

## Sir Gawain and The Green Knight

*Original Prose Translation of lines 2429-2478 (Anon. 1925 and 1967, link in bibliography at end)*

‘Your girdle!’ Gawain spoke through a grin. ‘God repay you! I will wear it with good will, not for precious gold, nor for the girdle itself, nor for the silk, nor the side pendant. I won’t wield it for wealth, for worship, nor for the wonderful workmanship, but as a sign of my wrongdoings.’ Gawain’s face steeled, his voice newly impassioned. The Knight looked down on him intently as Gawain continued: ‘I will see it often, when I ride in fame, and it will reawaken my remorse. It will remind me of my fault, the human frailty of our perverse flesh, and how its tenderness entices the teachings of filth. Thus, when pride for my prowess in battle does prick me, a look to this love-lace shall free my heart.’ Silence then hung in the air, and Gawain softened as he looked up at the Knight. ‘I do not intend to offend you,’ Gawain said, ‘but I have one question for you: since you are Lord of the land over there, where I stayed with you, I ask you with great respect—God repay you—how does one say your real name? After you tell me, I will ask no more questions.’

‘That I’ll tell you truthfully,’ said that other then. ‘Bertilak of the High Desert is the name I have in this land. Through the might of Morgan The Fay, who stays in my house, and her knowledge, attained through crafts well learned and the masteries of Merlin she acquired, I was guided into this green form, and into your precious hall. Because she used to happily dabble in the love of that masterly mage who knows all your knights at home, and now wields his knowledge, Morgan the Goddess is her name: none can possess a pride so high that she cannot make them fully tame to her whims.’ Bertilak continued despite Gawain’s flickering expression. ‘To assess the truth and extent of the pride that runs in the Round Table’s great renown, she guided me, this wonder, to take your wits. By doing so, she wished to have insulted Guinevere and have caused her to die from her fright of that aforementioned man, who like a phantom, spoke while clutching his disembodied head between his hands before the high table.’

Gawain’s hand went to his sword’s hilt, ready to strike down what stood before him. But his sword was stayed by Bertilak’s stare as the Knight continued: ‘It is her that’s at my home, the ancient lady. She’s even your aunt, Arthur’s half-sister: the Duchess’ daughter of Tintagel. After her birth, dear Uther had Arthur, who is king now. Therefore I implore you, come to your aunt. Rejoice in my house! My entire household loves you, and I desire you as well—by my faith—as any man under God, for your great honesty.’

‘No.’ Gawain spoke as best he could. ‘I will not, not by any means.’ Bertilak simply nodded, and stepped towards Gawain. Courteously, they clasped, kissed, and commended each other to the prince of paradise. They parted right there on cold ground. Gawain mounted his horse, utterly fair, and made bold haste to the King’s town. As for the vivid Green Knight, he went wherever he desired.

Original Text (Anon. 1925 and 1967)

'Bot your gordel', quop Gawayn, 'God yow forȝelde!  
Pat wyl I welde wyth guod wylle, not for þe wynne golde,  
Ne þe saynt, ne þe sylk, ne þe syde pendaundes,  
For wele ne for worchyp, ne for þe wlonk werkkez,  
Bot in syngne of my surfet I schal se hit ofte,  
When I ride in renoun, remorde to myseluen  
Þe faut and þe fayntyse of þe flesche crabbed,  
How tender hit is to entyse teches of fylþe;  
And þus, quen pryde schal me pryk for prowes of armes,  
Þe loke to þis luf-lace schal leþe my hert.  
Bot on I wolde yow pray, displeses yow neuer:  
Syn ȝe be lorde of þe ȝonder londe þer I haf lent inne  
Wyth yow wyth worschyp--þe wyȝe hit yow ȝelde  
Pat vphaldez þe heuen and on hyȝ sittez--  
How norne ȝe yowre ryȝt nome, and þenne no more?'  
'Pat schal I telle þe trwly,' quop þat oþer þenne,  
'Bertilak de Hautdesert I hat in þis londe.  
Þurȝ myȝt of Morgne la Faye, þat in my hous lenges,  
And koyntyse of clergie, bi craftes wel lerned,  
Þe maystrés of Merlyn mony hatz taken--  
For ho hatz dalt drwry ful dere sumtyme  
With þat conable klerk, þat knowes alle your knyȝtez  
at hame;  
Morgne þe goddes

Perfore hit is hir name:

Weldez non so hyȝe hawtesse

Pat ho ne con make ful tame--

'Ho wayned me vpon þis wyse to your wynne halle

For to assay þe surquidré, ȝif hit soth were

Pat rennes of þe grete renoun of þe Rounde Table;

Ho wayned me þis wonder your wyttez to reue,

For to haf greued Gaynour and gart hir to dyȝe

With glopnyng of þat ilke gome þat gostlych speked

With his hede in his honde bifore þe hyȝe table.

Pat is ho þat is at home, þe auncian lady;

Ho is euen þyn aunt, Arþurez half-suster,

Þe duches doȝter of Tyntagelle, þat dere Vter after

Hade Arþur vpon, þat aþel is nowþe.

Perfore I eþe þe, hapel, to com to þyn aunt,

Make myry in my hous; my meny þe louies,

And I wol þe as wel, wyȝe, bi my faythe,

As any gome vnder God for þy grete traube.'

And he nikked hym naye, he nolde bi no wayes.

Þay acolen and kyssen and kennen ayþer oþer

To þe prynce of paradise, and parten ryȝt þere

on coolde;

Gawayn on blonk ful bene

To þe knygez burȝ buskez bolde,

And þe knyȝt in þe enker-grene

Whiderwarde-so-euer he wolde.

References:

Anon. 1925 and 1967. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In: (ed. Tolkien, J.R.R.; Gordon E.V.; rev. N. Davis) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Digitised for the University of Padova, 2009. Available at: [http://www.maldura.unipd.it/dllags/brunetti/ME/index\\_gaw.php?poe=gaw](http://www.maldura.unipd.it/dllags/brunetti/ME/index_gaw.php?poe=gaw) [Last accessed 02/01/19]