

CHAPTER

10



The Third Poem  
The Exaltation  
of Inanna

Introduction

After the diversity and fullness of expression of “Lady of Largest Heart,” “The Exaltation of Inanna” stands in stark contrast. Despite the title, this poem is about an actual event that happened to Enheduanna. The part Enheduanna plays in each of the three poems I have translated varies. In “Inanna and Ebih,” Enheduanna does not mention her own name, but we feel her presence as the singer of the verses.

Maiden Inanna  
I worship you  
here is my song

At the end of “Ebih” she inscribes the poem with her characteristic phrase:

Holy Inanna  
sweet is your praise

Then, at the end of “Ebih,” Enheduanna identifies herself as a writer by paying homage to the divine force that guides her creations, Nisaba.

and praise be to Nisaba  
goddess of writing

In “Lady of Largest Heart” Enheduanna introduces herself by name:

I  
I am Enheduanna  
High Priestess of Nanna

“Lady of Largest Heart” emanates from Enheduanna’s emotional distress. As previously discussed, she wrote the poem as an offering to Inanna with the hope of cooling her goddess’ heart in order to stem the tide of suffering Inanna’s misery was spilling on the High Priestess. Enheduanna’s presence permeates every line. She creates the imagery of “Lady of Largest Heart” and infuses herself into the poem.

Though Enheduanna figures in the first two poems, these poems are primarily about Inanna. The goddess is the leading actor. Enheduanna occupies a small but essential part of the text. With “The Exaltation of Inanna” we have an entirely different situation. This poem is about Enheduanna. She is the central character, not Inanna. The poem is about an actual event through which Enheduanna was exiled from her rightful place in the temple by a usurper, one Lugalanne.

Even with its favorable ending in which Enheduanna returns to her place as high priestess, “The Exaltation of Inanna” has an air of foreboding. In this poem Enheduanna faces a situation similar to that which Inanna faced in “Inanna and Ebih.” Mount Ebih dared to defy the goddess and threatened to rob her of her powers over nature. In “The Exaltation of Inanna” a man overpowers Enheduanna and forces her out of the temple into exile, usurping her place. In “Inanna and Ebih” the battle is at the archetypal level of the gods. In this poem the battle is at the human level: high priestess against invader.

This poem appears to be the work of a more mature poet. All the elements of the other poems are here. Inanna is summoned in the first verses as the ultimate Queen. Her unquestioned dominion and her ruthless power are described in no uncertain terms. But there is a softness and a simplicity in these verses that is missing in the other poems. In “Ebih” and “Lady of Largest Heart,” Enheduanna portrays Inanna’s prowess in extreme terms. In “The Exaltation” she describes her goddess’s su-

periority with a calm certainty. She does not find it necessary to convince Inanna over and over again of her bloodthirsty hunger. Enheduanna seems more sympathetic to Inanna's victims. Indeed, she becomes one of the victims herself.

The very personal nature of this story infuses the imagery with an added level of meaning because the sufferer is Enheduanna. For this reason, the "The Exaltation of Inanna" has a very different quality from the two preceding poems. It is the simple, anguished lament of a woman overpowered by brute force. Inanna's presence in the poem is still essential, but remains secondary to Enheduanna's suffering. The poem's theme of a woman's displacement, or fall, will have a familiar ring to modern women.

## THE EXALTATION OF INANNA<sup>1</sup>

NIN-ME-ŠÁR-RA

by The Priestess Enheduanna

Queen of all given powers  
unveiled clear light  
unfailing woman wearing brilliance  
cherished in heaven and earth<sup>2</sup>

chosen, sanctified in heaven

You

grand in your adornments  
crowned with your beloved goodness  
rightfully you are High Priestess

your hands seize the seven fixed powers  
my queen of fundamental forces  
guardian of essential cosmic sources

you lift up the elements  
bind them to your hands  
gather in powers  
press them to your breast

vicious dragon you spew  
venom poisons the land  
like the storm god you howl  
grain wilts on the ground

swollen flood rushing down the mountain

YOU ARE INANNA

SUPREME IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

mounted on a beast

You Lady ride out  
shower the land with flames of fire  
your fated word charged  
with An's command

who can fathom your depths  
you of the great rites

You  
mountain smasher  
give the storm wings

You  
Enlil's dear  
fling storms over the land  
you stand at An's command  
my Lady  
the shriek of your voice  
shatters foreign lands<sup>3</sup>

