

32012



National Library of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

CANADIAN THESES ON MICROFICHE

THÈSES CANADIENNES SUR MICROFICHE

NAME OF AUTHOR / NOM DE L'AUTEUR KAREN LAWRENCE

TITLE OF THESIS / TITRE DE LA THÈSE NERUIA: THE INANNA POEMS

UNIVERSITY / UNIVERSITÉ UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED / GRADE POUR LEQUEL CETTE THÈSE FUT PRÉSENTÉE MASTER OF ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE CONFERRED / ANNÉE D'OBTENTION DE CE GRADE 1977

NAME OF SUPERVISOR / NOM DU DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE DOUGLAS BARBOUR

Permission is hereby granted to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

L'autorisation est, par la présente, accordée à la BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DU CANADA de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

L'auteur se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans l'autorisation écrite de l'auteur.

DATED / DATE April 5 / 77 SIGNED / SIGNÉ Karen Lawrence

PERMANENT ADDRESS / RÉSIDENCE FIXE Box 46
Drumheller Alberta
T0E 1N0

 National Library of Canada

Cataloguing Branch
Canadian Theses Division

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Direction du catalogage
Division des thèses canadiennes

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

**THIS DISSERTATION
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED**

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

Si il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE**

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

NEKUIA: THE INANNA POEMS

by

© KAREN LAWRENCE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1977

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Nekuia: The Inahna Poems" submitted by Karen Lawrence in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Douglas B. Berman
Supervisor

E. D. Galt

Date *March 29, 1977*

ABSTRACT

"Nekuia: The Inanna Poems" is a cycle of poems which deal with a mythical theme, the descent of an individual to the underworld. The subject is the goddess Inanna, who was a Sumerian deity of the third millennium B.C.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Poems	1
Afterword	62
Bibliography	65

anaesthesia

1.

the shaven skull gleams yellow
black vectors intersect
at point of incision.

she grips the little red book
as the gowns and masks

attack
she is awake
straining
her neck to look
at the doctors smiling
and the camera jerking
in the sweaty grip of an unseen technician

the scalp's red edges
fly apart
at the touch of the knife
the room heaves

the masks chatter:
these men have reached an agreement
about the contents
of her little yellow skull

a hand reaches in
to the hole in her head
almost to the wrist
jerks out something soft
purplish
it is dropped into a silver dish
held up, first to the lens
then to the woman's
face

she smiles as though she recognizes it.

anaesthesia

21

sleep
perform the operation
while she
sleeps.

she drinks the sweet gas
sips it like wine
only the lips do not touch
the rim of the glass

this lady left earth
and heaven

went down
into the pit
the road was dark
the night
she has fallen
the sword spins down
shrieks as it meets bone
voices of men
clicking of metal instruments
a hush -

they have discovered
the poems
deteriorating in her brainpan
like a bag
of small, bruised pears.

I

from
the summits
of heaven
she looked into the pit

she was a goddess
on the summits
of heaven

but her heart was in hell

O Inanna
on the summits

Your heart in hell!

from a hymn to the worm

1.

the worm that we know
is a multi-coloured
self-seeking
tail sucker.

he dwells in the dark
of the bowels and heart.

he relies heavily
on unhappiness and fear
to get him through his days.

he is the sacrificial animal
of idiots.

he is crafty:

if you hold a piece of raw meat in front of your lips,
his pinhead pokes out to sniff it.
but he will not eat.
he wants fresh pulsing gut.

the worm that we know
is a gizzard pecker
come to peck yours.



from a hymn to the worm

2.

i am the goddess

whose body
is the temple

of a worm.

is there any way
to speak

of the invisible
the nameless malignancy
made firm

in the soft, cold flesh
of the worm

of his water-thin blood

his radiant eyes,
which glisten like stones
stuck in his flat head

of the bone in his tongue
which can bore into
the great muscle
of the heart

and of the roots, which twine themselves there?

i have pleaded with the worm
to leave my insides
offered tears and burnt grasses
i have cut off my hair
and fed him bloody meals
which i could hardly swallow

but his cold heaviness
throbs still in my belly
in the night
i feel him
turning and crawling
when i walk
i hear only the low humming of the worm

7 4 6

from a hymn to the worm

3.

in the rainbow garden
i offer myself
an offering to myself

from a hymn to the worm

if you needed a diet of worms
you could have

anglearmy

boll

cankercaterpillarcottoncut

earthearorcornear

fire

galleyglow

inch

leech

measuring

pin

round

shipsilkspile

tapetobaccotomatotramatodetussah

webwirewood

that is,
worms classified as to

home

function

shape

size

destructive properties and
social class.

