

School of Media Culture and Creative Arts

Restoring Inanna: an ancient myth for contemporary women?

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To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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ABSTRACT

This autoethnographic practice-led study explores some of the ways in which the four to five thousand year old mythic stories and poems of the goddess Inanna from Ancient Sumer (present day Iraq) speak to the lives of contemporary women. Looking through a feminist lens, it seeks to disseminate Inanna's stories and poems to a wider audience in a thought provoking and entertaining manner, contribute to discourses in a range of disciplines, and bring the stories and discourses into conversation with each other.

As a cross-disciplinary study that combines more traditional approaches to research, such as literature review and discussion forums, with a range of performative methods, including original song and platform storytelling, it weaves together personal perspectives with broader contextual issues and knowledge.

The study considers both the changing ways in which Inanna's stories have spoken to contemporary women prior to the commencement of the current research, as expressed in academic writing and artworks, and a range of primary data generated by the research process. The research participants included women in my and my director's social, creative, and academic circles.

The research was structured by a series of overlapping, non-discrete research phases and processes: contextual research phases explored contemporary and historically contextualising academic written works and art works in a range of modalities; creative production incorporated songwriting, studio improvisations, and text development leading to a series of three one-woman "trial performances"; post-performance discussion forums with invited audience members; exegetical writing; and keeping a reflexive research journal.

An address to my research question and concerns is presented by a dual format creative thesis:

A three-act one-woman musical storytelling show, *Restoring Inanna*, stitched the ancient stories and some of their contextual background into an overarching

storyline, woven through with personal anecdotes and deconstructive commentary. It was presented to a live audience in December 2012, and is documented in the DVD accompanying this exegesis.

The exegesis takes two original songs from the performance as points of excavation into the mountain of research data about Inanna, her stories, and Sumer. This data was obtained from Near Eastern Studies sources; a range of disciplines which have been informed by the stories such as psychology, psychotherapy, feminist spirituality, religious studies, sexology and anthropology; and the primary data generated by the research. By providing a close reading of the selected songs, and some of the raw translations of poetry from which they were developed; cross referencing a selection of original translations and their interpretations; and positioning the songs both within the performance and broader contextual issues, I demonstrate some of the ways in which creative and academic research processes informed each other. Through these processes I draw out themes, theories and debates around issues such as power, gender relations, sexuality, lifelong human development, pre-patriarchal cultures, cross-cultural meaning-making, and art-as-research, in order to elucidate some of the ways in which Inanna's stories and poems could both be, and not be, considered "an ancient myth for contemporary women".

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I cannot find enough words to express the extent of my appreciation to Helen Merrick, the supervisor who walked the greatest length of the research road with me, encouraging me through my (all too many) moments of overwhelm and anxiety, cheering me on as I jumped hurdles, and helping me steer my way through the major research milestones and paperwork processes, going above and beyond the call. Helen, without your attention to detail, interest in and engagement with my research topic, willingness to read and re-read drafts, belief in my abilities, knowledge of when to cajole and push and when to stand back and let me get on with it, and your sane voice of reason in my moments of panicked insanity, I'm not sure I'd have reached the point where I got to write acknowledgements. A trillion thank yous!

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Preface

In weaving this exegesis from multi-disciplinary threads of information, I was constantly faced with decisions around which discussions and pieces of information to sequentially privilege from a sea of information which all seemed equally important to know before reading further. There was no foolproof solution.

Something had to go first, and not everything could. Every decision to bring some piece of information closer to the beginning pushed something else further away.

I have done my best to signpost and order material to overcome these dilemmas.

However, there are a couple of things that I think it will help the reader to know in advance.

The first relates to the source material for the stories and poems.¹

When I conceived of the idea for this research, before I had any access to university funded access to journals and journal databases, I discovered Wolkstein and Kramer's 1983 text *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Poems from Sumer*. It contained four stories about Inanna which were presented as chapters in her life. All other sources of Inanna's stories that I found at that time, and in the early stages of my doctoral research, were either earlier and less complete translations by the same Sumerologist, Samuel Noah Kramer² (Diane Wolkstein was a folklorist who worked the text into a readable form for a modern audience), often embedded in an academic article for which they were merely examples when making a point, or reworkings of one or more of the stories by authors who quoted Wolkstein and Kramer as their source. It wasn't till well into my research that I met some Near

¹ The stories are all written in poetic languages, and the poems often contain stories within them, so the distinction between the two is not always clear-cut.

² There may have been an occasional text which was translated by another scholar, but usually with Kramer as a co-author.

East specialists at the Penn University Museum in Philadelphia that I was directed to the two other sources I used: *The Electronic Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL)*, and Sefati's 1998 *Love songs in Sumerian literature: critical edition of the Dumuzi Inanna songs*. Both of these texts were more recent and the translations were done by experts in their fields. They introduced me to a much wider range of stories and poems about Inanna and other Sumerian deities/characters, and they were presented as straight translations with little or no attempt to guess at missing words and/or lines or to make narrative sense of stories that made no sense to Western eyes. I discuss these texts in detail at various relevant points during the exegesis, alongside some of the ways in which I used, adapted and made sense of them for my purposes. While sometimes I took great leaps of imagination, they were leaps that were fuelled by what I knew of context and other texts through my research, and I have done my best throughout to treat the texts with respect and integrity.

The second, and perhaps most important of the things it will aid the reader to know is a brief synopsis of the overarching storyline I constructed from these stories and the threads of my research as a basis for the musical storytelling performance *Restoring Inanna*. This performance was conceived as a partial answer to my research question: *In what ways do the stories and poems of Inanna speak to contemporary women?* I say "partial answer" both because this storyline is only one element of my response to the question,³ and also in acknowledgement of the inherently partial nature of any one person's response to an open topic which potentially invites a multiplicity of responses.

³ I refer here to the fact that the performance and exegesis together form my response to the research question, as well as to the fact that the overarching storyline is only one element of the performance that responds to the research question, others including deconstruction, personal anecdote, and some of the layers of meaning inherent in some of the songwriting.

I describe the performance as a one of “musical storytelling” because, although I do draw from some theatrical techniques, work with a theatre director, and read some theatrical texts, the theoretical underpinnings of my creative praxis lie in the arts of the singer songwriter and oral storyteller as a folkloric tradition, as I discuss in the methodology section. I unpack the whys and wherefores of the performance structure in the body of the exegesis. The following is simply a summary of my constructed storyline with an indication of some of the Ancient Sumerian stories that form the building blocks.

Act 1 gives a picture of Inanna in her childhood and as a young woman entering puberty and matrimony. It begins with her wedding to Dumuzi, created from the *Inanna-Dumuzi Love Poetry*,⁴ and then flashes back to her childhood as represented by the story *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*. In this act, the relationship between these two characters is established, as are some of the cracks in the relationship. The act finishes with the Huluppu Tree, which can be seen as symbolising Inanna’s emerging body/self, being felled by Dumuzi. This event cuts Inanna from her roots, thus co-opting her power to create a throne and bed which are the items connected to the patriarchal kingship that ruled in Ancient Sumer.

Act 2 is about Inanna’s rise and fall from power in the earthly political sense. Having sacrificed her tree, and therefore elements of her selfhood and her personal power for love, she slowly becomes drunk on the political power of war and acquisition, perhaps as a way to fill up the sense of loss. The act begins with some time having elapsed. Inanna, now

⁴ Sefati (1998) describes them as the Dumuzi-Inanna Love Songs, but I have altered this label to privilege Inanna, who is after all the subject of my research, and the more cosmically powerful of the two, and to distinguish between the poems and the songs I create from them.

Queen of Heaven and Earth wakes, realises she has been raped, and sets out to find and punish the perpetrator, a story based on *Inanna and Sukaletuda*. Once this task has been accomplished Inanna, in her anguish about how such a thing could have happened –how the world has become so out of balance that she is raped, goes looking for answers in the Underworld/Netherworld. *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld* is the most well-known story about the goddess.

In descending Inanna passes through seven gates. At each she must surrender an item of clothing or jewellery which symbolises an aspect of her earthly or heavenly powers. As she is forced to relinquish each item she has a flashback to the event by which she gained it, and the power associated with it. The flashbacks, almost all based on another Ancient Sumerian story about Inanna,⁵ slowly strip away her powers in reverse chronological order, until she arrives in the Underworld naked, with no memories, and is sentenced to death. In this way it is revealed to the audience what has transpired in the intervening time between Act 1 and Act 2. Along the way it is revealed that a rift in Inanna's relationship with Dumuzi has led to them ceasing to have sex. As it is through their sexual union that the rains and abundance is brought to the land, the rift in the relationship sent Sumer into drought. The Act finishes with Inanna falling to the ground, dead.

In Act 3, with the help of external intervention, Inanna is brought back to life and leaves the Underworld. This is the story of *Inanna's Ascent*. Ereshkigal, Queen of the Underworld insists that if Inanna leaves she

⁵ A couple are created by me from contextual data in order to fill gaps in the story.

must send someone else to take her place. Inanna thus departs surrounded by terrifying demons to ensure compliance. Along the way the demons attempt to take several characters as Inanna's replacement, but Inanna will not allow it claiming that they have all behaved with loyalty and protocol. When Inanna finally reaches Uruk (her home), she finds her beloved Dumuzi sitting on *her* throne – the one made from the Huluppu Tree, wielding *her* power, and not even missing her. Enraged, she nominates him to be her replacement in the Underworld.

Dumuzi asks for help from the sun god Utu (Inanna's brother) and manages to escape several times, but eventually the demons manage to catch him. By this time Inanna has relented a little and is grieving his loss. She grants permission for him to share his fate with his sister (Geshtinanna) who has volunteered to take his place. Dumuzi and Geshtinanna alternate time in the Underworld. During the six months that Dumuzi is gone, the earth becomes extremely hot, dries up and becomes infertile. When he returns the joy of the sexual reunion between Inanna and Dumuzi brings the earth back into abundance. As well as a description of the seasons, this can be read as a description of what is needed to heal the relationship – Dumuzi must also face his demons and spend time immersed in the land of death and destruction. He must do his own stripping back and looking deeper, and spend time with Ereshkigal, who is sometimes seen as Inanna's darker side.

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A Dream Prelude:

One night, during my final days in Melbourne before the adventure of PhD research in Perth, I dreamed:

I am living now in my new home in Western Australia, in a place both new and familiar. It is my first morning and I go walking. It is early, before breakfast, and as I walk I suddenly realise I am still wearing pyjamas. I'm not concerned, but decide I should probably turn back to change anyway. On the return walk I briefly speak with a teenage girl who is with someone – possibly her boyfriend.

I reach my street more quickly than expected. I realise that this is because my street curves around and intersects this road twice. If I go this way I won't have to walk the whole way back. I don't know this end of the street at all, but I am pretty sure this is the right way.

I enter what I think is my house, and encounter some stairs which seem to endlessly descend. I am a little nervous, and part of me thinks, "This isn't right; I should go back the other way." But I keep going forward because I can't be bothered going back. I push away my fear, and the intuitive knowledge that I am walking into something big, and continue tentatively to step downwards. As often happens for me, a part of me knows I am dreaming. The knowledge that this is a "Descent Dream" keeps growing at the edge of my awareness, until, about halfway down, I decide I am going to descend consciously and stop playing games with myself. I know that when I reach the bottom of the stairs I will be in the Underworld and encounter Kali,⁶ and I will look her straight in the face.

I am nervous, but it is not awful. I keep thinking I will not be able to stay present to my nervousness, that fear will overwhelm me, and that I will turn back, or else return to a lack of consciousness of what is happening. But I do stay present to myself and my nervousness, and I reach the Underworld. The figure of Kali emerges from the dark. All I see, though, is her cape, the turning of her face towards me, and a huge third eye.

Research Journal Excerpt, 28/08/2010

This dream, which took place very early in the research process, reminded me of the mythic story of *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld* (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983), the land of the dead below the earth, the place from which no one returns and where the dead eat dust and clay for eternity (C. Barratt, 2007).⁷ *Inanna's Descent*, as I will refer to it from now on, is one of the roughly five thousand year old stories, many of which could be described as quest myths, and poems⁸ about the Ancient Sumerian

⁶ Kali is the Hindu goddess of destruction. She thundered angrily through my dreams in my twenties, after I encountered images of her on a visit to India. I associate Kali with Ereshkigal, the "Queen of the Underworld" who Inanna encounters in the story *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld* (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983), only to me Kali is even more fearsome.

⁷ Despite the bleakness of this description, C. Barratt argues that Sumerians held a much more complex and contradictory range of views about death than is usually thought, and believed they had some influence over the quality of their future, or their relative's current, experience in Ereshkigal's realm.

⁸ The words "poem" and "story" are often used somewhat interchangeably when speaking about Sumerian literature. This is because stories are written in poetic form, and even shorter poems often seem to tell a story.

goddess which make up the subject matter of my research. Often speaking to its audience of hidden or lost knowledge, embodiment, and of different ways of being and knowing, it is the best known of Inanna's stories, and probably the most often written about in fields such as feminist psychotherapy (e.g. Cargill, K, & Cargill, A, 1992; Cargill, K, 2004; Perera, 1981; Kimmitt, 2000) and feminist spirituality (e.g. Rigby, 2001; Stuckey, 2005). By entering the Underworld, considered by many to symbolise the unconscious mind (Perera, 1981; Tchana, 2006; Lickus Cravens, 1999), and looking into Kali's third eye, a yogic concept relating to being able to see that which is hidden, I could be said to have expressed my intent to seek knowledge. By dreaming of descent I imagined myself into Inanna's role, identifying myself as quester, and my imminent interstate move – the purpose of which was to immerse myself in my research – as quest of descent.

