

THE LITERARY CLUB

Loose Women You Have Known Who Have Changed Your Life

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Man, the servant and interpreter of Nature, only does and understands so much as he shall have observed, ...; more than this he neither knows nor can do. Francis Bacon ¹

Gentlemen, this is my very first – or shall I say, maiden, paper to this esteemed group. So, don't you think it appropriate for me to talk of loose or easy women in something maiden? I was told on several occasions that there is no topic I could choose that could be 1) original or 2) that someone in this group may know more about it than I do, Surely many of you truly know more than I do about women – or shall I say, those who've been free with their bodies, not just their minds?

So, I've decided to focus on several loose women that are well known to all. I intend to describe their place in literature and history and argue that their significance is such that they may well have changed your lives.

But let me state at the outset what this paper is NOT about. It's NOT about the salacious, pornographic lives of famous females – which I've already admitted I'm sorry I know too little about. I do NOT intend to speak about how I managed to sneak into the Gaiety Theatre in my youth to see April Flowers strip and dance with only a bikini on (a very racy feat at the time!), inasmuch as many friends have told me this would make a good subject for a paper.

¹ Bacon, Francis, Novum Organum, Translated by Peter Urbach and John Gibson, Open Court Publishing Co. 1995, page 43.

Nor do I intend to focus on carnal sights and sounds such as those I discovered in my reading of the medieval French Minstrels' *Fabliques*. As an aside, there's a new translation in English by Dublin and I would highly recommend it.

Also not included are any loose women who never influenced the future direction of your lives. For example, the charming *Lais* of Marie de France of the 12th Century, described two beautiful and magnetic woman who could outshine even Guinevere of ancient lore. In another *Lais* Marie wrote that a woman with too many suitors: "She could not love them all, but she didn't want to refuse them either".² But there is no evidence that Marie's morals were questionable, as she probably believed in Courtly Love.

So, gentlemen, we will not discuss tales that have no relevance to our lives. These are tales like the one in Dante's *Inferno* about two people being punished for adultery: Francesca Da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta. Francesca was in an arranged marriage to Paolo's brother, the crippled Gianciott. Paolo and Francesca fell in love and had a meeting where they read about the Tales of Lancelot. When they got to Guinevere and Lancelot, they stopped reading and... Well when Paolo's brother found out he killed them, and they were buried together. When Dante heard this, he fainted in pity.

Why not? The list of such characterizes in literature is great. But These types of loose women have not changed your life – or made a lasting impression on great literature, for that matter.

But what about John Knox's misogynistic characters as found in as found in the First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment

² Marie de France, *Chatevel* vs 19-24, translated by /Robert Henney and Joane Ferante.

of Women 1558 in which he said: “To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature; contumely [*an insult*] to God..... Women should not rule over men...”.

Nor is it about what Dorothy Parker’s zinger when she was asked to use the word horticulture in a sentence. She said, “You could lead a whore to culture, but you cannot make her think.”³

Rather, I prefer to discuss loose women as they affect the course of the Great Books, as you are the literati of Cincinnati. I want you to think about women you know who changed the world, even though they may have been considered “women of the night” and affected the course of religion, geography and politics.

You know these women well. Allow me to focus on a few: Rahab; Helen of Troy; Mary Magdalen.....and perhaps a few more.

But what motivated me to research and write such a paper? I imagine that like you, I was taught that women of the night have had fingers wagged against them because their lifestyles were improper, and yet I find upon further reflection, their lives have taught valuable lessons. My hope is, by the end of my remarks, you’ll be able to judge whether these characters are just “bad girls” or if they are truly heroic.

Is there another motivation? You will find out later. But first, let’s review the cast of characters I’ve introduced.

- I. Let’s start with someone from the Bible, a woman you know in a Biblical way this would be Rahab.

³ Parker, Dorothy, Dorothy Parker Compendium

- a. Now for those who aren't familiar with her, Rahab ran a house of prostitution in the ancient town of Jericho. As a Madame, she remained at the beck and call of the King. At the same time, however, she became fascinated with the Hebrews and learning about their God. Most of us know that Joshua, not Moses, needed to topple the walls of Jericho in order to enter the Land of Milk and Honey. (Many archaeologists credit Jericho as the oldest walled city of Ancient times.) Joshua, like most leaders, had his own spy network, and dispatched two men to stake out the territory before he could enter. The King heard about the spies and wanted them killed, but it was Rahab, the prostitute, who let the two men hide in her House and kept them safe. (The Hebrew tradition claims that the two men stayed the night on her roof, not inside her home, but I'll leave that for you to decide.)