II

*You don't tell me what you have found.
You only tell me what you have lost.*

-Akkadian proverb

the tower

the queen builds a tower
to heaven

with the skulls
of unsuccessful suitors.

walls of the skull sweet and moist
and moist of walls the sweet skull
of moist sweet skulls and the wall

moist and sweet wall of the skulls
and sweet of skulls the moist wall
the wall of skulls sweet and moist

from a hymn to the worm

6.

oh worm
you bless my dreams
with the cruelty
shining
in your round black eyes
you are a single-stringed instrument
you are elegant
as a swan

there are fingerprints on my heart
they are all yours

she had a loveliness -
 it was said of her
 how she carried her beauty

like the rising moonlight

in the coldest room of the tower
 she waits, presses
 dried fruit

to her lips
 what is here
 for the lady

giver of delights?
 her arms ache to embrace
 a child,
 a tree, a young goat

she attends the monthly buzz and shudder
 of unseen organs

the cat peers into the bowl
 between her white thighs
 wipes them adoringly
 with wet noseleather

she bends to him
 he inhales love syllables from her lips

in dreams
 her friends are all become sick
 and old

they clutch at her robe
 upon waking
 she finds
 two small red

holes
 in her hand

she has not soothed her insides
 with a man
 for months

in dreams
 she feels a warm and dark presence
 undresses slowly
 and makes a pale necklace of her arms

she craves the bed of queenship

she craves the bed

her dress is woven of the tongues of cows

she craves the bed

the earth is tied to her foot as a sandal

she craves the bed

the eldest daughter of Sin

she craves the bed

she is a life-giving wild cow

she craves the bed

coming down now full
from the tower
just the idea
lashed to the brain

she set her mind upon below
set her mind on it
she set her mind upon below
down to hell she walked away

walked away down
the not seen
she moves as
ripples in tall grass
shadows on water
tall in the land moving
a green shoot in a dead land
her heart is piping in the wilderness
like a bird complaining

III

she sets forth
with a darkened face

the always laughing,
always rejoicing maid
the maid Inanna

how she weeps!

she takes up her clothing
the perfect stones
and walks down

to
the
city.

it is afternoon
it is after
 he puts out his hand
 for the rod
 at the gate
that she sees

 the first looming
 of the dark city

the worm sings to her
rich, slow voice
of the worm
who lives
in the small ruin of her heart

euphorbia splendens

the coldest month
 moon dangerously swollen
 in a white sky

grey birds screaming,
 hungry.

he stood framed in the doorway
 face frozen in glass
 the heavy wooden
 mask
 grinning on his shoulders
 a rag drawn across the loins
 go in.

she entered the room
 paleness
 of a dry, stripped dogbone
 voices murmuring
 in empty
 stone jars
 something burning
 in a back room
 he was wearing a red shirt
 he was asking if she

would like
 some coffee.

she stood by
 the window
 rubbing the smooth carved bear
 the devils clawed at the glass
 nipples stiffened
 in fear
 fingers wrapped themselves tightly

around his ten year-old
 crown
 of thorns

shugurra,
 the desert crown
 taken howling from her head

the blood moved slowly
out of the small round holes.

his hand holds out the white cup
they drink together in the smoky room
quiet.
it is after

noon and he is smiling
and wearing a red shirt

her heart was frozen in hell

have a throat

the throat
 smeared with sticky salve
 which burnt
 blotches into the skin

burned down to the throatbone
 the throat *inside* scraped
 where did she find the bandages
 -scarves woven from dried weeds and sticks
 -socks bursting with pickers
 wound
 like tourniquets
 fastened with pins

fascinated reading the
 watkins tin
 pinhead print tells how
 to make an ointment
 ball the size of a pea
 wrap it in
 gauze
 and
 swallow it.