Introduction

Background

My research quest is an autoethnographic practice-led exploration investigating some of the ways in which Ancient Sumerian stories and poems about the goddess Inanna speak to the lives of contemporary women through a feminist lens.

This intentionally broad topic was chosen to facilitate exploratory research. Given that Inanna's stories in particular, and Ancient Sumerian literature in general, are relatively unknown, an exploratory approach was chosen to allow connections between the various sources of primary and secondary data from a range of disciplines to emerge and for the research to develop and follow emerging lines of inquiry. Some parameters and clarifications are nonetheless appropriate.

An explanation of the sources and historical contexts of Inanna's stories, and some of what they may signify, is explored in more detail in later sections of the Introduction, as is the idea of my research as a quest. My approach to, and choice of, autoethnographic and practice-led methodologies is explored in more detail in Chapter 1. Before proceeding to these sections, I will speak to my claim that Inanna's stories are "relatively unknown", provide an explanation of my positioning in relation to feminist theories, and clarify my parameters around the term "contemporary women".

Any google search on the word "Inanna" will reveal a plethora of listings and links. Additionally Inanna's stories have been retold in a number of ways in a number of countries; have influenced art in various modalities, some fields of academic, and

not-so-academic inquiry, all of which I discuss in more detail later. Despite this, at least in Australia, I argue that knowledge of Inanna's stories has limited reach, and only a very limited range of the stories are known. Anecdotally, most people I meet have never heard of Inanna, or even Ancient Sumer, the land from which the stories come. This holds true regardless of whether I am in an academic environment,⁹ at a party, about to perform and asking my audience, or if I just get talking to a stall holder at a market. In other words as I move through a variety of environments and interact with people from a range of backgrounds, few, if any know that Sumer existed or that there is such a thing as Sumerian literature. This occurs even amongst those who are interested in literature, mythology, and ancient history, fields which one might imagine to be influenced by knowledge of these stories. Many or most of these people would at least have heard of some of the major mythological characters from Greek and Roman mythology, and would know that Ancient Greek and Rome existed. Some even have a very deep interest in these more recent mythologies. I find this state of affairs unfortunate given my contention, which I argue within my thesis, that Ancient Sumer and its stories are equally important historically to the development of Western culture, and very likely to other living cultures as well.¹⁰ And, while this is anecdotal evidence, it is anecdotal evidence gathered across various states in Australia, as I have travelled and moved around, and even when I travelled internationally to conferences.

That Inanna's stories seem to be unknown by most people, even in a casual way, prevents the meanings and clarifications they may provide for our understandings of

⁹ Including a storytelling conference.

¹⁰ I speak to this a little when I cite Kali, a Hindu goddess, as being in some ways similar to Ereshkigal. My explanation of 'informal folkloric transmissions' in Chapter 3 gives some explanation as to how this could happen.

ourselves and our culture/history from entering into contemporary discourses, except amongst a relatively limited circle of people such as those interested in modern day paganism/goddess worship and those with certain approaches to feminist psychotherapy.¹¹ Thus, like much of female history, and in fact feminist studies, they are often siloed to these special interest areas and do not enter a more general knowledge. This research cannot, of course, single-handedly correct this. However it will, through the very process of the research itself which involved performances,¹² and through future performances of some of the material in both academic and non-academic environments, be part of the process of introducing the stories to a wider audience.

Additionally, most of those who *do* know of Inanna, generally only know of *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*¹³ and occasionally on one or two other stories - usually those included in the publication *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (Wolkstein & Kramer, 1983).¹⁴ While this source was the starting point also for my research, through discussions with archaeologists and other specialists (e.g. a cuneiform tablet specialist) I became aware of a large number of additional stories and poems, many of which have not been published in any easily comprehensible or accessible form. I speak of this in more detail in Chapter 2, and throughout the body of the thesis I discuss some of the painstaking

¹¹ I discuss those who have responded to Inanna's stories in more detail shortly.

¹² These include in-progress performances to selected audiences, one final performance open to the public, and a performance to an international conference.

¹³ Usually referred to as *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld*.

¹⁴ It is interesting to note that the story of Gilgamesh, a male quest myth, is from the same part of the world around the same time and is often identified as "the first story" or "the oldest story" (e.g. <http://www.shmoop.com/gilgamesh/>, Shmoop Editorial Team, 2008; http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/engl257/ancient/epic_of_gilgamesh.htm). While I have not dated items of Sumerian literature in relation to each other, there are several reasons that I suspect Gilgamesh is a later story than some of those about Inanna.

processes by which I attempted to piece together and make sense of some of these stories through cross referencing different interpretations and translations, and drawing on my knowledge of imagery and symbolism in other better known stories; about the challenges creating song formats from the often fragmented texts, and the ways in which my responses to the contextual information about these texts also influenced my songwriting.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I also speak of how this period of time - during which I came to realise there were many additional stories - contributed to the evolution of my research. Ultimately I come to understand that there were so many versions of Inanna in antiquity, and so many contemporary readings of who or what she represents/represented, that I challenge the simplistic idea of restoring and presenting a single Inanna. Instead I map out some of the complexities of the culturally mediated ways in which some women, including me, relate and/or respond to Inanna, and in particular the theme of how this connects to our relationship with our bodies and our selves. I draw on and challenge some of the former uses Inanna has been put to culturally, in particular feminist uses, in a manner that is informed by my analyses of contextual evidence and these additional stories.

I consider this a feminist piece of research, then, at least in part because the lens through which I interpret Inanna's stories and poems is influenced by – and analyses - the ways in which feminists before me have interpreted and reconstructed them. Additionally I search for ways in the stories and poems may support and illuminate my own attempts to navigate the tricky waters of gender identity, expression and my desire for what I consider to be an ephemeral concept of gender equality. I invite and

challenge my audiences to enter into the same processes of questioning, deconstruction and reconstruction. I then bring my perceptions into conversation with other women, and some men, through discussion forums following performances. Thus I integrate the understandings of participants into my own understandings – and weave them through the exegesis – so that they indirectly influence my ever evolving readings of the stories. As such, this research can be read as a feminist ethnography which interrogates some of the ways that “gender operates within [] societ[y]” (Aune, 2012, p.1). By doing this it hopefully in some small way contributes towards the broader feminist movement to “end women’s oppression” (hooks, 2006, p.26 cited in Mikkola, 2012).

The term feminism can encompass many meanings, and my background training as a music therapist predisposes me to attempt to find a way of seeing the truth in each, rather than decide which one is ultimately correct. As a result I have attempted to embed a range of possible interpretations into at least some parts of my performances to also allow audiences to project and elicit their own meanings. Likewise my positioning as a feminist is perhaps not fixed so much as holding some core ideas which are pliable as I attempt to incorporate new ideas when I encounter them.

Effectively I support a fluid notion of gender, one which is neither essentially tied to sex identification, but is nonetheless in a rich and complex relationship to it. Like Harraway (1994) I see value in the attempt to reconcile binaries around our constructed and essential physical realities. Like Alcoff (2006, as cited in Mikkola, 2012) I recognise the paradox of too broad and fluid a definition of the term ‘woman’ which, while inclusive, can leave the feminist movement with no united identity - no recognised group of people for whom we seek release from oppression in its various guises. Likewise like Alcoff, I embrace the concept that, despite oppression, self-

identification as “woman” is a source of positive self-identity for many. Like Stoljar (2000, cited in Mikkola, 2012) I also think that a cluster concept is a useful way of thinking, but accept that it still does not entirely resolve the problem.

My goal in this research was not to reconstruct a helpful definition of woman, but to deconstruct and reconstruct Inanna’s stories and their appropriations in a way that allows us to grapple with the complexities and the ways they relate to our own lives.

I also conceptualise my version of feminism in terms of both the need to reclaim devalued qualities associated with female gender, such as nurturing and receptiveness, and achieve equality within the world as it is. In this I see the liberal and material ends of the feminist spectrum as another binary in need of reconciliation or integration.

Many of the appropriations of Inanna’s stories, especially those that relate to *Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld* (Perera, 1981; Tchana, 2006; Lickus Cravens, 1999), speak to this idea of reclaiming a positive sense of gender identity, or ‘finding a feminine voice’. In fact I would say that what Inanna reclaims as she descends are not only qualities that are devalued by society because they are associated with women, but qualities that women repress because society considers them inappropriate for women. I retain this idea in my retelling of *The Descent*, as I prefer to call it. I shall label the story thus for the remainder of the exegesis.

As well as being a warrior for reclaiming devalued “feminine” qualities, the Inanna I discovered is a warrior seeking equality in the world as it is, however flawed that world may be. In my overarching storyline I paint Inanna as foolishly attempting to achieve patriarchal power before descending to the underworld to reclaim the devalued “feminine”. This narrative arch does imply that I consider the reclaiming

process as more important than striving for equality within the dominant paradigm, further suggesting that my feminist stance leans towards the social change end of the spectrum. This is true to a point, and it is not till Inanna completes the descent that she truly sees the faults in the way the world is structured. However for me it is in the lack of resolution in Inanna's ascent to the external world, still predominantly patriarchal, that for me the real creative juice of the story lies. In the conclusion I tease out some of the difficulties in attempting to bring knowledge from the Underworld – which is often seen as the unconscious – into the external world without losing the new understandings and capitulating to patriarchal values, but still surviving and even thriving in that world which will not instantly change simply to suit us. In my own life, where I have felt myself to have predominantly lived in an Underworld state (by which I mean depressed and/or in introspection seeking inner wisdom), it is the stories of the external, succeeding-in-the-world version of Inanna to whom I felt I needed to connect.

Given the complexities, some of which I have identified, in defining the term “woman”, and the criticism of several authors about the ethnocentric nature of many definitions supplied by white middle class female scholars (e.g. Spelman, 1988 in Mikkola, 2012), the “contemporary women” whose responses to Inanna's stories are included in this thesis are predominantly, to my knowledge, white, middle class, cis-gendered and straight. They include the women who, alongside an occasional man, participated in the post-performance discussion forums, as well as the women whose academic texts and artworks I read and analysed. These limits were not so much chosen as decided by the literature I found, and the people in my circles who responded to the invitations to participate.

However, in using the term I do not mean to imply that I speak for all contemporary women, this I feel would be patronising and impossible. I can only ever truly speak for myself, and contextualise my voice within some wider frames of reference. Instead, the term “contemporary” was chosen to highlight the gap in time between the historical context of stories, which are approximately five thousand years old, and the contemporary contexts in which I am exploring their resonances. Thus I use the word “contemporary” somewhat broadly to refer not only to the postmodern environment in which I am writing, but also to be inclusive of relevant scholarship and artwork that has emerged since the (re)discovery of the stories approximately one hundred and fifty years ago.

This scholarship and artwork is derived largely from outside Australia, and so I did not narrow my term down to “contemporary Australian women”. Additionally, my use of the word “women” does not mean that I ignore the responses and input of men – there are of course male scholars included in my contextual research, and there were on occasion men in my discussion forums – but rather that the impact of the stories on women, the ways in which the stories “speak” to us, is the main focus of the research. The existence of a powerful female goddess in antiquity raises many questions around the ways in which women have been perceived, and perceive ourselves, throughout history. Several of these are discussed within the thesis.

As a contemporary woman, I am a participant in my own study and, as researcher and creative practitioner, the filter through which the responses of other contemporary women are interpreted. My address to the research question is presented in part through this written exegesis which, combined with my live

performance *Restoring Inanna*, forms my thesis. The live musical storytelling performance took place in December 2012 at the Hayman Theatre at Curtin University in Perth and is documented in the attached DVD.

Before further describing the parameters of my research quest, and my reasons for conducting it in the manner I did, I will provide some contextualising background about Inanna, Sumer, and relevant contemporary thought as justification for the need of such a quest to discuss and frame my discussion.

Inanna and her stories and poems

Stories and poems of the goddess Inanna are well represented amongst the ‘rich literature’ (Kramer, 1963) of Ancient Sumer that was inscribed on clay tablets some five thousand years ago. Sumer, which existed in the fertile delta between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that is part of present day Iraq, was rediscovered by archaeologists approximately one hundred and fifty years ago while digging for evidence of Babylonia (Kramer, 1956). The fragments of tablet containing cuneiform writing were initially scattered into different museums around the world, but in time the language was deciphered, and the tablets slowly and laboriously reassembled and translated (Kramer, 1983). The field of Sumerology, later subsumed into Assyriology or “Near East Studies”, was born.

Most tablets contained storage records, some contained contracts and legal agreements, but the stories and poems¹⁵ which were revealed by the painstaking restoration work of scholars such as Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer (1942, 1950, 1956, 1963, etc.) contributed to a growing realisation that Sumer was a culture with a level of organisational and artistic sophistication previously not understood to have existed that far back in history. They also revealed a goddess whose importance to Sumerian and later cultures has not only led to interest in, and speculation about, the roles and status of women in antiquity, but have also “spoken to” theories of feminist

¹⁵ The words ‘story’ and ‘poem’ are sometimes used interchangeably throughout the contextualising literature. The stories are written in a poetic style, and many of the shorter poems tell a short story.

psychology, psychotherapy, and spirituality (Kimmitt, 2000; Hannan, 2005; Grijalva, 2010; Rigby, 2001; Starhawk, 1987), and have influenced artworks in a range of modalities (e.g. Chicago, 1974; Lickus Cravens, 1999; Wolkstein, 2007).