You  
dreaded southwind  
hurl a hot storm  
people stumble dazed and silent  
face the terror of holy power  
chanting a dirge  
they meet you at the crossroads  
of the house of sighs

at the front of battle  
all is smashed before you  
the obsidian blade ravages  
my Lady  
by your own arm's power

a gouging storm-bull, you gouge  
a rumbling storm-roar, you thunder  
you bellow with the storm god  
you moan with evil winds  
your feet never weary

you sing of sorrow  
play the harp of lamentation

before you my Queen  
the Annuna  
all the great gods  
fly away to the ruins  
flutter around like bats

wither at your smoldering glance  
cower beneath your scowl

your angry heart  
who can soothe it  
cooling your cruel heart is  
too forbidding

the Queen alone lifts her feelings  
the Queen alone gladdens her heart  
She will not quiet her rage  
O great daughter of Suen

Queen  
greater than the mountain  
who dares raise nose-pressed-to-the-ground  
when the mountain quits nose-rubbing  
you curse its grain

    spin ashes around its main gate  
    pour blood into its rivers  
    its people cannot drink  
it hands over captives  
armies disband  
strong young men  
come before you willingly

a wind storm breaks up dancing in the city  
drives the prime youth before you  
rope-tied captives

to the city which does not profess  
“the land is yours”  
which does not say  
“it is your father’s”  
you speak one holy word  
turn that city from your path

you abandon its sacred stall  
the woman no longer speaks sweetly to her husband  
    no longer tells secrets at midnight  
    does not disclose  
    the soft whispers in her heart

ecstatic wild cow<sup>4</sup>  
 eldest daughter of Suen  
 Queen greater than An  
 who dares withhold adulation

mistress of the scheme of order  
 great Queen of queens  
 babe of a holy womb  
 greater than the mother who bore you  
 You all knowing  
 You wise vision  
 Lady of all lands  
 life-giver for the many  
 faithful Goddess  
 worthy of powers  
 to sing your praise is exalted

You of the bountiful heart  
 You of the radiant heart  
 I will sing of your cosmic powers

\* \* \*

truly for your gain  
 you drew me toward  
 my holy quarters

I  
 the High Priestess  
 I  
 Enheduanna

there I raised the ritual basket  
 there I sang the shout of joy

but *that man* cast me among the dead  
 I am not allowed in my rooms  
 gloom falls on the day  
 light turns leaden  
 shadows close in  
 dreaded southstorm cloaks the sun

he wipes his spit-soaked hand  
on my honey sweet mouth  
my beautiful image  
fades under dust

what is happening to my fate  
O Suen  
what is this with Lugalanne

speak to An  
he will free me  
tell him "Now"  
he will release me

the Woman will dash his fate  
that Lugalanne  
the mountains the biggest floods  
lie at Her feet

the Woman is as great as he  
she will break the city from him  
(may her heart grow soft for me)

stand there  
I  
Enheduanna Jewel of An  
let me say a prayer to you  
(flow tears  
refreshing drink for Inanna)

I say to Her  
**silim**<sup>5</sup>  
be well

I say  
I no longer soothe Ashimbabbar  
all the cleansing rites of Holy An  
that man changed them  
he robbed An of his temple  
he does not fear Big Man An  
the potent vigor of the place



does not fill him  
he spoiled its allure  
truly he destroyed it

haunt him  
with the ghost  
of her you set up as your partner

O my divine ecstatic wild cow  
drive this man out  
hunt him down  
catch him

I  
who am I  
in the place which holds up  
life's key elements

may An desert those rebels  
who hate your Nanna  
may An wreck that city  
may Enlil curse its fate  
may the mother not comfort  
her crying child

Queen  
creator of heart-soothing  
that man junked  
your boat of lamentation  
on an alien sea

I am dying  
that I must sing  
this sacred song

I  
even I  
Nanna ignores my straits  
am I to be ruined by treachery

I  
even I  
Ashimbabbar  
neglects my case

whether he neglects me  
or not  
what does it matter  
that man threw me out of the temple  
I who served triumphant

he made me fly  
like swallows swept  
from their holes in the wall

he eats away at my life  
I wander through thorny brush in the mountains  
he robbed me  
of the true crown  
of the High Priestess

he gave me  
the ritual dagger of mutilation  
he said  
“it becomes you”

precious Queen  
loved by An  
rekindle for me  
your holy heart

beloved wife of the sky dragon  
Ushumgalanna<sup>6</sup>  
Great Lady  
who spans the tree of heaven  
trunk to crown  
all the Annuna  
lash yoke over neck for you