As thanks, the two spies told her to hang a scarlet cord from her window. When Joshua's armies marched around Jericho and the walls came tumbling down Rehab's house was saved. And when Jerusalem was reunited, she was recognized as a Woman of Valor – the highest form of piety. Tradition has it that she went on to become a wife of Joshua and gave birth to the line that produced that prophet Ezekiel. The same Ezekiel in whose book described the rising of the Dry Bones. She also possibly was a progenitor of Jesus Christ himself.

Just think: if not for one prostitute, there would be no Land of Israel in the Middle East today. Who knows? There may never have been a Palestinian conflict

- b. Then there was Yael? She lived in the time of the great prophet Deborah, when Deborah's General, Barak, was confronted by a throng of Canaanites led by a general named Sisera. Barak was stationed with his troops on the higher ground, on Mt. Tabor, facing East. Preparing for battle, he had his troops polish their shields until they were so shiny that they reflected light, just like mirrors. And when the sun rose, the Israelites attacked the Canaanite lines with their shields that literally blinded the enemy. Most Canaanites ran, and many were slaughtered. General Sisera, a coward, fled ahead of his troops and he, too, survived, by hiding in the tent of a woman infamous for her loose morals – Yael – and had sexual relations with her before falling asleep. But Yael, who knew who the General was, was ready: as he snored, she drove a large stake into his head. Deprived of their General, the Canaanites turned back, and the Land of Israel remained secure.⁴
- c. The Spread of Christianity: Now I'd like to move beyond the Old Testament to the enigmatic Mary of Magdalen. She was known to possess 7 demons within her soul that Jesus cast out. Through the Middle Ages, her name became sullied. (Only now, thanks to the *Da Vinci Code*, is her name being reconsidered.) Think about this: Mary Magdalen is mentioned twelve times in the New Testament – more than any of the Apostles! She witnessed the crucifixion and rising of Christ. And who else could testify to the existence of Jesus Christ's story without her testimony? Without Mary Magdalene, we would be deprived of so many books, essays, even priceless paintings.
- d. We also read about “a woman at the well” in the New Testament...

⁴ Judges 4:4

In the Christian or New Testament there is “a woman at the well”. She was an early evangelist for Christ. In John 4:1-40 Jesus meets a woman drawing water from a well. He gives her the Good News that will allow her never to “thirst” again. She gladly told Jesus that she would tell her husband. Jesus says you have had 5 husbands and the man you are living with is not your husband. She left and evangelized the Samaritans, setting examples for Christians to evangelize once they hear the Good News. After Jesus points out that the man she’s been living with is not her husband, she leaves and evangelizes among the Samaritans. The Good News she spreads is legendary, the stuff of legend that Chaucer, among others, spins into gold.

We could go on naming others like Bathsheba, Hosea’s wife, Queen Esther, the New Testament woman who was to be stoned. But enough of the Bible. I feel like a Pentecostal preacher and am somewhat uncomfortable with those robes. Let’s look elsewhere.

- II. Let us turn to the ancient Greeks as much of our literature is founded not only on the Bible but on Greek History:
 - a. Oscar Wilde, who may have spoken from this very lectern, said that the only invitations he resented were those he never got. Well, there was a wedding on Mt. Olympus. Zeus planned a wedding fest for the sea nymph Thetis, and her beloved, the mortal Peleus. We all know who their child was of course, Achilles. Meanwhile Zeus invited all the gods but one, Eris the Goddess of Discord to a wedding. She, being angered by the slight, threw a golden apple into the wedding with a note: “to the fairest of all.” Well Hera the goddess of women and marriage, Athena, the goddess of wisdom and Aphrodite the goddess of beauty, all claimed the apple and asked Zeus to state who was the fairest.

Zeus was the consummate bureaucrat, passed the buck for someone else to make the decision. He picked Paris, the Shepherd of Troy, and sent his messenger, Hermes, to instruct him what to do. Paris, ever the sycophant, took on the task with relish. He interviewed each goddess, and each offered him a bribe: Hera offered him a kingship, which would make him the most powerful man in the world; Athena tempted him with wisdom. In the end, Paris chose Aphrodite, who gave him the most beautiful woman in the world.