In the early stages of Sumerian research, Zsolnay (2009) tells us, Inanna was thought to have been just “one of a multitude of deities” (p. 15). However, as the language became better understood, Inanna was revealed to be “no minor god” (p. 16). She is the central character in a series of “love-songs”; she was worshipped and/or evoked in incantations, rituals, and hymns; she appears in the great epics *Descent of Istar to the Netherworld*,¹⁶ *Epic of Gilgameš*, *Etana*, and in the various legends of the Early Dynastic (ED) kings; she is mentioned in proverbial wisdom collections and lamentations; and she appears in the royal inscriptions of almost every major Mesopotamian ruler.

Despite her greatness as a deity, in her stories Inanna often also seems like a young girl or woman. At least one of the women in one of my discussion forums¹⁷ did not realise there had been a deity in the stories I had told and at least one more had perceived the story to depict a young girl more than a goddess. This is congruent with Kramer’s (1963a) assertion that “The Sumerian gods, as illustrated graphically by the Sumerian myths, were entirely anthropomorphic; even the most knowing among them were conceived as human in form, thought, and deed” (p. 117). For various reasons, which I mention throughout the exegesis, I initially had reservations about working with stories about a goddess rather than an earthly woman, but the stories inspired me so strongly and this anthropomorphism made Inanna, in my opinion, a much more identifiable character than I originally imagined a goddess could be. Her divine powers, it has been said (e.g. Wolkstein, 1983), were earned through her questing, making them easy to associate with the developmental tasks that women encounter as we move through life; the tasks which, if met, increase our feelings of mastery and contribute to our sense of empowerment. It is, at least in part, for this reason that many psychotherapeutic theorists (e.g. Perera, 1981; Kimmitt,

¹⁶ *Istar*, or “Ishtar” as it is often written, is the Akkadian language name for “Inanna” (sometimes spelled “Inana”). Meador (2000), is amongst those who consider Ishtar to be a later manifestation of Inanna, but Zsolnay (2011, personal communication), refutes this, saying there has always been evidence that both words existed concurrently.

¹⁷ My research design is explained in more detail shortly.

2000) were inspired by Inanna's stories. Before beginning the research I met Katrina MacFerrin as a potential supervisor and summarised four of the stories to her. Her words (2008, personal communication) have echoed in my mind throughout the research: "That's every woman's story!"

Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer (1956a), who dedicated his life to translating Sumerian literature, attributes a number of cultural inventions to the Sumerians. These include literary debates, children's literature, tax reform, schools, agriculture, and horticulture, many of which he says were formerly believed to have been invented by the Greeks. While we cannot know if these inventions originated in Sumer, it is apparent that Sumer had a thriving literary, artistic, agricultural and structured society much earlier than the Greek, Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions with which we associate early Western cultural heritage¹⁸, and it has provided the earliest written literature of which we are currently aware (Adams, 1986).

A perception of the link between Sumer and Western cultural heritage is strengthened by the overwhelming sense when reading Inanna's stories of resonances between them and these later mythologies. For example, the appearance of a snake in Inanna's sacred garden in *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* appears to pre-empt the story of Adam and Eve, and Inanna herself is often considered an earlier version of Roman Venus and Greek Aphrodite, with the transition from Inanna to Aphrodite being traced by Marcovich (1996) in visual images on historical artefacts. It could therefore be argued that Inanna's stories, and indeed all of Sumerian literature, art and knowledge, are an important part of Western contemporary cultural heritage. Despite this, approximately one hundred and fifty years after Sumer was first discovered, and seventy years after Kramer predicted in a book first published in 1942 that "...the humanities will be enriched by one of the most magnificent groups of documents ever brought to light" (Kramer, 2007, p. 4), Sumer and Inanna remain relatively unheard of in Australia. I have often wondered during the research whether

¹⁸ There is perhaps some irony in the idea that Western cultural heritage may have arisen, or at least been strongly influenced, by a society that geographically existed in what we now consider "The Middle East". However, the concepts of "informal folkloric transmissions", discussed in detail in Chapter 3, demonstrate that stories and items of folklore (such as stories) do travel across time and place. Rather than mere appropriation, it is possible that patterns of migration and cultural displacement created geographically separate cultures with at least some common roots.

this is because many people associate them with fringe interest groups of the goddess movement.

The importance of story

According to many psychological theories, stories play an important role in constructing our sense of self – both the stories we are told, and the stories we create. Sturges (1993, p. 59), for example, states that “stories and myths are powerful forces in the creation of our ideas about self-concept and self-esteem”, and argues that stories which provide appropriate and authentic modelling of possible selves are important. McAdams (1996, p. 307, as cited in Tennant, 2006), contends that we use or create story to construct an enduring and integrated sense of self “that incorporates the reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future”. In other words we create a unified life story to give ourselves a sense of cohesiveness. Other theorists, for example Gergan and Kaye (as cited in Tennant, 2006), argue that the concept of a single integrated self is simplistic, and that in fact we create multiple stories and have multiple perceived and actual selves which we access and operate from in different environments. Nevertheless, what is consistent in these different approaches is the importance of the role of story in creating a sense of self. Therapies, such as “narrative therapy” (White & Epston, 1990) which seeks to assist people to ‘restory’ their life narratives to match their life experience, have grown from these kinds of theories.

The stories of Western culture have not well matched the lived experience of women, or provided good models upon which to build a sense of self. Sturges (1993) argues that the myths of Western culture have long represented women as ‘bad’ and/or in supporting roles. She reports a corresponding *negative* correlation between achievement and self-esteem in girls. “Where there are no religious stories depicting female creators” she argues, “we find that women are not seen as capable of any creation other than the physical creation of a child...” (p. 61). A participant in MacLaren’s (1991) research states the problem thus:

The trouble is women do not have a language to describe their experiences...when you have been encased in silence you learn a language from somewhere, of ‘putting up with it’, of ‘stoicism’, of ‘being good’ and

of 'making do'. It hasn't been till recently that I even had room in my consciousness to acknowledge that I actually have a story. I have been so busy living the world's script. The world sees you (woman) as living for and through other's stories, and somehow you take on the role of creators of stories for them (p. 100).

Gubar and Gilbert (as cited in MacLaren, p. 98) assert that "Women will starve in silence until new stories are created which confer in them the power of naming themselves".

I felt the need for such a quest in my own life, and it was in part my desire to embark on a creative quest of this nature that sent me looking for a myth with which to take it. Inanna's stories seemed to provide this.

Even the process of discovering and reassembling the tablets on which Inanna's stories were inscribed after they'd been buried under layers of earth for thousands of years spoke to me of the process many women (and men) go through to create/find our identities in the face of patriarchy. Our assigned gendered identity is often an uncomfortable fit, and who we are, represented here by Inanna and her buried stories, needs to be excavated from under the layers of culture and life experience. In the same way as the stories were discovered in fragments which were sent to museums in different parts of the world, and then painstakingly decoded and reassembled (Kramer, 1983), so we must dig into the buried places of ourselves to find and painstakingly piece together a more authentic identity.¹⁹ In asking the question 'how do the stories and poems of Inanna speak to contemporary women?', I began an excavation process which also asked the questions 'who is Inanna?', 'who are we?' and 'who am I?'; questions to which there is never one final and complete answer.

¹⁹ Many identity theorists (e.g. Bleakley, 2000) argue that the notion of an "authentic" identity is itself a construction, and that in fact we have multiple constructed identities. In a sense this goes back to the whole nurture/nature debate, and most psychologists would now agree that nurture and nature influence each other in an intricate and difficult to disentangle manner. My own stance within this rather large debate is that while it is hard to tell exactly what an 'authentic' identity is, there are certain ways of being and living that seems to 'fit' better for each individual, which are not always congruent with the individual's upbringing. Many feminists (e.g. F. Crawford, 1997) seem to prefer the concept that identity is constructed, probably because we do not wish to be told by someone else what our intrinsic nature is. My answer to this is that while stereotyped notions of gender identity are constructed, it is the sense that this "does not fit" (or the sense that our true identity is something other than the stereotype) that has led us to fight against it.

Quest myths

By speaking of Inanna's stories as 'quest myths' I am associating them with models for human development, as has been done in both psychotherapy and folkloric studies which, according to Dundes (1997), have developed in parallel.

There has been considerable study and analysis of male quest myths, sometimes also called "hero myths", but little of female ones. Segal (2000) describes the primary theorists as being Joseph Campbell (largely Jungian in approach), Otto Rank (largely Freudian) and Lord Raglan (a myth-ritualist). Alan Dundes (1997) has also done some work in this area. Campbell (1949) includes some female examples in passing, but describes their quests, however, in male terms. As a result, Kimmitt (2000) argues, the underpinning myths of our culture are male-centric,²⁰ and thus our dominant psychological development theories do not adequately speak to the lived experience of most women.

Female quest myths are relatively rare. Mythological stories with strong female protagonists like Inanna, whose power is great, and her own,²¹ are even rarer. Therefore, most quest myths could also be said to speak more to the lives of men than women. Additionally, women are often portrayed in mythic stories as the helpers rather than the questers. Drawing on a literature review, Kimmitt (2000) criticises the way in which theoretical analyses typically privilege the independence and aloneness aspects of the hero's journey, while ignoring the many forms of help the heroes receive, and the other relational aspects identifiable in the myths. These stereotypes of masculinity, she continues, are therefore promoted as the ideal model for adult development – male or female.

Kimmitt (2000) argues that this model leaves women in a double bind because we continue, even in contemporary life, to experience social censure for behaving in a feisty or autonomous manner, but are also considered lesser beings if we lack

²⁰ Kimmitt argues that the underpinning myths of Western culture are Christianity and Freudian theory, by which she means they form the unconscious bedrock of most of our cultural thought and judgement, regardless of whether or not we are Christian or versed in Freudian theory.

²¹ By this I mean her power is not derived from her relationship with a male as in many mythological stories, even those few, such as Psyche and Amor, where the female is the hero. Issues of power will also be unpacked in more detail throughout the exegesis.

independence and instead have a relational sense of self. Additionally, female characters in these myths tend to play supportive or secondary roles, excluding women from a sense of potential to achieve this prized autonomy. Kimmitt has attempted to redress this imbalance in psychological development theories with reference to *Inanna's Descent*. For, according to Sturges (1993), “in Inanna we find a fleshed out multi-faceted model for female development. She is not limited by our culture’s ‘feminine’ stereotypes, nor is she simply a copy of male deities. She belongs to herself, and celebrates her female nature in all its complexities” (p. 65).

Kimmitt (2000) is not alone in reading Inanna’s stories as an antidote to androcentric developmental theories. Wolkstein (1983) claims that Inanna gains her full divine powers through her quests, and further connects this questing process with the developmental tasks of a female lifespan. By doing so Wolkstein has created a cycle of stories which address both ‘first half of life questing’, or the process of reaching adulthood and establishing oneself in the world, and ‘second half of life questing’, or the process of finding deeper meaning which is typically believed to happen around midlife. According to Segal (2000) Freud only acknowledged first half of life questing, and Campbell only allowed for second half of life questing, while Jung allowed for both. Other authors (e.g. Perera, 1981; Caperton, 1983; Kimmitt, 2000; Starhawk, 1987; Hannan, 2005) also interpret one or more of Inanna’s stories as metaphors for female psychological development.

Following in this vein, in contemporary literature Mains (2005)²² equates quest myths with the search for identity. She says that for female protagonists they often involve the ‘slaying of dragons’, which signifies overcoming internal and external constraints imposed by patriarchy. While there are no actual dragons in Inanna’s stories, there are other creatures and obstacles, and I have come to see her quest, and perhaps all quests at some level, as a search for the parts of our identity lost in the context of present and past patriarchal social structures and attitudes, an idea which I will unpack throughout the exegesis.

²² This quote was taken from an online journal without page numbers. The article is cited several times.

Descent and Digging as a research frame and metaphor

By placing some of *Inanna's Descent* at the beginning of my exegesis, I am reflecting its position in my research journey. Perera (1981) states that one of the story's several functions is to act as a portal or initiation process into deeper wisdom (p. 13). For me it was the portal through which I passed to find the rest of the stories. It also became, to some extent, a portal through which I presented my research discoveries, both in the performance of *Restoring Inanna*, and in my exegesis: I came to realise at the time of writing the script for *Restoring Inanna* (see Appendix A) that no matter what else I had learned, my early perceptions of *Inanna's Descent* had remained, not always consciously, an important element of the lens through which all the stories spoke to me.

I had been looking for a quest myth to realise creatively, when I found Starhawk's *Truth or Dare* (1987) in my hands. Lured by tantalising glimpses of *Inanna's Descent*, and the quest it implied, amongst Starhawk's description of a contemporary spiritual/psychological healing ritual, I searched for more. At the Victorian State Library I discovered Wolkstein and Kramer's (1983) *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer*, a collection of four stories that together appeared to tell a more comprehensive story of a female lifespan. I was convinced that this collection provided the myth I had searched for, and it was with these four stories I formally began my research. Later I found many more, and the research changed shape. That story is revealed throughout this exegesis.

Starhawk (1987), and others (e.g. Perera, 1981; Kimmitt, 2000) place significance on Inanna's shedding of clothing and jewellery as she descends: in order to pass through Perera's portal and come face to face with Ereshkigal's knowledge of life and death, it seems, something must be shed. The idea of 'stripping back layers', in Inanna's case the trappings of patriarchal power, and in mine the layers of patriarchal conditioning, to find some kind of truth or knowledge, intuitively made sense to me.

