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American Literature

11/01/2021

Modeling Brian Stone's  
Translation of Sir Gawain and  
the Green Knight

## The Sunflower and The Dandelion

Once upon a time, in the vibrant kingdom of Demetria,  
There was a king with a crown upon his head  
And he was lying in embroidered silver blankets upon his deathbed  
He sat with white hair streaming around his thin face  
Like a waterfall with beads braided into place.  
Red velvet finery framed him in drapes,  
And copious cushions crowded around  
With ornamental tassels at their corners bound.  
His sunken eyelids drooped closed in the dim light  
And wrinkles spread out like a cobweb engraved in his skin.  
A frail hand he rested heavy on his heart  
Holding in it a small vial with a seed slipped inside.  
That bottle was blue-ish in color, with a moonlight tint  
And around the rim, a ring of gold glittered gilding it.  
From his withered lips he warbled a weak word  
To his lords and loyal servants lying beside his boss\*  
To fetch his daughter from the holy garden chambers,  
Where she had slept that night in sorrowful dread.  
She had prayed for hours before she sunk to her knees  
Tending the garden with tireless pleas  
Until she finally collapsed in exhaustion asleep.

With no good news, the messenger shook her awake  
And sent her solemnly to sob at his side.  
They called her The Sunflower, for she had golden locks  
And gossamer green veins that glittered under ivory skin.  
She had sharp green eyes like exquisite emeralds,  
That, now, were soft and weary from crying and strife.  
When the king felt her presence, he lifted his lids and he whispered this:  
"My dear and gracious daughter, here is the vial of The Sunflower Seed.  
When you were born, it came to us as a sign  
Signaling you, among your sisters, would be the single heir.  
You must go on a quest before you are queen,  
To prove to your people that they can trust you.

\*"Boss" is a British synonym for  
"bed"

The Goddess to whom you pray in the garden gave you this gift  
Now, you will use it on this quest.”

Upon delivering these words, he bequeathed to her the vial  
And his fragile arm fell as he fainted in death.

Her face streaked with tears, she bowed her head and gently kissed her father’s hand  
Before she turned and fled to the comfort of her chambers.

When she arrived, the amber room was light with ambience  
And a fire crackled warmly in the warped stone hearth  
Her love, The Dandelion, had been waiting for her.

The Dandelion was small with strong arms, red curls, and a mischievous smile.

She was a farmer’s daughter dressed in a simple brown garment to all The Sunflower’s regalia,  
But she had bright, clever eyes that sparkled on her face  
Like jewels framed in delicate lace.

They were the only gems she had ever seen.

But, to The Sunflower, they were everything.

The Sunflower collapsed into her arms and sobbed.

She told Dandelion all that had happened, and Dandelion said this:

“My love, you know what you must do.

This kingdom has never had two queens,

And the people want to know that they can trust me as your wife.

That they can trust what you decide.”

And The Sunflower said, “I must steal the Sun, store it in this seed

Then release it in the sky for all to see.”

Morning came and she climbed her clever mount,

A mare that ran faster than the swiftest hare.

And so, she departed, depriving her dandelion of her love for days

While she embarked to encapsulate the Ember of the Heavens.

Sunflower flew swiftly on her steed for seven days in the direction of the rising sun.

On the eighth morning, she came across a tiny cottage in a field

Where she dismounted and knocked on the door.

From the tiny house came a tinier dwarf

Dotted with freckles and feathers that dangled in her hair.

Sunflower said to the dwarf with the mane of feathers:

“I am The Sunflower, Future Queen of Demetria, and I am on a quest to steal the Sun.

I have traveled for seven tedious days without tire,

But now, it is time for me to rest. May I take leave in your garden tonight?

The dwarf bowed a deep bow and welcomed her in.

When the sun had set, she settled to rest,

Not first without praying profusely to her patron above.

In the morning, the dwarf with the feathers in her hair

Sent her off with droplets of dew pressed into a dark blue river stone  
That The Goddess had told her to give to a traveler called The Sunflower when she appeared.  
She would need it on her quest when the time came.

After three more days, she came across a military mushroom,  
Outfitted in a general's uniform and traveling attire.  
Sunflower said to the mushroom in a military uniform:  
"I am The Sunflower, Future Queen of Demetria, and I am on a quest to steal the Sun.  
Please grant me permission to pass through you camp."  
The militant mushroom bowed a deep bow, saying to her:  
"The Goddess sent us here to assist you when you arrive.  
I am your most humble servant. How may I help you on your quest?"  
As he spoke, many more mushrooms crept out from the shadows  
And bent into a flourish of fabulous bows.  
Perplexed, the pretty princess extended her hand  
And told them to ride with her on her mare until they were needed.

So, she rode on for six more days with the militant mushrooms  
Accompanying on her steed  
Until she came to a cliff that dropped into an ocean,  
A shimmering sea that separated the land from the edge of the world.  
Here, she dismounted and called out to the abyss:  
"I am The Sunflower, Future Queen of Demetria, and I am on a quest to steal the Sun.  
Please part to form a path so I may pass through."  
As the sound of her words were swallowed up by the sea,  
A great ripple rose and rushed toward them.  
Up from the depths leapt a brilliant blue whale.  
With water streaming down its face, it bellowed to her:  
"The sea sparkles and shimmers for all to see,  
But it parts for no one, no matter their pleas.  
I am Balaena, the Whale King, and The Goddess has ordered me to take you to the sun.  
Leave your mount and mushroom men behind."  
The Sunflower dismounted and sank to her knees before him  
She pressed her forehead against the earth in a gracious gesture  
And she said to Balaena, the Whale King: "I am honored to accept your service."  
She tossed the blue river stone, flashing as it fell into the king's mouth  
Where he stored all his treasures far behind his teeth.  
She rose and leapt from the cliff into the sea,  
Where Balaena caught her and swam swiftly  
To edge of the world with her on his back above the waves.