You  
born a minor queen<sup>7</sup>  
how great you have become  
greater than the Anunna  
greater than the Great Gods

the Anunna  
press lips to the ground for you

that man has not settled my claim  
again and again  
he throws a hateful verdict  
in my face

I no longer lift my hands  
from the pure sacred bed  
I no longer unravel  
Ningal's gifts of dreams  
to anyone

I  
most radiant priestess of Nanna  
may you cool your heart for me  
my Queen  
beloved of An

PROCLAIM!  
PROCLAIM!  
I shall not  
pay tribute to Nanna  
it is of YOU  
I PROCLAIM

that you are exalted as An  
PROCLAIM!

that you are wide as earth  
PROCLAIM!

that you crush rebellious lands  
PROCLAIM!

that you shriek over the land  
PROCLAIM!

that you smash heads  
PROCLAIM!

that you gorge on corpses like a dog  
PROCLAIM!

that your glance flames with rage  
PROCLAIM!

that you throw your glance around  
PROCLAIM!

that your eyes flash like jewels  
PROCLAIM!

that you balk and defy  
PROCLAIM!

that you stand victorious  
PROCLAIM!

I have not said this of Nanna  
I have said it of YOU  
my phrases glorify YOU  
    who alone are exalted  
my Queen  
beloved of An

I have spoken  
of your tempestuous fury

\* \* \*

I have heaped up coals in the brazier  
I have washed in the sacred basin  
I have readied your room  
    in the tavern<sup>8</sup>  
(may your heart be cooled for me)  
suffering bitter pangs  
I gave birth to this exaltation  
for you my Queen

what I told you in the dark of night  
may the singer recount at noon

child of yours    I am a captive  
bride of yours    I am a captive<sup>9</sup>  
it is for my sake your anger fumes  
your heart finds no relief

the eminent Queen  
guardian of the throne room  
receives her prayer

the holy heart  
of Inanna  
returns to her

the day is favorable  
she dresses lavishly  
in woman's allure

she glows with beauty's shine  
like the light of the rising moon  
Nanna lifts her  
into seemly view

at the sound of Ningal's prayer  
the gate posts open

Hail  
Be Well

\* \* \*

this poem  
spoken for the sacred Woman  
is exalted  
praise the mountain destroyer  
praise Her who  
    (together with An)  
received the unchanging powers  
praise my lady wrapped in beauty  
PRAISE BE TO INANNA

### “He Robbed Me of the True Crown”

Enheduanna has been removed from her office of high priestess by force. Banished from Nanna’s temple at Ur. The story she tells appears actually to have happened.<sup>10</sup> A man named Lugalanne or Lugalanna, according to Hallo and van Dijk, “played a role in the great revolt against Naram-Sin” at Uruk. They find no reason to believe this was not the same person in the poem.<sup>11</sup> Enheduanna’s appointment by Sargon was an affront to the local priests; perhaps her expulsion was the result, as Nissen contends.<sup>12</sup>

She is wretched, alone. A wanderer in the wild mountains. Her clothing torn. Her face covered with dust. “He eats away at my life,” she says. Her rage and anguish grow like a fetus forming in the damp inner chamber. Enheduanna swells with outrage at what has happened to her. She cries out to Inanna, and, in the bitter pangs of a figurative pregnancy forced upon her, she gives birth to a poem. She prays in the dark of night to her Goddess, anguish mimes the forced stretching to the edge of endurance, the tearing pain of birth.

suffering bitter pangs  
I gave birth to this exaltation  
for you my Queen

Enheduanna uses the metaphor of birth to describe the process of “conceiving the word,” a convention found in other Sumerian texts, for example the later King Gudea who “conceived or received the notion of building the temple of Ningirsu” in a dream.<sup>13</sup> These verses contain a unique description of the creative process of the poet, unparalleled in Mesopotamian literature. Enheduanna says she spoke to her goddess in the night, a familiar time of creative inspiration. She may have had a relevant dream. She was certainly qualified to be her own dream interpreter, as Hallo and van Dijk attest.<sup>14</sup>

The poem must match exactly the cosmic situation, must include all the elements. Then like a poultice it will draw out the poison and heal the wound. Enheduanna will return to her rightful place in harmony with the natural order that Lugalanne has upset.