An image I saw when I visited the Oriental Institute in Chicago on a research field trip made the concept viscerally present, aligning it with the idea of digging or excavating.

In the section of the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery closest to the museum entrance, I saw a diagram illustrating sixteen layers of superimposed temples that had all been built on the same site by succeeding cultures. The earliest was a simple one-room temple. With each layer the temples and structure became more elaborate and grand, the final being an imposing ziggurat, or temple complex, which housed many buildings. One could perhaps describe it as a visual representation of an architectural version of a Russian nesting doll. That small one-room temple could only be rediscovered after all the larger more recent layers had been stripped away. It was as if the archaeological discovery of Sumer, revealed in the deeper layers of a Babylonian dig, mirrored *Inanna's Descent*.

This image provided a metaphor for the research process. I saw my researcher self as digging into the layers of Inanna's stories (and their contexts and interpretations) to excavate meaning in much the same way as the archaeologists had dug into the layers of earth to find the tablets on which they were written. As Sumer was an older culture than Babylonia, Sumerian artefacts and architecture were, of course, in the deeper layers of the excavation site. Thus, layers of earth and artefacts from other cultures had to be physically dug through before the layers of earth associated with Sumer could be found. I felt that certain types of meanings about Inanna's stories had similarly been buried beneath layers of subsequent cultural thought that needed to be stripped away.

Description of research phases

My practice-led, autoethnographic, feminist quest to discover the ways in which Inanna's stories speak to contemporary women, including myself, involved a series of non-discrete iterative phases which overlapped, interacted and informed each other. Effectively four major creative production phases (which could be broken down into a series of more intense sub-sections and sub-phases) alternated and overlapped with more traditional styles of research. The final of these resulted in the performance *Restoring Inanna* which included excerpts, themes, personifications, and other edited creative ideas (including songs or parts of songs re-written into new songs) from all the earlier phases, as well as new material written specifically for the performance.

A **Literature and Contextual Review** began the process and continued throughout the research to allow for the cyclic nature of ‘interrogating and re-interrogating’ the stories, their historical context and contemporary resonances. Sometimes creative practice was influenced by what I had read as I reached for ways to allow certain possible interpretations to remain present in my performances, and sometimes my creative practice inspired me to look for more information as questions arose about the motivations of various characters and what may have inspired them to behave in a certain way.

When I speak of ‘context’, I refer not only to the historical context of the stories, but also contemporary recontextualisations, which involved exploring a range of fields upon which the stories of Inanna have had impact. Thus my reading encompassed a wide range of disciplines whose knowledge I needed to weave together in a meaningful way to inform my creative practice and be informed by it. As well as literature directly about Inanna, it included fields as diverse as: Sumerology and related disciplines; Mythology; Folklore (including song and story); Psychology/Psychotherapy; Literature Studies; Feminism; Religious Studies; writings about creative practice and research-related methods and methodologies; and creative literature which used the stories.

Likewise when I speak of contextual research, I speak not only of literature but also of viewing and reviewing artworks (visual, aural, audio-visual, and performative); visiting museums and galleries both for the actual information they provided as well as to get a sense of how information about Sumer is presented contemporarily; and discussions with Near East experts. Much of this took place in the USA in Philadelphia and Chicago, but I also visited the Brooklyn Museum in New York to see Judy Chicago’s *Invitation to Dinner* which includes place settings for Inanna and her Akkadian counterpart, Ishtar; and I saw displays of Sumerian artefacts in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin while there for a conference.

Creative Production phases were woven through the other phases of the research. Rather than one unified creative process, they involved a range of ‘sub-phases’ which used some or all of the following tools: a period (or periods) of intense

improvisation with a director; songwriting retreats; reading and rereading relevant portions of the text and any earlier translations; reworking of songs and text. The reasons for choosing the particular creative methods I chose, and combining them in the ways I did, will be explored in more detail in the methodologies chapter.

Originally a creative production phase was planned for each of the four stories in Wolkstein and Kramer's *Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Poems from Sumer* (1983). Each was to end with a 'trial performance', followed by a discussion forum (explained below). A final creative production period was intended to merge some of the work from these phases, all influenced by the knowledge gained through the interaction of story, performer and audience, in a manner suggested by what was discovered during the research. It was thought that the performance may present each story as a chapter in the goddess's life as suggested by Wolkstein and Kramer, or that some other format may emerge during the research process.

As my understanding of the source material changed, including my perception of how many stories there were and how they related to each other, this influenced the process. The first creative production phase focused on the story *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*, and the second on the love poetry, resulting in the performance *An Invitation to the Wedding of Inanna and Dumuzi*. Knowing that I could not explore all the newly discovered stories in the same depth as the first sets of material, both due to time constraints and the fact that less had been written about most of them, I decided for the third creative production process that in the sub-phase of improvisation with director, we would explore many of the remaining stories and some ideas for using *Inanna's Descent* as a structural element.²³ The performance for this production period involved me verbally telling several of the stories to a small group of people in a manner that encouraged storytelling and discussion to overlap, like the 'applied storytelling' described by Wilson (2006) in which the 'storyteller' uses story to facilitate story sharing rather than to be an expert performer.

²³ The reasons for using *Inanna's Descent* in this way are discussed at various places in the exegesis, and relate to the central role the story took in my own introduction to Inanna and her stories, as well as their central place in much of the re-contextualising literature.

The final creative production process involved long periods of script writing, songwriting and rewriting, and the general process of rehearsing and putting on the production.

Using pre-recruited audience members sourced from my social and collegial networks and those of my director, four post-performance **Discussion Forums** took place: two directly following the first two trial performances; one integrated into the third trial performance (see above); and the final one following a viewing of the DVD of *Restoring Inanna* with two of the audience members.²⁴ I also conducted two 1:1 interviews for some more detailed information.

These forums were intended to supplement the other forms of inquiry rather than provide the primary source of information about how the stories spoke to contemporary women, and as such were not attempting to provide a representative cross section of all contemporary women, or even all contemporary Australian women. Rather, they functioned as a key element in investigating the feedback loop between story, storyteller/researcher, and receiver of the story. According to McKay and Dudley (1996) a story changes each time it is told in response to both the storyteller's mood and changing perceptions of the story; and the response of the audience in the moment. Thus, while it was beyond the scope of this study to do full data analyses of the information, the discussions allowed me a greater insight into some audience reactions, focused the group's awareness more deeply into how the stories spoke to us, and provided me with research data to widen my understandings and thinking beyond my own responses and thus autoethnographically place my perceptions in a broader social context. This broadening of perception in turn influenced my ongoing development of telling and retelling the stories.

The groups were comprised of mainly women, although men were included on two occasions: my male director and one other man.

Care was taken to create a trusting and open environment, confidentiality, and to observe the required ethics. Participants were encouraged as far as possible to focus

²⁴ The reason for this number of people was simply that only two people were available to participate at the time.

their comments on their responses to the stories, rather than their evaluation of the performance per se, although evaluations and feedback of this nature were also gratefully received. In order to maintain a sense of interaction between storyteller and audience I facilitated the discussions myself using an open ended model based loosely on the folkloric research model described by Graeme Seal (2010, personal communication).

Where mention is made of these discussions in the exegesis, the forums are numbered according to the chronological order in which they took place. “Discussion Forum 2” for example, refers to the second forum which took place; the one following the trial performance of *An Invitation to the Wedding of Inanna and Dumuzi* (2011). Pseudonyms have been used and participants have been consulted for their approval of the way in which I represent their comments. Likewise, where I have quoted informal spontaneous discussions or given personal communication references, I have sought and received permission from the relevant people.

I kept a **Reflexive Journal** throughout the research to record my cognitive, emotional and bodily responses to: the other aspects of the research process; my creative decisions; and other elements of my life that may or may not later appear to have relevance to the research. In this way I was able to track some of the ways in which my interpretations of the myth were impacted upon by context and audience response, make note of which methods of communicating the story were working best and document ways in which the myth may have been speaking to my own life.

Reflective journaling is recommended by several writers as an important process in practice-led research (e.g. de Freitas, 2002), and in autoethnography (e.g. McIlveen, 2008; Ellis and Bochner, 2000). I took Webber’s (2009) advice to treat the journal as confidential, in the same way as I would data from any other participant, so as not to censor what I write for my imaginary audience. The issue of ‘how much of myself to leave in or leave out’ (Holman Jones, 2005) could then be decided when writing the exegesis, at which time I would have more distance and could consider the potential loss of privacy consequences to myself, or any people who I may mention or make

associations with in my reflections. For this reason I have not included my journal as an appendix, but have included some excerpts in the text of the exegesis.

While my intention was to make a daily entry, the rigours of being performer, scriptwriter, songwriter, researcher, and decision maker meant at times I had to make prioritising decisions about how to use my time and energy. Often, for example, as a performance became close, I had to decide between a script rewrite or line memorisation, and a journal entry. As a result I would sometimes make a rough note as a memory trigger, and write about the process in more detail later. Reflective recall can be yet another process in making sense of how the material speaks.

Exegetical Writing took place between creative production phases as a method of understanding, collating and interpreting knowledge, as well as in a larger block following the performance of *Restoring Inanna*. Writing, according to Richardson (2003) is more than a “mopping up activity at the end of a research project”, it is also “a method of inquiry, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic..., a way of knowing...[and] a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable” (p. 499). Despite this, given I engaged in a final discussion forum following *Restoring Inanna*, and given I wished to speak of the performance in my exegesis, much of my exegesis was written following the performance. However, through the research, the process of writing articles and pieces of exegetical writing helped me to develop my ideas and understandings about the material I was researching. Some of this writing was used, but more often the ideas were condensed into new pieces of writing in which my ideas had further developed.

Structure of performance

While a script was eventually developed for the first two trial performances and *Restoring Inanna* (see Appendices A, B and C), performance creation was not a process of writing a script and then rehearsing it, but rather of devising a performance in the space, which was then committed to a script as it tightened up. The reasons for this were twofold: firstly, this was the particular skill and habitual

process used by my chosen director;²⁵ and secondly, this studio process was an important research method of data creation. Embodied encounters with the material helped me discover things about how it spoke to me. Ereshkigal, for example, became a motherly/sisterly character who both loved Inanna, and hated and resented her for not understanding the wisdom she, Ereshkigal, was attempting to offer. This way of feeling Ereshkigal came through embodied connections to feelings I was having about my own family at the time, and influenced my writing of *Ereshkigal's Song of Grief* which opened Act 3 of *Restoring Inanna*. The studio process also helped me to discover what was and was not working before I committed it to script: it helped unstick my mind when I felt stuck and unsure where to go. As a result, the structure for *Restoring Inanna* was in part determined by studio process. But it was also determined by my ideas as to how the stories fitted together and by my discovery that there were many more stories than I originally realised. I had to make some serious choices about what to include, and what to exclude, and I had been advised by one of my first supervisors that it is better “to do more about less” (Seal, 2010, personal communication.).

At this point I had already completed my first two trial performances, and it was clear to me that it was easily possible for either of these topics to be at the centre of an entire PhD. I saw endless possibilities for creative exploration and contextual inquiry in each, and my creative-self longed to realise them. But, I had also read and thought about many other stories, not least *Inanna's Descent* which had guided my thinking and been the focus of much of my early contextual reading, and I wondered if it might be more logical, given one of my goals was to introduce Inanna's stories to a wider audience,²⁶ to choose one or more of the lesser known ones. Becoming aware of the existence of these lesser known stories was, after all a very significant element in shaping my thinking about my research.

²⁵ I chose to work with the particular director I did for several reasons. I was a novice at performance creation, and Robin Davidson had much experience in it, both professionally as a performer and director, but also with various community groups of likewise inexperienced actors. Additionally, because my research was motivated by personal reasons, much of the exploration I did took me into very vulnerable feelings, and I needed to work with someone I knew and trusted to feel safe enough to go there.

I had also started to realise the extent to which my interpretation of each individual story was influenced by my knowledge of other stories. Some stories, in their fragmented and incomplete form,²⁷ felt like intriguing puzzles, and some only made sense to me when I applied knowledge of imagery and symbolism of Sumerian literature I had gained when studying another story. To choose one or two stories would not really reflect the research I had done, or the way the stories had come to speak to me in an interconnecting web of associations. This web of associations, I realised, was in itself an address to my research question: it was how the stories were speaking to me, as an example of a contemporary woman. I decided my performance needed to present this ‘bigger picture’.²⁸ I felt I needed to construct my vision before I could even develop criteria for choosing where to focus more intensely, something which would need to wait for future research.

To bring the stories together into a larger framework and create an overarching narrative would not require as much in-depth creative practice work with each story as I had given to the first two creative production phases. Some stories could be told verbally in a more traditional oral storytelling style;²⁹ some could be presented as a song;³⁰ some could use another way of combining spoken word and music;³¹ and others may be told in part³² or in some other alternative manner.³³

The process began with an improvisational phase with director Robin Davidson. As well as working with individual stories, sometimes re-contextualising them into modern contexts,³⁴ I improvised being Inanna in descent and placing one story at

²⁷ Due to damaged or not completely restored tablets.

²⁸ This narrative is my own, and not one I imagined was intended by the original authors of the stories.

²⁹ An example of this would be the story of *Inanna and Enki* told at the fourth gate of *Inanna's Descent* in Act 2, p. 162 of Appendix A.

³⁰ An example of this is *Earth is Mine*, based on the story *Inanna and An*, and sung at the first gate of *Inanna's Descent* in Act 2, p. 155 of Appendix A.