(could the greasy pellet streaking
 down your gullet
 heal in passing
 or
 did it sit
 in a pit
 down there
 giving off
 beneficial fumes?)

we know, then
 that followed nights
 of dark, itching fire
 (insane, trying to blow
 downwards
 some cool
 breath
 for the
 suffering neck)

pain drawn like a bow
 across the cords of her throat

and mornings
when came

the stripping:

she stood with eyes closed
swaying on her feet a
little feverish

to receive the cold, sweet shock
of air
on her throat

(raw, sticky skin)
making the throat *inside* scraped
the *sore* throat
feel like a tube of
porcelain

-again, a whole instrument

come closer
here
lift your arms
open the robe
and give us your breast stones
and the pectoral gems
that dazzle men

these also
she loses

take the maiden
uncover her heart

in the fifth year she comes to the fifth door.

the gatekeeper at the fifth door is herself,
leaning easily against the stones, smiling a little.

here she realizes she has always been the gatekeeper

the gatekeeper takes the golden ring
she does not ask "why do you do this?"
she says "i feel that i hold a key in my hand"

this was in the fifth year at the fifth gate

by this gate art thou measured

-Ezra Pound,
"Canto XLVII"

at this last

the robe falls
to her feet
 a stiff heap
flesh meets water
 at the edge
is no turning

step down lady:
this is the pool.

1.

in the middle of a burnt lake
we sit
and discuss the advantages
of imprecise vision

faces float
 serious
in the steam
there is hope in this pool
there is talk of spirit river

2.

out of this element
between water and air
looms the face
looms the face
of the drowned man,
a dark planet
in the vapour

clouds move toward us
lowering
like huge dark hands !
there is hope in this pool
there is talk of no name creek

3.

one eye opens
its dark breathing cell
looms calm and speckled

in the steam
in the face of the stranger

an eye
upon which all eyes are focused

there is hope in this pool

from a hymn to the worm

7.

of evenings
the light-shy

 worms
conduct their business
migrants on the
long lonely journey
from the stomach:

 to think of
 families

 of eyeless creatures
whole civilizations
nurtured
in a blind alley

you can see them
if you shit in a warm place
if it's too cold
they burrow
into the warm shit
sometimes
you can remove them
with a finger

\ in the light
they burrow
into the warm finger

in legend
they wait
in candy and cake
warmed in the gullet
they awake
squirming
sharp nips
 go forth and
blind heads poking

the body:
 an infested tube

U
from a hymn to the worm

8.

there is a powder
licked from a blade
makes molars firm
in sockets, enamelled
the jaw a studded strut
hung by a muscle

from a hymn to the worm

9.

all things created
 canals created the marsh
 the marsh created
 a toothache-making worm
 he who went weeping
 tears

flowing before Ea:

i starve in this bowl of dust
 give me to eat
 give me to drink
 that i do not wither
 like a piece of dry grass

the apricot, is yours, worm
 the ripe fig

pah! what are fruits to me Ea?
 lift me up
 for my sucking
 lift me to dwell among teeth
 and gums
 in that cave i will suck blood
 from a white tooth
 there i will gnaw at gums
 and feed upon roots

from a hymn to the worm

10.

the illuminated chart
crabbed with cavities
crude brown slashes
in enamel

enamel

there is nothing like a root here

IV

You have gone.

So what?

You have stayed.

So what?

You have stood.

So what?

You have returned.

So what?

-Akkadian proverb

if you feel happy then

go as you

are you feel

happy if you

are and you

are happy if you

go as you feel you

are

if you feel like smilin and

feel happy as you

are laughin then

you feel as you

go you are happy if

you feel you can

go as you

are

and the forests will echo with laughter
and it makes me wonder

-Led Zeppelin,
"Stairway to Heaven"

in the rainbow gardens
is the joy of totems

eyes swirling
dark circles in wood

flowers

 dive
frilled heads first
into the earth
yellow roots kicking -
the soil shakes hugely with laughter

these gardens hum
there is the inner jazzline of roosters,
combs

 blasting off like cherry bombs
happy with
music and
 being headless

the totems are welcome in our gardens
the lady hears wind
 whistling through headholes
mad toothless heads
open laughing in forests alone

my vagina is fine
yet it is said
among my people
that it is useless for me

-Akkadian proverb

once the lining was fresh
now it's withered and dead
the walls of my uterus
no longer are red

alas! it has happened
the thing i most feared
my sweet breasts have dwindled
i'm growing a beard

oh who will pry open
the closed gates of horn
and dig out this monster
who will not be born?

dat ole debbil worm

who dat dancin
wid dat
ole debbil worm?

dat da she-god

what she want
wid dat
ole debbil worm?

she gon shake im loose
shake im loose
shake im loose

to tell the truth

about inanna
scholars say

inanna was ambitious
and aggressive

inanna was determined
to become
mistress
of the underworld

inanna had a
long-standing reputation
for deceit

it is true
her name has no
red-flannel reliability
if gary moore
brush-cut and bow-tied
shouted

Will The Real Inanna Please Stand Up?

i don't know if she would

but scholars
they have the breath of fishes

you think this is some
kind of joke
a worm
and a garden?