Lugalanne’s daring overthrow of Enheduanna is an ominous sign of things to come. The usurper is cruel. He has entered her rooms. He

mocks the dearest source of her being: her poetry. He spits in his hand and smears her mouth. He defiles the sweet, honeyed tongue. He jabs at her with the sacred dagger of mutilation. He says, “It becomes you.” He seems to be saying, “Use it on yourself!” “You know how the eunuchs do it. Cut out your own sex!” He would have her sexless. He would pull her from the pure, holy bed of the sacred marriage, ban her from that ritual axis around which the year turns. He casts her out. He has effectively undone all that Enheduanna created. He may even have assaulted her sexually.<sup>15</sup>

First he silences her voice:

he wipes his spit-soaked hand  
on my honey sweet mouth

Enheduanna’s most effective means of teaching was her poetry and religious song. He spits on it. His hatred of her honey sweet mouth muffles the outpouring of her creative genius. Not only that, but he tramples her beautiful image under dust. Enheduanna, who created the role of high priestess as poet—a model followed for five hundred years after her death—is defiled by the brute force of a usurping man.

He invites her to mutilate herself with the ritual dagger “in the manner of the androgynous dervishes (*kur-gar-ra*)” adding “insult to injury,” as Hallo and van Dijk observe.<sup>16</sup> The ritual knives of the temple belong to the priestly attendant, the *kurgarra*. Self-mutilation, Parpola says, “was widely practiced not only in Mesopotamia but all over the ancient Near East, and illustrates the tremendous power that the cult of Ištar (Inanna) exerted upon its initiates.”<sup>17</sup> Lugalanne asks Enheduanna to bloody herself in vicious ways not related to the sacred blood of menstruation. He wants her sexless. He wants her blood desecrated. He taunts and teases and cajoles her to turn the ritual knife on herself.

He spits on her poetry. He befouls the ritual dagger. Then:

again and again  
he throws a hateful verdict  
in my face

Enheduanna is reduced to begging this treacherous man for justice. He responds with hateful, vindictive judgments against her.

Ultimately he drives her from the temple. She is no longer allowed in her rooms, her intimate space in the **gipar**. She is cast among the dead in the marginal wasteland of graves and tombs. He whisks her away:

like swallows swept  
from their holes in the wall

She wanders alone in the “thorny brush of the mountains.” She has lost everything, her triumphant stature as High Priestess, her true crown. She cries out in utter hopelessness and despair. In the wrenching pangs of hard labor, she gives birth to this entreaty to Inanna. Inanna is her only hope for rescue.

Armed men probably accompanied Lugalanne in his overthrow of Enheduanna. Such men were not new to her. Enheduanna had watched her father, brothers, and nephew send armies to foreign lands and return victorious. Lugalanne was apparently an enemy of Naram-Sin’s, trying to gain prominence in the southern provinces of Sumer. Ur and Uruk had traditionally formed an alliance, and Lugalanne of Uruk attempted to free the provinces from the central rule of the Sargon dynasty. Enheduanna, who may have served the temple in Uruk as well as Ur, would have lost her position in both cities. The dreadful consequence of Lugalanne’s action was the desecration of the sacred precincts of the temples of An and Inanna in Uruk as well as Nanna in Ur. He defiled An:

he robbed An of his temple  
he does not fear Big Man An  
the potent vigor of the place  
does not fill him  
he spoiled its allure  
truly he destroyed it

Lugalanne enacts a masculine power beyond even that of great An.

If we remember Ebih, we know An’s potency collapsed before the radiance of the mountain. Enheduanna makes clear in “Ebih” and in “Lady of Largest Heart” that Inanna’s power is greater than An’s. In spite of the domination of men in the political and economic sphere at this time, the male gods’ superiority was equivocal, clearly present in some myths and missing in others. In this poem An again collapses in the face of a



more powerful masculine presence, Lugalanne. Once again the secular overcomes the sacred.

