Once the siege and assault had ceased at Troy,
The burg battered and burned to brands and ashes,
The trooper that the tricks of treason there wrought
Was tried for his treachery, the truest on earth.
It was Aeneas the noble and his high-born kin
Who then despoiled provinces and patrons became
Well nigh of all the wealth of the West Isles.
Then rich Romulus to Rome rushes him swiftly,
With great splendor that burg he builds at first,
And names it his own name, as it now has.
Ticius to Tuscany and towns he builds.
Longabeard in Lombardy lifts up homes,
And far over the French Flood Felix Brutus
On many banks full broad Britain he sets
To begin.
Where war and wrack and wonder
Have often flourished therein,
And oft both bliss and blunder
Have ruled in turn since then.

Ande quen þis Bretayn wat bigged bi þis burn rych,
bolde bredden þerinne, baret þat lofden,
in mony turned tyme, tene þat wro3ten.
Mo ferlyes on þis folde hau fallen here oft
þen in any oþer þat I wot syn þat ilk tyme.
Bot of alle þat here bult, of Bretaygne kynges,
ay wat3 Arthur þe hendest as I haf herde telle.
Forþi an aunter in erde I attle to schawe
þat a selly in si3t summe men hit halden
and an outtrage awenture of Arthure3 wondere3.
If 3e wyl lysten þis laye bot on littel qui
I schal telle hit astit as I in toun herde with tonge:
as hit is stad and stoken
in stori stif and stronge
with lel letteres loken,
in londe so hat3 ben longe.

And when this Britain was built by this brave knight
Bold men bred therein -- battles they loved --
Who in many a turbulent time troubles have wrought.
More wonders on this field have befallen here oft
Than on any other that I know since that same time.
But of all that here built of British kings
Ever was Arthur the most elegant, as I have heard tell.
Therefore an earthly adventure I intend to show,
That a strange sight some men it hold,
And an outrageous adventure of Arthur’s wonders.
If you will listen to this lay but a little while
I shall tell it at once, as I in town heard

With tongue,
As it is set down and struck
In story stiff and strong.
With true letters interlocked
In this land as has been long.

Þis kyng lay at Camylot vpon Krystmasse
with mony luflych lorde, lede3 of þe best,
This king lay at Camelot upon Christmas
With many loyal lords, lads of the best,
Renowned of the Round Table all those rich brethren,
With rich revel aright and reckless mirth.
There tourneyed troopers by times full many,
Jousted full jollily these gentle knights,
Then came to the court carols to make,
For there the feasting was the same for a full fifteen days
With all the meals and the mirth that man could devise;
Such gladness and glee glorious to hear,
Dear din upon day, dancing on nights;
All was happiness on high in halls and chambers,
With lords and ladies as most lovely it seemed.
With all the wealth of the world they dwelt there together,
The best known knights under Christ Himself,
And the loveliest ladies that ever life had,
And he the comeliest king that the court holds;
For all was this fair folk in their first age,
And still
The most fortunate known to fame,
The king highest man of will.
It would now be hard to name
So hardy a host on hill.

Wyle Nw ȝer watȝ so ȝep þat hit watȝ nwe cummen,
þat day double on þe dece watȝ þe douth serued.
Fro þe kyne watȝ cummen with knyȝtes into þe halle,
þe chaunte þe þe chapel cheued to an ende,
loude crye watȝ þer kest of clerkeȝ and ȝer,
"Nowel!" nayted onewe, neuened ful ofte,
and syȝen riche forth runnen to reche hondeselle,
ȝeȝed ȝeres ȝiftes on hiȝ, ȝelde hem bi hond,
debated busily aboute þo giftes.

Ladies layd ful loude þoȝ þay lost haden,
and he þat wan watȝ not wrothe þat maye wel trawe.
Alle þis mirpe pay maden to þe mete tyme.

When þay had waschen worpyly þay wenten to sete,
þe best burme ay abof as hit best semed,
Whene Guenore ful gayȝed in þe myddes,
dressed on þe dere des, dubbed al aboute,
smal sendal bisides, a selure hir ouer
of tryed Tolouse, of Tars tapites innogh,
þat were enbrawded and beten wyth þe best gemmes
þat myȝt be preued of prys wyth penyes to bye,
in daye.
Þe comlokest to discrye
þer glent with yȝen gray;
a semloker þat euere he syȝe, soth moȝt no mon say.