But gifts from the gods never came without strings. In Paris's case, the gift promised from Aphrodite happened to be married to another man. Happily married to King Menelaus, Helen was raising a daughter, but fell under the spell of Paris and ran off with him to Troy.

And was she beautiful? The old men of Troy stood on the battlements at Scaen gate looking at her identify the Greek heroes. They said her beauty made the war worthwhile.⁵

Christopher Marlow in The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus wrote: "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships And burnt the topless towers of Illium?" Well, it also launched thousands of books.

Was she loose? She married Menelaus and had a daughter with him. She ran off with Paris, and some authors state that she had an affair with Theseus, the Trojan Deiphobus and maybe even the ghost of Achilles.⁶

⁵ Iliad Line 3158

⁶ Hughes, Bettany, History Today November Issue 2005

In literature Helen is referred to in every generation for the last 2,700 years. Here is Shakespeare's take on her:

*Show me the strumpet that began this stir,
That with my nails her beauty I may tear!
Thy heat of lust, fond Paris, did incur
This load of wrath that burning Troy did bear;
Thy eye kindled the fire that burneth here,
And here in Troy, for trespass of thine eye,
The sire, the son, the dame and daughter die.⁷*

And Euripides' queen Hecuba questions Helen: '*were the halls of Menelaus not large enough for your luxury to wanton in?*'. '*O adulterous beauty!*'

And Euripides drama *Helen*, Helen says: '*My life and fortunes are a monstrosity... partly because of my beauty. I wish I had been wiped clean like a painting and made plain instead of beautiful*'.

And What paintings there are. There is the Love of Helen and Paris by David in 1788, Rape of Helen by Tintoretto 1578, and many others.

And in addition to Helen there were other meaningful loose women in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In fact, the *Iliad* begins with a loose woman who was Chryseis. Had that woman not been living with Achilles and taken from him by Agamemnon, Achilles would not have been angered. Then the muse could not have said: "I sing of the wrath of Achilles

⁷ Shakespeare, William, *Lucrece* 1 lines 1471-1474.

“which hurled to Pluto’s gloomy reign the souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain”.⁸

How did this loose woman affect you tonight? A foundation of much of our literature comes from the Iliad and the Odyssey and other lost plays, poems, books? And if that were not enough, two members of the Literary Club, Carl Blegen and Jack Davis have done archeological work and instructive and entertaining papers. These two are indeed “earth shakers” who proved that Nestor, Agamemnon, the destruction of Troy were not myths. None of that could have happened without Helen. Think what we would have missed if she stayed loyal to King Menelaus!

b. Aspasia of Miletus:

In ancient Greece there was a politician named Pericles. It is apocryphal that President Jack Kennedy was asked “What do you want to do with your Presidency” his answer is reputedly “Something Pericles-like.”

Well what kind of friends did Pericles have? There was Phidias, the architect and builder of the Parthenon and the great statue of Athena. There was the philosopher Anaxagoras and father of urban planning Hippodamus.

But the most interesting was Aspasia, the prostitute. She is rumored to have run a brothel. She was a beauty and served as Phidias’s model for

⁸ Pope, Alexander, Iliad, page 2, Flaxman’s Designs 1890, Gutenberg Project

the Athena Statue in the Parthenon. She probably was not married to Pericles, but was his paramour, although they had a son, Pericles the Younger. She was born in the Ionian Greek city of Miletus in Asia Minor and may have been the daughter of Alcibiades's grandfather.⁹ She was independent, educated and paid taxes (a sign of an independent woman). She is rumored to have been intelligent and had contact with Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, and the like.¹⁰

Her further significance to you might be her effect on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Let me explain. Plato attributes Pericles Funeral Oration to her. That Oration justified Athens participation in the Greek civil war known as the Peloponnesian War. Plato writes

SOCRATES:but yesterday I heard Aspasia composing a funeral oration about these very dead. For she had been told, as you were saying, that the Athenians were going to choose a speaker, and she repeated to me the sort of speech which he should deliver, partly improvising and partly from previous thought, putting together fragments of the funeral oration which Pericles spoke, but which, as I believe, she composed.

