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Author

Hark, Ina Rae

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Gawain's Passive Quest

By Ina Rae Hark*

The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero.

Northrop Frye,
Anatomy of Criticism

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight conforms generally to Frye's pattern. Gawain must journey through hostile territory in search of his foe. He must overcome physical obstacles and spiritual temptations before he arrives at a confrontation with his adversary. Yet that confrontation involves neither the finding of "a precious Object and/or Person to be . . . possessed or married,"¹ the lifting of a spell, or even an heroic struggle. Gawain has pledged to seek, without resistance, his own death. He directs all his actions toward placing himself in a position of ultimate submission. This constitutes a seeming paradox in a genre which emphasizes achieving and winning over enduring and relinquishing. Moreover, the quest is not entirely successful and the hero draws criticism as well as exaltation.

Although *Gawain* critics often speak of the purposes of the hero's quest — a test of bravery, "trawþe," courtesy, or chastity, a revelation of human imperfection — they rarely face the implications of its atypical goal and outcome.² Of course the beheading game itself, as Kittredge established long ago, is hardly unique in the romance tradition. The beheading game, however, is not usually part of a quest pattern. Generally the adversaries agree to exchange blows at the same place on subsequent evenings, as in the *Fled Bricend*. In *Caradoc* the interval between the blows

lengthens to Gawain's year, but again the adversary returns to Arthur's court; Caradoc does not have to seek him out. Only in *Perlesvaus* does the hero (Lancelot) have to journey to his opponent's realm, but here the situation has altered drastically: the challenger, a non-enchanted mortal, perishes from Lancelot's blow, and Lancelot's appearance to accept the return blow lifts a curse, restoring a waste-land kingdom. Gawain's accomplishment and partial failure, on the other hand, are primarily personal. His quest frees no kingdoms, earns him no great reknown — the court believes it a fool's errand and laughs at its outcome — changes nothing save Gawain's opinion of himself. And indeed the hero at the outset does not even anticipate a reward; he expects the adventure to terminate his career, and on a rather inglorious note.

It was a knight errant's business to die for the sake of the greater good, risk death in battle with some evil foe if something of value was at stake. But to lay it down tamely for the sake of *Crystemas gomen*? Moreover, to battle harsh weather and a hostile wilderness for the privilege of doing so? Even granting the conventions of romance, this strains credulity. When in addition the romance becomes diluted with realistic elements, as John Burrow notes the *how can he have stood for it?* reaction sets in.³ One joins Arthur's court in wondering what kind of quest this is to send so *dere a duk* upon.

Frye defines the typical hero of quest-romance as a figure "whose actions are marvelous but who is himself identified as a human being."⁴ In *Gawain* the hero's humanity is certainly made clear, but the terms of the quest provide little scope for marvelous actions. Having delivered his blow before setting out, Gawain must consent to withstand the Green Knight's *tape* without offering any resistance. In the one action the quest does require — finding the Green Chapel — he needs assistance. He locates it only through stumbling on Bercilak's castle. And even though the chapel lies but two miles from the castle, Bercilak insists upon sending along a guide to direct Gawain. At the Green Chapel the Green Knight refines his demands for inaction; he precludes even the slightest flinching at the approach of the ax. Likewise, in the temptation test-within-a-test the hero must linger long in bed (while his host gets up at dawn to go on vigorous hunts), resist the advances of a beautiful lady, and yet commit no act which might seem discourteous. In a genre noted for its action these circumstances seem puzzling. Marie Boroff comments: "The 'gomen' [the Green Knight] proposes is unheard of as a mode of knightly combat. It deprives Gawain of the use of sword and shield and involves a humiliating passivity, an inhibition of natural response and action."⁵

