***James Randall Leader Essay Prize*:** Kevin Whetter presented this year’s Leader Prize to Richard H. Godden (in absentia).

“The number of outstanding articles in the pool for the 2017 James Randall Leader Prize was daunting, and I am extremely grateful to my fellow judges for their meticulous work in choosing this year’s prize winner.  While a number of essays contended valorously in the final grand meleé, the judges unanimously awarded the champion’s garland to Richard H. Godden’s ‘Gawain and the Nick of Time: Fame, History, and the Untimely in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*’ (*Arthuriana* 26.4 (Winter 2016): 152-73).

Godden’s essay confronts the central question of chivalric identity in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, addressing the interweaving concerns of personal identity and Fame, time and the untimely, arguing ultimately that ‘the untimeliness of Gawain’s fame drags in its wake a future that the poem seeks to banish, yet cannot seem to forget’ (153). This concern with time, polychronicity, and the untimely is brought to bear in the first section, ‘The Time is Out of Joint’, where Godden reads time in the poem as non-linear, porous, and ultimately metatextual in nature. The ‘first age’ of the Arthurian court hides an anxiety about communal identity and the fame of the court, a fame whose ‘spectral quality’ (157) is laid bare by the untimely arrival of the Green Knight. This interrogation of future-past reputation continues in ‘Remembrance of Names Past’, where Godden returns to the question of Gawain’s intertextual identity and the shadow that it throws upon the young hero’s adventures, convincingly revealing ‘fame’s spectrality’ through a deft analysis of Gawain’s multiple, fragmented, and polychronic identities (164). In the third movement, ‘Haunted Futures’, the essay turns to the fraught question of the girdle itself, arguing - in a damning reading of portentous intertextuality - that ‘the green lace, and the story it tells, serves as a fitting symbol for the [ultimate] reputation of the Arthurian court. The lace tells the story of divided loyalties, the dangers of seduction, and familial strife, that is, the very qualities that bring about the infidelity of Guinevere and Lancelot, the death of Arthur and Gawain, and the end of a kingdom’ (168).

Godden insightfully interrogates the workings of polychronicity and metatextuality in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,*tracing the ruptures, nicks, and cuts of time within the narrative. As Godden concludes, ‘The nicks and cuts, both physical and figurative, that dot *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* signal the cracks in the historical fantasy that the poem would otherwise put forth’ (169). These cracks, or as Roland Barthes might terms them, *puncta*, remind us of the often unexpected and surprising flows of time in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a poem that - as Godden’s prize-winning essay reminds us - continues to reward careful and innovative reexamination. The essay is a testament to Godden’s theoretical acumen, probing intellect, and wide reading, and stands as a most worthy winner of the 2017 James Randall Leader Prize for best Arthurian article published in 2016.”