of lament in referring to the liturgical remembrance and intercession of the Trental of Masses. It seems then to mean "commemorate, mourn for"; this meaning is reinforced by *synge* in the next line, which also refers to the formal commemoration of the soul through Masses for the dead.
- 236     *a mylton of Masses*. Guenevere's promise here encompasses a huge number of Masses, though not literally a million. Lollards and their sympathizers, who

### Notes

openly criticized the ritual observances of the Church, were particularly outraged by the assumption (implied, for example, by treatises) that the eternal merit and satisfaction of Christ's sacrifice in the Mass might be improved by multiplication. The thirty *trentales* requested by the ghost (line 218 and note) would comprise nine hundred Masses, and *reynlou* may here (and at line 706) simply round this number to one thousand. Archbishop Henry Bowet of York, who died in 1421, designated in his will that money be given "pro mille missis celebrandis more trentale Sancti Gregorii . . ." (for a thousand Masses to be celebrated in the form of St. Gregory's treatise); see *Speculum* 49 (1974), 89. Such a request was therefore not so unusual for late medieval Christians.

- 237 *For one word, quod Waynour.* D: *A quod Waynour iwis;* alliteration requires word, which appears in L and T (so emended by A, G, and H); I omit *iwis* for the sake of meter.
- 239 *Pride.* While pride is here designated the greatest of the seven deadly sins, Awmyr places a corresponding emphasis on the sin which, during the high and later Middle Ages, came to rival pride as the worst — avarice. The ghost's concern for charity to the poor (see lines 232 ff., 251 ff., and her final exhortation at line 319) suggests that the remedy for aristocratic excess is acceptance of responsibility for the material support of all in the Christian community. The ghost's instructions reinforce the corporate identity that marks late medieval chivalry and religion by linking the spiritual treasury of merit (*woniales*, line 218) with the distribution of earthly goods (*almesende*, line 253).
- 240 *apertly.* D: *apt;* L: *apertly,* T: *appertly,* so emended by A and G; H: *apert.*
- 242 *bouse.* D: *bly;* Ir: *bouse* (adopted by G) makes contextual sense.
- 253 *care.* D: *care.* To make sense and complete alliteration, I follow Ir's reading (adopted by A and G; modified by H).
- 255 without spelling. H gives "destruction, waste" (from OE. *spilian*); G gives "spacing" (from OE. *spelian*). The context implies, however, that these gifts are infused in each soul — graceful, *enpires iche sprete* — and that *speling* therefore means "formal training, instruction," which conscience does not require in order to act charitably. Awmyr here offers the view that the moral understanding prerequisite for salvation — the Golden Rule or the two great commandments — is implanted in each person without spelling. The reference in the

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

next line to spiritual thing about which a lay woman should dispute no further links the passage yet more closely to formal theological discourse. Similar issues, concerning intuitive knowledge or "kunde knowing" versus the need for explicit dogmatic or sacramental understanding, are explored in contemporary poems like *St. Erkenwald* and *Piers Plowman*.

- 261 ff. Gawain's question to the ghost, had it originated with an actual medieval knight, would demonstrate a remarkable degree of self-consciousness and self-criticism. Other chivalric narratives offer similar chastisement of territorial avarice that renders a king no coverour; in particular, Arthur's downfall in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* follows upon his desire to spread his rule across Europe to Jerusalem (see lines 3216–17).
- 266 while his whel stondes. The ghost here refers to the traditional image of Fortune's wheel, which commonly shows four kings moving through various phases of rule (about to rule, ruling, falling from power, out of power) as the wheel turns; Arthur is momentarily at the top of the wheel, and cannot be overthrown while Fortune keeps him there. But the ghost also prophesies that the wonderfull wheelwright will give the king a chaunce, and he will suffer a fall from high estate (lines 267–68). The Alliterative *Morte Arthure* provides an elaborate dream, complete with interpretation, of Fortune's Wheel; as a prophecy of Arthur's eventual downfall, and the disintegration of the Round Table, it serves as a commentary and explanation for the end of the Arthurian fellowship. *Goligras* also employs the image of Fortune's Wheel, together with the Nine Worthy, but uses these to pinpoint the nature of knightly honor, rather than to underscore its transitoriness; see *Goligras*, lines 1220 ff. and notes.
- 269 Kingr. D: knight; Ir, T: kyng, followed by A, G, and H.  
a. D: thorugh; Ir, L, T: a, followed by A, G, and H.
- 270 Falsely Fortune. D: Falsely fadone; L, T: False Fortune, followed by A, G, and H.
- 271 That wonderfull wheelwright. D: With a wonderfull wight; Ir, T (followed by A, G, and H) give the present reading.
- 273 Take witnessse by France. This line and the next stanza to which it links allusively encompass the entire career of Arthur's European adventures, and in a version that closely resembles that told in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. The

### Notes

ghost's account of the Round Table's exploits, though they are presented as if already accomplished (at least through line 280, which moves to future tense), must be taken as a prophetic prologue to Arthur's downfall.

- 275 *Freol and his folke*. In the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* and other versions of Arthur's career (beginning with Geoffrey of Monmouth), Arthur initiates his continental conquests by defeating Frolio, the tribune in charge of Roman forces in France (Gaul). Fortune tells Arthur that she has "fellid downe Sir Frolio" (*Alliterative Morte Arthure*, line 3345), and the interpreters of Arthur's dream link "Frolio" with "Perawnt" (line 3404). T's reading, *Freol and his fernaghe*, would appear to be a confused reminiscence, one of many signs of borrowing from the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* in *Awntyrs*.
- 276 *and*. D: *in*; Ir, L, T: *and*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 280 *Roman*. D: *romayne*; Ir, L, T: *Roman*, followed by A, G, and H.  
*you*. D: *our*; Ir, L, T: *you*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 280 ff. Arthur's campaign against the Romans, the culmination in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* of his continental wars, takes him to Tuscany (lines 284, 291), but is aborted before he can reach Rome and receive the Emperor's crown; the dream of Fortune, and the news of Mordred's treachery in Britain, cause him to lead his fellowship back to England for the final battles, as the ghost here prophesies (lines 291 ff.).
- 282 *Then*. D: *thar*; *then*, suggested for sense by A, followed by G.  
*you*. D: *wish*; T: *you*, supported by A.
- 286 *knight*. D: *King*; Ir, L, T: *kynghe* (followed by A, G); here as elsewhere, I adopt an emendation (as does H) to reflect D's usual scribal spelling.  
*knight kene*. The phrase refers to Mordred, Arthur's son-nephew, as the oblique and ominous prediction of the fall of the Round Table in the following twenty-five lines indicates. The ghost makes clear the inevitability of Arthur's death (line 302), Gawain's death (line 298), and the disintegration of the fellowship (line 293), all through *meson* (line 291). As H and William Matthews (*The Tragedy of Arthur: A Study of the Alliterative "Morte Arthure"* [Berkeley and Los

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

Angeles: University of California Press, 1960], pp. 156-61) point out, many details and verbal echoes connect this passage to the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* and its descriptions of Mordred's arms, his actions, Gawain's death, and the fall of the Round Table. The ghost's striking vision of the destruction of Arthurian chivalry through a little child who even now "playes at the balle" (line 310), nursed in the household of the powerful Arthur, epitomizes the emphasis in *Awntyrs* on the tensions inherent in Christian knighthood.

- 287      *shaf kerenly croyse the crowne.* D: *shaf be clany enclosed with a crowne.* To have Mordred decisively crowned makes less sense than Ir's reading of Mordred's treason, which I adopt. In accepting the reading of Ir, *croyse*, I follow the MED in taking this as a form of *craschen*, used figuratively to mean "acquire by conquest" (though this is the only instance cited where such a meaning is possible). H ingeniously inserts *encroche the crowne*.
- 288      *at Carlisle.* The adventures of *Awntyrs* start when Arthur comes to Carlisle (line 3), and the poem concludes with the entire court assembled again at Carlisle (lines 689, 690). In making Carlisle the seat of the Round Table, *Awntyrs* resembles *Ragnelle*, *Arowing*, *Greene Knight*, and so on, which place Arthur's court there. This explains the precise appropriateness of Mordred's overthrowing his uncle/father by being crowned at the very center of power. No other romance stages the rebellion in this way.
- 289      *That sege shal be setede at a sesone.* D: *A sege shal be arche with a cession.* All editors reject D's line as "meaningless" (A); I substitute T's reading (with slightly modified spelling).
- 292      *tydynge.* D: *ȝyng;* Ir, L, T: *ȝydyngr*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 293 ff.     The ghost here foretells to Gawain his own death — *In Dorsetshire shal dy the doughter of alle* — though it remains unclear whether Gawain understands her indirection. By muffling this prophecy of Gawain's death and the fall of the Round Table, *Awntyrs* potentially magnifies its shattering impact; this effect, however, depends upon the audience's familiarity with the vivid description of Gawain's final combat in the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, when after a sea battle he wades ashore and is slain by Mordred (lines 3706-3863). Both Mordred and Arthur offer moving laments on his death (lines 3875 ff., 3956 ff.). In the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, Arthur moves his force "to Dorsett" (line 4052) for the confrontation with Mordred only after Gawain's death.

### Notes

- 294 Ramsey. Matthews argues that this is Romsey in Hampshire, next to Dorset, and that the line therefore refers to the place of Arthur's last battle in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*.
- riding. This word must mean "battle" or "encounter" rather than "region," "area." It has the latter meaning only when applied to one of the three "ridings" (i.e., "thirdings," thirds) of Yorkshire.
- 298 Matthews (following A's note) argues that the precision of this prophecy, involving as it does the relatively unusual word *sleke*, proves direct borrowing from the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, where Gawain impetuously wades ashore at a "slyke" only to meet death at Mordred's hand (line 3719).
- 306 surger. D: surget; I follow G's emended spelling.
- 306 ff. Any description of Mordred's arms is exceptional in Arthurian literature; in this case, the details are unmistakably taken from the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, where Mordred disguises himself by putting aside "the sawtarouze engrailed" (line 4182).
- 314 so. Omitted from D; this word is supplied from Ir, L, and T (followed by A, G, and H).
- 316 dwelle. D: dwelle; alliteration requires dwelle, as in Ir and T (followed by A, G, and H).
- 318 and. D: that; Ir, L, T: and the dole (with variants), which meter requires (so emended by A, G, and H).
- 337 Randalster Halle. The other manuscripts read "Randalsete" (Ir, L) and "Randollesett" (T). A, following a nineteenth-century local historian, connects this with Randalholme, "an ancient manor house near the junction of the Ale with the Tyne" in Cumberland.
- 339 ale. D: halle; Ir, L, T: ale, which alliteration requires (followed by A, G, and H).
- 341 innewith. D: menewith the walie (so A, G read MS); as A notes, the abbreviation strokes are not clear, and H ingeniously reads (without comment) innewith, which I adopt.

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 342 *brauden*. A reads *brandm*, G concurs, offering "(? for *braudene*)"; my reading agrees with H.
- 352 *The mon in his mantell sittet at his meie*. D: *Mon, in thy mantell, that sittet at thi meie*; G adopts T's reading, and H emends using T, a decision I follow.
- 354 This line is omitted in D; supplied from T, following A, G, and H. This line may have been omitted in exemplars of the other copies as well, and supplied by scribal copying from line 510, with which it is nearly identical. The descriptions here, and of the tapestries above and the lady's cloak and Galeros's pavilion below (lines 340 ff., 367 ff., and 443 ff.) echo the elaborately embroidered materials associated in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with the Green Knight's appearance (lines 165-66), the arming of Sir Gawain (lines 609 ff.), and the dress of Morgan (lines 959-60).
- 357 *his beveren berde*. Bertilak's beard is "bever-bwed" in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (line 845), and in the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* (in a scene reminiscent of Froissart's description of King Edward III's wearing a beaverskin hat in his ship before the battle of Winchelsea, 1350) Arthur is described "with beverysac lokkes" (line 3630).
- 360 *corper*. D: *talker*; It, T: *carpis*, which alliteration requires (followed by A, G, and H).
- 363 *Whethor*. D: *Whelw*; emended from It and T (followed by A, G, and H).
- 365 *emy wy weide woldie*. D: *emy wede walde*; present emendation adapts T, *wy myghte* *walde*, following G.
- 372 *pene*. D: *pene*; It, L: *pene*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 375 *ysoghe*. D: *Had I nore*; It, T: *ysoghe*, followed by G, H.
- 381 *bordar*. D: *brandar*; It, L, T: *bordar*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 382 *enclawer ful clere*. D: *white many hit seen*; reading from It adopted for alliteration (also by A, G, and H).
- 385 *Nake*. D: *brake*; emended for sense by A, G, and H.

### Notes

- 387 ff. The suggestion that the chevron — ME *chaufreis*, from French *chaufreis*, the top or front of the horse's head-armor — makes Gawain's horse resemble a unicorn is not simply a literary fantasy. In the later Middle Ages armor for both knight and mount became ever more elaborate and decorative, and visual evidence affirms the use of dagger-like horns such as that described here.
- 392 *that stanseld war one strye*. D: *golde his pencell displayed*; the manuscripts show much confusion here, though Ir, L, T show vague agreement in their description. I adopt T's phrasing, though I insert Ir's *stanseld*; A, G, and H make other modifications.
- 394 *gralned*. D: *gyaled*; L, T: *grahede*; emended for sense (following A, G, and H).
- 396 *poltinas*. A and G read D as *poltmar*; I follow H's astute reading of D and his gloss.
- polydodis*. D: *pelicour*; Ir: *pelidoder*, L: *polydodis* (emended variously by A, G, and H).
- 397 *that lovely con lede*. Variants show that scribes thought the phrase should be taken as "the knight accompanies or leads in that lovely woman": *that lady gone he lede* (T), *that lovely he ledur he ladur* (Ir, with obvious scribal error). MED, *loveli*, 4a, interprets the line similarly, reediting "Thus, launce upon lofte, that lovely [T: lady] he ledus" (which agrees with no manuscript reading, but follows Robson's edition, stanza XXI). But *lovely*, as adjective and substantive, is used of men as well as women; given that the lady has preceded Galeron into the hall and moved to the dais, it makes no sense that he would be said to be leading her. In this case, *lede* would mean either proceed — "that worthy knight did go forward with his lance at rest" — or, better, conduct himself (see OED, *lead*, v.1, 9, 12, and so on) — "that worthy knight did present himself." See also line 497, where "lordes . . . hom . . . ledes" is used reflexively, meaning "the lords move."
- 398 *A freke on a freson*. A Frisian horse was apparently not an appropriate chivalric mount, but a workhorse; when Galeron offers Gawain his "freson, fairest on fote" (line 551) as a substitute steed, the latter refuses with scorn. The phrase recalls the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, where a Roman warrior pursuing Gawain and his band is described (perhaps contemptuously) as a "freke alle in fyne golde . . . [who did] Come forthermaste on a fresone" (lines 1364-65).

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 404 *herand him alle.* All four manuscripts read *hem alle*, which may refer to the lady and Galerons, to whom Arthur will give a hearing. But the context of public speech engaging the interest of the entire court suggests the line specifies that the assembled nobility stand as witnesses for the formal exchanges and compact that follow. The phrase is equivalent to "in their hearing"; I therefore emend *hem* to *him*, reading the phrase as "with all hearing him (Arthur)." Here and in many other details the narrative emphasizes that the public, festive nature of the occasion intensifies how much of the court's reputation as the font of chivalric values is at stake in Galerons's challenge.
- 410 *be.* D lacks this word, which is supplied from Ir, L, and T (followed by A, G, and H).
- 412 *Fighting to frast.* Galerons's statement of his desire for combat with a champion of the Round Table recalls the Green Knight's disavowal of any such interest: "Nay, frayst I no fight, in fayth I the tell . . . Here is no man me to mach, for myghnez so wayke" (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 279-81); "Nay, I seek no fight, in faith I tell you . . . There is no man here to match me, for want of migh").
- 415 *and.* D lacks this word, which occurs in Ir, L, and T.
- 417 *Sir Galerons.* Carlisle mentions "Syr Galerowne" in its roster of knights of the Round Table (line 43), and "Galyras" appears (together with Gawain) in the Alliterative *Morte Arthare* (line 3636). As Sir Galerons of Galloway he makes one of the twelve knights (all "of Scotonde" or connected to Gawain's affinity) who in Malory align themselves with Mordred and Aggravayne in the ambush of Lancelot at the Castle of Carlisle (Works, p. 1164). Sir Gyngalyne, clearly the same knight as the son of Ragnelle and Gawain (*Ragnelle*, line 799) and identical in other romances with the Fair Unknown (*Libeaus Descones*; see *Carlisle*, line 55 and note), is also among this group, as is Sir Gromore Somys Joute (see *Ragnelle*, line 62 and note, and *Turke*, line 320 and note).
- 418 *gyllis.* D: *gryller*; Ir, L, T: *gyllis* (followed by A and G); H: *gilles*.

Galloway. Galloway is the southwesternmost territory of Scotland, northwest of Carlisle and the Solway Firth, and north of the Isle of Man (the setting of *Turke*). In his note (p. xli), Madden points out that from the Middle Ages

### Notes

Gawain was popularly known as Lord of Galloway, making Galeron's challenge to Arthur's sovereignty particularly pointed.

- 419 ff. Galeron's territorial possessions — the source of identity for a knight, as a member of the landed aristocracy — are all presumably in Scotland, though scribal corruption of proper names makes some difficult to locate precisely. The claim by a Scots lord that the English king had illegitimately taken his lands resonates with the continuous hostilities between England and Scotland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It reflects also a pattern common to the Gawain romances, whereby the Arthurian court (often set in its familiar seat at Carlisle, near the northern border) gains possession or control of far-flung, sometimes exotic or magical (and often Celtic) territories and provinces. At the point when Galeron accepts Arthur's lordship and joins the Round Table, he has some of the lands mentioned in these lines restored to him by Gawain (lines 677 ff. and note).
- 424 *newyller*, D; *newyller*, Ir, L; *newilles*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 433 What motivates Galeron is less an internalized sense of righteousness than his public identity derived from the honor of his lordship, and the desire to avoid the shame of public derision for non-action.
- 434 ff. Arthur's remarks here point up the intrusive character of Sir Galeron's combat-ready status. He sits upon his charger in battle armor, facing a court that is on holiday and unready for the rites of chivalric violence. The scene precisely repeats the opening confrontations of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Greene Knight*, where a mounted knight challenges the court. It also resembles the opening of *Reynell*, where Arthur, in the midst of a hunt, is approached by the armed Sir Gromer Somer Joure, who unchivalrously coerces the King's agreement in a compact. Galeron has demonstrated his own knightly honor by insisting that he wishes to fight by the laws of war, "On a faire felde" (line 429). In its adherence to the codes of chivalric combat, promoting honor through ritualized but unrestrained violence, the fight between the two heroes in the present poem resembles that between Gawain and Gologras, even down to the description of particular details and the use of verbal formulas; see line 499 below, with note, and Gologras, lines 586, 754, 807, and notes.
- 438 H emends ingeniously to *I rede the, renke, rest the at night*, which suits the alliterative pattern; A and G adopt readings from T. I have left D unemended.

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 443 it. D lacks this word, which is supplied from L and T (followed by A, G, and H).
- 450 *Sanaper and salers.* D: *sanape and saler*; Ir, L, T: *sanaper and salers*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 471 God stond with the right. Gawain's assertion here is not simply equivalent to "May the best man win," but a statement of an honor code's fundamental commitment to the display or vindication of worship through violence. The public and ritualized combat of the joust or duel, like an ordeal, assumes that God's honor is at stake as well, or at least that divine justice supports the rightness of the outcome. *Awntyrs* itself creates a showcase for the display of chivalric honor, even as it raises questions (through Guinevere's mother, Galeron's complaints, or the references to the poor) about the self-evident rightness of traditional aristocratic values.
- 475 *Plumton Land.* Plumpton and Plumpton Head are villages in Cumberland, south of Carlisle, along the Roman road that passes alongside Ingleswood Forest and the Tarn Wathelene.
- 477 *Thei setten lysters.* Here and at lines 489 and 497 *lyster* refers to the barriers that enclose the area set off for the joust between the two knights, and perhaps as well to a central barrier or palisade serving to keep the mounted knights apart but on course as they rush at each other with lances. The rule-bound and spectacular nature of the chivalric ethos emerges clearly in the care given to organizing this combat, including the installation of viewing places for the King and other noble witnesses (line 492). Two further examples from Malory (*Works*, pp. 518, 1233, cited by H), and Chaucer's description of Theseus' seat in the *Knight's Tale*, equally emphasize the essential role of display and judgment in chivalric combat.
- 481 *Iylyve.* I agree with H, where A and G read *by lyne*.
- 482 *kisdefi.* D: *kradefi*; Ir: *kisdefi* (followed by G, whose reading I adopt); H takes *kradefi* as a garbled proper name.
- 490 *Alle bor.* D: *bothe*, without *Alle*; Ir, L, T: *Alle bor*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 492 *Abowve.* D: *Quenne*; Ir, L, T: *Abowve*, followed by A, G, and H.

### Notes

- 495 ff. The single combat that follows underscores Gawain's role as the preeminent champion of the Round Table. It strikingly resembles Gawain's part as representative of the Round Table in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and his comparably bloody duels with Sir Golagras (see note at lines 434 ff., above) and with Sir Piramus in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (lines 2513 ff.).
- 499 *The barnes broched the blonkes that the side bledis.* Golagras offers almost identical phrasing of this distinctive alliterative formula; see lines 306, 754.
- 509 *griffouz of golde engleid.* In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain's heraldic device is the pentangle; in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, Kyng Froderike of Frisia asks Mordred about the knight "with the gaye armes, / With this gryf-fouse of golde" (lines 3868-69). In *Carlile* (lines 80 ff.), the arms of Sir Iron-side (son of the Knyght of Armes Grene) consist of a golden griffin on a field of blac, surrounded by fleurs-de-lis. In *Carle* (lines 55 ff.; see note), Ironside bears similar arms, though apparently with several griffins, which are said to be those of his father (the Knyght of Green Arms) with a difference. In one fifteenth-century album of arms, Gawain's device is said to be three golden lions' heads on an azure field, or, alternatively, three golden griffins on a green field (see General Introduction, note 21). It may be that the arms of Gawain or his kin have been mistakenly transferred to Ironside; see the notes accompanying the lines in *Carlile* and *Carle* mentioned above.
- 511 *stanand.* D: staryand; Ir, T: stanand, followed by A, G, and H.  
*he.* D: that; Ir, L, T: he, followed by A, G, and H.
- 521-22 These lines echo the description in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* of the blows Arthur strikes against Mordred:
- The canelle of the clere schelde he kerfis in sondyre,  
Into the schuldyre of the schalke a schaftmonde large.  
(lines 4231-32)
- A further variation of line 521 occurs in Golagras: "And claiif throw the canell  
of the clene schelde"; see line 937 and note.
- 522 *shinand.* D: shiand; I: emend spelling for sense.

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 523     *the lachely lord.* D: *the lady londe;* L: *lachely that lord,* adopted by G; H: *lachely.*
- 536     *skirkis.* D: *skirkis;* I emend spelling for sense, following G and H.
- 539     *of his grace.* D: *fele sike;* Ir, L: *of his grace,* followed by A, G, and H.
- 540     *swithely.* D: *swasht;* G: *swithely.*
- 542     *bi the Rode.* D: *a the grounde;* Ir: *bi the Rode,* followed by A, G, and H for the sake of rhyme.
- 544     *He was swithely smert.* D: *Of he were hanly and smert;* line supplied from L (following G), for the sake of sense.
- 546     *Grissell.* Gawain's horse bears this name (meaning "gray") in no other romance; in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (as in Chrétien and other French romances) Gawain's horse is Gryngole (line 597 and elsewhere).
- 559     *weppatte.* D: *naked;* I emend to Ir's reading (following A, G, and H) for the sake of concordance with the first line of the following stanza.
- 562 ff.   The action of these lines is so compacted that it is hard to follow. With the killing of Gawain's horse and his refusal of another mount, Galeron feels *dvide* — doubt, not fear — about how the combat should properly continue. He *boldely* — vigorously — spurs his horse across the field, so that he can dismount and continue the fight fairly, on foot (lines 566–67); but first he taunts Gawain for his want of action (line 564) in the wake of Grissell's death. A and H take line 564 as spoken by Gawain, not Galeron.
- 565     Other editors place quotation marks at the end of this line, making it part of the direct discourse of the preceding line. As a marker of time on the part of the narrator, the line seems to recall Gawain's mythic associations with the sun god, whereby his strength increased until noon and diminished afterward (see Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* lines 2802–07, and Malory, Works, pp. 1216–17).
- 567     *yare.* D: *share;* Ir, L: *yare,* followed by A, G, and H.
- 576     D omits this line; I follow H in substituting L's line.

### Notes

577 *brouched*. A, G read *brouched*, which A glosses as "pieced" and G glosses as "crouched"; I follow H in my reading of the manuscript.

591 *stright*. D: *mighr*; Ir: *streghar*, followed by A and G; H: *stright*, emended for rhyme.

594-98 D gives the following for these lines:

Then gretes Gaynor, with bothe her gray eue,  
For tho doughts that fight,  
Were manly mached of mighr  
Withoute resor or right,  
As al men sene.

The nonsensical use of rhyming tags and the lack of concatenation with the following stanza indicate the lines are corrupt; A, G, and H emend. I follow G in adopting L for these lines.

595 *Sir Lere and Sir Lake*. A and H follow Ir, where the first name reads *Lore*, no doubt King Lot of Lothian and Orkney, Gawain's father; A and H identify *Lake* as the father of Erec, King Lac. Medieval forms of address almost never make use of the last term (derived from a place or family name) in a knight's title, so that an allusion to Lancelot de Lake or to Arrak Fitz Lake (that is Erec, son of King Lac, line 654) could not be intended here.

600 *wound*. D: *wounded*; I follow A, G, and H for the sake of rhyme.

602 *wound*. D: *wounded*; A, H: *wound*.

603 *the knyght*. D lacks the article, which is supplied from Ir and L (so emended by A, G, and H).

609 *unredely*. I follow H's reading of D.

610 *on his trar*. I retain the reading of D, which makes adequate sense. A, G, and H emend to Ir's *on his face* (T: *fear*). All three editors seem to take this literally as specifying the place where Galfrid attacks Gawain. The immense array of words for "face," "visage," "countenance," "look," "gaze," "glance," and so on, which occurs throughout *Awntyrs*, *Golograv*, and other martial chivalric romances,

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

may indicate that this should be taken as an adverbial phrase of manner: Galeros, wounded and exhausted, makes his last desperate attack "in Gawain's face" — that is, without any care for self-protection, in full view of others and especially of one's adversary, and therefore in the face of ultimate threat. Such a usage resembles phrases appropriated by American English from African-American dialects: "in your face," "in your face disgrace," "get out of my face." As in chivalric romances, such contemporary phrases contain traces of orality and oral contest, and insist that the ultimate point of self-display in an honor society is to command the attention of others. In such situations, success does not depend upon physical victory, for dying gloriously (as Galeros seems about to do) can be a vindication of honor; success instead consists in making a spectacle of honor and prowess and of forcing others — in particular, the adversary — to witness and assent to it, as the court and Gawain do here.

- 613     *a cast of the carhone*. D: *a scat of care*; Ir: *a cast of the carhone*, followed by A, G, and H.

*camif*. I follow H's reading, where A and G give *camif* ("craft," "deceit").

- 618     *bi the coler*. Gawain takes hold of Galeros by his *coler*, the part of his armor that protects his neck and throat (the gorget). The idiomatic use of "collar" as a verb does not seem implied here, and is not recorded in English until the sixteenth century.

- 625     *Than wilfully*. D: *wisly, without rhac*; T: *Than wilfully*, followed by A, G, and H for concatenation.

- 625 ff.     The Queen's plea for mercy, on bended knee before her sovereign, seeking the life of a captive knight, is a stylized scene in chronicle and romance. A notable instance occurs in Froissart, when six citizens of Calais, stripped to their undergarments with nooses around their necks, present themselves to Edward III and offer him the keys to their city. When Edward orders them put to death, "the noble Queen of England, pregnant as she was, humbly threw herself on her knees before the King and said, weeping: 'Ah, my dear lord, since I crossed the sea at great danger to myself, you know that I have never asked a single favour from you. But now I ask you in all humility, in the name of the Son of the Blessed Mary and by the love you bear me, to have mercy on these six men.' The King remained silent for a time, looking at his gentle wife as she knelt in tears before him. His heart was softened . . . , and at last he said: 'My lady, I

### Notes

could wish you were anywhere else but here. Your appeal has so touched me that I cannot refuse it. So, although I do this against my will, here, take them. They are yours to do what you like with" (*Froissart: Chronicles*, trans. Geoffrey Bereson, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p. 109). Similar scenes of queenly intervention occur in Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Wife of Bath's Tale. In the morality play *Pride of Life*, the Queen of Life attempts to warn her mate against deadly arrogance; in the romance *Astelion*, the pregnant Queen kneels and begs mercy for the King's sworn brother, though he strikes her and thereby kills their unborn heir. These poetical and dramatic scenes underscore the conventionality of Froissart's anecdote, discussed by Paul Strohm in "Queens as Intercessors," *Hockom's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 95–119.

- 627 *Roye*. D: *roy*; L, T: *roye*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 634 I follow H's punctuation, which makes *leve* not an adjective ("dear lord"), but a subjunctive verb form ("if you would allow").
- 637 *Here*. D: *ther*; L, T: *here*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 640 *releife*. Galeron here uses a quasi-technical term in giving a quitclaim on Gawain's estates; since he makes it *byfore thiese ryalle* — in the royal presence — it stands as a legally binding agreement. A knight's word delivered in public, oral performance thus becomes the ultimate example and guarantee of his honor.
- 641 *byfore thiese ryalle, resyng*. D: *by ryal reson releife*, I adopt T's reading, following A, G, and H.
- 654 *Eweyne Fitz Uryayn*. D: *Eweyne Fitz Grian*; the other manuscripts contain different variants, and I adapt the spelling "Uryayn" [Urian] from Ir's *Fasaryayn*.
- 654–55 The names of the knights specified here appear muddled because of scribal transmission. Carlisle includes in its roster of the Round Table Syr Eweyne the Uytiryan (line 40 — Ywain fitz Urien) and Syr Mewroke (line 34). Before the final battle with Mordred in the *Alternative Mort Artur*, Arthur arrays his troops so that

*The Awysys off Arthur*

Sir Ewyne, and Sir Errake, and oþere gret lordes  
Desmons the mediswarde menkefull thareafyre,  
With MerraKE and Meneduke, myghty of strenghes

(lines 4075-77).

The group that runs to the lists in *Awysys* clearly seems to be drawn from this passage.

- 655 *Marrake and Moyland*. D: *Sir Drwefat and Moylard*; Ir, L, T mention *Marrake*, and all three garble a second alliterating name (*Melldale*, *Marcaduk*, *Menegalle*). A, G, H emend to *Meneduke* (as found in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*; see previous note). I follow the other editors in substituting *MerraKE* for the non-alliterating *Drwefat*, but retain D's *Moylard* as metrically appropriate (if otherwise unknown).
- 664 ff. Arthur seems here to bestow upon Gawain, in compensation for the territories he is about to restore to Galeron, the lordship of Wales together with a collection of individual lands. Glamorganshire occupies the southeast portion of Wales, with its major towns Cardiff and Swansea on the Bristol Channel. *Breteyne* likely refers to Brittany, an area of northwestern France with strong Celtic links. The other place names cannot be precisely identified; A and H assume they refer to towns in Wales or northern England. *Ulmer Halle* and *Waterforde* might as easily refer to Ireland; the English crown was actively involved in holding and developing its possessions in these two areas of Ireland during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The vagueness and interchangeability of reference to these fringe territories underscores their function in the *Gawain* romances as tokens of Arthur's kingly power; such scenes suggest that the English king can give away to his vassals (and thus retain control of) the entire Celtic world. In granting Gawain *The worship of Wales* Arthur seems close to endowing Gawain with the principality of Wales. From the time of Edward III (fourteenth century, a generation or so before the composition of *Awysys*), the eldest son of the king was created Prince of Wales by the monarch to signify his status as heir to the throne. Given that he has no son (except Mordred), Arthur's bestowal here of *The worship of Wales* upon Gawain seems to hint at the possibility that the King intends his sister's son to be his successor; in any case, the title given here would have special resonance for a medieval audience.
- 666 *ar woldr*. D: *al woldr*; I follow emendation of A, G, and H.

### Notes

- 667 *Gryffones Castelles*. Ir: *klyfne castell*; T: *Gryffones castelle*. I take this as another garbled place name, though (as the scribe of T suggests in his rationalized reading) one might stretch the line to mean "crenulated castles with griffins." The latter symbols are associated with Gawain in romance heraldry; see *Carline*, lines 80 ff. and note, and *Carle*, lines 55 ff. and note.
- 669 *walledr*. D: in Waler; Ir, L, T: *walindr*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 672 *dose*. D: *sighr*. Ir: *dose*; T: *endewe*; A, G: *endowe* (misreading T); H: *dose*, emending spelling.
- 677 *Gawyn*. D: G.; I expand abbreviation, with G.
- 678 ff. Gawain's gift returns to Galeron some of those territories Arthur had bestowed upon Gawain (though not Galloway; compare lines 418, 419 ff. and notes). Except for the names repeated from this earlier passage, none of the place names can be identified with certainty, and equally garbled names appear in the other manuscripts. Though some invite guesses (Loother, the Lowther Hills?; Castle itself), they seem mainly to serve as empty markers of Arthur's power to exercise dominion over border territories; indeed, Galeron seems positioned — as a lord with holdings in both Scotland and England — as a marcher lord, contrasted with resolving differences between emergent national identities.
- 680 There are several erasures and additions to the line in D, and the other manuscripts show more confusion than usual. I follow G in simply retaining D with its inserted corrections.
- 683 *Widshi*. I follow H in supplying this word from Ir as a connective.
- our*. D: *your*; Ir, L: *our*, followed by H.
- thou*. D: *to*; Ir: *thou*, followed by H.
- 684 *make thy*. D: *to make* (corrected in MS); L: *make thy*, followed by H.
- 685 *she*. D: *him*; Ir, L: *she*, followed by H.
- 693 *sownd*. A and G read D as *sownd*; I follow H's equally plausible reading of the MS (here and in line 699) since it seems more appropriate.

*The Awntyrs off Arthur*

- 696      wlonkest. D: *slonkest*; Ir: *wlonkest*, so emended by G and H.
- 703      iaso. D: *is*; Ir, L, T: *into*, followed by A, G, and H.
- 708      beller the barde. D: *bessely the barde*; G: *beller the barde*, followed by H. The ringing of church bells usually signals public celebration, and in particular marks the passage of a soul from Purgatory. St. *Erikenswald* (which, like *Awntyrs*, has connections to the *Trental of St. Gregory*) ends on this same note.
- 709      Ingulwad. D: *Englond*; Ir: *Digulwad*, followed by G and emended for spelling by H.
- 711      hofir. D: *hauxt*; Ir, T: *hofir*, followed by A, G, and H (with modification).
- 714-15     In having these last lines almost precisely repeat the opening lines, *Awntyrs* creates a final stanzaic concatenation that links the whole poem in a circular structure. A number of other alliterative poems, most of them nearly contemporary with *Awntyrs*, employ this structural device; these include *Awowyng*, *Sir Gowain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, and *Patience*. T provides a colophon in couplets following the final line: "This ferly byfelle, full sotheily to sayne, / In Yggilwode Foraste at the Tern Wathclayne." For this location, see line 2 and note.

## *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

### *Introduction*

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain* rivals the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* as the single richest and most impressive romance of arms and battle that survives from late medieval Britain. In its passionate attention to the details and motives of combat and its dedication to the honor of individual knights and the glory of chivalry, *Gologras* offers a vigorous celebration of rule-bound yet unrestrained violence. The poem reads and resonates as a literary counterpart of the lavish ornamentation and conspicuous consumption that mark the chivalry it describes: specialized terms proliferate for knightly livery, armor, swordplay, combat, horsemanship, landscape, and for the coded behaviors that define aristocratic courtesy and honor. This huge and difficult vocabulary, the poem's exceptionally demanding rhyme scheme and alliteration, and the formidable Scots dialect in which it survives (together with the general unavailability of the text) have given *Gawain* and *Gologras* many fewer readers than the energy and excitement of the poem otherwise would claim.

The plot of *Gologras* consists of two distinct episodes, the second almost four times the first in length. The two separate parts work together to produce a unified meaning, though not, as in *Awntyrs*, through a diptych-style, contrastive structure; in *Gologras* the two parts relate almost as orders of architecture, in which the larger structure both repeats and supports the smaller unit. The poem's second episode in this way recapitulates, and greatly elaborates, the pattern of action and meaning in the first part. In view of *Gologras'* density and unfamiliarity, a summary of its action may prove helpful. As in the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, Arthur and his knights undertake an expedition to Italy; in *Gologras*, however, his purpose is pilgrimage rather than conquest, and his ultimate destination is the Holy Land. Just at the point when the supplies and strength of the Arthurian entourage are exhausted, they come upon "ane cleté . . . Wit torris and turatis" (lines 41–42). The location is ostensibly France west of the Rhône, though the descriptions of landscapes and fortifications, here and in the second part, conform strikingly to the border areas between Scotland and England, where the poem originates. Sir Kay (as he does in *Carlife*) attempts simply to expropriate the goods needed by the army, and suffers a humiliating

### *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

thrashing; Gawain then asks courteously for assistance from the unnamed lord, who puts all of his people and possessions at the disposal of the Round Table. Arthur and his knights refresh themselves, offer proper thanks, and then continue on their way (line 221).

En route to Jerusalem, Arthur notes a handsome and well-fortified castle, "the seymliest sicht that ever couth I se" (line 255). The text locates this castle "On the riche river of Rose" (line 1345; see line 310 and note), though again descriptions resonate with northern Britain. Sir Spynagros (who serves as commentator throughout the second episode) explains that the seigneur of this castle, who turns out to be Sir Gologras, owes allegiance to no lord. This news appalls the King, who vows to gain lordship over Gologras at any cost. After completing their pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Arthur and his knights besiege Gologras, and the poem recounts in detail a series of ringing but costly combats, which culminate in a hand-to-hand encounter between Sir Gawain and Sir Gologras. Like Sir Galeron in *Awntyrs*, this opponent nearly prevails through his knightly skill and endurance, but in the end Arthur's nephew triumphs. In defeat, Gologras demands to die honorably by Gawain's hand. At Gawain's urgent beseeching, he finally agrees to keep his life, but on one condition: Gawain must give the appearance of defeat at Gologras' hand, and, at the risk of his life, return with the apparent victor to face Gologras' vassals in the castle. In accord with his own perfect courtesy and his conviction of Gologras' impeccable honor, Gawain agrees. Faced with this extraordinary display of knightly troth, Gologras' people accept fealty to their lord's conqueror, Gawain, and implicitly to their new lord's lord, Arthur. The progress of Gawain, Gologras, and his knights to Arthur's camp at first gives the King a fright, but the poem ends with Gologras pledging his loyalty to the King, and with Arthur in turn courteously releasing his allegiance in the last lines.

The reduplicating plots of Gologras set up an economy of chivalric honor that produces all gains and no losses. Despite Kay's humiliation, Gologras' defeat, and even deaths on both sides during the siege, the honor of all involved (except perhaps for Kay) increases. The reciprocity of honor emerges clearly in the initial episode: first the anonymous knight establishes his rightful lordship within his own domain, as Gawain acknowledges (lines 146–47). Then, by freely and courteously receiving Arthur — returning to him "his awis" (line 153) — he implicitly concedes the King's sovereignty, while he also enlarges his own worship. In such scenes, Gologras presents courtesy as a rich and subtle ritual of cultural communication; self-control operates not as an internal discipline alone, but paradoxically as a spectacle of restraint. As in *Carlisle*, Gawain demonstrates his knightly superiority to Kay by refusing to do, or even claim, all he might, in the presence of an inferior; he makes

### *Introduction*

a show of his physical and moral force not through coercion, but through honorable submission, which directly produces more honor and more submission.

The representation of chivalry in *Gologras* thus makes courtesy an infinitely subtle concoction of repression and assertion. This emerges most explicitly in the "devia" or charade by which Gawain allows Gologras to save face (lines 1090 ff.), putting aside the immediate opportunity to kill his opponent for the chance of a more willing and complete submission by Gologras later. Both knights' show of composure, or even of a passionate insouciance, in the face of deeply felt disappointment or terrible danger, provides an index of their extraordinary honor and courtesy. This comes through as well in Gologras' grim determination that he appear "mery" (lines 769 ff.), whatever anyone thinks. Gologras' resolve recalls Gawain's own remarkable performance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* when, on the last night before his fateful appointment with the Green Knight, he seems to all at Bertilak's castle merrier than ever before. The entrenchment of chivalric values, within art and life equally, is strikingly conveyed by Froissart's anecdote of Edward III asking Sir John Chandos to join the minstrels in singing a dance song just as he was about to join battle with the Spanish at Winchelsea. Such behaviors advertise not the loss of senses or extreme frivolity, but quite the opposite: an unwavering show of disregard of danger, a conspicuous consumption of valuable time, a commitment to the pleasurable and admiring gaze of others. As Froissart says, Edward "was in a gayer mood than he had ever been seen before . . . his knights were cheerful at seeing him so cheerful" (Froissart: *Chronicle*, trans. Geoffrey Brereton [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968], p. 115). Gologras' chivalry thus insists upon both the extraordinary character of such a gesture towards ordinariness, and upon the fact that above all it is a gesture — a social communication from which others may take heart.

In *Gologras*, as at Winchelsea, such flagrant restraint takes its full meaning by being set against the extraordinary violence surrounding it. Where even the show of composure — the refusal of reaction — is a revealing action, a knight is what he does. Accordingly, the narrative gives little space to psychology or internal reflection. Indeed, calculation is, in a chivalric context, a bad thing: Gawain's immediate acceptance of Gologras' unorthodox terms (he pauses just long enough to spell out to the audience precisely how high the stakes are, lines 1103 ff.) enacts his peculiar courtesy, unhesitating and almost reckless. As Arthur later says, with a mix of fatherly worry and knightly exultation, "This is ane soveranfull thing, be Jhesu, think I, / To leif in sic perell, and in sa grete plighe" (lines 1304–05). Through this action, Gawain stands to lose nothing, except his life, and as both title characters have pointed out earlier (lines 808 ff. and 1073 ff.), loving one's life is a major impediment to chivalric renown. What Gawain stands to gain, for himself and for all his companions and opponents, is honor: his risk allows Gologras to save face in the

### *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

immediate situation, before his own vassals, and, what is more, he gives Gologras the chance to reciprocate and so increase his own honor by sparing Gawain in turn when he has the physical force to crush him. Gologras' submission to Gawain, not under constraint on the battlefield, but freely in his own stronghold, repays Gawain's own gracious and unconstrained deference, and foreshadows Gologras' consequent obedience to Gawain's lord, Arthur. Such narrative patterning makes the final ripple in this sequence of reciprocal honor seem inevitable: Arthur freely returns to Gologras his own lordship. This edict, issued in the last stanza of the poem, leaves Gologras outside the Arthurian fellowship, and so creates a failure of inclusion that is unusual in popular romance. Gologras more than compensates for this slight gap in political cohesion through the unrelied masculinity of the poem's world; the almost complete absence of women from the action, and the emphasis on violence and direct confrontation, carry through a process of generalized male identification and bonding that far surpass any overt bonds in allegiance.

In *Gologras* then, if honor and courtesy contain violence, violence no less contains courtesy. Gologras' superb and profoundly disturbing celebration of the mutual implication of courtesy and violence, of the simultaneous containment and production of these apparent opposites within chivalry, stands out, appropriately and most strikingly, at the narrative center of the poem — in the long, gritty, ritualized combat between the title characters (lines 778–1129). The blunt materiality of this diehard performance — the stress and pain endured by the horses, the lavishness of war gear, the bodily hurt the knights expertly wreak on each other, the effort of moving in armor (ever greater as the fight proceeds) — hammers home the prodigal expense of spirit at the heart of chivalry. Only knights with so much to lose, and whose worth and valor depend not just on accepting but on seeking such loss, can make manifest, to the spectators in the poem as to its listeners and readers, at what cost chivalry purchases its glory.

Because honor is constrained in this way, raw violence and risk form the substance of *Gologras* only insofar as they are able to be transformed by chivalric codes and appreciated by an informed audience. Within the poem, this appreciation consists mainly in spectatorship — the expert yet emotionally engaged scrutiny of the action by Arthur and his knights, by Gologras and his vassals and ladies, and, especially by Sir Spynagros. This knight — whose invented name distinctly recalls that of Gologras, and who thus links the two opposing camps — appears in no other Arthurian romance, and seems to have been created expressly to serve as narrator and advisor within *Gologras*. His continual interventions and elucidations of the action underscore the ways in which external appearance, speech events, and social rituals demand interpretation. His running commentary — on political relations, the protocols of combat, the demeanor of knights in battle, the meaning of ringing bells and

### *Introduction*

torchlit processions — has a double effect. It explains particular goings on, but implies as well the necessity everywhere of cultural explication — technical, moral, political — for those within the poem, as well as for its listeners and readers. A typical instance occurs towards the end of the poem, when Spynagros calms the king and his knights by reading the clothing and demeanor of Gologras and his company, as they proceed towards the Artharias camp:

"Yose nahe eamnis arat in rihe robbeg . . .  
Bewix Schir Gologras and he  
Gude conteneance I se."

(lines 1265-69)

This sense of a person's look, dress, or actions as a form of display available at all times to the gaze of others — and thereby the core of identity, and the potential source of shame or honor conferred by others — underlies all the lavish description and versification of *Gologras*.

The two episodes that make up *Gologras* are drawn from a French romance, the *First Continuation* of Chrétien de Troyes' *Percival*. The second of these tells of the siege of Chastel Orgueilleux; Gologras, who appears in no other Arthurian romance, thus possesses what might seem a quasi-allegorical name (akin to Edmund Spenser's Orgoglio), derived from the Castle of Pride. Gologras acts out of an idealized chivalric honor, yet he is hardly an emblem of pride, for he embodies an ethos of knightly action rooted in broad social sympathies and concrete description. Gologras seems to have been written not long before the Scots printers, Andrew Chepman and David Myllar, published the poem at Edinburgh in 1508. It is among the first half dozen books to be issued from the press in Scotland, and is written in a Middle Scots dialect that has much in common with the vocabulary and forms of *Avalryr*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and other northern Middle English alliterative poems. Its thirteen-line stanza form, identical to that of *Avalryr*, is among the most complicated in English: the first nine lines are alliterative long lines, using traditional concatenating patterns of sound and formulaic phrases with a density surpassed by only two or three other Middle English poems. The last four lines of each stanza are short, two-stress lines forming a separate quatrain (a "wheel"), though linked by final rhyme to the ninth line. The rhyme scheme is ababababdddc. The form of *Gologras*, therefore, and its very words, phrases, and formulas, give further expression to the ostentatious display its narrative describes. In all these respects, *Gologras* occupies an extraordinary cultural moment, when oral narrative traditions, the aristocratic shame culture of chivalry, high literary sensibility, the cult of Arthur and his nephew Gawain, and the mass production of print culture come together.

### *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain*

#### *The Text*

Golagros was printed by Chepman and Myllar in 1508; only one copy of this edition remains, in the National Library of Scotland (Advocates Library H.30.a). The text was published again by J. Pinkerton in 1792. In 1827 David Laing created a facsimile of Chepman and Myllar's type, and issued what is thus a type facsimile of the black letter edition; Laing edited and corrected the text, however, so it is by no means identical to Chepman and Myllar. Madden based his edition upon the 1827 type facsimile reprint, not upon the Chepman-Myllar print. The facsimile of Chepman-Myllar edited by Beattie in 1950 makes the original print available to all readers, and I have worked from that. Amours' astonishingly learned and careful Scottish Text Society edition (1897) has been of enormous help in preparing the present edition. In transcribing the print, I have regularized orthography, so that *a/v/j/w* and *i/j* appear according to modern usage; abbreviations have been expanded, numerals spelled out, and modern punctuation and capitalization added. I have also adjusted word breaks to conform with modern usage, both joining and separating forms from the printed text. This policy transforms the characteristic form *owr* (representing a monosyllabic pronunciation of "over," "o'er") to *ovr* (and so *ovram* and other compounds); though this spelling looks a bit odd, I have decided to stay with it, rather than adding another letter (*over*) or going back to the original form, which would appear at least as odd to modern readers.

#### *Select Bibliography*

##### *Manuscript*

No manuscript version survives.

##### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

*The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane.* Edinburgh: W. Chepman and A. Myllar, 8 April 1508.

*Facsimile Edition of Chepman and Myllar, 1508.* Edinburgh: D. Laing, 1827. [This is a version of 76 copies produced from facsimile type; it is not a facsimile of the original Chepman and Myllar print.]

### *Introduction*

- Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.
- Trautman, Moritz, ed. "Golegros and Gawain." *Anglia* 2 (1879), 395-440.
- Amours, F. J. 1897. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.
- Stevenson, George, ed. *The Knightly Tale of Golegros and Gawane*. In *Pieces from the Mekaloch and the Gray MSS. Together with the Chepman and Myllar Prints*. Scottish Text Society, no. 65. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1918. Pp. 67-110.
- Beattie, William, ed. *The Chepman and Myllar Prints: Nine Tracts from the First Scottish Press, Edinburgh 1508: A Facsimile*. Edinburgh: Bibliographical Society. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950. Pp. 7-51.
- Criticism**
- Barron, W. R. J. "Golegros and Gawain: A Creative Reduction." *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society* 26 (1974), 173-85.
- Kerrick, Paul J. *The Relation of Golegros and Gawane to the Old French Perceval*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1931.
- Mathewson, Jeanne T. "Displacement of the Feminine in *Golegros and Gawane* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*." *Arthurian Interpretations* 1.2 (1987), 23-28.