A few figures of male gods have been found in Mesopotamia from the Neolithic period; but during this time, all divinities continued to exist as a part of nature's great design. Ultimately nature belonged to the goddesses, to the archetypal feminine, and to the teachings and ritual enactment of the women in the temple.

In Enheduanna's thinking, An, too, existed within this paradigm. His masculinity, as Enheduanna points out over and over again, is subject to Inanna's superior command. As we learned in "Ebih," to overthrow the goddess is unthinkable. All creatures, on earth and in the heavens, are subject to nature's ebb and flow, to the constrictions of the laws of matter. To defy this fundamental reality, the carved-out ground plan that Inanna wears on her robes, is an act of appalling pride and insolence. Inanna will unleash all her forces in order to crush such an audacious rebellion.

The goddess rules the masculinity of the gods, even An's. Among the priests, phallic masculinity is tempered, sometimes by emasculation, sometimes by androgynous dress and behavior. Theirs is the ultimate act of defiance against the domination of the phallus, facilitating, as Roscoe says, "escape from irreconcilable tensions by rendering oneself incapable of fulfilling either the social or sexual demands of patriarchal male roles."<sup>18</sup> Parpola maintains that the purpose of these emasculating acts "was to turn the devotee into a living image of Ištar: an *androgynous* person totally beyond the passions of the flesh."<sup>19</sup> Lugalanne enacts another sort of masculinity altogether. His attitude toward An's temple is this:

the potent vigor of the place  
does not fill him

Lugalanne is no longer satisfied by An's potency in relation to the goddess. He brings an entirely new phallic power into the sacred precinct. Lugalanne attempts to carry out what Ebih dared to dream: the overthrow of the goddess. His bearing is that of a man no longer dominated by women or the forces of the archetypal feminine. Not only do his acts privilege the secular over the sacred, but his defiance of the goddess paves the way for the new masculinity of the ensuing monotheism of Judaism and Greek influenced Christianity.

The surge of phallic power that fueled Lugalanne's revolt, Sargon's conquests, and even the rise of kings in the five hundred years prior to Sargon's rule represented a new force not apparent in the Neolithic cultures dominated by the nature-centered religions. This torrent of male libido ultimately could not be contained or controlled by religious taboo.

Men tended to express this new freedom in two ways: through domination and creativity. Male dominance greatly increased as a result of the new weaponry made possible by the invention of bronze. This invention ushered in a new kind of military conquest. As they gained military power, men increasingly dominated the political sphere, economics, and social life. While Sargon was a life-long devotee of Ishtar/Inanna, the city goddess of Agade, his grandson Naram-Sin declared himself a god and on his stele of conquest, Figure 19, wears the singular horned crown reserved for a deity.

As male dominion of cultural life increased, the new freedom men enjoyed gave rise to a creative soaring of the imagination above the material plane. In classical Greece, the male mind reigned supreme, and with respect to the Romans, Marie Louise von Franz says, "The phallus symbolized a man's secret genius, the source of his physical and mental creative power, the dispenser of all his inspired or brilliant ideas and of his buoyant joy in life."<sup>20</sup> Men have dominated the creative life of the mind in the centuries since the beginning of monotheism. Whatever factors brought this about, men's exercise of their physical strength and appropriation of their creative freedom, part and parcel of a male-dominated culture, heralded an entirely new alignment of civilization, one in which their genius soared while women lost ground. By the seventh century B.C.E., all images of the goddess which had remained in the Hebrew temples were destroyed.<sup>21</sup>

In the process of monotheism's development, women suffered a great loss. The essential role women had played in ancient religions as guardians who contained opposites diminished. Women's roles became marginalized and secondary to the roles of men not only in the religious sphere, but also in the realms of politics, economics, social, and cultural life.