MENEXENUS: And can you remember what Aspasia said?

*SOCRATES: I ought to be able, for she taught me, and she was ready to strike me because I was always forgetting.*¹¹

Some attribute that speech's message regarding government and liberty to be much of the bases of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Both the Oration and the Address proclaim that the soldiers play out a drama larger than themselves. They die in order that the constitution and homeland might live. Both further say that the soldier's sacrifice reverberates beyond the battlefield, but to the whole earth. Lincoln went further though. He in essence rewrote the Constitution with that speech. The

⁹ Bicknell, P.J. Axiochus, Alkibiadous Aspasia and Aspasio

¹⁰ Plutarch Lives of Famous Greeks and Romans, Pericles XXIV

¹¹ Plato, Menexenus, translator Benjamin Jowett, October 23, 2008 (Gutenberg EBook)

Constitution did not mention God and included slavery; in that speech, Lincoln included God and forbid slavery.

Aspasia was referred to in works by Plutarch, Xenophon, Aristophanes, and Aeschylus.

Without Aspasia we might not have had the Pericles Oration with its potential progeny the Gettysburg Address or the Statue of Athena in the Parthenon or some Greek plays.

III. Let's review Roman Times:

a. Servilia: And what about Roman times?

Let's turn to Rome about 44 BCE. Oh yes, those Romans had some holidays.

There was Caesar, handsome and conquering and married Pompeia. But Caesar was having an affair with Servilia, who was married to Marcus Junius Brutus the Elder. She was the mother of the Caesar killer Marcus Junius Brutus younger whom I will refer to as Brutus. She also was the sister of Cato the Younger.

Her son Brutus was proud of his forefathers who included the Trojan Aenias and Brutus's namesake Lucius Junius Brutus. The former founded Rome and the latter defeated the King of Rome. In fact Lucius Junius Brutus killed his own sons, who advocated for the return of the king.

But who was Brutus father? Plutarch implies that it was Caesar not Servilia's husband. Plutarch wrote

And this he is believed to have done out of a tenderness to Servilia, the mother of Brutus; for Caesar had, it seems, in his youth been very intimate with her, and she passionately in love with him; and, considering that Brutus was born about that time in

which their loves were at the highest, Caesar had a belief that he (Brutus) was his own child.¹²

Plutarch gives additional evidence the following incident: When Caesar was in the Senate, Servilia's brother Cato was arguing that Caesar was guilty of a conspiracy. During Cato's Senate argument a letter was delivered to Caesar. Cato continuing to argue that the letter was proof of the allegations of conspiracy and demanded that the note be read aloud. Caesar did read it as it was a love letter from Cato's sister Servilia to Caesar.

Shakespeare picked this up and wrote a play about the death of Caesar. It was the patricidal Brutus¹³ who gave Caesar the "unkindness cut of all", as Brutus stabbed his father in the groin.

Servilia gave Plutarch much to write about and gave Shakespeare a wonderful play's climax. Further it gave rise to Caesar's heirs, Octavius and the other Caesars. On top of that, much to many a Michigan's despair, there is Brutus Buckeye the mascot at Ohio State University.

- b. Let's look at another woman in Roman Literature. In the second century AD, Apuleius wrote the only surviving full Latin novel from the Roman period. He called it the Metamorphosis, but it is commonly known as the Golden Ass. In that novel there was there was a maid named Fotis had loose morals. She worked for a witch named Pamphile.

Pamphile could change into various animals.

¹² Plutarch Lives of Famous Greeks and Romans, Life of Marcus Brutus as translated by John Dryden, 6th paragraph

¹³ patricide is common, see Oedipus and King Arthur

Lucius saw this transformation and desired to be turned into an owl to feel what it is like to fly and have wisdom. He slept with Fotis and asked her to obtain the incantation to allow him to be transformed. She promised to obtain the incantation that would transform Lucius into an owl. The maid mistaken mixes up the magic incantation and instead of making Lucius into a bird, makes him into an Ass, the Golden Ass.

It was magic gone wrong. For, an ass was the lowest of animals. In the ancient Egyptian religion the evil god Seth was an ass and the enemy of Isis.

Because Fotis did not know the counter spell Lucius is stuck in his ass form. Lucius, like Candid, then treks, experiencing much of what life is like to be a low life and be often beaten. Lucius's bad experiences lead him to wisdom, his original goal after all.

