Head Versus Heart in Dorothy L. Sayers' *Gaudy Night*

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**Abstract**
Contends that in *Gaudy Night* "Sayers has so carefully woven together the setting, the theme and the plot that the mystery itself provides a major part of the commentary on the theme of intellectual integrity." Another theme is the achievement of the "delicate balance" between head and heart.

**Additional Keywords**
Sayers, Dorothy L.—Characters—Peter Wimsey; Sayers, Dorothy L. *Gaudy Night*; Stephen P. Gaddis

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Gaudy Night has been both praised and damned as a detective novel that attempts to be something more than a "whodunit," a combination of a mystery story with a serious treatment of values; critics seem hard pressed to decide whether it should be "less like a conventional detective story and more like a novel"; the desire to write a 'straight' novel "about an Oxford woman graduate who found, in middle life, and after a reasonably satisfactory experience of marriage and motherhood, that her real vocation and full emotional fulfillment were to be found in the creative life of the intellect"; the necessity to arrange a marriage for Lord Peter and Harriet Vane—an action which seemed to require a serious novel ruined by the frivolitous detection, or a detective novel fatally encumbered with a serious theme. But if we begin by suspending our disbelief in the possibility of a valid hybrid, we find that Sayers has so carefully woven together the setting, the theme and the plot that the mystery itself provides a major part of the commentary on the theme of intellectual integrity.

In any consideration of Gaudy Night we have the advantage of her own comments in her essay by the same title. While we certainly have to be aware that the author may not always accomplish her intentions, it is useful to know what those intentions were. Sayers tells us that "in Gaudy Night the three trains of thought which had been converging for some time in. . .my mind, happened to meet": the ambition to produce a Wimsey book which would be "less like a conventional detective story and more like a novel"; the desire to write a 'straight' novel "about an Oxford woman graduate who found, in middle life, and after a reasonably satisfactory experience of marriage and motherhood, that her real vocation and full emotional fulfillment were to be found in the creative life of the intellect"; the necessity to arrange a marriage for Lord Peter and Harriet Vane—which should not have involved the dissection of Wimsey and building up Harriet so that "she could accept Peter without loss of self-esteem." She discovered that by setting the novel in Oxford she could solve all three problems at once:

On the intellectual platform, alone of all others, Harriet could stand free and equal with Peter, since in that sphere she had never been false to her own standards. By choosing a plot that should exhibit Intellectual Integrity as the one great permanent value in an emotionally unstable world I should be saying the thing that, in a confused way, I had been wanting to say all my life. Finally, I should have found a universal theme which could be made integral both to the detective plot and to the "love-interest" which I had, somehow or other, to unite with it. (89)

So the plot, the theme, and the setting are admirably jointed, inevitably making this narrative more of a novel and less of a crossword puzzle. But what of Sayers' other aims? How can the 'straight' story of a woman who finds her true fulfillment in scholarship, not marriage, be reconciled with the necessity of arranging a marriage for Harriet and Peter? On the surface, these aims seem contradictory: indeed, they are incompatible if we look only at Harriet and Peter. But if we survey the larger structure of the novel, we see that it focuses not only on the general "relationship of scholarship to life," as Sayers said, but more particularly on the "problem of the intellectual woman." Is it womanly to choose scholarship instead of family? Does that decision necessarily produce a bitter and twisted spirit? Does the decision to put family before one's vocation lead to even greater bitterness? Is it possible to combine scholarship and family in such a way that neither suffers? I suspect that these questions have more than academic importance for many of you, as they do for me. As Sayers has various characters say throughout the novel, "What shall we do with the people who have both hearts and brains?"

Sayers does not underplay the popular fear of the learned woman; she has given to Shrewsbury College an "ominous"patroness in Mary, Countess of Shrewsbury, who seemed "to be the epitome of every alarming quality which a learned woman is popularly credited with developing." The students at Shrewsbury tend to eschew her example, not wishing to appear so learned that they frighten off the men. Miss Aayton, expected to take a First in Languages, declares that she will have to make her Geoffrey believe "I can do without him" by looking fragmentary at the University (129). The elegant Miss Millbanks always dealed that "she was a scholar only because she would not be seen dead in the ridiculous short gown of a commoner" (126). Lest this be taken as too sexually biased, we are also shown a male undergraduate who sees, in his professor, "an alliance by "murmuring something in an apologetic way about work and his tutor, as though they were rather indecent necessities" (159).