³¹ An example of this approach can be seen in my retelling of *Inanna and Ebih*, retold at the second gate of *Inanna's Descent* in Act 2, p. 159 of Appendix A, where the story is introduced with a song, and then retold over the backing of the song which is slowly faded out.

³² Although *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* was explored in some detail in the first creative production phase, only an edited version of it was included in *Restoring Inanna*, in the second half of Act 1.

³³ An example of a way in which I used a story in a different manner was with *Inanna and Sukaletuda* where at the beginning of Act 2 I semi-improvised a melody to some pre-written text in a quasi-operatic, quasi-screaming belt voice. This was interspersed with personal anecdotes and commentary. Much of the story was acted out as if in real time, and some was told by a narrator as if in past tense. The point of view was skewed by telling it largely in Inanna's voice.

³⁴ For example, Robin suggested I improvise *Inanna and An* as a story of a modern corporate takeover. On each occasion, I did this in character as Inanna, the first time taking over from an

each gate as a flashback. This approach became a big part of the structure I eventually decided on for the final performance.

The three-act structure was something that emerged in the scriptwriting phase. The more I experimented with trying to realise my interconnected web into something performable, the more I came to realise that in my mind the material fell into three parts: the material which set up the ‘problem’ - an unhealthy imbalance in the Inanna/Dumuzi relationship;³⁵ Inanna’s attempt to redress the problem through her descent quest; and the problems raised in attempting to ascend. I knew it was an ambitious format for a one-woman show, and I did experiment with finding other places to break so as to only have two acts, but there were certain moments that needed to open or close an act, such as Inanna’s death at the end of Act 2, and the wedding at the beginning of Act 1. It was how the material spoke to me, and I knew that until I had written it that way, I would not be able to write it any other way. It was a creative and structural risk, but my entire PhD project seemed to be about stretching myself into new creative territory: if I was ever to take such a risk, my PhD seemed the time to do it.

Much material was taken, sometimes in large chunks but mostly in edited form, from the trial performances. Most of Act 1, for example, was created by taking chunks from the first two trial performances. Some material was a combination of new and old material, such as *Ereshkigal’s Song of Grief*. I knew from previous improvisation that I wanted Ereshkigal to sing with a lowish operatic voice, and for her grieving melody to begin on a note that was a tritone³⁶ above a cry-like vocal drone,³⁷ and I had already imagined the melody. The lyrics, however, were new, written to fit the place in the text that the song would be sung. The tritone interval was contrasted with

incompetent father who would not give me a seat at the table, the second time as the corporate leader interviewing my father who wanted a seat on the board after being deposed. I discovered much about Inanna’s frustration at being patronised and underestimated that found its way into the way I played the story in *Restoring Inanna*, which was a challenge to the way Inanna’s actions are usually interpreted as being surly and childish (Karahashi, 2004). As Inanna in this scenario, I also discovered unexpected feelings of empathy for my poor lost father which didn’t find their way into the performance, because the story did not proceed to that point in the script.

³⁵ I discuss this in some detail throughout the exegesis.

³⁶ A tritone in music, an augmented fourth or diminished fifth, is exactly half an octave, and has a jarring, some would say ugly sound, although I personally love it and its crunchy feeling. It was once considered forbidden in music and known as the ‘devil’s interval’.

³⁷ A ‘drone’ in music is a continuously sounded single note against which a melody will move creating moments of tension and relief. It is the simplest form of harmony.

the section where Ereshkigal chants a feminist interpretation of history of the Sumerian pantheon: here the melody is mostly in unison.³⁸ This section was largely taken from a song that had been written for the first performance of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*, but which was not included in *Restoring Inanna*.

Some material was entirely newly written. As a result I entered the final rehearsal period with large bits of untried and un-memorised text, some of which was edited and even completely rewritten during that time. It is for that reason that the ‘scholarly Raelene’ character who read from the podium was created, to slightly lessen the burden of memorisation.

There are some pieces of material written for the final performance that were created from small scraps of contextual material. Inanna’s description of a measuring rod at gate six, for example, was based on some speculations about what a measuring rod and line may be (Black & Green, 1992), and the story of Inanna and Dumuzi’s relationship break down was created to provide a reason that the land had become barren leading to the rape of Inanna, which was the catalyst, in my version, for her descent.

Appendix D gives a breakdown of the acts and the stories that are represented within them.

My Quest

In my practice-led, autoethnographic, feminist quest to discover the ways in which Inanna’s stories speak to contemporary women, my digging tools were not picks and shovels but the collection of creative and more traditional research methods I chose. These included storytelling, songwriting, contextual research, discussion forums; and research journaling. Given the centrality of story in my research, and the fact that according to Kramer (1983) Inanna’s stories most likely developed from an oral storytelling tradition, story and storytelling seems a logical unifying concept for my methodological approach and the methods I used within them.

³⁸ Unison means ‘on a note of the same pitch’.

My research was conceived as being in the domain of story: the telling and retelling of stories, the stories behind the stories (context), the impact of story upon people, and of people upon story. I sought to re-enter the stories that comprise the myth into an evolving process of oral storytelling, using songwriting as a key element, and exploring other performative methods such as improvisation, narration, character development, humour and mime. Through this process I hope to introduce Inanna's stories to a wider audience via a thought provoking and entertaining performance that maintains some of the possible layers of meaning, but interprets the stories through a new lens which is influenced by the interactive process of personal and cultural, performer and audience, story and context; to contribute to relevant contemporary discourses; and to bring together knowledge from a range of fields.

Chapter 1

Methods and Methodology

Story in methodology

Methodologically, autoethnography is described by many theoreticians as a storytelling approach to research. Reed-Danahay (1997), for example, claims that autoethnography foregrounds story as a meaning making exercise and McIlveen (2008, p. 3) says that autoethnography is a form of narrative analysis in which “the researcher takes story as data and analyses it as such...in narrative analysis storying is the method which ultimately aims to produce a story pertaining to the research interest and objective”. In other words he describes it as an approach to research which uses story(ing) as data, method and outcome.

Autoethnography generally “entails some form of autobiographical storying” (McIlveen, 2008, p. 7) which has ethnographic interest (Reed-Danahay, 1997), involves analysis and interpretation, and must consider “the way narrative inquiry illuminates the social and theoretical contexts in which we position our inquiries” (p. 124). Given my research involves considering the meaning made of storied material from a lost ancient culture in a contemporary setting, this approach to my research material seems ideal. It is also a valuable tool for feminist research. According to Ettore (2005) it provides opportunities for “finding (a) lost feminist voice” (p. 544) and, through the device of allowing a sub-culture to define itself, is perceived by theoreticians such as Pratt (1991) and Lionnet (1990) as a challenge to a colonising interpretation of that sub-culture by the dominant culture.

Holman Jones (2005, p. 764) says: “Autoethnography works to hold self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis. Autoethnography writes in a world in a state of flux and movement – between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement. It creates charged moments of clarity connection and change”. Thus it is also a useful tool for making the cross-cultural comparisons between contemporary culture and Sumer, my personal observations and responses and contextualising them in a broader social milieu.

Autoethnography is sometimes criticised for its use of the subjective voice as this is seen as reducing its authoritativeness. As a methodology which is practiced in a range of ways, even some advocates of the method warn against the potential dangers of research which is self-absorbed and lacking in broader relevance when autoethnography is practiced in a purely autobiographical form (e.g. Tomaselli, Dyll, & Francis, 2008; Holt, 2003). However, it is through the honest acknowledgement of the researcher's subjective point of view that autoethnography seeks to avoid the colonising effects of 'false objectivity', recognising that it is impossible to view any topic from outside the lens of the cultural, social, and personal experiences we bring to our vision and that the 'objective view' is usually just the subjective view of the dominant culture.

Rather than seeking to be a definitive expert on a topic, the autoethnographer seeks to be one voice, albeit an informed, thoughtful and rigorous one, in a broader cultural conversation (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Issues of relevance and broader interest are addressed by the continual movement of gaze from the personal to the cultural (Holman Jones, 2005), which I have attempted to do through creating links between my own perceptions and experiences and my wide contextual reading and involvement of participants.

Autoethnography is compatible with practice-led research as both allow for the involvement of the researcher as participant, include embodied knowledge and life experience as valid forms of data, and allow for creative research output. According to de Freitas (2002) practice-led research is "... research in which creative practice plays the most important role in the cluster of research methods used" and in which the creative work functions as a legitimate research outcome. Bartleet and Ellis (2009) argue that in Australia the potential of music as a research output, rather than simply a researched topic, has been underutilised. The potential of music to engage an audience emotionally as well as intellectually, they say, makes it highly compatible with the goals of autoethnography.

Story as method

“Storytelling is one of the most ancient of the folk arts and is still alive and well in the 20th century...” (Davey & Seal, 2003, pp. 240-241). Stories have been used to teach and transmit cultural information (Seal, 1989) in oral traditions, and continue to be used as such a manner in oral and written form in contemporary times, particularly with children, and particularly in indigenous cultures (Davey & Seal, 2003). It continues to be an important means of recording and maintaining cultural identities, and for learning about other cultures. Through such learning we find the means “to offer worthwhile and interesting critiques of our own society; to enlighten [ourselves] about other human possibilities, [and] engender... an awareness that we are merely one pattern among many...” (Marcus & Fisher, 1999, p. ix, as cited in Tomaselli et al., 2008 p. 348).

Despite the centrality of story to this research, from a praxis perspective I entered this project as a performing singer songwriter, with an academic and professional background in the allied health field of music therapy,³⁹ a practice in which I was often involved in helping others use music to explore and express themselves. Thus the idea of practice-led research in which I used music to both explore my question and express the responses to my explorations intuitively made sense to me. Thus part of my exploration was about the various ways in which song and story may be combined.

My interest in the nexus of story and music is longstanding. One of the reasons I am so passionate about music and song/singing lies in its potential to convey story in a meaningful way, often connecting us more directly with emotional elements. Two research participants in my first discussion forum spontaneously commented on this, saying the songs had brought the story and the characters to life.

³⁹ The music therapy profession researches links between passive and active music activities that are supported and guided by a registered music therapist, and health and development. Music therapists must successfully complete an approved tertiary course of study, currently at Master’s Degree level, and meet the skill set requirements of the Australian Music Therapy Association (AMTA). For more information see <http://www.austmta.org.au/>

I began to explore ways of weaving oral storytelling into my performances when I was invited to perform as a storyteller,⁴⁰ and advised to weave storytelling and music, at one of Australia's largest folk festivals, Woodford Folk Festival in QLD in (2002/3). Here, I met many very skilled storytellers, such as the effervescent Jenni Cargill-Strong, and realised that storytelling for adults was a vibrant skill that I wished to develop. Cargill-Strong is primarily an oral storyteller, but sometimes includes snatches of song in her performances, one of which is a retelling of *Inanna's Descent*.⁴¹ This is one way in which song and storytelling are sometimes combined.

Conversely, oral storytelling is often woven into the craft of singer-songwriters. Many of my strongest singer songwriter-ly influences, mostly contemporary folk performers on the international circuit such as Kristina Olsen, David La Motte (both from the USA), and Nano Stern (Chile), are accomplished troubadours who not only tell stories through their songs, but also tell verbal stories between songs. The sung stories are often taken from the performer's own life, or conversely tell of people and situations the performers have encountered in their travels. The degree to which the stories are fictionalised varies. Some songwriters, for example England's Vin Garbutt and Canada's James Keelaghan write songs that recount, often lesser known, historical stories from their own countries,⁴² and occasionally there are songs that retell myth, such as Anne Lister's Icarus, re-told from the perspective of Icarus's lover watching on as he attempts to "touch the sky" (Lister, 1980).

These methods of weaving together story and song described so far are a simple inclusion of elements of one craft in a performance of the other. My own exploration of ways to integrate music and storytelling more strongly is also not unprecedented.

From the storytelling side, Diane Wolkstein's DVD, *Inanna: at the American Museum of Natural History* (2007), shows her in a live storytelling performance of her quartet of Inanna stories, accompanied by a musician who has composed what could perhaps best be described as mood and sound effect backing music. Although I

⁴⁰ I had no previous experience, but had met the co-ordinator of the spoken word programming who felt I had the skills.

⁴¹ Sadly I have not seen her perform this. She does so rarely finding it more exhausting than other stories, due to the strong themes of life and death (Cargill-Strong, 2010, personal communication).

⁴² For example, Keelaghan's *Cold Missouri Waters* which tells of a tragic fire event, and Garbutt's *Send the Boats Away* which tells of a community dismayed by colonisation.

admired the creative collaboration, it was a style of performance that I found self-conscious and affected: although I may have felt differently if I had seen it live, and was immersed in the atmosphere. I am not a fan of light ‘mood music’ and Wolkstein spoke almost entirely in a heightened dramatic voice. I hoped to create something with more musical interest and variation and a more dynamic and engaging interpretation of the stories.

On the music side, there is a growing interest at many Australian Folk Festivals to include a range of ‘themed concerts’ in the program. These are generally concerts in which songs of a particular theme are linked by verbal commentary. Sometimes these concerts develop into more ambitious formats. For example, *Unsung Heroes*,⁴³ began its life as a concert where ten singer songwriters sang pre-existing original songs on the theme, and then was distilled into a four singer songwriter show with an overarching chronological narrative, songs, and a slide show. Another highly engaging show, Lyn Van Hek’s *Difficult Women* (1993 – 2010), ventures into theatrical territory as she embodies a series of historical women deemed to have been “difficult”, in order to tell their stories through song and spoken word. Simon Oats, who describes his one-man musical storytelling performance piece, *Orpheus*, as “rock storytelling” (2008), also combines theatrical arts and original songs to retell this myth. This show was one of the primary influences on my decision to retell myth through musical storytelling.