Not only does Apuleius give us a witty story that is often sexually explicit, but it is an insight into the lower classes who are treated like Lucius, being a little more than beasts of burden. It was a true expose and criticism of Roman times.

But, my favorite story in the Golden Ass is the Marriage of Cupid and Psyche and my favorite line is: “Instantly Venus called her winged son, Cupid, rash enough and hardy, who, by his evil manners, condemning all public justice and law, armed with fire and arrows running up and down in the nights from house to house, and corrupting lawful marriages of every person...”¹⁴

¹⁴ Apuleius, Lucius, The Golden Ass (translated William Adlington 1566) Book 4, The Most Pleasant and Delectable Tale of the Marriage of Cupid and Psyche, book 4.

This novel developed the genre of the episodic picturesque novels like those by Cervantes, Voltaire, and Boccaccio (Decameron). These stories appear in the Decameron, Don Quixote and others. Also it teaches lessons that men in our times have learned (the Me Too Movement): that seducing loose women can turn us into an Ass with less gold.

- IV. Next is Medieval times or Post Roman-Medieval Times:
- a. What do The Pre-Raphaelites, Monty Python, Mark Twain, Wagner, Learner and Lowe, Marlow, Marion Bradley, T.H. White, Wace, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, von Eschenbach, and many other authors and songsters have in common? Of course, you know: two loose women: Guinevere and Isola.

Look what literature they have spawned. Is there a more popular man or star than King Arthur. Could he have had such fame without Guinevere?

While the history and stories about Guinevere and Arthur are too broad to review in this paper, let's look at a thumb nail sketch and show how it was essential to have a fallen woman in the mix.

The evolution of Arthur as a literary character runs from the 5th century King to Monty Python. So, there are several King Arthurs in literature and as well as the other characters. To explain the evolution, we will touch upon the ancient Welsh Tales like the Triads of the Ilse of Britain,

Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Frenchman named Chrétien de Troyes, Thomas Mallory and others.

Background: Geoffrey of Monmouth, a 12th century Welsh author, writes the regal history of Britain in his Historia Regum Britanniae or the History of the Kings of Britain. He begins his history with Troy, then follows the heirs of Aeneas until he gets to Aeneas's great grandson Brutus. Brutus of course consults with the Gods who tell him:

*Brutus! There lies beyond the Gallic bounds
An island which the western sea surrounds,
By giants once possessed, now few remain
To bar thy entrance, or obstruct thy reign.
To reach that happy shore thy sails employ
There fate decrees to raise a second Troy
And found an empire in thy royal line,
Which time shall ne'er destroy, nor bounds confine.*¹⁵

Brutus, so Geoffrey writes, high tailed it to England after he killed his father and founded, Britain, named after Brutus naturally. Geoffrey then follows the regal history down through many Kings (including King Lear) until he comes to, yes, King Arthur. In his work Geoffrey discusses the unfaithful Guinevere and begins to develop Merlin as a jester. Chrétien de Troyes, a 12th Century Frenchman, develops Guinevere and invents Lancelot. Thomas Malory, while in jail as a result of choosing the wrong side in the War of the Roses and for rape, etc., takes all the history and puts it into a compendium known as Morte de Arthur.

¹⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth, History of the Kings of Britain, translated by Aaron Thompson, Publications of Medieval Latin Series, Cambridge, Ontario 1999 page 14

Tennyson, T.H. White in The Once and Future King, and others develop the tales further.

But my favorite medieval legend writings are Morte D'Artur by Malory and its distant mirror or the Idyls of the King by Tennyson. Then again, I cherish Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. It is a satiric novel about the British aristocrats and American bureaucracy. His humor is exemplified by his asking "how does a fully armored knight scratch his nose?"

And a further like is Monty Python Holy Grail or Spamalot. My advice to all is that after my paper and dinner, go home and see it. Be prepared to laugh at this quest for a laugh

While this is a thumb nail of the history, keep this in mind as we discuss the matter more in detail.