Men are captive to the patriarchal ethos and suffer stifling limitations as a result. In his interpretation of the myth of Attis, the castrated son in the Cybele and Attis myth, Roscoe describes the modern plight of many men:

Attis is the object of unwanted heterosexual overtures, caught between the social demands of the pater-familias and the emotional demands of a mother figure who is herself caught up in the dynamics of patrilineal sexuality and marriage. . . . [I]n polytheism gender ambiguity is given a different valuation, and sexual tensions can be freely projected onto female deities. It is the combination of these two factors—patrilineal social order and polytheistic religion—that creates the ground for the long-term appeal of goddess figures and their priests . . . . The underlying hostility of this act (self-castration) underscores the transgressive nature of being nonmasculine and nonreproductive in a patriarchal culture.<sup>22</sup>

We who come of age within the basic assumptions of monotheism rarely think about how this paradigm infiltrates every corner of our psychological lives. It does not occur to us that our most entrenched values of good and evil, perfection and impurity, worthiness and corruption are strongly influenced by the splitting which male monotheism imposes on our socialization from birth. It takes a concentrated awareness to realize that this paradigm excludes all other possibilities, and to conceive that our most fundamental presumptions could be different.

### “Rekindle Your Holy Heart”

At the beginning of this new millennium, no sacred place exists where we can learn from deep traditional lore what it means to be a woman. The evolution of consciousness has tossed us into a cultural maze where society assigns the highest values to the activities that take place in shopping malls or high-rise office buildings. In this confusing time women have only themselves to rely on. Connection to the sacred female seems to be possible solely in the resonant halls of a seeker’s inner, imaginal chambers. The guide who will take our hands must be one of our own discovery. We look to myth, to ancient tradition, to writers like Enheduanna to show us the way. Each woman is on her own.<sup>23</sup>

Enheduanna offers a fitting model. Although she came to power within a centuries-old religious tradition that held women in high regard, she engaged in a private inner dialogue with her goddess, Inanna. Her life of attentive devotion to the inclusive female divinity, envisioned as the spark of being in matter, provides a model to follow.

In the temple Enheduanna performed the public rites to Nanna and to Ningal:

there I raised the ritual basket  
there I sang the shout of joy<sup>24</sup>

In the inner rooms of her soul, she offered her solitary devotion to Inanna. In this poem Enheduanna provides an intimate glimpse of her private relationship to Inanna.

Exiled in the wild mountains, Enheduanna turns to Inanna for solace. Through the dust and gloom the dreaded southstorm showers on Enheduanna shines a beam of light. In her anguish, hopelessness, and despair, she still declares her ardent love for Inanna. Inanna chose her in the beginning, singled her out, and drew her to her office of the high priestess:

truly for your gain  
you drew me toward  
my holy quarters

I  
the High Priestess  
I  
Enheduanna

Theirs is a bond of mutuality. Inanna is high priestess in heaven. Enheduanna is high priestess on earth. According to Hallo and van Dijk, the poem recounts “the fate of Enheduanna, paralleling that of Inanna, in almost autobiographical terms.” Parallels in the later “Inanna laments,” recount “that deity’s exile from her temples . . . described in a manner wholly reminiscent of Enheduanna’s removal from the priesthood” in this poem.<sup>25</sup> The mystical parallels between Enheduanna and Inanna exemplified the interaction of gods and humans in Mesopotamia. Parpola attests:

It is thus clear that the distribution of the roles of the goddesses was not fortuitous but had a well-established doctrinal basis shared by contemporary prophecy, mysticism and royal ideology . . . the complementarity of the celestial and mundane realms, the latter being conceived of as the mirror image of the former.<sup>26</sup>

Enheduanna found her life’s meaning in relationship to Inanna. Inanna called her from the traditional way of being a woman in her society, and

summoned her to a life of religious devotion to one goddess, herself. That transformation occurred in the inner recesses of Enheduanna's soul. Her relationship to Inanna is that of her ego consciousness to a spontaneous movement in her inner world, the surge of emotion and image that arise as she conjures up the presence of Inanna. She experiences being Inanna's child. In Assyrian times, royal children were nurtured in the temples of Ishtar, "almost certainly to be suckled and nursed by hierodules who impersonated the motherly aspects of the goddess," says Parpola.<sup>27</sup> A prophecy of Ishtar to the crown prince Assurbanipal says:

I will carry you on my hip like a nurse, I will put you between my breasts (like) a pomegranate. At night I will stay awake and guard you; in the daytime I will give you milk. . . .<sup>28</sup>

Enheduanna's experience of the nourishing Inanna/Ishtar may represent an early instance of this long tradition.

Enheduanna also called herself bride of Inanna. For Enheduanna love was aimed at a specific image, Inanna. Inanna became the organizing framework in her imagination, a real presence in the psyche with a particular character and a particular set of emotions. The image Enheduanna had of Inanna was, of course, influenced by the society she lived in, but the interplay of image and emotion in her inner world was a spontaneous motion, an autonomous dynamic over which the ego had no control. Her relationship to Inanna was utterly personal and unique.