Many of the beheading tales occur in larger collections of stories about the hero, among positive deeds of prowess. It seems therefore quite significant that Gawain, famed knight of the Round Table and not an uninitiated youngster like Caradoc who must prove his courage as well as his strength, *does* almost nothing in order to satisfy the requirements of the quest. His one decisive action, to take the girdle and violate the pact with Bercilak, almost nullifies his otherwise successful adherence to that quest. This relates to deeper questions which are bound up in the poem with the codes governing knightly conduct. It also enables the poet to explore the result of an excellent but human knight taking on a quest which demands "the 'passive' but (in the circumstances) very exacting virtues of patient fortitude, truth, piety, and chastity: virtues which are frequently annexed in part by the typical Arthurian hero, but, when viewed in the context of medieval narrative and idealism as a whole, are much more characteristic of the saint, the perennial Christian hero."⁶ The tension between the traditional quest form and the goals of the contemplative, rather than active, life throughout the poem points up a disparity between what Gawain considers himself to be and what he really is. It becomes a metaphor for the conflict between human impulse and the codes of military chivalry, courtesy, and Christianity with which a knight chooses to direct that impulse.

The contrast between regulated and impulsive behavior begins almost immediately in the poem. Arthur first appears as *þe hendest*, reknowned more as "a famous courtier than a powerful king."⁷ The poet then describes the lavish *reuel* at the court's Christmas feast. This description and the qualifying adjective *oryzt* create the impression that Camelot adheres strictly to the code of courtesy. Later Arthur's decision not to eat *er hym deuised were/Of sum auenturus þyng* (11. 92-3) and his initial courtesy to the Green Knight reinforce this impression. But other elements simultaneously undercut it. For Arthur's impulses are not entirely subordinated to his courtesy:

He watz so joly of his joyfnes, and sumquat childgered.

His lif liked hym lyzt, he louied þe lasse

Auþer to longe lye or to longe sitte,

So bisied him his 3onge blod and his brayn wyldre.

(11. 86-9)

Other instances of this impulsiveness crop up subtly in the descriptions of the court at large. Its members are also "in her first age,/on sille"(11.54-5).

They hurry through Mass as shouts of *Nowel* ring out and then "forth runnen to reche hondeselle" (1. 66). This is hardly the behavior of a decorous, sophisticated people. The Green Knight's conclusion that the court consists of *bot berdlez chylder* does not seem wholly unfounded, for in this they closely resemble a band of children rushing out on Christmas morning to see what presents lie under the tree. Their courtesy seems less intrinsic to their personalities than it is an arbitrarily feigned mode of behavior. Just as Arthur has *nomen þurȝ nobelay* not to eat before he hears of an adventure — hears of, not experiences — so his knights and ladies have taken on their elaborate courtliness as a kind of masquerade. When the Green Knight storms in, demanding that Arthur's game turn into a reality, they are unprepared to reply.

It is just one of the many paradoxes connected with the Green Knight that although he acts impulsively and scorns codified behavior, he proposes a *gomen* which requires the subordination of human instincts to the strictest chivalric regulations. An embodiment of immense vitality, he offers passively to accept a death blow if one of the court will in turn agree to receive one. To do them credit, the knights are not hypocrites. They realize that they would not be willing to risk their *ȝep* lives to fulfill such an unnatural bargain, and they do not display any false bravado. *Doute* and *cortaysye* combine to render them silent and immobile, and they leave the *aghlich mayster* to their king to deal with. The intruder's taunts soon overcome Arthur's *doute* but unfortunately his *cortaysye* goes with it. "He wex as wroth as wynde" (1.319) and accosts the challenger with rude words:

... "Hapel, by heuen, þyn askyng is nys,
 And as þou foly hatz frayst, fynde þe behoues.
 I know no gome þat is gast of þy grete wordes;
 Gif me now þy geserne, vpon Godez halue,
 And I schal baypen þy bone þat þou boden habbes."
 (11. 323-7)

His ill-concealed impulsiveness breaks through the courtly veneer as he swings the ax wildly before the impassive giant. But the quest is not meant for one who hopes to triumph through an active blow and avoid the darker consequences of the quest. Therefore at this moment Gawain speaks up to request that "þis melly mot be myne" (1. 341).

