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Although the date of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is uncertain, and we know nothing about the author, its composition is roughly contemporary with Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

It is a remarkably subtle and accomplished poem, in which the hero's knightly virtues of courage, courtesy and fidelity are put to the test in a strange adventure involving a huge green knight on a green horse, a winter journey, a lady in a mysterious castle and a challenge answered. It ranks as one of the greatest works of the English Middle Ages and perhaps the greatest triumph of the English alliterative tradition.

Unlike *The Canterbury Tales*, however, *Sir Gawain* is written in a dialect belonging to Cheshire, Lancashire or Staffordshire, and this seems more remote to the modern reader than Chaucer's London language. The aim of this edition has been to remove unnecessary impediments while retaining the integrity of the original. Notes and a glossary have been provided to assist an informed, critical reading of the text.