V

ashes ashes ashes
into the tomb the great queen falls

demeter kore demeter kore demeter kore
demeter kore demeter kore demeter kore
kore demeter kore demeter kore demeter
kore demeter kore demeter kore demeter
demeter kore demeter kore demeter kore
kore demeter kore demeter kore demeter

i speak to you
 as the eldest daughter of Sin
 i am the goddess
 who has the key
 who is second to
 no one of the gods

my sister straddles
 the throne of hell
 naked
 she must have her husbands
 her children
 the Bearing One
 in her are all the motherwombs assembled

no sheet covers her well-kissed breasts
 naked
 as a pitcher

'my entrails, o my entrails'
 this sister moans

i have seen her lips caress
 the cold skinny prick
 of death
 this one

in the rainbow gardens
the two queens meet.

naked inanna
falls to her knees
in the dust
with swollen tongue and throat
too dry to speak

the bearing one enters
squats on her seat
legs opened
dimly red and shining
in the darkness

in these halls of dust
is no stirring,
no striving
all time waits
for the Death
and the Birth

this is the hour
this is the hour of eternity

in the mind
 death is organic
 we are constantly informed
 of its presence
 the faint shadow in a mirror
 a breath, swift indrawn
 a photograph:

 the hand reaching
 out

in the eye
 it waits, darkly shining
 the eye holds only stillness
 gazes neither in front
 nor behind
 returns its own glance

and again, the same

death sings
 death sings tonight in pulsing genitals
 death dances
 death dances in your lover's face
 death laughs
 death laughs in our ears as we sleep

so the gatekeeper did not stop you
so the vizier did not say 'wait'
so you stand now
in front of the spike

there will be no
taking up of the robe here
nothing to keep you from drowning
in the dust of hell
nothing to keep
your nakedness
from the eyes of your sister
on her throne
from the eyes of the hopping spirits
the annunaki, which surround her
they fasten the eyes of death upon you
there is a spike waiting for you here,
lady.

here is the place
which finds your deceit
your pride
your impatience
your lust

your baleful heart is beyond soothing

naked the goddess kneels to receive her death
 all eyes become fastened upon her
 the eyes of death

seven judges utter the word
 which tortures the imperfect spirit
 howls in headholes
 like a sick animal

the queen of heaven sickens
for her they built the house of the heart
 the queen of heaven sickens
for hers was the power to destroy the indestructible
 the queen of heaven sickens
for in her was all healing found

nowa danca deatha
 nowa danca deatha
 nowa danca deatha
 nowadeath
 nowadeath
 nowadeath
 nowadeath

*her body was a corpse
 that hung
 on a spike*

birth cries echo in the rainbow gardens

VI.

What is above
is below

august

in this hottest month
 of purification
 i address you
 i

the Lady of the Wilderness
 the Lady of Desolation
 the Lady of All Eventualities

i have lived six weeks
 in the edin
 the valley of bones
 hungered and thirsted
 and dust and clay
 have been my food

no man or woman has come to me
 and i have gone to no woman or man

i have seen the worm
 he has come to me
 in the dry heat of day
 and at night, in dreams
 his seven elements have tried
 to suck

the last warm breath
 from my chest

i have seen in my cup
 a fear of damnation
 a fear of the one word spoken

the name

in the room

1.

in this room
i am dead
you are dead

2.

in the spring
i get on a plane
and travel to a warm climate
i lie on a beach
i visit a prison
i ride buses
when i return
i carry a lighter suitcase
and leave it, still packed, by the bed

3.

in the summer
you take to the road
and stay with friends, converts, family
you play cards
you drink tequila in the desert
you sell leather belts
when you return
you carry a bunch of sagebrush
and leave it in a bucket outside the door

4.

in this room
you are dead
i am dead

i leave this room
i am alive

you stay in the room

milk fever

you're right it's
no good to cry over spilled milk
but only a fool
wouldn't change milkmen

-Marylou Dietz


you have not tasted milk
from an animal
only from waxed cardboard, glass, plastic
milk from an animal
might taste raw, dirty, genital
might be buzzing with microbes
which your pale
 soft stomach
wouldn't know what to do with

when all the containers are broken
you will have to lick
your milk
off the floor
 as it drips from the table
you drink a lot of milk
it will take a long time
to get enough
the milk mixed with hairs and crumbs
will sicken your tongue
make your throat convulse

you could lap milk
from cupped hands
but it would be animal, sweat and dirt

a woman's nipple
warm and alive in your mouth
is out of the question.