*The Knightly Tale of Golegros and Gawain*

	In the tyme of Arthur, as new men me told,	old journeyed; time; Thracian
	The King tarmit on ane tyde towart Tuskan, Hym to seik ovr the sey, that saiklese wes vald,	seek over the sea; gallant; bold
	The syre that sendis all scill, suthly to sanc;	wholesomness, truly to say
5	With baneris, barounis, and bernis full bald, Biggest of bane and blude bred in Britane.	banner; baron; fighting men; bold bone; blood
	Tha walit out werryours with wapenis to wald, The gayest grumys on grund, with goir that myght gane; <sup>1</sup>	They chose warlike; weapons; wild
	Dukis and digae lordis, douchty and deir,	Dukes; worthy; bold and commanding
10	Sembilit to his summouse, Renlis of grete rescouse,	Assimilated; summons
	Casty kingis with crowne Of gold that wes clair.	Nobles Handsome; crown; bright
	Thus the Royale can remove, with his Round Tabell,	King did set out
15	Of all riches maist rike, in riall array. Wes never fundun on fold, but fespeing or fabill, <sup>2</sup>	subtil most kindly; royal
	Anc farayr floore on ane feild of fresch men, in fay, <sup>3</sup>	
	Parand on their stedis, stout men and stabill,	Traveling monk; unswerving
	Mony sterne ovr the streit steris on stray.	Many a bold one on the way starts out
20	Their baneris schane with the bone, of silver and sabill, And uthir glamyrt as gold and gowlis so gay:	banner shone; sun; sabre
	Of silver and saphir schirly tha schane;	other (gray) glimmered; gaily (i.e., red)
	Ane fair battell on breid	sapphire (i.e., blue) brightly
	Merkis ovr anc fair meid;	meadow in breadth
25	With spurris spedely tha speid, Ovr fellis, in fane.	Marched over; field
		quickly; moved
		Over moon, with joy

<sup>1</sup> The most splendid warriors on earth, with gear who might go

<sup>2</sup> Was never known in the world, but in make-believe or story

<sup>3</sup> A fair camp [of warriors] on any field of hardy men, in fane

*The Knightly Tale of Gologrus and Gwain*

	The King faris with his folk, o'er firthis and fells, Feill dais or he land of flynd or of fyre; Bot deip dais bedene, doansis and dellis. <sup>1</sup>	travel; force; moon Many days before he came upon fire
30	Mountains and marshes, with moey rank myre, Birkin bewis about, boggis and wellis, Withoutis beilding of blis, of barn or of byre; Bot torris and tene wais, teirfull quha tellis. <sup>2</sup>	mountain; peat bog Birch trees; swamp and streams building; comfort; barn; shed
35	Tuglit and travalit thus trew men can tyne, <sup>3</sup> Sa wundir wait wes the way, wit ye but wene; And all thair vittalis war gone, That they weildit in wone;	frustratingly hard was; know; without doubt supplies carried at once
	Resset couth thair find none That sold thair bate bone.	Welcome could should; soft-drying le
40	As thay walkit be the syde of ane fair well, Throu the schynging of the son ane cieté tha se, With torris and turatis, teirfull to tell, Bigly batolit about with wallis sa he.	by spring shining sun; walled city; see tower; towers;吐鲁番 so tell [July]
45	The yetts war closely keptit with ane castell; Myght nose fang it with force, bot fossilis to be. Than carpit King Arthur, kene and crsell: "I rede we send furth ane scynd to yonc cieté,	Greatly fortified; so [very] high gates were fully guarded by nose; except birds that fly
	And ask leif at the lord yonc landis suld leid, <sup>4</sup> That we myght entir in his toane, For his hie renoune,	advise; a messenger; city
50	To by us vittale bounce, For money to meid."	manor high buy provisions right away as compensation
	Schir Kay carpit to the King, courtes and cleir: "Grant me, lord, on yonc gait graithly to gay;	Sir; spoke; courteously way quickly to go
55	And I sail boidword, but afraid, bring to you heir, Gif he be freik on the fold, your freynd or your fay." <sup>5</sup>	shall a message; just wait; here Whatever person he be on earth; for

<sup>1</sup> *Bot deip vallys continuallly, splashes and [wooded] water*

<sup>2</sup> *[There was nothing] but mounds and grievous ways, unknown [to] who[ever] wills [about it]*

<sup>3</sup> *Dragged about and travel-worn that true men did become tired*

<sup>4</sup> *And [have the messenger] ask leif of the lord [who] those lands ha[ve] governance over (i.e., who governs there)*

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	"Sen thi will is to wend, wy, now in weir, Luke that wisly thow wirk, Criste were the fra wa?"	Since go, man; consciously believe; keep you from war
60	The berne bounit to the bargh with ase blith cheir, Fand the yettis enclosit, and thrang in full thra. His hors he tyt to ase ure, treuly that tyde; Sync hynt to ase hie hall.	warrior advancement; in good spirit gates went in boldly and time
	That wes astalit with pall; Weill wrought wes the wall, And payntit with pride.	Afterwards [he] went to a tall building set out with rich cloth beautifully decorated splendidly
65		
	The syluar deir of the deise daymely wes dent With the doughtyest in thair dais dyatis couth deile; <sup>1</sup>	canopy rich; dais gracefully was adorned
70	Bright letters of gold blith unto blear, Makand mesclouane qaha maist of manhede couth mele. <sup>2</sup>	delightful as the glance
	He saw nane levand leid upone loft leis, <sup>3</sup>	believe; much
	Nouthir leid na lad, leif ye the leis.	
75	The reek rakin in the saill, riale and gent, That wondir wisly wes wrought with woarchip and wele. <sup>4</sup>	warrior moved ahead; hall, royal and lavish
	The berne besely and base blenkit hym about;	warrior amazingly and quickly glanced
80	He saw thros ase entred Charcole in ase chymed;	doorway
	Ase bright fyre couth be se	
	Birmand full stont.	Burning
85	Ase daergh braydit about, besily and base, Small birdis on broche be ase bright fyre.	dwarf hunted; deftly skewer by
	Schir Kay ruschtit to the roist, and refit fra the swane, Lightly caught, throu lust, the lym fra the lyne. <sup>5</sup>	root and wrynd [hi]; serve
	To feid hym of that lyne fude the freik wes full fane.	fed himself; food; more; eager
	Than dynnyt the daergh, in angir and yre,	clamored the dwarf
90	With taris, quhil the rude hall reedit agane.	more while; great; resounded back

<sup>1</sup> With [images off the] mostel heroes who dealt blow in their days

<sup>2</sup> Making mention of who, greatest in their manhood, could fight

<sup>3</sup> He saw no living person up above [on the dais] seated

<sup>4</sup> That with wondrous subtlety was decorated, with grandeur and riches

<sup>5</sup> Quickly snatched because of hunger the drumstick from the body

*The Knightly Tale of Gologrus and Gawain*

	With that come girdand in greif are wondir gym sise;	bounding in anger; fierce and
	With stout contenance and stare he stude thame beforene,	frivous
	With vesage buffy and lang,	face; full
	Body stalwart and strang;	
90	That sege wald sit with none wrang	warrior would suffer
	Of berne that wes borne.	From [any] person
	The knyght carpit to Schir Kay, cruel and lone:	spoke out
	"Me think thou fedis the unfair, freik, be my day!	feel yourself wrongfully man
	Suppose thi bryny be bright, an bachelier said ben,	Even if; amay knight's should be
95	Yhit ar thi latus unfulham and ladlike, I say.	Not; manners offensive and ignoble; declare
	Quhy has thou marrit my man, with maistri to meese?" <sup>1</sup>	
	Bot thou mead hym that myys, be Mary, mylde may,	
	Thow salt rew in thi ruse, wit thou but wene.	
	Or thou wead of this wane wemeles away!"	Before; depart; cast unharmed
100	Schir Kay wes haisty and hate, and of anc hie will;	hoy(hasted); strong will
	Spedely to hym spak:	Directly
	"Schort amendis will I mak;	
	Thi schore compt I nocht ane cakk,	dear(cousin) cake
	Traist wele thair till."	That well shew
105	Thairwith the grame, in his grief, leit gird to Schir Kay,	lost; anger, did approach
	Fellit the freke with his fist flat in the flure.	on the floor
	He wes sa astonayt with the strake, in stede quhare he lay	astonished; stroke; spot where
	Sook still as ane stane, the sterne wes sa stare!	Stock-still; stone; angry (bold); so frivous
	The freke na forthir he faris, bot foundis away.	warrior; goes, but aside
110	The nothir drew hym on dreigh in deere to the dure. <sup>2</sup>	
	Hyit hym hard throu the hall to his haiknay,	Hammered him fast; haikney (horse)
	And sped hym on spedely on the spare mare.	to the barren mare
	The reak restles he raid to Arthour the King,	warrior breathing; ride
	Said: "Lord, wendis on your way,	go
115	Yone berne rykis yow with nay;	Right rebuff

<sup>1</sup> Lines 96-98: Why have you hurt my man, trying to assert your superiority? / Unless you make amends to him for that wrong, by Mary (the) frivous virgin, / You shall give (not) for your honor, understand (know you) without doubt.

<sup>2</sup> The other (i.e., Kay) made his way at a distance stealthily toward the door

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	To peise hym furthir to pray, It helpis na thing."	To attempt; to bewitch gracious irresistible by nature
120	Than spak Schir Gawayne the gay, gracious and gode: "Schir, ye know that Schir Kay is crabbit of kynde; I rede ye mak furth ane man, mekar of made, <sup>1</sup> That will with fairses fraist frendship to fynd. Your folk at febill and faynt for falt of thair fede; Sum better boordword to abide, undir wod lynd."	fairses attempt; to seek (out) people (i.e., army); lack of food message to await; underwood ask you this mission; holy Cross unshakable a person's anger; quick gode; before made for gate were flung wide [open] did quickly
125	"Schir Gawayne, graith ye that gait, for the gode Rude! Is name sa bowsum ane berne, brith for to bynd." The heyd knight at his haist held to the tounse. The yentis wappit war wyde; The knyght can raithly in ryde, Reynit his pallayn of prude,	Reined; handsome Where; alighted
130	Quhen he wes lightit doane.	
135	Schir Gawayne gais furth the gait, that graithit wes gay. <sup>2</sup> The quhilke that held to the hall, heydly to se; Than wes the syre in the saill, with renkis of array, And blith birdis hym about, that bright wes of hie.	which; led; pleasing Lord; hall; warrior in order pleasant woman; countenance
140	Wourthy Schir Gawayne went on his way. Sobirly the soverane salut has he: "I am send to your self, ane charge for to say, Fro cumly Arthur, the King, cortesse and fire; Quhilke prayns for his sailk and your gentrice, That he might cum this toun till	Polyely; saluted (i.e., greeted) message courteous Who; sake; country into
145	To by vitiale at will. Alic deir as segis will sell, Payand the price."	purchase supplies <i>As dear as people</i> Paying
	Than said the syre of the saill and the soverane: "I will na vitiale be sauld your senyeour until." "That is at your aunc will," said wourthy Gawayne;	hall will (allow); lord own

<sup>1</sup> I advise [that] you send forth some man, more defensiall (mild) in demeanour

<sup>2</sup> Sir Gawayne goes on the path, who dressed was handisomely

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	"To mak you lord of your aune, me think it grete skill."	as at; over; quite reasonable
	Than right godly that grome answerit agame:	lord answered in return
	"Qushy I tell the this taill, tak test now thair till: <sup>1</sup>	
150	Pase on thi purpos furth to the plane.	Continue; mission
	For all the wyis I weild ar at his aune will,	people I rule; (i.e., Arthur's) own
	How to hage and to leynd, and in my land lest.	judge; linger; remain
	Gif I sauld hym his awin,	(if I sold)
	It war wrang to be knowin; <sup>2</sup>	
155	Than war I woorthy to be drawin	drawn (i.e., punished for treason)
	Baldly on bent.	Obedy on ground (i.e., among people)
	"There come ase laithles leid air to this place,	discourteous "boy" (i.e., Kay) earlier
	With ase girdill ovrgilt, and uthir light gese;	glided-over; rifling gear
	It kythit be his cognisance ase knight that he wes,	appeared by his heraldic dress
160	Bot he wes ladlike of laidis, and light of his fere.	gracious; manners; silly; behavior
	The verray cause of his come I knew nocht the case,	actual; visit; circumstances
	Bot wondirly wraithly he wroght, and all as of were.	Accord he acted; was
	Yit wait I nocht quhat he is, be Goddis grete gracie!	Not know
	Bot gif it happenis that he be ase knyght of yoursis here,	But if
165	Has done my lord to displeise, that I hym said ryght, <sup>3</sup>	On his majesty offended
	And his presence plane.	self
	I say yow in certane,	shall be compensated
	He salbe set agane,	
	As I am trew knyght!"	
170	Schir Gawayne gettis his leif, and grathis to his steid,	abusing his horse; goes; need
	And broght to the basuld King boidword of Mys:	bold; manage
	"Weill gretis yow, Lord, yone lusty in leid,	you powerful (one) with his people
	And says hym likis in land your langour to lie;	it pleases him; distress or losses
	All the wyis and weildis he weildis in theid	subject; possess in his land
175	Sall halely be at your will, all that is his."	Shall wholly
	Than he merkit with myrrh ovr ase grene meid	marched; over; meadow
	With all the best, to the bargh, of lordis, I wis.	etc.; surely

<sup>1</sup> Why I tell you this tale, take heed now thame (i.e., the reason I spoke to you in this manner I will now explain.)

<sup>2</sup> It would be wrong (for it) to be known (i.e., it would be a minded that would cause great shame.)

<sup>3</sup> And if what I said plainly ar him has made my lord (arbitrary) displeased

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gwain*

	The knight keptit the King, cumly and cleir, With lordis and ladyis of estate,	met; comely and fresh
180	Met hym furth on the gate, Sync take him in at yore With ase blith cheir.	on the way Afterwards; the poor cheerful regard
	He had that heyd to ase hall, hichly on hight, <sup>1</sup> With dukis and digne lordis, doughty in deid.	worthy; deed
185	"Ye ar welcum, comly King," said the kene knyght, "Ay, qahil you likis and list to luge in this steid. Heir I mak yow of myne maister of myght, Of all the wyis and welth I weild in this steid. Thair is na ridand roy, be resoun and right, Sa deir welcam this day, douteles but dreid.	powerful
	I am your cosing of kyn, I mak to yow knowis; This kyth and this castell, Firth, forest, and fell, Ay, qahill yow likis to dwell, Resave as your awin.	Always while; wish to judge; land Here; in my domain sovereign complete people; arbitrary doughty prince without any doubt cousin (i.e., relation) by birth country Wood; meadow while Reserve
190	"I may refresh yow with folk, to feght gif you nedis, With threty thousand told, and traistfully tight, Of wise, warthy, and wight, in their were wodis, Bath with biray and brand to strenth yow ful stright, <sup>2</sup> Weill stoffit in steill, on thair stout stedis."	refresh (i.e., provide); to fight full; bold; reliably equipped powerful; war gear
195	Than said King Arthur hymself, seymly be sight: "Sic frenschip I hold fair, that forsis thair dedis; Thi kyndnes salbe quyt, as I am trew knyght." Than they buskit to the bynke, beirnis of the best. The King crownit with gold, Dukis deir to behold, Allys the barrest bold	dressed out in and to sight Such; And; that shows forth Kindness shall be required moved off; bench, warhorse worthy In all ways the barrest (powerful Knight)
200	Gladit his gest.	Welcome

<sup>1</sup> Mr (the Lord) had that fair man (Arthur) [escorted] to a hall, [and round] above on a high [dais]

<sup>2</sup> Both with armor and sword to support you completely

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 230 | <p>Thair myght service be seene, with segis in taill,<br/>         Thought all sekought war soght fra the son to the see.<sup>1</sup><br/>         Wynis went within that wane, maist wortly to vaill,<br/>         In cospis of clair gold, brichest of blee.</p> | Aospitality: welcome in hall   |
| 235 | <p>It was fall teir for to tell trealy in taill<br/>         The seir coursis that war set in that semblee.<br/>         The meriest war menekit on mese, at the mail,<br/>         With menstrualis myrrhfully makand chame glee.</p>                             | Wines were passed; castle; enjoy<br>cups; brightness of surface<br>aniseed; ale  |
| 240 | <p>Thus they solasit thame selvyn, sathly to say,<br/>         Al thay four daies to end;<br/>         The King thankit the heyd,<br/>         Sync take his leve for to wend,</p>   | many courses; company<br>honored or dinner during the meal<br>minstrelsy; making [for] them<br>enjoyed; truly<br>those four days in full<br>handsome [lord]<br>Then; or go |
| 245 | <p>And went on his way.</p>  |  |
| 250 | <p>Thus refreschit be his folk in grete fusoun,<br/>         Withoutin wanting in wall, wastell or wyne.<br/>         Thay tursit up tentis and turnit of town,<br/>         The Roy with his Round Tabell, richest of ryne.</p>                                   | abundance  |
| 255 | <p>Thay drive on the da deir be dallis and down,<br/>         And of the nobilitee bename, noumerit of synce.<br/>         Quhen it drew to the dark nyght, and the day yeld down,<br/>         Thay plantit down pavillonis, proudly fra thine.</p>               | lack of choice items [off] bread or wine<br>packed; departed from<br>King: lord<br>pursue the deer deer by date<br>(had in) number nine                                    |
| 260 | <p>Thus journait gentilly thy chevalrouse knichtis,<br/>         It handly ilk day,<br/>         Throu mory fer costray,<br/>         Over the montains gay,</p>   | Where; dark; were<br>pavillon; thence<br>journeyed; these<br>Continually each<br>for   |
| 265 | <p>Holtis and hills.</p>   | Wood   |
| 270 | <p>Thay passit in thare pilgrimage, the proudest in pall,<br/>         The prince provit in prese, that prise wes and deir.<br/>         Sync war thay war of ane wane, weocht with ane wal,<br/>         Reicrdit on ane riche roche, beside ane riveir,</p>      | passed over; robes<br>proven in battle; renowned   |
| 275 | <p>With doubill dykis bedene drawin ovr all;</p>   | These were; aware; building fortified  |
| 280 | <p>Micht nane thame note with envy, nor nygh thame to neir.<sup>2</sup></p>  | Envied; magnificence<br>meet together all  |

<sup>1</sup> Through all variety [of food] was sought from the sun to the sea

<sup>2</sup> No one might get power over them through malice, nor approach too near to them

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	The land wes likand in large and lufsum to call, Propir schene schane the soe, seymly and feir.	plasing in esone; handsome to describe (With) special splendor shone the sun
	The King stude vesland the wall, maist vallycand to se:	viewing valiant
	On that river he saw	
245	Cumly towris to knowe;	behold
	The Roy eckianit on raw	counted on now
	Thretty and thare.	
	Apose that riche river, randonit fall evin	arranged symmetrically
	The sidewallin war set, sad to the see;	firm against the sea
250	Scippis saland thame by, sexty and sevyn.	(There were) ships sailing
	To send, quhen thameself list, in seir contré, <sup>1</sup>	(Such) that made
	That al that that ar wrocht undir the hic hevin.	present; so time or ever
	Micht nocht warne thame ar wil to ische nor entz.	Then spoke out; voice
	Than carpit the cumly King, with ane lowd stevin:	most beautiful
255	"Yone is the seymlynt sicht that ever coath I se.	arm
	Gif thair be ony keyne krycht that can tell it,	Who
	Quha is lord of yone land,	Vigorous and handsome
	Lusty and likand,	
	Or quham of is he haldand,	Or from whom is he holding this lordship?
260	Fayne wald I wit."	Happily; know
	Than Schir Spynagrose with speche spak to the King:	
	"Yone lord haldin of name leid, that yone land zw,	hold (power) through no lord; govern
	Bot everlasting but legiance, to his leving. <sup>2</sup>	
	As his eldaris has done, enduring his daw,"	elders (i.e., ancestors); to his day
265	"Hevinly God!" said the heynd, "how happyngis this thing?"	handsome (King)
	Herd thair ever oey sage sa selcouth ane saw!	any wise (person); so marvelous a saying
	Sal never myne hart be in saill na in liking.	Awful; happiness
	Bot gif I lossing my life, or be laid law,	Online; lose; low
	Be the pilgrimage compleit I pas for saull prouw, <sup>3</sup>	
270	Bot dede be my destenyng,	Unless death; destiny
	He saill at my agane cumyng	return

<sup>1</sup> [Available] for dispatch, when them (it) pleased, into diverse countries

<sup>2</sup> Bot (holds) if forever without (owing) service (to a superior lord), until his death

<sup>3</sup> When the pilgrimage is completed (which) I pass (i.e., undertake) for my soul's welfare

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Mak homage and obisning, I mak myne avow!"	homage and obisning I mak myne avow!"
275	"At Lord, sparis of sic specie, qhill ye speir more, For abandonit will be nocht be to berne that is borne. Or he be stocaycht with streath, yone sterne for to schore, <sup>1</sup> Mony ledis salbe losait, and liffis forlorne. Spekis na succedry, for Goddis sone deir! Yone knicht to scar with skaith, ye chaip nocht but scorne. <sup>2</sup>	cour from neck until injury abjugated; knight men shall be lost; forsaken Speak no false pride Yone knicht to scar with skaith, ye chaip nocht but scorne.
280	It is full fair for to be fellow and feir To the best that has bese brevit you beforene. The myghty king of Massidone, wourthiest but wene, <sup>3</sup> Thair gat he nane homage, For all his hie parage, 285 Of lord of yone lynage,	fellow (i.e., equal) and companion praised gave High rank lineage since
290	Nor never none sene.  "The wy that wendis for to were quhen he wenys best, All his wile in this world, with welthis I wyls, Yit soll be light as leif of the lynd leif, <sup>4</sup> That welteris down with the wynd, sa waverand it is.	person; (monkey) wile; know better power; resources indeed light; as leaves flattery; as uneven
295	Your myght and your majesté mesure bat myns." "In faith," said the cumly King, "trou ye full traist, My hecht soll haldin be, for baill or for blis: Sall never my likame be laid unlaissit to sleep, Qhill I have gart yone berne bow, As I have maid myne avow —	majesty add up only to trouble believe you sincerely promise; wile body unloosed (i.e., without armor) Dish; made you knight how down
	Or ellis mony wedow Ful wraithly sal weip."	a widow wretchedly shall weep

<sup>1</sup> Before he [may] be constrained by force, as concerns thenceforth yonder knicht (warrior)

<sup>2</sup> If you threaten yonder knicht with harm, you will not escape without shame

<sup>3</sup> The powerful king of Macedonia (i.e., Alexander the Great), the most worshipful without doubt

<sup>4</sup> Shall nevertheless be as light (i.e., ineffectual) as the least leaf of the linden tree

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Thair wes na man that durst mei to the King	speak
300	Qahan thai saw that mighty na movit in his mude.	powerful (man); moved
	The Roy rial raid withoutin resting,	royal route
	And socht to the cleft of Criste, ovr the salt flode.	sought for; flood (i.e., sea)
	With mekil honour in erd he maid his offering.	mucky earth
	Syne buskit hame the samyne way that he before yude.	Then hastened home; went
305	Thayre wes na spurris to spair, spedely thai spring.	spur to spur; naked (off)
	Thai brochit bloakis to thair sidis brist of rede blade.	spurred horse all bare; blood
	Thus the Roy and his rost resiles thai raid	
	Ithandly ilk day,	deadly each
	Ovr the montains gay.	
310	To Rone take the reddy way,	Jherf Rhone (valley)
	Withoutin mare abaid.	more delay
	Thai plantit down ane pallycoun, upone ane plane leie,	set out; pavilion; plain sheltered
	Of pall and of pillow that proudly wes pictit,	rich cloth; fair; constructed
	With rapis of rede gold, riale to see,	wealth
315	And grete ensayes of the samyne, semly by sicht;	heraldic bearings; sume (material)
	Bordouris about, that bright war of ble,	bright; appearance
	Betin with beint gold, barely and bright;	brates; burnished gold; noble
	Freyces of fyne silk, frest ful fre	fringes; crisscrossed
	With deir dyamondis bedene, that daymely wes dicht. <sup>1</sup>	
320	The King cumly in kith, coverit with crouse,	with his household
	Cailit knichtis sa kene,	
	Dukis douchty bedene:	together
	"I rede we cast us betweene,	advise we take counsel
	How best is to done."	do
325	Than spak ane wight werious, wourthy and wise:	powerful
	"I rede ane sayndis man ye send to yone seaycoun,	messenger; lord
	Of the prodest in pall, and haldin of prise, <sup>2</sup>	valiant and most
	Wise, valyeing, and moost of valour.	if repeat
	Of yone douchty in deid wil do your devise,	
330	Be house at your bidding in burgh and in boar,	compliant; city; private room

<sup>1</sup> with costly diamonds grouped together, that nobly were crafted

<sup>2</sup> (One) of the most impressive in appearance, and (someone) held in highest esteem

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Resave him reverendly, as reson in lyis;	Receive; Honourably; as lies within reason
	.....	
	And gif he nykis you with nay, yow worthis on neid	acuse you [ik] becomes you
	For to assege yone castel	assault
	With cast men and cruel,	bold; fierce
335	Durandly for to deel	Dreadly; fight
	Ever qahill ye speid."	flourish
	Than Shir Gawane the gay, grete of dege,	king
	And Shir Lancelot de Lake, without lesing.	courteous; dispatched
	And avenand Schir Ewin, thai ordanit that thre	fortunate; instructed
340	To the schoee chiltane, chargit fra the Kyng.	on earth [i.e., right here]
	Spynagros than spekis, said, "Lordings in le,	advise; attend
	I rede ye tent treuly to my teching,	bold warrior
	For I know yone basild berne better than ye,	bring (i.e., income)
	His land, and his lordship, and his levying.	
345	And ye ar thre in this thede, thrivand off in thrang.	Though; company; stumbling combat
	War al your strenthis in ane,	Woe; (combined) into one
	In his griffin and ye gane,	if you go
	He wald ovrum yow likane.	each one
	Yone sterne is sa strang.	
350	"And he is maid on mold meik as ane child,	made (i.e., conduct himself) on earth
	Blith and bousam that berne as byd in her bout,	gracious; bride in her own room
	Fayr of fell and of face as flour unfill,	skin; unspoiled
	Wondir stalwart and strang to strive in ane stour.	bold
	Thairfore meichly with mouth mel to that myld,	speak
355	And mak him na manusoe, bot al mesoure. <sup>1</sup>	
	Thus with trewy ye cast yow trew undre tyld,	seek; to obtain
	And faynd his friendship to fang with fyne favour.	pleasing
	It hynderis never for to be heydly of speche;	
	He is ane lord riale,	
360	Ane seymly soverane in sale,	full

<sup>1</sup> Lines 355-56: *And make no threat against him, but (show) complete moderation. / That with diplomacy (i.e., courtesy) (should) you act (oward) that true [knight] in his castle (i.e., under his protection).*

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Ane wourthy wy for to wale, Thros all this world reche."	person to exist world magnificence
	"Thi coonsale is comensable, kynd and courtese;	appropriate
	Forthi us likis thi lair listis and leir." <sup>1</sup>	
365	Thi wytis, wourthy in weid, wend on their ways, And caryis to the castell, curay and cleir; Sent ane sayed to the soverane sone, and hym sais, [They] messenger; right away; [to] him There knichtis fra court cum thay weit.	These men; dress, move go [off] to were
	Than the ledas belife the lokkis unlaisis;	servants quickly the locks unlatch
370	On fate freshly that frekis foundis but fair; The renkis raithly can rakk into the round hald. Thair met thame at the estré	foot; men proceed without doubt men directly do advance; hold (i.e., castle)
	Ladys likand to se,	ladies pleasing to see
	Thretty knichtis and thee,	
375	That blith war and bald.	
	Thi war courtes and coath thair knyghted to lyth, Athis athis wele geet in gretly degré;	courteous and polished; to display Each other; saluted
	Thi bowit to the bernys, that bright war and blith, Fair in armys to fang, of figure sa fire.	bowed (i.e., showed deference) embroidered; in appearance so noble
380	Syne thay sought to the chamer, swiftly and swith, The gait to the grete lord semely to se, And salast the soverane sone, in ase sitth, Courtesly inclinand, and kneeland on kne.	Then; sought out the chamber; briskly go; immediately, full or one time bowing
	Ane blithar wes never borne of base nor of blude;	A more noble [knight]; born
385	All thre in certane Salast the soverane, And he inclynand aganc, Hades, but hode.	Gives acknowledging in return Hades, but [for] his hand
	Than Schir Gawayne the gry, gode and gracie,	
390	That ever wes belidit in blis, and boundé embrasit, Joly and gentill, and full chevalirus, That never poyst of his pris; wes fundis defaist,	anchored; [with] largesse filled desire; honor was found deficient

<sup>1</sup> Therefore it pleases us [to] kiss and kiss [from] your love

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Egir and erand, and ryght armes, Illuminat with lawte, and with hufe lasit, Mells of the message to Schir Golagras.	Eager and lively; admiring Radiant with loyalty; love bound up Speaks
395	Before the riale on raw the renk wes nocht mait; With anc clese contencance, camly to know, Said: "Our soverane, Arthour, Gretis the with honour, 400 Has maid us thre as mediatour, His message to schaw,	in his place the knight; discomposed a candid look; behold show (i.e., make known)
	"He is the nailliest Roy, neveread and rike, Of all the rentaris to ryme or rekin on raw. There is na leid on life of lordship hym lik, 405 Na name sa doughty of deid, indaring his daw. Mony burgh, mony boar, mony big bke, Mony kynrik to his clame, camly to know, Masers full menskfull, with mony deip dike; Selcouth war the sevint part to say at saw. 410 Thare anerdis to our Nobill, to note quhen hym nedis, <sup>1</sup>	Kingliest King powerful lords to make nose of or reckon in order laid during his day (i.e., life) Many [a] city dwelling swarm of men Kingdom; count Majors; noble; deep mouse Wondrous were the seventh; in words
	Twelf crownit kingis in scir, With all their strang poweir, And mony wight weryer, Worthy in wedis.	many [a] powerful warrior gear
415	"It has bene tauld hym with tong, trow ye full traist, Your dedit, your dignite and your doughtynes, Brevii throu boontie for anc of the best That now is namyt neir of all nobilnes, <sup>2</sup> Sa wylde quahre wourscip walkis be west.	emper
	Renowned for largess; one	
420	Our seymly Soverane hymself, foessuth, will nocht cese Qschill be have frely fangit your frendship to fest; Gif pament or praiser might mak that purchese, For na liegele my Lord nocht wil he never let,	end; cease Until; accepted; in hand If gift or proper; agreement riches; in [up]

<sup>1</sup> Lines 418-19: There answer to our Lord, for service whom he sends [them]. / Twelf crowned kings together

<sup>2</sup> Lines 418-19: Who now is regaud as the virtuously the paragon of all nobility / So widely (i.e., in every place) where honor walks by the west (i.e., where honor spreads widely among the people).

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Na for na riches to rige. <sup>1</sup>		
425	I mak you na lesing, It war his maist yarstyng Your grant for to get."	to promising (foolish) submission to receive	
	Than said the syre of the sail, with sad semblant:	lord of the hall with audience look	
	"I thank your gracious grete lord and his gode wit;		
430	Had ever leid of this land, that had bene levand, Maid ony feare before, freik, to fulfill, I said sickirly myself be consonant, And seik to your soverane, seynly on tyll.	Lord; bring Made any fealty; sir purely; agreeable on throne	
	Sen hail our doughty elderis has bese endurand, <sup>2</sup>		
435	Thrivandy in this thede, anchargit as thril, If I, for obeisance or boist, to bondage me bynde, I war woeorthy to be	[Then] I were	
	Hingit heigh on ase tre,	Hanged	
	That ilk creature might se,	each	
440	To waif with the wynd.	wave	
	"Bot savand my senyours fra subjection, And my lordscip unlastryt, withoutin legiance, All that I can to yone King, curvy with croun, I sall preif all my pane to do hym plesance,	keeping [as] my accouenant unimpeded; service	
445	Baith with body and beild, bowsen and boun, Hym to mensk on mold, withoutin mansance. Bot nowthir for his senyours, nor for his summons, Na for deid of na dede, na for na distance,	prove (take) every pain possession friendly and eager to honor; hostility neither; lordship; command	
	I will nocht bow me ase bak for berne that is borne.	no strife	
450	Quhill I may my wit wald, I think my fredome to hold, As my eldairis of ald Has done me beforese."	bow my back one time wield (i.e., possess) instand my [own] lordship	

<sup>1</sup> Not for any richer (i.e., thing) to reign (i.e., within his power).

<sup>2</sup> Lines 434-36: Since (i.e., because) [as] free [from] our ancestors have always lived, / Prosperously among this people, not bound as vassal [to anyone]. / Were I through [either] submissiveness or threat, in homage [to another] to/ bind (i.e., obligate) myself.

*The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gwain*

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 455 | <p>Thair lufy ledis at that lord thair levin has laught;<br/>         Bounit to the bauld King, and boidword him broght.</p>  | <p>These; their lemons have taken<br/> <i>Wise; message</i></p>                         |
|     | <p>Than thair schape for to assego segis unsought,<br/>         Ay the manlyest on mord, that maid of myght nocht.</p>        | <p><i>prepared to assault; warrior unyielding</i></p>                                   |
|     | <p>Thair wes restling and reling bot rest that taught.<br/>         Mony sege ovr the soy to the cité socht;</p>              | <p><i>soul and confusion without; went on</i><br/> <i>fighter; made way</i></p>         |
| 460 | <p>Schipmen ovr the streme thair stithil full straugh,<br/>         With alkin wappyns, I wys, that wes for were wrought.</p> | <p><i>Assent straightforward</i><br/> <i>all kinds of weapons; war</i></p>              |
|     | <p>Thair bend bows of bras braithly within;<br/>         Pellokis paishand to passe,</p>                                      | <p><i>fiercely</i></p>  |
|     | <p>Gapand ganrys of brane,<br/>         Grundin ganyels thair wase,</p>   | <p><i>Cannons heavy to [set in] place</i><br/> <i>Huge</i></p>                          |
| 465 | <p>That maid ful gret dyn.</p>  | <p><i>Sharpened darts there were</i><br/> <i>darts</i></p>                              |
|     | <p>Thair wes blawing of bentys, braging and beir;<br/>         Bretynit doune braid wod, maid bewis full hair,</p>            | <p><i>muskets, racket and blare</i><br/> <i>Chopped; broad branches; bought</i></p>     |
| 470 | <p>Wrightis weiterand doune treis, wit ye but weir,<br/>         Ordanit hurdis fal hic in holtis sa haire,</p>               | <p><i>Carpenters hacking without doubt</i><br/> <i>Set up hurdles; woods to bar</i></p> |
|     | <p>To gar the gayest on grand grayne undir geir.<br/>         For to greif thair gomys, gramest that wer,</p>                 | <p><i>To cause; toy grown in their gear</i><br/> <i>enemies; most hostile</i></p>       |
|     | <p>Thus thair schape for ase salt, ilk sege seir;<br/>         Ilka soverane his emseyne shewin has thair;</p>                | <p><i>prepared; assault; each and every warrior</i></p>                                 |
| 475 | <p>Ferly fayr wes the feild, fickerit and faw<br/>         With gold and goulis in greyne.</p>                                | <p><i>commander his heraldic signs displayed</i></p>                                    |
|     | <p>Schynand scheirly and scheyne;</p>   | <p><i>Marvellously sparkling and dappled</i></p>  |
|     | <p>The sone, as cristall sa cleyne,<br/>         In scheildis thair schaw.</p>  | <p><i>gates (i.e., red) dyed fast</i><br/> <i>brightly; beautiful</i></p>               |
|     |   | <p><i>reflex</i></p>  |
| 480 | <p>Be it wes mydmorne and mare, merkit on the day,<br/>         Schir Golagros mery men, meankful of myght,</p>               | <p><i>By /the time/ it is as the day goes</i></p>                                       |
|     | <p>In greis and garatouris, grathit full gay,<br/>         Sevyn score of scheildis thair schew at ase sicht.</p>             | <p><i>Golagros' heavy; proud</i></p>  |
|     | <p>Ane helme set to ilk scheild, siker of assay,</p>  | <p><i>gauntlets and sabres, flared out</i></p>  |
| 485 | <p>With fel lans on loft, lemand ful light.<br/>         Thras flourit thair the forefront, thair fays to fray,</p>           | <p><i>show at one sight</i></p>   |
|     | <p>The frekis, that war fundin ferse and forsay in fight,<br/>         Ilk knyght his cunynance kithit full clair;</p>        | <p><i>wield and use</i></p>   |
|     | <p>Thair names writhin all thace,</p>   | <p><i>Armed lances alight, gleaming</i></p>   |
|     |   | <p><i>deployed; foes in fight</i></p>   |
|     |   | <p><i>warrior; proven fierce and valiant</i></p>  |
|     |   | <p><i>heraldic device displayed</i></p>   |

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

490	<p>Quhar berne that it bare, That ilk freke quhare he fave Might wit quahit he weiz.</p>	<i>Which knight whatever make known who he was</i>
495	<p>"Yone is the warliest wane," said the wise King. "That ever I wist in my walk, in all this world wyde; And the straistest of straf, with richese to ring, With unabait bernys bergane to abide; May nane do thame na deir with undoyng. Yone house is sa huge hic, fra haeme thame to hide. Yit sat I mak thame unrafe, foroutin resting. And revv thame thair rentis, with roatis full ride. Thought I suld fynd thame new notis for this nine yeir;<sup>1</sup> And in his ause presence Heir sal I mak residence, Bot he with force mak defence, With strenth me to steer."</p>	<i>most formidable stronghold now in my travels stranger fully with power to reign undismayed warlike conflict to endure home with open attack</i>  <i>[for] them swift without drive; [should] never pillaging force</i>  <i>territory</i>  <i>Unless</i>  <i>(And); drive off</i>
500	<p>"Quhar nedis," said Spinagras, "sic notis to sevin, Or ony termis be turnit, I tell you trealy? For thair is segis in yone saill wil set spone sevin<sup>2</sup> Or thay be wrangit, I wis, I warne yow ilk wy.<sup>3</sup> 510 Name hardiar of hertis under the hevin: Or thay be dantit with dreid, erar will thai de; And thai with men upone mold be machit full evin, Thai salbe fandin right ferse, and fall of chevaltrie. Scheit, ye ar in your majesté, your mayne and your myght,</p>	<i>sack words to say Before exchanged</i>  <i>dimmed; sooner; die</i>  <i>If earth are mashed up evenly</i>  <i>found</i>
515	<p>Yit within thir dais thre, The sicker suth saill ye se, Quhar kin men that thai be, And how thai dar fight."</p>	<i>these days three</i>  <i>unshakable truth</i>  <i>What kind [off]</i>

<sup>1</sup> Though I shold find them (i.e., the people on the lands) new occupation for these nine years

<sup>2</sup> For there are warriors in this hall [who] will take a great risk (see note)

<sup>3</sup> Before they [will] be wronged (i.e., crossed); indeed, I assure you [concerning] each man

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gwain*

- As the reverend Roy wes rekaand upone raw,  
 With the root of the Round Tabell, that wes richest,  
 The King crounait with gold, cumly to knaw,  
 With reverend barosis and beirnis of the best,  
 He hard ase bugill blast beym and ase loud blaw,  
 As the seymly sone silt to the rest.
- A gone gais to ase garet, gisnand to schaw,  
 Turnit to ase hic toure, that right wes full trest;  
 Ase helme of hard stell in hand has he bynt,  
 Ase scheid wrought all of weir,  
 Semyt wele upone feir;
- He grappit to ase grete speir,  
 And furth his wais wynt.
- "Qwhat signifyis yone schene scheild?" said the Scyeyout.  
 "The luffly helme and the lance, all ar away,  
 The beym blaw that he blew with ase stevis stour?"
- Than said Spynagras with speche: "The suth sail I say.  
 Yone is ase feeki in his force, and fresch in his flour.  
 To se that his schene weid be sicker of assay.  
 He thinkis prosese to preve for his paramour,  
 And peik in your presence to purchese his pray."
- Forthi makis forth ase man, to mach hym in feild,  
 That knowin is for cruel,  
 Doughty dynnis to dell,  
 That for the maistry dar mell  
 With schaft and with scheild."
- Than wes the King wondir glaid, and callit Gaudileir,  
 Qhilom in Briane that berne had baronyis braid.  
 And he gudly furth gais, and graithit his geir,  
 And buskit hym to bannell, without mair abuid.  
 That wy walit, I wis, all wedis of weir
- That nedit hym to note gif he nane had.
- Bery brown wes the blonk, bured and braid,  
 Upone the mold, qshare thai met, before the mydday.  
 With luffly lancis and lang,
- considering [such point] in a row  
 company; most powerful  
 loudly enough  
 sent to its  
 sure, sparkling to behold  
 Wine; comestal was soundly  
 grasped  
 [gold] wire  
 /Which/ seemed well together
- Lord  
 are gone [now]  
 force; powerful sound  
 truth  
 warrior in his prime  
 To me; handsome gear; sure against attack  
 his prowess to show; beloved  
 ride (joust); earn his reputation  
 Therefore put fresh  
 force  
 strokes to strike  
 courage
- Once; and  
 ready  
 hammed; delay  
 warrior picked out; garments of war  
 it was necessary for him to use
- Berry-brown; home, luffy and huge

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Ane faire fold can thai fang.	did they sake
555	On stedis stalwart and strang, Baith Blanchart and bay.	white and reddish-brown
	Gaudifeir and Galot, in glemand stel wedis,	and armor
	As glavis glowand on gleid, grymly thai ride.	blades; on live coal
	Wondir sterlyn thai stir on thair stent stedi:	they advance; unfurling
560	Athir berne fra his blonk borne wen that tide. <sup>1</sup>	
	Thai ruschit up radly, quahsa right redis;	furiously, whose rightly understande
	Out with swerdis thai swang fra thair schalk side.	noble
	Thairwith weathly thai wirk, thai wortly in wedis. <sup>2</sup>	
	Hewit on the hard stel, and hart thame in the hide.	skin
565	Sa wondir freshly thai frekis fruscht in feir,	strangled together
	Throw all the barnes thai hadde,	unconquerable
	Baith birny and breistiplade.	Both curves and straight place
	Thairis wappynis cooth wade,	Where penetrate
	Wit ye but weit.	You may be certain
570	Thus thai fraught upone fold, with ase fel fair,	lethal onslaught
	Quthil athir berne in that breth bokit in blude.	until moved about through blood
	Thus thai metlit on mold, ase myle way and maire,	strangled; for about half an hour
	Wraithly wroht, as thei war witless and wode.	Perilously reckless and mad
	Baith thai segis, forswath, sadly and tair. <sup>3</sup>	
575	Thought thai war astonait, in that stor stithly thai stede.	
	The fight sa felly thai fang, with ase fresch fair. <sup>4</sup>	that; all
	Quthil Gaudifeir and Galot baith to grund yhude.	
	Gaudifeir gaith up agane, throu Goddis grete mightis —	
	Above him wichestly he wan,	Over him (i.e., Galot) powerfully he prevailed
580	With the craft that he can.	skill; could [master]
	Thai lovit God and Sanct An,	praised; Saint Anne
	The King and his knighthis.	

<sup>1</sup> Either warrior was overthrown from his horse in that [first] pass

<sup>2</sup> With due furiously they work (i.e., fight); those worthy (fighters) in armor

<sup>3</sup> Lines 574-75: Both those warriors, indeed, sorely and eagerly. / Thought they were stung; in that conflict valiantly stood [their ground].

<sup>4</sup> The fight so lethally they engaged; with such fresh assault

*The Knightly Tale of Golagras and Gauain*

	Than wes Galot the gone hynt in till ase bald.	A knight who has a strongfield
	Golagras grew in greif, grymly in hart,	
585	And callit Schir Rigal of Rose, ase renk that wes bald:	bald
	"Quhill this querell be quayt, I cover never in querl. <sup>1</sup>	
	With wailit wapeis of were, evin on yore wald,	choicer (i.e., valuable); war; field
	On ase sterand steid that sternly will sterit	Evily; boldly will move
	I pray the, for my sailk, that it be deir said;	dear bought
590	Was never sa unsound set to my hert."	such trouble
	That gone gadly furth gays and graithit his gere,	warlike; gays and readiness
	Blew ase blast of ase horne,	
	As wes the maner beforene;	
	Schedild and helm has he horne	
595	Away with his spere.	
	The King crownit with gold this cumpas wele knew,	golden
	And callit Schir Rausald, cruell and kene:	ferocious and eager
	"Gif ony pressis to this place, for prowes to persew,	Russes; prowess to pursue
	Schaip the evin to the schalk, in thi schroud schene." <sup>2</sup>	
600	The deir dight him to the deid, be the day dew: <sup>3</sup>	
	His birny and his basnet, burnist full bene;	armor; helmet polished well are
	Baith his horne and his geir wes of ase hale bew,	a single color
	With gold and goulis sa gay graithit in grene;	red; adorned
	Ase schene schedild and ase schaft, that schaerly was sched.	honed
605	Thre ber hedis he hair,	bear heads (as heraldic device)
	As his eldaris did air,	ancestors did before
	Quhilk beirnis in Britane wair	Which warlike
	Of his blude bred.	
	Owhen the day can daw, deirly on hight,	did down
610	And the sone in the sky wes schyryng so schir,	bright
	Fra the castell thair come cariland ase knight,	riding
	Closit in cleve stell, upone ase coursyt,	Enclosed; warhorse
	Schir Rausald to his riche steid raikit full right;	proceeded

<sup>1</sup> Quhill this issach is answered, I [will] never recover in court

<sup>2</sup> Present yourself directly as the knight, in your bright gear

<sup>3</sup> The worthy (knight) readied himself for the deed (i.e., the encounter), at the day appointed

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- Lightly lap he on loft, that luffly of lyce.  
 Athir laught has thair lance, that lempt so light;  
 On twa stedis thai straid, with aue sterne schiere.  
 Togiddir freshly thai frekis fruschtit, in fay;  
 Thair speris in splendris spreat  
 On scheldis, schoskit and scheit,  
 Evin ovr thair hedis west  
 In feild fir away.
- Thair luffly ledis belife lightit on the land,  
 And laught out swerdis, luffly and lang.  
 Thair stedis stakkorit in the stoor, and stude stammerand,<sup>1</sup>  
 Al tostifflin and stonayt, the strakis war sa strang!  
 Athir berne braithly bet with aue bright brand;  
 On fute freshly thai frekis leghtin thai fang  
 Thair hewit on hard steil, hardly with hand,  
 Quhil the spalis and the sparkis spedely out sprang.  
 Schir Rannald caught to the renk aue rout wes unryde; dash to his for a knive grivous  
 Closely in the collair,  
 Fifty mailycis and mair  
 Evin of the scheldir be schair,  
 Aue wound that wes wyde.
- Thus thai fascht on fate, on the fair feild.  
 The blude famyt thame fra, on feild quhare thai found:  
 All the berries on the best about that beheld,  
 For pure sorrow of that sight thai sight unsound.  
 Schire teris schot fra schalkis, schene undir scheild,  
 Quhen thai foundrit and fel Fey to the grand;  
 Baith thair harts can breit braithly, bat beild.  
 Thair wes na stalwart unstanait, so sterne wes the stound!  
 Schir Rannaldis body wes broght to the bright tent;  
 Spne to the castel of stone  
 That had Schir Regal of Rose;  
 With mckil marnyng and mone  
 Away with him west.
- Asped he alift; apperance  
 Each /warlike/ grasped; sparkled  
 advanced; took  
 snugged in fath  
 spinners shamed  
 shivered and ruined  
 for  
 fathom quickly diminished  
 matched  
 All strained and strained the smoky  
 (smoky) heat (i.e., laid on)  
 combat they engaged  
 hourly  
 spinners  
 collar  
 chainlinks  
 Clearly from; sheared  
 Then  
 much mourning

<sup>1</sup> Their souls staggered on the background, and stood shivering

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gauain*

	Thus endit the avynantz with mckil honour;	did the courteous knyghtes; much
	Yit has men thame in mynd for their manhede. <sup>1</sup>	
650	Thair bodeis wes beryt baith in ane hoor;	buried both in the same hour
	Set segis for their saultis to syng and to reid.	(There were) appointed men (i.e., priests)
	Than Gologras graithit of his men in glinand armour	readied; glistening
	And Schir Louys the lele, ase lord of that leid;	loyal; people
	Ase ethir heght Edmond, that provit paramour; <sup>2</sup>	
655	The thrid heght Schir Bassellax, the batal to leid;	called; lead
	The ferd wes ase weryour worthy and wight,	fourth
	His name wes Schir Sangsel,	
	Cumly and cruel;	foe
	Thir four, treuly to tell,	these
660	Foundis to the fight.	See me
	Schir Lyonel to Schir Louys wes levit with ase lance;	lef (i.e., paired) (with)
	Schir Ewin to Shir Edmond, ethir ful evir;	each equally matched
	Schir Bedwar to Schir Bassellax, to enschew his chasor,	to follow his feet
	That baith war nemmyt in neid, nobil to nevin;	renowned; name
665	To Schir Sangsel soght gode Gyromalance.	
	Thus thai metlit and met with ase stout stevin.	smuggled; tumult
	Thir luffe ledis on the land, without legiance.	figures; submission
	With seymely scheildis to schew, thai set upone sevin,	took great risks
	Thir cumly knightis to kyth ase cruel course maid. <sup>3</sup>	
670	The frekis felouse is feir	force together
	Wondir stoutly can steit,	did conduct (themselves)
	With geir grudgin ful cleir	brawled
	Rudly thai raid.	Hoolishly they rode
	Than thair hors with thair hochis sic harmis coust him,	by joints much did marr
675	As trast in unquart quakand thai stand.	Awkward (horses that have been) spooked
	The frekis freshly thai fare, as fyre out of flyst;	fought on

<sup>1</sup> And still have men abyd them in mind because of their manhood (i.e., their spectacular courage).

<sup>2</sup> A second was named Edmond, that tried-and-true lover.

