

To whom it may concern, here is a Statement regarding  
'Our Plagiaristic Poet Laureate'

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"And folly finds the man who flirts with a fool"  
(*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, verse 324 – as translated by  
Simon Armitage; 2007, 2018.)

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In 2007 Simon Armitage published a translation of the fourteenth century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

In 2018 he published a Revised Edition. In a "NOTE" on this new version he says:

There are no radical changes, particularly in the tone and attitude of the translation and its emphasis on alliteration; more a case of a nip here and a tuck there, amounting to perhaps a couple of hundred minor amendments.

These claims must be countermanded.

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A comparison of the texts finds firstly that in fact over three hundred and fifty verses have been changed – that is, about one verse in seven – and often complexly so.

It is then found that in about three hundred of the altered verses the changes cannot be said to be "minor". The emendations range from being noteworthy to being profoundly significant.

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It may then be stated that the changes evidence extensive plagiarism.

In his "NOTE ON THE REVISED EDITION" Mr Armitage makes no mention of the use that he has made of a translation of mine – a copy of which he was given when Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

*I find that in the great majority of the three hundred or so verses that are significantly altered the changes are made in direct response to my manuscript.*

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By way of proof of this assertion, a demonstration of the first examples in Mr Armitage's plagiaristic sequence is appended to this statement.

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## APPENDIX

Here, my own version of the verses is presented between Mr Armitage's earlier and later ones.  
(Not all the verses included have been changed.)

### Verses 3-6:

The turncoat whose tongue had tricked his own men  
was tried for his treason – the truest crime on earth.  
Then noble Aeneas and his noble lords  
went conquering abroad, laying claim to the crowns.

And that · traitor who the trickings of treason had wrought there  
was · tried for his treachery, the truest upon earth,  
it was · Aeneas the elder, and his high-born kind,  
who after · pressed under provinces and the patrons became.

The traitor who contrived such betrayal there  
was tried for his treachery, the truest on earth;  
Aeneas, it was, with his noble warriors  
who went conquering abroad, laying claim to crowns.

### Verse 50:

Such a coming together of the gracious and the glad.

With all the · joy that was general they joined there together.

With all the wonder in the world they gathered there as one.

### Verses 54-59:

Fine folk with their futures before them, there in  
that hall.

Their highly honoured king  
was happiest of all:  
no nobler knights had come  
within a castle's wall.

For all were these · fairest of folk in their finest age  
on that sill:

the happiest under Heaven,  
a King the man highest of will,  
now might not such a name be given  
to a hardier folk on a hill.

All those fair folk in their first age, together in  
that hall:

most fortunate under heaven,  
with Arthur, that man of high will;  
no bolder band could ever  
be found on field or hill.

Verse 72:

When, washed and worthy, they went to table.

When they had · washed them worthily, they went to their seats.

When, worthily washed, they went to the table.

Verses 77-80:

With French weave and fine tapestry from the far east  
studded with stones and stunning gems.  
Pearls beyond pocket. Pearls beyond purchase  
or price.

Of well-tried · Toulouse stuff and Tarsic, tapestries aplenty,  
that were em- · broidered and embellished with beautiful gem·stones  
that might be · proved of great price, were there pennies to buy them,  
any day.

With tasteful tapestries of Toulouse and Tharsia,  
studded with stones and stunning gems  
beyond pocket or purse, beyond what pennies  
could buy.

Verses 109-15:

Good Sir Gawain is seated by Guinevere,  
and at Arthur's other side sits Agravain the Hard Hand,  
both nephews of the king and notable knights.  
At the head sat Bishop Baldwin as Arthur's guest of honour,  
with Ywain, Son of Urien, to eat beside him.  
And as soon as the nobles had sampled the spread  
the stalwarts on the benches to both sides were served.