While New Year was so young, since it was newly come,
That day with double portions were the diners served,
For the king was come with knights into the hall,
The chanting in the chapel achieved an end.
Loud cries were there cast by clerks and others,
"Noel” named anew, announced full oft;
And then the rich run forth to render presents
Yelled ”Year’s gifts!” on high, yielding them by hand,
Debated busily about those gifts;
Ladies laughed full loud, though they had lost,
And he that won was not wroth, that may you well believe.
All this mirth they made until the meal time.
When they had washed worthily, they went to sit,
The best brave always above, as it best seemed;
Queen Guenevere, full gay, graced the middle,
Bedecked on the dear dais, adorned all about,
Fine silk at her sides, a ceiling above
Of rich cloth of Toulouse, and of Tartary many tapestries
That were embroidered and bedecked with the best gems
That might be proven in price with pennies to buy
In our day.
The comeliest to see
There gleamed with eyes of gray;
A fairer that ever could be
In sooth might no man say.

Bot Arthure wolde not ete til al were serued,
he watȝ so joly of his joyynes and sumquat childgered.
His lif liked hym lyȝt: he louied þe lasse
auþer to lenge lye or to longe sitte,
so bisied him his þonge blod and his brayn wylde;
and also anoþer maner meued him eke,
þat he þurȝ nobelay had nomen: he wolde neuer ete
vpon such a dere day er hym deuised were
of sum auenturus þyng an vncoûþe tale
of sum mayn meruayle þat he myȝt trawe,
þat he þurȝ sum segg hym bisoȝt of sum siker knyȝt
to joyne wytþ hym in iustynge in joparde to lay,
lede, lif for lyf, leue vchon oþer
as fortune wolde fulsun hom þe fayrer to haue.
Þis watȝ þe kynges countenaunce where he in court were
at vch farand fest among his fre meny
in halle.
Þerefore of face so fere
he stiȝtles stif in stalle
ful ðep in þat Nw þere—
much mirthe he mas with alle.
But Arthur would not eat until all were served, He was so jolly of his joyfulness and somewhat juvenile: He liked his life light; he loved the less Either too long to lie or too long to sit So busied him his young blood and his brain wild. And also another matter moved him as well, That he through nobility had adopted: he would never eat Upon such a dear day ere he was told Of some adventurous thing, an astonishing tale Of some mighty marvel that he might believe Of our elders, of arms, of other adventures, Or some stalwart besought him for some true knight To join with him in jousting, in jeopardy to lay At risk life for life, each one happy if the other Fortune favored, granted him the fairer to have. This was the king’s custom whenever he was in court At each fine feast among his fair retinue In hall. Therefore of face so fair He stands strong at his stall. Full youthful in that New Year, Much mirth he makes with all.

Thus þer stondes in stale þe stif kyng hisseluen, talkkande bifore þe hyȝe table of trifles ful hende. There gode Gawan watȝ grayþed Gwenore bisyde, and Agraauyn Aladuremayn on þat oþer syde sittes, boþe þe kynges sistersunes and ful siker kniȝtes. Bischop Bawdewyn abof bigineȝ þe table, and Ywan Vrynson ette with hymseluen. Þise were diȝt on þe des and derworþyly serued and siþen mony siker segge at þe sidborde. Þen þe first cors come with crakkyng of trumpes, wyth mony baner ful bryȝt þat þerbi henged, nwe nakryn noyse with þe noble pipes wylde werbles and wyȝt wakned lote, þat mony hert ful hîȝe hef at her towches. Dayntes dryuen þerwyth of ful dere metes, foysoun of þe fresche and on so fele disches þat pine to fynde þe place þe peple biforme
for to sette þe sylueren þat sere sewes halden
on clothe.
Iche lede as he loued hymselue
þer laght withouten loþe;
ay two had disches twelue
good ber and bryȝt wyn boþe.

Thus there stands at his stall       the strong king himself,
Talking before the high table       of trifles full courtly.
There good Gawain was seated       Guenevere beside,
And Agravain of the Hard Hand       on that other side sits,
Both the king’s sister’s sons       and full sure knights.
Bishop Baldwin above       begins the table
And Ywain, Urien’s son,       ate with Arthur himself.
These were dining on the dais,       diligently served,
And next were many sure stalwarts       at the sideboards.
Then the first course came       with cracking of trumpets
With many banners full bright       that thereby hanged;
New noise of drums       with the noble pipes,
Wild warbles and loud       wakened echoes,
That many hearts heaved       full high at their notes.
Dainties drummed in therewith       of many dear foods,
Full plenty of fresh food       and on so many fair dishes
That it was a pain to find place       the people before
To set the silver that held       the seperate stews
On cloth.
Each lad as he loved hime
There dined, nothing loath
Each two had dishes twelve,
Good beer and bright wine both.