<sup>3</sup> These knyghts renowned as glaziers began a savage joust.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Thair lufy lancis thai loissit, and lichtit on the land.	damaged; got down
	Right styth, stoffit is steill, thai stoth na stynt,	solitary; enclosed; hemmed nor crossed
	Bot baskit to battaille with birny and broad.	battened
680	Thair riche birmys thai bet derly with dynt,	savagely
	Hewin doas in grete haist, harily with hand.	
	Thai mighty men upon mold are riale course maid,	on earth; air
	Quhill clovis of clene maille	Until scrape
	Hoppit out as the haill,	
685	Thay beirays in the battail	These warriors
	Sa basildy thai baid!	endured
	Thair bet on sa brymly, thai beirys on the best,	fiercely; field
	Beitis birneis with beandis barnist full bese.	Bone; polished full well
	Throu thair schene scheildin thair schaldiris war schent;	shoulders were shamed
690	Fra schalkis schot schire blude ovr scheildis so schene.	bright blood
	Ryngis of rank steill rattillit and rent,	hard and nailed and gave way
	Gomys grisly on the grund grams on the grene.	Felled knights grieve terribly on the field
	The Roy ramyt for reuth, richist of rent,	cried out for pay; lordship
	For cair of his knighthis cruel and kene,	cure; force
695	Sa wondir freshly thair force thai front on the feildis!	vigorously; put to proof
	Sa huge wes the melle,	melee
	Wes nane sa satell coath se	acuse
	Quhilk gone suld govern the gre,	have the victory
	Bot God that al weildis.	
700	The wyis weught uther grete wandsreh and wesach,	warriors; each other; distress and sorrow
	Wirkand wosanda full wydc with wapeis of were.	war
	Helmis of hard steill thai hatterit and heuch;	battered and bound
	In that halking thai hynt grete harmys and here,	encounter they sustained; loss
	All totrevit thair extyre, traistly and tewch.	repudiated; charge steadily unyielding
705	Burnist bladis of steill throw birneis thay bere.	field
	Schort swerdis of scheith smerty thay dreach,	from shields nimble they drew
	Athir freik to his fellow, with felonie affere;	opponents, with ferocious war frenzy
	Throw platis of polist steill thair poynjis can pase.	polished; did pass
	All thus thair threw in that thrang	deal; strong
710	Stalwart straks and strang.	smacks
	With daggaris derly thay dang,	grovously they struck
	Thai doeghtyis on dace.	days (i.e., in their time)

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gauain*

	Schir Lyonell Schir Lewes laught has in hand, And seit is Sangwell with Giromales the gode.	taken seized; by
715	Schir Evin has Schir Edmond laid on the land, Braithly bartynit with baill, ballcrand in blade.	<i>Fiercely filled with moe, willing</i>
	Schir Bedwar to Schir Bannellas yaldis up his brand, In that stalwart stour they styth men in stude.	<i>yield</i> <i>fierce battle those vanquishing men</i>
	Wes name forsay on told that wes fughtand — <sup>1</sup>	
720	Usmanglit and marrit — myghties in made; Wes name sa proud of his part, that prisit quhen he yeid.	<i>named worship; war taken</i>
	Bedwer and Lyonell	
	War led to the castell;	
	The curvy knight Sangwell	
725	To Arthour they led.	
	Schir Edmond loissit has his life, and laid is full law;	law
	Schir Evin hurtis has hynt hidwise and sair.	<i>suffered hideous</i>
	Knightis caryis to the conse, wes curvy to know,	<i>process; corpse; deorum to see</i>
	And had hym to the cassell with mckill hard cair;	<i>much deep sorrow</i>
730	Thai did to that doughty as the dede aw.	<i>dead deserve</i>
	Uthir four of the folk foundis to the fair,	<i>Another; gracious [son]</i> (i.e., Gologras)
	That wes dight to the dede, be the day can daw;	<i>prepared; action, as soon as</i>
	Than said bernys bald, brym as hair:	<i>force as [a] bear</i>
	"We sal evin that is od, or end in the pane!"	<i>bold (unconquerably) die</i>
735	Thai stuffit helmyis in by,	<i>in base</i>
	Breisplait and birny;	
	They renkis maid redly	
	All geir that myght gane.	
	Schir Agalus, Schir Ewmonde, honest and habill,	able
740	Schir Mychin, Schir Meligor, men of grete estat;	
	Than steris out ase sterne knyght, stalwart and stabili,	<i>Then advances; solid</i>
	Ane berne that heght Schir Hew, hardy and hait.	<i>was named; hard-supported</i>
	Now wil I rekin the renkis of the Round Tabell,	<i>mention the knyghts</i>
	That has tristly thame tight to governse that gait. <sup>2</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> Lines 719–20: *{There} was not one [of those knight] who fiercely on the field was fighting — / {Whether}*  
*unscathed or wounded — [who was] infirm in spirit*

<sup>2</sup> *Who have faithfully prepared themselves to control the course [of action]*

*The Knightly Tale of Gologrus and Gawain*

- 745 Forth faris the folk, but foyeing or fahill,  
That bensyt war be the lord, lufsum of lat:  
Schir Cador of Cornwel, casily and clair,  
Schir Owales, Schir Iwell,  
Schir Myneot, mighty esell;  
750 Thir four, nealy to tell,  
Fowndis in feir.
- without fighting or battle  
chosen were by; command  
in their mide  
These  
Set out together
- Thair wes na trety of treux, trow ye full traist,  
Quhen thai myghty can mach, on mold qahair thai met.  
Thai brochit blonkis to thair sydis out of blade brast,  
755 Thair luffly lancis thai loissit, and lightit bat let;  
Sadillis thai temyt tyt, thir trew men and traist,  
Bessidit out brandis, on birnys thai bet.  
As fyre that fleis fra the flynt, thay fechtin sa fast,  
With vengeand wapnis of were throu wedis thai wet.  
760 It war teirfull to tell treulys the tend  
Of thair strife sa strang.  
The fight so feliley thai fang.  
Thoght it lestit never so lang,  
Yit laught it ase end.
- trust, believe you [me]  
dane; did join battle on ground  
spurred horses until  
destroyed, and alighted without power  
emptied right off  
Whipped; beat  
fire; fought so hard  
pitiless weapons; strike [blows]  
hard; success  
fiercely they engaged  
laughed  
found
- 765 Schir Owles, Schir Iwill, in handis war hym,  
And to the luffly castell war led in ase lyng.  
Thairwith the stalwaerts in stoor can stotin and styst,  
And baith Schir Agalus and Schir Hew wes led to the Kyng.  
Than Schir Golograve for greif his gray eue bryst,  
770 Wod wraith as the wynd, his handis can wryng.  
Yit makis he mery, magry qahasa mynt —  
Said: "I sal bargane abyde, and ase end tryng.  
Tomorne, sickirly, my self salle wikk to the feild."  
He buskit to ase barlasy —  
775 Twa smal bellis rang thay;  
Than seymly Arthur can say,  
Wes schene undir scheild:
- in hand-to-hand; when  
column  
battle did stop and rise  
eyes burned  
Violently angry; did  
despair [what] anyone might think  
conflict engage  
Tomorrow indeed  
withdraw to a helly  
did
- "Qwhat signifiis yone rynging?" said the Ryale.  
Thus said Spynagros with speche: "Schir sens peir,  
780 That salle I tell yow with song, treulys in taill.
- Royal (i.e., the King)  
Lord without peer

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	The wy that weildis yone wane, I warn you but weir, <sup>1</sup> He thinkis his aunc self shall do for his dail, Is nane sa provit in this part of pyth is his peer. <sup>2</sup>	over; cause <i>to profit you; fighter; choose valiantly; worthy [Lord]</i>
785	Yow worthis wisly to wirk, ane wy for to wail, That sal dachtely his deid do with yone deir. He is the foriest freik, be fortoune his freynd, That I wait lewand this day."	<i>most powerful man, if fortune be know living</i>
	Than Schir Gawine the gay Prayt for the journey.	<i>Exward; mission</i>
790	That he myght furth weynd.	go
	The King grantit the gait to Schir Gawan, And prayt to the geote God to grant him his grace, Him to save and to safi, that is our sovereign, As he is makar of man, and alkyn myght haise.	mission <i>preserve infinite power has</i>
795	Than Schir Spynagros, the freik, wox ferly undane, Marnyt for Schir Gawayne, and mckil mayne maile, And said: "For His saik, that saiklese wes slane, Tak nocht yone keyne knight to countir, in this hard cas —" <sup>3</sup>	<i>became wondrously uper Mourned; much lament makes public</i>
800	Is nane sa stalwart in stour, with stoutnes to stand. Of al that laugis to the King, The mair is my marrayng. Ye sold this fell fechting	<i>in combat; as withdrawn all [those] that are in service more [That] you should; lethal fight Take in hand</i>
	Hynl spone hand.	
805	"Sen ye ar sa wounchipfull, and wourthy in were, Demyt with the derrest, maist doughty in deid, Yone berse in the battale wil ye nocht forbere, For al the mobil on the mold, merkit to meid." "Gif I de doughtily, the les is my dere,	<i>Since; war Honored with the worthy spare names; designated as recompence I [Gawain] die; here help</i>
810	Thoght he war Sampson himself, sa me Criste Reid! I forsak nocht to fecht, for al his grete feit, I do the weill for to wit, doutlese bat droid." Than said Schir Spynagrose: "Sen ye will of neid	<i>refuse; flattery want you to understand; without any doubt of necessity</i>

<sup>1</sup> The lord who rules yonder stronghold, I advise you without doubt

<sup>2</sup> There is none so tried and true in these parts who is his peer in strength

<sup>3</sup> Do not take on this fierce knight in single combat in this tight spot

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Be boun to the battale, Wirkis with counsele —	Mounes Aer with counsel
815	It sall right gret avale, And do it in deid.	shall very greatly help If [you]; for sure
	"Quhen ye mach hym on mold, merk to hym evis, And bere ye your bright lance in myddis his scheild, Mak that course cruel, for Crystis hale of hevin, And sync wirk as I wize, your wappins to weild. Be he stossay, yone sterne, stout beis his stevin; He woudis brym as ane bait, that bydis na beild. <sup>1</sup> Noy you nocht at his note, that nobill is to nevin. Suppose his dyntis be deip dentit in your scheild, Tak na haist upon hand, quhat happenys may hynt: Bot lat the riche man rage, And fecht in his curage, To sayng with swerd qahil be saage; Synе dele ye your dynt.	menace; attack him straight on floor for love of Christ afterwards work as I advise (if) he is stunned; will be his master Wary; voice; grand; sound Even if his smile None; whatever chances may occur strong fight; strength will be lit up Then
	"Quhen he is staffit, thair strike, and hold hym on stair: <sup>2</sup> Sa sal ye stonay yone stowt, suppose he be strang, Thus may ye lippin on the lake, throu lair that I leir, <sup>3</sup> Bot gif ye wirk as wise, you worthis that wrang." The King and his knaithis, cumly and cleir, In armour dewly hym dight, be the day sprang. Than wes Schir Kay wondir wo, wit ye bet weir, In defait of ane freik the fechtig to fang. <sup>4</sup> That gone gudely farr gain, and graithin his geir, Evin to the castell he raid, Huvit in ane dern slaid;	men that arm (knights), even if Unless deserve that misfortune properly arm studied; success without doubt (Kay) splendidly forth goes; prepares Right; rule Pulled up in a secluded vale raided Armed for war
830	Sa come ane knight as he baid, Anairmit of weir.	
835		
840		

<sup>1</sup> He becomes fierce as a bear, that looks for no quarter

<sup>2</sup> When he is wounded, then (i.e., at that point) strike, and keep him in action

<sup>3</sup> In this way may you succeed in the game (i.e., swordplay); through the love that I teach

<sup>4</sup> At the lack of an (opposing) knight to engage in the fighting

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gwain*

	That knight buskit to Schir Kay one arm stoid brouse,	hastened toward
	Braissit is birnesis and basnet full bene;	Clof in mail; helmet; excellent
845	He cryis his ensenye and conteris hym full sounse,	battle cry; assault
	And maid arm course curagiousse, cruell and kene.	and ran a tilt splintered
	Thair luffe lancis tha loissit, and lightit baith doone,	
	And giedit out swerdis on the grand grene,	
	And hewit on hard steill hartie but house.	rigorously without pause
850	Rude reknysg raise their renkis betwene.	Savage conflict arose there; between
	Thair malycis with melle thay merkit in the modis;	armor; onslaught; down middle
	The blade of their bodeis	
	Throw breistplait and birnesis,	
	As noise ragt on rise,	Like [a red] rose on thorny branch
855	Ovran their riche wedis.	Ran over; armor
	Thus tha faught upone fute, without fayng.	in mail
	The sparkis flew in the feild, as fyre out of flint.	fire
	Thair luffe ledas in lyke, tha layid on in ase ling,	fights handsome in body; laid on; more
	Detis their full doughtely mony derf dyn.	Deaf out there; many a strong blow
860	Dusched on deir wedis, dourly tha dyng. <sup>1</sup>	Melancholy; immediately they susain
	Hidwise harts and huge haistly tha hym.	feast of perplexity
	That knight carpit to Schir Kay, of discomforting:	overhanging battle / urge; cease
	"Of this stonayand stour I rede that ye stynt.	sword; since fitj no
	I will yeild the my brand, sen na better may bene.	However; full short
865	Quhair that fortoune will fail,	no busy-ness (i.e., effort)
	Thair may na boyynes avail."	there; vice
	He braidit up his ventail	
	That closit wes clese.	
	For to resave the brand the berne wes full blith,	receive the sword the knight (i.e., Kay)
870	For he wes byrsit and beft, and braithly bledand.	bruised and buffond; severely bleeding
	Thought he wes myghties, his mercy can he thair myth,	weakened; did show
	And wald that he nane harm hynt with hart and with hand. <sup>2</sup>	
	Thair caryit baith to the Kynge, camly to kyth;	moved off; of repur
	Thair lancis war loissit and left on the land.	naised

<sup>1</sup> Battering on rich armor, fiercely they strike

<sup>2</sup> And took care with heart and hand that he (i.e., Kay's opponent) suffered no harm

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 875 Than said he loud upon loft: "Lord, will ye lyth:<sup>1</sup>  
Ye sail name torfyr betyde, I tak upon hand.  
Na mysliking have in hart, nor have ye na dout.  
Oft in romantis I reid:  
Arlly sporne, late spide."  
880 The King to the pallyeous gart leid  
The knight that wes stout.
- Thai bynt of his harsone, to helyn his wound;  
Lochis war nocht to lait, with sawis sa sle.  
With that, moey fresh freik can to the feild found,  
885 With Gologras in his geir, grete of dege;  
Armyt in rede gold, and rabeis sa round,  
With moeny riche relikis, riale to se.  
Thair wes on Gologras, quhair he glaid on the ground,  
Frenpeis of fine silk, frath fall fir.  
890 Apone sterand stodis, trappit to the heill,  
Scoty schatikis fall schese  
Cled in armour sa clene;  
No wy wantit, I wene.  
All stodit in stell.
- 905 That berne raid on aye Monk of aye ble qahite,  
Byndit all with bright gold and berialis bright —  
To tell of his deir weid war dowlies deline.  
And aise ter for to tell the travalis war ticht.  
His name and his nobillay wes nocht for to nyte;  
910 Thair wes na hathill sa heich, be half aye fute hicht.  
He lansit out ovr aye land, and drew nocht aye lyte.  
Quhair he sold frastyn his force, and fangin his flight.  
Be that Schir Gawayne the gay wes graithit in his gene;  
Cammynge on the ta syde.  
915 Hovand, battale to abyde,  
All reddy samyne to ryde,  
With schelde and with spere.

*(T)h<sup>e</sup>n; no injur behid; give my hand  
margrave for  
romance*

*Early sporne; arrived  
parlour had conducted*

*took off; heel  
Physician; too late; salve to make  
did go*

*nobis  
hairesons, royal  
adorned*

*Finger; decorated most handsomely  
lively; with droppings as the heel  
(W)e're sixt knyght*

*No one was missing [of sixt]*

*warhorse with forehead white  
Shoulder; heyle  
costly gear were doubtless a joy  
as talons; pains that were taken  
reputation and his mobility; deny  
height so high; foot's height  
marked; drew [up] not a bit  
make trial of his strength; join  
By that [time]  
the one side*

*Holding so engag  
together*

<sup>1</sup> *Than said he [the King] for all to hear: "Sir (i.e., Kay's opponent), you are well off*

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Thir luffly ledis on the land left be thame allane, Toku nowthir frenesyf nor freydys, bot found thame fra;	went off by themselves alone for no friends; went away
910	Twa ryngayng renkis raith the riolyse has tane. <sup>1</sup> lik freik to his feir, to frestis his fa.	like fresh to his friend, to frost his face
	Thair gird one twa grete horse, on grund qubil thai grane. <sup>2</sup> The trew helmyng and traist in tathis thai ta;	sturdy in armor they have
	The rochis reidrit with the rasch, qahen thai samyne rane. <sup>3</sup>	spurs are made to go
915	Thair speris in the feild in flendris gart ga; The stedis stakerit in the stour, for strekyng on stay. <sup>4</sup>	drew
	The boreys bowit abak,	bore; draw
	Sa woundir rade wes the ruk;	which [one] afford the more
	Qubilk that happyngit the lak,	
920	Couth na leid say?	
	Thair brayd fra thair brenkis, besely and base, Sync laught out swerdin, lang and luffly,	jumped from; lively and quick
	And hewit on hard steill, wondir hawtane.	Then grabbed
	Baith war thai haldis of harts heynd and hardy.	consequently
925	Gologras grew in geif at Schir Gawayne;	possessor of heart noble
	On the hight of the hard steill he hyt hym in by,	anger
	Perty put with his pith at his pesant. <sup>5</sup>	up; in hand
	And fulyeit of the fyne maill ma than fyfty.	destroyed; more (links)
	The knight stakeit with the straik, all stonayt in stound. <sup>6</sup>	
930	Sa woundir scharply he schait,	keenly he hacked
	The berse that the brand haire,	who the sword wielded
	Schir Gawayne, with ane fell fair,	lethal thrust
	Can to his fae found.	Died at his foe's
	With ane bitand brand, barly and braid,	bring sword, new and broad
935	Qubilk off in battale had bene his bone and his belde,	Which aid; protection

<sup>1</sup> Lines 900-11: Two rushing courses (i.e., sides) the princely (knights) have vehemently taken; <sup>2</sup> Each man against his opposite; to try out his foe

<sup>3</sup> They spur on two great horses over the ground until they groan [as they gallop]

<sup>4</sup> The rocks resounded with the sound off the charge, when they ran together

<sup>5</sup> The sword stagger in the battleplace, from the thrusing about

<sup>6</sup> Skillfully aimed with his strength or his greget (i.e., neck-armor)

<sup>7</sup> The knight staggered with the stroke; all stunned in the encounter

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawayne*

	He leit gird to the grone, with greif that he had,	made or assault; anger
	And claiſ throw the canſell of the cleſe ſcheldic.	cut through the corner
	Throw birny and breſtſplait and bordour it baid;	and
	The fulye of the fyne gold fell in the feild.	full (i.e., plating)
940	The rote blade with the root folowit the blaid,	Horn; blade
	For all the wedis, I wiſe, that the wy weid,	Through all the armor indeed; had on
	Throw claspiſ of cleſe gold, and clowiſ ſa cleir.	ornament
	Thair with Schir Gologras the ſyrc,	At that; lord
	In mekill angir and ire,	At firſt
945	Aſc ferſe as the fyre,	Did rush at his fellow knight (Gawayne)
	Leit fle to his feit.	
	Sic dintis he delit to that doughtry,	Such blowe he (Gologras) dealt
	Leit hym destanyt to danger and dreid;	Made him ſubject; fear
	Thus wea he handillit full hait, that hawtane, in by.	mankindled or hauy; that noble
950	The ſcheld in countir he leſt ovr his cleir weid,	in defense; shining armor
	Hewit on haed ſteill wondir haſtely;	
	Gart beryallis hop of the hathill about hym on braid. <sup>1</sup>	
	Than the King unto Criste leſt up and cry,	the living among (your) people
	Said: "Lord, as Thou life leſt to levand in leid,	cread all living things; nourishment
955	As Thou formit all frute to foster our fide,	
	Geant me conforit thiſ day,	confort
	As Thou art God veray!"	
	Thus prais the King in affray,	
	For Gawayne the gade.	gentry
960	Gologras at Gawayne in ſic aſe grief grew	rage
	As lyoun, for fait of fude, faught on the fold.	low for lack; fought; earth
	With baith his handis in haſt that haultane couth hew,	sudden; that warrior did
	Gart starys hop of the hathill, that haultane war hold. <sup>2</sup>	
	Birny and breſtſplait, bright for to ſhow;	plain armor
965	Moſy mailye and plait war marrit on the mold.	
	Knightis ranys for reuth; Schir Gawayne thair rew,	cried out for pity; sorrow (for)
	That doughtry delit with hym ſa, for doſt he war defold, (Because); handled; fear; shamed	
	Sa wondir ſcharply he ſchare throſ his ſchene ſchroud.	sliced; bright armor

<sup>1</sup> Caused the beryll (i.e., gem) [to] hop off the knight full around him on (the) field

<sup>2</sup> Caused precious stones to hop off the knight, who was held (as he) fierce

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

970	His scheld he chopit hym fra In tweinty pecis and ma. Schir Wawane writhit for wa, Witless and woud.	Gawain writhed for we Reckless and enraged
975	Thus wourthit Schir Gawayne wrath and wepan, And strak to that stern knight bot styn. All engrevit the grome, with ake bright brand, And delit thairwith doughtely mony derf dyn.	became angry to mere made for; without lea-fur <i>(Gawain)</i> made grief for many <i>[a]</i> bold blow
	Thow byray and breistplait, boðour and band, He leit fle to the freke, as fyre out of flynt. He hewit on with grene haist, harty with hand.	edge let fly laid on
980	Hakkit throw the hard weid, to the bede hynt; Throw the stuf with the strak, stapanis and stanis, <sup>1</sup> Schir Wawine, wourthy in wail, Half a span at ake spail.	Hacked; struck <i>(From) half a span (nine inches) to a splinter</i>
	Qehare his harnes wes hail, He hewit attanis.	among the hair Where; And been unbroken <i>at once</i>
985	Thus raithly the riche bese rassit his array. The tothir steris ake balk, the sterne that wes stout, Hit Schir Gawayne on the gere quhil grevit wes the gay, Betit dounse the bright gold and beryallis about;	suddenly destroys [Gologras] armor <i>(i.e., Gologras)</i> until
990	Scheddit his schire wedis scharply away: That luffly lappit war on loft, he gart thame law low. <sup>2</sup>	Sliced
	The sterne stakrit with the strak, and steris on stray, Quhill seir his resoun wes tynt, sa rude wes the rost: The beryallis on the land of bratheris gart light,	<i>(Gawain) suggest; strike; array</i> that; low; force <i>from bracer sum protective fall</i>
995	Rubeis and sapheir, Precious stanis that weir; Thus dresse thai wedis sa deir, That dantely wes dight.	rubies were <i>since this gear no costly delicately was decorated</i>
1000	Thai gyrd on sa gymly, in ake grete ire, Bath Schir Gawayne the grome, and Gologras the knight.	strangle

<sup>1</sup> Through the gear with that stroke, through fanning and gems

<sup>2</sup> *(These circumstances) that [so] beautifully were set out above (i.e., on the surface), he made fall low (i.e., off)*

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	The sparkis flew in the feild, as fagottis of fire, Sa wondir freely thai frekis sangis the fight.	Handling enjoy
	Thai haschit and laid on, thai lallyis of lyre.	struck out; in looks
	King Arthur Jhesu besought, seymly with sight:	searched; wisely
1005	"As Thow art Sovereane God, sickerly, and syne, At Thow wald warys fra wo Wawane the wight, <sup>1</sup> And grant the frekis on fold farer to fall, Baith their honouris to saf."	only, and lord
	At Crist with credence thai crast,	To; faith they pray
1010	Knight, squyar and knaif, And thus pray they all.	squire and knave
	Thai mellt on with malice, thay myghtis is made, <sup>2</sup> Mankit throw mailyeis, and maid thame to mer; <sup>3</sup>	
	Wraithly wrought, as thai war wilese and wod.	Angily reclining; headless and enraged
1015	Be that Schir Wawane the wy likit the wer; <sup>4</sup> The ble of his bright weid wes bellerand in blude.	surface; hollowing
	Thair with the nobilit is neid myght hym ner, <sup>5</sup> Straik hym with ase stell brand, in stede quare he stade.	in /the/ spot where splinters did fly
	The scheld in fardellis can fle, in feild away fer;	
1020	The rothir hyt hym agane with ase hard swerd. <sup>6</sup> oher (i.e., Gologras); again (i.e., in return)	
	As he leutit ovr ase bea, His seit founderit hym fra;	bent; slope
	Schir Gologras graithly can ga Grailingis to erd.	See founded immediately did go Creveling to earth
1025	Or ever he gat up agane, gale Schir Gawan Grippit to Schir Gologras on the grand grene.	Before Took hold of
	Thairof gromys wes glaid, gudly and gane, Lorit Criste of that case with harts sa clene.	For that; quickly (They) praised Christ for that outcome
	Ase daggar dayntely dight that doughty has drawne;	delicately made

<sup>1</sup> Lines 1006–08: *(I pray) that Thow would keep from woe Gawain the powerful, / And gave that a more favorable fate may befall the knight on the field, / (In order) to keep safe the honor of both*

<sup>2</sup> Those (fighters) struggled on with violence, those mighty in spirit

<sup>3</sup> Maimed through (i.e., in spite of) mail (i.e., chain-links), and caused them to break

<sup>4</sup> At that point the warrior (i.e., Gologras) liked Gawain the worse

<sup>5</sup> With that, the hero at need (i.e., Gawain, the hero when things are worst) moved nearer to him (i.e., Gologras)

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 1030 Than he carpit to the knight, cruel and kene:  
 "Gif thou luffis thi life, lelely nocht to lyse,  
 Yeld me thi bright brand, burnist sa benc;  
 I rede thow wirk as I wise, or war the betide."<sup>1</sup>  
 The tothir answerit schortly:
- 1035 "Me think fear to doe,  
 Than schamyt be, vernalic,  
 And sclander to byde.
- "Wes I never yit defoullit, nor fyliit in fame,  
 Nor name of my eldaris, that ever I hard nevin.  
 Bot ilk berne has benc unbundin with blame,  
 Ringand in rialte, and reallit thanself evin.  
 Sail never sege undir son se me with schame,  
 Na lake on my lekane with light nor with levin,  
 Na name of the nynt degré have noy of my name,<sup>2</sup>
- 1045 I swere beuthfast God, that settis all on sevin!  
 Bot gif that wounschip of were wi me away,  
 I trete for na favour.  
 Do futh thi devoir —  
 Of me gettis thou na more,  
 Doubles this day."
- Lordingis and ladyis in the castell on loft,  
 Oshen thai saw their liege lord laid on the landis,  
 Moty swet thing of sware swownit full oft,  
 Wyis wourthit for wo to wrangin their hands.
- 1055 Wes nowthir solace nor sang their sorow to soft —  
 Ane sayr stonaynd stour at thair herti standis.  
 On Criste comly they cry: "On Croxe as Thou cost,  
 With Thi missit blade to bring us out of bandis,  
 Lat never our soverane his cause with schame to encheif!
- 1060 Mary, fairest of face,  
 Besek thi sone in this case,

cruel; fierce

in much not to conceal (anything)  
 Summons; polished so splendidly

more worshipful to die  
 shamed (sic) be truly  
 slander as endure

dishonored nor defiled  
 ancestors; heard named (talked of)  
 such; uncompeached  
 Righting governed themselves wholly

Nor look; body; score; contempt

made all in seven (days of creation)  
 Childe Honor in combat sales  
 negotiate  
 Do what you must

ground  
 sweet sing with lovely neck measured  
 Nobles began

action

sore mourning strife  
 You reformed (sic)  
 bondage

his enterprise; to conclude

Breach; cause

<sup>1</sup> I urge [to] do as I advise, or worse [to] you [may] happen

<sup>2</sup> Nor name as the ninth degree (even my most distant kin) have dishonor through my name

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

Ane drop of His grete grace  
He grant us to gefit?"

give

- Thus the ledis on loft in langour war lest.  
The lordis on the tothir side for likyng they leagh.  
Schir Gawayne tretit the knight to turn his entent,  
For he wes wondir wa to wirk hym mace wugh.  
"Schir, say for thiself, thow seist thou art schent;  
It may nocht mend the ane myne to mak it so teugh.  
Rise, and rait to our Roy, richest of rest;  
Thow salbe newit at acid with nobillay ensuch,  
And duktur in our dachery, all the daellind."  
"Than war I woundir uwis,  
To purchese peoffit for pris,  
Quhare schame ay ever lyis,  
All my leving.
- were weak  
for pleasure they laugh  
increased; change his intention  
reluctant; more harm  
see; you say; how  
help you a bit; rough  
go  
resumed; honor enough  
(made of dute; kingdom; all your life  
advantage for the cost of honor  
always (would) prevail  
die
- "The sege that schoeskinis for na schame, the schent might hym schend,<sup>1</sup>  
That mare luffis his lif than lois upon erd.  
Sal never freik on fold, frommyt nor freynde.  
Gar me bark for ane huke, lawit nor lerd.<sup>2</sup>  
For qohasa with wourschip sal of this world wende,  
Thair wil name wyis, that ar wi, wary the werd.<sup>3</sup>  
For oþer trety may tyde, I tell the the seynd, *For any deal (that) might (be) arranged; surely*  
I will nocht turn myn entent, for all this world brenð. *change my intention; world ends*  
Or I pair of pris ane penny-worth in this place,  
For besandis or berycell;  
I know my aunc quarnell —  
I dreid not the pereill  
To dee in this case!"
- Before I impair my honor  
money or gain  
own affair (i.e., the rules of honor)  
danger  
*To die under these conditions*
- Schir Gawayne rewrit the reesk, that wes riale,  
And said to the reverend, riche and rightwic:
- sorrowed (for) the knight  
praiseworthy (man); honor-bound

<sup>1</sup> Lines 1077-78: The knight who shrinks from no dishonor (i.e., who does not reject what is shameful) disgrace may well undo him; / Since he loves his life more than his renown here on earth (among the living).

<sup>2</sup> Make me害羞 in public; (further) unlearned nor educated (see note)

<sup>3</sup> There (i.e., because of that) will no knight, who are courteous (wise), know his fate

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gwain*

	"How may I succor the sound, semely in sale, Before this pepil in plane, and pair nocht thy pris?"	keep you alive; handsome in full in plain [view]; impair: honor
	"That sail I tel the with tong, trewly in tale, Wald yow denye the in deid to do my devis: Lat it worth at my wil the wearschip to wale, As I had wonsyn the of were, wortly and wis; Syn care to the castel, quhare I have maist cure. Thus may yow saif me fra syte;	anger put yourself at risk; plan happie; have <i>As</i> [if]: overcome you in combat Then go [off] to; provocative from disgrace baptized truly mpey <i>And keep safe</i>
1095	As I am crizynit perfise, I sail thi kyndes quyte, And sauf thyn honoure."	
	"That war hard," said that heyd, "sa have I gude helit! Ane wounder peralous poynt, parteyng grete plighe, To souer in thi gestrice, bat signete or sole, <sup>1</sup> And I before saw the never, sickerly, with sight, To leif in thi laute, and thow war unlefe, <sup>2</sup> Than had I causin in cair mony kene knight. Bot I knew thou art kene, and also cruel;	noble; health (i.e., on my life) dangerous spot, involving valour; fierce
1100	Or thow be fulyeit fey, freke, in the fight, I do me in thi gestrice, be Deightis sa deir!" <sup>3</sup> He leynt up in the place; The tothir raitly sprase. Gat never grome sic ase grace,	<i>Before you are done</i> [of death] straightened quickly got up
1105	In feild of his feit!	<i>In combat from his fellow [knight]</i>
	Than thei nobillis at acid yeld to thair note new — <sup>4</sup> Freshly founidis to fecht, all fencyand thair fair. Tua schort swedis of scheith smerty thai drew, Than thai mellt on mold, ane myle way and mare.	Newly proceed; staging their violence Two wangled; a half-hour
1110	Wes newthir casar nor king thair quentance that knew, <sup>5</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> To rest within your sense of honor, without signs or seal (i.e., formal agreement)

<sup>2</sup> Lines 1107-08: [If I were] to live (i.e., make my life depend) on your loyalty, and you should prove untrue, / Then had I encased in care many a brave knight [who depend on me as their champion]

<sup>3</sup> I do [swear] myself to your honor, by [the] Lord so beloved

<sup>4</sup> Then those noble [knights] consequently moved to their new plan of action

<sup>5</sup> There was neither emperor nor king (whom) their pace suspected

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawayne*

	It semyt be thair contenance that kendillit wes care.	knellit was kindly
	Syne thai traist in that feild, throu trety of trew, <sup>1</sup>	
	Put up thair brandis sa braid, barly and bair.	sword; brazen and naked
	Gologras and Gawayne, gracious and gode,	
1125	Yeid to the castel of stane,	stone
	As he war yoldin and tane.	As [if] he (Gawan) were subdued and taken [prisoner]
	The King precious in pane	in cloth
	Sair mursand in madc.	[W]eaf wendy mourning in spirit
	The Roy ramsand ful raith, that reuth wes to se,	burning out suddenly; pity
1130	And ralkit full redies to his riche tent;	went off fully inconsolable
	The watter wet his chekis, that schalkis myght se,	water (i.e., tears); cheeks; figures
	As all his welthis in world had bene away went,	At [it]
	And othr bernys for barrat blakkenit thair ble.	grief darkened in their looks
	Braithly bandin in baill, thair becritis war blent.	Worthy bound in sorrow; troubled
1135	"The flour of knighthode is caught throu his crudite!"	boldness
	Now is the Round Tabil rebuit, richest of rest,	rebuked
	Quhen wounschipfull Wawane, the wit of our were,	spirit of our warfare
	Is led to ane presoun;	
	Now fallyeis gode fortouise!"	fair
1140	The King, cunly with crowne,	
	Geat mony salt tere.	tears
	Quhen that Gawayne the gay, greve of dege,	
	Wes cammyng to the castel, cunly and cleir,	
	Geomeys of that garisouane maid gamyn and gle,	stronghold; sport and celebration
1145	And ledis lofit thair lord, lufly of lyere;	(the) people prouid; of appearance
	Beirdis beillit in blise, brightest of ble.	Women basked in bliss; looks
	The othr knightis maid care of Arthuris here; <sup>2</sup>	
	Ai thus with swymyng and myrrh thai maid mette. <sup>3</sup>	
	Ay, qahil the segis war set to the supprese,	when
1150	The seymly soverane of the sail manschel he wes;	half chief officer he was
	He gart Schir Gawayne uppa,	had; go up
	His wife, his doghter abaa,	also

<sup>1</sup> Then they made compact in that field, through agreement in [good] faith

<sup>2</sup> The other knight [captured earlier] of Arthur's force lost heart

<sup>3</sup> All [of them], thus, with mourning and mirth made [a] mixed [sound]

*The Knightly Tale of Golgras and Gwain*

	And, of that mighty, na ma War set at that des.	of that magniflow (company), no more settend; des
1155	He gart at ase sete buri the strangearis begin; The maist seymly in salce oedanit thame sete, lik knyght and cumly lady, that clair wes of kyn. <sup>1</sup> With kynde contenance the renk coath thame sechete, Quhen that war machit at mene, the mare and the myn,	had; begin the board (i.e., do the honors); arranged [for] them same knight; cheer marched; greater; lesser provided
1160	And ay the myrest on mold marshalit at mene. Than said he lowd upone loft, the lord of that in, To al the beirns about, of gré that wes grete: "Luffi ledis in land, lythis me til!" He strak the buri with ase wand,	inn (i.e., castle) of degree (i.e., status) danes struck the noble; respect which
1165	The qahilk he held in hand. Thair wes na word myvand, Sa war thai all stil.	wiving
	"Heir ye at gaderit in grosse, al the gretest Of goemys that grip has, undir my governyng, Of baronis and burouis, of bread land the best, And also the myrest on mold has intrometting. Cumly knyghtis, in this case I mak you request,	gathered all together power; lordship baronies and towns; bread the chance of sake part on this occasion
	Freyndfully, but falset, or ozy fenyeing, That ye wald to me, treuly and traist, Tell your entent, as touching this thing That now hingis on my hart, sa have I gade hole!	Candidly, without falsehood; decent would; faithfully touching this matter weight; on my soul
1170	It tuichis myne honour sa noir, Ye mak me plese answere;	[That] you full
1175	Thairof I you requeir — I may nocht conseile.	This I [of] you demand I make no attempt to hide it
1180	"Say me ase chois, the tane of thir twa, Qahethis ye like me lord, taught in the feild, Or ellis my life at the lest leidely forga, And bouse yow to sum berne, that myght be your beild?" <sup>2</sup>	Tell one of these two Whether you prefer; (having been) repaid at the least leidely forgo

<sup>1</sup> Each knight with a comely lady, who was distinguished of lineage

<sup>2</sup> And you bind yourselves to another lord, who might be your protection

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

1185	The wourthy wyis at that word wox wouadir wa, Than thal wist thair soverane wes schent under scheild. "We wil na favour here fenyte to frende nor to fa. We like yow ay as our lord, to were and to weild; Your lordship we may nocht forga, alse lang as we leif.	became deeply sorrowful When they leave; defend mischance here prevent (make) war; govern disown; flee
1190	Ye sal be our governour, Qahil your dais may endure, In eise and honour, For chance that may cheif."	case (i.e., well being) cause
1195	Quhen this avendand and honest had maid this answer, And had tald thair entent trewly him till, Than Schir Gologras the gay, in gudly maner, Said to thal segis, seadly on syll,	those courteous (nobles)
	How woarschipful Warwane had wounin him on weir, To wirk him wandeirth or wough, qahilk war his wit;	on (the) floor captured him in combat shame or sorrow, whichever
1200	How fair him fell in fight, synce how he coath forbore. <sup>1</sup> "In sight of his soverane, this did the gentill: He has me savit fra syte throw his gestrice. It war syn, but recure,	from dishonor; nobility Not without remedy
	The knightis honour suld smere, <sup>2</sup> That did me this honoure,	
1205	Qahilk maist is of price.	Who worth
	"I aught as prynce him to pris for his prowesse, That wasyt nocht my wounschip, as he that al wan; And at his bidding full banc, blith to obene	praise
1210	This berne full of beswic, that all my baill blan, I mak that knawin and kend, his grete kyndnes, <sup>3</sup> The countirpas to lyth to him, gif I can."	diminished; honor; won nurse; glad to serve misfortune; trouble relieved
	He talkit to Schir Gawine, right in ane race,	wife; rank
	Said: "Schir, I knew be conquest thou art ane kynd man;	by (one) conquest
1215	Quhen my lyfe and my dede wes baith at thi will,	death were both

<sup>1</sup> How fyrmer had befallen him in combur (and) after how he undurk to restrain (himself)

<sup>2</sup> (Anything which) that knight's honor should bairnach

<sup>3</sup> Lines 1211-12: I make known and affirm (in view off his great kindness / The counterpart (i.e., same) to show him if I can

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gwain*

	Thy frendship frely I fand;	found
	Now wil I be obeyand,	submissive
	And make the manrent with hand,	do you homage
	As right is, and skill.	and reasonable
1220	"Sen Fortouane cachis the cours, throu his quentys, I did it nocht for nane dreid that I had to de, Na for na frating of hart, na for na fastise. Qohare Criste cachis the cours, it ryngis quently — <sup>1</sup> May nowthir power nor pith put him to pris.	At direc <i>t</i> device <i>die</i> <i>default of courage; cowardice</i> <i>strength make him to swerve</i>
1225	Quhan onfortone qahelmys the qahel, thair gais grace by; Quha may his danger endure or destanye dispise, That led men in langour ay lastand isly, The dote na langar may endure na Drightin devinis. Ilk man may lyth be his care,	<i>make [himself] known by his hardship</i>
1230	Baith knyght, king and empriour, And muse in his myrrout; And mater must mine is.	<i>[may] reflect upon his own example</i> <i>[this] theme most [applies to] my own [situation]</i>
	"Hector and Alexander, and Julius Cesat, David and Josaf, and Judas the gent,	<i>Judas [Maccabaeus]</i>
1235	Sampson and Salamon, that wise and wourthy war, And that ryngis on erd, richest of seast: Qohen that met at the mark, than might thai na mair. <sup>2</sup> To speid thame ovr the sperefeld — enspringing thai spreit;	<i>And who reigned</i>
	Qohen Fortune worthis unfrende, than fallicis welefair —	
1240	Thair ma na tresour overtak nor twyn hit easest. All erdly riches and ruse is nocht in their gade;	<i>earthly fame; keeping</i>
	Qwhat meint Fortune be skill,	<i>Whatever may mean Fortune by [her] devices</i>
	Ane gode chance or aye ill.	

<sup>1</sup> Whoever [in such] Christ controls the course [of events], *fund therefore* it runs smoothly

<sup>2</sup> Lines 1235–38: When misfortune overwhelms the world, there goes success away (i.e., then success is lost); / Whoever [has the spirit] to withstand peril and take no care about his mortal fate — i [Cares] that have pushed men to a faint-heartedness that lasts forever within [them] — i [For those strong in spirit] their lot will endure no longer than the Lord decrees

<sup>3</sup> Lines 1239–40: When they had reached the mark (i.e., their set limit), then might they [do] no more / To advance themselves on the battlefield — [though] resulting they fall; / When Fortune becomes hostile, then falls prosperity / There [in such case] may no [amount of] treasure overcome [Fortune] nor divert her course

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

	Allane be werk and be will	Each person by deed and by instance
1245	Is worth his reward.	against
	"Schir Hallekis, Schir Hewis, heyd and hardy, Schir Lyosel luffy, and also Schir Bedwere, Schir Wawane the wise knight, wicht and wourthy —	noble
	Carys forth to the King, cumly and clere;	powerful
1250	Also my self shall passe with yow reddy, My kyth and my castel compt his conqueror."	Go forth (shall be) reckoned as his conquer arrayed most quickly
	Thay war aray ful taith, that ryale cumpary, Of lordis and ladis, lafum to leire,	describe
	With grete lightis on loft, that galf gretre leime —	light on high; radiance
1255	Sesty torcheis ful bright, Before Schir Gologras the knyght; That wes ase sensely ryght, In ony riche reime.	main
	All effrayt of that fair wes the fresch King. Wend the wyis had bone wrought all for the weir.	takes back by that conversion
1260	Lordis laught thair lancis, and went in ane lyng, And graithit thame to the gait, in thair greif geir.	Thought; gathered; warfare caught up; formed; column
	Synok spekis with speche, said: "Move you na thing —	readied themselves; gave; heavy gear
	It semys saughtryng thay seik, I se be thair feir.	Synagog; Attempt peaceful terms; fire
1265	Yone niche commis aray in riche robbing: I trow this devore be done, I doot for na deir.	kind (i.e., Gologras); arrayed; were campaign; fear no harm
	I wait Schir Gawane the gay has graithit this gait.	possible; made possible this outcome
	Betwix Schir Gologras and he	himself
	Gude consterance I se,	Mutual respect
1270	And uthir knyghtis so fre, Lafsum of lait."	other appearance
	The renk raikit to the Roy, with his riche rouit —	(Gologras) approached; company
	Sesty schalkis that schene, seymly to schaw,	warriors who gleamed; fair to view
	Of baneatis and baronis bauld hym about,	banners
1275	In clothis of cleyne gold, cumly to know, To that lordly on loft that luffy can lost,	clothes
	Before the riale renkis, richest on raw;	(i.e., Arthur); (i.e., Gologras) did how in order
	Salust the bauld berne, with ane blith wout,	Greasy; look
	Ase furkenth before his folk, on felidis so few.	furling in front of; displayed

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gwain*

- 1280 The King crochit with crouanc, cumly and cleir,  
Take him up by the hand,  
With anc fair semblant;  
Grete honour that avenand  
Did to the deir.
- 1285 Than that seymly be sight said to the gent,      *[one] handsome to look upon (i.e., Gologras)*  
Wes vailycand and verteous, forostis ony vice:      *[Who]; valiant; free from any*  
"Heir am I cumyn at this tyme to your present,  
As to the wourchiphallest in world, worthy and wise,  
Of al that ryngis in erd richest of rent,
- 1290 Of pyth and of powres, peiries of pris.  
Heir I mak yow ane granz, with godly entent,  
Ay to your presence to persew, with al my service;  
Quhare ever ye found or fair, be firth or be fell,  
I sal be reddy at your will
- 1295 In alkin rescouane and skill,  
As I am halidin thairill,  
Treuly to tell."
- He did the Conquerour to know all the crase quhy,  
That all his hathillis in that heir, hally on hight —<sup>1</sup>
- 1300 How he wes wonnyn of wer with Wawane the wy,  
And al the fortoune the freke befell in the fight;  
The doot and the danger he tauld him quently.  
Than said Arthur himself, semely by sight:  
"This is ane soveranefull thing, be Jhesu, think I,
- 1305 To leif in sic perell, and in sa grete plig.  
Had ony prejudice apperit in the partyoe,  
It had bene grete perell.  
Bot sen thi lawrif is lell,  
That thow my kyndnes wil hell,
- 1310 The mare is thi price.
- inclined [towards him]  
look  
noble [king]  
that worthy  
  
right; majority to attend  
might; unequalled in honor  
  
ever; majority to attend  
wood or fire, by wood or by hill  
  
every cause and situation  
bound them  
  
the made; reason why  
made prisoner  
owner [than to] the knight (i.e., Gwain)  
peril; graciously  
powerful (nobility)  
live in (go through) such  
small-mindedness; (opposing) party  
  
loyalty is true  
[So] that; acknowledge  
your honor

<sup>1</sup> [So] that all of his warriors of that (i.e., Gwain's behavior) bear, wholly our load (i.e., give our to his public account)

*The Knightly Tale of Golougras and Gawayn*

	"I thank the mekill, Schir Knight," said the Ryall.	
	"It makis me blythar to be than all thi braid landis, Or all the rentis fra thyne unto Romewall, Thoght I myght reif thame with right, rath to my handis."	<i>so feel gladder your warf Romewall (Even) though; wise; sharply</i>
1315	Thas said the senyeour in syth, semely in sail: "Because of yone bald berne, that broght me of bandis, All that I have undir hevyn, I hold of you haill, In firth, forest and fell, qahare ever that it standis. Sen wourschipfull Wawane has woonyn to your handis	<i>and at once exclusively woods; moor Soverain lordship</i>
1320	The senyory in governyng, Camly Conquerour and Kyng, Heir mak I yow obeising, As liege lord of landis.	<i>obedience (homage) service</i>
	"And syse fewnd I yow fest, without fesying, <sup>2</sup> Sa that the cause may be kend, and knawis thow skill, Bithly bow and obeise to your bidding, As I am baldin, to tell truly, thairill." Of Schir Golougras grant bith wes the King, <sup>3</sup>	<i>Gladly [I] bow and submit bound; serve</i>
1325	And thought the forward wes fair, freyndship to falil. Thair Schir Gawayn the gay, throu requiring, Gart the Soverane himself, semely on syll, Cary to the castel, cleiry to behald — With all the worthy that were,	<i>pace beseeching Had; handsome on floor Go off were (there)</i>
1330	Erl, duke and douchopere, Baith banrest and bachilere, That blyth war and bald.	<i>duchopere (compassion knight); bannrest and bachelor (knights)</i>
1335	Quhen the semely Soverane wes set in the sail, It wes selcouth to se the seir service. Wynis wisly in wane went full grete wail! <sup>4</sup>	<i>wonderful; various courses</i>

<sup>2</sup> Because of that bold knight who brought me in bonds (i.e., made me his prisoner)

<sup>3</sup> Lines 1324-25: Therefore fuly I to you [make] fast, without fanyf doot, / So that the compact may be / openly shown, and known through signe

<sup>4</sup> By Sir Golougras' submission the King was delighted

<sup>5</sup> Lines 1339-40: Wynis fulyngly in (i.e., around) the hall were (i.e., circulated) [In] very great abundance / Among the princes or noble, unequalled in honor

*The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawayn*

- 1340 Amang the pryncis in place, peirles to price.  
It war teir for to tel, treuly in tail,  
To oþy wy in this world, wourthy, I wisc,  
With reveling and revay all the oþak hale,  
Also rachis cas ryn undir the wod rise;  
hardship; detail  
in appropriate style; indeed  
reveling and celebration all the week entire  
As small hounds did run; forest boughs
- 1345 On the riche river of Rose ryot thair maid.  
And synse, on the synste day,  
The renkis rial of array  
Bownyt name thair way,  
Withoutin marc baid.  
*Rhyme festival*  
after; ninth  
See off  
way
- 1350 Quhen the ryal Roy, maist of renoune,  
With al his reverend rout wes reddy to ryde,  
The King, cumly with kith, wes crochit with crowne.  
To Schir Golagros the gay said godly that tyde:  
"Heir mak I the reward, as I have renoune,  
grease of renoun  
company  
household was furnished  
time
- 1355 Before thir seyeouris in sight, sensely beside,  
An tauching thi tempealte, in tourt and in toune,  
In firth, forest, and fell, and woddis so wide:  
I mak releisching of thin allegiance.  
those lords in public  
your names  
give release
- 1360 But dredit I sal the warand,  
Saith be sey and be land,  
Fre as I the first land,  
Withoutin distance."  
Without doubt; declare  
both by sea  
absolutely

Explicit.

*The end*

Heir entis the Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawayn  
[for sale] in the south gait of Edinburgh  
be [by] Walter Chepmas and Androw Millar,  
the viii day of Aprile,  
the yhere of God, M.CCCCC. and viii. yheris

### Notes

I have normalized the orthography of the Chapman-Myllar print (giving "th" for thorn; "gh," "g," or "y" for yogh as appropriate; "j" [note quot. marks] for "Y"; "u" for "v" and "w," "v" for "u" and "w," and "w" for "u" and "v") to accord with modern usage. I have expanded numerals and abbreviations ("&" as "and," and so on). Punctuation (including capitalization) is editorial, and word division reflects current standard use. I have recorded (and corrected) obvious compositor's errors, such as turned letters ("u" for "n," "c" for "l," "f" for long medial "s," and so on); in such cases I have only indicated those instances where Amours' edition differs. On the other hand, in those instances where errors in the print require a substantive emendation, I have tried to indicate the relationship of the present text to Amours' edition. Differentiating between corrections and emendations is not, however, always a straightforward process; I have tried nonetheless to give notice where decisions to change the text follow Amours' lead.

Abbreviations: CM = Beattie's facsimile of the Chapman-Myllar print (1508); A = Amours' edition; M = Madden's edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

- Title *Gologras*. I elect the spelling *Gologras* for the title as the representative one from the print; this occurs thirteen times, with *Golagras* and *Golograss* once each. *Golageos* occurs twice and in the colophon, and *Golagras* and *Gologras* once each. Editions and allusions have virtually exhausted the possible forms for the poem's title; Pinkerton (1792) used *Gologras*; David Laing's facsimile reprint (1827), *Golagrur*; Trautmann (*Anglia*, 1879), *Golagrur*; Madden and Amours use *Golagras*. The Asloan MS (c. 1515) refers to "The buke of Syr Gologruss and Syr Gawane"; in the *Complaynt of Scotland* (1543), one of the shepherds tells of *Gollogras*; and Sir David Lyndsay's "Squire Meldram" (1548) alludes to *Golibras*. These latter references certainly demonstrate the romance was well known in the earlier sixteenth century.
- 2 toward Tuscany. In the French source, these adventures of the Round Table take place not on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but when Arthur and his company set out to release the imprisoned Gieflet from the Chateau Orgueilieux. The specification of Tuscany (in northern Italy) as a part of Arthur's route to Jerusalem directly recalls one of the major narrative sections

### Notes

of the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*; here Arthur rejects Rome's claims for tribute, and wages devastating war across France and Italy, until, in the last phase of the campaign, "Inno Taskane he tournez" (line 3150). *Gologras* differs decisively from the other *Guinevere* romances by altering its setting from the regional — Carlisle and its environs — to the international; in moving Arthurian adventure *over the sey* (line 3), *Gologras* places the Round Table in the context of what the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* calls "Ewrope the large" (line 574).