There the good · Gawain in fine garb was at Guenevere's side,  
And Agravain of the · Hard Hand on that other side sitting,  
both were the King's · sisters own sons, most sure in their knighthood;  
Bishop · Baldwin was above, to begin the feasting,  
and Iwain, · Urien's son, they ate there together;  
these were dis- · posed at the dais, and duly were served thus,  
and then many · trusty and true men at the tables beside.

Good Sir Gawain is seated by Guinevere,  
and on his other side Agravain the Hard Hand sits,  
both nephews of the king and notable knights.  
At the head of the board sits Bishop Baldwin,  
With Ywain, son of Urien, to eat beside him.  
First those sitting on the dais were splendidly served,  
then those stalwarts seated on the benches to the sides.

Verse 156:

Worn shawled on his shoulders, shucked from his head.

That was · loosened from his locks and then laid upon his shoulders.

Worn shawled on his shoulders, slipped from his head.

Verses 180-186:

The hair of his head was as green as his horse,  
fine flowing locks which fanned across his back,  
plus a bushy green beard growing down to his breast,  
and his face-hair along with the hair of his head  
was lopped in a line at elbow-length  
so half his arms were gowned in green growth,  
crimped at the collar, like a king's cape.

And the · hair upon his head and of his horse were in suit,  
fairly · fanning it fell, and enfolded all his shoulders;  
a great · beard much like a bush over his breast was hanging;  
and this with the · handsomest hair that was from his head reaching down  
was · clipped about and cut so as to be clear of his elbows,  
that half his · arms then thereunder were hidden in the way  
of a · King's own capados, that closes around the neck.

The hair of his head was as green as his horse,  
fine flowing locks which fanned across his back,  
plus a bushy green beard growing down to his breast,  
which hung with the splendid hair from his head  
and was lopped in a line at elbow length  
so half his arms were gowned in green growth,  
crimped at the collar, like a king's cape.

Verse 195:

Was strung with gold bells which resounded and shone.

On which many · bells all burnished in bright gold were ringing.

Where bright and burnished gold bells chimed clearly.

Verses 199-202:

A look of lightning flashed  
from somewhere in his soul.  
The force of that man's fist  
would be a thunderbolt.

He looks there as lightning so bright,  
so say all that him espy;  
it seems that no man might  
under his dints then but die.

His look was lightning bright  
said those who glimpsed its glow.  
It seemed no man there might  
survive his violent blow.

Verse 212:

The skull-busting blade was so stropped and buffed.

The bit was · burnished brightly, with the broadest edge.

Its broad-edged blade brightly burnished.

Verses 228-37:

The green man steered his gaze  
deep into every eye,  
explored each person's face  
to probe for a reply.

On the King's men he cast his eye,  
as he reeled him up and down;  
then stood, and sought to espy  
who wielded there most renown.

He held them with his eyes,  
and looked from right to left,  
not knowing of those knights,  
which person to respect.

Verses 256-7:

'No', said the knight, 'it's not in my nature  
to idle or allack about this evening'.

'Nay, so · help me', said the horseman, 'He that on high does sit,  
to waste any · while here in this place, that was not my errand'.

'No', said the knight, 'by Him in highest heaven,  
I'm not here to idle in your hall this evening'.

Verse 301:

Flustered at first, now totally foxed.

If he had a- · stonished them at first, then stiller were they now.

If flustered at first, now totally foxed.

Verse 329:

The man-mountain dismounts in one mighty leap.

Then · fiercely that other fellow on his feet alighted.

the man dismounts in one mighty leap.

Verses 334-5:

Quite simply he stands there stroking his beard,  
fiddling with his coat, his face without fear.

with sternest · visage there he stood; he then stroked at his beard  
and with his · features quite fixed he unfastened his coat.

just stands there sternly, stroking his beard,  
drawing down his coat, countenance undaunted.

Verse 342:

'This moment must be mine'.

'that this mêlée may be mine'.

'May this melee be mine'.

(I seek no particular redress in this matter either from Mr Armitage or from his publishers and advisors.  
Indeed, had he asked, I would have granted him unlimited use of the manuscript.)

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