

## Translation Class Set Pieces, Week 4

### *SGGK*, lines 1178–1207

So the lord amused himself at the edges of the woods and the good man Gawain lay in his pleasant bed as the daylight gleamed on the walls, lurked under the fair canopy, with curtains around. And he slumbered gently, he heard a little noise at his door and it quickly opened; and he lifted his head out from the covers, raised a corner of the curtain a little and looked warily that way to see what it could be. It was the lady, loveliest to look at, who pulled the door behind her very stealthily and silently, and turned towards the bed. The man was embarrassed and lay down again craftily and pretended to sleep. And she tiptoed softly and stole up to his bed, lifted up the curtain and crept inside it, and sat down gently on the bedside and stayed there a marvellously long time to see when he woke up.

The knight lay low a very long time, pondered in his mind what the event might mean or result in since it seemed a marvel to him. But yet he said to himself, ‘It would be more fitting [appropriate] to find out what she wants soon by asking.’ Then he awoke and stretched and turned towards her, and opened his eyes and acted as though he was surprised, and he crossed himself [‘sayned hym ... with hande’] as if to become safer through his prayer.

She behaved most graciously, with her sweet chin and cheeks of mingled white and red, and her small laughing lips.

### *SGGK*, lines 1476–1534

She came to the curtain and peeped at the knight. Sir Gawain greeted her courteously first and she replied eagerly to his speech, sat down gently at his side and laughed a good deal, and with a loving [?pleasant] look she spoke these words to him: ‘Sir, it seems strange to me, if you be Gawain, a man always so well disposed to good, that you do not perceive noble manners [?customs] and if someone teaches them to you, you dismiss them [?out of hand]. You have quickly forgotten what I taught you yesterday by the truest lesson that I could manage [know how to say].’

‘What is it?’ said the knight, ‘for I certainly do not know at all. If what you believe is true, I alone am to blame.’

‘But I taught you about kissing,’ said the fair lady then; ‘whenever favour is evident, it should quickly be accepted; thus it becomes any knight who practices courtesy.’

‘Enough of such talk,’ said the bold man, ‘for I dared not do that in case I were refused; if I were refused, I would surely be wrong to have offered.’

‘By my faith,’ said the noble lady, ‘no-one could refuse you: you are strong enough to constrain with your strength, if you wished, if anyone were so ill-bred as to deny you.’

‘Yes, by God,’ said Gawain, ‘your words are good [right], but in the country I live in force [is thought] ignoble and any gift [thought ignoble] which is not given with good will [= consent]. I am at your command to kiss whenever you like; you may take it [= the kiss] when you wish and stop when you

think it right, in due course [soon after].’

The lady bent down and graciously kissed his face; then they had much conversation about the grief and mercy of love.

‘I’d like to learn from you, sir knight,’ said that noble lady, ‘if you weren’t to be angered about it, what was the reason that one so young and bold as you are now, so courteous, so chivalrous as you are known to be far and wide — and conspicuous in all chivalry, the chief thing praised is the loyal sport of love, the lore of arms; for in describing the labour of these true knights, the title and text of their works tell how men have risked their lives for loyal love, endured grievous trials for true love and afterwards have avenged themselves through their valour and assuaged their sorrow, and brought joy into a bower with their own virtues — and you are reputed to be the noblest knight of your time, your reputation and honour are spread abroad everywhere, and I have sat here next to you on two separate occasions, yet I have never heard from you any speech, great or small [long or short andc.], relating to love. And you, who are so courteous and wise in your vows, should be eager to show and teach a young woman some elements of the arts of true love. Why! [Upon my word! andc.] Are you, famous through all the world, ignorant? Or do you think me too stupid to listen to your courtly conversation [dalliance]? For shame! I come here alone and sit here to learn some game from you. Do teach [Come! teach] me something of your wisdom [knowledge] while my lord is away from home.’