Now wyl I of hor seruise say yow no more,
for vch wyȝe may wel wit no wont þat þer were.
Anþer noyse ful newe neȝed biluie,
þat þe lude myȝt haf leue liflode to cach—
for vneȝe watȝ þe noyse not a whyle sesed
and þe fyrst course in þe court kyndely serued,
þer hales in at þe halle dor an aghlich mayster,
on þe most in þe molde on mesure hygh,
fro þe swyre to þe swange so sware and so þik,
and his lyndes and his lymes so longe and so grete, 
half etayn in erde I hope þat he were, 
bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene, 
and þat þe myriest in his muckel þat myȝt ride, 
for of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne, 
bot his wombe and his wast were worthily smale 
and alle his fetures folȝande in forme þat he hade, 
ful clene. 
For wonder of his hwe men hade, 
set in his semblaunt sene; 
he ferde as freke were fade 
and oueral enker-grene.

Now will I of their service say you no more, 
For each warrior may well know no want was there. 
Another noise full new quickly came nigh 
That the lord might have leave to lift up his food, 
For hardly was the noise not a while ceased, 
And the first course in the court courteously served, 
There hastens in at the hall door an awesome figure, 
One of the most on earth in measure of height, 
From the neck to the waist so square and well-set, 
And his loins and his limbs so long and so big 
Half a giant in earth I hold that he was; 
Yet man must I nonetheless admit him to be 
And that the merriest in his muchness that might ride, 
For though of back and of breast his body was stout, 
Both his belly and his waist were worthily slim, 
And all his features conforming, in form that he had, 
    Full clean. 
But great wonder of the hue men had 
Set in his complexion seen: 
He fares like a fighter to dread, 
And over all deep green.

Ande al grayþed in grene þis gome and his wedes: 
a strayt cote ful streȝt þat stek on his sides, 
a mere mantile abof mensked withinne 
with pelure pured apert, þe pane ful clene, 
with blyþe blauunner ful bryȝt and his hod boþe
And all garbed in green       this gallant and his clothes:
A straight coat full tight       that stuck to his sides,
A merry mantle above,       embellished within
With fur skillfully trimmed,       a lining full bright
Of bright white ermine       and his hood as well,
That was lifted from his locks       and laid on his shoulders;
Neat well-fitting hose       of that same green
That covered his calves,       and shining spurs below
Of bright gold, on silken borders       embroidered full rich,
And with rich shoes below the shanks       the chevalier rides,
And all his vesture verily       was verdant green,
Both the bars of his belt       and other bright stones,
That were richly arranged       in his array completely
About himself and his saddle,       upon silk works
That would be too toilsome to tell       of trifles the half
That were embroidered above,       with insects, and birds
With gay gems of green,       the gold all intermingled,
The pendants of his horse trappings, the proud crupper;
His mount’s bit and all the metal enameled was then,
The stirrups that he stood on colored the same,
And his saddle-bow next and its elegant skirts
That ever glimmered and glowed all of green stones.
The foal he fares on fully of that same hue,
Cert:*
A green horse great and thick,
A steed full stiff to restrain;
In embroidered bridle quick,
For the gallant who held the rein.

Wel gay watȝ pis gome gered in grene
and þe here of his hed of his hors swete.
Fayre fannand fax vmbefoldes his schulderes;
a much berd as a busk ouer his brest henges,
þat wyth his hiȝlich here þat of his hed reches
watȝ euesed al vmbetorne abof his elbowes,
þat half his armes þervnder were halched in þe wyse
of a kynge þapados þat closes his swyre;
þe mane of þat mayn hors much to hit lyke,
wel cresped and cemmed wyth knottes ful mony,
folden in wyth fildore aboute þe fayre grene,
ay a herle of þe here, anoþer of golde.
Þe tayl and his toppyng twynnen of a sute,
and bounden boþe wyth a bande of a bryȝt grene,
dubbed wyth ful dere stoneȝ as þe dok lasted,
syþen praven wyth a þwong, a þwarle knot alofte,
þer mony belleȝ ful bryȝt of brende golde rungen.
Such a fole vpon folde ne freke þat hym rydes
watȝ neuer sene in þat sale wyth syȝt er þat tyme,
with yȝe.
He loked as layt so lyȝt,
so sayd al þat hym syȝe.
Hit semed as no mon myȝt
vnder his dyntteȝ dryȝe.