But these are merely comic indications of the difficulty in combining learning with "real life." It is the story of Shrewsbury who illustrate the various permutations of the life devoted to scholarship, for all of them have chosen to be single—with the exception of Miss Chilperic, who was "remarkable chiefly for being engaged to be married to a junior don at another college" (89).

Miss de Vine comes closest to representing the person with head but no heart, the woman of whom Harriet says "If anything came between her and the service of truth, she would walk over it without rancor and without pity—even if it were her own reputation." This ruthless dedication to intellectual truth provides the mainspring of the plot; when Arthur Robinson stole a document that would disprove his thesis, she exposed the fraud without hesitation. When the case is later presented to the other dons (under Lord Peter's skillful manipulation of the conversation) they all agree that such dishonesty cannot be tolerated. But Miss de Vine must come to realize that although her initial action was justified, she should have cared about Robinson's personal fate, taking steps to prevent the academic disgrace from eventually causing his death. In addition to providing this crucial portion of the plot, Miss de Vine has two other important functions. First of all, she demonstrates the militant extreme of scholarship. She is termed "a fighter, indeed" whose proper arena is in the quadrangle at Shrewsbury, "a soldier knowing no personal loyalties, whose sole allegiance was to the fact," a person with no understanding of compromise. As the extreme example of intellectualism, she is balanced against Annie Robinson, whose fierce personal loyalties leave no room for the intellect. Secondly, her intellectual objectivity makes her a valuable counselor for Harriet: she warns her that people who make other people's jobs are dangerous, she predicts that the important things will reveal themselves by overmastering her, she points out that a man who values objectivity would be worth marrying. If fact, to her are given Sayers' best words on marriage: "If you ever find any kind of repose with him, it can only be the repose of a very delicate balance" (123).

Harriet comes to see her almost as a nun, having a "powerful spiritual call" to scholarship, aware of her repressions and able to handle them.
The repressions which can warp the spirit are displayed in Miss Hillyard, the frustrated spinster, one who has apparently been mistaken in choosing scholarship instead of marriage. Significantly, she is not a good teacher and perhaps not a true scholar at all; her lectures on Constitutional Development remain a college joke. She is persistently anti-man throughout the novel, asking bitterly "Do you know any man who sincerely admires a woman for her brains?" When Miss Barton, the psychologist, declares that the culprit is either a man-trap or a man-hater, the reader is prepared to accuse Miss Hillyard, the man-hater. Sayers has deliberately engineered this reaction by making her the last person to have Miss Lydgate's manuscript and proofs, by placing her in the fellows garden when Harriet returns after a threatening call, and by putting fragments of the smashed chessmen on her slipper and floor.

Lest the reader conclude that all women who choose the scholarly life are beset by repressed passions, we are given the figure of Miss Lydgate. Miss Lydgate, modeled on Sayers' own tutor, Mildred Pope, is a true scholar who retains her full humanity. She is such a perfectionist about her work that her continual corrections are beginning to fluster even the Oxford University Press, but she has not lost her compassion: "Of a scrupulous personal integrity, she embraced the irregularities of other people in a wide, unquestioning charity!" (19). The only person Harriet has heard her condemn was a former pupil who had written a shoddy book about Carlye: "But I believe, poor thing, she is very hard up." This belief that no one could betray his principles without the most severe provocation foreshadows her reaction to Annie's outburst: "Poor soul! brooding over that grievance in this most unbalanced way!" (424). It is Miss Lydgate who arranges a pension for the retired Head Scout, who worries about Jukes' wife and children when he had to be dismissed for his dishonesty, who helps the aged, blind alumna at the Gaudy Night dinner. She is the scholar par excellence, who has combined a passion for Truth with love for the people around her.