So, let us look at the dramatis personae of the tale:

1. Arthur: There is the 5th Century Welsh Arturo, a warrior, who later legend had him become Arthur. In the year 410, about which most of you know, two things of importance happened in England: Rome was sacked, and the Roman troops were withdrawn from England. England was ripe for invasion, and the Saxon invaders were eventually beaten back by a fierce king, many believe was King Arthur. Arthur it is said had three wives all named Gwen Flower or

Guinevere. The Monks in Glastonbury, the seat of Camelot, in the year 1090 claimed they “found” a grave with a cross indicating that it was the grave of King Arthur and his second wife Guinevere. The rest you know regarding the Round Table, and various knights.

2. Guinevere: What would literature be without Guinevere and who was she? The Triads of the Isle of Britain was an early Welsh history that reported three of everything, people, and events. For instance there were three of the greatest and worse kings. However, when it came to woman the author added to three faithless wives two wives who were worse, Isola and “Gwenivre”. *The three unchaste wives of the Isle of Britain were the three daughters of Culvynawyd Prydein. The first was Essyllt Vyingwen the mistress of Trystan son of Tallwch; the second was Penarwen, wife of Owain son of Urien; and the third was Bun, wife of Ida the flame-bearer.*¹⁶ It goes on to describe Isola the fair hair, but states one was most faithless of all since she shamed a better man, Gwen Flower. Chretien de Troyes a 12th Century Frenchman and Francophile, changed the name Gwen Flower to Guinevere. Look at her influence. Without her there could be no legend for the English, Germans, the French and the Welsh nor should I say the Cambrians (the Welsh

¹⁶ Iolo Morganwg Triads of Britain as translated by William Probert in 1807.

did not like the pejorative Word Welsh), and the Norse.

3. Avalon: Where was Avalon, the Isle of Avalon or the Isle of Apples? It was supposedly Glastonbury. Today there is a high mound at Glastonbury but no water. This mound was a Tor and was a door to Annwfa, the world of the dead. But in the 5th century the land was not drained and there was a lake and a marsh around the mound where they have many apples. On this site Joseph of Arimathea in the first century was said to have come with the Grail and he planted a thorn tree that has descendants to this day. It was near this tree that the monastery was built, and it was Joseph's visit that in later Arthurian tales gave rise to the grail legend.
4. Merlin: And who was Merlin? He evolved from Geoffrey of Monmouth's roving jester named Merte, to Chretien de Troyes' s magician. T. H. White finished the evolution making Merlin Arthur's tutor His name was changed from Merte to Merlin by the French. "Merte" was too close to a French word for "shit". The French probably could not have a shitty jester, so they French converted Merte into Merlin and made him a magician.
5. Lancelot: The Frenchman Chretien de Troyes adopted the Arthurian legends and changed the story. The Welsh/ English legends did not have Lancelot having an affair with the Queen. It was Mordred who was Arthur's nephew and, yes, son who in some writings slept with Guinevere. But Chretien wrote

that it was Lancelot who slept with her. Think of it, the French developed the greatest knight who cuckolded the greatest English King. Arthur, the King that conquered Rome, was bested by a French knight. Then this great knight later became a Catholic Monk after conceiving the holiest of knights, Galahad. How French can you get?

6. Mordred: King Arthur had slept with a woman not knowing it was his half-sister Morgan La Fey. They conceived Mordred who was therefore Arthur's son and nephew. And it was Mordred who slept with Guinevere. In the Triads of the Isle of Britain, Mordred is described as evil: *The third (traitor) was Medrawd ... for when Arthur left the government of the Isle of Britain in his custody, whilst he marched against the Roman emperor, Medrawd took the crown from Arthur by usurpation and seduction; and in order to keep it, he confederated with the Saxons; and, on this account, the Cambrians lost the crown of Lloegria and the sovereignty of the Isle of Britain.*

¹⁷

And of course, like Brutus and Oedipus, it was Mordred who gave Arthur his death blows.

7. Isola: The Tristan/Isola story like the Grail story came later. While this couple committed adultery, Isola never admitted it to her husband, but she also

¹⁷ Morganwg, Iolo, supra Triad Number 21. See also Triad Number 45

never lied to him. The story goes like this: Tristan was to escort Isola to his liege/uncle so that the Uncle could marry Isola. But Tristan and Isola fell in passionate love, brought on by a love potion meant for Isola's fiancé but inadvertently drunk by Tristan and Isola. They had intimate relations. Nevertheless, Tristan did convey Isola to his uncle and did his duty to his liege. She did marry her betrothed, but the Uncle was suspicious of Tristan. Tristan married another.

