

Translation exercises – Sir Gawain and the Green Knight  
2013/14

**Fitt 3.**  
**II. 1178–1207.**

This is how the lord amuses himself on the edge of the woods, and the good Gawain is lying in his pleasing bed, passing the time under the beautiful blanket, curtains drawn, until the daylight shines on the walls. And as he was slipping into slumber, he warily heard a little noise at his door stealthily opening; and he lifts up his head from out of the bed sheets, he slightly raises a corner of the curtain, and warily waits to see what it might be. It was the lady, most beautiful to see, who shut the door behind herself very stealthily and silently, and bowed toward the bed; and the knight was embarrassed, and secretly lied down, and pretended to be sleeping; and she leaped softly and stole to his bed, cast up the curtain and sneaked in, and set herself down softly on the side of the bed, and waited there for fairly long to see when he would wake up. The knight lay lurking for quite a while, pondering in his conscience what this might come to or how it would end; he thought it was some wonder. But yet, he said to himself, 'It would be more appropriate to find out by asking what her will is soonish.' (1200) Then he suddenly got up and turned towards her, and opened his eyelids, and pretended that he is surprised, and he crossed himself with his hand, as if by his words he would become safer. With very sweet chin and cheeks, mingling white and red, she looked kindly and replied with a small laughter on her lips.

**II. 1476–1534.**

She comes to the curtain and peeps at the knight. Sir Gawain first welcomed her courteously, and she in return very eagerly gives him her words, sits softly by his side and laughs sweetly, and she says these words with a gracious look: 'My lord, if you are Gawain, then I find it curious that a man who is always so well-disposed to good, cannot perceive the customs of his company, and if someone teaches them to you, you cast them out of your mind. You have forgotten quickly what I taught you yesterday with the truest spoken teaching that I am capable of.' 'What is it', says the man, 'I truly say I don't know. If what you claim is true, then I am to blame.' 'But I taught you about kissing', says the beautiful one then, 'wherever a favour is offered, claim it quickly; this is appropriate for a knight who wants to be courteous.' 'Put aside such speech my dear', said the strong man, 'because I didn't dare to do that lest I be refused; if I were refused, I would indeed be wrong to have offered.' 'By my faith', says the merry lady, 'you shall not be refused! You are strong enough to constrain hold me back with your strength, if you want, in case I were so villainous as to refuse you.' 'By God', says Gawain, 'you speak well, but threatening is ignoble in the country where I'm from, and so is every gift that is not given happily. I am at your service to kiss, whenever you like; you may get one or leave it in due time if you want.' The lady bows and pleasantly kisses his cheek. Then they talk a lot about love's pain and bliss.

'I would like to know from you, knight', said the courteous lady, 'if it wouldn't make you angry, what was the reason for which such a young and valiant person like you, so courteous, so knightly, as you are known to be everywhere – and among all that is chivalrous, the main that is praised is the true amorous game, the doctrine of weapons, for to tell about this

endeavour of true knights, it is the inscribed token and text of their works, that man have ventured [risked] their lives for their true love, endured painful time for their love, and then avenged with their valour and relieved their care and brought joy into the bedchamber with their own virtue – you, who are known to be the most handsome of your generation, your fame and your esteem precedes you everywhere, and even though I sat here with you on two different occasions, yet I never heard to proceed such words from you that would ever so slightly pertain to love. And you, that are so courteous and polite in your promises, you ought to show and teach to a young eager person some lessons of the craft of true love. What, are you ignorant, that you give up all the renown? Or perhaps you think that I am too stupid to hear you tell of your polite conversation. Shame on you! I come here alone and sit to learn some game from you; come on! show me your wit, while my lord is away from home.’