Thus my own wandering into theatrical territory was intended as an extension of my craft rather than an attempt to become an expert in theatre, which, given I had no training or academic background therein, was way beyond the scope of this PhD. Although I did spend some time acquainting myself with the work of some relevant theatre practitioners,⁴⁴ my performance was never intended to be considered a piece of theatre steeped in an expert knowledge of theatrical genres. It was intended as a musical storytelling performance that would weave together the strands of my research in a creative manner, bring Inanna’s under-represented stories to a wider audience, while addressing the research question.

⁴³ For more information see: <http://www.unsungheroesofaustralianhistory.com>

⁴⁴ E.g. Dario Fo (1986, 2005); Erol Bray (1976); Sara Warner (2004).

In his book *Storytelling and theatre: contemporary storytellers and their art*, Michael Wilson (2006) examines some of the overlaps between the art of the verbal storyteller and the actor, an overlap which he says is readily accepted by actors, but less so by storytellers who, he argues, tend to lack a full understanding of the broad range of practices encompassed by the terms 'theatre' and 'acting'. In employing a director to assist me with creative development and performance preparation, I set out to embrace and explore some of this same overlapping territory through praxis. In so doing I sought, as well as to experiment with performance styles and formats to extend and grow myself as a performer, to maximise the potential of my praxis to illuminate my research question. Research is about exploring new territory and by stretching myself into new and often uncomfortable performance territory, I discovered things about the stories that I would not have otherwise.

In particular I found that attempting to embody characters and improvise telling the stories from their different perspectives made me contemplate their feelings and motivations in ways that I may not have done had I simply explored perspective through song. It also made me confront many difficult feelings about my own body image, one of the themes relevant to Inanna's stories. While many of these perspectives, feelings and characterisations were not performed or directly addressed in the final show, the explorations did influence my interpretations of the stories in a broader sense, the themes I wished to highlight, and thus impacted on how I presented the stories in performances.

Myth as story

As previously stated, Inanna's stories are mythic stories. There are many definitions of myth, some more inclusive⁴⁵ than others. As Segal (2004) points out, all of them rely in some way on the idea of 'story', and so in this research I borrow his definition that a myth is a story that "accomplishes something significant for adherents" (p. 6). This significance could be cultural, as in something shared by a group of people and believed to speak to the origins or structure of their culture, or individual, as in a personal myth which might shape one's life. In some ways any story could be a myth

⁴⁵ Some definitions only allow for a certain category of myth, e.g. creation myth, to be a myth, and may categorise some 'mythic' stories as legends or something else. 'Myth' is also a term often used in contemporary times to mean 'not true'.

in the right circumstances. Inanna's stories would be considered mythic by most definitions, but it is their narrative elements that are of most interest to this research. Some of them hold significance not only for the historical cultures for which she was an important deity, but also for contemporary people, mostly women, and could thus be also labelled 'contemporary myths'.

Dream and myth

One way in which contemporary significance is claimed from ancient myths such as Inanna's stories, as well as Greek, Roman and other mythologies of historical religious significance, was pointed to in the 'dream prelude' with which I opened the exegesis and dreamed myself into *Inanna's Descent*. In claiming this association I am preceded by the historical giants of psychology and psychotherapy, Freud and Jung, and some of their theoretical descendants such as Lord Raglan, Rank and Campbell (Segal, 2004).

According to Rank (2004),⁴⁶ who provides one of the classic Freudian analyses of myth (Segal, 2004), Freud argued for the connection between myth and dream on the basis of his clinical experience: he observed his patients' dreams to have mirrored and echoed mythic themes, and then theorised that Psyche(s), which in this instance we could interpret simply as the human mind, have similar themes that re-emerge in different places. Given my own personal experiences in which mythic characters have appeared in my dreams, and given that I generally wake from such dreams with a pressured feeling that something important has taken place within me that I must remember, I find this argument convincing; it speaks to my lived experience.

However, Freud's interpretation of meaning in dreams and myths often do not speak to me. They seem to make assumptions and leaps of logic that are difficult to follow and imply personal biases. Kimmitt (2000) observes that Freud's ideas are centred on linear male life patterns, and argues that therefore the theories that grow from them

⁴⁶ The version of the book I read was published in 2004, although Rank died in 1939. The original was published in 1914 and the second edition, upon which this is based according to Segal (2004) was finished in 1922. Segal refers to significant changes in this version.

do not speak to the actual lived experience of most women, which is often more cyclic⁴⁷ than linear.

Despite several obvious ways in which Jung has demonstrated sexist attitudes (see Wehr, 1983, 1989), he is often seen as having more emancipatory theories; thus feminist psychotherapeutic approaches are often predicated on them.⁴⁸ In particular, his concept of ‘the feminine’ makes an important contribution to the contemporary idea that qualities and values generally associated with femaleness, such as nurturing and compassion, and which have therefore been devalued and derided in patriarchal societies, need to be re-valued, and reintegrated into societies and all of the humans within them, not just women (e.g. Douglas, 2006; Tacey, 1997). This idea is present when men speak of showing their ‘feminine side.’ It is no surprise, then, that the psychological analyses of *Inanna’s Descent* generally have a Jungian flavour.

While I identify with, and argue for, the need to revalue the so-called ‘feminine’ qualities both within ourselves and within our culture, my own perception is that amongst Jungians, despite protestations to the contrary, ‘the feminine’ as a concept is still overly associated with biological femaleness (as is ‘the masculine’ with biological maleness). It does not adequately embrace ideas of gender variation, both amongst those of us who identify as being a particular gender and those who do not, to be a complete model for psychological liberation from patriarchy. For example, famous feminist⁴⁹ Jungian Marion Woodman (1982, 1992), while espousing that masculine and feminine need to be balanced in both men and women, says that a woman’s core being is feminine and that when a woman is overtaken by ‘masculine’ values it is somehow a more serious problem psychologically than for men. If we accept that such a thing as a core being does exist, I find the idea that that mine is ‘feminine’ in the way Jungians describe somewhat constricting: it makes me feel that someone else is trying to tell me who I am and how I should behave or feel as a

⁴⁷ I.e. we experience life themes that return at different times and in different ways throughout our lives, rather than confront an issue resolve it and move on to the next one.

⁴⁸ For example, Kaalii Cargil (2008), co-founder of the Kairos Centre, a training facility for psychotherapists in Melbourne, described the style of psychotherapy taught to be based on a range of modalities, but said ‘Jungian’ was probably the closest to accurate summary she could give. The course is very strongly aimed at revaluing the ‘feminine’ elements of culture and Psyche.

⁴⁹ While I am unsure if Woodman used this term to describe herself or not, I feel it applies because much of her work was about liberating women from the negative consequences of being raised within a patriarchal system.

biologically female person. Like Wehr (1989), I feel that Jung's construction of 'masculine' and 'feminine' reinforces androcentric gender stereotypes and that, to the extent that Jungians internalise these constructions, this deepens the wounding of women, rather than healing it.

However, like Eishold (2002) and Wehr (1983, 1989), I also feel that many Jungian ideas have much to offer our understanding of human experience, and, like Eishold (2002) that they influence contemporary thinking, in particular our understanding of psychology, much more deeply than most are willing to admit due to a fear of being associated with a man sometimes reviled as an esotericist. Eishold (2002) provides a number of examples of psychological theories which clearly draw on Jungian theory without acknowledging it.

In my own case, my experiences of Jungian-style dream analysis, and related therapeutic processes, form a significant part of the lens through which mythology, and in particular Inanna's stories, speak to me. Jung believed that dreams existed as a kind of doorway into both the individual and collective unconscious, a deeper place of mind where we are all connected,⁵⁰ a kind of mythic realm where truth is not defined by whether or not something is verifiable, but rather an experience, and from which myths, dreams, and all forms of creativity emerge (Jung, 1978). It is through working with dreams, and a therapeutic process called "The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music" (GIM) (Bonny, 2002; Bruscia & Grocke, 2002) which is a little like having waking dreams to music, that myth first came to 'speak to' me.

My earliest hazy memories of exposure to myth, Greek and Roman in this case, took place in a library class in high school and did not speak to me at all. The stories were not told in an interesting way, and seemed strange and a little boring. The teacher espoused what Segal (2004) calls the "primitive science" (p. 13) definition of myth, proposed by people such as E.B. Tylor and J.G. Frazer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She explained that myths were ancient stories which

⁵⁰ To give a full account of what Jung means by collective unconscious is beyond the scope of this discussion. Some liken it to an idea of "God" (e.g. Henking, 1989). It differs from Freud's idea in that Freud considers the unconscious a place where repressed ideas are pushed, whereas Jung's unconscious also includes that which is not yet known or understood and that is universally shared and inherited (Campbell, 1987). The unconscious is like a sea in which people are little islands of consciousness (Tacey, 2009).

attempted to explain natural phenomena that humanity now understands better through science: things such as why and how the sun crosses the sky (because a god pulls it in a chariot). The ancients believed, she continued, that these stories were true, and this was why myths were in the non-fiction section, and what made them different to other untrue stories. A ‘primitive science’ theory of myth suggests that science invalidates the need for the continued existence of myths, and Tylor, Frazer and their followers apparently believed that myth and religion would die out in response to science. This clearly has not happened, although it is likely that our understanding of meaning has changed shape, and is possibly much more diverse.

If we applied this theoretical approach, then *Inanna’s Descent* is simply an inaccurate primitive attempt to explain the seasons as they were in that part of the world. During Dumuzi’s six months in the Underworld summer became so hot that the land was dry and barren. When he returned to earth, the joy of Inanna and Dumuzi’s lovemaking brought moisture, and thus fertility and abundance, back to the earth.

The ‘primitive’ or ‘false science’ approach to myth is in direct opposition to a “true science” (Segal, 2004, p. 11) definition of myth where a myth, or collection of mythic stories, is taken as being a true and accurate account of how the world was created and works. If this approach was applied to Inanna, we might say that Inanna was literally a divine being, and her stories a true account of events that once happened, in the same way that some Christians read the bible literally, or that Muslims may say the stories of Mohammed are literally true. In the case of Inanna’s stories, the hand of a politically motivated teller seems to me to be far too often apparent to not recognise human creation in the stories.⁵¹

Both ‘true science’ and ‘primitive science’ approaches to mythology are the same in that they narrowly define both the potential functions and meanings of myth, and the idea of ‘truth’. For me truth is a much more multi-faceted, multilayered, and elusive

⁵¹ This does not mean that there are not historically true elements in mythology. Volk, (1995, as cited in Alster, 1999) and Averbeck, (2003) suggest us that some of Inanna’s stories can be read as mythologised history.

concept. Stories and myths can be untrue in one sense, but tell truths of another kind, through the ways in which they speak to us.

In my early twenties as an undergraduate studying music therapy at Melbourne University I re-encountered myth through dreams and, as an extra-curricular sideline, became deeply involved with GIM as both a trainee⁵² and a client. I came to see myths as blueprints for psychological processes. Sometimes mythic stories and characters took on a life inside my imagination in a way that made me feel more alive and more connected to myself. My external life felt richer and more stable. Internal realities came to seem to me as important as external realities.

As in the descent dream excerpt, the mythic stories altered in my dreams and GIM experiences according to my own imagination and life experiences. I WAS Kali raging across the universe when a certain life event triggered intense anger; I was a snake speeding through long grass, the blades parting as I moved; I was an eagle soaring high above the earth looking down upon its textures and contours; I was a snake that became an eagle, that became a snake and eventually rested my eyes on a shining goddess sitting on a mountain top, the folds of the mountain her dress; I was a baby held in the arms of a king and queen on a throne of stars, and then thrown into a raging river by an earthly mother in a wild dance, briefly rescued by a father who threw me back in the river; I held the shield on which the image of Medusa's Gorgon head was imprinted, a shield of anger towards patriarchal injustices that could be used when needed, then discarded when it no longer served me.

Thus, while I have some deep reservations about Jung's constructions of gender, some of his ideas made sense to me and gave me a love of the idea of journeying with a myth: those around the need to balance internal and external life; those around our ability as humans to draw on the energies of different archetypes; and those around the need to acknowledge and accept those archetypes that we find within us and balance and integrate them in our personality.

⁵² I trained only in the preliminary levels of the GIM, and not the final qualifying course. I am now a qualified "registered music therapist" (RMT), but not a "registered guided imagery and music therapist" (RGIMT).

Despite this, I did not enter this research with the intent of doing a Jungian analysis of Inanna's stories. I am not a Jungian expert and, in relation to *Inanna's Descent* at least, it has been done (e.g. Perera, 1981; Kimmitt, 2000). Additionally, as Tennant (2006) points out, much research is done by "latching onto an easily assimilated theory ... which advances an unambiguous account of the process and end point of development" (p. 57), rather than attempting to understand or take a stand amongst the complexity therein. While he is referring to educational theorists and researchers, I wanted to avoid the same temptation to oversimplify the complex range of resonances that the stories appeared to contain. I was more interested, for the purposes of this research, in the visceral responses to the stories that I would discover in creative production phases of the research. I was also interested in other peoples' responses, both academically and personally. I was constantly shifting through different ways of being with the stories: from visceral to intellectual; from personal responses to broader cultural contexts; from my own interpretations to those of discussion group members, theorists, and those in other art works. Scott-Hoy (2009) tells us that autoethnography is, amongst other things, a process of: "[asking yourself] 'What's going on here?' When you think you know look inward and ask 'what does this mean to/for me as an individual?' Then focus outward and ask 'what does this mean to my family, my community and the wider world?'" (p. 42).

