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Consort, Virgin, Adventurer

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Abstract
Proposes an additional term beyond Consort and Virgin for anima figures—Adventurer. As examples, considers Inanna from Sumerian myth at length, and several other figures from myth and legend and from Tolkien, Williams, and Lewis more briefly.

Additional Keywords
Anima figures in literature; Jungian psychology
Jungian scholar Esther Harding offers a useful typology of archetypal mother and anima figures in her books. There is the Consort, she who derives her identity essentially from her spouse. Until marriage she is a half, or less than a half; she waits. Only with marriage does she experience wholeness, and within marriage she is basically receptive. Loss of her husband, or loss of his love, is the ultimate calamity for her. This orientation is not usually mutual; she is one interest for him, perhaps not even the chief one. She may be Hera, mother of the gods in Greek mythology, a goddess of marriage and childbirth; or she may be a Sumerian counterpart. Inanna, Queen of Heaven. She does not need to hide her sex under armor, like Eowyn or the real-life Maid of Arc; she wields conventional weapons or she wields charm, as the occasion demands. She wears royal garments, jewelry and regalia; she does her own fighting or asks another to fight for her, as she chooses. At least three gods find her irresistible, but not for any appealing helplessness.

In another incident she journeyed to an ancient center of culture set over the waters, to appropriate its "divine decrees" (i.e., its culture) for her own new city Erech. While she was being woned and dined there by Enki, the god of Wisdom, she charmed him out of the decrees, loaded them into her boat of heaven and set off for her own city. When Enki sobered up and noticed that the decrees were missing, he was upset. His loyal retainers Isimud informed him what he had done; Enki dispatched Isimud and various sea monsters to waylay Inanna at her ports of call, and steal back the boat with its cargo. This they did; each time Inanna charged her own loyal retainers Ninshibur to fight them off, and each time Ninshibur succeeded. She made it back safe to Erech with her load of culture, and there were great celebrations.

The queen of the nether world was her elder sister and enemy Ereshkigal. When Inanna knocked at the door of her palace, Ereshkigal instructed her servant to open the seven gates of the nether world to Inanna. As each gate was opened a piece of her royal insignia was removed, despite her protestsations, and finally her clothing. Naked she stood before Ereshkigal and seven judges, who slew her with a look and a word. Her body was taken away from a stake.

After three days and three nights Ninshibur raised a hue and cry for her in heaven. He finally got Enki to respond; Enki sent down messengers with the food of life and the water of life to sprinkle over Inanna's corpse. She arose and ascended, surrounded by a cloud of spirits of the dead and other denizens of the nether world. (The end of the story is, unhappily, missing; we don't know whether she went on to take over the ships of the Corsairs.)

It is necessary to be somewhat tentative in drawing conclusions from these myths, since the language is still imperfectly understood, and portions of the texts are missing. Thus the reason for her descent is unknown in the earliest version; conceivably it could have been to rescue a lover or spouse, but here apparently Inanna is a goddess of the virgin type. (She does marry—an ironic fate for an god, refused by a gracious shepherd-god who also sought her hand—but her spouse is little in evidence.) Of great interest is Inanna's remarkable manysidedness. To do heroic deeds she has no need to hide her sex under armor, like Eowyn or the real-life Maid of Arc; she wields conventional weapons or she wields charm, as the occasion demands. She wears royal garments, jewelry and regalia; she does her own fighting or asks another to fight for her, as she chooses. At least three gods find her irresistible, but not for any appealing helplessness.
was finery and her weapons charm and guile against her enemy, whom she beheaded while he was dead—not but she is dependent on her cousin for and whose adventure is a struggle to gain or regain are profoundly committed to a spouse, lover or child Drunk, Esther the Queen is objective as well — and whose armor is also objective, and a virgin figure. Her armor is less known than other adventurers, but among the subjective adventurers of myth, those who move from myth to the fantasies of our three authors: Tolkien presents us with some anomalous figures. Eowyn has the makings of an objective adventurer; she chafes at restrictions from the very beginning, and wants to fight the enemies of Rohan. Yet when she finally does go to battle and slays the Nazgul lord, she is motivated chiefly by a thwarted love become a deathwish. Betrothed to Faramir, though not strictly an auxiliary she clearly lacks the one-in-herself quality of the virgin.

Judith, a purely legendary Jewish heroine, is also objective, and a virgin figure. Her armor was finery and her weapons charm and guile against her enemy, whom she beheaded while he was dead drunk. Esther the Queen is objective as well—her intention was solely behalf of her nation—but she is dependent on her cousin for initiative, and thus should be classed as a consort rather than a virgin.

An occasional other objective female adventurer comes to mind from the literature of myth, such as the Hindu demon slayer Durga. But compared to male heroes, they are few. The only kinds of literature in which they abound are formula gothic novels, where they have a decided tendency to end as consorts, and children's stories.

The subjective adventurers of myth, those who are profoundly committed to a spouse, lover or child whose adventure is a struggle to gain or regain the beloved, are not usually consorts in the sense of auxiliaries. Apuleius' Psyche perhaps comes closest; she rebels against the restrictions imposed on her when she lights the lamp, but her several quests are a submission to the consequent punishment by Aphrodite.

The fertility and mystery goddesses are often subjective adventurers, and more virgin than consort. Isis, on quest for the severed parts of her spouse, is the central and moving figure of the pair (or family); Ishtar seeks and finally restores Tammuz, Cybele Atis, and Anath or Ashethoreth, Baal. None of these are consorts; all are equal or take leadership in the relationship. Desmer in her search for Persephone shows basically the same pattern, letters Sayers found in various newspapers: "People write eloquently to say that women... have got the higher education and done nothing with it. They have only succeeded in making themselves hard-featured, heartless, restless, childless and unhappy." ("A Toast of the University of Oxford," unpublished manuscript, Wade Collection, Wheaton College.)

One may hope, however, to be spared this labor through the publication in future of a revised edition of The Silmarillion.

Taken all together, this work is not unworthy of its source. Tolkien, who once said that he "would rather have written in Elvish," would undoubtedly have been pleased.

... George Colvin

Lewis has no developed female figure comparable to Sybil or Lúthien (though the Narnia children are potentially such). Orual appears to outsiders to be the Virgin, but her unhappiness and the destructive effect she has on her sisters and Bardiel show that she is far from being one-in-herself. Given Lewis' view of the true Feminine as essentially receptive, it is no surprise that he did not create such a figure. Consort figures he does have, of course—Jane and Tílthiel—who have adventures, in the course of which they learn that their truest freedom lies in submission.