Gawain's eminently proper manner of asking this boon shows that for one of Arthur's knights at least, courtesy is not merely a game. Despite the

tense atmosphere he can still function within a system which requires a great number of words for a man simply to rise from the table. His display of courtesy brings Arthur to his senses. Donning the king's mask again, he with all due ceremony yields the task to Gawain. Yet Arthur still does not realize what the quest will entail. He believes that success can come through action rather than submission. Therefore he cautions his nephew:

“Kepe þe, cosyn . . . þat þou on kyrf sette,
And if þou redez hym ry3t, redly I trowe
Pat þou schall byden þe bur þat he schal bede after.”

(11. 372-4)

But the blow Gawain will strike is unimportant. The essence of the test lies in the blow he must seek and endure.

After Gawain's blow and its astounding consequences, the Green Knight departs as mysteriously as he came, leaving behind the cryptic, yet compelling terms of the quest:

“Loke, Gawan, þou be grayþe to go as þou hettez,
And layte as lelly til þou me, lude, fynde,
As þou hatz hette in þis halle, herande þise kny3tes;
To þe grene chapel þou chose, I charge þe, to fotte
Such a dunt as þu hast dalt — disserued þou habbez
To be 3ederly 3olden on Nw 3eres morn.
Þe kny3t of þe grene chapel men knowen me mony;
Forþi me for to fynde if þou frayste3, faylez þou neuer.
Perfore com, oþer recreaunt be calde þe behoues.”

(11. 448-56)

Suddenly it is as if a spell had been lifted. Arthur and Gawain break the tension with a laugh. The silent courtiers are now *stoken of sturne werk, stafful her hond*. The company fairly bubbles with action after the near paralysis the *meruayl* had occasioned. But the atypical knightly pledge still stands.

For the remainder of the poem we are to wonder if Gawain can fulfill his pledge. The poet undermines his hero somewhat when he comments that Gawain may have undertaken the quest because *men ben mery in mynde quen þay han mayn drynk* (l. 497). Nevertheless the reader does receive a favorable overall impression of Gawain before he begins his journey. Although the court, ever the voice of human, if anti-romantic,

common sense, grieves and grumbles over Gawain's departure on such a hopeless mission, *þe knyzt mad ay god chere* (l. 562). His leave-taking from Arthur is a model of courteous speech and it indicates once again that his devotion to his codes runs deeper than that of his companions. Also significant is his stoic reply to the court's lamentations:

“Quat schuld I wonde?
Of destines derf and dere
What may mon do bot fonde?”

(11.563-5)

It seems to reveal in Gawain a fatalism that the passive nature of the quest requires. To cap confidence in his hero, the poet introduces the emblem of the Pentangle. This *endeles knot* represents unbroken perfection in adherence to the knightly ideal. Its five fives encompass and combine all chivalric, courtly, and Christian virtues. Similarly the shield it adorns combines military protection with that of the Virgin Mary, who is identified as the *hende heuen quene*. If this shield symbolizes Gawain's true nature, then he should have little difficulty completing any quest, even this unusual one.

As Gawain journeys farther and farther from Camelot, the strangeness of the quest increases. He performs many of the usual deeds of military prowess against assorted forest monsters, handily dispatching them with God's help. And yet these feats do not appreciably advance the quest, nor do they provide Gawain's severest trial: *For werre wrathed hym not so much þat wynter was wors* (l. 726). Again the success of the quest does not primarily depend upon action (decapitating the Green Knight, defeating the monsters) but on endurance (suffering the return blow, surviving the harsh winter). The poet underscores this contrast through his narrative techniques. As several critics have remarked, the poet reports the battles with the monsters in a most perfunctory way. If one applies the vocabulary of the cinema – and *Gawain* often calls for this⁸ – one might say that these events occur in a long-shot, montage sequence. By contrast, the camera lingers in sharp closeup over the *naked rokkez*, the icy stream *claterande fro þe crest*, and the *hard iisse-ikkles* hanging over the head of the hero, asleep in his *yrnes*. Thus by the time Gawain has asked Mary that she might lead him to shelter for the Christmas celebration, the ideal of the Pentangle has received a vigorous assault from purely physical needs, and all his codes have brought Gawain no closer to his goal. Inside that marvelous castle which shimmers through the trees, seemingly in answer to

