

Arthurian Women

Or “Behind Every Good Man...”

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<http://www.amazon.com/Kim-Headlee/e/B001KE2LK2>

INTRODUCTION

- Collection of works about/relating to Arthurian Legends is on the order of 25,000 spanning fifteen centuries.
- Began as oral tradition relating genealogies and historic events (e.g., Welsh triads).
- Transitioned to romantic fiction with minstrels and troubadours beginning in middle ages (e.g., Chrétien de Troyes, Sir Thomas Malory).

ORIGINS

- Geoffrey of Monmouth: *History of the Kings of Britain* (Mordred marrying Guanhumara/Guinevere)
- Anonymous Welsh compilation: *Mabinogion* (story of Culhwch and Olwen, etc.)
- Welsh Triads: Three Guineveres; Three Unrestrained Ravagings (Medrawd assails Gwenhwyfar); Three Harmful Blows (Gwenhwyfach slaps Gwenhwyfar); Three Futile Battles (Camlann)
- Chrétien de Troyes: *Eric and Enide*, *Cligés*, *Lancelot*, etc.
- Marie de France, patroness of Chrétien de Troyes – possibly suggested inclusion of the adulterous themes found in *Cligés* and *Lancelot*.

WOMEN'S ROLES

SOURCE OF INSPIRATION



God Speed!
Edmund Blair Leighton, 1900



The Lady Guinevere
Howard Pyle, 1903



Guinevere (*Idylls of the King*)
Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, 1913

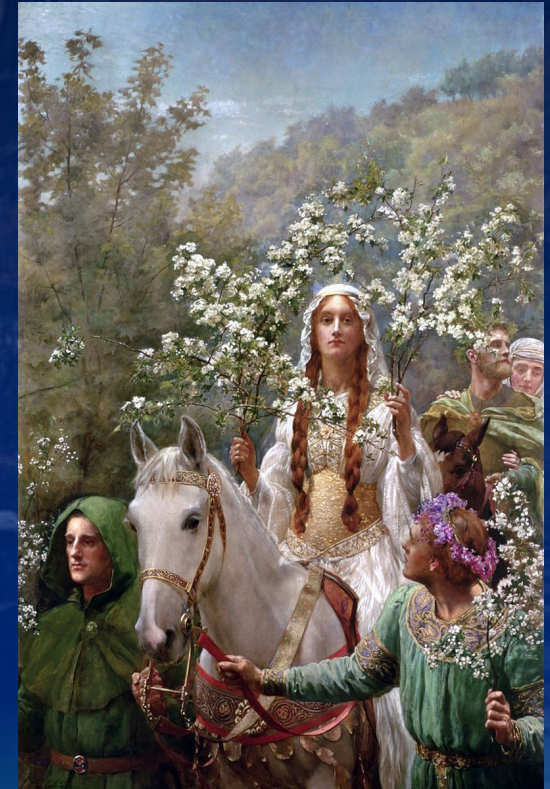
WOMEN'S ROLES

Sir Mellegrans interrupts the sport of the Queen. ததததத



Sir Mellegrans interrupts the sport of the Queen.
Howard Pyle, 1907

TARGET
FOR
ENEMIES



Queen Guinevere's
Maying
John Collier, 1900

WOMEN'S ROLES

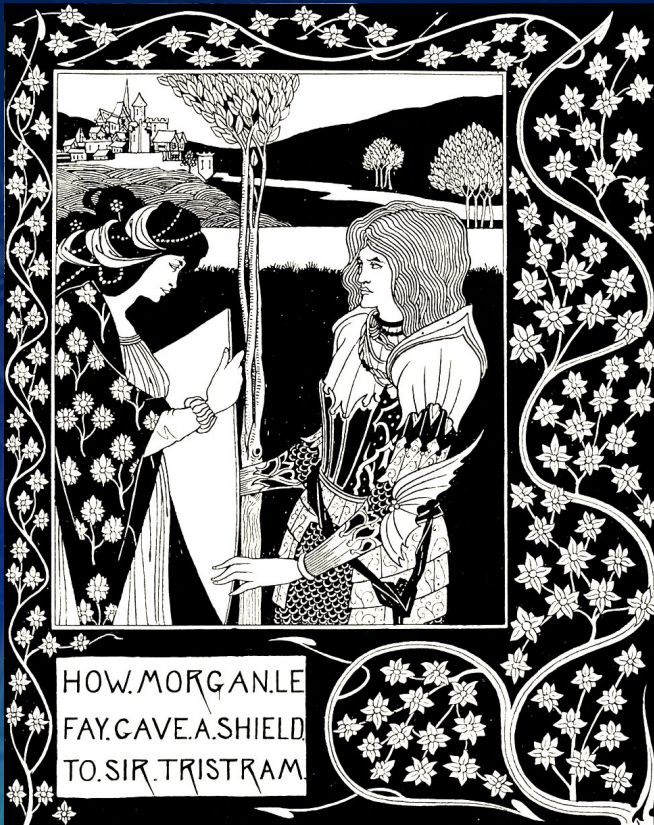
DISPENSER OF
WISDOM



Morgan le Fay
Frederick Sandys,
1863-64

WOMEN'S ROLES

CATALYST FOR ADVENTURE



How Morgan le Fay Gave a Shield to Sir Tristram (*Le Morte Darthur*)
Aubrey Beardsley, 1893