Well gay was this gallant and his gear in green,
And the hair of his head matching his horse.
Fair fanning locks enfold his shoulders,
A beard big as a bush over his breast hangs
That with the noble hair that from his head reaches
Was clipped all around above his elbows
That half his arms thereunder were held in, in the manner
Of a king’s cape that encloses his neck;
The mane of that mighty horse much to it like,
Well curled and combed with knots full many,
Tied in with gold thread about the fair green,
Always one strand of hair, another of gold,
His tail and his topknot twisted in braids,
And both bound with a band of bright green,
Adorned with full dear gems to the top of the tuft,
Then bound tightly with a thong, trickily knotted above,
Where many bells full bright of burnished gold rang.
Such a foal in the field nor fighter that rides him
Was never seen in that hall with sight ere that time
With eye.
He looked like lightning as light,
Said all that saw him come nigh;
It seemed that no man might
Such blows as his defy.

Wheþer hade he no helme ne no hawbergh nauþer,
ne no pysan ne no plate þat pented to armes,
ne no schafte ne no schelde to schwne ne to smyte,
bot in his on honde he hade a holyn bobbe,
þat is grattest in grene when greueȝar bare,
and an ax in his oþer a hoge and vnmete,
a spetos sparþe to expoun in spelle quoso myȝt.
Þe hede of an elnȝerde þe large lenkþe hade,
þe grayn al of grene stele and of golde hewen,
þe bit burnyst bryȝt with a brod egge,
as wel schapen to schere as scharp rasores.
Þe stele of a stif staf þe sturne hit bi grypte
þat watȝ waunden wyth yrn to þe wandeȝ ende,
and al bigrauen with grene in gracios werkes,
a lace lapped aboute þat louked at þe hede,
and so after þe halme halched ful ofte
wyth tryed tasseleȝ þerto tacched innoghe,
on botounȝ of þe bryȝt grene brayden ful ryche.
This horseman held his way in and the hall enters, driuande to þe heȝe dece—dut he no woþe—haylsed he neuer one bot heȝe he ouerloked. Þe fyrst word þat he warp, “Wher is,” he sayd, þe gouernour of þis gyng? Gladly I wolde se þat segg in syȝt and with hymself speke raysoun.”

To knyȝte3 he kest his yȝen and reled hym vp and doun; he stemmed and con studien quo walt þer most renoun.

Yet he had no helmet nor hauberk neither,
Nor no armor nor plate that pertained to arms,
Nor no spear nor no shield to shove nor to smite,
But in his one hand he had a holly branch,
That is greatest in green when groves are bare,
And an axe in his other, a huge and monstrous,
A spiteful axe to describe in speech, if anyone could.
Near four feet in length the large head had,
With a spike of green steel and of hammered gold.
The bit burnished bright with a broad edge,
As well shaped to shear as a sharp razor.
By the hilt of the strong shaft that stern one it griped
That was wound with iron to the weapon’s end,
And all engraved with green in gracious works;
By a lace sash, coiled about, that was tied at the head
And so down the shaft looped full oft,
With fine tassles thereto attached thereby,
And buttons of bright green, embroidered full rich.
This horseman held his way in and the hall enters,
Driving to the high dais—no danger he feared;
Hailed he never any one but high he looked over.
The first word that he whipped out: “Where is,” he said, “The governor of this gang? Gladly I would see that stalwart in sight and speak with himself
And reason.”
To knights he cast his eyes
And rolled them up and down;
He stopped and studied to surmise
Who wields there most renown.

Ther wæt ðe lîken on lenþe þe lude to beholde,  
for vch mon had meruayle quat hit mene  
þat a hæpel and a horse  
such a hue lach  
as growe grene as þe gres and grener hit semed  
þen grene aumayl on golde glowande  
þryþer.

Al studied þat þer stod and stalked hym nerre  
wyth al þe wonder of þe worlde what he worch schulde,  
for fele sellye þat þay sen, bot such neuer are,  
forþi for fantoum and fayrye þe folk þere hit demed.

Þerfore to answere wat þær ære mony æpel freke,  
and al stouned at his steuen and stonstil seten,  
in a swogh sylence þur  
in hyȝe.

I deme hit not al for doute  
bot sum for cortaysye  
let hym þat al schulde loute  
cast vnto þat wyȝe.

There was looking at length      the liegeman to behold,  
For each man had marvel      what it might mean  
That a horsemen and a horse      might have such a hue.  
As green as the growing grass      and greener it seemed  
Than green enamel on gold      glowing brighter.  
All studied that there stood      and stalked him nearer,  
With all the wonder of the world      of what he would do,  
For many spectacles had they seen      but such as this never;  
Thus from fantasy and fairyland      the folk there it deemed.  
Therefore to answer were afraid      many elegant fighters,  
And all were astounded by his speech,  
in a swooning dead stillness      through the silent hall,  
As if all were slipped into sleep      so slackened their noises.