Gawain's prayer, the poet shows Gawain's dedication to those codes waning in response to his human impulses.

From all that has gone before, Gawain would appear to be an aloof, formal, ever-correct figure with few emotional needs, who rarely gives way to impulse. At Bercilak's castle, however, he basks in the warmth of the fire, eats with gusto a lavish fish dinner — ostensibly a penance — and during Mass gazes with definite interest at his host's attractive wife. This change forces the reader to alter some assumptions. *Knight of the Pentangle* now seems only a role Gawain adopts when engaged in official knightly business. While his chivalry represents more to him than the game of the court, it is finally only an occupation. When not engaged on the quest he observes the letter of his vows, but abandons their spirit. Once Bercilak informs him that his goal is nearby, Gawain puts the quest aside, sheds it along with his armor and shield, (thus the emphasis the poet places on Gawain's arming and disarming). Of course he cannot know that Bercilak and the Green Knight are one in the same or that he has just arrived at the most important part of his task. But this should make no difference. Chivalry should become part of the knight's inmost nature, not a costume which he can doff at will. And if the quest motif is, as Auden suggests, "A symbolic description of our subjective personal experience as historical" (p. 42), then the private values of the quest hero should coincide with those the quest calls on him to display. If they do not match, then the knight is not suited to his quest or the quest is inappropriate to the knight.

No sooner has Gawain learned that his destination is in sight than he unthinkingly binds himself to a new exchange bargain, one which also demands that he eschew action for passivity:

"3e schal lenge in your lofte, and ly3e in your ese

.....

And I schal erly ryse,
On huntyng wyl I wende.

.....

Quat-so-euer I wyne in þe wod hit worþez to yourez,
And quat chek so 3e acheue change me þerforne."

(11.1096; 1101-02; 1106-7)

Whatever the similarities that have been noted between Gawain in the bedroom scenes and the quarry in the hunts, Burrow quite correctly asserts that the contrasts between the hunts and the temptations are more

important than the parallels.⁹ The poet repeatedly contrasts references to Bercilak's activity outside with references to Gawain's passivity inside:

Pus laykez þis lorde by lynde-wodez euez,
And Gawayn þe god mon in gay bed lygez;
(11. 1178-9)

Pis day wyth þis ilk dede þay dryuen on þis wyse,
Whyle oure luflych lede lys in his bedde;
(11. 1468-9)

Pe lede with þe ladyez layked alle day,
Bot þe lorde ouer þe londez launced full ofte;
(11. 1560-1)

Sir Gawayn lis and slespes
Ful stille and softe al niȝt;
Pe lorde þat his craftes kepes,
Ful erly he watz diȝt.
(11. 1686-9)

Even the hunted animals can flee, double back, and turn fiercely on their pursuers. Gawain can do nothing save fence with words. His three interlocking codes, instead of providing an honorable action to extricate him from the situation, combine to prohibit any recourse but semantics. To do what the lady asks *he schulde make synne, and be traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde aȝt*, a violation of Christian and chivalric ordinances. Yet *he cared for his cortaysye, lest crapaȝn he were*. As the epitome of courtesy, Gawain cannot very well kick the lady in the belly as a hero in a similar situation does in *Yder*. Thus his conflicting oaths reduce Gawain to a "sinuous politeness, here devoted not to achieving action but to evading the action that the Lady would force upon him."¹⁰