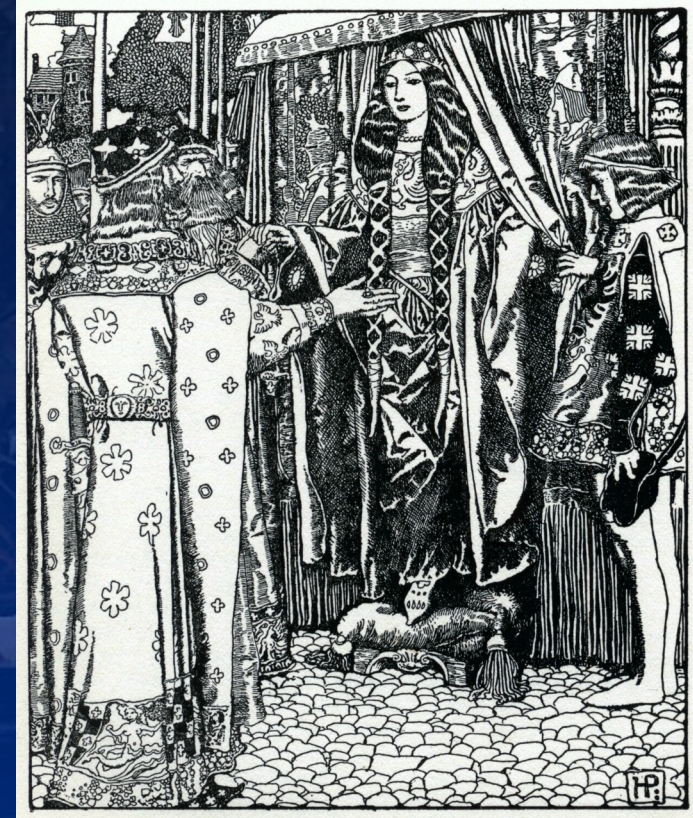


The Damsel of the Sanct Grael
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1857

WOMEN'S ROLES

ARBITER OF MALE WORTHINESS

Lancelot and Guinevere
Herbert Draper, 1890s



King Arthur Meets Lady Guinevere
Howard Pyle, 1903

WOMEN'S ROLES

JUDGE

Especially in regard to
crimes against women
(Guinevere)



Starting Over (*King Arthur's Sister in Washington's Court*)
Jennifer Doneske, 2014

WOMEN'S ROLES

HOUSEHOLD MANAGER



"After prayers we had dinner."
(*A Connecticut Yankee in King
Arthur's Court*)
Daniel Carter Beard, 1889



"Did you really murder an innocent child?"
(*King Arthur's Sister in Washington's Court*)
Jennifer Doneske, 2014

WOMEN'S ROLES

OBJECT OF DESIRE



The Beguiling of Merlin
Edward Burne-Jones,
1873



Tristan and Isolde
Edmund Blair Leighton, 1902

WOMEN'S ROLES

WARRIOR



Britomart and Artegall

Britomart and Artegall (*The Faerie Queene*)
Gertrude Demain Hammond, 1909



Britomart Redeems Faire Amoret
William Etty, 1833

OTHER WOMEN'S ROLES

- Governor (Morgan, Lyonors/Lyonesse; Gwenhwyfar/Guinevere rules in Arthur's absence in Welsh "Unbridled Ravaging" triad)
- Mother (Guinevere in earliest stories, Morgan, Morgause, Elaine)



REFERENCES

- *The Arthurian Companion*, Phyllis Ann Karr, Chaosium, 1997
- “The Role of Women in the Arthurian Material Across History,” Lis Marxen, University of Southern Denmark (academia.edu, 2021)
- *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*, Thelma S. Fenster, Norris J. Lacy, Routledge, 1996 (rereleased 12/22/2015 routledge.com)
- *King Arthur*, Norma Lorre Goodrich, Harper Perennial, 1989
- *Guinevere*, Norma Lorre Goodrich, Harper Perennial, 1992
- *The Camelot Project*, University of Rochester (ongoing) <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot-project>