For these reasons, I did not wish to tie myself to one theory, or one exclusive approach to analysing the stories, but to observe and attempt to understand some of the lenses through which the stories spoke to me and the other women represented in my research: those who participated, or whose work I read or viewed. I needed to understand some other approaches to myth.

Other approaches to myth

Segal's *Myth: a Very Short Introduction* (2004) presents a range of historical perspectives, definitions and approaches to studying myth. He explains that there is no real study of myth as myth, but that myth is studied in different ways from within different disciplines. Anthropological studies of myth apply theories of culture to myth; and psychological studies of myth apply theories of mind to myth. The Jungian and Freudian approaches already discussed are clearly theories of mind, which one could argue considers the relevance of myth to individuals. I could then

say, from an autoethnographic perspective, that considering additional approaches to myth is another way of “connect[ing] the personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Bartleet and Ellis, 2009), hopefully broadening the relevance of the research.

What unites the study of myth across disciplines, Segal (2004) says, is that one or more of the following types of questions are asked of it: questions which generally relate to origin (why and how it arises); function (why and how it persists); and subject matter (what the myth refers to, whether that be literal or symbolic). The approaches he considers are myth and science (as considered briefly within my discussion of the theories of Freud and Jung); myth and philosophy; myth and religion; myth and ritual; myth and literature; myth and psychology (including Freud and Jung); myth and structure; and myth and society. At times I discuss elements of some of these approaches, and some version of all of the above questions in relevant sections of the exegesis.

I also encountered various ideas in relation to interpreting Inanna’s stories in other literature. Alster (1975), for example, analysed several of Inanna’s better known stories to show how they all mapped the movement of Venus (Inanna’s heavenly form) across the night sky, accounting for the time when Venus could not be seen by, for example, Inanna’s time in the Underworld, or in Enki, the god of wisdom’s underground temple.

As a musician, I felt drawn to Lévi-Strauss’s (1978) description of myth as being like an intricately woven symphonic structure that must be read vertically. This metaphor, I feel, allows many ways of interpreting and thinking about myth to be simultaneously present. Thus, it also provides me with a useful method of thinking about my approach to this research. When listening to a symphony sometimes we attend to one element or another, one layer more than another, perhaps noticing the soaring violin melody here, and then here swaying along to a tantalising rhythmic element.

Listening to the second movement of Beethoven’s 7th Symphony, as an example, I find myself mesmerised by the countermelody, a second elegant and ornamental tune

which plays contrapuntally⁵³ against the main more march-like melody and makes something inside me expand with joy. It would not be nearly as arresting if the other musical elements were not simultaneously present, but my mind attends mainly to the countermelody. With myth, also, it is not possible to fully attend to all layers at once, and many definitions of myth, or approaches to studying myth, focus on one of the layers. I prefer to swim through the texture, sometimes dancing to the drumbeat, sometimes humming the melody, attending to what speaks most strongly at the time, sometimes going back to see whether what was happening in other layers has contributed to what I perceive. Often in creating the performances I attempted to maintain many layers of possible meanings in my retellings, to allow the audience members to attend to the layer that spoke most strongly to them in that moment.

While not all approaches to myth spoke to me equally, some even seemed to me inaccurate, overly reductive, or simply outdated, I still found many of them spoke to me at times when trying to make sense of the stories. The plot of *Inanna and An* (ETCSL, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006) in which Inanna procures possession of the palace of heaven,⁵⁴ for example, only made sense when I applied Alster's (1975) idea of Inanna's movements within it as a journey through the constellations and planets of a night sky. If not the constellation of Scorpio, what was this scorpion that suddenly appeared without warning for her to battle? Given that some scholars believe Sumerians understood Inanna to have heavenly and earthly/human, and in some cases underworld, forms (Kramer, 1983; Stuckey, 2001), it seemed reasonable to imagine this was a story about the heavenly Inanna. As another example, Smith's (1889, in Segal, 2004) theory that myths existed as a kind of narrative set of instructions for a cultural/ spiritual ritual spoke to me in some stories when oft repeated phrases seemed to be perhaps reminding the person acting a particular role in a ritual of what to do next.

⁵³ Literally 'point against point'. It simply means that two melodies with different rhythmic patterns are playing against each other in a manner that creates harmony, but is different from "block harmony" in that in block harmony only one melody is distinct and the other parts provide a sense of "thickness" and depth to the sound.

⁵⁴ Represented by the song *Earth is Mine* that I sing at the first gate of her descent in Act 2. The lyrics can be read on page 156 of Appendix A.

Matriarchy

Another way Inanna's stories have held significance for some contemporary feminists is as a perceived manifestation of the divine Goddess who was worshipped before patriarchy emerged.⁵⁵ Matriarchy is also often discussed in Jungian circles as a pre-patriarchal fact (e.g. Woodman, 1992). Jungian Claire Douglas (2006) is amongst those who argue that some sort of return to matriarchy, a 'return of the Goddess' is necessary in human evolution for a hopefully more balanced future, and Ziolkowski (2012) speaks of Jung's thinking as being a motivator for the interest amongst feminists in scrutinizing Sumerian works of literature for evidence of matriarchy. As a result, one question that dominated my thoughts early in the research was whether there had once been a matriarchy, or some form of pre-patriarchal society.

Fleming (1969) argued vigorously against the notion of 'wide-spread' historical worship of a mother goddess. In the article he expresses exasperation at the theory's persistence, developed in the fifties, despite the growing scepticism that developed in the late fifties. He examines what his understanding of the arguments in favour, with reference to data from four specific regions, and concludes there are several more plausible explanations for the phenomena that led to the theory.

Sometimes I was convinced by Fleming's (1969) arguments and sometimes I was unsure. I felt at times he had misunderstood the claims of matriarchal theorists and/or that his own replacement theories were equally biased. Lacking access to the primary data, and lacking the training in archaeology and such fields, it was impossible to reach a conclusive stance. However, I was struck by the fact that Fleming acknowledged that there once had been worship of a Mother Goddess in one of the regions, and despite his belief that it was unlikely to have taken place in the other three: the possibility remained open.

Fleming's article sent me back to Eisler's (1987) *Chalice and the Blade*, which I had read as an undergraduate. At the time I had been convinced of, if not a matriarchy, some sort of more female-valuing pre-patriarchal culture. Like Starhawk (1987),

⁵⁵ For example, see the goddess society of Australia, <http://www.goddessassociation.com.au/home.html>

Eisler argues a more egalitarian pre-patriarchal social structure once existed. Also like Starhawk, she criticises the term 'matriarchy' as belonging to the conditioned assumption that a 'dominator model' is all that is possible. Eisler suggests the term 'partnership model' of society, and speaks of 'gynocentrism' and 'matrilinage', which are similar to Starhawk's terms 'matrifocal,' and 'matrilineal'. By this they means that society was structured with a more egalitarian attitude to gender, but that the life-giving role of birth was at the centre, and that the line of descent was determined by the mother and not the father. Neither suggests that society was flat with no inequality, but that the balance was tipped more towards equality than inequality.

Eisler (1987) speaks convincingly of how mostly male archaeologists viewed their finds through a patriarchal lens, and thus overlooked evidence of anything not patriarchal. As an example, she explains that dating of archaeological finds before carbon dating was incorrectly based on the assumption that cultural progress was linear, and therefore more sophisticated tools belonged to more recent cultures. In addition to wide ranging archaeological data Eisler also observes that many very early human developments, such as standing, were most likely first taken by women attempting to carry their young as they walked.

More recent works by Eisler (e.g. 1996, 2011) suggest she is still interested in similar themes, as she works to build communities committed to returning society to a 'partnership model'. She argues that since the dominator model took hold, it has at times stretched like a rubber band and allowed some partnership model values in. However, like an elastic band it always sprang back. She believes we are now at a point in history where we have an opportunity to stretch it till it breaks, tipping it back to a new more balanced way of working.

In her evidence for pre-patriarchal culture, Eisler (1987) refers to Catal Huyuk, as does Rohrllich (1980). Catal Huyuk existed some time prior to Sumer. Providing a range of archaeological evidence Rohrllich argues that women clearly predominated in the social, economic, and religious spheres. Although Catal Huyuk was some way from Sumer, it was apparently abandoned around the time an also 'female-friendly' culture sprung up in Ubaid, which was later superceded by Sumer. This provides, for

Rohrlich, a theoretical link between Catal Huyuk and Sumer. Using a very meticulously researched timeline, Rohrlich then gives examples of how the once relatively egalitarian Sumer became more and more patriarchal, and women became more and more oppressed. This concurs with a similar observation by Sumerologist Kramer (1983), as well as other authors (e.g. Wakeman, 1985).

As with many questions that arose for me in this research, I was unable to follow this line of enquiry to a satisfyingly conclusive end. Indeed the number of fields of study I would need to be expert in in order to critically analyse all the evidence from both a scientific and culturally deconstructive perspective is prohibitive. However, I did conclude that there was most likely at some time and place in antiquity, a culture, or cultures, in which male dominance was not the norm and which was more equitable and/or even gynocentric than we have since imagined. I also concluded that Sumer began as a more equitable society, and became less so over time. Even archaeologist William Hafford (2011), although initially sceptical about the concept of pre-patriarchy, said that he was comfortable with such a conclusion.

Additionally, I concluded that such a construction of history, although possibly flawed and biased,⁵⁶ was at least equally valid as the obviously biased constructions of history that assume that male dominance is the natural order. These, I believe, need constant challenging. I am reminded of Rohrlich's description of a male anthropologist who acknowledges the presence of sexism in his discipline, yet continues to ignore increasing evidence of former egalitarian relationships between men and women and claims that there is "no evidence" (p. 77). I would be more convinced by this stance if it refuted the evidence, rather than simply denying it exists.

Structure of exegesis

If the performance *Restoring Inanna* predominantly addressed the research question in relation to one contemporary woman, me, it was an address that was filtered through, and influenced by, the voices of other women, and one which was contextualised in relation to broader social theories. The exegesis is my opportunity

⁵⁶ The emotional need for a history in which women were not always oppressed is a bias.

to demonstrate the way these strands were woven together, and show some of these other voices in more detail: the voices of the scholars and the research participants who contributed to my research.

One of my supervisors, Helen Merrick (2010, personal communication) sometimes used the metaphor of a mountain to describe practice-led research to me. The research product, she explained, is the peak. It can only exist as a result of the mountain of research below it, a mountain which can never be presented in full.

To some extent the performance *Restoring Inanna* is my mountain peak: the product which has woven together a story from the stories, but reveals only a hint of the body of work below it. Returning to the metaphors of descent and digging, I have decided to present my exegesis as excavations into the mountain, in the hope that my chapters will be as slithers of rock which reveal some of the swirls and patterns caused by the compacted layers of earth - of research. Rather than trying to summarise the mountain, I hope that my exegesis will point towards the fullness⁵⁷ of that from which they are taken in much the same as the perceived significance of myth might point towards cultural, psychological and/or spiritual truths.

The mountain analogy breaks down fairly quickly, of course. In many ways my performance was more like a series of interconnecting tracts of land and rivers than a mountain peak, weaving together ancient stories, anecdotes, deconstructive reflection, historical context, and cross-cultural observations (in as far as it is possible in relation to a culture long since gone). The excavation analogy also breaks down in that not all of the layers of research that I will explore in the exegesis have directly influenced the final performance, but rather have provided additional lines of intersecting inquiry helping me address my research question in different ways that are sometimes more academic, and sometimes provide direct reference to the responses of others to the stories. I could argue though, that given I am the filter through which every line of inquiry has flowed, everything has in some way influenced every aspect of the research through the subtle changes in my thinking

⁵⁷ By “fullness” I do not mean to imply that the research is in some way complete. As I stated in discussing patriarchy, often lines of enquiry were abandoned rather than resolved, due to the hugeness of subject matter related to my research.

that emerged from considering it. Excavation remains a useful metaphor for the way I intend to present this exegesis.

The remainder of the exegesis falls into two parts, each containing two chapters, followed by a conclusion. Rather than choosing a more traditional laying out of the various readings from different sources, each of the two parts is structured around a song to uncover the synergies between research and creative process. Through analysing the songs, and the texts and stories which informed them, discussing the processes and decisions involved in creating them, and contextualising where and how they were used in the performance, I draw in elements of other aspects of my research, discussing themes which emerged, and hopefully elucidating ways in which these stories have spoken to me and to other contemporary women along the way.

Part 1 is structured around the song *Reliable Love*, and Part 2 around the song *Who is the Girl?* The first chapter of each part focuses more directly on the song itself: contextualising it, analysing it, and beginning to discuss ways in which it relates to a more contemporary context. For example Chapter 2, *Ready for Love in Context*, discusses the body of poems from which the song is created, and the original performance it belonged to, the process of writing the song and adapting ancient texts into a song format, alongside the thinking and research ideas that went into this process. Chapter 4, *Who is the Girl? in context*, again discusses the textual sources for the song and the challenges and decisions around adapting ancient texts and choosing musical formats to assist in conveying the layers of meaning that can be read. It also discusses the ways in which other research discoveries changed my general approach to the Inanna stories and poems and how these changes are reflected in the approach I take to songwriting. In tracing the connections between song lyrics, ancient text and other elements of the research, this chapter also enters into a discussion of power dynamics and the possible role Inanna played in either supporting or challenging patriarchal social structures.