Gawain's obvious uneasiness during the bedroom scenes stems only in part from the lady's advances. He chafes under the inactivity as well. He *wolde boȝe of þis bed* but she insists *ȝe schal not rise of your bedde*. For courtesy's sake he dare not defy her, but the impulse to be up and doing does not vanish. When the lady finally departs each day, Gawain *rapes him sone, boȝez forth . . . blypely to masse and mad myry al day or layked alle day*. He reminds one of the restless, *childgered* Arthur at Camelot. In addition, as the reader learns that Gawain is not inherently passive, he also

learns that Gawain is not so fatalistic about receiving the Green Knight's blow as he appeared at the outset. On the third morning dreams of the *buffet* he must abide *without debate more* trouble his sleep. Previously he has told Bercilak, *And me als fayn to falle feye as fayly of myn ernde*: a rather ironic comparison, since he is just as likely to fall dead from success in his quest. This reveals that Gawain subconsciously still hopes to fulfill the quest and yet save his life.

So when the opportunity to preserve himself presents itself, Gawain reaches for it. The girdle will serve as

... a juel for þe jopardé þat hym iugged were:

When he acheued to þe chapel his chek for to fech,

My3t he haf slypped to be vnslayn, þe sle3t were noble.

(11. 1856-8)

Gawain never sees anything wrong in using the girdle during his encounter with the Green Knight. After all, some enchantment must have enabled that knight to pick up his severed head and ride off with it. Indeed nothing in the *forwarde* specifically excludes the use of protective charms. But this, like the bedroom maneuvering, seems somehow beneath knightly dignity. A hero who trusts completely in God and Mary should not require such talismans. Again Gawain is truer to the letter than to the spirit of his vows.

Moreover, while the acceptance of the girdle does not technically violate his covenant with the Green Knight, its retention certainly does violate his agreement with his host. Yet this breach of faith does not seem to disturb Gawain. He takes his official chivalry seriously but does not stick at bending the rules during his Christmas vacation. The contrast becomes clearer when the guide tempts Gawain. The guide offers him essentially the same escape the Lady did: to appear to complete the quest and yet avoid its consequences. As Paul Delany notes, the offers are even couched in the same terms.¹¹ But now, clad again in his armor, Gawain will have none of it. That he recognizes no underlying similarity between the two offers, nor between the Green Knight's game and Bercilak's only indicates his failure to comprehend more than the external trappings of his quest while ignoring its fundamental insistence on consistent moral commitment to one's professed ideals.

When Gawain, at the Green Chapel, stands his ground and survives the nick, he therefore believes that he has succeeded in his quest. At last freed from the restraint of the bargain, he joyfully leaps into action, jumping

back, donning helmet and shield, and pulling out his sword. Finally he can operate in his own sphere of action. But action, precluded throughout the quest, is likewise unnecessary at its conclusion. Leaning on his ax, the Green Knight coolly admonishes him, *Bolde burne, on þis bent be not so gryndel* (1.2338). The explanation follows. Gawain learns that both his real success and partial failure occurred without his knowledge; he did not recognize the most important part of the quest as part of the quest at all. Three judgments are passed on his succumbing to the temptation of the girdle. Bercilak laughs and deems Gawain *þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote zede* who only *lakked a lyttel* because of his very human desire for self-preservation. He bids him keep the girdle as a token of remembrance. Gawain, however, reproaches himself as a cowardly, covetous, and false knight. He accepts the girdle as a mark of penance, a "remorde to myseluen / *Pe faut and þe fayntyse of þe flesche crabbed*" (11. 2434.5). After a homeward journey including *mony aventure in vale* which the poet does not enumerate, Gawain receives the court's judgment. Like Bercilak, they too laugh. In their opinion, however, Gawain has not lacked even a little. They indulgently adopt the girdle as a baldric.