- 5      *barounis*. CM: *baroñis*.
- 9      *douchy*. CM: *douchy*.
- 16     *feyeling*. CM: *sensing*.
- 17     *fresh*. CM: *fresh*.
- 18     *stout*. CM: *stout*.
- 19     *on stray*. This prepositional phrase is an ancestor of modern English "astray," though in alliterative poetry its meaning varies to the point, as A notes in his glossary, of being "often meaningless." In *Awntyres*, lines 511, 532 (as below at line 916), it seems to mean to hammer "away" at an opponent, rather than to strike an errant blow. In *Jeane*, line 207, *out of straye* seems to mean aside, off the path. Here it certainly does not imply "astray," but simply to be off and away; at line 992 below, which repeats the same phrase from this line, the meaning seems ambiguous, either "start off" or "go astray."
- 22     *silver*. CM: *silver*.
- 46     *Arthur*. CM: *Arthur*.
- 47     *ane seynd*. CM: *ane send*; A: *ane saynd*.
- 49     *toune*. CM: *toune*.
- 51     *bouse*. CM: *bonne*.
- 66 ff.    This description of the embroidered or engraved canopy, recording in pictures and words the most memorable deeds of heroic legend, parallels the passage on

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

the Nine Worthy (see lines 1233 ff. and note) or indeed *Gologras* itself as a mirror of honor bound together by alliteration and rhyme.

67      *doughyest*. CM: *doughyest*.

69      *couth*. CM: *couth*.

77      *couth*. CM: *couth*.

80      *broche . . . bright*, CM: *broche . . . bright*.

82      *claught*. CM: *claught*.

84      *angir*. CM: *angir*.

86      *ane woundir gym sire*. *Gologras* maintains the anonymity of this protagonist, though in the source, the *Roman de Perceval*, the knight identifies himself as Yôlier le Bel, a knight of the Round Table about whom there is a separate thirteenth-century French verse romance.

98      *Thow*. The first two letters of the first word of this line are lacking because of a missing piece of the leaf in the printed text. A provides *Thow*, which I follow.

99      *thow*. A emends to *thou*.

103     *noght*. CM: *noght*.

112     *more*. CM: *more*.

115     *sykis yow with nay*. This vivid alliterative formula occurs with some frequency, as below in line 332. When *Gawain* asks after the whereabouts of the Green Knight, "al sykked hym wyt h nay" (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 706, and see line 247); see also *The Pistol of Sweet Susan*, line 148, in *Heroic Women From the Old Testament*, ed. Russell A. Peck, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991).

122     *folk*. CM: *fook*.

### Notes

- 122-23 I punctuate as if line 123 were elliptical, meaning, "Let us await some better word." A suggests emending *fayr* to "fayn," which would give, "Your folk are feeble, and for lack of food are glad to await (or anticipate) some better word."
- 125 *nase*, CM: *naas*.
- 129 *Reynit*, CM: *Reymit*.
- 130 *lightir downe*, CM: *lightir downā*.
- 133 *asill*, CM: *faill*.
- 145 The lord's response — I will allow no supplies to be sold — is calculated to mislead Gawain, and thereby to test his courtesy. When Gawain sidesteps the temptation to appropriation by force, the lord reveals that — in keeping with the gift economy of an idealized honor culture — payment or sale are not possible since he will freely give all he has.
- 147 *your*, CM: *your*.
- 148 *answert*, CM: *answrit*.
- 151 *weild ar*, CM: *weilder*.
- 159 *cognisance*. A quasi-technical term designating the arms, colors, and dress distinctive to a knight; the lord here emphasizes the gap between Kay's unmissable chivalric appearance, and his unskightly behavior. Moreover, by asserting "wait I nocht quhat he is" (line 163) the lord reduces Kay to a nobody, stripping him of his chivalric identity and all claims to honor.
- 162 *wraithly*, CM: *wraighty*.
- 166 *And his presence plane*. The phrase seems to mean "before the king and court," where *presence* means "royal presence," and *plane* means "full" (from French *plein*, Latin *plenus*); see *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue, presence*, n.2.b.
- 167 *certane*, CM: *certane*.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologrus and Gawain*

- 174 *and weith.* CM: *is weith.* I follow A's emendation.
- 176 *with.* CM: *widht.*
- 182 *Hith.* CM: *High.*
- 189 *renoun.* CM: *reoun.*
- 191 *cousing.* CM: *cousing.* Just who this anonymous knight is, or what relation he claims to Arthur, remains unknown; see line 86 and note.
- 195 *Ressone.* CM: *Ressene.*
- 196 *medis.* CM: *medir.*
- 203 *knight.* CM: *knight.*
- 205 *crownit.* CM: *crovint;* A: *crownit.*
- 209 *service . . . new.* CM: *seruite . . . neuar.*
- 211 *to wail.* In this and analogous phrases — *in wailif* (line 223), *to wale* (line 361) — *wale* means “to choose,” “to be chosen,” and suggests those things that are choicest, most honored and honorable, of greatest pleasure or abundance.
- 215 *war.* CM: *wai.*
- 217 *rushly.* CM: *fusly.*
- 218 *days.* A reads *dayt.*
- 226 ff. This cursory reference to a royal hunt signals the nearly obligatory nature of such episodes in Arthurian romance, and their function as narrative cues for impending events. *Ragnelle*, *Carlisle*, *Arwyoung*, and *Awntryr* all employ the royal hunt in this way. See also line 1344.
- 229 *pavillonis, proudly.* CM: *passionis proudly.*

### Notes

- 230 *knichtis*. This rhyme, at the turning point of the stanza, is clearly a misprint or corrupt reading; "hathills" or some similar word is needed.
- 233 *mountain guy*. CM: *mountain pay*; A reads *mountainr*. The original reading is rejected by all editors, who substitute *guy*; A suggests "graye" as an alternative.
- 237 ff. The details of Gologras' castle, which stirs both admiration and hostility in Arthur, strikingly resemble those of the massive strongholds at the center of struggles between monarchs and local lords in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Its location on a high rock by a river, with a long curtain wall and defensive towers, recalls, for example, the magnificent Bothwell Castle, built above the steep sides of the River Clyde, south of Glasgow. Bothwell was captured twice by Edward I, lost by Edward II, occupied by Edward III's forces, then captured again and destroyed by the Scots in 1337. It passed to the Douglas family who rebuilt it, and then lost it to King James II of Scotland in 1445. Both Spynagros (lines 274 ff.) and King Arthur (lines 493 ff.) hint at the terrible destructiveness characteristic of siege warfare and castle assault in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; within the narrative of *Gologras*, on the other hand, such wholesale destruction becomes transformed into idealized chivalric combat between individual champions. Other castles in the south of Scotland associated with great families and enmeshed in strife against English or Scots kings included Threave, Hermitage, and Douglas Castles (Douglas), Craignethan (Hamilton), and Caerlaverock (Maxwell).
- 240 *envy, nor nygh*. CM: *in vy nor ny'*. A interprets, "nobody might view them with envy," meaning desire was pointless because of their impregnability. I take *note* in the common sense of "make or get use of" (OED, *note*, s.v.).
- 241 *laftam*. CM: *laftam*.
- 242 *feir*. CM: *seir*; M reads *zchir*. I instead for sense.
- 255 *ever couch*. CM: *ever couch*.
- 261 *Sohir Spynagrose*. In the *Roman de Perceval*, Arthur is accompanied in the main episode by Bras de Lis, the Brasdes of Jeaste; in *Gologras* he is replaced by Spynagros. Madden connects the latter (p. 341) with Malory's Sir Epynogrys, but this poet seems rather to have formed his name to echo that of the poem's second hero, Gologras. The character's name (like Gologras) is spelled var-

### *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

iously: *Spynagrose* here and at line 812, *Spynagras* (line 535), *Spinagras* (line 506), *Spynok* (line 1263), and *Spynagor* (lines 341, 779, and 795). These patterns may reflect no more than a compositor's whim in setting type, but I have chosen the last as the representative spelling.

- 262 *ford*. CM: *fordis*.
- 263 *everlasting*. CM: *ever lasting*.
- 266 *ever*. CM: *ever*.
- 267 *never*. CM: *nener*.
- 273 *I mak myne avow*. Arthur's impulsive, public oath takes the form of the speech act that defines chivalric identity within an honor/shame culture. Such public vows constitute the central plot of *Avowyng*; see the introduction to that poem, and lines 127 ff., 313 ff., 425 ff. and notes, and below, lines 292 ff. and note.
- 274 *more*. Here, and at line 276, *schorr*, the rhyme is defective. As A suggests, the difficulty in line 274 might be remedied by reversing the last two words — *more spir* — but the second faulty rhyme word points to some larger problem.
- 276 *be strenyeit*. CM: *bestres pair*.
- 278 *Goddis*. CM: *Cristis*; A emends to *Goddis*, which I follow.

succesdry. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, when the latter character, through his initial challenge of a beheading contest, has reduced the fellowship of the Round Table to silence, he asks, "Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquesnes?" (line 311). At the conclusion of the romance, the Green Knight explains that the motive of his mission to Arthur's court was "For to assay the varquidre, yif hit soth were" (line 2457; for to test the pride [of the Round Table] and see if it were true). In both cases, *sourquidre* suggests a false pride or arrogance linked to chivalry, which the Green Knight works to deflate. In the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, after Arthur has his dream of the Nine Worthy (see below, lines 1220 ff., especially 1233 ff., and notes), his philosopher explains to him that "thy fortune es passede," for "Thow has schedde myche blode, and schalkes distroyede, / Sakeles, in cirquytrie, in sere kynges landis" (lines 3394, 3398-99; your good fortune is over; you have shed much blood and

### Notes

destroyed people, without cause, in your pride, in many kings' lands). This passage, and the entire denouement of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, link chivalric pride with imperialistic, territorial ambitions and with the fall of the Round Table. Though some readers have taken *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* as outright condemnations of knighthood or knightly behavior in the late Middle Ages, they seem perhaps to offer — like Gologras — a delicate probe of the interdependence of honor, violence, pride, and courtesy, of the political constraints of kingship, state-making and national identity, and of the relation of a chivalric ethos to the values and experience of other estates, classes, and groups in an increasingly heterogeneous society.

- 279      *knight . . . with*. CM: *knich . . . wiþ*.
- 281      *the best . . . brevit*. CM: *thre best . . . brevit*.
- 282      *The neyghty king of Maccidone*. Alexander of Macedon, one of the Nine Worthy (see below, lines 1233 ff. and note) was the hero of more medieval narratives than any other figure; throughout Europe and in the Middle East as well, it has been said that Alexander stories were exceeded in popularity only by the Bible. At least ten different works in Middle English and Middle Scots survive.
- 289      *be licht*. CM: *he licht*. A emends to *be*, which I follow.
- 290      The demanding rhyme scheme makes clear that this stanza lacks a line following line 290, and that lines are missing as well following lines 331 and 550. Missing lines have not been numbered in the present edition.
- 292      *throu*. CM: *shrou*.
- 292 ff.     Arthur reaffirms here the vow he had made at line 273 (see note), and does so in terms that resemble celebrated oaths made by knights, actual and fictional. In particular, his vow that his body will never "be laid unlaisait to sclip" (line 294) recalls the oath made by Prince Edward (the future Edward III) in 1306, that he would not sleep two nights in the same place until he had made a campaign to the Holy Land. For the traditions associated with such public vows, see *Avowyng*, line 127 and note, and the material cited there, especially Oegelfinger, p. 614.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 297 ff. Arthur's open acceptance of the harm his warfare may cause non-combatants echoes the formulas that describe the effects of his campaigns in the Alliterative *Morte Arthur*:

Towers he turns, and tormentes the popic,  
Wranghe wedewes falle whocke wrothcyle syng(e)n.  
Ofte wry and wepe, and wrygene theirne handes

(lines 3153-55: Towers he throws down, and torments the people, made widows most proud to sing of their misery, to curse often and to weep, and to wring their hands). Having Arthur explicitly own responsibility for such consequences highlights the brutality associated with medieval warfare and with chivalric activity in general. Whether the mention of such suffering constitutes a direct critique of knighthood (as Matthews and others have argued) seems less than certain; literary works, vernacular writers, and Latin chroniclers seem often to regard violence as an inevitable condition or by-product of a chivalrous society, so that (as in Froissart) an author can simultaneously exalt knightly exploits and regard its victims as martyrs.

300 Quhan . . . made. CM: Quhy . . . myndr; I follow A's emendation for the sake of rhyme.

305 sparris. CM: speirris.

306 Monkir. CM: blouskir.

That brochir Monkir to thair sidis bair of rede blade. The distinctive alliterative formulas of these two half-lines are repeated at line 754; they occur elsewhere only in *Awstyr* line 499, and provide evidence for direct connection between the two poems.

308 ihandy. CM: I thandy.

309 gay. CM: pay. See line 233 and note.

310 Rose. CM: Rome. Arthur's pilgrimage over the sey (line 3), to the ciel of Criste, over the salt shude (line 302) seems certainly to have Jerusalem as its goal, despite the emphasis on passing through Italy (see line 2, note). Rose here then would seem to indicate not the city of St. Peter, but the Rhone valley. Further

### Notes

evidence for this identification occurs at line 1345: *On the riche river of Rose  
ryot ther maid.* The main episode of Gologras is therefore set in southeastern France, after Arthur has made his return from the Holy Land through Tuscany in northwestern Italy.

321 *knichtis.* CM: *kinchis.*

330 *burgh.* CM: *burgh.*

331 *Ressare.* CM: *Ressane.*

The rhyme scheme indicates another omitted line following this (see lines 290 and 550 and notes).

338 *Sir Lancelot de Lake.* Though Malory exalts Lancelot as the preeminent champion of the Round Table, at least among secular knights, he does not appear often in the Gawain romances. The exceptions are the Stanzaic *Marie Arthur* and the Scots romance, *Lancelot of the Laik*; for the latter, see the edition by Alan Lapack, TEAMS Middle English Texts series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994).

339 *Soir Ewin.* Ywain is a central figure in Arthurian romance from Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth-century *Yvain* through the fourteenth-century *Ywain and Gawain*; Carlisle mentions him in passing (see line 40, note).

340 *the schore chifone.* A, following M, suggests "high, noble" for this adjective. I take it as an adjective cognate with *to schore* (line 276), and with the noun of the same spelling, meaning "menace" (see OED, *schore* sb.2, and v.2).

344 *Iring.* CM: *irraig.* A gives *Iring* in his corrigenda.

345 *And.* CM: *And.*

356 *yon new.* CM: *you new.*

360 *An.* CM: *Her;* I follow A's emendation.

368 *Thre knichtis.* CM: *Thre thre kinchis.*

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 370 *frechly*. CM: *frechly*.
- 374 *knichtiz*. CM: *knichtiz*.
- 380 *swifly*. CM: *swifly*.
- 395 Schir Golagras. Though Spynagros has described this knight at some length, this is the first mention of his name. (For spelling, see note on title above). M tentatively connects the name with Malory's Galagars (see Works, p. 131); it also distantly resembles the name of a fiendish giant — Golafas — whom Arthur dispatches in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (line 2124). It seems to me more likely, however, that the poem uses the associations of the Chansons Orgueilleux (see note at line 2) to name a hero who embodied chivalric honor and pride.
- 400 *mediator*. CM: *mediator*.
- 402 *He is*. CM: *He his*.
- 405 *doughty . . . induring*. CM: *doughty . . . indarnig*.
- 406 *story big bke*. A, following earlier editors, in his glossary suggests "probably a thickly populated place," taking it as a metaphoric usage of the word derived from OE *bewic*, nest of wild bees. MED provides no help, but OED (*bke*, sb.4) gives a series of citations, almost all Scots, where the word means "ywarm of people."
- 409 *naw*. CM: *few*.
- 411 *crownit*. CM: *crovint*.
- 416 *doughtynes*. CM: *doughtynes*.
- 419 *quare wourcyp walke*. This alliterative formula specifies the heavy dependence of a shame culture like chivalry upon the circulation of honor through word of mouth; compare *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, "your worship walkez ayquere" (line 1521).
- 421 *sangit*. CM: *sangit*.

### Notes

- 424 *riches to rige*. An obscure alliterative formula (compare line 495). A takes *rige* to mean "to reign" (which fits well enough with the latter line). I take the phrase to mean something like "with power to dispense," suggesting here that in seeking the friendship and homage of Gologras Arthur will stop short of nothing within his power — offering both an open promise and a covert threat.
- 429 *gracious*. CM: *gracious*.
- 429 ff. Gologras' assertion here of hereditary autonomy within his own domain parallels claims made by many individual lords in resisting preemptive appropriations by kings and emperors during the later Middle Ages. When Edward I challenged the lordship of the Earl of Gloucester in Glamorganshire — one of the Celtic territories (in southern Wales) that typically provided new lands through conquest — the Earl countered "that he holds these lands and liberties by his and his ancestors' conquests." Similarly, when Edward claimed lordship over the lands of the Earl of Warenne, the latter asserted, "My ancestors came with William the Bastard and conquered their lands with the sword. The king did not conquer and subject the land by himself, but our forebears were sharers and partners with him." Robert Bartlett discusses the conflicts surrounding lordship through conquest in *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change: 950-1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 90 ff.; I have taken the above quotations from his citations. Arthurian romances often built their fictional worlds on these sites of real contest and conquest; in *Awntyrs Arthur beslows upon Gawain*, in compensation for previously appropriated territory that he has now restored to Sir Galeron, "Al the Glamergan leade with greves so greve" (line 665), that is, the very territory whose lordship the Earl of Gloucester had disputed with his king (himself a sponsor of Arthurian recreations).
- 430 *ever*. CM: *never*. I follow A's emendation.
- 434 *hail*. In its root meaning (whole, sound), *hail* implies not simply "hale" and "hearty," but also uncompromised autonomy of lordship, entirely possessed of their own estates and not in service to some higher feudal lord.
- 441 *subjectious*. CM: *subjectown*; A reads *subjection*.
- 448 *na for na distance*. In ME, *distance* usually means "strife" or "discord," and the phrase *withoutin distance* (line 1362, significantly the last line of *Gologras*)

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

means "indisputably," "forthwith." Yet in both instances in *Gologras* the word has connotations of deference connected to the formal gap or remoteness between lord and subject.

449      *noghr*. CM: *nogrh*.

456      *unsaught*. CM: *unsought*.

459 ff. The details mentioned here concerning supplies and fortifications constitute the starting point for a realistic description of a drawn-out and destructive besieging of Gologras' castle, which Arthur seems about to initiate (see lines 297 ff., 499 ff. and note). The poem quickly leaves such hints behind, however, turning its back on the grinding if dull conduct of warfare most typical of the late Middle Ages. In its place *Gologras* offers an idealized portrayal of chivalry, a series of duels and jousts that culminates in the battle of the two champions.

461      *alikin wappyns, I wys, that wes for were wrought*. The inventory mentioned here includes artillery — *Pelloskis* and *Gopand gunnes of braxe* — suggesting the ways in which technology changed the nature of man-to-man combat in the late Middle Ages, and the ways in which chivalry accommodated these new technologies to its style of warfare. Such heavy armaments were deployed (by both defenders and attackers) in the siege warfare that typified many late medieval campaigns. Gunpowder, by increasing the chances of dying by an unknown hand, diminished the potential for honor through violence. Though it mentions these up-to-date contrivances, *Gologras* clearly presents war as a series of individual encounters that are opportunities to earn honor, in the ultimate case by dying at the hands of a renowned, worshipful opponent; see, for example, lines 635 ff., 713 ff. and notes. On the effects of artillery upon knightly combat and the chivalric ethos, see Koen, *Chivalry*, pp. 241–62 and the bibliography cited there.

462      *bowlis of brax*. This seems to refer to a cross-bow or perhaps an arbalest, a weapon with a special mechanism (a windlass or crucklin) for drawing and slipping the string. Late medieval cross-bows were made with metal bows, which substantially increased the power with which they might hurl arrows, bolts (perhaps the *goryeis* of line 465), or stones. Such armaments were typically used in siege warfare, for they were too large and difficult to manage in open-field combat, let alone in individual encounters. Commonly the bow was made of steel. Other metals, like bronze or brax (as here) lacked sufficient tensile

### Notes

strength, and are not mentioned so far as I know in medieval sources; perhaps *bear* here describes the drawing mechanism.

465 *Grundin*. CM: *Grundis*.

470 *handys*. These are apparently scaffolds that the wrights construct in the woods; after transport to the walls of Gologras' castle, they will be used in the siege.

471–72 A points out that defective rhymes demonstrate that lines 471–72 are out of place in CM; I have therefore reversed them in the present edition.

479 *sachow*. CM: *sachir*; I follow A's emendation for the sake of rhyme.

485 *lass*. CM: *lass*.

488 *curyssance*. See line 159 and note. The honor of each knight depends upon the recognition by others of his distinctive arms, and then of his deed. The writing of knights' names — a kind of captioned identity for a literate spectatorship — seems out of keeping with the highly visual character of heraldic sign systems.

489 *nemes wrincis*. CM: *mamer wrincis*.

494 *wist*. CM, A: *rist*.

499 ff. Arthur vows here to destroy the countryside with *routis*, a kind of pillaging and scorched earth policy typical of English military tactics in France during the Hundred Years' War and after; the object of such warfare was to destroy the rents or income a lord might derive from his lands, and thereby to force his submission even when he was not personally vulnerable to attack. This devastation affected most directly the people who lived and worked on the lands; Arthur's second promise — to find alternate livelihood for his victims during a long campaign — is both a generous and uncharacteristic gesture for a medieval king. Such tactics continued as a practice in the border wars between Scotland and England throughout the late Middle Ages. On the *chevauchée*, see *Greene Knight*, line 246 and note, and on border raids see the Introduction, pp. 28–33. I take *noir* here in its primary ME sense of work, occupation.

501 *nine*. CM: *ir*.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

504 *fōre*. CM: *fōre* (as in line 536); I follow A's emendation in both cases, who follows M and Traestman.

507 *you*. CM: *yuo*.

508 *saill*. CM: *faill*. I follow A's emendation, which he makes without note.

*wil set upon sevin*. Here, and at line 668 — *that set upon sevin* — this proverbial phrase means to put everything at risk. It refers to the game of hazard (similar to craps), in which a player might stake his entire wager on one throw of the dice. At line 1045 the similar phrase *setis all on sevin* has almost the opposite meaning. See B. J. and H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968), 5359.

514 *myght*. CM: *mygth*.

516 *sicker*. CM: *silker*. I follow A's silent emendation.

519 *apone raw*. A, with his usual directness, comments that this "seems a useless tag . . . [whose] meaning is of the vaguest." But this formulaic phrase is both a descriptive and constitutive feature of alliterative poetry's oral component and of the chivalric honor culture that it exalts. The phrase *apone raw* describes the rhythmic, symmetrical, artifical style of this poetry, with its rhymes, repetitions, echoes, and patterned stanzas, but it names as well the mnemonic principle on which such poetry is composed and performed. When Gawain delivers his message to Gologras *on raw* — poised amidst the splendor and order of his own court, as Arthur, *richest on raw*, is later — he praises Arthur as the greatest lord to *ryme or rekin on raw* (lines 396, 403, 1277). Style, power, meaningful and memorable speech itself, all are dependent upon this articulated order (and upon others seeing, hearing, and confirming such sights and sounds). In the present scene, speaking and understanding are themselves matters of *reknend apone raw*, of remembering, refashioning, revoicing the scattered but already spoken fragments of shared wisdom. By reiterating formulas like *on raw*, the patterned, orderly verses of Gologras make clear the equivalence of language and action, of style and substance; moreover, this equivalence marks the exchanges within its narrative descriptions — Gawain before Gologras, Spynagros with Arthur — and its performative demands on its audience, whether in a reading or listening event.

### Notes

- 524 *seyndy*. CM: *seyndy*.
- 525 *A gome . . . glimond*. CM: *Agane . . . glifnand*. A reads *glifnand* in his corrigenda.
- 535 *suth*. CM: *sach*. I follow A's emendation.
- 536 *force*. CM: *fomre* (see note on line 504 above).
- 540 Spynagros tells Arthur, "Choose a champion" (*makir firth ane man*) to match the knight who has presented himself on the tower.
- 545 Gaudifeir. Carlisle mentions *Syr Gaytefer* (line 43 and note), but he does not otherwise appear as a knight of the Round Table. A points out that his exploits are associated with the cycles of ancient romance (Alexander and Caesar), which are retold in several Scots narratives, and in the French prose romance of *Perceforest*.
- 550 *gylf he nane And*. Precisely what this phrase means is unclear, since as a nobleman of great ancestry (see lines 545–46) Gaudifeir would surely possess all the accoutrements of a knight. Perhaps he acts as if starting from scratch, emphasizing the completeness of the arming ritual. The rhyme scheme indicates a line is missing after the present line; see lines 290, 331 and notes.
- 557 Galor. *Lancelot of the Lake* (line 302) mentions a Galot who seems to be the same knight as Malory's Galehaut; the latter's central role within the Arthurian fellowship makes it impossible to consider him the same knight named here as a vassal of Golgras. The alliterating names of Golgras' champions here and in the following scenes (lines 585, 653 ff.) seem to have been invented for this romance.
- 564 *stil*. A reads *stilf*.
- 572 *ane myle way and mair*. The ME phrase *myle way* (also at line 1119) indicates a measure of time, namely the interval it takes to walk a mile, or about twenty minutes. The poet here specifies that the two knights fought for a slightly longer period.
- 573 These formulas for the berserker character of chivalric violence are repeated at line 1014, and the b-verse occurs again at line 972.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gwain*

- 577 *yhude*. CM: *yhude*.
- 578 *mighthir*. CM: *mighthir*.
- 580 *craf*. CM: *craf*.
- 585 *Schir Rigel of Rose*. A knight apparently otherwise unknown in Arthurian romance. The localization of his lordship — of *Rose* — provides further evidence that the fictional setting for this episode, and for Gologras' castle, is the Rhône valley, in southeastern France. See lines 310 and 597 and notes.
- 586 *it quert*. A takes *quert* as the fairly common ME word meaning "peace, rest," in which case the line would mean, "until this matter is requited, I will not be at ease." If *quert* means "court," Gologras is making a stronger statement: "until it is requited, I will not be properly lood in my own court." Compare *Awntyrs*, line 257, where the ghost has Guenevere swear to act "Als thou art Quene in thi quert."
- 590 *never*. CM: *neser*.
- 591 *graithir*. CM: *graith ir*.
- 597 *Raynald*. A emends to *Ronald* to preserve consistency with subsequent spellings. The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* lists "Sir Raynalde" as one of the knights who accompanies the Roman prisoners to Paris (line 1607); he fights also at the siege in Saxony where one of his companions is "The riche duke of Rowne" (line 1995–96), recalling the title of Raynald's opponent, *Schir Rigel of Rose*.
- 599 *schround*. CM: *schround*.
- 600 *him*. CM: *ham*.
- 603 *Wich*. CM: *Wich*.
- 611 *knightr*. CM: *kinghtr*.
- 613 *right*. CM: *rihht*.
- 614 *Lightly . . . left*. CM: *Lightly . . . lefft*.

### Notes

624 *in.* CM: *in.*

635 *fauchr.* CM: *fauchi.*

635 ff. The death of even a minor character is a rare occurrence in a chivalric romance. Though "chronicle" narratives like the stanzaic and alliterative poems on the death of Arthur, and Malory's *More Dethar*, record the deaths of central characters — including Gawain and of course Arthur himself — they do so as part of the narrative underpinning that announces their status as epic or tragedy. These deaths function as moral signals, either of nostalgic loss in the passing of the heroes of chivalry's golden age, or of chastening deficiency in the spectacle of an honorable society's downfall. Occasionally romances seriously contemplate the death of a notable character, as in the life-threatening circumstances that produce the "tappe" that "severed the hyde" in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (lines 2309 ff.), or in the near battle to the death of Sir Galeron and Gawain in *Awynys*. Gologras, however, quite remarkably presents death as grim and grievous, and yet as the predictable, even inevitable, outcome of chivalric violence; though Arthur and Gologras feel fierce distress at the deaths of Sir Rigal and Sir Rassald (and later at the death of Sir Edmond, lines 726 ff.), there is never any question about the rightness of chivalric combat and killing. Both men die "with mckil honoar," are simultaneously buried with fit ceremony, and — most important of all — have achieved a lasting fame in the memory of a worshipful community: "Yet has men thame in mynd for their manhede" (lines 648 ff.). The narrative in this way simultaneously impresses upon its audience the high cost and the ultimate worth of the honor and violence sponsored by knighthood. See lines 713 ff. and note, Gawain's and Gologras' acceptances of their own deaths (lines 808 and 1035 ff.), and Gologras' long speech that pinpoints the paradoxes of honor entailed in freely giving up a life that one has created through the most strenuous exertions (lines 1201 ff. and notes).

639 *scheild.* CM: *scheid.*

640 *and fel.* CM: *one fel.*

652 *glossand.* CM: *glifstand.*

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 653     *Schir Louys*. The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* mentions *Louys* (line 4266), who is slain in the final battle with Mordred, though the composer of *Gologras* seems to have invented *Louys* afresh as a retainer of *Gologras*.
- 654     *Edmond*. This knight is otherwise unknown, and seems to have been created simply as Ywain's victim; he is apparently not the same champion as *Edmond* (line 739).
- 655     *Schir Bontifler*. Again, this otherwise unknown knight, who subdues Arthur's familiar champion Bedwar, suggests by his name the exotic character of *Gologras'* retinue.
- 657     *Schir Sanguel*. This champion of *Gologras* is otherwise unknown.
- 661     *Schir Lyonel*. As son of Bors of Gaul, and brother to Lancelot's constant companion Bors de Ganys, Lyonel plays a large role in many romances, including Malory's *Morte Darthur*.
- 662     *ashir*. CM: *a thir*.
- 663     *Schir Bedwar*. Bedevere is brother of Lucan the Butler, and one of Arthur's chief companions; in the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* and Malory, he survives the final battle with Mordred, attends Arthur at his death, and disposes of Excalibur, Arthur's sword.
- 664     *nennyr*. CM: *nennyr*. In his glossary, A gives the meaning "taken, chosen" (from OE *niman*); but (as the OED citation confirms) this seems to be the past participle of *neson*, "to be called," in this case, "to be called upon or summoned."
- 665     *Gyromalance*. In romances associated with Merlin, Gyromalance is the retainer of Amast, who refuses submission to Arthur. There is perhaps pointed irony in his role in *Gologras*, which makes him the vassal of Arthur who subdues Sangwel, the retainer of another lord who refuses homage to Arthur.
- 668     *scheiddis*. CM: *scheidis*.
- 669     *knightis*. CM: *knightis*.
- maid. Broken type in CM makes this a conjectural reading.

*Notes*

- 674-75 The idiomatic character of these lines makes them difficult to construe. A paraphrases, "Then their horses receive such hurts in their houghs ["hocks," the lower joint of the leg], are so sorely strained, as they stand quaking, checked in their unrest — i.e., pulled up, reined in, though eager to rush on." To me, the lines seem to emphasize not the horses' eagerness, but their frenzy: they suffered such shocks that they stand quaking like horses under great stress who cannot bolt because of their harness.
- 677 The formulas of these two half-lines, describing the ritualized havoc of battle, repeat with slight variation in lines 755, 847, and 874.
- 686 *bawldly*. CM: *bawldly*.
- 687 *brymly*. CM: *brymly*, which A prints. I emend to the usual form of *brym*.  
*bent*. CM: *bent*.
- 689 *Thros . . . schaldfir*. CM: *rhos . . . schaldfir*; I follow A in expanding a mark above *d* in *schaldfir* as an abbreviation for *ir*.
- 692 *gras*. A emends to *grasir*, i.e. "grasas." Though the form is somewhat odd (*grasys* would be a more likely spelling), *gras* fits the context.
- 693 *reath . . . rent*. CM: *reuth . . . rent*.
- 694 *cair . . . knighthis*. CM: *thair . . . kinghais*. A gives *kinghais* in his corrigenda.
- 696 ff. The statement that only God knows, and determines, the outcome of the combat reflects assumptions fundamental to a shame/honor culture like that of chivalry. Because violence constitutes the final proof of honor, the combatants must trust not simply that the best man will win, but that the winner will have proved the justice of his cause with God, the ultimate guarantor of such public rituals. Gaudifeir succeeds in rising from the ground and winning his duel with Galiot only "thros Goddis grete mightis" (line 578, above); Gawain's assertion in *Awntyrs*, concerning his combat with Galeron, that "God stond with the right," offers a striking articulation of this conviction; see *Awntyrs* line 471 and note.
- 698 *govern*. CM: *governe*.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

703 *herc*. A argues this is a form of "hire," and takes the line to mean, "they receive great harm and reward or glory." Almost certainly, however, *herc* is related to the common ME word *herien*, to ravage or pilage; in earlier ME, *herc* in fact means "devastation by war" (see citations in MED).

704 *All tosarvir*. CM, M, A: *tosarvir*. Skeat (*The Academy*, 6 January 1894, p. 13; cited by A) argues for this emendation on the basis that no such word as *tosarvir* exists in English.

706 *swendis*. CM: *swendis*.

The formulas in this line are repeated at line 1106.

710 *Stalwart*. CM: *Scalvert*.

713 ff. Though the syntax is ambiguous, the account makes clear that Gologras' champion Lowes captures Lyoneif (see lines 722 ff.). Here as earlier, Gologras takes care to emphasize the parity, even the symmetry, of the combat between the forces of Arthur and of Gologras: two of Arthur's knights are taken captive, while one of Gologras' knights is captured and one is killed. In giving the Arthurian side only a slight advantage, the narration makes Gologras a more formidable, and intriguing, opponent, and leaves questions of "rightness" within the poem and of audience sympathy more difficult to settle. The effect is also to increase the sense of the costliness and genuine loss consequent upon knightly violence, though without openly condemning such combat. See lines 635 ff. and note, and Gologras' speeches at lines 1035 ff. and lines 1201 ff. and notes.

714 *Giromakur*. CM: *Giromelour*.

720 *Ummanglir*. CM: *Wimaglir*.

721 The meaning of this line, clearly parallel to line 719, is hard to disentangle. A suggests, "none was so proud of his part that he could boast of it when he left the field, because they had all suffered so severely." I take it to mean almost the opposite: "not one of the knights so proud of his part in the battle did not win honor, even when captured" (though to obtain this meaning one has to assume a suppressed second negative).

### Notes

- 739     *Schir Agolar*. Malory mentions Sir Agloval, the brother of Perceval, some ten times, but it seems doubtful that Cador's prisoner here is identical to this Arthurian knight.
- Schir Ewmon*. This knight of Golgras', whose name recalls that of Edmond (line 654, slain by Ywain at line 726), is, except for the present exploit of defeating Owales, unknown.
- 740     *Schir Mychin*, *Schir Melgor*. These retainers of Golgras are otherwise unknown in romance.
- 742     *Schir Hew*. This knight of Golgras' retinue, otherwise unknown, resembles in name Arthur's knight Schir Hewis (line 1246).
- 745     *feyning*. CM: *feyning*.
- 746     *laflam*. CM: *laflam*.
- 747     *Cornwel*. CM: *Cornwel*.
- Schir Cador of Cornwel*. In the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, Cador of Cornwall is nephew to Arthur, who brings news of Mordred's treason to the king in Italy; he is father of Constantine, Arthur's successor (see Carlisle, line 44 and note). Cador and Constantine are both accused by Guenevere of lack of courtesy in *Awestyrz* (line 96).
- 748     *Schir Owales*. Since *Owales* (Owles, line 765) is otherwise unknown as an Arthurian knight, his defeat at the hands of Ewmon gives Golgras' side a victory without diminishing the glory of the Round Table.
- Schir Jwell*. This Arthurian knight is otherwise unknown.
- 749     *Schir Myrot*. This seems to be another Arthurian knight invented by the composer of Golgras.
- emell*. A is inclined to capitalize *Emell* as a proper name, making the fifth champion of the Round Table, matching the five knights named by Golgras. But he is not named again, and line 750 specifies four knights.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 764 *laught*. CM: *light*. The usual expansion would be *laught*, which makes no sense in this context, where *laught* fits appropriately. See note at line 922.
- 770 *as*. CM: *ad*.
- 775 *zmal*. CM: *zwal*, not noted by A.
- 776 *Arthur*. CM: *Arthur*.
- 778 *yore*. CM: *your*.
- 779 *sesu peir*. CM: *ses speir* (followed by A), which is clearly a faulty word break.
- 782 *his aune self shall do for his dail*. Spynagros' account pinpoints the tension between Arthur and Gologras, namely the latter's autonomy as a lord holding allegiance to no overlord, and therefore offering implicit challenge to Arthur's kingship.
- 783 *is this*. CM: *is thi*. I follow A's emendation.
- 798 *to countrir*. This seems to be a quasi-technical term of chivalric combat, encompassing a knight's formal engagement with an opponent (compare the action of line 845).
- 807 *mobil on the mold*. This distinctive alliterative formula occurs only here and in Awntyrr line 199 (see note).
- 809 *he war*. CM: *the war*. I follow A's emendation.
- 816 *do it*. CM: *doiſt*.
- 823 *sevin*. CM: *sevin*.
- 827 *Ayd*. CM: *Ayſ*.
- 836 ff. The assignment to Sir Kay of a small but successful part in the ongoing chivalric combat is a feature that distinguishes Gologras from all the other verse romances. Here he encounters and defeats, though just barely (see lines 869 ff.), an unknown champion of Gologras. Though this is clearly the preliminary

### Notes

- host to the central encounter of the poem, it is presented in complete seriousness, enabling Kay to earn an unwonted bit of honor.
- 857 *flow*. CM: *flow*, with initial two letters printed as a digraph.
- 872 *Aurum*. CM: *Aurum*.
- 873 *Kyngr*. CM: *kynde*. I follow A's obvious emendation.
- 875 ff. Arthur's reassuring reception of the unnamed knight, and the immediate attempt to comfort him and staunch his wounds (lines 882 ff.), reinforce the sense that chivalric values like courtesy and graciousness transcend any individual hostility. Though misfortune may overtake an honorable knight (see lines 864 ff.), he retains his worship and status within the chivalric community.
- 878 ff. *romanzis*. CM: *romans*. See note on line 778 above. The King's citation, within an Arthurian romance, of *romanzis [that] I reid* as a source of authority creates a degree of ironic circularity, in which a fictional character cites fiction as a guide to behavior. There is, however, a large body of evidence documenting the broad interdependence of art and life concerning chivalric practices and ideals in the late Middle Ages. Moreover, the King's remark, in idealizing the audience for chivalric romance (suggesting that even monarchs consult them), explicitly points towards difficult questions surrounding their sponsorship and consumption (see General Introduction, pp. 10-23). The King's phrasing in this line, while a common oral formula, confirms the impression that line 879 is a proverb, though it is not recorded by Whiting, *Proverbs*. It would seem to mean something like, "Even well started plans sometimes fail."
- 880 *paiþnoune*. An odd spelling compounded by a stroke over the final "n"; A reads *paiþnoune*.
- 884 *fresch*. CM: *fresh*.
- 889 *silk*. CM: *silk*.
- 895 *Norsk*. CM: *bonk*.
- 896 *gold and*. CM: *goldfond*.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 909 *thane*. CM: *than*.
- 922 *laught*. CM: *laught*.
- 928 *me*. CM: *may*. I follow A's emendation.
- 937 *And cleif throw the castell of the clene schelde*. In the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, just before receiving his fatal wound from Mordred, Arthur strikes his nephew/son so fiercely that "The castelle of the clene schelde he kerfes in sondyre" (line 4231). Awbery adapts this line as well in the description of the combat between Gawain and Galerons: "And clef his shelde shene . . . He clef thoegh the castell" (lines 520–21).
- 961 *as house*. The particular comparisons of Gologras — here to a lion, and at line 945, *Abe ferse as the fyre* — extend back (though not in a direct line) to the elaborated epic similes Homer used to characterize fighters like Sarpedon, Hector, and Achilles.
- 1002 *wondir*. CM: *wndir*.
- 1012 ff. The abridged, staccato syntax of this crucial stanza, which ends the combat between the main characters, reproduces the dense, chancy, abrupt character of the action. It begins with both champions frenzied from the battle (*witless* and *wod*). Gawain makes the first move, striking at Gologras and destroying his shield (just as Gologras had carved Gawain's *In twenty peris and me*, line 970). The blow is by no means lethal; however, as Gologras makes a return stroke (line 1020) he loses his footing on what seems an uneven battlefield (lines 1021–22). Fatigue, loss of blood, and the weight of his armor bring him crashing to the ground, and Gawain (in the following stanza) takes the opportunity to demand his surrender. The narrative takes care in this way to suggest that Gologras' defeat does not occur solely because of Gawain's superiority, but is an outcome presided over by circumstances, Fortune, and, ultimately, by God (see lines 508, 578, 635 ff., 696 ff., 1220, 1333 ff., and notes); chivalric renown therefore depends not upon victory, but upon honorable conduct.
- 1025 *ever*. CM: *ever*.
- 1031 *lif*. CM: *lif*.

*Notes*

- 1034 *answert*. CM: *answrit*; A incorrectly prints *answert* in his corrigenda.
- 1039 *ever*. CM: *ever*.
- 1043 *levit*. CM: *lens*. M emends for rhyme, though A defends the sense of the original reading as "nor look on my (dishonoured) body in the broad light of day."
- 1045 God, that *setteſ all on reſit*. This proverbial phrase alludes to the order imposed by the Creator during the seven days of creation. In the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, Arthur leads his forces against the giants who accompany the Romans: "Thus he setteſ on sevēne with his sekyne knyghtez" (line 2131), restoring order to his army and putting the giants in their place. A cites many additional instances. Compare the similar sounding phrase at lines 508 and 668 (with note at line 508).
- 1050 *Douſter*. CM: *Douſter*.
- 1053 *zwoſtit*. CM: *zwoſtir*.
- 1064 *loſt*. CM: *lost*.
- 1071 *eneach*. CM: *enath*.
- 1080 *hark for aſe luke*. A paraphrases, "shall make me hide from people's eyes." I take *hark* to mean not "hide" but "hesitate," with the phrase emphasizing the public, spectacular nature of chivalric honor, which a knight earns for *aſe luke*, before the gaze of onlookers.
- 1095 *jow*. A prints *show* here and at line 1099, but the first letter is clearly y, not thorn.
- 1105 *anſer*. CM: *anſer*; I emend for sense.  
*genteice*. CM: *gentrie*.
- 1114 *nir*. CM: *nir*.
- 1118 *scheith*. CM: *scheith*.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 1119 *way*. CM: *wan*.  
*style way and mare*. See note at line 572.
- 1135 *knightshede*. CM: *knightshede*.
- 1138 *presounne*. CM: *presonne*.
- 1144 *garisounne*. A paraphrases, "Knights made sport and glee of that prize." Citations from MED indicate that *garisounne* may mean "treasure," but usually with reference to material wealth or a particular object (compare *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 1255, 1807, 1837); here it seems to refer directly to Gologras' *castel of stane* (line 1125).
- 1148 *Al that with mouryng and myrth that maid melle*. The alliterative phrasing of this line recalls the end of *St. Efnoswald*, where the decomposition of the pagan saint's body causes the assembled throng to feel a mixture of emotions: "Moche mouryng and myrthe was melyd togeder" (line 350, ed. Ruth Morse [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1975]).
- 1154 *that*. A expands the abbreviation to *the*.
- 1165 *quhilk*. A prints *quilk*.
- 1167 *shai*. CM: *shair*.
- 1169 *governyng*. CM: *godgovernyng*.
- 1180 *concele*. CM: *concole*.
- 1186 *andfir*. A prints *under*.
- 1220 *Sen Fortune cackis the cours*. Gologras' explanation of his motives for saving his life on the battlefield are less psychological than philosophical. Fortune and her ever-moving wheel, which arbitrarily brings prosperity and ruin, is a common figure in medieval literature and visual art from the time of Boethius (sixth century). The iconography of her wheel often represents four kings (at top, bottom, and sides) marked by verbs that describe shifting phases of rule: "I reign," "I was reigning," "I have reigned," "I will reign." King Arthur has a

### Notes

vivid, prophetic dream of Fortune in the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, though here her wheel is not populated by anonymous emblematic kings, but by the Nine Worthy (see lines 1233 ff. and note). Gologras' reflections set up an opposition between Fortune's tricky regime, and the orderly providence of Christ (line 1223). But where the traditional Boethian hierarchies firmly establish the superiority of internal to external, of innocence/guilt to honor/shame, Gologras in this instance uses the traditional opposition to define two kinds of externally conferred shame/honor: false knighthood where one acts self-servingly to keep one's life or possessions, and true knighthood which pursues honor while completely disregarding immediate costs or possible gains. The connection between the inscrutable, inevitable chascisess of martial chivalry and the achievement of knightly honor is vividly pictured in one of the elaborate illustrations to Honoré Bonet's *Tree of Battles*: atop a tree filled with armored knights in combat stands Fortune, blind-folded and turning her wheel. At the bottom, slain knights, fallen from the tree, have their souls rescued by angels or are dragged into the mouth of hell. The iconography of the four kings does not appear; their absence makes the image not simply a *memento mori*, but an injunction — like Gologras' here — that every true knight should greet his fate — whether life or death, triumph or defeat — with an unflinching equanimity. For a reproduction of this illustration, see Andrea Hopkins, *Knights* (1990; reprint London: Orange, 1993), p. 135.

1231. *And muse in his myroure.* In *Awntyrs*, the ghost of Guenevere's mother chastizes her daughter in her speech of greeting:

"Thus am I lyke to Lucifer: takis witness by me!  
For at thi fresh brouere  
*Muse on my myroure;*  
For, king and emperor,  
Thus dight shal ye be!"  
(lines 165-69, italics added; see note)

The recurring presentation in chivalric romances of death — especially the deaths of the rich and famous — as a shocking and thereby memorable mirror of life underscores that gaining worship by arms can take place only in the shadow of death. The poems themselves function as mirrors to the aristocratic ideals of chivalry they describe, but they operate through an aesthetic not of mimesis (art imitating life), but of the spectacular (specular is the Latin word for 'mirror'). The brilliant surface, especially of the alliterative poems — their

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

decorated, lapidary descriptive style — mirrors the centrality of public gaze and display within the romances, conveyed, for example, through lavish dress, the jewelled, embroidered accessories of ladies and warriors, and the exhibitionist quality of warfare.

- 1233 ff. Gologras here allusively invokes the Nine Worthy, a group presented in medieval literature and art as the greatest exemplars of chivalric achievement in history. They included three heathen, three Jews, and three Christians: Hector of Troy, Alexander of Macedon, and Julius Caesar; Joshua, King David, and Judas Maccabeus; Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon. In *The Parliament of the Thre Ages*, Elide, discoursing on the vanity of the world, devotes almost three hundred lines (nearly half the poem) to the Nine Worthy (lines 297–583); see the edition by M. Y. Offord, EETS 246 (Oxford, 1999). Elide's conclusion is "Bot doghetynes when dede comes ne dare noghte habyd" (line 583; when death comes, valor dare not stay), a moral quite opposite to Gologras' assertion that "Ikane be work and be will / Is worth his reward" (lines 1244–45). The turning point of the Alliterative *Morte Arthur* occurs in Arthur's nightmarish but prophetic vision of the Nine Worthy on Fortune's wheel (lines 3218–3455); in effect the vision telescopes his own rise and fall, making Arthur ironically a moral emblem for the fleeting, precarious character of his own experience. Gologras, in omitting the three Christian Worthy, avoids anachronism (since Arthur is, in the course of the present narrative, only achieving his status, and Charlemagne and Godfrey are yet to come) and forgoes prophecy and explicit moralization; instead, the poem substitutes two heroes from the Hebrew Bible, and then compares all these to the modern instances — those heroes who have suffered in the present glorious combat. In drawing on the tradition of the Nine Worthy, Gologras accentuates the tension within chivalry between splendor and mortality; in Gologras' interpretation, the mortal limit that these heroes come up against ("merk," line 1237) becomes not a cause for rejection of the world, but a spur to the individual knight to grasp honor in the world without thought for consequences. This emphasis, though unusual within the moral tradition that surrounds the Nine Worthy, entirely typifies the chivalric ethos celebrated in Gologras, where knights paradoxically attain lasting worship through deadly violence. Certainly one of the most magnificent representations of the theme of the Nine Worthy must have been the set of tapestries woven in Paris around 1400; the much-reproduced portrait of Arthur shows this worthy crowned and enthroned, with crowns on his robes and on the banner he holds, at once sovereign and set for a fall. It is

### Notes

now in the Cloisters Museum (New York); see frontispiece to *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. S. Loomis (1959; corrected ed., Oxford, 1967).

- 1246 *Schir Hallolkitz*. A speculates that this name might be a corruption of *Schir Owales* (lines 748, 765), and not the introduction of yet another otherwise unknown champion.
- Schir Hewis*. This Arthurian knight does not appear elsewhere, though his name is suspiciously similar to that of Goloras' knight, *Schir Hew* (line 742).
- 1258 *In ony*. CM: *I ony*.
- 1271 *Lafnum*. CM: *Laffam*.
- 1272 *near*. CM: *near*. I follow A in emending for the sake of rhyme.
- 1295 *resounne*. CM: *resonne*.
- 1298 *Conquerour*. CM: *Conquer*.
- 1300 *wouyne*. CM: *wouyn*.
- 1301 *fortoune*. CM: *fortonne*.
- 1306 *prejudice*. CM: *presidice*.
- 1308 *shi*. CM: *the* (abbreviated); I emend for sense.
- 1312 *than*. CM: *thau*.
- 1313 *Ronsival*. OF Rescvals, modern Roncevaux or Roncesvalles (in Spain). ME Rouscavale, the mountain pass in the Pyrenees where Charlemagne's rear guard, led by his nephew Roland and the Emperor's twelve peers (compare line 1334, *douashpare*), was annihilated by the Saracens (Spanish Muslims). The event is celebrated as a glorious chivalric exploit in the *Chanson de Roland*, in ME Charlemagne romances, and in many other retellings.
- 1318 *ever*. CM: *ever*.
- 1322 *J*. The pronoun is lacking in CM; I follow A in supplying this.

*The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*

- 1324 *feyning*. CM: *sespenig*.
- 1326 *hilding*. CM: *hilding*.
- 1331 *syll*. CM: *sail*. I follow A in emending for rhyme.
- 1334 *douchspere*. The word is a variant of *doungperes*, i.e., "twelve peers," and refers in its origin to the twelve companion knights or paladins who accompanied Charlemagne in the battle recounted in the *Chanson de Roland* (early twelfth century). Since the sixteenth century the word has been used to identify any collection of great knightly champions. See note on line 1313; and see *Awsatyr* line 4 and note.
- 1355 *air*. CM: *their*.
- 1356 *naching*. CM: *naching*.