what are we going to do
about you
and your milk?



death comes calling

we watch television
 we watch a documentary
 about a tribe
 of leftover mayans

against trees
 the men lounge in shapeless dresses
 puffing big cigars
 they are

 all beautiful.

the women mash corn in a trough
 it will ferment
 the men and women will drink the mash
 at their corn ceremony
 they have

 rituals

for all the seasons

we have
 the blue glow
 in this cold room
 it is all
 the motion
 we have

you leave the room
 and start screaming
 i watch you on the floor
 you lie on your back
 shivering
 you tell me you think you are
 dying

your death comes calling
 the lacondones smile shyly
 at the camera
 a voice tells us
 there are approximately three hundred lacondones still in existence

i cover you with a blanket
later i will tell you
that i see your death
every day

i cannot comfort

tonight
the air spiced
with the sin-sweet smell
of the evening mushroom
the worm and i
will suffer
a parting of ways

i will put him from me
i will raise the dead
i will raise the dead

eating and alive

so the dead

outnumber the living!

She is coming

Inanna is coming from the pit!

hellwise the spiky demons scurried
from out of the dry land

where hearth is barren
where sky threatens
where milk-churns
jiggle no longer
in our laps
and milk sours
where coyote stalks the lamb
where seed lies scattered
on dry ground
where river and stream run fouled

scurried like bats
through sunless halls of the dead

She is coming

Inanna is coming from the pit!

eat not
from the fields of the dead
drink not
the water of death
they asked for the corpse
hanging on a spike
sixty times scattered
the food of life
the living water
Inanna stood up alive
out of the dust and

She is coming

Inanna is coming from the pit!

VII

*from the chapter
of the coming forth
by day*

one cool wet morning
you will meet
The Lady
who comes Forth
out of Darkness

standing beside the river
you will look up
and see
The Eater of the Dead

perhaps you will walk
in early summer
with
The Shining One

give it to her
give it up
to her

give it to her
give it up
to her

when the wild bull comes to her
he comes with a chant
a chant to move her heart

from a love-song to the lord of light

1.

last night
as i
the queen
was shining bright

last night
as i
the queen of heaven
was shining bright

as i was shining bright
as i was dancing alone
as i uttered a song
to the coming
night

he came to me
the lord
he heard my song

he came to me
the lord of light
he heard my song

from a love-song to the lord of light

2.

the night bird sings a wild note
 as i
 gaze upon him
 as i
 caress the lord
 his hand he puts
 on my hand
 as i
 rejoice in him
 his heart he puts
 next to my heart
 as i
 give life to him
 his song brings deep joy
 in the night

i will drink with him the fresh milk
 the sweet cream
 i will watch over his house of life

from a hymn of the goddess to herself

it is a bright new crescent
it is a hillock for me
 high and wide in the plain
it is a fallow field
 where the uz-bird pipes with longing
it is wet ground, soft and rich
who will plow it for me?

lady, the king will plow it for you
he lies waiting at your side
the king will plow it for you

plow it for me, my love

she craves the bed of the singing heart
she craves the bed
she craves the bed of the sweet lap
she craves the bed

by his sweet, by his sweet bed
by his honey bed of the rejoicing heart
by his honey bed
by his sweet bed of the honey lap
by his

he covers her
covers her for her
he covers her
covers her bed for her

from a love-song to the lord of light

in the hot sun
 he meets me
 and we rejoice together
 in his honey bed

his green gaze waters the plain
 he is a sprouting garden
 he is the honey-man
 the honey-man
 of the gods

favoured
 of my womb

whose lips are honey
 whose hands and
 limbs and cheeks
 are sweet

 honey
 he sweetens me ever

he prepares a sweet, fruitful couch
 in the midst

 of the house

my sweetener

 of the navel

he is sweet lettuce

my wild bull

 of the fair thighs

his green gaze waters the plain

he is a tall leafing tree

he is the honey-man

 the honey-man

 of the gods

sweet lettuce

 of my heart

his is the honey

 of my mouth

the sweet juice

 of my holy lap

he sweetens me ever

In me
find the Mother

I awake and
stand up
shining!
You have gathered my flesh together

My left side
is joined to my right side
and my hands hold high
the reedshoots

I am covered
with my
womanly beauty
I have the wings and feet
of a bird

I am praised and
come forth
loved!
You have given me my heart again

from the many tales
of her splendour
her great triumphs
her healing hands
she has selected these:

Afterword

The tablets and fragments which provide the text of the goddess Inanna's journey to the underworld were excavated at Nippur and at Ur. They were inscribed in the first half of the second millennium B.C. The date of their composition is unknown; but because Sumerian literature goes back to the middle of the third millennium B.C., most scholars estimate the composition date to be somewhat earlier than the date of inscription. For translations of the texts, I have relied primarily on Sandars and Kramer, and have compared their versions with others taken from texts listed in the bibliography and from the translations of the Ur tablets in the Sumero-Akkadian Collection, British Museum. Following is a brief summary of the main events of the myth.

Inanna, Queen of Heaven and goddess of the fertile earth, decides to visit the underworld. Though some scholars hypothesize about her motives, nowhere do the texts indicate a reason for her journey; in this she differs from the heroic figures - Ishtar, Odysseus, Heracles, Orpheus and others - who succeeded her. Her journey takes place in summer, in the dry season of purification, when water is scarce. Before she leaves the earth she garbs herself in her divine garments and 'powers', and instructs her minister Ninshubar to mourn for her and plead with the great gods to save her life if she has

not returned within three days. When she reaches the outer door of the underworld, she commits a sin by lying to the gatekeeper about the reason for her visit; she says she has come to attend last rites for her brother-in-law. The gatekeeper consults with his mistress and is given permission to allow Inanna to enter. She must pass through seven gates, and at each one a garment is removed, until she enters the halls of the dead, naked.

The Sumerian conception of hell is difficult to envisage. The gate of hell is a gaping monster, the jambs are 'a sharp knife to slash down wicked men'. The *Edin* is a place where one can drown in dust - a desert, a Death Valley. Yet in hell also lie 'the rainbow gardens of the Lady' which Sandars compares to Virgil's asphodel meadow, a place for the refreshment of the dead. Kramer asserts that 'the very idea of paradise (as a garden of the gods) is Sumerian'.

In hell Inanna meets her sister, Ereshkigal, who reigns as Queen of the Underworld and sits naked on her throne. The *Annunaki*, the seven judges of hell, fasten the eye of death upon Inanna and she sickens and dies; her body is hung on a spike.

Meanwhile, Ninshubar does his duty and implores various gods to save his mistress. Each of them answers that she is insatiable and must suffer the fate she has brought

upon herself. But Enki, the water god, is grieved, and so fashions the *Kugarru* and the *Kalaturru*; to these two sexless creatures he gives the food and water of life and instructions to scatter these libations upon the goddess' corpse. They travel to the underworld and revive her. As she is leaving hell the *Annunaki* remind her that she must leave another in her place, for no one ever left hell without paying a price.

Inanna now ascends from the pit with the devils of the underworld fastened to her, walking with her. She travels from city to city in Sumer. On the way the party encounters various subjects of the goddess whom the devils want to abduct to hell as hostages. But Inanna refuses to let them be taken. Finally they meet Dumuzi, the shepherd-husband of Inanna, who neither makes obeisance to her or appears to be in mourning as he sits high on his throne. And upon him she fastens the eye of death. Sanders' translation concludes 'This was how holy Inanna gave up her shepherd into the power of the devils'.

Bibliography

- Allen, Thomas George. The Book of the Dead or Going Forth By Day. Chicago, 1974.
- Campbell, Joseph. The Mythic Image. Princeton, 1974.
- Frankfort, Henri. The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man. Chicago, 1946.
- Hallo, William W. and J.J.A. Van Dijk. The Exaltation of Inanna. New Haven, 1968.
- Henderson, Joseph L. The Wisdom of the Serpent. New York, 1971.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. Second edition. Princeton, 1968.
- _____. Symbols of Transformation. Second edition. Princeton, 1967.
- Kirk, Geoffrey Stephen. Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures. Cambridge, 1970.
- Kramer, Samuel Noah. History Begins at Sumer. Garden City, 1959.
- _____. Mythologies of the Ancient World. Chicago, 1961.
- _____. The Sacred Marriage Rite. Bloomington, 1969.
- Neumann, Erich. The Great Mother. New York, 1955.

Pritchard, James Bennett. Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. Third edition. Princeton, 1969.

Sandars, Nancy K., trans. Poems of Heaven and Hell From Ancient Mesopotamia. Harmondsworth, 1971.

Watts, Alan. The Two Hands of God. New York, 1963.