Why such a disparity in reactions? One possible answer might be that the three separate judgments evaluate the hero's performance according to each of the three components of knighthood. Bercilak judges Gawain's fidelity to chivalric oath, Gawain judges himself by Christian standards, and the court judges his courtesy. Thus Bercilak can be forgiving since Gawain has fulfilled the letter of his *forwardes* with the Green Knight, has resisted adultery with his host's wife, and has only broken the agreement to exchange winnings on the last of the three nights. His final breach of his oath earns him the nick but is mitigated by its origin in the instinct for self-preservation rather than any unchivalric intention toward his host. From a Christian perspective, on the other hand, the fault becomes more serious. Christianity de-emphasizes the world and maintains that he who loses his life will find it. Therefore the desire to preserve one's life does not excuse transgression. Gawain has sinned by setting the flesh above the spirit. When only courtesy is involved, however, Gawain succeeds admirably. He preserves his courtesy throughout, slipping only briefly during the trying encounter at the Green Chapel. In this poem, as in other Gawain literature, courtesy forms an integral part of Gawain's nature.

It is impossible completely to reconcile these three judgments, for each is correct on its own terms. The constant critical debate over their respective accuracy seems therefore wide of the mark. Since the poet has so carefully justified each, the fact of the conflict, not its resolution

becomes paramount. Rather than combining to form a perfect whole, as do the elements of the Pentangle, the codes now contradict each other, and this contradiction comments upon Gawain's relation to his knightly ideals. The irresolvable tension between them parallels the tension between Gawain's impulses and the restraint demanded by Bercilak, between the self-assertion inherent in the quest form and the saintly self-denial required by its conditions. The contradictions inherent in the poem from its beginning anticipate and predetermine Gawain's failure, so that the failure is not an occasion for blame but simply the culmination of the poem's message and of Gawain's self-education.

The conflict between codes and impulses which the quest brings to the fore arises because in Gawain's mind his codes have become ends rather than means; they have been divorced from the human nature which formulated them. They have changed from directives for action to abstract formalities which restrict natural behavior. To adopt an ideal code of action is to strive continually after a perfection one can never reach. Such striving results in the highest human endeavor. But Gawain, confusing ends and means, goals and attainments, has persuaded himself that his ideals are synonymous with achieved perfection. Follow the rules — no matter in what spirit — assume the Pentangle as an emblem and you magically take on the identity of the Perfect Knight. Having thus lost their original correlation with spiritual striving, Gawain's codes cease to have their initial moral force. In his transactions with the Lady they hinder rather than help him achieve an honorable extrication. Their combined letter paralyzes and demeans, while the proper moral spirit, not codified into abstract regulations, might forcefully have cut the Gordian knot of the situation. And when moral integrity only involves perfect adherence to rules rather than spiritual commitment, morality is reduced to a game; the temptation to cheat becomes irresistible, especially when one's life is involved. Gawain can equivocate with his ideals, put them on and off at will, because they have ceased to have any real connection with his human impulses.

The distance between Gawain as active knight and the quest's demand for the self-denial of the contemplative saint reflects the gap between Gawain's natural impulses and the stifling, morally false abstraction of his codes. The poet, however, does not indict Gawain for failing to be a saint, only for thinking that an arbitrary set of rules would make him one. The poem celebrates humanity. Alan Markman observes: "One of the marks of genius in the romance is the deliberate care which the poet took to make his hero human."¹² Indeed throughout the Arthurian tradition Gawain has always represented the best human knight in contrast to the more

supernatural-seeming Lancelot or Galahad. I believe the poet chose Gawain as his hero (at a point in the tradition when Gawain's pre-eminence had declined) because he wanted to comment on human ideals.