Even though both Tristan and Isola were married to others, they kept having relations.

Isola took a trip and had to cross a river. A man dressed as a leper carried her across on his shoulders. When Isola was later questioned by her husband, she swore on the Bible and all the world's holy artifacts and relicts that the only men who came between her thighs were her husband and the leper who carried her across the river. You guessed it; the leper was in fact Tristan dressed as a leper.

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How many books are written about the Arthurian legend from 6th Century song poems to Geoffrey of Monmouth's with his Historian Regnum Britanniae (1130) to Mallory's Morte'de Arthur, to Idlys of the King (1830) to Mark Twain's a Yankee in King Arthur's Court to T.H. White's Once and Future King, John Steinbeck: the Acts of King Arthur and his Noble knights Camelot and even Spamalot and Monty Python

and the Holy Grail? Of course, there are the books for the operas from Purcell's King Arthur in 1691 to Wagner.

All told I counted 100s of books, 10 plays, 10 operas, 16 movies. Indeed, to corrupt John Lennon's statement, Arthur maybe more popular than Jesus. And he could not be so without a loose woman, Guinevere.

b. The Canterbury Tales: the Canterbury Tales are about 29 individuals on a journey to pay homage to Thomas Beckett's tomb. On the way each person tells a tale. The Wife of Bath had been married five times and divorced (remember the New Testament woman at the well was married 5 times too). She relates a tale about a Knight in King Arthur's court who is guilty of rape. For such an offense he was condemned to death. Queen Guinevere intercedes for him and says that he will be spared of death if in fact in one year he tells her what a woman wants most. In his final day he meets a hag who says that she will give him the answer provided that the Knight agrees to do anything the hag wishes. He of course says "yes". She gives him the answer and he tells that answer to Guinevere, who states that the answer is correct. He is spared. The hag then says to the Knight, you promised me you would do what I wanted you to and I want you to marry me. He keeps his promise and marries the hag.

The knight begins to love the ugly hag and of course she turns out to be beautiful.

But what was the answer to Guinevere's question? Now then, what was the answer to what a woman wants? The answer some give is the "superiority over man". I argued with learned Medievalist woman,

Dr. Tory Pearman¹⁸ about this answer and she claims I am wrong, and the answer to what a woman wants it is sovereignty or the right to govern herself and her love. Who won that argument? Who am I not to give a woman what she wants?

Some write that this Chaucerian tale and life's experience gave impetus to Freud to devise theories. Throughout Freud's life he often pondered Guinevere's question: "what does a woman want"? Freud asked Marie Bonaparte: "The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is "what does a woman want?"¹⁹ But he is never satisfied with any explanation. Early on he believed that some had an envy of a man's sexual organ. (Anna O was the study and she had hysteria-her real name was Pappenheim). He felt this envy created hysteria, a word which comes from the women's reproductive organs. Later in a lecture at Clark University he realized that he did not know what a woman wanted: "*It is certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly. But do not forget that I have only been describing women in so far as their nature is determined by their sexual function. It is true that that influence extends very far; but we do not overlook the fact that an individual woman is a human being in other respects as well. If you want to know more about femininity, enquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information*"²⁰ . This issue is being answered in different ways in different generations. As

¹⁸ Dr Tory Pearman, PhD, Professor of Medieval Literature, Miami University, conversation September 9, 2019.

¹⁹ *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work* (Hogarth Press, 1953) by Ernest Jones, Vol. 2, Pt. 3, Ch. 16, p. 421. In a footnote Jones gives the original German, "Was will das Weib?"

²⁰ Freud S: *Femininity: new introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*. Standard Edition, Hogarth Press, Toronto; 1933

woman become more equal to men in business and opportunity, what they want differs from what the Wife of Bath wanted. Or is it?

What did the Wife of Bath add to your life? It inspired psychiatrist to investigate the question we all wonder about.

