

# The Lord's Goodbye / Bertilak's Ghazal and Antigone Regina

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## Abstract

With *The Lord's Goodbye / Bertilak's Ghazal*, I wanted to give myself the challenge of incorporating the Arthurian legend into the Medieval Persian ghazal form. The ghazal's stylistic characteristics are incredibly fascinating and unique compared to traditional Western forms, especially the rhyming patterns. I realised I also found this stylistic distinctiveness in Medieval poems, notably 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', with its unique alliterative form. This poem draws similarities between the themes generally explored in a ghazal (abandonment, love, and religious imagery) and the story of Sir Gawain. I created a deliberate ambiguity between the two female characters, respectively described as *her* and *Her* (the capitalisation reinforcing the religious aspects of the Virgin Mary, who has a major role in the poem). The erotic connotations of Gawain's relationship with Bertilak also helped with adapting the ghazal to the Arthurian genre. Through this poem, I hope to illustrate the malleability of the myth; a modern Arthurian retelling could deal with queer themes and interpretations, for example, or explore its influence outside of the Western psyche from a non-European perspective.

I wrote *Antigone Regina* to experiment with the triolet form and to expand on the father-daughter relationship in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. My favourite aspect of this form is the opportunity to make the same line take different meanings through the poem. The line 'Oedipus' grave and weeping blood' plays on the word 'grave', hence the comma that appears in the last line. I also wanted to draw on the relationship that various retellings of the myth placed between humans and gods, as well as the role of ancestry and inheritance – not as a curse, but a fundamental part of human experience on both the individual and the societal level. Although this poem does not explicitly deal with the Arthurian story, it therefore still speaks of the role of poems as important reinterpretations of a myth.

## The Lord's Goodbye / Bertilak's Ghazal

Tell me, O Knight, how blind you were to Her  
Whose sapphire smile was hidden to view *her*?

How far away She seemed, the moonlit church,  
Salvation-girdles, victory through *her*!

They would have laughed, O Knight, to see you pray  
Between their hips – the Maiden, and You. *Her*.

The holy trinity – three kisses deep  
My breath is tinged with both our sins. *Woo her*.

Delve, O Knight, into the greenlit chapel.  
Your lover grazes your neck. You *knew* her.

My girdle green upon your waist, you ride,  
You tell your tale, and find a brand new *her*.

Bleeding on the marsh, Knight, your eyes shut tight:  
Remember green, and Bertilak, and your two *Her*.

## Antigone Regina

The touch of sun-soaked hands against her cheeks;  
Oedipus' grave and weeping blood  
Spilled on her baby dress in steady streaks;  
The touch of sun-soaked hands against her cheeks:  
"The gods will never love the Greeks."  
She'll prize above a silent god  
The touch of sun-soaked hands against her cheeks,  
Oedipus' grave, and weeping blood.

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