As mentioned at the outset, for Enheduanna, Inanna was a personification of the ordered totality of "What Is." Inanna was a constellation of a larger, yet personally related, reality to which Enheduanna had access in thought and in imagination. As an image, Inanna shaped Enheduanna's sense of her own true nature, her essence, and meaningful purpose. The goddess, as a divine image of the Real, reflects the numinous order of the whole, against which the worshipful high priestess defines in her small, human way her own vocation. As high priestess, she becomes the conduit that expresses the essence of the Real to worshipers on earth. Enheduanna's relationship to Inanna developed into one of love for the divine.

Inanna lives on two planes. She is a goddess, a vessel of the divine, and she is a part of Enheduanna's intimate life. She lives both in the realm of the gods and in the realm of the individual soul. She spans the bridge between the celestial and the human. This paradigm continued in the

Assyrian Ishtar, the Hebrew Shekhinah, and the Gnostic Sophia, all of whom connect the divine to the earthly and human worlds. The Catholic doctrine of the assumption of the Virgin and the Christian Holy Spirit are vestiges of this tradition as well.

In the invocation of this poem, Enheduanna makes it clear that Inanna is an exceptionally powerful goddess. She is “Queen of all given powers” and “unveiled clear light.” She is “chosen, sanctified in heaven” and “Queen of fundamental forces/guardian of unchanging cosmic sources.” As mistress of the given forms and powers in the cosmos, she sways in a cosmic dance with her forces:

you lift up the elements  
bind them to your hands  
gather in powers  
press them to your breast

The invocation of this poem, as in the other two, serves to locate Inanna, “supreme in heaven and earth,” as the instigator and the life force who rides the unleashed energies of storm, wind, flood, fire, and battle. Inanna has the will and the force to curse grain, pour blood in rivers, abandon stalls, and drive people to the edge of unbearable sorrow.

Enheduanna states unequivocally that Inanna is much larger than human will, a terror even to the gods. She is a personification of the mystery of the forces of the universe. She is not merely Enheduanna’s ego-ideal. Inanna is not Enheduanna’s self-image. She is a force of the divine mystery of the cosmos, a goddess with particular attributes, characteristics, and powers.

The appearance of Inanna in Enheduanna’s psyche was the beginning of a life-long relationship. While Enheduanna never doubted Inanna’s divine force, she dared to relate to Inanna personally. Inanna became an intimate companion and guide, while maintaining her totally unique status among the gods.

## PROCLAIM!

In the past thirty years women have imagined a religion centered on goddess worship and have begun to reconstruct the myriad pieces of an actual ancient religion whose core was female.<sup>29</sup> Now we have a written

articulation of one woman whose religious tradition reaches back to the Neolithic age.

In the cultures of the western world, dominant religions have perpetuated a silence that has surrounded us for four thousand years. Now Enheduanna's voice has broken that protracted silence. Archaeologists have unearthed thousands of images of goddesses from Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age. Building on these findings, women are beginning to piece together a cultural past in which their place in society was vastly different than it is now. In ancient times, women's social status derived from a religion in which femaleness was distinctly defined and worshiped and in which their role was central.

Enheduanna's writing is a poetic description of the full range of femaleness. Her work has archetypal dimension, and therefore it does not portray any one woman. She gives us the whole complex range of possibilities that occupy the vast reaches of the unconscious. The unconscious depths are a vital source and may be tapped by women according to their needs and inclinations. Enheduanna's poetry is an invitation to expand the definition of "woman" across the range her writing graphically depicts.

In the "Exaltation," Enheduanna is cruelly thrown out of her quarters

23. *A baked-clay model of the ring-post symbol of Inanna from Uruk. Uruk period, c. 4000–3350 B.C.E. Courtesy of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad.*



in the **gipar**. She loses her position, her status, her influence. However, she does not lose her voice. She remains steadfast in her convictions. She calls on professional chanters to sing her song in the broad light of day. She insists that Inanna keep her promise to protect and support the high priestess. Ultimately she is restored.

We offer thanks to Enheduanna for all her gifts and join her in exaltation:

O maiden Inanna  
sweet is your praise