On high –

I deem it not all for fear,  
But some, for courtesy shy,  
Let him whom all should revere  
To that warrior give reply.
Then Arthur before the high dais       that adventure beholds
And rightly reverenced him,       for feared was he never,
And said "Warrior,       welcome indeed to this place;
The head of this hostel       Arthur I am called
Light lovely adown       and linger I pray thee
And whatever thy will is       we shall know later,"
"Nay, so help me," quoth the horseman,       "He that on high sits,
To dwell any while in this dwelling       was not my errand;
But for the laud of thee, lad,       is lifted up so high,
And thy burg and thy braves       best are held,
Stoutest under steel gear on steeds to ride,
The strongest and the worthiest of this world’s kind,
With prowess in jousting and other pure sports,
And here is famed courtesy, as I have heard claimed,
And that has drawn me here, indeed, at this time.
You may be sure by this branch that I bear here
That I pass here in peace and no peril seek,
For had I fared here with a force for fighting ready,
I have a mail coat at home and a helmet too,
A shield and a sharp spear, shining bright,
And other weapons to wield I know well also;
But since I want no war, my weeds are softer.
But if thou be as bold as all battlers tell,
Thou will grant me goodly the game that I ask,
By right.”
Arthur gave answer
And said, “Sir courteous knight,
If thou crave battle of armor bare,
Here failest thou not to fight.”

“Nay, frayst I no fyȝt, in fayth I þe telle.
Hit arn aboute on þis bench bot berdle3 chylder—
if I were hasped in armes on a heȝe stede,
here is no mon me to mach for myȝte3 so wayke.
Forþy I craue in þis court a Crystemas gomen,
for hit is þol and Nwe þer and here ar þep mony:
if any so hardy in þis hous holde3 hymseluen,
be so bolde in his blod, brayn in hys hede,
þat dar stifly strike a strok for anoþer,
I schal gif hym of my gyft þys giserne ryche,
þis ax þat is heue innogh to hondel as hym lykes,
and I schal bide þe fyrst bur as bare as I sitte.
If any freke be so felle to fonde þat I telle,
lepe lyȝtly me to and lach þis weppen.
I quitclayme hit for euer, kepe hit as his auen,
and I schal stonde hym a strok stif on þis flet,
elleȝ þou wyl diȝt me þe dom to dele hym anoþer
barlay,
and þet gif hym respite
a twelmonyth and a day.
"Nay, I seek no fight, in faith I thee tell.
Here about on this bench are but beardless children.
If I were harnessed in armor on a high steed
Here is no man to match me, their mights are so weak.
Therefore I crave in this court a Christmas game,
For it is Yule and New Year and here are youths many.
If any so hardy in this house holds himself,
Or is so bold in his blood, brain-mad in his head
That dare stiffly strike one stroke for another
I shall give him of my gift this great battle-axe,
This axe, that is plenty heavy, to handle as he pleases,
And I shall abide the first blow as bare as I sit.
If any fighter be so fierce to test what I tell
Leap lightly to me and latch on to this weapon;
I quit-claim it forever; let him keep it as his own,
And I shall stand one stroke from him, stout on this floor,
If thou will grant me the right to render him another.

-- Time out today! --
And yet I give him respite,
A twelvemonth and a day.
Now hurry and let’s see aright
If any dare anything say.”

If he hem stowned vpon fyrst, stiller were þanne
alle þe heredmen in halle, þe hyȝ and þe loȝe.
Þe renk on his rounce hym ruched in his sadel
and runischly his rede yȝen he reled aboute,
bende his bresed broȝeȝ. blycande grene,
wayued his berde forto wayte quoso wolde ryse.
When non wolde kepe hym with carp, he coȝed ful hyȝe
ande rimed hym ful richly and ryȝt hym to speke.
“What, is þis Arþures hous,” coþe þe haþel þenne,
þat al þe rous rennes of þurȝ ryalmes so mony?
Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes,
your gryndellayk and your greme and your grete wordes?
Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe Rounde Table
ouerwalt wyth a worde of on wyȝes speche,
for al dares for drede withoute dynt schewed!”
Wyth þis he laȝes so loude þat þe lorde greued;
þe blod schot for scham into his schyre face
and lere.
He wex as wroth as wynde;
so did alle þat þer were.
Þe kyng as kene bi kynde
þen stod þat stif mon nere.