*temporalit*. This term, which usually refers to estates and possessions of the clergy, or more generally to the domain of secular (versus ecclesiastical) lordship, here seems to be used to clarify the autonomy of Gologras' rule, as a lord who owes allegiance to no superior. This emphasis on separate rule, outside the authority of the monarch, establishes for Gologras a unique position among rivals and opponents in the Gawain romances. In the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* Arthur bestows on an anonymous knight lordship of the region surrounding Toulouse,

"The tolle and the tachementz, tawernez and other,  
The towne and the tenementz with townez so lyte,  
That towcher to the temporarie, whiles my tyne laste"  
(lines 1568-70).

See the more traditional use in *Turke*, line 161.

- 1358 *shir*. CM: *ynt*.
- 1362 On the leaf following the end of *Gologras* occurs a "Balade" that runs for two and one half pages. It is a version of a poem, entitled "Rhyme without Accord," attributed to John Lydgate, a fifteenth-century monk and follower of Chaucer. The colophon of *Gologras*, given here immediately after the text, follows the "Balade."

## *The Greene Knight*

### *Introduction*

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is by acclamation the most subtle, learned, and enjoyable of poems about this chivalric hero, as well as one of the great narrative achievements in the English language. Yet there exists little evidence of its being read from the time of its composition in the later fourteenth century until the edition produced by Madden in 1839. Even if it did find readers, however, this profoundly literate text exercised little influence over the popular *Gawain* narratives represented in this volume. The kernel story, of a monstrous Green Knight who visits Arthur's court and tests Sir Gawain as the pearl of chivalry, seems to have been popular before its absorption into *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and there is every reason to think it would have continued as a great favorite in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Certainly some of the central motifs of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, like the beheading game in *Turke*, distantly reflect its plot, and there are echoes of its language and phrasing in other poems, like *Awntyrs*.

The best proof for the lasting popularity of this story is by far the present poem, called *The Greene Knight* in order both to connect it and distinguish it from its illustrious predecessor. Scholars have often assumed that *The Greene Knight* represents a quirky retelling of an exceptional narrative, but such a view neglects important evidence. An inventory of Sir John Paston's books from the late 1470s mentions among his titles several of Chaucer's poems, "The Dethe off Arthur," a series of chivalric romances (Arthurian and otherwise), together with "The Greene Knayght" and "my boke off knyghthod . . . [and] makynge off knyghtys, off justys, off tornaments and] fightryng in lyntys" (see General Introduction, p. 12). This remarkable library ranges from popular and oral stories to the most literate and learned texts (Paston also owned a copy of Cicero and a number of religious writings); the strong emphasis on chivalry and Arthur is particularly striking in a collection that dates from within ten years of the publication of Malory's *Morte Dorthor* in 1485. But Paston likely owned a more literary, and literate, version of *The Greene Knight* than our poem. The surviving text might well be a written record of the sort of recital mentioned by Robert Laseham in a letter describing festivities put on for Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575. Laseham offers an account of Captain Cox, a

### *The Greene Knight*

performance artist "hardy as Gawin," who acts, sings, recites, and professes "philosophy both morall and naturall." Cox possesses "at his fingers ends" — that is, within his memory and ready for recital on demand — a vast repertoire of stories, including ballads, songs, perhaps plays, and romances; he knows "King Arthurs book," a huge mix of other chivalric narratives, and "Syr Gawyn." Just which *Gawain* romance this was is not specified; that it was the story of the Green Knight is entirely plausible, for the Percy Folio Manuscript (where *The Greene Knight* occurs) makes clear that such popular performances provided the precise milieu where the surviving poem was produced.

Although the differences between the two poems leave open the possibility of one or more intermediate versions, the details of *The Greene Knight's* plot draw directly upon *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In many ways, in fact, *The Greene Knight*, as the later poem, seems almost a summary or guide in its determined spelling out of motives and events, its domestication of the challenging and mysterious, and its explanation of marvels and ambiguities. Yet, just because the surface narrative gives a reader less pause, the poem moves more quickly and gives a more immediate pleasure.

As its opening suggests, *The Greene Knight* was intended for popular recitation. In this, it resembles the other poems in the present collection, as well as other pieces in the Percy Folio Manuscript, where it occurs. The Percy Folio scribe clearly wished to preserve a large group of what were by the mid-seventeenth century ancient romances and entertainments, many of which must have been transmitted orally. The Percy Folio texts are in general more "popular" — marked for oral performance and mixed audiences — than surviving Middle English versions of the same stories. The manuscript contains *Turke*, *Marriage*, *Carle*, and *Cornwall* (all included in the present volume), several other stories involving *Gawain* (including a version of *Liberus Descomar*, the "Fair Unknown," a romance about *Gawain's* son *Ongolyn*), together with tales of Robin Hood and other heroes. The language of *The Greene Knight* suggests that it was originally composed about 1500 in the South Midlands. It is marked for two fits (perhaps indicating performance sessions), and falls into eighty-six tail-rhyme stanzas, running aabccb.

As in many of the other *Gawain* romances, the king's nephew stands out as the court's representative in dealing with the mysterious or unknown — in this case, a shape-shifting Green Knight. Given the lack of stir caused by this figure in *The Greene Knight* — he seems more a "jolly sight to see" (line 79) and a "vesteuous knight" (line 94) than an ogre or moral inquisitor — it is worth noting that simple reference to a Green Knight might not seem so extraordinary to a medieval audience accustomed to hearing knights identified by their colors or liveries. Green knights turn up in a number of chivalric romances (see note to line 109), including *Carle*

### *Introduction*

and Malory; it is only the extraordinary description in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, combining natural, supernatural, and courtly details, that has made the figure of a Green Knight on a green horse seem so completely without precedent. Like Dame Ragnelle and Sir Gromer in *Tarke*, Sir Bredbeddle (who appears also in *Cornwall*, where he is called "the Greene Knight," lines 214, 222, 233, and elsewhere) in his transformed state poses a challenge to Arthurian chivalric values, but the easy resolution of this challenge only reinforces the glamour of the Round Table's fellowship.

Yet the strangeness of this outsider in *The Greene Knight* is much modified from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, first of all by the insertion of conventional episodes like the exchange with the porter and the irritable response of Sir Kay to the initial dare. In addition, the multiple temptations, hunts, exchanges, and blows that organize *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are here all reduced to single events, and the relations between them, so richly unspecifiable in the earlier poem, are here made unmistakably plain for the audience. All of this makes the poem coalesce and speed toward its conclusion, and this sense of things coming together finds support in motifs of convergence and communion: the Green Knight actually sits down and shares a meal with the Round Table after making his challenge, Sir Bredbeddle is ultimately brought back to Arthur's court and joins its fellowship, and the poem ends with a celebration of the chivalric order of the Knights of the Bath. This perhaps reflects or even imitates the allusion to the Order of the Garter which follows the conclusion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, though it is striking that Sir John Paston's "boke off knyghthod" contained a detailed account of "How Knyghtis of the Bath shulde be made" (see note at line 502). Gawain's knightly role is to encounter the marvelous and bring it within the realm of the familiar; in *The Greene Knight* he succeeds in taming the mystery of Sir Bredbeddle, the dangerous love of his wife, and the magic of her mother.

### *Text*

*The Greene Knight* survives in a famous post-medieval manuscript, the Percy Folio, now in the British Library (see Bibliography). The Folio volume, about fifteen inches long and five and a half wide, and about two inches thick, was compiled about 1650 in a single hand. This collection, an unparalleled treasury of late medieval and early Renaissance popular compositions, was acquired by the antiquarian Bishop Thomas Percy of Dromore in Ireland (1729-1811). He reported finding the "scrubby, shabby, paper" book "lying dirty on the floor under a Bureau in the Parlor" of his friend Humphrey Pitt of Shifnal in Shropshire, "being used by the maids to light the fire" (ed. Hales and Furnivall, p. xii). The text of the present edition is based on the

### *The Greene Knight*

Folio, though it makes use of Madden's and Furnivall's prints (see Bibliography). The scribe wrote in a cramped and relatively rapid cursive, and the misadventures of the manuscript have not rendered it any more easily legible. The scribe frequently uses shortened notations for common words (i.e., *k* for king). In transcribing texts from the Percy Folio, orthography (including thorn) has been regularized, so that *u/v* and *i/j* appear according to modern usage; abbreviations have been expanded, names spelled out, and modern punctuation added.

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscript*

British Library Additional MS 27879 (The Percy Folio). Pp. 203–10.

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Hales, John W., and Frederick J. Furnivall. 1868. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

#### *Criticism*

Hulbert, J. R. "Syt Gawayn and the Grene Knayght." *Modern Philology* 13 (1915–16), 433–62; 689–730.

Kittredge, George L. *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*. Cambridge, 1916.

Day, Mabel. "Introduction." *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Ed. Israel Gollancz. EETS o.s. 210. London: Oxford University Press, 1940. Pp. xxviii–xxxix. [Discusses parallels and differences between *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Greene Knight*.]

*The Greene Knight*

*First Part*

- 1 List! wen Arthur he was King,  
He had all att his leadinge  
The broad Ile of Brittaine.  
England and Scotland one was,  
And Wales stood in the same case,  
5 The truth iit is not to layne.
- 2 He drive alliance out of this Ile,  
Soo Arthur lived in peace a while,  
As men of mickle maine,  
10 Knights strove of their degree,  
Which of them hyest shold bee;  
Therof Arthur was not faine.
- 3 Hee made the Round Table for their behove,  
That none of them shold sitt above,  
15 But all shold sitt as one,  
The King himselfe in state royall,  
Dame Guisever our Queene withall,  
Seemlye of body and bone.
- 4 It fell agayne the Christmase  
20 Many came to that Leeds place,  
To that worthye one,  
With helme on head and brand bright,  
All that tooke order of knight;  
None wold lager att home.
- 5 There was noe castle nor manour free  
That might harbour that compayne,  
Their puissance was soe great,
- Linen? when  
command  
Island  
united  
  
to conceal  
  
drove aliens  
  
While; great might  
disputed about their rank  
highest  
About that; glad  
  
on their behalf  
  
Handsome  
  
happened upon  
(That)  
  
helme; sword  
belonged to the knightly class  
  
lodger  
ensuage

The Green Knight

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
|    | Their tents up they pight<br>For to lodge there all that night;<br>There were set to meate.  | pitched  |
| 30 | Messagers there came and went<br>With much virtuous veramost,<br>Both by way and streete.  | food truly   |
| 35 | Wise and wild fowle thither was brought —<br>Within they spared neught<br>For gold, and they might iiii gett.  | In all<br><i>if they could get it</i>  |
| 40 | Now of King Arthur noe more I melli,<br>But of a venterous knight I will you tell<br>That dwelled in the west countrey.<br>Sir Brodbeddele, for sooth he het:<br>He was a man of mickle might<br>And Lord of great bewtye.         | speak<br>during<br>was called<br>great strength<br>beauty  |
| 45 | He had a Lady to his wiffe:<br>He loved her deerye as his liffe —<br>Shee was both blyth and bee.<br>Because Sir Gawayne was stiffe in stowre,<br>Shee loved him privilye paramour,<br>And shee never him see.                     | dearly<br>cheerful; fair of complexion<br>powerful; bold<br>secretly and passionately<br><i>Even though she never had seen him</i> |
| 50 | Iii was Agostes that was her mother:<br>Iii was witchcraft and noe other<br>That shoo dealt with all.<br>Shoo cold transpose knights and swaine<br>Like as in battaile they were slaine,<br>Wounded in lim and lightt.             | could; servant<br>To appear as if<br>arm and leg   |
| 55 | Shoo taught her sonne the knight alioe<br>In transposed likenesse he shold goe<br>Both by fell and frythe.<br>Shoo said, "Thos shalt to Arthurs hall,<br>For there great adventures shall befall<br>That ever saw king or knight." | son-in-law<br>moor; woods<br><i>As</i>   |

*The Greene Knight*

- All was for her daughters sake,  
That which she soe sadlye spake  
To her sonne-in-law the knight:  
Because Sir Gawaine was bold and hardye,  
And thereto full of curtesy,  
To bring him into her sight.
- The knight said, "Soe mote I thee,  
To Arthurs court will I mee hye  
For to praise thee right,  
And to prove Gawaines points throe —  
And that be true that men tell me,  
By Mary most of might."
- Earlye, soone as itt was day,  
The Knight dressed him full gay.  
Umstrode a full good steede;  
Helme and hawberke both he hent,  
A long fasshion verament  
To feed them in his neede.
- That was a jolly sight to seeue,  
Wher horse and armour was all greene,  
And weapon that bee bare.  
When that borne was harnisht still,  
His countenance he became right well,  
I dare int safelye sweare.
- That time ait Carleile lay our King;  
Att a Castle of Flatting was his dwelling,  
In the Forrest of Delamore.  
For sooth he rode, the sooth to say,  
To Carleile he came on Christmas day,  
Into that fayee countrey.
- When he into that place came,  
The poeter thought him a marvelous groome.  
He saith, "Sir, wher wold yee?"  
Hee said, "I am a venterous knight,
- narrowly  
in addition  
(She wished) to
- On my lyfe  
myself hasten  
give you your due  
test  
Wherther
- got ready with all speed  
Beneath  
Helmet; armor; took  
broadsword truly  
shield
- Knight; completely armed  
He was equal to his appearance
- (i.e., the Green Knight)
- man  
what is your destination  
adventure-seeking

*The Greene Knight*

- 95 And of your King wold have sight,  
And other lords that heere bee."
- Noe word to him the porter spake,  
But left him standing att the gate,  
And went forth, as I weene,  
100 And kneeled downe before the King.  
Saith, "In lifes dayes old or younge,  
Such a sight I have not seened!"
- "For yonder art your gates right,"  
He saith, "Hoer is a venterous knight.  
105 All his vesture is greene!"  
Then spake the King, proudest in all,  
Saith, "Bring him into the hall,  
Let us see what hee doth meane."
- When the Greene Knight came before the King,  
110 He stood in his stitrops strechinge,  
And spoke with voice cleere,  
And saith, "King Arthur, God save thee  
As thou sittest in thy prosperitee,  
And maintaine thine honor!
- 115 "Why thou wold me nothing but right,  
I am come hither a venterous knight,  
And kayred thoerow countrye farr,  
To prove poynts in thy pallace  
That length to manhood in everye case  
120 Among thy leuds deere."
- The King, he sayd full still  
Till he had said all his will.  
Certein thus can he say:  
"As I am true knight and King,  
125 Thou shalt have thy askinge!  
I will not say thy nay,
- suppose  
just at  
Here  
trappings  
foremost of  
island  
raising himself  
Because; do by me  
have travelled through  
test  
That are appropriate  
remained quiet  
he (the Green Knight)  
Firmly; did (Arthur)  
request  
deny there

*The Greene Knight*

- "Whether thou wilt on foote fighting,  
Or on steed backe jousting,  
For love of ladyes gay.  
130 If and thise armes be not fine,  
I will give thee part of mine."  
"God amercy, Lord!" can he say:  
*drive  
horseback jousting  
And if  
did*
- "Here I make a challenging,  
Among the lords both old and young  
135 That worthy beene in weede —  
Which of them will take in hand,  
Hoe that is both stille and stronge  
And fall good att need.  
*dress  
{To see}; respond  
powerful*
- "I shall lay my head downe —  
140 Strike it off if he can  
With a stroke to gare it bleed,  
For this day twelf monthe another at his.<sup>1</sup>  
Let me see who will answer this —  
A knight that is doughtye of deed.  
*off  
make  
worthy*
- 145 "For this day twelf month, the sooth to say,  
Let him come to me and scicth his praye,  
Readily, or ever hee blin.  
Whither to come, I shall him tell —  
The readie way to the Greene Chappell:  
150 That place I will be in."  
*And then on  
make his request  
Readily or forever be silent  
Where*
- The King att ease sate full still,  
And all his lords said but little  
Till he had said all his will.  
Upp stood Sir Kay, that crabbed knight,  
155 Spake mighty words that were of height,  
That were both loud and shill:  
*exaggerated*

<sup>1</sup> In return for a similar stroke at his neck twelve months from this day

*The Greene Knight*

- "I shall strike his necke in tooe,  
The head away the body free!"
- They bade him all be still,  
160 Saith, "Kay, of thy dints make no rousel  
Thou wottest full little what thou does —  
Noe good, but mickle ill."
- Eche man wold this deed have done.  
Up start Sir Gawayne soone,  
165 Upon his knees can kneele,  
He said, "That were great villanye  
Without you put this deede to me.  
My Leoge, as I have sayd.
- "Remember, I am your sisters sonne."
- 170 The King said, "I grant thy boose.  
But mirth is best att meele:  
Cheere thy gaest, and give him wine,  
And after dinner, to itt fine,  
175 Now the Greene Knight is set att meale,  
Seemlye served in his seate,  
Beside the Round Table.  
To talko of his welfare, nothing he needs;  
Like a knight himselfe he feeds,  
180 With long time reasonable.
- When the dinner it was done,  
The King said to Sir Gawayne soone,  
Withouten any fable,  
185 He said, "On you will doe this deede,  
I pray Jesus be youre speede!  
This knight is nothing unsitable."
- The Greene Knight his head downe layd;  
Sir Gawayne, to the axe he braid  
To strike with eger will;  
190 He stroke the necke bone in twaine,
- two  
from  
*(Theyf) said; blow;* boast  
know  
much
- desired to have the quest  
immediately  
did  
*It would be great shame*  
Unless; assign  
Sovereign
- request
- Entertain  
bring it (the challenge) to conclusion  
deliver the blow
- dinner  
Properly
- With respect to his satisfaction  
With knightly manners  
leisurely
- immediately  
idle talk  
And if  
aid  
weak
- eager  
eager determination  
left

*The Greene Knight*

- The blood burst out in everye vaine,  
The head from the body fell. vain
- 195      The Greene Knight his head up hent;  
          into his saddle wightlye he sprent,  
          Spake words both lowd and shrill,  
          Saith: "Gawaine! Thinke on thy covenant!  
          This day twelf monthes see thou ne want  
          To come to the Greene Chappell!" seized  
                        vigorously; sprung  
                        bargain  
                        don't fail
- 200      All had great marvell, that they see  
          That he spake so merrilie  
          And bare his head in his hand.  
          Forth att the hall dore he rode right,  
          And that saw both King and knight  
          And lords that were in land. when  
                        carried
- 205      Without the hall dore, the sooth to saine,  
          Hee set his head upon againe,  
          Said, "Arthur, have boore my hand!  
          Whensoever the knight cometh to mee,  
          A better buffett sickerlye  
          I dare him well waerand." Outside; off  
                        pledge  
                        certainly  
                        guarantee
- 215      The Greene Knight away went.  
          All this was done by enchantment  
          That the old witch had wrought.  
          Sore sickle fell Arthur the King,  
          And for him made great mourning  
          That into such bale was brought. him [Gawain]  
                        trouble
- 220      The Queen, shee weeped for his sake;  
          Sorry was Sir Lancelott de Lake,  
          And other were dreery in thought  
          Because he was brought into great perill.  
          His mightye manhood will not availe,  
          That before hath freshlye fought.

*The Greene Knight*

- Sir Gwaine comfort King and Queen  
And all the doughtye there bedeene.  
225      He bade they shold be still,  
Said, "Of my deede I was never feard,  
Nor yet I am nothing adread,  
I swere by Saint Michael!"
- "For whan draweth toward my day,  
230      I will dresse me in mine array  
My promise to fulfill.  
Sir," he saith, "as I have blis,  
I wott not where the Greene Chappell is:  
Therefore, seeke itt I will!"
- 235      The royal courst verameat  
All rought Sir Gwaines insteas;  
They thought itt was the best.  
They went forth into the feild,  
Knights that ware both speare and sheeld  
240      They pricked forth full prest.
- Some chuse them to justinge,  
Some to dance, revell, and sing;  
Of mirth they wold not rest.  
All they swore together in feee,  
That and Sir Gwaine overcome were,  
245      They wold bren all the west.
- Now leave wee the King in his pallace.  
The Greene Knight come home is  
To his owne castle.  
250      This folke frend when he came home  
What doughtye deeds he had done,  
Nothing he wold them tell.
- Fall well he wist in certaine  
255      That his wiffe loved Sir Gwaine,  
That comelye was under keli.  
Listes, lords! And yee will sitt,
- worthy folk gathered together  
required; quiet  
death; afraid
- as I hope for heaven  
know
- truly  
understood
- were  
pricked (galloped); swiftly
- choose (decided upon)  
revelry and song
- as a group  
if; were killed
- burn all the west country
- These people asked  
brave
- knew
- and (cap)  
If you'll sit still

*The Greene Knight*

What adventures Sir Gawaine behel.

## Second Part

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 260 | The day is come that Gawayne must gone.<br>Knights and ladyes wased wass<br>That were without in that place.<br>The King himselfe siked ill,<br>Ther Queen a swounding almost fell,<br>To that jorney when he shold passe, | be gone<br>grew pale<br>stood outside<br>sighed grievously<br>Their; into a faire<br>journey |
| 265 | When he was in armour bright,<br>He was one of the goodlyest knyghts<br>That ever in Britaine was boore.<br>They brought Sir Gawayne a steed,<br>Was dapple gray and good ar need,<br>I tell withoutes scorn.              | in all seriousness   |
| 270 | His bridle was with stones sett,<br>With gold and pearle overfret,<br>And stones of great vertue.<br>He was of a farley kind.<br>His stirrops were of silke of Ynde,<br>I tell you this tale fee true.                     | overland<br><br>(The horse); marvelous<br>India  |
| 275 | When he rode over the mold,<br>His goore glistered as gold.<br>By the way as he rode<br>Many furleys he there did see.<br>Fowles by the water did floe,<br>By brimes and bannes soe broad.                                 | (Gawayne); earth<br><br>marvels<br>Birds<br>waters; shores                                   |
| 280 | Many furleys there saw hee,<br>Of wolves and wild beasts sikerlye;<br>On hunting hee tooke most heed.<br>Forth he rode, the sooth to tell,<br>For to seeke the Greene Chappell;  | marvels<br><br>caution   |
| 285 | He wist not where indeed.  | know   |

*The Greene Knight*

- 290 As he rode in an evening lane,  
Riding downe a greene gate, pathway  
A faire castell saw hee,  
That seemed a place of mickle pride.  
Thitherward Sir Grawaine can ryde, did  
To gett some harborrowe. lodging
- 295 Thither he came in the twylight.  
He was ware of a gentle knight, became aware  
The lord of the place was hee.  
Meekly to him Sir Grawaine can speake did  
And asked him, "For King Arthurs sake,  
300 Of harborrowe I pray thee!"
- "I am a far labordd knyght — an utterly exhausted  
I pray you, lodge me all this night." did not say no  
He sayd him not nay:  
He tooke him by the arme and led him to the hall.  
305 A poore child can he call, did  
Saith, "Dight well this palfrey." Take good care of
- 310 Into a chamber they went a full great speed.  
There they found all things readye att need,  
I dare safelye sweare:  
Fier in chambers burning bright, fire  
Candles in chandliers burning light. candlesticks  
To supper they went full yare. readily
- 315 He sent after his Ladye bright  
To come to supp with that gentle knight,  
And shee came blythe withall. gladly  
Forth shee came then apon,  
Her maids following her eche one one by one  
In robes of rich pall. fine purple
- 320 As shee sate att her supper,  
Evermore the Ladye clere

*The Greene Knight*

- Sir Gawayne shoo looked upon.  
When the supper it was done,  
Shee tooke her maids, and to her chamber gone. west
- He cheered the knaigt and gave him wine,  
And said, "Welcome, by St. Martine!  
I pray you, take iiii for nose ill! to your health  
One thing, Sir, I wold you pray;  
What you make soe farr this way? brings you to these remote parts  
The truth you wold me tell.
- "I am a knight, and soe are ye:  
Your cousell, an you will tell mee,  
Foosooth keepe iiii I will. confidence if  
For if iiii be poynf of any dead,  
Perchance I may helpe all need,  
Either lowd or still." anything worrisome  
publicly; privately
- For his weuds that were soe smooth,  
Had Sir Gawayne wist the soothe, In reply to; polished  
known the truth  
All he wold not have told:  
For that was the Greene Knight
- That hee was lodged with that night,  
And barbarmous in his hold. reside; keep
- He saith, "As to the Greene Chappell,  
Thitherward I can you tell,  
Iii is but furlongs thre. [Sir Brebedeele]  
The master of it is a venterous knight,  
And workes by witchcraft day and night,  
With many a great furley. three  
during  
wonder
- "If he workes with never soe much frauce,  
He is curteous as he sees cause. Even if he acts; clamor  
when he sees fit  
I tell you sikerlye,  
You shall abyde, and take your rest,  
And I will into yonder Forrest narely  
stay in bed late  
Under the greenwood tree."

*The Greene Knight*

- 355 They plight their truthe to beleeve,  
Either with other for to deale,  
Whether it were silver or gold.  
He said, "We two both sworn wil be  
Whatsoever God sendis you and mee,  
To be parted on the mōd." *pledged their troth in agreement exchange*  
*/The Green Knight/*  
*divided evenly on earth*
- 360 The Greene Knight went on hasting;  
Sir Gawayne, in the castle beinge,  
Lay sleeping in his bed.  
Up rose the old wiche with hast throwe,  
And to her dashter can shee goe,  
And said, "Be not afread!" *remaining*  
*with all haste*  
*daughter did she*  
*Don't be frightened*
- 365 To her daughter can shee say,  
"The man that thou hast wiste many a day,  
Of him thou maist be sped,  
For Sir Gawayne, that curteous knight,  
Is lodged in this hall all night."  
Shee brought her to his bedd.  
*did*  
*desired*  
*succeed*
- 370 Shee saith, "Gentle knight, awake!  
And for this faire ladies sake,  
That hath loved thee soe deare,  
Take her boldly in thine armes.  
There is noe man shall doe thee harme."  
Now boone they both heare. */The mother/*  
*Finally; together*
- 375 The Ladie kissed him times thre,  
Saith, "Without I have the love of thee,  
My life standeth in dere."  
Sir Gawayne blushed on the Lady bright,  
Saith, "Your husband is a gentle knight,  
By Him that bought mee deare!" *Unless*  
*was*  
*glanced at*  
*noble*  
*redeemed*
- 380 "To me itt were a great shame  
If I shold doe him any grame,  
That hath boone kind to mee.  
For I have such a deede to doe," *harm*

*The Greene Knight*

- That I can seyther rest nor roe,  
All an end till iiii bee." relax  
*Until it be finished*
- 390 Then spake that Ladyc gay,  
Saith, "Tell me some of your journey;  
Your succour I may bee.  
If iiii be poynt of any warr,  
There shall noe man doe you noe darr something: mission  
*matter of warfare*  
395 And yee wil be governed by mee. *if: guided*
- "For heere I have a lace of silke:  
It is as white as any milke,  
And of a great value."  
Shee saith, "I dare safelyc swear  
400 There shall noe man doe you deere lace  
When you have it upon you."
- Sir Gawayne spake mildlye in the place:  
He thanked the Lady and tooke the lace,  
And promised her to come againe. courteously
- 405 The knight in the Forrest slew many a hind; doe  
Other venison he cold nose find,  
But wild boes on the plaine, *game he could*  
*Except; flatland*
- Plestye of does and wild swine,  
Foxes and other ravine. predatory
- 410 As I haue true men tell. *heard*
- Sir Gawayne swore sickerlye,  
"Housse to your owne, welcome yee bee,  
By Him that harrowes hell!" liberate
- 415 The Greene Knight his venison dowsac layd; kill  
Then to Sir Gawayne thus hee said,  
"Tell me anoon in heght,  
What noveltyes that you haue won,  
For heer is plenty of venison." *aloud*  
*new things*  
*meal*
- Sir Gawayne said full right:

*The Greene Knight*

- 420 Sir Grawaine sware, "By St. Leonard!  
Such as God sends, you shall have part!"  
In his armes he hent the Knight,  
And there he kissed him times thre,  
Saith, "Heere is such as God sends mee,  
425 By Mary most of myght."
- Ever prively he held the lace:  
That was all the villanye that ever was  
Prooved by Sir Grawaine the gay.  
Then to bed soone they went,  
430 And slepted there verament  
Till morrow iiii was day.
- Then Sir Grawaine soe carous and free,  
His leave soone taketh hee  
All the Lady soe gaye.  
435 Hee thanked her, and tooke the lace,  
And rode towards the Chappell apace;  
He knew noe whitt the way.
- Ever more in his thought he had  
Whether he shold worke as the Ladye bade,  
440 That was soe carous and sheene.  
The Greene Knight rode another way,  
He transposed him in another array,  
Before as it was greene.
- As Sir Grawaine rode over the plaine,  
445 He hard one high upon a mountaine  
A horne blowne full lowde.  
He looked after the Greene Chappell:  
He saw iiii stand under a hill  
Covered with evyes about.
- He looked after the Greene Knight:  
450 He hard him webett a firschion bright,  
That the hills rang about.  
The knight spake with strong cheere,
- grasped
- secretly
- upon
- truly
- kept
- not a hit
- act  
radiant
- himself in different trappings  
green as before*
- resoundingly (aloud)
- around for
- wiles
- sharpen; broad sword  
So that  
a stern countenance

*The Greene Knight*

- 455 Said, "Yee be welcome, Sir Grawaine, heere;  
It behooveth thee to lowrie."  
becomes you; bow  
  
He stroke, and litle perced the skin,  
Uneth the flesh within.  
Then Sir Grawaine had noe doubt.  
He saith, "Thou shonest! Why dost thou soe?"  
460 Then Sir Grawaine in hart waxed threwe:  
Up on his feete can stand,  
*pierced a little  
but scarcely (barely)  
no (more) worry*  
*(The Green Knight); flinched  
heart; ferocious  
did*  
  
And soone he drew out his sword,  
And saith, "Traitor! if thou speake a word,  
Thy litle is in my hand.  
465 I had but one stroke att thee,  
And thou has had another att me:  
Noe falsehood in me thou found!"  
  
And soone he drew out his sword,  
And saith, "Traitor! if thou speake a word,  
Thy litle is in my hand.  
470 The Knight said withouten laine,  
"I wend I had Sir Grawaine slaine,  
The gentlest knight in this land.  
Men told me of great renoume;  
Of curtesie thou might have woon the crowne,  
475 Above both free and bound,  
*concealing anything  
I do believe I might have*  
*won  
unfree*  
  
"And alsoe of great gestrye.  
480 And now thre points be put fro thee:  
It is the moe pitty.  
Sir Grawaine, thou was not leele  
When thou didst the lace conceale  
That my wiffe gave to thee.  
  
For wee were both, thou wist full well,  
485 For thou hadst the halfe dale  
Of my vencrye.  
If the lace had never been wrought,<sup>1</sup>  
To have slaine thee was never my thought,  
I swere by God verelyle!
- High nobility  
points of virtue; removed from  
more  
loyal (honest)*  
*both (bound by the agreement); knew  
portion  
having*  
*verily*

<sup>1</sup> If (the concealment of) the lace had not happened

*The Greene Knight*

- "I wist it well my wiffe loved thee;  
Thou wold doe me no villanye,  
But sicked her with nay.  
But wilt thou doe as I bidd thee —  
490 Take me to Arthurs court with thee —  
Then were all to my pay." *knew*  
*squelched her with "no"*  
*satisfaction*
- Now are the knights accorded thone.  
To the Castle of Huron can they fare,  
To lodge there all that night.  
495 Early on the other day  
To Arthurs court they tooke the way  
With harts blyth and light. *there*  
*next*  
*hearts happy*
- All the court was full faine.  
Alive when they saw Sir Gawaine;  
500 They thanked God above.  
That is the matter and the case  
Why Knights of the Bathe weare the lace  
Until they have wosen their shoen — *deeply pleased*  
*above*  
*reason*  
*spare (shoes)*
- Or else a ladye of bye estate  
505 From about his necke shall it take,  
For the doughtye deeds that he hath done.  
It was confirmed by Arthur the King.  
Thorrow Sir Grawaines desiringe  
The King granted him his boone. *Unless; high*  
*wish*  
*[the Green Knight] his request*
- 510 Thus endeth the tale of the Greene Knight.  
God, that is soe full of might,  
To heaven their soules bring  
That have hard this little storye  
That fell some times in the west countrye *heard*  
515 In Arthurs days our King! *occurred once upon a time*
- Fixis. *The end*

### Notes

Abbreviations: P = Percy Folio; BP = Bishop Percy's marginal notes in the MS; M = Madden's edition; F = Furnivall's edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

*First Part.* The first fit or section of the poem is not marked by a rubric in the manuscript; I have added a rubric here to correspond with the one the scribe adds after line 258.

- 2      *aff arr.* M prints *arr aff*; though a blot in the MS makes the reading indistinct, it appears that *arr* follows *aff*.
- leadinge.* M disregards the final stroke and prints *leading*.
- 10     *strove of.* I follow BP; F reads *strong of*, then inserts *above* as initial word of line 11.
- 12     Arthur's founding of a *round table* in order to prevent squabbling among his knights about rank, about who "bygan the highe dese" (*Ragnelle*, line 601), is mentioned first in Geoffrey of Monmouth. Cornwall begins with Gwenevere's demurral concerning Arthur's statement to Gawain that his is "one of the fairest Round Tables / That ever you see with your eye" (lines 3-4).
- 22     *on head.* P: *& head*; I emend for sense, following F.
- 27     *painsance.* Through Shakespeare's time, this word is used to designate a crowd or force of people.
- 28     *they.* P: *the*; F: *the*. I emend to *they* here and in lines 159, 199, 225, 240, 243, 246, 307, 308, 312, 430, 494, and 497.
- 31     *came and went.* P: *came went*; I follow F's emendation.

*The Greene Knight*

- 39      in the west countye. The poem sets its action in the northwest midlands, near the Welsh border, with localized references to Hatto's and Delamere Forest (see lines 87 and 493 and notes). Arthur's court nonetheless remains at Carlisle (line 85); despite the impression of proximity offered in the poem, this would have been a long northern journey for Sir Bredbeddie.
- 41      *wickele*. M: *wickele*.
- 43      *his wiffe*. P: *wir wiffe*; I follow F's emendation.
- 49      Agoster. So far as I know, this name does not occur elsewhere in Arthurian literature, though the connection between her supernatural powers of witchcraft and the consonance of *Agoster* with 'ghostly' is striking. Agostes' counterpart in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Morgan le Fay, is called 'Argante' in Layamon's *Brur* (see note at line 169).
- 54      *lighr*. The manuscript is indistinct; M prints *lighr*, reading only a single "l" in the tangle of strokes. The tail rhyme is clearly defective in the stanza, and *lighr* may have crept in through analogy with rhymes in lines 60, 63, 66, 69, and 72. BP suggested a variation on "lythe," a word for trunk or body which would rhyme with *fyshe* (line 57); *licham* (spelled "lygham" in *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, lines 3281, 3286), also meaning body, would fit still better, making the phrase an alliterative tag. The scribe or a later reader seems to have overwritten the "g," but no amount of straining produces a certain or convincing reading.
- 62      That which she. P: *that theye which*; M: *Y' the witch* (emending the MS, which he reads as *theye w'*); I follow F's emendation.
- 70      *Gowaines points three*. Gawain's three points are his boldness, his courtesy, and his hardiness.
- 79      *a jolly right*. Though Bredbeddie's "horsse and armour was all greene" (line 80), the magic by which Agostes "transpose[ed]" his "likenesse" does not seem to transform his person (lines 53, 56); the porter notes that "his vesture is greene" (line 105), and when he meets Gawain for the return blow, Bredbeddie has "transposed him in another array, / Before as it was greeene" (lines 442-43). This distinguishes him from the marvelous intruder of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, who (although he bears no arms or armor) is not simply dressed in green, but is "overall enkergrene" (line 150; everywhere bright green) right

### Notes

down to his hair and skin; the uncanny, and potentially mythic or supernatural, character of that Green Knight separates him from Bredbeddie, and helps mark the radical difference in atmosphere and effect between the two poems. See also line 109 and note, below.

- 87     *the Forrest of Delamore*. Unlike other *Gawain* romances, which set their adventures in Ingewood Forest near Carlisle, *Greene Knight* specifies places that are in "the west countrye," in particular, in Cheshire. The reference here is to Delamere Forest, east and slightly north of Chester, in which local Cheshire families maintained interests; see B. M. C. Hussain, "Delamere Forest in Later Medieval Times," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 107 (1955), 23–59, and the more general discussion of the region and its cultural life in M. J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Courtship: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). In giving Sir Bredbeddie a seemingly brief journey to Arthur's court, the poem presents his manor as bordering upon the Wirral (the peninsula that extends northwest from Chester, between the Rivers Dee and Mersey), the wilds through which Sir Gawain travels to meet the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (line 701). As the further reference to Hatton (line 493 and note) suggests, the locale has only an imaginary connection to Carlisle, despite the assertion of lines 85 and 89. The Castle of Flaiting (line 86) remains unidentified.
- 90     *joyre countrye*. BP emends to *countrye faire*, to improve the rhyme (but not by much).
- 104     *Heer*. P: *hee*; BP: *there is*; I emend for sense.
- 109     *the Greene Knight*: As the introduction points out, Cornwall expressly refers to Sir Bredbeddie as "the Greene Knight" (lines 214, 222, 233, 267 and 285). Chivalric champions presenting themselves under the name of "Green Knight" occur in several other romances as well: in *Carfus*, the son of Sir Ironside is apparently referred to as "The Knyght of Armas Grene" (line 45 and 68), and in the same poem *Gawain*'s own livery seems green, for he throws his "mantell of grene" over the small boose of the Earl (line 353). In *Malory*, *Gawain*'s brother Sir Gareth (fighting as Sir Bewmaynes) has a long encounter with the *Greene Knyght* (also called Sir Perthelepe; Works, pp. 305–10, 314). It is possible that within popular tradition Sir *Gawain* and his kin had some long-standing association with *Greene Knights*; see note to line 64 of *Carlisle*.

*The Greene Knight*

- 116 *a venturous*. BP adds *knight*, and F so emends, echoing, e.g., line 104.
- 119 *everye*. M: *eu ye*, though it seems that M's usual abbreviation mark — an ' for *er* — has been omitted (see p. lxix in his edition); this appears to be a typographical error since there is space within the word as printed for the mark to have been added.
- 169 *your sisters sonne*. Gawayne's mother is Arthur's half-sister and the wife of King Lot of Lothian and Orkney, variously called Morgause (in Malory) or Anna. She is mother also of Mordred (by Arthur), and sister to Morgan le Fay, who in *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* sponsors the transformation of the Green Knight. Morgan is therefore the counterpart of the witch Agostes (line 49), who in the present poem is also the Green Knight's mother-in-law.
- 181 *it*. M: *it*.
- 220 *peril*. M: *pir*, with a stroke through the descender of the *p* as an abbreviation mark for *er* (see his edition, p. lxix).
- 235 *covet*. P: *covet*; I follow BP's suggested emendation here. F reads *Couett*, and speculates that this may be *covey* from French *couver*, i.e., "gathering."
- 242 *revell*. M prints *revell*, emending the MS, which he reads as *knell*.
- 246 *They wold brev all the west*. The off-hand character of this threat perhaps reflects its anachronistic status. Though *chevauchée* — the systematic devastation of resources and countryside through pillaging and burning — was a feature of chivalric warfare throughout the Middle Ages, such raids would not have been usual in the conduct of royal justice or even private war after the thirteenth century, at least in "the west." On the northern borders, including Carlisle, such destructive raids continued beyond the end of the Middle Ages.
- 259 The scribe brackets the stanza beginning with this line, and the accompanying rubric reads, *Second parte*.
- 280 *furlegs*. P: *furleg*; I follow F's emendation.
- 289 *evening*. P: *evenig*; I follow F's emendation.
- 304 *Hee*. F: *He*.

### Notes

- 325 This stanza lacks its sixth line. Madden supplies a possible filler of his own devising: "Shee tooke her maids [every one,] / And to her chamber [will] gone."
- 325 St. Martine. St. Martin of Tours was one of the most popular saints of the Middle Ages. His best known act, dividing his cape in two to share with a beggar, made him a patron of the poor and an exemplar of charity and hospitality. Perhaps his invocation here, as a welcoming gesture, reflects the nature of his cult; compare line 420 and note.
- 327 F labels this as line 328, and his numeration is consequently off by a single line from here to the poem's end. Subsequent citations will refer to actual line numbers (as in the present edition) rather than to F's numbers.
- 348 *frasce*. This word is apparently not recorded in the OED or MED. The meaning, "uproar, noise," seems clear, though the origin is not. MED lists the apparently onomatopoeic verb *fraschen* or *frasher*, "to make a harsh or strident noise," but gives no cognate noun. F connects it to French *frasir*, "noise," but it seems more likely connected to French *fracar*, as in modern English "fracas," i.e., "uproar, row."
- 396 a *lace* of silke. This phrase vividly recalls the third encounter between Gawain and Lady Bertilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where she offers him her "girdel," "a lace" adorned with "grene sylke" (lines 1829 ff.). This lace is not a garment, but an elaborately worked, ornamental braid used as a cincture or belt, or perhaps as a fastener (as in "shoelace"). *Lace* meaning cloth worked in delicate patterns seems not to occur in medieval English, and (like "girdle" before twentieth-century American usage) it has no association with intimate apparel; a *laiface* (as in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 1874, 2438) is simply an accessory of dress, though perhaps especially appropriate as a love token because of its woven, interlaced character. In Middle English, lace seems to have had as a primary meaning "net" or "snare." Both here and in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, therefore, the repetition of the word may entail a suggestive pun; see R. A. Shour, *The Poem at Green Girdle: "Comerciam" in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984).
- 400 *sor.* F. *so.*
- 401 *apon.* I follow F, based upon his glimpse of a stroke in the manuscript that BP did not see.

*The Greene Knight*

- 418 *heer.* P: *heerr*; I emend for sense and meter.
- 420 St. Leonard. St. Leonard of Noblac (near Limoges) was widely celebrated as the patron of captives, peasants, pregnant women, and the sick. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the invocation of particular saints seems at times coordinated to specific moments in the narrative, though the linking of St. Leonard to the exchange here is not clear. See line 325 above and note.
- 434 *Ar.* M: *Ar*; the MS is no longer clearly legible, though the spacing seems to support *Ar*.
- 449 *evyes.* P: *eyes*. According to BP, probably "ivies," but conceivably "yews."
- 459 *shourest.* The interchangability of letter forms makes it possible to read this as "shoutest" (as does Madden). It is a further recollection of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* where, when Gawain "schranke a lytel" from the Green Knight's stroke, the latter held back with "wyth a schunt" (line 2268). In reply to the Green Knight's taunt, "Thou art not Gawayn . . . that is so good halden" [so highly esteemed], Gawain replies, "I schunt oncz, / And so wyl I no more" (lines 2270 ff.).
- 461 *feste.* P: *feete*; I emend to single initial *f* rather than capitalize as in lines 352 and 405.
- 488 *sicked her with nay.* This vivid alliterative formula occurs frequently in late medieval poetry; see *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 706 and 2471, and *Gawain and Gologras*, line 115 and note.
- 493 *the Castle of Hutton.* Huttons (and Hatton) are relatively common place and family names. F suggests this is Hutton manorhouse, in Somerset. Given the other localizing details of *Greene Knight* (see lines 39, 85 ff. and notes, above), it seems more likely that the reference here is to Hutton in Cheshire, some seven miles north of the Delamere Forest. It is perhaps worth noting that there is a Hutton in Inglewood Forest, Cumberland; it is the neighboring village to Hesket, the parish that contains the Tarn Wathelese. Madden considers this the locale intended, and says the "whole of the territory hereabout was romance-ground" (p. 354).

### Notes

502

*Knights of the Bath.* This allusion parallels the insertion of the motto of the Order of the Garter at the conclusion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which was written only a generation after the Order was founded in the 1340's. Unlike the Garter, which was a formal Order with statutes and distinctive garb, the category "Knights of the Bath" seems to have been used simply to designate knights of special eminence; often this high rank may have been based upon receiving knighthood from the sovereign's hand after an elaborate, ritualized ceremony (including bathing). Froissart makes this connection explicit in his account of the coronation of Henry IV (1399); on that occasion, with full ceremony, the king created forty-six Knights of the Bath. Particular customs — for example, the removal of a white silken shoulder lace or insignia — became associated with the Knights of the Bath. Nonetheless, the formal Order of the Bath was founded only in 1725 by King George I. John Anstis, who wrote a *Historical Essay Upon the Knighthood of the Bath* (London, 1725) and produced the statutes of the Order, made much use of these historical traditions that preceded the actual founding, though he seems not to have known about the allusions in *Greene Knight*. As noted in the Introduction to this poem, Sir John Paston owned a copy of a poem entitled "the Greene Knyght"; in addition, in a separate volume (his "boke off knyghthod"), he owned a description of "Hos Knyghtis of the Bath shulde be made," a detailed formulary specifying just what "our soveraigne lord" the king must do to create knights of this rank. A scribe or reader, finding these volumes side by side in Sir John's library, might well have been struck by similarities between the actual ceremonies of fifteenth-century knighthood and the fictional portrayal in *Greene Knight*, and may have decided to add this "historical" allusion. For a full discussion of this ceremonial, see G. A. Lester, *Sir John Paston's "Grewe Boke"* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984), pp. 80-83; Lester's account of this "boke off knyghthod" sheds much light on the links between chivalric romance, the ideals and rituals of chivalric behavior, and the role of courtesy, violence, and political maneuvering in the lives of a late medieval knight and his associates. James C. Risk, in *The History of the Order of the Bath and Its Insignia* (London, 1972), provides a full account of the Order's origins. The use of an Arthurian poem to lend authority to such "Ancient Ceremonials" makes clear how this chivalric material is rewritten for the interests of each generation and audience.

were. F prints wear.

Fair. F: ffins.



## *The Turke and Sir Gawain*

### *Introduction*

*The Turke and Sir Gawain* occurs in the Percy Folio Manuscript, a collection of popular tales including some of the other Gawain romances printed in this volume. Though the surviving copy of the poem dates from around 1650, the language and spellings of the text indicate it was composed around 1500 in the North or North Midlands. The pages of the Percy Folio on which this poem occurs have been mutilated, so that about half of each page, and therefore about half of the poem, is missing. In the text that follows I have offered prose summaries, inevitably somewhat speculative, of the sections that are lost. The features of the story and the details of its telling mark it for oral recitation; the remaining sections of *Turke* fall into tail-rhyme stanzas linked by asceeb rhyme scheme, though there are a number of defective stanzas and rhymes. It is a remarkable tribute to the poem's narrative energy, and to its saturation in traditional plots and motifs, that despite its serious losses it remains not simply intelligible, but boisterously engaging.

Like many another romance, *The Turke and Sir Gawain* begins with an intrusive challenge to the tranquility, or perhaps complacency, of the Arthurian court: the "Turk" — an alien figure who is impressively strong but not knightly, and apparently not Christian — demands an exchange of blows. Sir Kay's violent reaction threatens to undo the court's obligations to courtesy, but Gawain's intervention restores the proper chivalric balance of force and graciousness. This combination of raw power yoked to an elaborate code of honor becomes a central theme of the poem, as in *Carlile* and *Golengras*, although the relation between these chivalric values is not particularly subtle in *Turke*. On the one hand, the "Turk" makes extraordinary demands on Gawain's courtesy and endurance, dragging him through a series of preternatural encounters; on the other, as Gawain's "boy," he performs deeds of exceptional ferociousness in destroying the enemies he finds for his knightly companion. The latter's courtesy and prowess, his self-imposed deference to one who seems strange and therefore inferior, remain intact, even through the final episode of the "Turk's" beheading. This event clearly constitutes a kind of death and rebirth, by means of which the "Turk" undergoes a conversion, becoming in the process a Christian knight. Throughout the romance, the categorical term "Turk" operates as

### *The Turke and Sir Gawain*

an indeterminate Orientalist stereotype of difference and exoticism; like "Saracens," "Turk" defines otherness through geography, politics, religion and class (see note at line 10 below). Such interchangeable usage is common to the late Middle Ages, as, for example, Caxton's translation of *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon* makes clear in referring to "Goddys enmyes, as ben Turques and Sarrazins" (EEETS e.s. 45; London, 1884, 1885, p. 348).

*Turke* ends on a note common to the popular chivalric romances, and to romance in general. The "Turk," restored to his proper knightly identity as Sir Gromer (a figure who turns up in *Ragoult* and in *Malory*), is brought into the fold of Arthurian chivalry and Arthurian political fealty. Sir Gromer's installation as the new and proper King of the Isle of Man not only converts the alien figure — the "Turk" — to familiar Christian knighthood, but presumably it demystifies the Isle of Man, changing it from a magic kingdom into a recognizable and accessible feature of the Arthurian (and contemporary) landscape. Gawain's courteous behavior at the end of the poem also helps make clear why he is such a crucial hero for the Arthurian court. When Sir Gromer and King Arthur attempt to make him "King of Man" (line 322 — certainly a resonant title), he rejects the offer, protesting, "I never purposed to be noe King" (line 326). His suitability for adventure depends upon his being closely connected to the king, as his nephew and champion, but also on his being free of the constraints of leadership. Gawain must continually refuse rule in order to be open to reckless daring and marvelous adventure. Since he is not at the center of the court, he can journey to the most remote and fabulous places without threatening social integrity by his absence; since he is not a ruler, he needn't concern himself with the dull virtues of prudence, justice, and peacemaking. As a free agent with the widest possible scope for his dealings, Gawain typifies popular notions of chivalric virtues, but he is able to test these, to show their nature and durability, in repeated encounters with marvelous opponents and exotic locales.

#### *Text*

*The Turke and Sir Gawain* occurs in the Percy Folio Manuscript, pp. 38–46 (described in the introductory material to *The Greene Knight*). The text of the present edition reflects the dilapidated state of the MS; half of each page on which *The Greene Knight* was written was ripped out of the volume to start fires, and the ill treatment it received before Bishop Percy rescued it has left pages blotched and stained from damp. All of this has made the forms of the cramped scribal hand at points ambiguous or illegible. The writing seems also to have deteriorated since Madden and Furnivall examined the Percy Folio for their nineteenth-century editions; I have sometimes followed their readings for letters or entire words that now

### *Introduction*

appear indistinct or indecipherable. Orthography has been regularized, so that "u"/"v" and "y"/"ȝ" appear according to modern usage; abbreviations have been expanded, numerals spelled out, and modern punctuation and capitalization added.

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscript*

British Library Additional MS 27879 (The Percy Folio). Pp. 38-46.

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Hales, John W., and Frederick J. Furnivall. 1868. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Williams, Jeanne Myrie Wilson. "A Critical Edition of 'The Turke & Gowin.'" Ph.D. Diss. University of Southern Mississippi, 1988. (*Dissertation Abstracts International* 49 (1988) 815A.) [I have not seen a copy of this edition.]