V. Modern Times:

- a. Carmen, Bizet's opera, was about a cigarette Gypsy woman who was definitely free with her body. Carmen sings in her first aria "Love is a wild bird that none can tame, and you'll waste your time trying to catch it. Love is a gypsy child who never follows the rules". The music in this aria is gypsy-like almost modal atonal piece, which was prior to many atonal pieces. The music might have affected other French composers such as Satie, Pulanc and Milo. Carmen might also have influenced artist such as Toulouse Lautrec and especially Mucha whose Job Paper Poster is a woman smoking. This poster was an early cubism, an advent of cubism. Further, Carmen was a liberated woman, an independent woman, a sexual woman. Carmen was everything that flew in the face of Victorianism and gave license to the flapper and the modern woman.
- b. Alexander Hamilton's mother was Rachel lived in sin with Johanna Michael Lavien, Hamilton's father. They were married and he divorced Rachel as she was a "whore". She later married James Hamilton and Alexander took his name.²¹ And what of the life of Alexander Hamilton, which has so much influence on stage today? As the Musical's song lyrics

²¹ Chernow, Ron, Alexander Hamilton, Penquin Group, 2005 pages 9-11. As to the spelling "Lavien" that was Hamilton's as indicated on page 10 supra.

goes, “he was the son of a whore”. Hamilton wrote the Federalist Papers, established the New York Stock Exchange, established a National Bank, wrote Washington’s Farewell Address.

On top of that he with Jefferson established the Nation’s capital in Washington D.C., which has been a great source of plots for literature for over 300 years.

Thank goodness his mother messed around with Johanna Lavigne, his biological father.

VI. Why study such a topic:

- a. We now have covered about 3,500 years and I could go on to the 18th-19th century. I could go on about other famous naughty women. There was the 19th Century Debra Lape who ran 20 bordellos in Ohio and elsewhere and it is believed that Margaret Mitchell based her fictional madam of Belle Watling on her in Gone with the Wind. She helped implement the Woman’s Property Act and several anti-liquor cases.

And I could go on with Anna Karenina, Nana, Boccaccio, Lolita, Lady Chatterley, and others. Before that was Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry VIII’s wife Anne, the “Great Whore” Cleopatra.

Oh, so many women and so little time. But since you want to sup together and get home sometime this millennium, I will jump to two modern women who changed our lives.

- b. Current Women:

Morgana the Great: Do you remember Morgana the Great? She is the one who ran on the baseball field and kissed Johnny Bench and Peter Rose. What was great about her was her 43 inches of chest. And she displayed it not far from here on 4th street on a summer day, clad only in pasties. Sherriff Lies had her arrested as he believed that she was guilty of indecent exposure. That law was defined “as anyone exposing his private parts in public” was guilty of indecent exposure. She pleaded *nolo contendere*. That means she accepted the facts but did not know if she were guilty of the crime.

The Municipal Court Judge found her guilty.

The Hamilton County Court of Appeals, in a charming decision, found her not guilty.²² The court held that the law referred to males only: anyone exposing “his” private parts.... Clearly the court held that looking at the pictures Morgana’s anatomical parts showed that Morgana’s chest was not “a his private parts”, but a hers. The statutes were all changed. Maybe this is not really a change in literature ala Helen of Troy, Rehab, Guinevere or the rest, but most Ohio Statues were changed to be gender neutral. That certainly was a change that affected us.

VII. Why then did I want to write a paper on loose women to a group of male literati?

The first reason could be First to ask the question “where would great literature be without these loose women?”

But that is not the reason I decided to look into this topic.

²² City of Cincinnati v. Wayne 23 Ohio App.2d 91 (1970)

Let me explain. When I attended the Harvard's Kennedy School in Boston, I met a man. This was his story. He grew up in Newport and his father abandoned his mother and her two sons. She lived in the "projects" as she had no money. She decided she did not want to live in subsidized housing and on food stamps and welfare. She did not want to raise her children in the cycle of poverty. So, she began a bordello to support her sons. The kids went to Covington Catholic, and received undergraduate and graduate degrees from Xavier. The man I met was the head of one of the major charities in America. He was there to help the poor and did so. Was his mother wrong? Well, many people who received the charitable bequests should be grateful for loose women. Her story changed my view of prostitutes and those who live those lives. As Judge S. Arthur Spiegel once argued: "Even a prostitute can love a child"

Now then what do these loose women have in common? These women in literature changed our lives politically geographically, scientifically, musically, artistically, and literarily. In the Gilgamesh (an ancient Mesopotamian epic poem) the wild man Enkidu becomes civilized by a prostitute. Perhaps we too are made more civilized by them? So, I would suggest that those with glasses raise them up and toast the loose women who we know and who changed our world.