But she is single. It is Miss Hillyard's oft stated belief that married women's minds "are not, and cannot be, on their work" (424). Annie Robinson is the embodiment of Miss Hillyard's worst expectations—as indeed, Miss Hillyard embodies Annie's. (No wonder they could not get along in the same staircase of the college.) Annie is the man-trap, not in the sense of one who is physically seductive (although she may have been that, in her younger days) but rather in a more literal sense of actually trapping a man. Annie was one who, by making another person her job, did much to destroy him. But of course she did not acknowledge any responsibility for his suicide; she believed that Miss de Vine, the scholar who exposed the fraud, was solely responsible for the tragedy. She and Miss de Vine are deliberately contrasted. As Miss de Vine's specialty of Tudor finance is as far from the traditional womanly sphere as one can well go, Annie's role as domestic servant is the archetypal "womanly" occupation. As Miss de Vine gave her loyalty to the unswerving pursuit of Truth, even if it destroyed herself or others, Annie followed a pernicious personal loyalty which transcended morals. To Miss de Vine the stolen document represented the most grievous sin against intellectual honesty; to Annie it was "a dirty bit of paper." When Annie accuses "You broke him and killed him—all for nothing," she adds, "Do you think that's a woman's job?" "Most unhappily," said Miss de Vine, "it was my job." All the bitter complaints of those who think that a "woman's job is to look after a husband and children," that women cause unemployment by taking men's jobs, that intellectual women envy those with husbands, eupt into Annie's hysterical cry: "He didn't mean to steal that old bit of paper—he only put it away. It made no difference to anybody. It wouldn't have helped a single man or woman or child in the world—it wouldn't have kept a cat alive; but you killed him for it." (428)

She thus becomes the embodiment of all that is perverse in the "womanly woman"—the fiercely possessive pride in her children, the total ignorance of intellectual integrity. When Annie complains about learned ladies with "no heart in them," when she warns young Viscount St. George that "We murder beautiful boys like you and eat their hearts out," she is emphasizing the perennial danger of those with heads but no hearts. She herself is the warning against losing one's head, letting passion run away with rational judgment.

The disturbances themselves are in pattern with her resentment of women with brains, with the academic gown a recurring symbol: the Harpy quotation knifed to the academic robe, the bonfire of gowns, the obscene drawings of a voluptuous naked woman (an Earth mother) beating a person in an academic gown. Both Annie's character and her crimes lead naturally to her hysterical denunciation of the ones after she has been caught; in few detective novels is the theme so interwoven with the mystery itself.

="And kings riding to battle on the advice
Of their ambition have seen crosses burn.
In the skylight of the winter solstice.
Reasonable men, however, hold aloof,
Doubting the gesture, speech and anecdote
Of those who touch the Grail and bring no proof.
Eavan Boland-"Mirages"

It is Harriet's fear that Annie represents the inevitable outcome of marriage; lest she and the reader reach this conclusion, we are given vignettes of other married women involved in the academic community. Mrs. Goodwin, the dean's secretary, is unjustly accused by Miss Hillyard of putting personal loyalties before her job; the accusation leads her to offer her resignation rather than to fulfill her job responsibilities. Lord Peter stops her from leaving, reminding Miss Hillyard that all the SCR members agree that public responsibilities must come before private loyalties. Less fortunate is the example of Catherine Freemantle, "the outstanding scholar of her year," who married a farmer. "What a damned waste," Harriet thinks. Even though serving the land might be noble, one must do one's own job—and any sturdy country girl would have been more help on the farm than that fine scholar. "One's rather apt to marry into somebody else's job," Catherine explains. We are left with her haunting cry "Once I was a scholar," and with Harriet's observation
that she was "a Derby winner making shift with a coal cart" (50). As a counterbalance we have Phoebe Tucker, "somebody who had not altered by a hair's breadth, in spite of added years and marriage" (18). We note that "After exhaustive inquiry into funerary rites," Harriet asked about her family; in that context, could quite easily put her work first. She, unlike Annie, is not at all possessive of her children, just thankful that they all seem to be turning out intelligent. She is unchanged by marriage because she has stuck to her own job, meshing her work with her husband's archaeology. Harriet later remarks that she and her husband were among the few "who don't look on themselves as jobs but as fellow creatures" (173).