#### *Criticism*

Jost, Jean E. "The Role of Violence in *Aventur*: 'The Ballad of King Arthur and the King of Cornwall' and 'The Turke and Gowin.'" *Arthurian Interpretations* 2.2 (1988), 47-57.

Lyle, E. B. "The *Turk and Gowain* as Source of Thomas of Erceldouze." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 6 (1970), 98-102.

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- Listen, lords, great and small,  
What adventures did befall  
In England, where hath beene  
5 Of knights that held the Round Table  
Which were doughty and profittable,  
Of kompys cruell and keene.
- All England, both East and West,  
Lords and ladyes of the best,  
They basked and made them bowne.  
10 And when the King sate in seate —  
Lords served him at his meate —  
Into the hall a burne there came.
- He was not hye, but he was broad,  
And like a Turke he was made  
Both legg and thye;  
15 And said, "Is there any will, as a brother,  
To give a buffett and take another?  
And iff any soe hardy bee?"
- Then spake Sir Kay, that crabbed knight,  
20 And said "Man, thou seemest not soe wight,  
If thou be not adread.  
For these beene knyghts within this hall  
With a buffett will garr thee fall,  
And grope thee to the ground.
- 25 "Give thou be never soe stalworth of hand  
I shall bring thee to the ground,  
That dare I safely swaze."
- Then spake Sir Gawayne, that worthy knyght,  
Saith, "Coxen Kay, thou speakest not right —  
30 Lewd is thy answere!
- there were (once)  
[Some] knights  
stalwart and worthy  
warriors fierce and courageous  
  
(Throughout)  
came and went  
sat  
warrior  
tall  
(i.e., a pagan)  
shigh  
who wishes through manual contest  
blow  
Might there be  
  
tall  
powerful  
Given that  
make  
drop  
  
If; ever so stalwart  
overcome you  
  
Cousin  
Uncousin

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- "What and that man want of his witt?  
Then little worshipp were to thee Pitt  
If thou shold him foefoe."  
Then spake the Turke with words throw,  
35 Saith, "Come the better of your tow,  
Though ye be breme as boee . . ."
- What if; be deficient in  
honor; allowed  
destroy  
angry  
two  
*force as a wild boar*
- [At this point about half a page of the story is missing: Gawain enters into a sworn agreement to trade blows (apparently without weapons) with the Turk. He strikes his blow, but the return blow by the Turk is postponed.]
- "This buffett thou hast . . .  
Well quitt that it shall be.  
And yet I shall make thee thrise as feard  
40 As ever was man on middleearth,  
This Court againe ere thou see."
- repaid  
*three times as afraid*  
*before*
- Then said Grawaine, "My trouth I plight,  
I dare goe with thee full right,  
And never from thee flye;  
45 I will never flee from noe adventure,  
Jousting, nor noe other tournement,  
Whilost I may live on leee."
- trouth I pledge*  
*[That]; resolutely*  
*flee*  
*Jousts*  
*unharmed*
- The Turke tooke leave of King with crowne;  
Sir Grawaine made him ready bowne,  
50 His armor and his need.  
They rode northwards two dayes and more.  
By then Sir Grawaine hangred sore,  
Of meate and drinke he had great need.
- himself ready for travel*  
*sorely*
- 55 The Turke wist Grawaine had need of meate,  
And spake to him with words great,  
Hawtinge uppon hee;  
Says "Grawaine, where is all thy plenty?  
Yesterday thou wast served with dainty,  
And noe part thou wold give me,
- understood  
*Raising himself on high*  
*riches*  
*were; delicacies*

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- 60 "But with buffett thou did me sore;  
Therefore thou shalt have mickle care,  
And adventures shalt thou see.  
I wold I had King Arthur heere,  
And many of thy fellowes in fere  
65 That behaves to try mastery."<sup>1</sup> made  
your  
together
- He led Sir Gawayne to a hill soe plaine.  
The earth opened and closed againe —  
Then Gawayne was adread.  
The merke was comen, and the light is gone:  
70 Thundering, lightning, snow, and raine,  
Thereof enough they had. in the open  
darkness  
Of those
- Then spake Sir Gawayne and sighed sore:  
"Such wether saw I never afore  
In noe stead there I have beeene stood." place where
- [Again at this point a half page is missing. The storms seem a preliminary test. Gawayne endures them, and accepts instruction from the Turk, and is then allowed to proceed to the mysterious castle.]
- 75 "... made them noe answere  
But only unto mee."
- To the Castle they then yode.  
Sir Gawayne light beside his steed,  
For horse the Turk had none. were  
dismounted
- 80 There they found chamber, bower, and hall,  
Richly rayled about with pale,  
Seemly to look uppon. arrayed with elegant cloths  
handsome
- A boord was speed within that place:  
All manner of meates and drinke there was  
85 For groomes that myght it againe.  
Sir Gawayne wold have fallen to that fare, table  
men; gain  
taken up that food

<sup>1</sup> Who deserve to have their prowess used

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- The Turke bad him leave for care;  
Then woxt he unfaine. *[Bur]: refrain because of harm  
because [Gawain] unhappy*
- 90      Gawaine said, "Man, I marvell have  
That thou may nose of these vittells spare,  
And here is soe great plentye.  
Yett have I more mervaile, by my fay,  
That I see neither man nor maid,  
Woman nor child soe free.
- 95      "I had never now all mine owne will  
Of this fayne meate to eate my fill  
Then all the gold in Christendom."  
The Turke went forth, and tarryed sought;  
Meate and drinke he forth brought,  
100      Was seemly for to see.
- He said, "Eate, Gawaine, and make thee yare.  
In faith, or thou gett victalls more  
Thou shalt both swinke and sweate.  
Eate, Gawaine, and spare thee nought!"  
105      Sir Gawaine eate as him good thought,  
And well he liked his meate.
- He dranke ale, and after wiste.  
He saith, "I will be all thy bidding baine  
Without bout or threat.  
110      But one thing I wold thee pray:  
Give me my buffett and let me goe my way.  
I wold not longer be hereait."
- [Another half page is missing at this point. The Turk refuses to allow Gawain to conclude the bargain by receiving his return blow. Instead he asks that Gawain accompany him to the Isle of Man.]
- 115      Ther stood a bole and . . .  
Sir Gawaine left behind his steed,  
He might noe other doe. *boat*

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- The Turke said to Sir Gawayne,  
"He shal be here when thou comes againe —  
I plight my troth to thee —  
Within as bower, as men tell me."  
hour  
120 They were sailed over the sea:  
The Turke said, "Gawayne, hee!  
Hoere are we withouten scath.  
But now beginneth the great othe,  
When we shall adventures see."  
arm  
the fulfillment of our compact  
125 He lett him see a castle faire;  
Such a one he never saw yare,  
Noewher in noe country.  
before
- The Turke said to Sir Gawayne  
"Yonder dwells the King of Man,  
A heathen soldan is hee.  
sabres  
130 "With him he hath a hideous rout  
Of giants strong and stout  
And ugley to looke uppon.  
Whosoever had sought faer and neare  
135 As wide as the world were,  
Such a compayne he cold find none.  
strong
- "Many avestures thou shalt see there,  
Such as thou never saw yare  
In all the world about.  
before  
140 Thou shalt see a tennis ball  
That never knight in Arthurs hall  
Is able to give it a bout.  
tennis ball (so large)  
Now
- "And other adventures there are moe.  
Wee shall be assayled ere we goe.  
therof have thou noe doute.  
more  
145 absolved (of sin) before
- "But and yee will take to me good heed,  
I shall helpe you in time of need.  
For ought I can see  
if  
anything

The Turke and Sir Gawain

- |   |   |                               |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
|   | There shall be none soe strong in stower      | battle                        |
| 150   | But I shall bring thee againe to hi . . .     |                               |
| [Another half page is missing here. After these reassurances, Gawain accompanies the Turk into the Castle of the King of Man where he is met with verbal assaults.] |   |                               |
|   | ... "Sir Grawaine stiffe and stowre,          | ficer                         |
|   | How fareth thy uncle King Arthur,             |                               |
|   | And all his company?                          |                               |
|   | And that Bishopp Sir Bodwine                  | Baldwin                       |
| 155   | That will not let my goods alone,             |                               |
|   | But spineth them every day?                   | spoil                         |
|   | "He peached much of a Crowne of Thorne;       |                               |
|   | He shall ban the time that he was borne       | curse                         |
|   | And ever I catch him may.                     | If                            |
| 160   | I anger more att the spiriutally              | clergy                        |
|   | In England, not att the temporaltie,          | lords                         |
|   | They goe soe in theire array.                 | lewhish clothes               |
|   | "And I purpose in full great ire              | intend; wrath                 |
|   | To brent their cleryg in a fire               | burn                          |
| 165   | And punish them to my gay.                    | satisfaction                  |
|   | Sitt downe, Sir Grawaine, at the bord."       | sable                         |
|   | Sir Grawaine answered at that word,           |                               |
|   | Saith, "Nay, that may not be,                 |                               |
|   | "I trow not a ventarous knight shall          | do not think a during         |
| 170   | Sitt downe in a kings hall                    |                               |
|   | Adventures or you see."                       | before                        |
|   | The King said, "Gawaine, faire mot thee fall! | may good things befall you    |
|   | Goe feitch me forth my tennise ball,          |                               |
|   | For play will I and see."                     | see what happens              |
| 175   | They brought it out without doubt.            |                               |
|   | With it came a hideous rost                   | huge strong                   |
|   | Of gyants great and plenty,                   |                               |
|   | All the gyants were there then                |                               |
|   | Heire by the halfe then Sir Grawaine,         |                               |
| 180   | I tell you withouten nay.                     | Higher; than<br>without doube |

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

There were seventeen giants bold of blood,  
And all thought Grawaine but little good.  
When they thought with him to play,  
All the giants thought then  
To have strucke out Sir Grawaines braine.

185 To have strucke out Sir Gawaines braine.  
Help him God that best may!

The ball of brass was made for the giants hand;  
There was noe man in all England  
Were able to carry it . . .

[In a missing section, Gawain defeats the giants at tennis with the help of the Turk, who ends by pummeling one of the giants.]

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 190 | ... and sticke a giant in the hall<br>That gryslie can bee gone.<br>The King sayd, "Bray away this axeltree,<br>For such a boy I never see.<br>Yett he shal be assayzed better ere he goe —                    | match'd<br>gruously did<br>Take; stuff<br>(i.e., the Turk)                                 |
| 195 | "I told you, soe mote I the —<br>With the three adventure, and then no more<br>Befor me at this tide."   | may I prosper<br>time  |
| 200 | Then there stood amongst them all<br>A chimney in the Kings hall<br>With barres mickle of pride.<br>There was laid on in that stand<br>Coales and wood that cost a pound,<br>That upon it did abide.           | free-standing fireplace<br>iron bars great in strength<br>stand<br>in large quantity<br>be |
| 205 | A giant had Gawaine assay,<br>And said, "Gawaine, begin the play —<br>Thou knowest best how it shold be?<br>And afterwards when thou hast done,<br>I trow you shal be answered soone<br>Either with boy or me. | give it a try<br>matched<br>(i.e., the Turk)   |

*The Turke and Sir Gawaine*

- 210 "A great giant, I understand,  
Lift up the chimney with his hand  
And sett it downe againe fairly." *(Should be able to)*  
*easily*
- 215 Sir Grawaine was never soe adread  
Sith he was man on middle earth,  
And cryd on God in his thought.  
Grawaine unto his boy can say  
"Lift this chimney — if you may —  
That is soe worthily wrought." *since*  
*did*  
*massively*
- 220 Grawaines boy to it did scape,  
And gat it by the bowles great,  
And about his head he it flang.  
Thris about his head he it swang  
That the coals and the red brands . . . *charcoal bidders*  
*flung*  
*Thrice*
- [In a missing half page the Turk completes his victory in the second contest, twirling the hot fireplace above his head. He then clothes himself in a garment of invisibility to accompany Grawain as the King of Man leads him to the final challenge. Here, a giant threatens Grawain.]
- 225 ". . . saw of mickle might  
And strong were in battell." *great*
- 230 "I have slaine them thorow my mastery,  
And now, Grawaine, I will slay thee.  
And then I have slaine all the flower.  
There went never none againe no tale to tell,  
Nor more shalt thou, thoe thou be fell,  
Nor none that longeth to King Arthur." *(i.e., other knight)*  
*elite (of chivalry)*  
*none ever returned*  
*Any more than; though; force*  
*belong*
- 235 The Turke was clad invisible gay:  
No man cold see him withouten nay.  
He was cladd in such a weede.  
He heard their talking leuse and more:  
And yet he thought they shold find him there  
When they shold do that deed. *clothed with wonderful invisibility*  
*without doubt*  
*garment*  
*alwayker*  
*feel his presence*

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- Then he led him into steddie  
Werhas was a boyling leade,  
And welling upon hic;  
And before it a giant did stand  
With an iron forke in his hand,  
That hideous was to see.
- (i.e., the King led Gawain); a spot  
Where; [cauldron off] molten lead  
seething
- 240
- The giant that looked soe keene  
That before Sir Grawaine had never seene  
Noe where in noe country.  
The King saide to the giant thoe,  
"Here is none but wee tow;  
Let see how best may bee."
- fierce  
{one so fierce}  
then  
two  
do your best
- 250 When the giant saw Grawaines boy there was,  
He leapt and threw, and cryod "Alas,  
That he came in that stead!"  
Sir Grawaines boy to him leapt,  
And with strenght up him gett,  
And cast him in the lead.
- wished  
this place  
took
- 255
- With an iron forke made of Steele  
He held him downe wondorous weele,  
Till he was scalded to the dead.  
Then Sir Grawaine unto the King can say,  
"Without thou wilt agree unno our law,  
Eatein is all thy bread."
- well  
death  
did  
Unless  
(i.e., your time is up)
- The King spint on Grawaine the knight.  
With that the Turke bent him upright  
And into the fyre him flang.  
And saide to Sir Grawaine at the last,  
"Noe force, Master, all the perill is past!  
Thinke not we tarrie too longe . . .
- seized him as he stood  
fire  
No worry
- 265

[In a missing half page, Grawain and the Turk apparently move quickly to another part of the Castle, where captives have been magically imprisoned. The Turk then, instead of taking the return blow at Grawain to which he is entitled, requests that Grawain deliver a sword stroke that would behead him.]

*The Turke and Sir Gawayne*

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| He tooke forth a bason of gold<br>As an Emperour wase shold,<br>As fell for his degree.  | 270  | <b>basin</b><br><i>Such as<br/>it suited his rank</i>                                  |
| He tooke a sword of mettle free,<br>Saires "If ever I did any thing for thee,<br>Doe for me in this steed:<br>Take here this sword of steele<br>That in battell will bite weele,<br>Therwith strike of my head." | He tooke a sword of mettle free,<br>Saires "If ever I did any thing for thee,<br>Doe for me in this steed:<br>Take here this sword of steele<br>That in battell will bite weele,<br>Therwith strike of my head." | <b>metal noble</b><br><i>(And) says<br/>Help me; case</i><br><b>(And) with it; off</b> |
| "That I forefend!" said Sir Gawayne,<br>"For I wold not have thee slaine<br>For all the gold sou red."   | 280  | <b>forbid</b>  |
| "Have done, Sir Gawayne! I have no dread.<br>But in this bason let me bleed,<br>That standeth here in this steed,  | "Have done, Sir Gawayne! I have no dread.<br>But in this bason let me bleed,<br>That standeth here in this steed,  | <b>Enough</b><br><i>place</i>  |
| "And thou shalt see a new play,<br>With helpe of Mary that mild mayd<br>That saved us from all dread."   | 285  | <b>turn of events</b>  |
| He drew forth the brand of steele<br>That in battell bite wold weele,<br>And there stroke of his head.   |  | <b>off</b>   |
| And when the blood in the bason light,<br>He stood up a stalworth Knight<br>That day, I undertake,   | 290  | <b>fell</b><br><i>dare say</i>   |
| And song "Te Deum Laudamus" —<br>Worshipp be to our Lord Jesus<br>That saved us from all wracke!   |  | <i>sang</i><br><i>rain</i>   |
| "A! Sir Gawayne! Blessed thou be!<br>For all the service I have don thee,<br>Thou hast well quitt it me."  | 295  | <b>repaid</b>  |
| Then he tooke him by the hand,<br>And many a worthy man they fand<br>That before they never see.   | 300  | <b>encountered</b><br><i>had seen</i>  |

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- He said, "Sir Grawaine, withouten threat  
Sitt downe boldly at thy meate,  
And I will eate with thee.  
Ladys all, be of good cheere:  
305 Eche one shall wend to his owne doore  
In all hast that may be." *with all courtesy*  
*one; go; dear  
haste*
- "First we will to King Arthurs hall,  
And soone after your husbands send we shall  
In country where they beene;  
310 There they wold . . . abide. *have lived*
- [In another missing section, the process of liberating the chivalric captives continues with the return to Arthur's court.]
- "Thus we have brought seventeen ladys cleere  
That there were left in great danger,  
And we have brought them out." *handsome*
- 315 Then sent they for theire husbands swithe,  
And every one tooke his owne wife,  
And lowlye can they lowe,  
And thanked the two knights and the King,  
And said they wold be at theire bidding  
In all England about. *quickly  
own  
humbly did they bow*
- 320 Sir Gromer kneeld upon his knee,  
Saith "Sir King, and your wil be,  
Crowne Grawaine King of Man."  
Sir Grawaine kneeld downe by,  
And said "Lord, nay, not I;  
325 Give it him, for he it wan." *if it be your will  
of the Isle of Man  
next to Sir Gromer*
- "For I never purposed to be noe King,  
Never in all my living,  
Whilst I am a living man."  
He said, "Sir Gromer, take it thee,  
330 For Grawaine will never King bee  
For no craft that I can." *(i.e., Arthur); for yourself  
argument I may make*

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

Thus endeth the tale that I of escase,  
Of Arthur and his knyghtes keene  
That hardy were and free.  
335 God give them good life far and neare  
That such talking loves to heere!  
Amen for Charity!

*had in mind*

*to them (i.e., the audience)*

Fins.

*The end*

### Notes

Abbreviations: P = Percy Folio; BP = Bishop Percy's marginal notes in the MS; M = Madden's edition; F = Furnivall's edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

- 10 ff. The appearance of a strange, potentially threatening figure as preliminary to a great feast occurs frequently in Arthurian romance. See note at line 169 below. The "Turk" as emblem of festive exoticism occurs also in civic pageants at Gloucester; in 1595 the chamberlains paid ten shillings to cover expenses "for a wagon in the pageant and for the turke," the latter clearly a figure whose lavish dress conveyed his exotic, and entirely conventionalized, strangeness (*Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire: Records of the Early English Drama*, eds. Audrey W. Douglas and Peter Greenfield [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986], p. 313). The "Turk" also appears as a character in many of the folk plays that originated in the Middle Ages. Surviving versions of Sword Dances, St. George Plays, and other mumming include "The Turk," "The Turkish Knight," "The Turkish Champion," "Turkey Snipe," and so on, a boisterous figure who stands as the enemy of the plays' comically chivalric Christian heroes (see Alex Helm, *The English Mummers' Play* [Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1981], pp. 34, 76, 80, with other examples as well).
- 12 come. The word has been written over, perhaps by BP. P may originally have read *raite*, which M gives. F reads the corrected form as *came* (which he notes means *come*).
- 18 iff. I follow M's reading. F reads *Gif*, taking the ampersand for "g".
- 25 Give . . . hand. M: Give . . . hands.
- 35 your. P: *yo<sup>n</sup>*; F reads the abbreviation as *your*, which I follow.
- 39 *shise*. P: *sise*.
- 40 *on middlearth*. M: *in middlearth*.

### Notes

- 51 northwards. M: northward.
- 56 *Hawtinge*. M: *Lawtinge*, and adds *Lowhinge?* in his note.
- 59 *par*. M: *shar* (the latter "thora" with superscript "T"), though F's *par* seems accurate.
- 62 *shak*. M: *shall*.
- 74 *beene stood*. M's reading of the line ends with *beene*, though additional (undecipherable) letters appear at the end of the line; here and at later breaks, F seems to have been able to make out more of the text, and I follow his reconstructions.
- 75 *made them noe awere*. M's line begins *noe awere*.
- 77 The mysterious adventures within this depopulated Castle, which is inside a hill and surrounded by *merke* (line 69), parallel events in other romances, especially (in the motifs of dangerous feasts) those associated with the Holy Grail. The entrance to the other world through an earthly, seemingly natural portal — "a hill," "The earth opened and closed again" (lines 66–67) — occurs in a wide variety of narratives beginning with Homer and Virgil, but is especially common in stories with Celtic connections. In the Breton *Iwi*, *Sir Orfeo*, the hero rides "in at a roche [cliff]" to enter fairyland (ed. A. J. Bliss, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1966]; see Bliss's comment, pages xxviii ff.).
- 79 *horse*. M: *horse*.
- Whether the Turk lacked a horse during the entire journey (see line 51) or has lost his horse only at this point seems uncertain, but what is clear is the contrast between Sir Gawain as knight — mounted warrior — and the Turk as powerful, and even magical, but not chivalric. In line 114, the romance significantly notes that Gawain must abandon his horse. *Jenite* makes a point of noting the discomfiture that follows upon each combat when a knight (including Gawain, in the last encounter) loses his horse.
- 82 *look*. M: *ooke*.
- 113 *Ther stood a bole and*. M's line ends with *stood a*.

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- 123 *See*, M: *hoe*, in the sense of "stop" ("whoa").
- 124 *we*, P: *he*; I emend for sense.  
*see*, P: *dore*; I emend for rhyme.
- 128 Here, and at lines 143, 195, and 210 occur defective three-line stanzas, all linked by tail-rhyme to the previous or succeeding stanza (making four potential nine-line stanzas). Other defective stanzas (e.g., at lines 37 and 74) are clearly the result of losses in the MS. See also line 219 and note.
- 129 *the King of Man*. Despite the characterization of the King as a *heathen soldier* (line 130), the reference seems clearly to locate this enemy on the Isle of Man in the Solway Firth; this is (as line 51 suggests) off the northwest coast of England, near Scotland. The Isle of Man is opposite Cumberland, the county which contains Carlisle, Ingewood Forest, the Tarn Watchelene, and other locations repeatedly associated with Arthurian legend in the popular *Gawain* romances. Man was one of the "Southern Islands," in contrast to the northern islands (which included the Orkneys, by tradition one of Sir Gawain's ancestral homes). The Manx people, originally of Celtic descent, intermarried with Scandinavian invaders, and lived under their own king, who did homage to the kings of Norway and Scotland. English control of Man began about 1290, during the reign of Edward I, though it passed back to the Scots several times during the next half century. Several English knights ruled the Manx people (by appointment of the king or purchase of the Manx crown) before 1400; in 1406 Henry IV made Sir John Stanley the hereditary King of Man, and members of this family governed the island through the eighteenth century. The chivalric exploits that led the king to appoint Sir John as ruler of the Manx people parallel those celebrated in romances (see General Introduction, pp. 33-34).
- 144 *Wee shall be assayed*. Though this form might, in its context, be taken as "assailed" — i.e., "we shall be attacked before we finish" — I have interpreted it as a spelling of "auoil," meaning "above." The Turk's concern for Christian absolution suggests the superficiality of his role as exotic stereotype within the narrative. He serves clearly as a "stage Saracen," whose strangeness works to set off the hero and offset some of the plot's predictability. Within the action, though the Turk seems Gawain's adversary, he cooperates in the adventures he orchestrates to advance Christendom: he calls the King of Man a "heathen soldier" (line 130, and note at line 129), destroys the King when he

### Notes

Christianity (lines 263 ff.), and spontaneously calls upon the Virgin Mary before his transformation. The covert alliance of the Turk with the conventional Christian ethos of the poem is only thinly veiled, therefore, by his exotic appearance.

- 150 The line breaks off, with fragment of a word beginning *hi* visible.
- 154 that *Bishopp Sir Bodwinc*. This reference to a Balowin who is by title both a bishop and a knight seems unarguably to assume a single identity for the Bishop Baldwin who accompanies Gawain in *Carlisle*, and the knight who exchanges vows with Arthur, Kay, and Gawain in *Avowyng*. See *Carlisle*, line 28 and note, and *Avowyng*, line 74 and note.
- 160 ff. This attack on the spirituality or clergy in England and *not all the temporalitie* seems, both in its very terms and in its unmotivated appearance at this point in the poem, to be a post-Reformation insertion into the text, and in this resembles the outburst in *Carle*, lines 269 ff.
- 169 Gawain's refusal to begin the feast until he witnesses an adventure is a commonplace of French and English chivalric romance. It occurs notably at the outset of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and in Malory's tale of Sir Gareth (*Works*, p. 293); the beginning of the present poem more distantly echoes the convention. See note at line 10.
- 172 *ther*. P: *then*; I emend to restore the common idiom.
- 181 *seventeen*. M: *ix*.
- 192 *axelbow*. The word refers literally to an axe for wheels; here it seems to be an instrument — a huge staff perhaps — used by the Turk in the tennis game and in combat against the giant.
- 194 *assayed*. M: *aflayed*.
- 194 ff. The three lines that follow, and constitute a separate short stanza, continue the sentence begun in line 194. The sense is, "He shall be more fully put to the test before he leaves — as I've said, so help me — with the three adventures, and no more, with me as witness, right now."

*The Turke and Sir Gawain*

- 195 *sor more I the.* M and F read *tho*, which almost rhymes with *more* (line 196). The letter form is sufficiently ambiguous to allow reading *the*; though not at all a rhyme, grammatically and idiomatically this is precisely the form the context demands.
- 199 *the.* F reads *they*, which seems possible, though there is a blot on the line.
- 220 *bowler.* M: *bowler*. The last line of this stanza is lost because of a missing half-page, but the rhyme scheme of the surviving five lines is defective.
- 222 *Thirz.* P: *g<sup>4</sup>*.
- 226 *thow.* M: *thow*.
- 232 *gay.* M suggests *gray*.
- 250 The Turk seems to rematerialize at this point, as the giant's dismay suggests.
- 257 *wondour.* M: *wonderous*.
- 261 *Eaten.* M: *eaten*.
- 262 The King's pointed rejection of Christianity, symbolized by his spitting on Gawain, casts him in the role of *heathen soldier* (line 130), as adapted from popular verse romances associated with Charlemagne and the conquest of the Saracens (to whom the Turk would be equivalent). In *The Sowdoun of Babylon*, when Laban, the chief enemy of the Christian West, is offered baptism, he spits into the font, and is promptly beheaded. See line 3167 of Alan Lupack's edition of *The Sultan of Babylon*, in *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990), p. 92.
- 269 *waife.* M: *was he*.
- 271 The act of disenchantment, whereby delivering a return blow Sir Gawain changes the Turk back into Sir Geomer, is a version of the folk motif called the Beheading Game. It vividly recalls the beheading scenes in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Carle*, and calls attention to the missing scene in *Cordiale*. Moreover, the metamorphosis to a true self as the climax of the romance resonates as well with the endings of *Ragnelle*, *Marriage*, and *The Greene Knight*.

### Notes

- 292 *Te Deum Laudamus.* This is a Latin hymn of praise to the Father and Son, often (though falsely) attributed to St. Ambrose and associated with the baptism of St. Augustine. It dates probably from the fifth century, and was widely familiar from its use in the daily offices and in the liturgies for various feasts and ceremonies. It was also frequently used to conclude popular festivities and plays, where its singing emphasized the solidarity of the Christian community. The transformed Sir Gromer's spontaneous performance of the hymn here signals his restoration to Christian knighthood.
- 299 *many a worthy man.* Apparently the defeat of the King of Max, with his peer-natural powers, together with the transformation of the Turk, liberates those other knights and ladies whom the King had defeated, captured, and enchanted; see above, lines 226 ff. The actual restoration of these knights and ladies to their proper identities parallels the scene in *Carlike* (lines 517 ff.), and its counterpart in *Carle* (lines 409 ff.), where the Carle shows Gawain the liveryes and bones of the knights he has slain. Unlike the beheading of the Turk, the disenchantment of the Carle, who also had been "transformed soe" (*Carle*, line 410), does not result in the liberation of a tyrant's victims, only in prayers for their souls. The freeing of the captive ladies (to which Sir Gromer refers in lines 304 ff.) resembles the episode at Le Chastel de Pesme Avantree in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* (lines 51 ff.), which is reproduced in the English *Ywain and Gosewain*. In the English version, Ywain arrives at the Castel of the Hevy Sorow (line 2933), confronts a porter, defeats two "fowl felous," and releases the women of "Maydesland" (line 3010): "Maidens," he said, "God met yow se, / And bring yow welc whare ye wald be" (lines 3355-56). This episode in *Turke* also recalls Lancelot's release of Gawain's brother Gaherys and sixty-four other knights of the Round Table from captivity within Sir Terquyn's castle, and his freeing of "three score ladyes and damesch" by the defeat of "two grete gaunth" (Malory, *Works*, pp. 265-72).
- 301 ff. The willingness of the transformed Sir Gromer to share a meal with Gawain contrasts with the Turk's interruption of the court's feast (lines 10 ff.) which he is not asked to join, and with the apparent refusal of the Turk to partake in the meal he serves Gawain at the depopulated castle (lines 83 ff.). The shared meal signifies the restoration of Gromer's proper individual identity, and the confirmation of the generalized cultural identity he and Gawain take part in as Christian knights.

*The Turke and Sir Gawayn*

- 310      *There they wold . . . abide.* This line is not now at all legible. I follow the text as given by F. M provides no text for this line.
- 318      *they.* F: *the.*
- 320      *Sir Gromer.* This knight of the Round Table is apparently identical with Sir Gromer Soomer Joure of Raguelle (see line 62 and note) and Malory's Sir Gromore Somyr Joure (Works p. 1164), an ally of Galeros of Galloway (see *Awntyrs*, line 417 and note).

## *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

### *Introduction*

*Marriage* follows Cornwall and Turke in the Percy Folio manuscript. It has suffered the same fate as those two poems: half of each page of the text had been torn out for use in starting fires sometime before Bishop Percy acquired the volume. In plot, *Marriage* closely resembles *Ragnelle* and the versions of the same story told in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, so that despite the losses the main points of the narrative remain clear. In fact, *Marriage* presents a retelling bolder and bolder than any of the others. The characters play exaggerated parts: Arthur's antagonist is not knightly, but a threatening thug "With a great club upon his backe"; the lady "in red scarlett" is simply monstrous; Kay at first is totally disgusted, and at the end filled with brotherly congratulation; Gawain is impeccably courteous. In the same way, motives and reactions are unhesitatingly named by the narrative: Arthur says he was afraid to fight, he offers Gawain in marriage before the lady even expresses an interest, and the crux of the story — what women most desire — turns out to be a tautology, for "a woman will have her will": she wants what she wants.

As a proper ballad, *Marriage* maintains the fundamental simplicity of the plot. There are none of the literary touches that Gower adds, or the learned allusions to Ovid, Dante, and Boethius of Chaucer's version. Likewise, *Marriage* forgoes the narrative replications and the thematic and verbal repetitions that mark *Ragnelle* as a popular romance and complicate its possible meanings. The interlocking sets of masculine social relations hold in place through *Ragnelle*'s plot do not surface in *Marriage*; indeed, the nameless antagonist calls his nameless sister "a misshapen hore" and promises to burn her "in a fyre" if he catches her. The lady's plight, whereby like a witch she "looked soe fowle and . . . was wont / On the wild more to goe" (lines 184-85), comes about through a bad marriage: her father, an "old knight . . . married a yonge lady" who in fairy-tale fashion proceeded to turn her competition (or her children's competition for inheritance) into a creature "most like a feend of hell" (line 182). The wicked stepmother appears also in *Ragnelle* and in Gower's version.

### *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

Like the majority of Gawain romances, *Marriage* places Arthur's court at Carlisle (line 1), and sets its action in Ingelwood Forest, and specifically at the Tarn Wathelense (lines 32, 51). Arthur is presumably hunting when he encounters the "bold baron," as are the main characters in *Ragnelle*, *Carlisle*, *Awntys*, and several others in this group of romances. These linkages of plot and detail do not, however, demonstrate that *Marriage* is a popular refashioning of an earlier written or literary narrative. The Percy Folio poem may well be the record of one more retelling of a story that had been popular at least from the time of King Edward I, and that, in addition to giving rise to a group of literary renditions, must have circulated widely in oral performances throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. As such, it bears witness to Gawain's huge celebrity with an astonishing variety of audiences, and across centuries of enormous cultural change. The social milieus and the precise nature of the performance represented by *Marriage* are vividly defined in the fictional portrayal that Howard Pyle inserts into his *Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883); in this children's narrative, Robin's first adventure is a meeting in a tavern with a Tinker-minstrel, who sings "an ancient ballad of the time of good King Arthur, called the *Marriage of Sir Gawayne*, which you may some time read, yourself, in stout English of early times" (New York: Dover, 1968, p. 19). Pyle's portrayal of this impromptu performance before a tavern audience at the edge of Sherwood Forest likely corresponds to the sort of setting in which the compiler of the Percy Folio Manuscript heard the version of *Marriage* that he wrote down.

Like *Cornwall*, *Marriage* is composed in ballad meter, namely four-line stanzas rhyming *aaa**b*. The lines tend not to fall into regular metrical feet; instead they alternate, with four-stress unrhymed lines followed by three-stress lines containing the rhyming final word. As the oral sources of the meter would suggest, the poetry is most effective when read aloud; lines that "sound" clumsy when not vocalized take on life in spoken form.

#### **Tear**

*The Marriage of Sir Gawain* survives, though mutilated, in the Percy Folio Manuscript, pp. 46-52 (described in the introductory material to *The Greene Knight*). In transcribing the cramped and fading hand, I have been aided by the editions of Madden, Furnivall and Hales, and Child, and I have sometimes followed their readings and reconstructions for letters and words that now appear indistinct or indecipherable. I have regularized orthography, so that *av* and *ij* appear according to modern usage; abbreviations have been silently expanded, numerals spelled out, and modern punctuation and capitalization added.

### *Introduction*

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscript*

British Library Additional MS 27879 (The Percy Folio). Pp. 46–52.

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Hales, John W., and Frederick J. Furnivall. 1868. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Child, Francis James. 1884. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Lupack, Alan. "The Marriage of Sir Gawaine." In *Modern Arthurian Literature: An Anthology of English and American Arthuriana from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Alan Lupack. New York and London: Garland, 1992, pp. 106–18. [A reprint of the reconstructed version by Bishop Percy (first published in his *Reliques*, 1765), in which Percy supplied from his own invention the missing portions of the surviving fragment in the Percy Folio Manuscript.]

Shepherd, Stephen H. A., ed. *Middle English Romances*. New York: Norton, 1995. Pp. 380–87. [I have not been able to examine a copy of this edition.]

#### *Criticism*

Coomaraswamy, Amanda K. "On the Loathly Bride." *Speculum* 20 (1945), 391–404.

Garbity, Thomas J. "Rhyme, Romance, Ballad, Burlesque, and the Confluence of Form." *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. Robert F. Yeager. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1984. Pp. 283–301. [A discussion of the generic relation between ballad and romance in *Wedding and Marriage*.]

*The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

Kinge Arthur lives in merry Carlisle,  
And seemely is to see,  
And there he hath with him Quene Genever,  
That bride soe bright of blee.

5 And there he hath with Queene Genvier,  
That bride soe bright in bower,  
And all his barons about him stooode  
That were both stiffe and stowre.  
has been  
chamber  
brace

The King kept a roayll Christmasse  
Of mirth and great honor,  
And when . . .

[In a missing half page, Arthur arranges a hunt; he is accosted by a Baron — an armed warrior — who demands the King fulfill a quest.]

"And bring me word what thing it is  
That a woman most desire.  
This shal be thy ransome, Arthur," he sayes,  
15 "For Ile have noe other bier." I will recompence

King Arthur then held up his hand  
According thereto as was the law;  
He tooke his leave of the Baron there,  
And homeward can he drow.

20 And when he came to merry Cartile,  
To his chamber he is gone;  
And ther came to him his cozen Sir Gawayne  
As he did make his mose. Ainsworth  
Jernyngham

### *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

- |    |   |                               |
|----|---|-------------------------------|
|    | And there came to him his cozen Sir Gawayne,<br>That was a courteous knyght:<br>"Why sigh you soe sore, uncle Arthur," he said,<br>"Or who hath done thee unright?"   | Who<br>saying                 |
| 25 | "O peace, O peace, thou gentle Gawayne,<br>That faire may thee befall,<br>For if thou knew my sighing soe deoþe,<br>Thou wold not mervaille at all.   | knew <i>[the cause off]</i>   |
| 30 | "For when I came to Tearne Wadling,<br>A bold Barron there I fand<br>With a great club upon his backe,<br>Standing stiffe and strong.   | Tarn Wathelone<br>encountered |
| 35 | "And he asked me wether I wold fight,<br>Or from him I shold begone —<br>Or else I must him a ransome pay<br>And soe depart him from.   | (In which case)               |
| 40 | "To fight with him I saw noe cause,<br>Methought it was not meet,<br>For he was stiffe and strong withall,<br>His strokes were nothing sweete.  | misable<br>indeed             |
| 45 | "Therefor this is my ransome, Gawayne,<br>I ought to him to pay:<br>I must come againe, as I am sworne,<br>Upon the New Years Day.  | over                          |
|    | "And I must bring him word what thing it is . . .   |                               |
|    | [Here a half page is missing. Arthur and Gawayne spend their time searching for an answer to the Baron's question, and collect a sheaf of answers, none satisfactory. Finally, Arthur sets out for his New Year's meeting.] |                               |
| 50 | Then King Arthur deest him for to ryde<br>In one soe rich array<br>Toward the foresaid Tearne Wadling,<br>That he might keepe his day.  | prepared himself              |

[Here a half page is missing. Arthur and Gawain spend their time searching for an answer to the Baron's question, and collect a sheaf of answers, none satisfactory. Finally, Arthur sets out for his New Year's meeting.]

Then King Arthur dress him for to ryde  
In one soe rich array  
Toward the foresaid Tearse Wadling,  
That he might kecone his day.

*The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

- And as he rode over a moor,  
I see a lady where shee sate  
55 Bewixt an oke and a greene holles:  
She was cladd in red scarlett.
- Then there as shold have stood her mouth,  
Then there was sett her eye;  
The other was in her forehead fast,  
60 The way that she might see.
- Her nose was crooked and turad outward,  
Her mouth stood foole awry.  
A worse formed lady than shee was,  
Never man saw with his eye.
- 65 To halch upon him, King Arthur,  
This lady was full faine,  
But King Arthur had forgott his lesson,  
What he shold say againe.
- "What knyght art thou," the lady sayd,  
70 "That will not speake to me?  
Of me be thou nothing dismayd  
Tho I be ugly to see.
- "For I have halched you curteously,  
And you will not me againe;  
75 Yet I may happen, Sir Knyght," shee said,  
"To ease thee of thy paine."
- "Give thou ease me, lady," he said,  
Or helpe me any thing,  
Thou shalt have gentle Grawaine, my cozen,  
80 And marry him with a ring."
- "Why, if I help thee not, thou noble King Arthur,  
Of thy owne hearts desiringe,  
Of gentle Grawaine . . .

moor  
sat  
holly

where

greet him  
eager  
was at a loss for words  
again (i.e., in reply)

greeted  
not [greet] me in turn  
turn out

If  
in any way

*The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

[The lady agrees to the marriage bargain, and tells Arthur what women most desire. The King proceeds to his appointed meeting.]

- 85 And when he came to the Tercne Wadling  
The Baron there cold be finde,  
With a great weapon on his backe,  
Standing stiffe and stronge.could
- 90 And then he tooke King Arthurs letters in his hands  
And away he cold them fling.written answers  
did
- 95 And then he pull out a good browne sword,  
And cryd himselfe a king.bright  
declared
- 100 And he sayd, "I have thee and thy land, Arthur,  
To doe as it pleasest me,  
For this is not thy ransome sume;  
Therefore yeold thee to me."recompense
- 105 And then bespake him noble Arthur,  
And bad him hold his hand,  
"And give me leave to speake my mind  
In defence of all my land."bade
- 110 He said, "As I came over a more,  
I see a lady where shew sate  
Betweene an oke and a green holler;  
Shee was clad in red scarlett.  
  
115 "And she says, 'A woman will have her will,  
And this is all her cheef desire.'  
Doe me right, as thou art a baron of skill:  
This is thy ransome and all thy hyer."by me; proper
- 120 He sayes, "An early vengeance light on her!  
She walkes on yonder more —  
It was my sister that told thee this,  
And she is a misshappen hore!"(The Baron)  
whore

*The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

"But heer Ile make mine avow to God  
To doe her an evill turne,  
For an ever I may thane fowle theefe gett,  
In a fyre I will her burne."  
115

[Having satisfactorily answered the Baron's question, Arthur returns to court. He gathers his knights and returns to the lady in the forest, though he appears to have informed Gawain alone of his marriage pact.]

## The Second Part

Sir Lancelott and Sir Steven bold  
They rode with them that day,  
And the foremost of the company  
There rode the steward Kay.

120 Soe did Sir Banier and Sir Bore,  
Sir Garrett with them soe gay.  
Soe did Sir Tristeram that gentle knight,  
To the forest fresh and gay.

125 And when he came to the greene forest,  
Underneath a greene holly tree  
Their sate that lady in red scarlet  
That unseemly was to see.

Sir Kay beheld thin ladys face,  
And looked upon her swire:  
"Whosoever kisses this lady," he sayes,  
"Of his kisse he stands in feare."

Sir Kay beheld the lady againe,  
And looked upon her snout;  
"Whosoever kisses this lady," he saies,  
135 "Of his kyng he stande in doute."

"Amend thee of thy life."

*The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

For there is a knight amongst us all  
That must marry her to his wife."

140 "What! Wedd her to wif!" then said Sir Kay.

"In the devells name anon,  
Get me a wiffe where ere I may,  
For I had rather be slaine!"

whenever  
*destroyed*

145 Then some tooke up their hawkes in hast,  
And some tooke up their hounds,  
And some swore they wold not marry her  
For citty nor for towne.

*now*

150 And then bespake him noble King Arthur,  
And swore there by this day:  
"For a little foole sight and misliking . . .

*spoke out*

[After Arthur's speech, Gawain announces his intention to marry the lady. All return to the court, the marriage is celebrated, and the lady and Gawain retire to their marriage bed. Faced with Gawain's sexual reticence, the lady metamorphoses into a beautiful young woman, and then offers Gawain a choice.]

Then she said, "Choose thee, gentle Gawaine,  
Truth as I doe say,

Wether thou wilt have me in this liknesse  
In the night or else in the day."

*appearance*

155 And then bespake him gentle Gawaine,  
With one soe mild of moode,  
Says, "Well I know what I wold say —  
God grant it may be good!

*With a demeanor ever so*

160 "To have thee fowle in the night  
When I with thee shold play;  
Yet I had rather, if I might,  
Have thee fowle in the day."

*If choose*  
*make love*

"What! When leeds goe with ther felles," shee said,  
"Both to the ale and wine?"

*companions*

*The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 165 | Alas! Then I must hyde my selfe,<br>I must not goe withinne."   | into the hall (public space)              |
|     | And then bespake him gentle Gawayne,<br>Said, "Lady, than but a skill:<br>And because thou art my owne lady,<br>Thou shalt have all thy will."  | spoke our<br>trick (i.e., trial response) |
| 170 |   |   |
|     | Then she said, "Blessed be thou gentle Gawayne,<br>This day that I thee see,<br>For as thou see me att this time,<br>From hencforth I wil be.   | remain                                    |
| 175 | "My father was an old knight.<br>And yett it chanced soe<br>That he marryed a younge lady<br>That brought me to this woe.   |   |
|     |   |   |
| 180 | "Shee witched me, being a faire younge lady,<br>To the greene forest to dwell,<br>And there I must walke in womans liknesse,<br>Most like a feend of hell.                                | bewitched<br>like a monstrous woman       |
|     |   |   |
|     | "Shee witched my brother to a carliss B. . . .  | charish B(yron)?                          |
|     |   |   |
|     | [The lady continues her explanations, and then she and Gawayne consummate the marriage. In the morning Kay comes to check on Gawayne's welfare, and Gawayne explains his wife's history.] |   |
| 185 | "That looked soe fosie, and that was wort<br>On the wild more to goe.   | accustomed<br>moor                        |
|     |   |   |
|     | "Come kisse her, brother Kay," then said Sir Gawayne,<br>"And amond thē of thy life:<br>I sweare this is the same lady<br>That I marryed to my wiffe."                                    | shee                                      |
| 190 | Sir Kay kissed that lady bright,<br>Standing upon his feote;  |   |

*The Marriage of Sir Gawain*

He swore, as he was true knight,  
The spice was never soe sweete.

- 195     "Well, cozen Grawaine," sayes Sir Kay.  
      "Thy chance is fallen arright,  
For thou hast gotten one of the fairest maidis  
I ever saw with my sight."

luck

- 200     "It is my fortune," said Sir Grawaine.  
      "For my uncle Arthurs sake,  
I am glad as grasse wold be of raine,  
Great joy that I may take."

- 205     Sir Grawaine tooke the lady by the one arme,  
      Sir Kay tooke her by the other;  
They led her straight to King Arthur  
      As they were brother and brother.

the other

- 210     King Arthur welcomed them there all,  
      And soe did Lady Genever his Queene,  
With all the knights of the Round Table  
      Most seemly to be scene.

- 215     King Arthur beheld that lady faire  
      That was soe faire and bright.  
He thanked Christ in Trinity  
      For Sir Grawaine that gentle knight.

- 220     Soe did the knights, both more and lesse,  
      Rejoyced all that day,  
For the good chance that hapened was  
      To Sir Grawaine and his lady gay.

handsome

Fins.

*The End*

### Notes

Abbreviations: P = Percy Folio Manuscript; M = Madden's edition; FH = Fennival's and Hales' edition; C = Child's edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

- 29      *befoil*. M: *befoil*; the stroke for the second *f* appears blurred.
- 32      *Tearne Wadling*. The Tarn Wathelone (a tarn is a small lake) is mentioned in *Avowyng* (lines 131, 338) and *Awynys* (line 2), and again in lines 51 and 84 of the present romance. Though Ingelwood Forest, where this lake is located, is the setting of *Ragnell*, the Tarn itself is not mentioned in that romance.
- 87      *mrooge*. Though elsewhere rhymes are strained, this stanza seems clearly deficient.
- 116     *Sir Steven*. This is a knight otherwise unknown in Arthurian romance.
- 120     *Sir Basier* and *Sir Bore*. Madden suggests the first name is a misnomer for Beduer or Bodyvere (Bodevere), brother of Lucas the Butler and Arthur's constable, but perhaps this is Sir Bas (or Bayan), the father of Lancelot. The second is Bors de Gaynes, Lancelot's loyal companion.
- 121     *Sir Garrett*. This is Gareth, Gawain's brother and loyal supporter of Lancelot, by whom he is inadvertently killed in the rescue of Guenevere.
- 122     *Sir Tristeram*. A celebrated hero in many Arthurian tales, Sir Tristan is the son of Meliodas and nephew of King Mark of Cornwall.
- 143     *slaine*. FH: *zhaine*, with the suggestion that the word may be a variant of *shew*, *slaine*, or *shamed*.
- 163     *feires*. The scribal forms are unclear; M, C read *seires*, and I amend to *feires*, which I follow. FH give *squires*.

*Notes*

- 174 *henceforth*, M: *henceforth*.
- 175 ff. The plot of *Marriage* more closely resembles a traditional fairy tale in making the source of evil simply a wicked stepmother rather than the entanglements of an Arthurian court intrigue.
- 182 *feind*, M reads the apparent extra minus as *i*, which seems right; FH, C: *feind*.
- 192 *zwar*, M: *sager*, without explanation, though *zwar* seems clear in P.



## *The Carle of Carlisle*

### *Introduction*

Like *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, *The Carle of Carlisle* is a post-medieval version of a surviving tail-rhyme romance. Besides giving witness to the continuing appeal of chivalric plots among popular audiences, *Carle* is especially valuable for including a crucial episode that the extant version of *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle* omits. This is the beheading scene (lines 379 ff.), which resembles similar motifs in *Turke*, *Greene Knight*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In *Carle*, Gawain's obliging beheading of his host is the act of courtesy that breaks the spell, restoring the erstwhile good warrior to his proper identity. The transformation also strongly resembles the climactic events in *Ragnelle and Marriage*, whereby a beautiful and noble maiden is likewise saved from "nigromancy." In a popular story like *Carle*, the beheading episode precipitates a Frog Prince metamorphosis; the tale presents this less as a rudimentary psychology — a change of heart — than as a complete change of character, or rather a return from the monstrous to a true identity. The surviving text of *Carlisle*, however, omits this consequential scene, which the *Carle* convincingly shows was a feature of the established plot. In *Carlisle*, the Carle must simply vow to reform himself, which makes for a much less vivid and memorable turnabout.

*Carlisle* and *Carle* are not directly related to one another as source or derivative, and so give evidence for still another medieval version of the story in some lost common ancestor. *Carle* recalls *Avowyng* (and *Carlisle*) in bringing Sir Gawain together with Kay and Baldwin, and, in common with many of the other popular *Gawain* romances, it makes the area surrounding Carlisle in Cumberland, near the Scottish border, the setting for Arthurian adventure. As *Carle* makes clear, the point of the story is to prove Gawain's worthiness as a knight, to show that his courtesy indeed justifies his reputation and the chivalry of the Round Table. Both the courtesy and the hardness of Arthur's knights are put to the test by the seeming bluffness of the Carle; his "lodlye" appearance and behavior (line 182) make him, like Ragnelle, not only monstrous but uncouth and uncourteous. In the end, however, the poem presents the Carle's challenges not as conflicts of values between knights and churls, but as the result of magical plotting; its undoing of the spell simply confirms the superiority of chivalry. Not only does the chivalric code absorb the Carle's rude

### *The Carle of Carlisle*

buffets and demands, it actually transforms him to a properly compassionate and honorable knight. Gawain's courteous submission — his deliberate control of his personal strength and his political and social superiority — demonstrates not simply that every Carle's home is his castle, but that true knighthood cuts across and consolidates class distinctions. By the conclusion, the audience sees the Carle not as an enemy of knighthood, but as another of the knights of the Round Table. The other motifs of reconciliation in the poem — Gawain's marriage to the Carle's daughter, and the Carle's feasting of Arthurian knighthood — are then simply themes within the larger movement of the romance plot towards reunion and restored identity. These normative motifs also help clarify the meaning of the central episode, for though the Carle's apparently eccentric hospitality seems to violate or dislodge ordinary expectations, its effect is to allow the standards of chivalric conduct to prevail.

#### *Text*

*The Carle of Carlisle* appears in the Percy Folio Manuscript, dating from the middle of the seventeenth century (see introduction to *The Greene Knight*). The poem is not preserved in formal ballad stanzas, but simply in rhyming couplets. See Bibliography for other editions.