"In our subjective experience, of which the Quest is, I have suggested, a literary mimesis, what we ought to become is usually dependent upon what we are; it is idle and cowardly of me if I fail to make the fullest use of any talent with which I have been endowed, but it is presumptuous of me to attempt a task for which I lack the talent it requires," Auden asserts (p. 54). Such presumption, *angardez pryde*, results from Gawain's misapprehension of his ideals; it leads him to accept a quest for which he is not fit. The court realizes its unfitness, perhaps because it is fully conscious that its codes are only a game. Its members are lesser than Gawain in that they have lower aspirations, but they are greater in that they recognize their own limitations. But Gawain, no more qualified than they, takes on the quest they have the self-knowledge to refuse. He can only be cured of his presumption by going on the quest and failing, so the poet and Bercilak have him do just that.

The quest then becomes a journey to self-discovery in which Gawain must learn to accept his humanity. In facing the Green Knight with his multiple associations of life and death, God and Satan, vegetation myth and fairy enchanter, Gawain comes face to face with all the ambiguities inherent in human existence. It is this ambiguity which Gawain must acknowledge in himself. He is not the perfect knight of the Pentangle. He is not one of those rare individuals whose spiritual purity lifts him above human needs. He is simply a worthy knight and a human being. The quest teaches him to discard the *surfet* of overconfidence and complacency, of confusing his reputation with himself, which led him to think himself more. He should learn from it never to attempt its like again.

The poet's world holds a place for both saint and hero, provided the hero does not presume upon the saint. *Gawain* is not a solemn moral tract, bemoaning the limited state of fallen man. It is a festive poem full of games and laughter, which joyfully affirms humanity. Yet it also prefigures disaster with its hints that Gawain will not accept its lesson.¹³ In this respect it foreshadows the time when the whole court, infected by Gawain's fault, undertakes a saint's quest. And when the unworthy many, as well as the worthy few for whom it was intended, go upon the quest for the Grail, the Round Table takes the first step toward its own destruction.

*Ina Rae Hark received a B.A. in English from Northwestern University in 1971 and an M.A. from UCLA in 1972. From 1972 through 1974 she served as a Chancellor's Teaching Fellow in the UCLA English Department. Ms. Hark has recently completed her doctoral dissertation, "Bernard Shaw and Victorian Satiric Inversion," under the direction of G.B. Tennyson and will join the English faculty at the University of South Carolina in September, 1975.

Notes

1. W.H. Auden, "The Quest Hero," in *Tolkien and the Critics*, ed. Neil Isaacs and Rose Zimbaro (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 44.
2. Only John Burrow in *A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966) dwells at length on the goal of the quest, but he carries its implications too far by seeing the poem as a secular, comic *Everyman*.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 164. For other treatments of romance vs. realism in the poem see Larry Benson, *Art and Tradition in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers U. Press, 1965) and Sacvan Bercovitch, "Romance and Anti-Romance in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'," in *Critical Studies of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'*, ed. Donald R. Howard and Christian Zacher (Notre Dame: Notre Dame U. Press, 1968), pp. 257-66.
4. *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 33.
5. "Criticism of Style: The Narrator in the Challenge Episode," Howard and Zacher, p. 129. See also Jan Solomon, "The Lesson of Sir Gawain," *ibid.*, p. 272 and Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), p. 202.
6. T.A. McAlindon, "Magic, Fate, and Providence in Medieval Narrative and 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'," *RES*, ser. 2, 16 (1965), 121.
7. Benson, p. 97.
8. See Borroff and also Alain Renoir, "Descriptive Technique in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Orbis Litterarum*, 13 (1958), 126-32.
9. Burrow, p. 87. The similarities were most fully enumerated by Henry L. Savage in "The Significance of the Hunting Scenes in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *JEGP*, 27 (1928), 1-15.
10. A.C. Spearing, "Gawain's Speeches and the Poetry of 'Cortaysye,'" Howard and Zacher, p. 179.
11. "The Role of the Guide in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,'" *ibid.*, p. 231.
12. "The Meaning of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,'" in *Sir Gawain and Pearl: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert J. Blanch (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana U. Press, 1966), p. 165.
13. His exaggerated remorse over his fault, his repeated blushing, his penitential fervor, his refusal to return to the scene of his failure.