After seven days of swimming, they stopped with sensation.  
This is where the sea ended, and the sky began.

The Sun, the Ember of the Heavens, floated before them  
A massive ball of fire suspended in the vast, dark nothingness of the universe.  
Sunflower took the vial from her pocket and stretched her arm as far as it would go  
Until the brazen girl brushed the blazing mass with her fingertips...  
And ripped the Ember from its resting place.

As they soared back across the roaring waves, everything was dark  
As though a scribe had spilled black ink across the sky  
And day had turned to night.

As they approached the shore, there arose a tumultuous clamor  
Of blades clashing and shouts ringing, horses screaming in the night.  
Now that the Sun was off its throne the Army of Darkness had emerged  
To steal it from The Sunflower and the gift from The Goddess that she stored it in  
Their prophets had predicted that she would prevail,  
And now that the sky had gone out, they knew she had arrived.

When Sunflower made it to the cliff, she tied her hair back and scaled it to the top.  
Everywhere, she could see the mushrooms were multiplying,  
Erupting into plumes for spores, spawning, swarming, slaying.  
They raced up the legs of dark stallions and toppled them as they reared in fright  
And Sunflower, ever courageous,  
Leapt into her saddled and spurred her steed into battle.  
With the vial bound tightly to her breast, she swept her sword in graceful arcs  
Cutting down the soldiers surrounding her in clusters.  
As the mushrooms fought, she raced back to her kingdom,  
Striking any shadow that tried to stop her  
As the belligerent beasts marshalled, the mushrooms mobilized,  
Never losing strength or splitting asunder.  
For days and nights, the war waged on  
And The Sunflower clutched the seed stowed safely at her side.

After sixteen days, she galloped gallantly through the gates.  
She tore the vial from her bindings and threw it back from whence it came.  
The Goddess snatched it from the sky and smashed it, so the sun soared back into space  
And its blazing rolled through the night  
Filling the skies so they were ever bright.

The Army of Darkness shrieked and wailed,  
Clutching their heads and fleeing back to the shadows  
So that day reigned once more, and all on the Earth abounded again.

After more than a month of separation, The Dandelion ran into her lover's arms

And they kissed in sweet euphoria that the Queen was home again.  
 With The Dandelion at her side, The Sunflower strode to her balcony  
 And announced to her people the benevolence she had brought.  
 And she said this:  
 "People of Demetria,  
 I have made allies with the people of Whales,  
 announced my reign to the dwarves,  
 and procured an army of Mushrooms to protect us all.  
 As my first act as Queen of Demetria, the Garden of Demeter,  
 I will marry The Dandelion and make her your second queen."  
 And the people cheered at their brave and worthy ruler  
 As she kissed her lover once more  
 And the bells began to ring.

And so, she proved to her people  
 That they could trust her judgment  
 And she was fit to be their king.

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Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (SGGK) is the story of a knight of the Round Table as he journeys on a quest to fulfill an oath he took from a stranger in green one Yuletide Eve. The Sunflower and the Dandelion (TSTD) was modeled after the fashion of this thirteenth century epic, and they contain many congruencies. The Sunflower and The Dandelion is similar to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, translated by Brian Stone, in its style, frequent use of alliteration and visual imagery, and format.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and The Sunflower and The Dandelion are both written in the style of epics. They are constructed from lines of poetry grouped into long stanzas that, when translated, do not follow a particular meter or rhyme scheme. They both use recurrent alliteration and vivid imagery. Examples of these two literary devices occurring simultaneously are, "and both were bound with bands of bright green, / ornamented to the end with exquisite stones," (14-15) and "that bottle was blue-ish in color, with a moonlight tint / and around the rim, a ring of glittering gold gilded it," (13-14), in SGGK and TSTD, respectively. This

correspondence demonstrates a similarity in style from both the perspectives of literature type and individual writing technique.

Finally, these two stories follow the same format, beginning in *medias res* and with stanzas divided into an introduction, sections distinguished by their settings, events, and interactions of the main characters, and sections containing their respective resolutions. An example of this in SGGK is the separation of lines into a stanza introducing and describing the green knight and distinct parts of the quest when Sir Gawain is in the green knight's castle, and then at the Green Chapel. Divisions of the lines in *The Sunflower* and *The Dandelion* are made after this same fashion. For example, the middle portion is separated into the four parts of *Sunflower's* quest that each occur in a different location and time, with interactions between *The Sunflower* and different helpers along the way. This resemblance in construction creates a fundamental similitude between the two.

Ultimately, *The Sunflower* and *The Dandelion* was modeled after the epic *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a fact which can be supported by their common characteristics. The frequent appearance of imagery and alliteration, among other literary devices, shows that the style of TSTD mimics that of SGGK. The parallels in their structure and form show that such characteristics of *The Sunflower* and *The Dandelion* were derived from those of SGGK. Clearly, *The Sunflower* and *The Dandelion* resembles its literary parent, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

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## **Bibliography**

Wilhelm, Jeffrey D., et al. *Glencoe Literature*. Glencoe McGraw-Hill, 2009.