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscript*

British Library Additional MS 27879 (The Percy Folio). Pp. 448–55.

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Hales, John W., and Frederick J. Furnivall. 1868. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

*The Carle of Carlisle*

	Listen to me a little stand —	
	Yee shall heare of one that was sober and sound.	
	Hee was meeke as maid in bower,	while
	Stiffe and strong in every stoure.	trustworthy and brave
5	Certes, withouten fable,	maiden in a chamber
	He was one of the Round Table.	bustle
	The knights name was Sir Gawaine,	Surely
	That much worshipp wan in Brittaine.	won
	The Ile of Brittaine called is	
10	Both England and Scotland iwis.	indeed
	Wales is an angle to that ile,	corner
	Where King Arthur sojourned a while,	stayed
	With him twenty-four knights told	(And); all told (in number)
	Besids barrons and dukes bold.	
15	The King to his bishopp gan say,	did
	"Wee will have a Masse today —	
	Bishopp Bodwin shall itt done.	perform
	After to the forrest wee will gone,	
	For now its grass-time of the yeere:	it's time when the deer are fattened
20	Bacross bold shall breake the deere."	dress
	Faine theroff was Sir Marrocke.	Glad
	Soe was Sir Kay, the knight stout.	
	Faine was Sir Lancelott Du Lake;	
	Soe was Sir Percivall, I undertake,	dare say
25	Faine was Sir Ewaine	
	And Sir Lott of Lothaine;	
	Soe was the Knight of Armes Greese	brilliant one
	And alsoe Sir Gawaine the sheene.	
	Sir Gawaine was Steward in Arthurs hall:	
30	Hee was the courteous knight amongst them all.	most courteous
	King Arthur and his cozen Mordred,	kinsman; (were there)
	And other knights withouten leitt.	without end

*The Carle of Carlisle*

	<i>The Fair Unknown</i>
35	Sir Lybias Discosyus was there With proud archers lese and more.
35	Blanch Faire and Sir Ironside, And many knights that day can ryde. And Ironside, as I weene, Gote the Knight of Armour Greene,
40	Certes, as I understand. Of a faire lady of Blanch Land. Hee cold moe of honor in warr Then all the knights that with Arthur weare.
40	Burning dragons he slew in land And wilde beasts, as I understand.
45	Wilde beares he slew that stond: A hardyer knight was never found. He was called in his dayes One of King Arthurs fellowes.
45	Why was hee called Ironsyde? For ever armed wold he ryde;
50	Hee wold alwais armes beare, For gyants and hee were ever att warr. Dapple-couleur was his steede,
50	His armour, and his other weedes.
55	Azure of gold he bare With a grifon leise or more, And a difference of a molatt He bare in his crest alligane. <sup>1</sup>
55	Wheresoever he went, east nor west, He never forsooke man nor beast.
60	Beagles keenly away they ran; The King followed after with many a man. The grayhounds out of the leashe;
60	They drew downe the deere of grasse.
65	Fine tents in the feild were sett: A merry sort there were mett Of comely knights of kind.

<sup>1</sup> Lines 55-58: *He bore arms of blau and gold, / [Emblazoned] with several griffins, / And the distinguishing mark of a mullet (i.e., star) / He always bore on his crest (see note)*

*The Carle of Carlile*

- Upon the bont there can they lende,  
And by noone of the same day  
field; finger  
70      A hundred harts on the ground lay.  
Then Sir Gawaine and Sir Kay  
And Bishopp Bodwiz, as I heard say,  
After a rodd deere they rode  
Into a forest wylde and brode.  
75      A thicke mist fell them among  
That caused them all to goe wronge.  
Great moasse made then Sir Kay  
That they shold loose the hart that day:  
That red hart wold not dwell.      stay behind  
80      Harken what adventures them befall.  
Fall sore they were adread  
Ere they any lodginge had.      before  
Then spake Sir Gawaine:  
"This labour wee have had in vaine.  
85      This red hart is out of sight —  
Wee meene with him no more this night.  
I neede wee of our horses do light,  
And lodge wee hoere all this night.      from  
90      Truly itt is best, as thinketh mee,  
To lodge low under this tree."  
"Nay!" said Kay, "Goe wee hence anon!  
For I will lodge wheresoere I come;  
For there dare no man warne me  
Of whatt estate soever hee bee."      now  
95      "Yes," said the Bishopp, "that wolt I well.  
Here dwelleth a carle in a castelle.  
The Carle of Caetile is his name;  
I know itt well, by St. Jame.      wherever  
100     Was there never man yett soe bold  
That durst lodge within his hold  
But and if hee scape with his liffe away  
Hee ruleth him well, I you say."      forbid me  
105     Then said Kay, "All is feare  
To goe thither is my desire.  
For and the Carle be never so boilde,  
I thiske to lodge within his hold.      know  
Nearby; chart  
cautly  
But if only  
does very well  
together  
no matter whether

*The Carle of Carlisle*

	For if he jangle and make hit stout, I shall beane the Carle all about. And I shall make his bigging bare And doe to him mickle care, And I shall beate him, as I thinke, Till he both sweate and stinke."	complain and resist dwelling cause for him
110	Then said the Bishopp, "So mote I face, At his bidding I wil be yare."	However I (Kay's); ready
115	Gawaine said, "Let be thy bostrye fare, For thou dost ever waken care. If thou scape with thy liffe away Thou rales thee well, I dare say."	noisy claims set up
120	Then said Kay, "That pleaseth me; Thither let us ryde all three. Such as hee bakes, such shall hee brew; Such as hee shapes, such shall hee sew; Such as hee beeweth, such shall hee drinke."	That's fine with me deserves
125	"That is contrary," said Gawaine, "as I thinke. But if any faire speeche will be gaine, Wee shall make him loed within his owne. If noe faire speech will avayle, Then to karp on Kay wee will not faille."	pervasive respond to own (castle) profit (us) complain I ascent
130	Then said the Bishopp, "That senteth me; Thither let us ryde all three." When they came to the Carles gate, A hammer they found hanging theratz.	
135	Gawaine bent the hammer in his hand And curteouslye on the gates dange. Forth came the porter with still fare Saying, "Who is soe bold to knocke there?"	took knocked quietly
140	Gawaine answered him curteouslye: "Man," hee said, "that is I. Wee be two knights of Arthurs inn And a bishopp, no moe to min."	Household mention
145	Wee have rydden all day in the forest still Till horse and man beene like to spill. For Arthurs sake, that is our Kinge, Wee desire my Lord of a nights lodginne And harbarow till the day att morne	desolate perish Hospitality

The Castle of Carlisle

- |     |  |                    |
|-----|--|--------------------|
|     | That wee may scape away without scorne."               | harm               |
|     | Then spake the crabbed knight Sir Kay:                 | prickly            |
|     | "Porter, our errand I reede the say,                   |                    |
|     | Or else the castle gane wee shall breake               |                    |
| 150 | And the keyes thereof to Arthur take."                 |                    |
|     | The porter sayd with words throe,                      | angry              |
|     | "Theres no man alive that dares doe soe.               |                    |
|     | If a hundred such as thou his death had sworne,        |                    |
|     | Yett he wold ryde on hunting tomorne."                 | IMPATIENCE         |
| 155 | Then answered Gawain, that was curiosous aye,          |                    |
|     | "Porter, our errand I pray thee say."                  |                    |
|     | "Yes," said the porter, "withouthen fayle,             |                    |
|     | I shall say your errand fall well."                    |                    |
| 160 | As soone as the porter the Carle see                   | saw the Carle      |
|     | Hee kneeldowne upon his knee.                          |                    |
|     | "Yonder beene two knights of Arthurs ar-               | Household          |
|     | And a bishopp, no more to myn.                         |                    |
|     | They have roden all day in the forrest still           |                    |
|     | That horse and man is like to spill.                   | perish             |
| 165 | They desire you for Arthurs sake, their King,          |                    |
|     | To grant them one nights lodginge                      |                    |
|     | And herberrow till the day ait morne,                  |                    |
|     | That they may scape away without scorne."              |                    |
|     | "Noething greeves me," sayd the Carle, "without doabt, |                    |
| 170 | But that the knights stand soe long without."          | outside            |
|     | With that the porter opened the gates wyde,            |                    |
|     | And the knights rode in that tyde.                     |                    |
|     | Their steeds into the stable are tane;                 | time               |
|     | The knights into the hall are gone.                    | taken              |
| 175 | Hoere the Carle sate in his chaire on hye              |                    |
|     | With his legg cast over the other knee.                |                    |
|     | His mosth was wyde and his beard was gray,             |                    |
|     | His lockes on his sholders lay.                        |                    |
|     | Betwene his browes, certaine,                          |                    |
| 180 | Itt was large there a spann.                           | as broad there as  |
|     | With two great eyen bresing as fyre,                   |                    |
|     | Lord, hee was a lodye syer.                            | bustly fire (lord) |
|     | Over his shoulders he bare a bread                     |                    |
|     | Three taylors yards, as clarke doe reede.              | Across; breadth    |
|     |  | meadow             |

*The Carle of Carlile*

- 185 His fingers were like to teddar-stakes,  
And his hands like breads that wives may bake.  
Fifty cubitts he was in height.  
Loed, he was a loathsome wight!  
When Sir Gawaine that Carle see  
190 He haled him full curteously  
And saith, "Carle of Carlile, God save thee  
As thou sittis in thy prosperitee."  
The Carle said, "As Christ me save,  
Yee shall be welcome for Arthurs sake.  
195 Yet is it not my part to doe soe,  
For Arthur hath beeene ever my foe.  
He hath beaten my knights and done them bale  
And send them wounded to my owne hall.  
Yet the trath to tell I will not leane,  
200 I have quitt him the same againe."  
"That is a kind of knave," said Kay, "without leasing,  
Soo to revile a noble king."  
Gawaine heard and made answere,  
"Kay, thou sayest more then moche weere."  
205 With that they went further into the hall,  
Where bordes were spredd and covered with pall.  
And four welches of great ire  
They found lying by the fire.  
There was a boare that did rone,  
210 And a boar that did whent his tushes fome;  
Alsoe a bul that did rone,  
And a lyon that did both gape and rone —  
The lyon did both gape and gres.  
"O peace, whelpes," said the Carle then.  
215 For that wood that the Carle did speake  
The four whelpes under the bord did creepe.  
Downe came a lady faire and free  
And sett her on the Carles knee.  
One whiles shee harped, another whiles song  
220 Both of paramours and lovinge amoung.  
"Well were that man," said Gawaine, "that ere were boorne  
That might lye with that lady till day att moore."  
"That were great shame," said the Carle free,
- thick pegs  
creature  
greeted  
bale  
send  
be  
required (give him back)  
chart's nature; being  
approach  
right  
tables; rich cloth  
wander untrouthed  
boar; foamy tusks  
glare and snarl  
table  
For a time  
among other subjects  
ever

*The Carle of Carlisle*

- 225 "That thou sholdst doe me such villanye."  
"Sir," said Gwaine, "I sayd sought."  
"No, man!" said the Carle; "More thou thought."<sup>1</sup>  
Then start Kay to the flore  
And said hee wold see how his palfrey for.  
Both corne and hay he found bynd,  
230 And the Carles palfrey by his steed did stand.  
Kay tooke the Carles palfrey by the necke,  
And soone hee thrust him out att the hecke.  
Thus Kay put the Carles sole out,  
And on his backe he sett a clout.  
235 Then the Carle himselfe hee stood thereby  
And sayd, "This baffen, man, thou shalt aby."  
The Carle caught Kay such a rapp  
That backward he fell flatt.  
Had iit not boene for a feald of straw,  
240 Kayes backe had gone in two.  
Then said Kay, "And thou were without thy hold,  
Man, this baffen shold be deere sold."  
"What," sayd the Carle, "dost thou menace me?  
I swere by all the soules sicerlye,  
245 Man, I swee further those:  
If I hooore any malice more  
For this one word that thou hast spokea,  
Iit is bat ernest thou hast gotten."  
Then went Kay into the hall,  
250 And the Bishopp to him can call,  
Saith, "Brother Kay, where you have boene?"  
"To looke my palfrey, as I weene."  
Then said the Bishopp, "Iit falleth me  
That my palfrey I must see."  
255 Both corne and hay he found bynd  
And the Carles palfrey, as I understand.  
The Bishopp tooke the Carles horse by the necke,  
And soone hee thrust him out att the hecke.  
Thus he turned the Carles sole out.
- got up  
fared  
spread about  
  
stall door  
  
struck a blow  
  
pay for  
delivered  
  
If; own castle  
dearly paid for  
threaten  
nearly  
then  
  
Beyond  
a token  
  
did  
  
It happens  
  
stall door  
warhorse

<sup>1</sup> "You imagined more (than you said)"

*The Carle of Carlisle*

- 260 And on his backe he sett a clout,  
Sais, "Wend forth, folc, in the devills way.  
Who made thee soe bold with my palfrey?"  
The Carle himselfe he stood thereby:  
"Man, this baffest thou shalt aby." (and said)  
265 He hit the Bishopp upon the crowne  
That his miter and he fell downe.  
"Mercy," said the Bishopp, "I am a clarke!  
Somewhath I can of Chrism-werke."  
He saith, "By the clergye I sett nothing.  
270 Nor yett by thy miter nor by thy ringe.  
It fitteth a clarke to be carous and free  
By the conning of his clergye."  
With that the Bishopp went into the hall,  
And Sir Gawayne to him can call.  
275 Saith, "Brother Bishopp, where have you boone?" did  
"To looke my palfrey, as I weene."  
Then sayd Sir Gawayne, "Itt falleth mee  
That my palfrey I must needs see."  
Corne and hay he found enoughe lynd,  
280 And the Carles folc by his did stand.  
The Carles folc had boone forth in the raine:  
Therof Sir Gawayne was not faine. glad  
Hee tooke his mantle that was of greese  
And covered the folc, as I weene;  
285 Sayth, "Stand up, folc, and eate thy meate.  
Thy master payeth for all that wee heare gett."  
The Carle himselfe stood thereby  
And thanked him of his certeyne.  
The Carle tooke Gawayne by the hand,  
290 And both together in the hall they wend.  
The Carle called for a bowle of wine,  
And soone they settled them to dine.  
Seventy bowles in that bowle were — might be per  
He was not weake that did itt beare.  
295 Then the Carle sett itt to his chin  
And said, "To you I will begin."  
Fifteen gallons he dranke that tyde lift  
And caught to his men on every side. For  
time  
*And passed it*

The Castle of Cardisie

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
|     | Then the Carle said to them anon,<br>"Sirrs, to supper gett you gone."  |  |
| 300 | Gawaine answered the Carle then,<br>"Sir, att your bidding wee will be ben."  | Happy                                  |
|     | "If you be bayne att my bidding<br>You honor me without leasinge."  | Happy                                  |
| 305 | They washed all and went to meate<br>And dranke the wine that was soe sweete.<br>The Carle said to Gawaine anon,              | lie                                    |
|     | "A long speare see thou take in thy hand:<br>Att the buttrye doore take thou thy race,  | <i>pantry door prepare your attack</i> |
| 310 | And marke me well in middest the face."   | aim at                                 |
|     | "A," thought Sir Kay, "that that were I,<br>Then his buffett he shold deene abuy!"  | if only                                |
|     | "Well," quoth the Carle, "when thou wilt thou may,<br>When thou wilt thy strenght assay."                                     | whenever you're ready<br>make trial    |
| 315 | "Well, Sir," said Kay, "I said nought."   |  |
|     | "Noe," said the Carle, "but more thou thought."   |  |
|     | Then Gawaine was fell glad of that,<br>And a long spere in his hand he gatt.  |  |
|     | Att the buttrye doore he tooke his race   | <i>prepared his attack</i>             |
| 320 | And marked the Carle in the middest the face.<br>The Carle saw Sir Gawaine come in ire  |  |
|     | And cast his head under his speare.   | with violence                          |
|     | Gawaine caught the wall such a rapp   | ducked                                 |
|     | The fyre flew out and the speare brake;   | made against                           |
| 325 | He stroke a foote into the wall of stone.<br>A bolder baron was there never none.   | sparks                                 |
|     | "Soft," said the Carle, "thow was to radd."   | soft; quick                            |
|     | "I did but, Sir, as you me bade."   | only                                   |
|     | "If thow had hitt me as thou had mest,<br>Thow had caught me a fell dist."  | aimed to                               |
| 330 | The Carle tooke Gawaine by the hand,<br>And both into a chamber they wead.  | given                                  |
|     | A fall faire bed there was spred:   |  |
|     | The Carles wiffe therin was laid.   |  |
| 335 | The Carle said, "Gawaine, of curtesye<br>Gett into this bedd with this faire ladye.<br>Kisse thou her thrice before mine eye: |  |

*The Carle of Carlisle*

- Looke thou doe no other villanye."  
The Carle opened the sheetes wyde.  
340 Gawaine gott in by the ladyes syde;  
Gawaine over her put his arme —  
With that his flesh began to warme.  
Gawaine had thought so have made infare.  
"Hold!" quoth the Carle, "Man, stopp thee!  
345 It were great shame," quoth the Carle, "for me  
That thou sholdest doe me such villanye.  
But arise up, Gawaine, and goe with me;  
I shall bring thee to a fairer lady then ever was shee."  
The Carle tooke Gawaine by the hand;  
350 Both into another chamber they wend.  
A faire bedd there found they speed,  
And the Carles daughter therin laid.  
Saith, "Gawaine, now for thy courtesye  
Gett thee to bedd to this faire lady."  
355 The Carle opened the sheetes wyde;  
Sir Gawaine gott in by the ladyes side.  
Gawaine put his arme over that sweet thing.  
"Sleepe, daughter," sais the Carle, "on my blessing."  
360 The Carle turned his backe and went his way  
And lockt the dore with a silver kaye.  
On the other morning when the Carle rose  
Unto his daughters chamber he goes.  
365 "Rise up, Sir Gawaine, and goe with mee,  
A marvelous sight I shall lete thee see."  
The Carle tooke him by the hand,  
And both into another chamber they wend.  
370 And there they found many a bloody serke  
Which were wrought with curyous werke.  
Fifteen hundred dead mens bones  
They found upon a rooke att once.  
375 "Alacke!" quoth Sir Gawaine, "What have beene here?"  
Saith, "I and my welpes have slaine all there."  
Then Sir Gawaine, curroos and kind,  
He tooke his leave away to wend  
And thanked the Carle and the ladyes there  
Right as they worthy were.
- intercourse
- says; with
- near
- battle shirt designs
- rock
- has happened
- (The Carle says; these
- Accordingly

*The Carle of Carlisle*

- "Nay," said the Carle, "wee will first dine,  
And then thou shalt goo with blessing mine." depart
- Afer dinner, the sooth to say,
- 380 The Carle tooke Grawaine to a chamber gay  
Where were hanginge swords towne. two
- The Carle soone tooke one of tho  
And sayd to the knight then,  
"Grawaine, as thou art a man,  
385 Take this sword and stryke off my head." off
- "Nay," said Grawaine, "I had rather be dead.  
For I had rather suffer pine and woe pain  
Or ever I wold that deede doe."
- The Carle sayd to Sir Grawaine,  
390 "Looke thou doe as I theo saine,  
And therof be not adread.  
But shortly smite off my head:  
For if thou wolt not doe ill tyte in short order; off  
quickly  
For smooth thy head I will ofmyte." strike off
- 395 To the Carle said Sir Grawaine,  
"Sir, your bidding shall be done."  
He stroke the head the body froe: from  
And he stood up a man thou then  
Of the height of Sir Grawaine —
- 400 The certayne soothe, withouten laise. be
- The Carle sayd, "Grawaine, God blesse theo!  
For thou hast delivered mee  
From all false witchcraft —  
I am delivered alle the last.
- 405 By sigromancie thus was I shapen magic (incromancy); transformed  
Till a knight of the Round Table  
Had with a sword smitten off my head,  
If he had grace to doe that deede. my permission
- It is forty winters agoe years
- 410 Since I was transformed soe.  
Since then nose lodged within this woon dwelling  
But I and my whelpes driven them downe.  
And but if bee did my bidding soone Except that; destroyed  
I killed him and drew him downe, unless
- 415 Every one bat only thee.

*The Carle of Carlisle*

- Christ grant thee of his mercy:  
He that the world made reward thee this,  
For all my hate thou hast turned to blisse.  
Now will I leave that lawe;
- 420 There shall no man for me be slawe,  
And I purpose for their sake  
A chastitye in this place to make,  
And five preists to sing for aye  
Until itt be doomesday.
- 425 And Gawayne, for the love of thee  
Every one shall bee welcome to me."  
Sir Gawayne and the young lady clere,  
The Bishopp weded them in fere.  
The Carle gave him for his wedding
- 430 A staffe, a miter, and a ringe.  
He gave Sir Kay, that angry knight,  
A blood-red steede and a wight.  
He gave his daughter, the sooth to say,  
An ambling white palfrey:
- 435 The fairest hee was on the mold;  
Her palfrey was charged with gold.  
Shee was soe gorgeous and soe gay  
No man cold tell her array.  
The Carle commanded Sir Gawayne to wead
- 440 And say unto Arthur our King  
And pray him that hee wold,  
For His love that Judas sold  
And for His sake that in Bethlehem was borne,  
That hee wold disc with him to morne.
- 445 Sir Gawayne sayd the Carle unto,  
"For ssooth, I shall your message doe."  
Then they rode singing by the way  
With the ladye that was gay.  
They were as glad of that lady bright
- 450 As ever was fowle of the daylyght.  
They told King Arthur where they had boone,  
And what adventures they had seene.  
"I thanke God," sayd the King, "coven Kay,  
That thou didst on live part away."
- (some) of  
(for) this  
sorrow  
custom  
through; slain  
  
traveler  
  
together  
for celebration of the  
  
powerful (one)  
  
ladon  
handsome  
could justly describe  
  
(i.e., Jesus)  
  
(Arthur with the Carle)  
  
perform  
  
handsome  
  
get out alive

*The Carle of Carlisle*

- 455 "Marry," said Sir Kay againe,  
"Of my liffe I may be faine.  
For His love that was in Bethlem borne  
You must dine with the Carle to morne."  
In the dawning of the day they rode:  
Indeed glad
- 460 A merrier meeting was never made.  
When they together were mett,  
It was a good thing, I you heft.  
The trumpets plaid att the gane,  
With trumpets of silver therat.  
promise right there
- 465 There was all manner of minstrelye —  
Harpe, gynoene, and sowtrye.  
Into the hall the King was fent  
And roayalye in seat was sett.  
By then the dinner was readye dight;  
Stringed instruments escorted prepared
- 470 Tables were covered all on height.  
Then to wash they wold not blina,  
And the feast they can begin.  
There they were mached aright,  
Every lady against a knight,  
Tables on trellies were all set hold off did paired
- 475 And minstrells sate in windowes faire  
And playd on their instruments cleere.  
Minstrells for woeshipp att every messe  
Fall lowd they cry, "Largesse!"  
The Carle bade the King, "Doe gladlye,  
at window seats banquet Largest (give generously) Enjoy
- 480 For heere yee gett great curtesye."  
The King said, "By Seint Michael,  
This dinner liketh me full well."  
He dubd the Carle a knyght anon.  
He gave him the country of Carlile soone,  
please made immediately
- 485 And made him Erie of all that land,  
And after knyght of the Table Round.  
The King said, "Knyght, I tell thee  
Carlile shall thy name bee."  
When the dinner was all done,  
490 Every knyght tooke his leave soone  
To wead forward soberlye  
Home into their owne countrye.  
He that made us all with His hand,

*The Carle of Carlisle*

Both the sea and the land,  
Grant us all for His sake  
495 This false world to forsake —  
And out of this world when wee shall wend  
To heavens blisse our soules bringe,  
God grant us grace itt may soe bee.  
500 Amen, say all, for charite.

FINIS.

*The End*

### Notes

Abbreviations: P = Percy Folio; M = Madden's edition; HF = Hales' and Farnival's edition; K = Kurvinen's edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

- 19      *grass-time*. The term refers to the "grease" time, when herds have fattened; see explanation of this idiom, and of the assay or "breaking" of the deer in *Ragnelle*, line 46 note.
- 20      *break the deere*. This term is frequently used for the prescribed, almost ritualized, dressing of the dead animal. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (lines 1325 ff.) offers a striking and detailed account, in which *brek* occurs at line 1333; briefer descriptions of the hunt appear in *Ragnelle* (lines 46 ff.), *Carlisle* (lines 29 ff., 85–87, 103 ff.), *Arwystyl* (lines 25 ff.), and *Awnyfys* (lines 5 ff.).
- 21 ff.     On the catalogue of knights, see notes on the corresponding passage in *Carlisle*, lines 34 ff.
- 31      *cousin Mordred*. In *Cornwall*, line 1, Arthur calls Gawain "cousin" or kinsman; see note on *Carlisle*, line 49, which refers to "The Kyngus uncull, Syr Mordreste."
- 55 ff.     Sir Ironside's coat of arms consists of a field of blue, embazoned in gold with a griffin *leesse or more*. The phrase *leesse or more*, which may have been composed for metrical rather than descriptive purposes, seems to suggest arms decorated with more than one griffin, though how the animals are arranged is unclear. *Leesse or more* may indicate the presence of an inescutcheon, i.e. one smaller coat of arms set within a larger to signify a family connection, or, geratting, where the family symbol or totem is repeated across the field of the coat. The griffin, a mythical beast, may symbolize the traits of the bearer, as is suggested in John Trevor's fifteenth-century Welsh *Llyfr Arfau* [Book of Arms]: "A griffin borne in arms signifies that the first to bear it was a strong, pugnacious man in whom were found two distinct natures and qualities: for the griffin is a bird in its head and talons and resembles an eagle, and its hind part

### *The Carle of Carlile*

is like that of a lion" (in Evans John Jones' *Medieval Heraldry: Some Fourteenth-Century Heraldic Works* [Cardiff, Wales: William Lewis, 1903], p. 45). Also, Lycurgus, the King of Thrace in Chaucer's Knight's Tale, is intimidatingly described as glaring around "lik a grifphon" (line 2133). Ironside's coat of arms contains a difference, or cadence mark designed to distinguish it from that of his father or other senior kinsman. In this case it is a mullet, a figure resembling a five-pointed star (cp. with Gawain's pentangle [line 664] in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), which became the particular mark of the third son of a family: "originally the mullet was a spur rowel, from the French word *moulette*, but it now has a stereotyped form and more often symbolizes a star" (J. P. Brooke-Little, *An Heraldic Alphabet*, rev. ed., [London: Robson Books, 1985], p. 145). Griffins, either as crests or ornamentation, appear elsewhere in Arthurian poems in association with Gawain. In Awynys, this hero bears arms engraved with griffons of golde (line 509). In *Lybeas Descomas*, Arthur gives Gawain's son (i.e., The Fair Unknown) "a rich sheeld all over gilt / with a griffin see gay" (lines 92-93 in Hales' and Furnivall's edition of the Percy Folio [see Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited], vol. 2, p. 419); in the Cotton version of this romance (edited by Mills [see Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited]) "Lybeas Descomas" receives a golden shield with a griffin (lines 78-81). Interestingly, there also exists a fifteenth-century depiction of a coat of arms composed of a green field embazoned with three gold griffins registered to "SIR GAWAYNE the good knyght" (Harleian MS 2169; this is reproduced in *The Ancestor: A Quarterly Review of County and Family History, Heraldry and Antiquities* 3 [1902], p. 192; see also General Introduction, note 21). The description of Ironside's arms in both *Carlile* and *Carle* suggests by its placement some confusion with the distinct armorial bearings associated with Gawain and his kin. See Awynys, line 509 and note, and *Carlile*, lines 82 ff. and note. Baron Simon de Montagu (d. 1317) bore arms resembling those of Sir Ironside, composed of blue and gold, with, depending on the particular campaign, either one or two griffins — the animal assumed to be the symbol of his house, which died out in 1428.

61 they. P: *ther*; HF prints *shē* in instances where the scribal spelling *ther* represents "they." I emend to *they* here and at lines 73, 81, 82, and 459. Elsewhere the scribe uses *they* as the form of the demonstrative adjective or the definite article. I have emended this spelling to *ther* at lines 63, 170, 171, 215, 216, 287, 289, 290, 295, 299, 331, 345, 349, 359, 365, and 375.

123 ff. All these remarks are proverbial; see *Carlile* line 160 and note.

### Notes

- 125 *gaine*. This is a broken rhyme, whose meaning is unclear. M in a note suggests the emendation *hine* for *he*, which would give, "win him [the Carle] over." *gaine* may be the adverbial form (meaning "back," "in return") used as a verb, giving "reply to," "respond to"; or it may be the noun *gein*, "reward," "profit" (whose northern form, *gawis*, would suit the rhyme) used as a verb, giving "reward," "respond favorably to."
- 152 *Theres*. K: *There's*, with no indication of punctuation in P.
- 179 ff. Given the obviously fantastic dimensions of the Carle, who is clearly a fairy-tale giant, it may seem pointless to note that his size here far exceeds that in *Carline*: here his shoulders are nine feet broad (rather than six), and he is seventy-five feet tall (as opposed to twenty-seven in *Carline*; see lines 256 ff.).
- 269 This overt anti-clerical (or, more precisely, anti-episcopal in its focus on *witer* and *ringe*) outburst seems to reflect a post-Reformation rather than a medieval attitude. In *Carline*, when Baldwin claims a similar benefit of clergy, the Carle simply attacks his want of courtesy. *Turke*, lines 154 ff., contains a similar intrusive anti-clericalism.
- 309 *race*. In *Carline*, the Carle asks Gawain to "take thy passe," to take his position at the door.
- 367 *Bloody serke*. This is a traditional phrase; see note at line 535 of *Carline*.
- 379 ff. The beheading scene, by which the Carle is "delivered . . . From all false witchcraft" (lines 402-03) is inexplicably missing from *Carline*. The manner of disenchantment resembles the similar episode in *Turke* (see lines 271 ff. and note). The Carle's revelation that he had been "by nigromancé . . . shapen" (line 405) echoes Ragnelle's use of the same term; see *Ragnelle*, line 691 and note.



## *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

### *Introduction*

The *Jeaste of Sir Gawain* combines two widely separated but interwoven episodes from a twelfth-century French poetic romance, the anonymous continuation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval*. In this poem, Gawain's union with an unknown woman leads many years later to combat with her brother, Bras de Lys (Brandis in *Jeaste*); this encounter ends, however, when the sister of Bras de Lys intervenes, presenting to her lover and her brother the son she has borne to Gawain, Ginglais (called elsewhere Le Bel Inconnu, or, as in *Cartisie*, Libeaus Desconus, The Fair Unknown). In the end, Arthur inducts Bras de Lys into the fellowship of the Round Table. The Middle English *Jeaste* stitches together these relatively minor components of Gawain's part in the much larger story of the Grail, and, by omitting the reconciliation that ends the episodes in the French romance, turns them into a stark series of trials of Gawain's martial prowess. Gawain's role in the *Jeaste* therefore differs somewhat from his character as the knight of truth in other Middle English romances; here he more closely resembles the French Gauvain, whose exploits often involve, or even start with, love affairs. The surviving transcription of the poem lacks the opening episode. In the original French, this was a *chanson d'aventure*, a chance meeting while wandering in the woods; in the *Jeaste*, Gawain may have been part of an Arthurian hunt ("chase," line 2), as in *Ragnelle*, *Cartisie*, *Aventys*, *Avowsyng*, and other romances. Gawain's venture into the woods (not localized here as Inglewood Forest, or connected to Carlisle) transmutes from the pursuit of wild creatures to the stalking of a strange lady in a pavilion. In his study of the narrative core of *Ragnelle* and other loathly lady stories, Eisner suggests that the quest to discover what women most desire traditionally began with a seduction or a rape, as Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* in fact does. On this argument, an episode like the one that opens the *Jeaste* would have been an integral part of *Ragnelle*; the union of a strange woman with Gawain or another hero would thus have formed the kernel story that initiates the action in a widely known Arthurian romance. (All but Gower's version of the story explicitly connect the tale to the Round Table.)

Despite its amorous beginnings, however, the *Jeaste* is not at all about romantic love. The successive of combats that make up the plot of the *Jeaste* spell out the

### *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

nature of honor among men. Yet the least active figure — the nameless sister/daughter/lover — turns out to be the pivotal character, through whom male relations of power and honor receive definition. Retaining the love (and the body) of the woman constitutes Gawain's best proof of manhood, for it brings Sir Gylbert to confess, "Therefore I dare well saye he ys a manne" (line 315). The fundamental cause that sets the anonymous lady's male relations against Gawain is that he has improperly taken from them her "love" — that is, her sexual person, in which they have proprietary rights. The father claims that in possessing the daughter without permission, Gawain has "done me great vyllanye" and "done me muche dyshonoure" (lines 18, 26; my italics), and that her "loss," physical and symbolic, harms him more than the loss of his own blood (line 102). Through proper conduct — by testing each other out according to the rules of chivalric combat, "all gentilnes to fullifill" (line 427) — Gawain, Gylbert, Gyamour, Terrye, and Brandis establish their proper identities, their names as worshipful knights. Like *Ragnelle*, the *Jeaste* dramatizes the signal function of Woman as the medium by which men establish relations among themselves: in the French poem the woman eventually returns, bearing a son, and so consolidates the bond between Gauvin and Bran de Lys, whereas here, after being beaten "bothe backe and syde" (line 509), the lady vanishes, without name or trace:

Than the lady gane her awaie —  
They sawe her never after that dayt;  
She went wondryng to and fro.  
(lines 524-26)

Sir Gylbert and his sons are left to lick their wounds, and Gawain returns "home" to the court (line 529) to share his adventures with his uncle, King Arthur.

In its attention to individual combat and martial prowess as the staple of the plot, the *Jeaste* resembles *Gologvez*. But here each of the four fights is compressed into a formulaic exchange of blows, so that *Jeaste* lacks the spectacular and lavish details that themselves constitute chivalric encounter in the Scots poem. A chivalric residue is apparent in the repeated focus upon the knights' discomfort and disgrace in their unhorsing, and the accompanying emphasis upon the identity of these fighters as mounted warriors. But the *Jeaste* indicates its popular status by its very title: "jeaste" (more often spelled "geste," from Latin *gesta*, "things done," memorable or heroic deeds) is a generic title for a romance of derring-do. By the end of the Middle Ages it had, at least among literary writers, come to mean a popular or degraded form of chivalric romance, and was well on its way to attaining its modern meaning of "jest," a frivolous or laughable story.

### *Introduction*

*The Jeaste of Syr Gawayne* comes down to us in a copy written out by an Arthurian enthusiast of the Elizabethan age; this copy was itself based upon an earlier sixteenth-century print of the poem, perhaps that entered in the Stationers' Register (1557 or 1558), licensing John Kynge to print a book of this title. Still another copy was printed by Thomas Petyt (date unknown); of this, one leaf survives, corresponding to the last fifty-three lines of the surviving transcript. The *Jeaste*'s language indicates it was composed in the second half of the fifteenth century in the South Midlands. It is composed in remarkably regular six-line tail-rhyme stanzas, running asbeccb. The *Jeaste*'s survival in multiple copies — hand-written and printed, medieval (at least in origin) and Renaissance — bears further witness to Gawain's enduring popularity as a hero. As a thoroughly popular production, the *Jeaste* takes its place in the company of other post-medieval versions of chivalric romances, like those of the Percy Folio Manuscript. One can easily imagine it entertaining the same audiences who enjoyed the performances of Captain Cox in the 1570s (see General Introduction); indeed, the Captain was just the sort of reader and performer who might have carried such a story in his collection "bound with a whipcord," ready for recitation.

### *Text*

The *Jeaste* survives in an incomplete, hand-written version (dated 1564), probably made from a now lost print issued by John Kynge in 1557 or 1558 (Oxford, Bodley MS 21835, formerly Douce 261). The final leaf of a second print, issued by Thomas Petyt, has also survived (London, British Library MS Harley 5927 Arts 32). The manuscript transcription is signed E.B., and contains some drawings as well as several other romances (*Iuonbras*, *Degard*, and *Eglamour*), all apparently also copied from early prints. The hand is clear, formal, italic script, with few abbreviations. The *Jeaste* has been printed previously only once, in Madden's edition. I note differences between the manuscript and the print in the notes.

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscripts*

Oxford, Bodley MS 21835 (formerly Douce 261).

London, British Library MS Harley 5927 Arts 32.

*The Jeause of Sir Gawayne*

*Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Child, Francis James. 1884. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

*Criticism*

Bennett, R. E. "Sources of *The Jeause of Syr Gawayne*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 33 (1934), 57-63.

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

And sayde, "I dreede no threte;  
I have founde you here in my chace."  
And in hys armes he gan her brace,  
With kyssyng of mouthes sweete.

fear  
hunt  
embrace

- 5      Those Syr Gawayne made suche chere,  
That greate frenchedesp he founde there.  
With that fayre lady so gaye;  
Suche chere he made, and suche semblaunce  
That longed to love, he had her countenaunce  
10     Withoute any more delaye.

was so good mannered  
affection  
gracious  
proper conduct  
was appropriate to; favor

- He had not taryed with her longe,  
But there came a knyght tall and strounge;  
Unto the pavillion he wente.  
He founde Syr Gawayne with that lady fayre:  
15     "Syr knyght, thou makest an evyll repaire  
That wyl make the shene.

visit  
bore you ruined

- Yt ys my daughter that thou lyest by.  
Thowe hast done me great vyllanye —  
Amenade yt mayst thou nought.  
20     Thou haste greate fortune with that dame:  
Tyll nowe never man coulde for shame.<sup>1</sup>  
I see, Syr knyght, that thou hast wrought,

miscreas

what; done

- Wherefore I see fortanc ys thy frende.  
But hastely unto harness nowe thou wynde."  
25     Thus sayed that boide knyght:

friend

armor; go

(i.e., the father)

<sup>1</sup> Until now no man has been able (to have sexual relations with her) because of her modesty

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawayne*

"Thou hast done me muche dyshonoure,  
And may not amende yt, by Mary floure!  
Therefore hastyng the dyght."

*flower [of women]  
prepare yourself*

- Than bespake Syr Gawayne, and thus he sayde:  
30 "I suppose I have the love of the mayde,  
Sach grace on her have I founde.  
But and yow be her father deere,  
Syr, amedes nowe wyll I make here,  
As I am to krygthode bounde.
- 35 Nowe all forewardes I wyll fullifill,  
And make amedes yowc untyll,  
And lette me passe quyte."  
"Naye," sayed the olde knyght than.  
"Fyrst wyll we assayre oure myghtes as we can,  
40 Or else yt were a dysprise."
- Nowe sayde Gawayne, "I graunne yt the,  
Sythe yt none otherwise wyll be:  
Nedes must that nedes shall."  
He toke hys stronge horse by the beydle,  
45 And lightly lepte into the saddle,  
As a knyght good and roiall.
- He toke a spere that was greate and stronge,  
And forthe he weste, a large furlonge,  
And turned hys horse with mayne.  
50 They feutred theyr speares, these knyghtes good,  
And rasshed together with eger moodie,  
Above on the mountayne.
- Gawayne smote thys knyght so soore,  
That hys hoese with strenght he overthrewse thore,  
55 And on the grounde he laye upright.  
Syr Gawayne turned hys horse agayne  
And sayde, "Syr knyght, wyll ye any more fayne?"  
"Naye," he sayed, for he ne myght.
- obligations  
to you  
*If you allow me to leave free and clear*  
then  
greatest  
an outrage  
  
What will be must be  
  
strength  
*braced their spears for combat*  
*some resolute*  
  
smote harshly  
there  
stretched out  
  
*do you desire any more*

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

- 60     "I yelde me, Syr knyght, into thy hande,  
For thou art to stiffe for me to stande.  
My lyfe thou graunt me."  
"On thys covenaunte," Syr Gawayne sayde:  
"That ye do no harme unto the mayde,  
I am agreed that yt so be.
- 65     "Also ye shall swere on my swerde here,  
That none armes agaynst me ye shall beare,  
Neyther todaye nor tonyght.  
And then take your horse, and weade your waye,  
And I shall do the best that I maye,  
As I am a trewe knyght."
- 70     There thys knyght sware, and dyd passe;  
Syr Gylbert called he was,  
A ryche earle, stiffe and stoure.  
He sayde, "Syr knyght, take good kepe,  
For better shalt thou be assayled or thou slepe,  
With many a sharpe shoure."
- 75     Than sayd Gawayne, "I believe right well,  
Whan they come, yow shall here tell  
Howe the game shall goo.  
I am nowe here in my playage —  
I wyll not go awaie for no threatynge,  
Or that I will feele more woo."<sup>1</sup>
- 80     Than Syr Gylberte wente his waye.  
His horse was gone downe the valaye,  
On foote he must hym abyde;  
He yode downe, without wordes more,  
The strokes greaved hym full soore;  
That hated muche his prude.
- too powerful; withhold  
please grant  
agreement
- went off  
strong  
stay on guard  
before  
attack
- take account  
sword play  
ready for contest
- remain  
went  
abused

<sup>1</sup> Before (or until) I suffer painful defeat

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

- 90      Syr Gawayne had smytten hym in the sholderblide;  
Afer hys walkyng the blode out shade.                  Because of, flowed  
He rested hym under a tree.  
He had not rested hym but a lytell space,  
But one of hys sonnes came to that place —  
Syr Gyamoure called was he.
- 95      "Father," he sayde "what ayleth yow nowe?  
Hath any man in thys forrest herte yow?  
Me thynke full feste ye blode!"                          wrath  
"Yea, sonne," he sayde, "by Goddes grace!  
A knyght hath done me spye and shame,  
100     And lost I have my stede.                              dishonor  
    need
- 105     "Also he hath layne by thy syster, by the Rode!  
That greveth me more than shedyng of my blode,  
And the dyspyte was well more:  
And he hath made me to sweare  
That todaye nose armes shall I beare,  
110     Agaynt hym, by Goddes ore!"                          mercy
- 115     "Father, nowe be of good chere,  
And I shall rewarde hym, as ye shall here,  
As I am a trewe knyght!  
He shall beate me, or I shall beate hym.  
I shall hym beate be he never so gyymme,  
119     And hys deaht todyght."                                  fierce  
    bring about
- 125     "Lett be, sonne Gyamoure, nowe I the praye!  
Thou speakest more than thou maye:  
That shalt thou feele soone.  
There shalt thou mete with a knyght stronge  
That wyl paye hys byteray large and longe,  
130     Or thy journey be all done."                              make good on his reputation  
    Before your encounter
- 120     "Nowe farewell, father," Gyamoure sayde.  
He toke the waye to hys syster the mayde  
As fast as he myght on the gate;  
Unto the pavillion he toke the waye.                      path

*The Jeasie of Sir Gawayn*

- There as Syr Gawayne and hys syster laye,  
That thought on so debase. Who; wife
- 125 "Aryse," he sayed, "thou knyght strooge of hande,  
And gwe me battayle on thys lande.  
Hye the fast anone right!  
Thou hast herte my father todaye,  
And layne by my syster, that fayre may:  
Therefore thy deathe ys dyght." Haste; immediately  
130 maiden  
ordained
- Than sayde Gawayne, "Though yt be so,  
Amedes I wyll make or that I goo,  
Yf that I have myndone.  
Beter yt ys nowe to accorde right.  
135 Than we two nowe in battayll shalde fyght.  
Therefore go from me soone." before I go further  
agree in justice  
right away
- "Nay," sayed Gyamoure, "that shall not bee.  
That daye, knyght, shalt thou never see,  
For to suffer such a skorne.  
140 Aryse in haste, and that anone,  
For with the wyll I fyght alone,  
As God letti me be borne!" /That I should/ suffer such dishonor  
God made me
- Gawayne sawe no better bothe,  
And wyghiclyc he lepte on foote. relation then  
145 Hys horse was fast hym byc;  
Into the saddle wightelyc he spremte,  
And in hys hande hys speare he bestee,  
And loked full egerlyc. nimbly  
sprang  
seized  
fiercely
- Eyther turned hys horse than awaye  
150 A furlonges lenght, I dare well saye,  
Above on the mountayne.  
They rasse together, those knighnes good,  
That theyr horses sydes rasse on bloode,  
Eyther to other, certayne. Each one  
Each against

*The Jeane of Sir Gawain*

- 155 What nedeth nowe more tale to tell?  
Gawayne smotte hym with hys speare so well,  
That he fell flame to the grounde;  
Hys horse was fyers, and went hys waye, vigorous  
And herte was the knyght ther as he laye.  
Syr Gawayne asked hym in that stounde: *at that point*
- "Syr knyght wyll ye say more?"  
"Naye," he sayde, "I am herte so sore  
I maye not my selfe welde. *get full control of myself*  
I yelde me, syr knyght, and save my lyfe,  
For with the I wyll no more stryffie, with  
For thow hast wonne the felde."
- "Syr, on thys covenante I the graante,  
So ye wyll make me frythe and warrante, *give me good faith; guarantee*  
Todays agaynst me no armes to beare:  
Sweare thys othe on my swearde bright." sword  
"Yes," he sayde, "I wyll, as I am trowe knyght,  
That thys daye I wyll not yow deare. hurt
- "Nowe fare well, knyght, so God me amende!  
For I see fortune ys thy greate frende —  
175 That shewith in the todaye; *it obvious through your actions*  
There ys no bote to stryve agayne, *fight again*  
For thou art a knyght full stronge of mayne, *night*  
Fare well, and have good daye."
- Thys Gyamoure wenche downe the mosstaync bys.  
180 On foote he wente full wereley; wearily  
Hys father sonne hym spyd.  
"Al welcomme," he sayed, "my sonne Gyamoure.  
Me thynke thou hast not spede well thys stour; *fared; in this battle*  
That full well I see thys tyde. *or this time*
- 185 "Thos went on horshacke, lyke a good knyght,  
And nowe I see thou arte dolefully dyght;  
That maketh all my care."  
"Father," he sayde, "yt wyll none otherwise be.