So here is our structure. Harriet is bounded by those who have let their hearts conquer their heads, like Annie and Catherine Freemantle, and by those who let their heads conquer their hearts, such as Miss de Vine. There is the frustrated spinster, Miss Hillyard, balanced against the compassionate functionary, Phoebe Tucker, the only person who has achieved a balance which includes both work and family, is hurried off the scene; she could too easily steal scenes from Harriet's struggle for the "delicate balance."

Harriet is very sceptical about the possibilities of achieving any sort of balance between her vocation and her personal relationships. During their dinner at the Eglistes' Club she attempts to provoke Peter by listing "promising scholars, distinguished by their studies and subsequently extinguished by marriage". (66) Peter, with his own respect for facts, will not deny that such things do happen. But what are people to do? Should they cut out human contacts altogether? "Or could the people with brains sit tight and let the people with hearts look after them?" Their own problem remains: "But what are you going to do about the people who are cursed with both hearts and brains?" Harriet replies with conventional wisdom: "I'm beginning to believe they've got to choose" (67). In the essay Are Women Human? Sayers noted that this either/or dilemma is generally restricted to women. "A man does not, as a rule, have to choose" between job and family. "He gets both." This is why Gaudy Night is Harriet's story, not Peter's. It is Peter who must make the choice or dare a compromise while Peter is "Looking on at it, and quite powerless to interfere" (432). (Note, however, that Sayers does not let Peter off entirely. In Busman's Honeymoon there is a moment when it looks as though he must choose either marriage or his profession— but Harriet quickly rescues him from the dilemma.)

This necessity for choice preoccupies Harriet throughout the novel, constantly bringing her attention to the mystery itself. As she noted, Miss de Vine, the "head" character, is her primary source of counsel, stressing "the difficulty of combining intellectual and emotional interests. But suppose, Harriet asks, "one doesn't quite know which one wants to be put first." De Vine replies that one never makes mistakes about the fundamental thing, "but if there's any subject in which you're content with the second-rate, then it isn't really your subject" (171). De Vine herself had broken an engagement because she found herself always making stupid blunders through lack of attention, hurting his feelings—she was content with the second-rate. Harriet had realized that "she had stuck to her work—and that in the face of what might have seemed overwhelming reasons for abandoning it and doing something different. It had overmastered her without her knowledge or notice, and that was the point of its mastery. Never again is there a question that she must stick to her work; that clearly is of overmastering importance. But what about Lord Peter?

She does realize that she loves him, and that he knows it, in one of the more restrained, and therefore effective, love passages in fiction. While Peter is reading Harriet's notebook about the disturbances, she studies every detail in his face "magnified as it were by some glass drumming ears some enormous bulk seemed to stoop over her. Then the mist cleared. His eyes were riveted upon the manuscript again, but he breathed as though he had been running."

So, though Harriet, it has happened. But it happened long ago. The only new thing that has happened is that now I have got to admit it to myself. I have known it for some time. But does he know it? He has very little excuse, after this, for not knowing it. Apparently he refuses to see it, and that may be new. If so, it ought to be easier to do what I mean to do. (282)

And what she means to do, of course, is to deny her heart. "Could there ever be any alliance between the intellect and the flesh?" No, she concludes, one could only keep "the bitter tormenting brain on one side of the wall and the languorous sweet body on the other, and never let them meet.. .to seek to force incompatibles into a compromise was madness; one should neither do it nor be a party to it" (403).

But it is just this compromise which Lord Peter is offering, for they both agree with the dons at Shrewsbury that personal affection cannot come before public duty. Each of them sets the other free to perform that duty. Lord Peter writes to Harriet that "If you have put anything in hand, disagreeableness and danger will not turn you back, and God forbid they should," (210) an admission of equality that Harriet had not expected. "If he conceals those lines, allowing the thing to be a problem would have to be reviewed in that new light; but that seemed scarcely possible" (210). Much of the rest of the novel is devoted to showing that such an equality is what Peter had in mind. After all, he says, "I object to being tactfully managed by somebody who ought to be my equal. If I want tactful dependents, I can hire them" (309). Harriet realizes the full implications of such equality—Peter will put his own work before her, as indeed he does, when she is injured and he must fly off to Rome. Young Jerry comments, "I told you Uncle Peter had a strong sense of public duty; now you see it in action." Harriet, with intellect firmly in control of passion, replies, "Well, he's quite right." (410)

Having demonstrated that she will not devour Peter, nor he her, she is challenged by Miss de Vine: "Isn't it about time you faced the facts about that man?"