If he astounded them at first, stiller were then
All the courtiers in the hall, the high and the low;
The rider on his mount moved him in his saddle
And roughly his red eyes he rolled about,
Bent his bushy brows brightly green,
Waved his beard to see whoever would arise.
When none would keep him there with talk, he coughed ”ahem,”
And rose up full lordly and readied himself to speak.
“What? Is this Arthur’s house?” quoth the horseman then,
“That all the renown runs through realms so many?
Where is now your vainglory and your victories,
Your ferocity and your grimness and your great words?
Now is the revel and renown of the Round Table
Overthrown by one word of one warrior’s speech,
For all dither for dread without deed shown!”
With this he laughs so loud that the lord grieved.
The blood shot for shame in his shining white face
So fair;
He waxed as wroth as wind,
So did all that were there.
The king, as keen by kind
Then strode that stout man nearer,

ande sayde, “Hàfel by heuen þyn askyng is nys,
and as þou foly hatȝ frayst, fynde þe behoues.
I know no gome þat is gast of þy grete wordes.
Gif me now þy geserne vpon Godeȝ halue,
and I schal bayþen þy bone þat þou beden habbes.”
Lyȝtly leþ þe hym to and laȝ hit at his honde;
þen feersly þat oþer freke vpon fote lyȝtis.
Now hatȝ Arthure his axe and þe halme gryþeȝ
and sternely sturen styrne hit aboute, þat styrke wyth hit þoȝt. 
Þe stif mon hym biforn stod vpon hyȝt 
herre þen ani in þe hous by þe hede and more. 
Wyth sturne schere þer he stod he stroked his berde 
and wyth a countenaunce dryȝe he droȝ doun his cote, 
no more mate ne dismayd for hys mayn dinteȝ 
þen any burne vpon bench hadde broȝt hym to drynk of wyne. 
Gawan, þat sate bi þe quene, 
to þe kyng he can enclyne: 
“Í beseche now with saȝe sene 
þis melly mot be myne.”

And said “Horseman, by heaven, thine asking is foolish, 
And as thou folly have sought, to find it thee behooves. 
I know no gallant that is aghast of thy great words. 
Give me now thy great axe, by God’s wounds, 
And I shall bestow the boon that thou hast begged.”

Lightly leaps he him to and latches it from his hand 
Then fiercely that other fighter upon foot alights. 
Now has Arthur his axe, and the hilt grips, 
And sternly swings it about, and meant to strike with it; 
The stout man before him stood up straight, 
Higher than any in the house, by the head and more. 
With stern stance where he stood he stroked his beard, 
And with a countenaunce drye he drew down his coat, 
No more moved nor dismayed for his mighty blows 
Than if any battler upon bench had brought him a drink 
Of wine. 
Gawain, that sat by the queen, 
To the king he did incline: 
“I beseech now with plain speech 
This melee may be mine.”

“Wolde þe, worþilych lorde,” coþe Wawan to þe kyng, 
“bid me boȝe fro þis benche and stonde by yow þere, 
þat I wythoute vylanye myȝt voyde þis table, 
and þat my legge lady lyked not ille, 
I wolde com to your counseyl biforn your cort ryche. 
For me þip hit not semly, as hit is sop knaunen,
Would ye, worthy lord,” quoth Wawain to the king,
Bid me bow from this bench and stand by you there,
That I without vile manners might vacate this table,
And that my liege lady be not ill pleased,
I would come to your counsel before your rich court,
For I think it not seemly, as it is known sooth
That such an asking be heaved up so high in your hall,
Though you yourself be tempted to take it to yourself
While so many bold about you upon bench sit
That under heaven I hold none hardier of will,
Nor better bodies on earth where battle is reared.
I am the weakest, I know, and of wit feblest,
And my life would be the least loss to speak the sooth.
For only because you are my uncle am I to be praised;
No goodness but your blood I in my body know,
And since this business is so foolish, it does not befit you,
And I have begged it of you first, inflict it on me;
And if I speak not courteously, let all this court rich
Me blame.”

Rich nobles gathered round
And they all advised the same:
To replace the king with crown,
And give Gawain the game.

Then commanded the king the knight for to rise,
and he ful radly vpros and ruched hym fayre,
kneled doun biforn þe kyng and cache3 þat weppen,
and he lufllyy hit hym laft and lyfte vp his honde
and gef hym Godde3 blessyng and gladly hym biddes 
þat his hert and his honde schulde hardi be boþe.
“Kepe þe, cosyn,” coþe þe kyng, “þat þou on kyrf sette,
and if þou rede3 hym ry3t, redly I trowe 
þat þou schal byden þe bur þat he schal bede after.”
Gawan got3 to þe gome with giserne in honde 
and he baldly hym byde3, he bayst neuer þe helder.
Þen carppe3 to Sir Gawan þe kny3t in þe grene:
“Refourme we oure forwardes er we fyrre passe.
Fyrst I eþe þe, haþel, how þat þou hattes 
þat þou me telle truly as I tryst may.”
“In god fayth,” coþe þe goode kny3t, “Gawan I hatte, 
þat bede þe þis buffet quatso bifalle3 after,
and at þis tyme twelmonyth take at þe anoþer wyth what weppen so þou wylt and wyth no wy3 elle3 on lyue.”
Þat oþer onsware3 agayn,
“Sir Gawan, so mot I þryue 
as I am ferly fayn
þis dint þat þou schal dryue.”
First I ask thee, horseman, how you are called;  
That thou tell me truly, so I can trust.”

