Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Medieval Misogyny and Gawain's Outburst in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

By:
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Critic and Credibility

- Gerald Morgan
  - Senior lecturer at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland
  - Employee for over 40 years
  - Teaches a class specifically on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
  - Currently on probation from Trinity College of Dublin

- 2002 sexual harassment complaint filed against him
  - He responds with blast email to colleagues
  - Says the woman is “dumb without the virtue of being blonde”
  - Banned from Arts Building

- He has no right to judge misogyny in others
In *Medieval Misogyny and Gawain’s Outburst Against Women in Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* the author, Gerald Morgan, explores the existence of misogyny throughout medieval literature and “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.” Morgan asserts that Sir Gawain does not earn the title of a misogynist despite his singular outburst against women. To support this point, he explains the relationships between medieval women and knights, defines the key values of knights through other literary examples, and reviews Gawain’s actions throughout the play to prove that he has exhibited these values. Essentially, since Gawain has upheld all of values of chivalry in the rest of his experiences, characterizing his outburst against Lady Bertilak as misogynistic would be uncalled for. The criticism concludes with an analysis on the importance of recognizing similarities between humans and not stereotyping sexes.
Audience

● Higher Educated People
  ○ Extensive use of vocabulary
  ○ Cites past authors and philosophers
    ■ Aristotle
  ○ Written by a college professor
● Feminists
  ○ Appeals to those in favor of feminist views
Relationship to Our Study of Text

Majority of Morgan’s argument is based on evidence from similar literature

- Relationship between knights and ladies- Palamon and Averagus
  - Wife of Bath- independent feminine perspective
- Characteristics of perfect knight- Palamon, especially in general prologue
  - “Rather, it is fitly accompanied by the virtues of temperance, such as gentleness, humility, and courtesy, and these are conspicuous and humanizing elements in Chaucer's portrait of the Knight in the General Prologue” (268)
3 Take Away Points

1. The criticism concluded that while Sir Gawain had outbursts against women, he was not entirely a misogynist.

2. The audience of the article is primarily those in higher education or supporters of the feminist movement.

3. The characterizations of a knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the *Canterbury Tales*, both express virtues of chivalry.