"I have been facing one fact for some time... and that is, that if I once gave way to Peter, I should go up like straw."

"That," said Miss de Vine dryly, "is moderately obvious. How often has he used that weapon against you?"

"Never," said Harriet, remembering the moments when he might have used it. "Never." (431)

Sayers has quite deliberately given Peter and Harriet three opportunities to fall into each others arms in the approved fashion: when he sees that she loves him in that interlude on the river, when Harriet throws herself into his arms to cry over the chessmen, when he is demonstrating how to ward off the attack. Harriet the novelist reflects— she would rather have Peter cut off her hand than give odd to it. (432). It is Peter's weakness, de Vine says, that he will not sweep her off her feet; she must be left to make her own decision. But Peter's "weakness" is the novelist's way of avoiding the traditional resolution of the heart/head conflict—one simply gives way to passion, and faces the consequences later. Miss de Vine may speak for Sayers when she keeps the problem on the intellectual level. "A marriage of two independent and equally irritable intelligences seems to me reckless to the point of insanity. You can hurt one another so needlessly," Harriet pleads that she cannot endure being hurt more. "Then," de Vine concludes, "I suggest that you stop hurting other people. Face the facts and state a conclusion. Bring a scholar's mind to the problem and have done with it" (432).
Harriet's decision is actually made on the gallery of the Radcliffe Camera. Peter is shaken by her assurance that she is 'really working at Wilfrid' because of his suggestion. "My dear—if anything I have said. If you have let me come as far as your work and your life..." (438).

Since Peter can grant that her work is the centre of her life, she unconsciously makes her decision as he leaves.

The overmastering things reveal themselves by over-mastering her:

Harriet was left to survey the kingdom of the mind, glittering from Merton to Bodley, from Carfax to Magdalen Tower. But her eyes were on one slight figure that crossed the cobbled Square walking lightly under the shadow of St. Mary's into the High (439).

The later proposal and acceptance, expressed in suitably scholarly terms, simply seal a decision to try the experiment, to attempt to force together incompatibles, to make the flesh and the intellect coexist.

And how does the experiment work? In Busman's Honeymoon Harriet is frantically trying to finish her present novel to earn money for her trousseau; the Dowager Duchess mentions that she visited a water-mill in connection with her book, presumably the Death 'twixt Wind and Water of Gaudy Night. Although the hectic days of her honeymoon apparently leave no time for writing, Harriet's attempts to reconcile her duties as wife and author later become an important theme in the unfinished Wimsey novel Thrones, Dominations. Now Harriet must face with new urgency the danger of a fatal split within the self that threatens every woman who attempts to combine marriage and career: If it ever came to a choice between Harriet Vane or Harriet Wimsey, then it didn't matter much which one chose; the mere necessity of choice would mean that something had suffered defeat.

There are three major obstacles to be surmounted if she is to achieve the "delicate balance" between the head and the heart: the logistical problems of finding a time and place to write while still fulfilling her new duties, the emotional problem that a satisfied love might stifle the creative impulse, and the personal problem of Peter himself. Did he mean it when he said her work was essential? "Talk settled nothing; the only way to find out the facts was to start writing and see what happened."

On the practical level, Lady Peter Wimsey has advantages which leave the rest of us limp with envy. In Busman's Honeymoon the Dowager Duchess chose eight servants for her, to be supervised by a competent house-keeper, for her journal admonishes "Peter insistent wife's work must not be interrupted by uproars in servants' hall." When Harriet worries that she should be making a home for Peter, the Duchess assures her that it is Peter's duty to make a home for her. "Peter's wife fortunately without duties." So not only is Harriet free from housework, but she is free from the need to supervise those who do the work; even her decorating is done for her, by the energetic Duchess. She has a private study on an upper floor, while Peter has his own room for interviewing "policemen and people." Virginia Woolf's stipulations for the writer were simply enough to live on and "a room of one's own." Harriet's material life is so far beyond these requirements that she fears the very ease will adversely affect her writing; she also fears that emotional fulfillment will stifle her imagination.