“In good faith,” quoth the good knight, “Gawain I am called,
Who grants thee this buffet, whatever after befalls,
And from this time a twelvemonth I will treat thee to another,
With what weapon as thou wish and with no other warrior
A-live.”

The other answers again:
“Sir Gawain, as I may thrive,
I am greatly glad, certain,
That thou this blow shalt drive.”

“Bigog!” coþe þe grene knyȝt, “Sir Gawan, me lykes
þat I schal fange at þy fust þat I haf frayst here;
and þou hatʒ redily rehersed bi resoun ful trwe
clanly al þe couenaunt þat I þe kynge asked,
saf þat þou schal siker me, segge, bi þi trawþe
þat þou schal seche me þiself whereso þou hopes
I may be funde vpon folde, and foch þe such wages
as þou deles me today bifoþ þis douþe ryche.”

“Where schulde I wale þe?” coþe Gauan, “Where is þy place?
I wot neuer where þou wonyes, bi hym þat me wroʒt,
ne I know not þe, knyʒt, þy cort ne þi name—
bot teche me truly þerto and telle me howe þou hattes
and I schal ware alle my wyt to wynne me þeder,
and þat I swere þe forsoþe and by my sekere trawþe—
þat is innogh in Nwe ʒer, hit nedes no more.”
Coþe þe gome in þe grene to Gawan þe hende,
“3if I þe telle trwly quen I þe tape haue,
and þou me smoþely hatʒ smyten, smartly I þe teche
of my hous and my home and myn owen nome,
þen may þou frayst my fare and forwardeʒ holde—
and if I spende no speche, þenne spedeʒ þou þe better,
for þou may leng in þy londe and layt no fyrre.
Bot slokes!
Ta now þy grymme tole to þe
and let se how þou cnokeʒ!”
“Gladly, sir, for soþe,”
coþe Gawan—his ax he strokes.
"By Gog" quoth the green knight, "Sir Gawain, I like it
That I shall feel from your fist, the favor I have asked.
And thou hast readily rehearsed, by reason full true,
Completely all the covenant that I of the king asked,
Save that thou shall assure me, stalwart, by thy troth,
That thou shall seek me thyself, wherever thou supposest
I may be found upon earth, and fetch thee such wages
As thou deal to me today before this dear court."

"Where should I wend to thee?" quoth Gawain, "where is thy place?
I am not aware where thou dwellest, by Him that me wrought,
Nor I know not thee, knight, thy court nor thy name.
But teach me truly thereto and tell me how thou art called,
And I shall work with all my wit to win my way thither,
And that I swear thee for sooth and by my sure troth";
"That is enough in the New Year; it needs no more,"
Quoth the gallant in the green to Gawain the courtier.

"If I tell thee truly when I have tapped thee,
And thou me smoothly hast smitten, smartly I will teach thee
Of my house and my home and my own name.
Then may thou be my guest and fulfill our agreements;
And if I cannot speak any speech, then succeedest thou the better,
For thou may linger in thy land and look no farther.
Thou spokest!
Take now thy grim tool, in truth,
And let's see how thou pokest."
"Gladly, sir, for sooth,"
Quoth Gawain; his axe he strokes.

The grene knyȝt vpon grounde grayþely hym dresses;
a littel lut with þe hede, þe lere he discouereȝ.
His longe louelych lokkeȝ he layd ouer his croun,
let þe naked nec to þe note schewe.
Gauan gripped to his ax and gederes hit on hyȝt.
Þe kay fot on þe folde he before sette,
let hit doun lyȝtly lyȝt on þe naked
þat þe scharp of þe schalk schyndered þe bones
and schrank þurȝ þe schyire grece and schade hit in twynne
þat þe bit of þe broun stel bot on þe grounde.
Þe fayre hede fro þe halce hit to þe erþe
þat fele hit foyned wyth her fete þere hit forth roled.
Pes blod brayd fro þe body þat blykked on þe grene,
and nawþer faltered ne fel þe freke neuer þe helder,
bot styþly he start forth vpon styf schonkes
and runyschly he raȝt out þereas renkkeȝ stoden,
laȝt to his lufty hed and lyft hit vp sone
and syȝen boȝȝe to his blonk. Þe brydel he cachcheȝ,
steppeȝ into stelbawe and strydeȝ alofte,
and his hede by þe here in his honde haldeȝ,
and as sadly þe segge hym in his sadel sette
as non vnhap had hym ayled, þa hedleȝ he were
in stedde.
He brayde his blenk aboute,
þat vgly bodi þat bledde.
Moni on of hym had doute
bi þat his resounȝ were redde.