*The Jeane of Sir Gawain*

- 190 Yonder knyght hath wouned me in warre so fre,  
And hathe wounded me full sore. *defrauded; honorable combat*
- 195 "Forsythe," sayde Gyamouere, "I wyll not lye,  
He ys a stronge knyght, bolde and hardye.  
Of Arthures courte I trowe he ys;  
I suppose on of the Roudne Table,  
For at node he ys both stronge and hablie.  
So have I founde hym, withouten mysse." *genu  
the isf one  
in a pinch; able  
make no mistake*
- 200 Right so as they spake the one to the other,  
There came to them the seconde brother,  
Syr Tyrr was hys name;  
He came rydyng on a jolye coursyer,  
Dryvinge by leapes, as the wylde fyre.  
The knyght was of good fame. *warhorse  
Galloping  
renowned*
- 205 He was not ware of hys father deare,  
But hys brother called hym neare,  
And sayde, "Syr, nowe abyde!"  
He than turned hys horse, that knyght so gaye,  
By leapes out of strage; *avide*  
Hys hearte was full of prude.
- 210 That founde he hys father all blodye,  
And hys brother was wounded syckerlye. *indeed  
sick*  
In hys hearse he began to be syke:  
"Al Syr, who hath wounded yow?" quod he;  
"Avenged on hym nowe wyll I be,  
That shall hym myslyke." *So that it shall hurt him*
- 215 "Iwys, sonne, yt ys a knyght strounge  
That hath done us thys wronge,  
Above on the mountayne.  
He hath me wounded passyngre soore,  
And I trowe thy brother he hathe well more,  
And by thy syster he hathe layne. *with extreme pain  
even more*

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

- Therefore go nowe, as a knyght good,  
And avenge the shedyng of thy fathers blood,  
As faste as ever thou maye.  
Loke that thou fayle not for no cowardysse,  
But smote hym in the myghtyest wyse,  
For he ys good at assaye." take him on; way  
in combat
- "I see well, father, he ys a knyght stronge,  
But he hathe done yowre greane wronge  
Yt wold be hardc hym to wyne;  
But never the lamer I shall do my myght.  
Hys strength assaye nowe I shall in fyght,  
Yf he were of the devyls kynde." If he had not done  
defeat  
nonetheless; without  
rest  
*Even if; kin*
- Thys knyght Syr Terry vased hys hoese,  
And up the mountayne he rode with force,  
As fast as he myght dryve.  
He came to the pavillion, with greate prydye:  
"Have done, syr knyght! Thy horse bestryde,  
For with the I am at stryve." at enmity
- Syr Gawayne loked out at the pavlyon doore,  
And sawe thys knyght armed hym before;  
To hym he sayed verelye:  
"Syr, yf I have ought to yowre offended,  
I am ready to make yt to be amended,  
By mylde mother Marye!" truly
- "Naye, syr knyght, yt maye not so be.  
Therefore make the ready faste to me,  
In all the haste that thou maye;  
For be God that me dere bought,  
Make amedes mayest thou nought.  
Therefore nowe lett us playe." you may  
by God who saved me  
join in battle
- Gawayne sawe none other boie than;  
Hys horse he toke as a worthye man,  
And into the saddle he spreare;  
He toke hys horse with a greene randone, — sobacion  
mounted; rush

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

- 255 "Nowe, Syr knyght, lette me have done,  
What is youre hearte ys mente." *make proof*
- "Lo! Here I am," sayde Syr Terrye,  
"For to the I have greate envye." *anger*
- And together gan they dashe —  
They rusched together with suche debate  
That marveyll yi was howe that they sate,  
They gave suche a crasshel! *such a clash*  
*stayed mounted*
- Syr Terrye spake in that place,  
And Gawayne fought faste in that race, *ground*  
265 And throughe the sholder hym pyght; *charge*  
And caste hym over the horse backe,  
That in the earth hys helme stacke, *pierced*  
That nyghe hys death he was dyght. *snack*  
*near; left*
- Syr Gawayne than sayed on byght:  
270 "Syr knyght, wyl ye any more figh?" *aloud*
- He answered hym, "Nayc!  
I am so soore hurie I may no more stande.  
Therefore I yelde me into thy hande;  
Of mercye I the praye."
- 275 "What," sayde Gawayne, "ys that youre boast greate?  
I wende youe woulde have foughthen tyll ye had sweat!  
Ys youre strenght all dose?" *that /the outcome off  
[worked up a] sweat*
- "Yea, syr, is fayth, so God me nowe save!  
Of me thou mayst no more crave, *demand*
- 280 For all my myght ys gone.
- "Thou haste today wonne thre knyghes,  
The father, and two sonnes, that well fyghtes,  
Worshypfullie under thy shyldie. *defeated*  
And yf thou mayc wynde oure eldest brother,  
285 I call thee the best knyght, and none other,  
That ever fought in fyelde. *In honorable chivalric combat  
on the field*
- "For he ys full wyght, I warne youe welle:  
He endureth better than doth the steele, *powerful, I advise you*

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

- 290 And that shalte thou soone see.  
But he be thy matche, I can not knowe,  
Of knyghthode thou haste no felowe,<sup>1</sup>  
On my fayth I ensure thee."
- "Nowe," quod Gawayne, "lette hym be.  
And, Syr knyght, make us othe to me,  
That this daye thou do me no greve;  
And thou shalt paue fro me all quye,  
Where as ys nowe thy mooste deliyht,  
Withoute any moore repreve."
- Syr Terrye sayde, "Therto I grauntie,  
Farewell nowel! God be thy warrante."  
Full weykelye he wente on foote;  
He lefte never tyll he came there,  
Where as hys father and Gyamoure were,  
That carefull heartes had, Ood wote.
- Than bespake Gyamoure, hys yongest brother:  
"Syr, thou hast gotten as we have, and nos other;  
That knewe I well yt shoule so be."  
"By God!" sayd Syr Terrye, "so nowe yt ys.  
He ys a devyll, Iesiothe ysya,  
And that ys proved on me."
- "Yea," quod Syr Gylbert, that Earle so olde;  
"He ys a knyght bothe stronge and boide,  
And fortane ys hys freade;  
My daughters love he hath cleene wanke.  
Therefoore I dare well saye he ys a manne,  
Whenever that he wende."
- As they ther stode thus talkyng,  
They hearde a manse full loude syng,  
That all the woode ronge:

*leave him aside*

*bare*

*free*

*which is; greatest desire*

*rebuke*

*safekeping*

*freably*

*stopped*

*sorrowful; knowe*

*received*

*for absolute certainty*

*completely*

*may go*

*rung*

<sup>1</sup> Lines 290-91: *If he is not a match for you, I cannot think / That you have an equal in knighthood*

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

- 320 "That ys my soane Brandles so gaye;  
Whan he seeth us in sache araye,  
He wyl leave hys songe." *(Gylbert says:—)*
- 325 By than they sawe the knight comyng:  
A grene boughe in hys hande he dyd bryng.  
Sytyng on a joylyc coursyre. *warhorse*  
Hys horse was trapped in reddic velvett;  
Many ouches of golde theron was sette.  
Of knyghtode he had no peere. *decked our  
ornaments*
- 330 Also hys horse was armed before — *in front*  
The headdle and the beest, and no more,  
And that is fyne steele.  
Hymselfe was armed passyng sure,  
In harneys that woulde strokes endure,  
That had bene proved right welic. *most stowly  
armor*
- 335 Thys knyght bare on hys hedde a pomell gaye.  
Sytyng on hys horse, sterbyng oute of the waye,  
By leapes he came aboute.  
A shyelde he had, that was of renoume:  
He bare theryn a blacke fawcowne;  
The shyelde was of sylver withoute. *an ornamental boss  
changing his course  
turned around  
remarkable  
falcon  
on the outside*
- 340 Also is hys hande a spere he bare,  
Bothe stronge and longe, I make yow ware,  
And of a trustye tree; *tell you  
reliable wood*  
There was an headdle theron of steele wrought,  
The best that myght be made or bought,  
And well assayed had be. *tryed out; born*
- 345 Theron of pleasaunce a kercheyf dyd honge;  
I wote yt was more than thre elles longe,  
Embrodereid all withe golde. *handsomely a person did hang  
about twelve feet*
- 350 He was a knyght of large and lenght,  
And proved well of muche strenght,  
Assaye hym whoso woulde. *big and tall  
Test*

*The Jeasie of Sir Gawain*

- Sparres of golde also he had on,  
And a good swerde, that woldc byte above.  
355 Thus came he dryvynge. *above [all others]*  
Tyll he came there as hys father was;  
Whan he all sawe, he sayde, "Alas!  
Thys ys an evyll tydyngs." *in a rush*  
*piece of news*
- Whan he sawe hys father all blodye,  
360 And hys two brethern herte full syckerlye,  
"Alas!" sayde Brandles than,  
"Who hath done yowre suche a dyspite?  
Tell me in haste, that I maye yi quye,  
For my hearte ys wo begone." *dishonor*  
*repay*
- 365 Than saide the father, "Sonne, I shall the tell:  
All thys hathe done a knyght full fell,  
And layne by thy syster also.  
He beete me fyrt, and them all,  
And made us swere that we se shall  
370 Thys daye do hym no wo."
- Nowe saide Brandles, "Thys ys yll come!  
I ensure yowre by my holydome,  
I shall prove hys myght;  
Were he as strooge as Sampson was,  
375 In dayth shall I never from hym pas,  
Tyll the one of us to death be dyght." *bad luck*  
*spiritual welfare*  
*test our*  
*turn away*  
*marked for death*
- "Yea, sonne Brandles, thou shalt not soo.  
Thoughte he have done wronge, lett hym goo.  
The knyght ys paunage sure;  
380 I wyll not for more than I wyll sayne  
See the, Syr Brandles, there slayne,  
For I warraunte the he wyll endure." *stalwart without measure*  
*than I can say*  
*assure you; prevail*

*The Jessie of Sir Gowain*

- "The knyght ys stronge, and well fight can,  
And when he bathe at hande a man,  
He wyl do hym nose yll.  
But gentle wordes speake agayne,  
And do hym no harme ne mayne.  
Thus gestyll he ys in skyll."      *or advantage*  
 385      *in return*  
*violence*  
*so noble; in knightly behavior*
- "Nowe lette hym be," sayde Brandles than;  
"Sone shall we see yf he be a manne,"      *(I.e., whatever he is)*  
 390      And sayed "Have good daye."  
Streyght to the pavilyon he rode;  
That sawe the mayden as she stode,  
That yt was her brother gaye.
- 395      "Syr knyght," she sayde, "here cometh one,  
Yt wyl be harde hym to overgone —  
Beholde nowe and see:  
Yonder cometh one wyl dure in fyght;  
I warraunte ye sawe never a better knyght  
 400      Than ye shall fynde hym, syckerlye."      *surely*
- "Beholde nowe my brother, Syr Brandles.  
He ys in warre full slye, ywys.  
And that thowe shalt fynde;  
Me thynke hym passyng lyke a knyght.  
405      Have no dredc ye shall fynde hym wight,  
Nowe under thys lynde."      *skillful*  
*doubt; powerful*  
*linden tree*
- "By God!" sayde Garwayne, "he ys full lyke  
To abyde a buffete and to stryke,  
And of hys handes a man.  
410      I sawe not or nowe thys yeares thre,  
A man more lyke a man to be,  
By God and by Saynt Johan!"      *just the sort*  
*withstand*  
*in his strength a warrior*  
*before*
- Right so Syr Brandles, the knyght gaye,  
Spake on hyghe, and thus gan saye:  
415      "Where arte thou, good Squeyer?  
Come forthe in haste," he sayde on hyght,  
*gracious*  
*aloud*

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawayne*

- "For with the will I fyght.  
A newe game thou shalt leere." *join  
learn*
- 420 "Thou haue done me dysworship greate,  
And mayst not nowe amendement gette;  
Yt ys no tyme of peace to speake."  
Syr Gawayne saide, "Syr, I the praye,  
Let me make amendes, and you maye,  
Or thou begynne thy wrecche." *dishonor  
if you please  
negligence*
- 425 "Syr, and I have ought mydone,  
Tell me, and it shal be amended soone,  
All gentilnes to fullifill.  
I have bene bessad todaye full score;  
Shame yt were to prove me any moore.  
But here I am at yowre wyll." *if  
noble obligation  
sorely beseit  
test*
- 435 "Ywys," quod Brandles, "that ys sothe.  
But I must nodes holde mync othe,  
Thou haute done so yll —  
My father and my brethres thou hast beaten bothe.  
To accorde with the I were therof lothe,  
My worshippe to fullifill." *Indeed  
oath  
*If I wish/ to maintain my honor**
- Nowe sayed Gawayne, "Sythe yt ys so,  
I must nodes me dryve ther to.  
Thys daye God lende me grace,  
440 For my worde shall do none advantage:  
Let us see howe well we can outrage,  
Yf I maye dace ought in thys trace." *enter into combat  
negotiation will gain  
fight furiously  
course*
- "Gramaryc," sayde Brandles, "in good faye,  
Nowe shall yow see me make good playe.  
445 Of knighthode thou hast no poete;  
I am right gladde thou hast myght,  
But sorye I am we lacke the dayelyght.  
But amended ys my cheere." *Great thanks; faith  
equal  
sorry  
Nonetheless; mood*
- They fought together, those knyghtes good;  
450 Through theyr habargons ran out the redde blade, *costs of mail*

*The Jessie of Sir Gawain*

- That pynd yt was to see;  
They fought together with sache yre,  
That after flamed out the fyre.  
They spake of no mercy.
- 455 Thus fall longe than gan they figh.  
Tyll at the laste they wanted lyght;  
They wiste not what to done.  
Thus sayde Syr Brändles, that knyght so gaye:  
"Syr knyght, we waste lyght of the daye;  
Therefore I make my mone." *protest*
- "Yf we figh thus in the darke together  
Thoughe myshappe the one myght sile the other,  
And therefore by myne assent,  
Lett us swear on oure swerdles bothe.  
Where that we mette for leyfe or lothe,  
Yf that we mette in present,  
"Never to leave the battayll till the ose be slayne."  
"I assent me therunto," than sayde Gawayne,  
"And ye wyll that yt so be."  
470 Thus sayde Syr Brändles, "I may none other do,  
For sache promesse I made my father usso;  
Therefore thys othe make we."
- "I wotne there ys no stroke that thos gavest me,  
But I shall quyte yt full syckerlye —  
And thos arte not in my debte.  
Full large of lyveray thos arte, syr knyght —  
Never none that peoved so well my myght;  
We bene even as we mette.
- 480 "Lett us make an othe on our swerdles here,  
In that place we mette, farre or nere,  
Even there as ether other may fynde,  
Even so we shall do the battayle utterlye."  
"I holde," sayde Gawayne, "by mylde Marye!  
And thus we make an ende."

*fire*  
*sparks*

*lacked daylight*  
*knew*

*protest*

*bad luck; slay*

*words*

*Wherever; love or hate*  
*soon*

*one of us*

*if; with*

*know*

*repay; surely*

*powerful in combat*  
*No other ever tested*  
*as equal as when*

*either*

*to the death*  
*promise*

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawayne*

- 485 Syr Gawayne put up hys swerde than:  
"Syr knyght, be frende to that gentle woman,  
As ye be gentle knyght."  
"As for that," sayde Brandles than,  
"She hathe caused today, pardye, much shame.  
Yt ys pyttie she hathe her syght." by God  
she is yet alive
- 490  
495 "Syr knyght," sayde Gawayne, "have good daye,  
For on foote I have a longe waye,  
And horse were wonders deare;  
Some tyme good horses I have good won.  
And nowe on foote I myste nodes gone.  
God is hante amende my chere!" badly wounded  
captured  
situation
- 500 Syr Gawayne was armed pasyngage heavy;  
On fote myght he not endure, trewely.  
Hys knyfle he tolke in hande;  
Hys armure good he cam hym fro,  
Eis on fote myght he not goo.  
Thus with care was he bande. beast (bound)
- 505 Leave we nowe of Syr Gawayne in wo,  
And speake we more of Syr Brandles tho. then
- 510 When he with hys syster mette  
He sayed, "Fyc on the, harlot strong!  
Yt ys pyttie thou lyvest so longe.  
Strypes hande I wyll the sette." A lashing; give
- 515 He bate her bothe backe and syde.  
And than woulde he not abyde,  
But to hys father streight he wente,  
And he asked hym how he fared.  
He sayde, "Sonne, for the have I cared;  
I wende thou haddest be shente." beat  
stay longer  
you; worried  
thought; perished
- 520 Brandles sayde, "I have beate my syster,  
And the knyght, I made hym sweare  
Than whan we mete agayne,  
He and I wyll together fyght.

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawayne*

- 520 Tyll that we have spended our myght,  
And that one of us be slayne." exhausted
- So home they went all fourre together,  
And ech of them helped other,  
As well as they myght go.  
Than the lady gate her awaie — went off by herself
- 525 They sawe her never after that daye;  
She went wondryng to and fro.
- Also Syr Gawayne on his partye,  
On foote he went full werylye, for his part  
wearily
- Tyll he to the courte came home.
- 530 All his adventures he shewed the Kinge, disclosed
- That with those fourre knyghtes he had fightryng,  
And ech after other alone. in single combat
- And after that tyme they never mette more; encountered again
- 535 Full gladde were those knyghtes therfore.  
So there was made the ende.
- I praye God geve us good rest,  
And those that have harde thys lyttel Jesie,  
And in bye heaven to be dwellyng: <sup>1</sup>  
And that we all maye, upon domesdaye,  
540 Come to the blysse that lasteth aye,  
Where we maye here thy Angels syng.

AMEN.

Here endeth the Jeaste of Syr Gawayne.

<sup>1</sup> Lines 536-38: *I pray that God give good rest to us / And to all who have heard this little Jeaste, / And (that all) may come to dwell in high heaven*

### Notes

Abbreviations: B = Bodley MS; H = surviving leaf of printed edition in the Harley Collection, British Library; M = Madden's edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

- 1 *And sayde. Jesuse* clearly begins in the midst of a conversation between the nameless lady and Gawain, indicating the loss of the opening episode. The context clearly indicates that Gawain has come upon the lady in her forest pavilion while hunting, and has made amorous overtures. She warns him of possible reprisals by her father and brothers, but Gawain dismisses these threats in the opening lines of the surviving text.
- 5 *pache*. M: *mack*.
- 42 Following this line, the remainder of this page is taken up with a drawing showing two mounted knights, in armor with lances; one (obviously Gawain) unshorses the other. The drawings (see lines 147, 274, 357, 452, and 503 and notes) were executed by a talented amateur with archaic realism, in a pseudo-medieval style, and illustrate the enthusiastic response chivalric romance might elicit in the sixteenth century.
- 50 *fearred*. B: *fearred*; M emends without comment.
- 57 *sayne*. B: *sayur*; I emend for sense.
- 73 *and stoure*. M suggests reading *in stoure*.
- 74 ff. Gylibert here gives Gawain warning that he will soon have to fight the three sooths.
- 103 *despyte*. M: *despyre*.
- 109 *a trewe knyght*. M: *trewe knyght*.

### Notes

- 147 Another picture takes up the remainder of the page, showing a mounted knight with lance and a second knight — clearly Gyamouet at this point in the narrative — unhoesed and seated on the ground, but still holding his lance.
- 176 *stryve*. B: *royde*; I follow the suggested emendation from M's notes.
- 207 *out of strye*. Tyrry turns his horse "astray," abruptly aside from the path on which he had been riding. For the use of this phrase, see Gologras line 19 and note.
- 233 *Thys*. This line begins with an enlarged capital *T* against a shaded background, four lines of text in size.
- 275 The entire page above this line is taken up with a drawing that closely resembles that on folio 17b; in it a mounted knight holds his lance against a knight seated on the ground (in this case, Terryc), while the latter knight's horse looks on.
- 284 *cure*. M: *our*.
- 288 *shan*. B: *that*; I follow M's emendation.
- 295 Under line 293 a rule is drawn across the page, and line 295 is inserted to the right of line 294, remedying what is clearly a skip by the copyist.
- 320 *Branbles*. In the continuation to Chrétien's *Perceval*, Gawain fights and then reconciles with a knight named Bran de Lys; this same knight accompanies Arthur in the episode that forms the source of the first part of *Gologras* (though in the Scots poem Arthur's companion is named Spynagros). Carilife names *Syr Branchelet* (line 64) among the roster of knights associated with Arthur. In Malory, Lancelot rescues a knight of this name (*Braundebles*) from Tarquyn (Works, pp. 268, 344 ff.). In addition, Malory declares that two of Gawain's three sons — Sir Florence and Sir Lovell — "were begotyn upon sir Braundebles syster" (Works, p. 1147), reflecting a narrative tradition that prolongs the relationship between Gawain and this woman long beyond the brief encounter of *Jeante*. In *Ragnell*, the third son listed by Malory — Sir Gyngalyn — is born of the union between that heroine and Girwain; see *Ragnelle*, line 799 ff. and note.

*The Jeuste of Sir Gawain*

- 324 When the Green Knight appears before Arthur's court in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, "in his on hande he hadde a holly bōbbe, / That is grānest in grēne when grever ar bare / And an ax in his other" (lines 206–8; in his one hand he had a sprig of holly, which is greenest when the trees are bare, and an ax in the other). Carrying a bough signals peaceful intentions, though Brandles also holds a spear (line 341).
- 329 *Allo.* M: *Also.*
- 350 of large. The phrase means "of (considerable) size"; compare Gologras line 241, "The land wes likand in large."
- 357 The remainder of the page following this line is taken up by a drawing, showing three armored knights on foot, with a fourth mounted holding a spear with pennon attached. Their raised visors make their faces visible, and one, so doubt Gylbert, is bearded.
- 383 ff. Sir Gylbert seems to say that Gawain defeats and treats honorably all those that approach him violently; but if one speaks courteously to him from the outset, Gawain shows nothing but courtesy.
- 389 Another enlarged capital against a shaded background, this one six lines in size, begins this line.
- 451 *yt.* B: *yr*; I follow M's emendation.
- 453 The entire page above this line contains a drawing of two armored knights (Gawain and Brandles) on foot, fighting each other with swords drawn and visors up.
- 489 *pardye much shame.* H: *moch shame pardye.*
- 491 *nayde Gawayne.* H: *yr Gawayne.*
- 491 ff. Having fought to a draw with Brandles, and lost his horse in the duel (as he does in *Awatyr*; see lines 540 ff.), Gawain seems to feel he can no longer remain in the pavilion with the lady. He therefore departs on foot, after cutting away the heavy armor a mounted knight would wear for combat.

Notes

- 493 *And horse were wonders.* H: *an horse were me wonder.*
- 495 *And.* H: *But.*
- I maste nodes.* H: *nodes mast I.*
- 499 *honde.* H: *honde.*
- 502 *honde.* H: *honde.* Following this line, the rest of the page is occupied by a drawing of a knight in armor, holding a staff with one hand and grasping the arm of a woman (clothed in distinctively Elizabethan dress) with the other. These must be Bransicles and the nameless sister.
- 503 *sowre of Syr.* H: *sow syr.* This line begins with an enlarged capital *L*, against a shaded background, three lines long.
- 507 *pymie thou.* H: *pymie that thou.*
- 508 *wyll the sette.* H: *wyll sette.*
- 509 *He bese her.* H: *And bese she.*
- 512 *And he asked.* H: *Then he axed.*
- 514 *wende thou haddeſt be.* H: *wende that thou haddeſt been.*
- 517 *Than whan.* H: *That whan.*
- 519 *Tyll that we.* H: *Tyll we.*
- our.* H: *ache our.*
- 521 *all fourſe together.* H: *all together.*
- 527 *on.* H: *in.*
- 530 *byt adventure.* H: *this adventure.*
- 533 *And after.* H: *After.*

*The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*

- 534 those knyghtes. H: *these partyer*; M: *knyghtes*.
- 535 there war. H: *war there*.
- 536 as. H: *as at*.
- 538 to. H: *for to*.
- 539 all maye, upon. H: *all upon*.
- 541 sly. H: *the*. Following *AMEN* there is another drawing by the same hand, showing marvelous creatures holding a shield with three fleurs-de-lis. A rectangle at the center surrounds the explicit, above which are the initials *E B*, perhaps those of the copyist and illustrator. The other romances in the manuscript — *Inambras*, *Degard*, and *Eglomour* — are written in the same distinctive hand, with drawings of the same sort, though none of the other romances contains a signature or initials. The date 1564 appears at the conclusion of *Eglomour*.

## *King Arthur and King Cornwall*

### *Introduction*

As a story of fantastic knightly adventure, *King Arthur and King Cornwall* resembles Chaucer's Squire's Tale and other popular romances like *Sir Lousful*. The Arthurian knights gain victory by getting control of a magical horse, sword, and horn; to come by these, they must first gain mastery (through a kind of religious ritual or white magic) over a seven-headed sprite who serves King Cornwall, improbably named Barlow Beanie. To seal their victory, Sir Gawain vows to carry Cornwall's daughter back with them to Little Britain. The magical elements are embedded within an overt contest of honor and prowess between the knights of the Round Table and Cornwall's court; a series of ritualized public boasts, serving both as speeches and as acts that define heroic behavior, initiate this contest. The plot begins when Guenevere challenges Arthur's boast to Gawain that his Round Table excels all others. The King (here ruler of Little Britain, or Brittany, rather than England) and his entourage travel in disguise through "many a strange country" (line 33) until they reach the palace of King Cornwall; once again, Arthur's rival in an English narrative is the lord of a marginal, Celtic territory in Britain. Cornwall's boasts — of the daughter he fathered on Guenevere, his magical possessions, and his general superiority to Arthur — openly offend the chivalric honor of the Round Table, and demand reparation. This redress occurs first in the form of counterboasts, in which the Arthurian knights stake their reputation on living up to their bold words. Afterwards, Sir Bedivere nearly suffers defeat in combat with the monster, but then snatches victory through an exorcism of sorts. Cornwall ends with each of the knights achieving his vow, through the assistance of the monster.

In making boasts or vows the essence of chivalric honor, Cornwall resembles *Arlwyng* (and to some extent *Ragnell*, *Gologrus*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Jeante*, and other poems where fulfilling one's spoken word controls the story). In upholding the excellence of Arthurian chivalry, however, the fragmentary Cornwall contains no twists, suspense, or reconciliations. King Cornwall is a false braggart, and the knights of the Round Table easily accomplish their vows and dispatch him. (In Arthurian tradition, the King of Cornwall is Mark, uncle — mother's brother — of Sir Tristan, who is the King's rival for the love of Isolde of Ireland.) But neither

### *King Arthur and King Cornwall*

King Arthur nor Sir Gawain is the hero of this poem, though in the first lines Arthur refers to their typifying heroic relationship of mother's brother-sister's son. Instead, the central figure is Sir Bredbeddle, the former antagonist of Sir Gawain in *The Greene Knight*, now a full companion of the Round Table. As the Green Knight, Bredbeddle is Arthur's great champion, and he dominates the action in the second half of the poem — much of which consists of uproarious knock-about between the Green Knight and the demonic Buslow Beanie. Sir Gawain plays a relatively small role in *Cornwall*; his vow, unfulfilled in the surviving text, to "worke my will" (line 155) with Cornwall's daughter, recalls his rakish character in the later French romances, or is Jeante. Nevertheless, the very naming of Bredbeddle as the Green Knight makes clear that the composer assumed the audience's familiarity with the romances of Sir Gawain.

*King Arthur and King Cornwall* survives in the Percy Folio Manuscript. Like *Turke*, it occurs in that section of the volume where about half of each page had been ripped out to start fires, and so lacks about half its content; as a result, a story that was already more attentive to large motifs and bold turns of plot than to subtle details has lost a number of crucial events. *Cornwall* redeploys an array of traditional features of romance story. In particular, the pilgrimage, the boasts (or "gabs"), and the encounter with a magically powerful opponent resemble medieval anecdotes told about Charlemagne, though similar episodes also occur in Arthurian narratives like *Golofraz* and *Turke*. Yet *Cornwall* may not have come by these elements through specific literary sources. Instead, its plot may reflect motifs connected to Arthurian legend from its origins, or, perhaps most likely of all, it may simply represent a reworking of elements popularly associated with the knights of the Round Table in the late Middle Ages. Whether the seventeenth-century ballad retells a medieval romance of Gawain and Arthur, or improvises its own image of medieval chivalry on the basis of notions that earlier Arthurian romances had put in circulation, *Cornwall* strongly conveys the enduring glamour of the Round Table's might and magic. It also reiterates a basic romance paradigm, by which the king and his chief knight's journey to a strange, outlying territory, defeat the monstrous forces they encounter, and bring that formerly mysterious place into the governance of the monarch. This process of appropriation or domestication finds its ultimate symbol in Gawain's possessing Cornwall's daughter; forced marriage becomes the means of bringing this wayward creature back under the control of her legitimate (if not biological) father, and of joining the recalcitrant fringe to the center.

*Cornwall* preserves a rough version of ballad meter. It falls mainly into quatrains rhyming *aaa*, though the *a*-rhyme sometimes continues into an additional couplet, producing some six-line stanzas. The metrical feet and the number of stresses in each

### *Introduction*

line are irregular, though much of the verse falls into the ballad formula of a four-stress line followed by a three-stress line.

### *Text*

*King Arthur and King Cornwall* survives (with the losses mentioned above) in the Percy Folio Manuscript, pp. 24–31 (described in the introductory material to *The Greene Knight*). The cramped hand and blotted lines have become more difficult to read over time; in transcribing the text, I have made full use of the nineteenth-century editions of Madden, Furnivall and Hales, and Child, sometimes following their readings where the script now seems indistinct or indecipherable. I have regularized orthography so that *uv* and *vj* appear according to modern usage; abbreviations have been expanded, numerals spelled out, and modern punctuation and capitalization added.

### *Select Bibliography*

#### *Manuscript*

British Library Additional MS 27879 (The Percy Folio). Pp. 24–33.

#### *Editions (arranged chronologically)*

Madden, Frederic. 1839. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Hales, John W., and Frederick J. Furnivall. 1868. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

Child, Francis James. 1884. See Bibliography of Editions and Works Cited.

#### *Criticism*

Jost, Jean E. "The Role of Violence in Adventure: 'The Ballad of King Arthur and the King of Cornwall' and 'The Turke and Gowin'." *Arthurian Interpretations* 2.2 (1988), 47–57.

Krappe, Alexander Haggerty. "Mediaeval Literature and the Comparative Method." *Speculum* 10 (1935), 270–76.

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

- Sales, "Come here cuzen Grawaine so gay; Say; handsome  
My sisters sonnes be yee;  
For you shall see one of the fairest Round Tables  
That ever you see with your eye."
- 5 Then bespake Lady Qeene Guenever, spoke out  
And these were the words said shee:  
"I know where a Round Table is, thou noble King,  
Is worth thy Round Table and other such three.
- 10 "The trestle that stands under this Round Table," she said, near the earth  
"Lowe downe to the mould,  
It is worth thy Round Table, thou worthy King,  
Thy halls, and all thy gold.
- 15 "The place where this Round Table stands is, near  
It is worth thy castle, thy gold, thy fee; Britany  
And all good Little Britaine."
- "Where may that Table be, Lady?" quoth hee,  
"Or where may all that goodly building be?"  
"You shall it seeke," shee sayd, "till you it find,  
For you shall never gett more of me."
- 20 Then bespake him noble King Arthur,  
These were the words said hee:  
"Ile make mine avow to God, I will  
And shew to the Trinity,
- 25 "Ile never sleepe one night, there as I doe another, I will; two consecutive nights  
Till that Round Table I see.  
Sir Marramiles and Sir Tristeram,  
Followes that ye shall bee;

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

- "Weele be clad in palmers weede,  
Five palmers we will bee;  
30 There is noe outlandish man will us abide,  
Nor will us come ryce."
- Then they rived east and they rived west,  
In many a strange country;
- 35 Then they trankled a little farther,  
They saw a battle new sett;  
"Now, by my faith," saies noble King Arthur,  
... well mett
- [Half a page is missing. After martial adventures and further travel, Arthur and his pilgrim-knights come to the castle of King Cornwall]
- But when he cam to this . . . C . . .  
And to the palace gate,  
40 Soe ready was ther a proud porter,  
And met him soone therat.
- Shooes of gold the porter had on,  
And all his other rayment was unto the same.  
"Now, by my faith," saies noble King Arthur,  
45 "Yonder is a misson swaine."
- Then bespake noble King Arthur,  
These were the words says hee:  
"Come hither, thou proud porter,  
I pray thee come hither to me.
- 50 "I have two poore rings of my finger,  
The better of them lie give to thee:  
Tell who may be Lord of this castle," he sayes,  
"Or who is Lord in this country?"
- "Cornwall King," the porter sayes;  
55 "There is none soe rich as hee;  
Neither in Christendome, nor yet in heathenness,  
None hath soe much gold as he."

We will; pilgrim's dress

stay among us

traveled

wandered  
just arranged

of the same material

dainty boy

I will

among pagans

King Arthur and King Cornwall

These were the words saves her.

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 60 | "I have two poore rings of my finger,<br>The better of them Ie give thee,<br>If thou wilt greete him well, Cornewall King.<br>And greete him well from me.                       |   |
| 65 | "Pray him for one nights lodging, and two meales meate,<br>For His love that dyed uppon a tree;<br>A une ghesting, and two meales meate,<br>For His love that dyed uppon a tree, | <i>food</i><br><i>(i.e., Jesus)</i><br><i>single night's</i> of hospitality |
| 70 | "A une ghesting of two meales meate,<br>For His love that was of Virgin borne,<br>And in the morning that we may scape away,<br>Either without scath or soene."                  | <i>depart</i><br><i>harm or disgrace</i>                                    |
| 75 | Then forth has gone this proad porter.<br>As fast as he cold bye;<br>And when he came befor Cornewall King,<br>He kneeled downe on his knee.                                     | <i>hasten</i>   |
| 80 | Sayes, "I have beeene porterman at thy gate<br>This thirty winter and three . . .  | <i>[H]er</i>  |
|    | [Half a page is missing. The disguised Arthur and his knights are brought into King Cornewall's presence and a series of probing verbal exchanges takes place.]                  |   |
|    | . . . our Lady was borne.<br>Then thought Cornewall King,<br>These palmers had beeene in Brittaine.  |   |
| 85 | Then bespake him Cornewall King.<br>These were the words he said there:<br>"Did you ever know a comely King.<br>His name was King Arthur?"                                       |   |
| 90 | And then bespake him noble King Arthur.  |   |

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

- These were the words said he:  
"I doe not know that comly King,  
But once my selfe I did him see."  
Then bespake Cornwall King againe;  
90 These were the words said he:  
  
Sayes, "Sevyn yeare I was clad and fed,  
In Little Brittaine, in a bower.  
I had a daughter by King Arthurs wife,  
That now is called my flower.  
95 For King Arthur, that kindly cockeward,  
Hath none such in his bower.
- FOORM
- "For I durst sweare, and save my othe,  
That same lady so bright.  
That a man that were laid on his death bed  
100 Wold open his eyes on her to have sight."<sup>1</sup>  
"Now, by my faith," sayes noble King Arthur,  
"And that's a full faire wight!"
- keep my oath  
(so) so splendid
- she is; being
- And then bespake Cornwall againe,  
And these were the words he said:  
105 "Come hither, five or three of my knights,  
And fetch me downe my steed;  
King Arthur, that foule cockeward,  
Hath none such, if he had need.
- cuckold
- "For I can ryde him as far on a day,  
As King Arthur can doe any of his on three.  
And is it not a pleasure for a King  
110 When he shall ryde forth on his journey?
- "For the eyes that beene in his head,  
They glister as doth the glood."
- burning ember

<sup>1</sup> Would come back from the dead just to lay eyes on her

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

- 115 "Now, by my faith," says noble King Arthur,  
That is a well faire steed."

[Half a page is missing. King Cornwall continues with his insulting proofs of his superiority to Arthur, and then all agree to retire to bed.]

- "Nobody say . . .  
But one that's learned to speake."

(i.e., *courteous*)

- 120 Then King Arthur to his bed was brought,  
A grieved man was hee,  
And soe were all his fellowes with him.  
From him they thought never to flee.

*grieved*

- 125 Then take they did that lody boome, (i.e., Cornwall's household); monstrous sprite  
And under thrib chadler closed was hee. within a chair on which was a candle  
And he was set by King Arthurs bedside,  
To heare theirre talke and theirre communye,

*hear; conversation*

- 130 That he might come forth, and make proclamation,  
Long before it was day.  
It was more for King Cornwalls pleasure,  
Then it was for King Arthurs pay.

*benefit*

- 135 And when King Arthur in his bed was laid,  
These were the words said hee:  
"Ile make mine avow to God,  
And alsoe to the Trinity,

*I will*

That Ile be the bane of Cornwall Kinge,  
Little Brittaise or ever I see!"

*sworn enemy (killer)  
before I see again*

- 140 "It is an unadvised vow," saies Gawayne the gay,  
"As ever King hard make I:  
But wee that beene five Christian men,  
Of the Christens faith are wee —

*rash*

And we shall fight against assaynted king  
And all his armorie."

*heard*

*We are only*

*army*

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

- And then bespake him noble Arthur,  
And these were the words said he:  
145 "Why, if thou be afraid, Sir Grawine the gay,  
Goe home, and drinke wine in thine owne country."

The Third Part

- And then bespake Sir Grawine the gay,  
And these were the words said hee:  
150 "Nay, seeing you have made such a hearty vow,  
Heere another vow make will I.  
  
"Ile make mine avow to God,  
And also to the Trinity,  
That I will have yonder faire lady  
To Little Brittaine with mee.

- 155 "Ile hose her homly to my hert,  
And with her Ile worke my will." *clasp her close to my heart*

[Half a page is missing. Arthur and his companions discover the sprite hidden in their chamber, and prepare to try to subdue it.]

- These were the words sayd he:  
"Befor I wold wrestle with yonder feend,  
It is better be drowned in the sea." *would; fiend*  
  
160 And then bespake Sir Bredbeddie,  
And these were the words said he:  
"Why, I will wrestle with yon lody feend!  
God, my governor thou wilt bee." *lady*  
  
165 Then bespake him noble Arthur,  
And these were the words said he:  
"What weapons wilt thou have, thou gentle knight?  
I pray thee tell to me."

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

- He sayes, "Collen brand lie have in my hand,  
And a Millaine knille fast by me knee;  
170 And a Danish axe fast in my hands —  
That a sure weapon I thinke wil be."
- A sword from Cologne  
Milanese*
- Then with his Collen brand that he had in his hand  
The bunge of the trubchandler he burst in three;  
With that start out a lody feend,  
175 With seven heads, and one body.
- opening of the camfir tub  
traped*
- The fyre towards the element flew  
Out of his mouth, where was great plentie.  
The knight stooode in the middle, and fought,  
That it was great joy to see.
- Arment  
mider*
- 180 Till his Collaine brand brake in his hand,  
And his Millaine knife burst on his knee;  
And then the Danish axe burst in his hand first,  
That a sur weapon he thought shold be.
- trusty*
- But now is the knight left without any weapons.  
185 And alacke! it was the more pity.  
But a surer weapon then had he one,  
Had never lord in Christenteyle:  
And all was but one little booke —
- (i.e., the Bible)*
- 190 He found it at the seaside,  
Wrucked upp in a floode;  
Our Lord had written it with His hands,  
And sealed it with His bloode.
- Left; side*
- [In a missing section of a half page, Bredbeddie exorcises the sprite through the power of the sacred page. After requiring him to appear in a less frightening aspect, he prepares to make the sprite work for Arthur's benefit.]
- "That thou doe not s . . .  
195 But by still in that wall of stone
- be*

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

Till I have beene with noble King Arthur,  
And told him what I have done."

200 And when he came to the Kings chamber,  
He cold of his curiositie;  
Says, "Sleepe you? Wake you, noble King Arthur?  
And ever Jesus waken yee!"

"Nay, I am not sleeping, I am waking" —  
These were the words said hee:  
"For thee I have card. How hast thou fared?"  
205 O gentle knight, let me see."

The knight wrought the King his booke.  
Bad him behold, reede, and see;  
And ever he found it on the backside of the leafe,  
As noble Arthur wold wish it to be.

210 And then bespake him King Arthur:  
"Alas, thou gentle knight, how may this be —  
That I might see him in the same licknessse  
That he stood unto thee?"

215 And then bespake him the Greese Knight,  
These were the words said hee:  
"If yoale stand stilly in the battell strooge,  
For I have woan all the victory."

220 Then bespake him the King againe,  
And these were the words said hee:  
"If wee stand not stilly in this battell strooge,  
Wee are worthy to be hanged all on a tree."

225 Then bespake him the Greese Knight,  
These were the words said he:  
Says, "I doc conjure thee, thou sowlie feend,  
In the same licknessse thou stood unto me."

*was mindful of*

*card (then concerned)*

*produced for*

*bade*

*sorely*

*likenesse (appearance)*

*you will*

*[To appear again]*

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

With that start out a lody feend,  
With seven heads, and one body;  
The fier towards the element flaugh  
Out of his mouth, where was great plenty.

*flow*

230 The knight stood in the middle p . . .

[Half a page is missing, in which Bredbeddie and the sprite go several more rounds, with the knight finally gaining complete mastery.]

. . . they stood the space of an hour,  
I know not what they did.

And then bespake him the Greene Knight,  
And these were the words said he:  
235 Saith, "I conjure thee, thou fowle feend,  
That thou fetch downe the steed that we see."

*fetch; now*

And then forth is gone Burlow Beanie,  
As fast as he cold hic;  
And fetch he did that faire steed,  
240 And came againe by and by.

(the monster's name)

*harrow*

Then bespake him Sir Marramiles,  
And these were the words said he:  
"Riding of this steed, brother Bredbeddie,  
The mastery belongs to me."

245 Marramiles tooke the steed to his hand,  
To ryd him he was full bold;  
He cold noe more make him goe  
Then a child of three yeere old.

*ride*

*could*

He laid upon him with hoolc and hand,  
250 With yard that was soe fell;  
"Help! Brother Bredbeddie!" says Marramile,  
"For I thinke he be the devill of hell.

*riding crop; violent*

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

"Help! Brother Bredbedde!" says Marramile,  
"Help! for Chriss sake!  
255 For without thy help, brother Bredbedde,  
He will never be rydden thorrow me."

by

Then bespake him Sir Bredbedde,  
These were the words said he:  
"I conjure thee, thou Burlow Beane,  
260 Thou tell me how this steed was riddin in his country."  
He saith, "There is a gold wand  
Stands in King Cornwalls study windowe.

"Let him take that wand in that window,  
And strike three strokes on that steed;  
265 And then he will spring forth of his hand  
As sparks doth out of glede."

burning ember

And then bespake him the Greene Knight . . .

[Half a page is missing. With the help of the sprite, Bredbedde and his companions take possession of the horse and Coenwall's other magical objects, and learn the mysteries that enable their use.]

A lowd blast he may blow then.

270 And then bespake Sir Bredbedde,  
To the feend these words said he:  
Says, "I conjure thee, thou Burlow Beane,  
The powder box thou feitch me."

Then forth is gone Burlow Beane  
As fast as he cold bie;  
275 And feich he did the powder box,  
And came againe by and by.

Then Sir Tristeram tooke powder forth of that box,  
And blest it with warme sweet milke;  
And there put it unto that horne,  
280 And swilled it about in that ilke.

milk

swished; some fhorw

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

Then he tooke the horse in his hand,  
And a lowd blast he blew.  
He rent the horse up to the midst —  
All his fellowes this they knew.

split

285 Then bespake him the Greene Knight,  
These were the words said he:  
Said, "I conjure thee, thou Barlow Beanie,  
That thou fetch me the sword that I see."

290 Then forth is gone Barlow Beanie,  
As fast as he cold bye,  
And fetch he did that faire sword,  
And came againe by and by.

295 Then bespake him Sir Bredbeddie,  
To the King these words said he:  
"Take this sword in thy hand, thou noble King Arthur!  
For the vowes sake that thou made lie give it thee.

"And goe strike off King Cornwalls head,  
In bed were he doth lye."  
Then forth is gone noble King Arthur.  
300 As fast as he cold bye;  
And stracken he hath off King Cornwalls head.  
And came againe by and by.

He put the head upon a swords point . . .

[Another half page is missing. Having slain Cornwall, the knights seize his possessions. Sir Gawain takes Cornwall's daughter, and the companions return to Arthur's court in Little Britain.]

### Notes

Abbreviations: P = Percy Folio MS; BP = Bishop Percy's marginal glosses in the MS; C = Child's edition; M = Madden's edition; HF = Hales' and Furnivall's edition. See Select Bibliography for these editions.

- 1 *Soles*. The first line of the surviving copy was cut off when Percy sent the manuscript to the binder; Percy restored this line to the text from memory. The opening section of the poem has been lost through the mutilation of the Percy Folio.
- 3 *one of the fairest Round Tables*. Arthur's founding of a round table in order to prevent squabbling among his knights about rank, about who "bygan the highe dese" (Raguelle, line 601), is mentioned first in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*. Guenevere's demur from Arthur's claim to Gawain here is peculiarly ironic, since it initiates the plot of Cornwall by starting a squabble over the ranking of round tables themselves.
- 18 *seyf*. HF, C: says. The scribal form is unclear; I agree with M in reading it as an oddly formed *d*.
- 26 *Sir Marraviles*. A knight apparently otherwise unknown in Arthurian legend. Sir Tristan, one of the most prominent of Arthurian knights, is the nephew of Mark, King of Cornwall.
- 29 *Five palmers*. Gawain and Bredbedde make up the full complement of five knights.
- 32 *they rived*. P: *the*. I emend this scribal spelling of *they here* and at lines 114, 122, and 284.
- 34 *transckled*. BP: travelled with an asterisk in the margin.
- 51 *The*. P: *they*; I follow M's emendation.

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

- 66     *A une ghesting of.* M: *A bae ghesting.*
- 68     *A une ghesting of.* M reads as in line 66, emending of to and; C remarks "the first two words are hard to make out," and reads them as *A une*, but emends to modernized *Of one*. I leave the MS reading, since its meaning appears sufficiently plain.
- 69     *bome.* HF: *bōme*.
- 72     *bar.* P: *bar*; M, C emend to *ir*; I follow the reading of HF.
- 79-80   I have made two lines of what is written as a single long line in P.
- 81     *Cornwall.* So C, HF; M reads *Cornewalif*, but the MS is too faint to confirm this spelling.
- 92     *Little Brittaine.* This is the usual English designation for Brittany (French  *Bretagne*, the Roman territory of  *Armorica*), across the English Channel from Cornwall. The Bretons preserved many Celtic traditions associated with Arthur; an English prose romance, *Arthur of Little Brittaine* (translated in the early sixteenth century from a fourteenth-century French source by John Bourchier, Lord Berners), sets Arthur's adventures in Brittany.
- 95     *cockward.* One of the problems that haunts Arthur's reign in romance and chronicle is that he produces no legitimate heir; the question of succession to the throne therefore produces open strife, usually involving Mordred, Arthur's son by his sister. In his novel *The Lyre of Orpheus* (New York: Viking, 1988), Robertson Davies describes the production of an opera, *Arthur the Cuckold*, whose Arthurian themes of sexual anxiety and rivalry are reproduced in the novel's central plot.
- 124   *shrub-chandler.* P's reading here has become faint; though the spelling at line 173 — *shubchandler* — is more distinct, the meaning of this word is not at all clear in either case. M reads as a single word, and emends to *shrubchandler*, without comment; HF conjecture, "a kind of tub?" C emends to *shub-chandler*, commenting that he is "unable to make anything of *shrub, shab*"; he goes on to give elaborate philological arguments for the meaning "rubbish barrel" (p. 279). *bunge* (line 173) confirms that this is some sort of stoppered container; I assume from the context of the poem that this is used as a stand next to

### Notes

Arthur's bed, on which a candle is placed. Barlow Beanie has been enclosed within by Cornwall's men (lines 123 ff.) in order to spy upon Arthur's company.

- 147 ff. *The Third Part*. The division is noted in the left margin, apparently by the scribe rather than BP. Whatever other rubrics there may have been have been lost in the torn-out pages.
- 155 *hourly*. M: *hourly*; C adopts this apparent misreading by M as an emendation.
- 165 *she*. P: *they*.
- 201 *waken*. M: *watch* (apparently misled by the descender from the line above that touches a).
- 206 ff. It is not clear whether Bredbeddie conveys to Arthur words of magical power (perhaps even the sprite's name), or, as seems more likely, somehow shows him an image of what the sprite looked like before its metamorphosis. In the lines that follow, Barlow Beanie upon request transforms back into its monstrous form, only to be domesticated for a final time by Bredbeddie.
- 214 *the Greene Knight*. The reference to Sir Bredbeddie by this title suggests that the composer and his audience were familiar with *The Greene Knight*, which makes Bredbeddie its hero.
- 228 *noward*. M: *nowarde*.
- 236 *Barlow Beanie*: This alliterative title apparently names a combination monster-genie who serves Cornwall. The source and meaning of the name are obscure. It recalls formulaic phrases like "barlokest blonke" (applied to Gwain's horse, Grissell, in *Aventryr*, line 548), "borclich boic" (*Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight*, line 766), or especially "borly berne" (stout, brawny warrior), which occurs in several alliterative poems. Child connects Barlow Beanie to the Billie Blin, a household demon who appears in several surviving ballads (see p. 279, and discussion at p. 67). As a figure of the comic grotesque, Barlow Beanie might be compared to a character in the repertoire of Victorian street players, "Billy Barlow"; Henry Mayhew records the carnivalesque dress and the semi-improvisatory performance of this figure in his lengthy conversation with a Billy Barlow impersonator from the "street business" (*London Labour and the London Poor* [1861; rpt. New York: Dover, 1968], vol. 3, pp. 138-39). The

*King Arthur and King Cornwall*

pageants, narratives, and performances Mayhew records in this section would seem to be the direct descendants of the popular recitations offered by Captain Cox and his troupe at Kenilworth (see General Introduction).

- 256 sorrow me. The scribe has abbreviated the form before *me* as a *p* with a stroke over it, usually indicating Latin *pro* ("for") or *per* ("through"). M expands to *for*; HF give *pro me*; C expands to *for*, following M. "Through" seems the most appropriate expansion, and I have followed scribal spelling from elsewhere in P.
- 295 *King Arthur*. As usual, *King* is abbreviated as *K* in P; in this case, *Arthur* is also abbreviated as *a* (standing apart from the end of the line). M omits *Arthur*.
- 302 The motif of impaling an opponent's head on a spear or sword occurs in Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec*, *Le Bel Inconnu*, and elsewhere; see Loomis' *Arthurian Literature*, p. 358.

## Glossary

air before, earlier, ever	dalis doles, valleys
and if	daw day
and -ing (present participle ending)	de to die
aryghte correctly	deir dear
a(i)ther either	dellis dells, wooded valleys
ane own	dere costly
ne to owe, deserve	dight prepared, ordained, decked out
baith both	dighten to prepare, make ready, arrange,
bairs man, warrior, knight	set, dress, outfit
bauld bold, courageous	doughty strong, stalwart
be by	dounis down, rolling country
be chesus of for the sake of	dred, dredf fear, doubt
bedene together	dredless certainly, without question
belld protection	fayr(e), feir, feye fair, beautiful
bell(e)fe quickly	fele many
berne, beirne man, warrior, knight	fell skin, complexion, visage, look
bird(e), byrd woman, lady	fet fur
birny chain mail	fere, feir fellow; in fere, in feir
boare private chamber, bedroom	together
braid to draw, pull out	fir far
brym fierce	firth woods, forest
bugell bugle	fold earth, creation
buerne knight, man	force strength
busken to set out, go, hasten, prepare,	forthi therefore, and so
fit out, dress, dispatch	freik, freke man, warrior, knight
cair care, sorrow	gais goes
can, con did (past auxiliary), did order,	gart did, caused to happen
did bring to pass	gate path, way
carry, carryis, carryit to move off, go	gay gracious, lively, handsome, generous
clair clear, open, beautiful	geir armor, weapons, gear

## Glossary

glemand	shining, gleaming	loud	loud, loudly
gome, gomes, gomys	man (men), warrior(s), knight(s)	mayn(e)	strength
gralith(es)	to prepare, make ready; go, take oneself	mair	more
graithly	immediately	matens	morning prayers, liturgical services
grund	ground, foundation	meik	meek, submissive, courteous
hart	heart	melan	to speak, talk, converse
hathil	man, warrior, nobleman	melne	struggle, combat, melee
hee	high; on hee aloud	melnen	to mix, struggle, fight
beynd	noble, courteous, handsome; (n.) noble warrior, knight	mete	food, meal
hele(n)e	helmet	myld	courteous; (n.) a courteous person
hertly	fervently	mold	earth; on mold on earth, in the world, anywhere
hewit	hacked, slashed, hewed, struck	many	many, many a
hic, hee	to harnes	namyt	named, called, reputed
hic, hy	high, lofty	of	off
holtes	woods	off	of
ich	each, every	oer, our	over
ikk	each; the same	or	before, ere
iwis, ywis	certainly, indeed	pear	peer, equal
kene	eager, vigorous, bold	qaha	who
kith	kinspeople, loyal supporters	qahare	where
layne	to conceal; not to layne to tell the truth, indeed	qahen	when
ledis	people, loyal supporters, vassals	qeathin	whether
leid	lord	qashlik	which, which one, this, this one
leid	to lead	qashill	while, until
lesing, leasing	lie, falsehood; without lies	rad	quickly, impetuously
lykand	pleasing, handsome	raw	row, order; on raw in order, in an orderly manner
loft	high; on loft aloud, loudly, above	raed	rode
lodely	loathsome, frightful	rathe	quickly
		raughte	reached, provided

## Glossary

reake	warrior, knight	teare	hateful, grievous, noisome
riale	royal, kingly; the riiale	thoer	that, they those
rich	powerful; (n.) a powerful person, a knight	the	you, thee
wrought	made, prepared, reached	there	to thrive, prosper; so mote I thee as I prosper, on my life
roy	king	thile	these
so		thretty	thirty
sall(l)	hall, lord's chamber	thrid	third
salle	hall, lord's chamber	tong(e)	tongue
sall	shelf	tower	tower
sare	grievously	tralist	crazy, foolish, worthy; (n.) trust
schafft	spear, lance, shaft	wedis	clothes, dress, armor
schalk	warrior, knight	weir	doubt; but weir without doubt, to be sure, you may be certain
s(c)hene	shining, handsome, brilliant; (n.) a noble person, a knight	weire	were (past tense of "to be")
s(c)here	bright	weyst	went
schir	air	wend	go, take one's way,
schire	bright	wene	know, understand, think
sege	man, warrior, knight	wer(re)	war battle, combat
sen	since, because	wy	person, warrior
certaintly	certainly, absolutely	wyghte	strong, able, vigorous
sethen	afterwards, since	wyg(g)hte	person, being
sey	sea, water	wy(is)	warrior(s)
seymly	becoming, handsome, seemly	wite	know
sengeoury	lordship	wyt	with
sicht	sight, spectacle	wod(e)	mad, angry, violent
sikerly	nearly, truly	wraithly	angrily, fiercely
seth(e)	true	wroght	angry
stell	steel, armor, chain mail	wroght	caused, made, wrought
stern	bold, terrible; (n.) a bold warrior	wundir	fantastically, extremely, unusually
strife	strong, powerful; (n.) a fierce warrior	yawl	yowl; scream
		yhere	year
stint(e)	stop	ywis	truly, indeed
stode	stood, stood still		
stound	interval, time		
stour	fierce, angry; (n.) battle, combat		
streame	water, ocean, stream		