She must decide "Am I really a writer or only a writer faute de vie? If one was really a writer, then one must write, and write now, while the hand still kept its cunning, while the technique be still in one's head, while one was still in touch with one's public. A little slumber, a little sleep, a little folding of the hands to sleep, and one might drowse into a lethargy waiting for a dawn that might never break." When in a "black slough of misery and frustration" Harriet had written intellectual comedies. But once she begins work as Lady Peter Wimsey, she discovers with surprise that "the immediate effect of physical and emotional satisfaction seems to be to lift the lid off." "Harriet, pouring into her eye of her own imagination, saw a drama of agonised souls arrange itself with odd and alluring complications. She had only to lift a finger to make the puppets move and live!"

Peter apparently did mean that "one's work came before private entanglements" for he is delighted to hear that her characters are undergoing fascinating tortures; his approval quickly eliminates the last obstacle to her work.

Their final resolution of the conflict between head and heart is given in a grotesquely appropriate manner. While Harriet is working on a novel, she finds that she needs advice on a corpse which has been left in the town water supply. When it occurs to her that Peter has some expertise in this line, she follows him to the library. He questions her closely on the nature of the drain, the size of the reservoir, the length of the corpse's residence in the reservoir, prompting Harriet's reflections on marriage: "'Thirdly,' murmured Harriet, with a rich thrill of emotion, 'it was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other.'" She sat down on the opposite side of the table, and they plunged eagerly together into the statistics of putrefactions.

Gaudy Night dealt at length with the problem of coordinating head and heart, one's job with one's love. Apparently the experiment, under such carefully controlled conditions—no household responsibilities, plenty of money, the enthusiastic support of her husband, compatible vocations—is to be successful, even the added complication of three children. In the story "Talboys," written in 1942 and only recently printed, we have a pleasant view of the Wimseys vacationing at Talboys some seven years after Busman's Honeymoon. Harriet is obviously continuing her career; while she is superintending the two youngest sons she is writing frantically to meet the publishers' deadlines so that she will have time to spend "Playing the fool with a congenial, but admittedly distracting, husband."9

NOTES

was finery and her weapons charm and guile against kinds of literature in which they abound are formula and whose adventure is a struggle to gain or regain initiative, and thus should be classed as a consort rather than a virgin. Her armor is also objective, and a virgin figure. Her armor was developed than Inanna. She is a wife and a "mother in Israel," but these relationships do not figure in her story; she leads the tribes out to battle because oppression must be overthrown. She is a judge, a psychic and a successful general.

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 on 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 and 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 Attis, and Anat or Ashethoreth, Baal. None of these are consorts; all are usual or take leadership in the relationship. Desuner 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, heartbroken, 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

To 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.

Luthien is remarkable both in the completely balanced relationship with Beren, and in the shared nature of the adventure. She emphatically rejects the shelter he would have kept her in while he went on quest to Thangorodrim for the Silmaril. Both Beren and Luthien are subjective in that he goes forth to win her bride-price, and she to rescue him from Sauron, yet their adventure is a joint battle against a universal foe.

Charles Williams has several adventuring female characters, Chloe, Pauline and Nancy among them. In contrast to Eowyn and Luthien they are obviously people rather than archetypal figures. Sybil, however, comes close to being pure archetype. She is the most conspicuous example both of the virgin status (Henry compares her to the zodiacal Virgo) and of objective motivation; she rescues Lothair because he needs rescuing, not from any passionate attachment. She is an embodiment of the Fool, sovereign and supremely balanced.

Lewis has no developed female figure comparable to Sybil or Luthien (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 sister and Bardia 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 Tirdril—who have adventures, in the course of which they learn that their truest freedom lies in submission.