This green knight upon ground       gracefully him readies,
A little bow with his head       the face he uncovers;
His long lovely locks       he laid over his crown
Let the naked neck       show to the nape.
Gawain gripped to his axe       and gathers it on high,
The left foot on the floor       he set before,
Let it down swiftly alight       on the naked skin
That the sharp of the chevalier       shattered the bones
And sheared through the shining flesh       and slashed it in two,
That the bit of the bright steel       bit on the ground.
The fair head from the neck       hit to the earth,
That full many it kicked with their feet,       where it forth rolled.
The blood poured from the body,       bright on the green,
And neither faltered nor fell       the fighter nonetheless,
But stoutly he starts forth       upon strong shanks,
And roughly he reached out       where riders stood,
Latched on to his lovely head,       and lifted it up soon;
And then bounded to his bronc,       the bridle he catches,
Steps into the stirrups,       strides aloft,
And his head by the hair       holds in his hand ,
And as steadily the stalwart       sat him in his saddle,
As if no mishap had ailed him,       though headless now
Instead.
He twisted his trunk about,
That ugly body that bled;
Many feared the clout,
Ere his speech was said,

For þe hede in his honde he haldeȝ vp euen,
toward þe derrest on þe dece he dresseȝ þe face,
and hit lyfte vp þe yȝelyddeȝ and loked ful brode,
and meled þus much with his muthe as þe may now here:
“Loke, Gawan, þou be grayȝe to go as þou hetteȝ
and layte as lelly til þou me, lude, fynde,
as þou hatȝ hette in þis halle, herande þise knyȝtes.
To þe Grene Chapel þou chose, I charge þe, to fotte
such a dunt as þou hatȝ dalt. Disserued þou habbeȝ
to be ȝederly ȝolden on Nw þeres morn.
Þe KnȜȝt of þe Grene Chapel,’ men knowen me mony,
forþi me for to fynde if þou fraysteȝ, fayleȝ þou neuer;
þerfore com oþer recreaunt be calde þe be houȝ.
With a runisch rout, þe rayneȝ he torneȝ,
halled out at þe hal dor, his hed in his hande,
Þat þe fyr of þe flynt flaȝe fro fole houȝes.
Toquat kyth he becom knwe non þere,
neuer more þen þay wyste from queþen he watȝ
What þenne,
þe kyng and Gawen þare
at þat grene þay laȝe and grenne;
ȝet breued watȝ hit ful bare
a meruayl among þo menne.

For the head in his hand he holds upright,
Toward the dearest on the dais he addresses the face,
And it lifted up the eye-lids and looked full widely about
And spoke thus much with its mouth, as you may now hear:
“Look, Gawain, thou be prepared to go as thou promised,
And look loyally till thou, liegeman, find me,
As thou hast promised in this hall, in these knights’ hearing;
To the green chapel choose the way, I charge thee, to fetch
Such a dint as thou hast dealt -- thou hast deserved it --
To be promptly yielded on New Year’s morn.
As the Knight of the Green Chapel, men know me many.
Thus me for to find, if thou set forth, failest thou never.
Therefore come or recreant to be called thee behooves."
With a rough roar the reins he turns,
Hurried out at the hall door, his head in his hand,
That the fire of the flint flew from his foal’s hooves.
To what country that he came knew none there,
No more than they knew from whence he was come.
What then?
The king and Gawain there,
At that green one they laugh and grin,
Yet recorded it was with care
As a marvel among those men.

Though Arthur, the elegant king, at heart had wonder,
He let no sign be seen, but said full high
To the comely queen with courteous speech,
"Dear dame, today dismay you never;
Well becomes such craft upon Christmas,
Playing of interludes to laugh and to sing,
Among these courtly carols of knights and ladies.
Nonetheless to my meal I may me well address,
For I have seen a strange sight; I can not gainsay it."
He glanced at Sir Gawain and goodly he said,
"Now sir, hang up thine axe, that has enough hewed";
And it was done, above the dais on the tapestry hanging,
Where all men for a marvel might look on it
And be truly entitled thereof to tell the wonder.
Then they bounded to the board these battlers together,
The king and the good knight and keen men them served
With all dainties double as to the dearest should befall;
With all manner of meat and minstrelsy both,
With wealth dwelt they that day until it went to an end
In land.
Now, think well, Sir Gawain,
Lest for fear of what thou began,
Thou from this adventure refrain
That thou hast taken in hand.