

In Beowulf, Arthur, and Othello warriors and monsters dominate the epic poem, but women still play important roles. The way they are viewed in the poem gives a glimpse into the cultures and minds of the males of the time. Wealtheow as the good girl is everything desirable in a woman: beautiful, courteous and places her husband above all other men. Guinevere is also a good girl, but flawed in that she commits adultery and the result is the destruction of Camelot and the “death” of Arthur. However, after her fall, she repents and becomes a nun, submitting to God. Emilia is clearly a good girl despite not meeting the criteria of being submissive throughout the play. Initially she does submit to Iago and steals the handkerchief, but in Act 5, when she discovers her part in

Iago's scheme, she rebels, and even confesses that rebellion to other men. In her case her conscience, and love for Desdemona lead her to the moral choice of rebellion. *Wealthew* is the perfect idyllic good girl, but this does not hold true for the other good girls. They are flawed in terms of submission to their husbands. In *Guenevere's* fall we see a change in the good girl from a perfect mate to a woman capable of great evil, as her actions destroyed the kingdom. She joins a nunnery to redeem herself to God, and as a chaste nun is re-established as a good girl. Emilia is a good girl because she is not submissive to her husband. She has higher moral standards than Iago, and probably would not have participated in his scheme if she knew what the consequences would

be. Overall there is a movement from the the purely submissive beautiful woman to one who may not be as submissive, but one who will do what is right. Wealtheow is a perfect model, but is unrealistic and therefore fails as a character and model. Emilia is a whole person, with her own mind, and in the end shows what a real good girl is.

Grendel's mother however, is a cursed descendent of Cain, beastlike, and savage. Arthur's Morgana is evil as well as she is a witch, and commits incest and conspires to take the kingdom from Arthur through Modred. However, Morgana's mother is Igraine a beautiful woman, and Morgana is in Camelot, so it can be assumed she is a person, and not a beast. Bianca can be called a bad girl because she is a prostitute,

but in terms of the criteria of being ugly and violent, she no longer fits the stereotype of Grendel's mother. As a prostitute one can assume she is to some degree beautiful, and Shakespeare does not assign her any unusual characteristics. She also is not violent although she does demonstrate her indignation when Cassio leaves her Desdemona's handkerchief.

Here we also see a shift toward a middle ground in the stereotypes in that the "beast" of the bad girl is now a person. They each in their own way fulfill the stereotypes of the good and bad girl respectively. There is a movement in Arthur of both stereotypes toward a sort of middle ground where a woman can be good and evil at the same time. She can be evil in that she will destroy good men with sex or feminine wiles, and in

opposition as pure as a nun. This trend continues in Othello in Bianca as she is not evil except in a sexual sense, but is neither ugly nor violent, but is like Emilia her own person. So in both cases, be it good or bad girl there is a movement from the extreme stereotype to a woman who is both good and evil, but who in the end is a more believable character.