The second chapter in each part discusses some broader research issues that are connected to the song and/or some of the discourse that emerged in discussing it. Chapter 3, “*Who is the Girl?*” in *Restoration*, begins to problematise the concept of restoration through a discussion of different ways that stories have travelled across

time to the present day, and through discussing different possible ways of conceptualising the diversity of representations of Inanna both contemporarily and in antiquity. Chapter 5, “*Who is the Girl?*”: *Problems of Power*, enters into a discussion of power dynamics and the possible role Inanna played in either supporting or challenging patriarchal structures. It concludes with an exploration of how these problems were addressed in the narrative arch of the performance *Restoring Inanna*.

Although both songs I explore in the exegesis are derived from the love poetry - thus limiting my ability to represent the range of songs and storylines I explored, created and researched - they were chosen because they represent different types of relationship between creative practice and contextual research, as well as demonstrating an evolution in my research understanding. Given there are roughly sixteen songs in *Restoring Inanna*,⁵⁸ and several more from ‘trial performances’ which were excluded for narrative reasons, it is clear that even in choosing songs, every decision of inclusion means an even larger decision of exclusion.

Given that the exegesis and performance work together to address my research, I have avoided where possible, repeating myself across the two. At times throughout the exegesis I refer to the performance, providing some markers as to where in the three-act structure I am alluding, which assumes that the DVD has already been viewed.

The quoted dream excerpt which opens the exegesis, if read as my mimicking *Inanna’s Descent*, ends just before Inanna falls dead. Like Inanna, I set out, for motives unclear; descended; and faced a goddess whom I associate with Ereshkigal: Kali. If Ereshkigal is a truth goddess (Perera, 1981), then I have chosen, for now, to leave my dream at the point of having descended; at the invitation to dig deeply. The body of my exegesis discusses some of what I have found through this exploration, and I will return to my dream and *Inanna’s Descent*, both of which continue, in the conclusion.

⁵⁸ The exact number is debateable depending on whether you define a rewritten reprise and some of the instrumental music as discrete songs.

PART ONE

READY FOR LOVE

Verse 1: *What I tell you let the singer weave into song,
What I tell you let it flow from ear to mouth,
What I tell you let it pass from old to young:
I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.
(You are Inanna and you're ready for love).*

Verse 2: *Look at how my breasts have now become firm,
See how my nakedness has sprouted hair,
Let's celebrate my nakedness, dance and rejoice,
I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.
(You are Inanna and you're ready for love).*

Chorus: *So who will taste my sweet waters? (Dumuzi will)
Who will plough my field? (Oh Dumuzi will)
Who will bring his ox to my gate?
Who will plough my field? (Oh Dumuzi will, yeah, yeah, yeah Dumuzi will).*

Verse 3: *My vulva clothed in beauty is like the crescent moon
My boat of heaven is eager for the bull
My moist watered field is an open waiting mound
Yes I am Inanna and I'm ready for love,
(You are Inanna ready for love).*

Final Chorus: *So who will taste my sweet waters? (Dumuzi will)
Who will plough my field? (Oh Dumuzi will)
Who will bring his ox to my gate?
Who will plough my field?
(Oh Dumuzi will, yeah, yeah, yeah Dumuzi will,
Dumuzi will, Dumuzi will, yeah yeah, yeah, Dumuzi will).*

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Ready for Love was one of the first research related songs I wrote, the earliest version having emerged before official PhD enrolment. It is now also one of the most re-written. It was chosen to open the December 2012 show *Restoring Inanna*⁵⁹ and had appeared as the opening to an earlier 'trial performance,' *An Invitation to the Wedding of Inanna and Dumuzi*.

⁵⁹ The performance has been documented on the included DVD. The full script is included in Appendix A.

Chapter 2

Ready for Love in context.

An Invitation to the Wedding of Inanna and Dumuzi

An Invitation to the Wedding of Inanna and Dumuzi (Bruinsma & Davidson, 2011), (hereafter referred to as *An Invitation*), appeared first as a ‘trial performance’ to an invited audience in Canberra, September 2011, and then again in edited form at a storytelling conference in Prague in May 2012. It was the second ‘trial performance’ of my research, the first having been *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*, to an invited Perth audience in March 2011. *An Invitation* focused entirely on a collection of love poetry usually referred to in the literature as the “Dumuzi Inanna love songs”, or “DI” (e.g. Sefati, 1998; ETCSL, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006), and which I originally thought belonged to a story called *The Courtship* (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983). I prefer to reverse the order of the names, the “Inanna Dumuzi love songs”, as Inanna is not only, to my understanding, the more powerful of the two in the Sumerian pantheon and the main character in most of the poems, but also the focus of my research. To put Dumuzi before Inanna felt to me to be a capitulation to patriarchy.⁶⁰ However, for the sake of ease, I most commonly refer to this collection of poems as ‘the love poetry’, changing the word ‘songs’ to ‘poems’ in order to distinguish the raw translations from the songs I created in response to them.

Before beginning rehearsals for the creative development of *An Invitation*, I spent a month writing songs. It was perhaps one of the most joyful months of my life as I immersed myself in layers of poetry and related contextual reading, explored different musical and lyrical ideas, and experimented with musically expressing different elements of the material and my responses to it. Sometimes I began with a musical idea which expressed a general feeling evoked by the poetry, and then looked for a specific poem; other times I read a poem and decided on musical tools to best express it.

⁶⁰ Although, Zsolnay (2009) notes that in certain Mesopotamian inscriptions, the deities are listed in reverse order of importance.

Some songs came from a single poem, for example Usumgalana;⁶¹ while others combined images from several poems with similar themes.⁶² Sometimes one poem spoke strongly to me in one translation,⁶³ but bypassed my awareness in another needing me to actively search it out for cross-comparisons. Initially I worked with poems and literary images that I found particularly beautiful. Later I realised that poems that repelled me were also ‘speaking’ to me. I purposefully also included some of these to provide a more representative selection of the poetry to my audiences. There was, however, too much poetry to include it all, and due to damaged and incomplete tablets, some poems only had fragments of a translation.

There were several reasons I chose to lead the creative process with songwriting on this occasion.

Firstly, following reflection upon preparatory discussions with Robin, I decided at the beginning of the research project to trial several different approaches to devising performances. I was deliberately stretching myself for both praxis and research purposes,⁶⁴ and one of my goals was to uncover processes and performance styles that I felt worked. With *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* we had begun with a week of exploratory work together in the studio, then I worked alone on songs and script and other research processes for approximately six weeks, before another week of collaborative work preparing for the trial performance and discussion forum. Given my inexperience with devising performances, it seemed useful to begin the first process with the guidance of someone who had much performance devising experience. From that perspective Robin functioned somewhat like an unofficial supervisor in my research. However, for the second period of creative development I wished to explore another starting point.

⁶¹ Usumgalana is another name for Dumuzi. The song was performed in both the Canberra and Prague versions of *An Invitation* but did not appear in *Restoring Inanna* as it did not fit the overarching narrative, and its function was achieved through other means in the later performance.

⁶² I discuss some of these in both Chapters 2 and 3.

⁶³ An example of this is the poem from which I wrote *Honey Man*, DI E, which I was drawn to in the Sefati translation (1998, p. 165 – 170), but had not noticed in the other translations. I did, however, refer to the other translations in choosing my exact wording and deciding on my interpretation.

⁶⁴ Stretching myself as a performer seems to me to be an important goal of creativity. I agree with theorists such as Julia Cameron (1992, 2002) that creativity is not about only doing what you know best, but stretching yourself into new areas, finding that combination of known and unknown and combining it in new ways. As a researcher I felt this way of engaging with the stories would prevent me from always following set paths with the material, and hopefully discover new ways in which it would speak to me.

Secondly, the first process had perhaps overly stretched me into new areas without adequately taking advantage of my existing strengths and skills. I had felt awkward and uncomfortable with most of the performance, whereas I usually really enjoy performing. While I was willing to tolerate a certain amount of discomfort to grow my art and my skill, I wanted balance. What had given me the greatest feelings of mastery and ownership of that process were the few songs I had begun work on before entering the studio, which I had done simply because I had some song ideas. *The Creature Song*,⁶⁵ in particular, had been a starting point around which we structured much of the performance.⁶⁶ Songwriting thus seemed an appropriate starting point for the next creative round.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, from my first readings of Wolkstein's *The Courtship* (in Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983), which was my first contact with the material, I felt as if the poetic verse of the story was begging me to capture its tenderness, joy, love and playfulness in a collection of songs. My later discovery that the story of *The Courtship* had been formed from a selection of 'love songs' seemed vindication of that desire and perception of the poetry.

For the love poetry, in contrast to *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* where I wrote the songs with a specific narrative purpose in mind, I let the poetry (and related contextual data) speak directly to me as a songwriter, without much considering narrative. This was largely due to the nature of the material which was a collection of related, but not cohesively connected, poems. Thus I entered the rehearsal studio with only a loose image for the performance: an impressionistic four part structure to represent the four stages of the wedding ritual: courtship; wedding preparations;

⁶⁵ *The Creature Song*, also slightly rewritten as *I am Inanna*, was the song in which The Anzu Bird, The snake, and Lilith all taunt Inanna in her sacred garden in the second half of Act 1. It was an intrinsic structural element of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* (Appendix B) and even more so in the second half of Act 1 in *Restoring Inanna* (Appendix A), where the bass riff, played by guitarist Neil Steward, was used almost as 'mood music' to dramatically reflect Inanna's discovery of the creatures in her tree.

⁶⁶Both Robin and supervisor John Freeman asked me at one point whether I wanted to create a performance that was essentially a set of songs linked by dialogue, or a piece of theatrical storytelling with songs in it. I felt the interaction of music and story could be much more nuanced than those two extremes and wrote and published an article about the topic using *The Creature Song* as an example (Bruinsma, 2013). The article was written before the script of *Restoring Inanna* and so does not speak about how the song was used there.

wedding ceremony/sex rites; and post wedding celebration.⁶⁷ Within each stage, indicated to the audience by a projected image of a word on the back of the stage, a series of ‘moments’ would reflect upon that part of the wedding from different perspectives using song, mime, and/or spoken poetry. The ‘moments’ of my imagined performance would not need to be strongly connected, but rather could function as interconnected modules. As the wedding ritual would have included instrumental music, singing and feasting (Sefati, 1998) I also wanted to involve the audience as part of the crowd who would have celebrated the wedding.

Robin did not fully understand my ill-articulated half-formed vision, but did understand some elements of it. I found the resulting negotiated process frustrating and difficult. Yet, upon reflection, I felt it was in our moments of greatest misunderstanding that much of what we most liked about the performance emerged; as if the poems, and the stories that flowed within and between them, were speaking to us through our efforts to understand each other. The following poem draws on relevant journal entries to recreate a sense of this process.

The tension scrapes my insides
As gratitude competes with frustration
You simultaneously listen to and midwife my ideas
And eclipse them with the strength of your own
Generously giving
Insightful and devoted, but not seeing
How can my beginner's legs
Know when to hold their ground,
And when to give way to your experience?

I want impressions
You see linearity
I see a wedding
You see a songwriter's set
With linking dialogue
“I don't want it!”
And yet you insist.
You are perplexed when I show you my ending
When you asked for a beginning with goddam linking dialogue
I want a wedding woven with
Jewels of poignant affect and vibrant thought
Of quiet rage and vibrant tenderness
Viewed from a wide and narrow focus
Love and sex
Food and celebration

And you seem to want a line?!

⁶⁷ The wedding ritual is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

I cannot speak, you cannot hear
Though I can feel the effort of your trying
I am soothed by it
I try to try some of what you want

And somehow from the silence
A breath of song, a loving rite
My end becomes your beginning
Woven with moments
Of wide and narrow focus
And a linking line
Made of words, or music, or mime
And I bless the struggle
From which a performance style was born
That I felt might be the one to keep

Raelene Bruinsma, written based on
journal extracts, 07/02/2014

What I particularly liked about the results of this process was that the performance still challenged me to find different characters, and even different voices within the character that was ‘Raelene’: the narrator; the storyteller; the academic; the vulnerable human sharing her own story. But these differences were more subtle and closer to the art of the singer/songwriter that I was used to. I was no longer trying to be a lion-faced bird, a snake, a young girl, a witch-like demon, a goddess, a man and a queen of the land of the dead all in the space of a few moments as in the previous performance. My strengths, music and song were now in the forefront. But even more importantly, the weaving of the different ‘Raelenes’ through the text allowed me to bring in personal, creative and academic elements, albeit that the academic elements were sometimes a little watered down for performance purposes.⁶⁸ I remember the moment when Robin and I looked at each other and almost said in unison “this might just work!”

This weaving of different strands of my research into performance struck me as autoethnographic practice-led research in action: story was data, method (McIlveen, 2008) and outcome (Bartleet and Ellis, 2009). The result was in part autobiographical, an attempt to display multiple layers of meaning, and connected the personal to the cultural (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 739), or, in the words of

⁶⁸ For example, I say that “some academics believe” rather than giving a full account of the different perspectives in debates that surround the issue of which I am speaking. Many of these issues get addressed in more detail throughout the exegesis.

Tomaselli, Dyll and Francis (2008) it was “about understanding self/lived experience in a cultural context (p. 357)”. These things could be said about both performances, which, through the discussion forum process, allowed ‘readers’ of my research thus far to participate in the “decision points that define the method” (Tomaselli et al, p. 358). But in this case my own location within the research felt more strongly defined and, as a former practitioner newly turned researcher, I was able to more fully comprehend how the theory/ies of the method were functioning.

I also felt that through tolerating the anxiety of ‘not knowing’ what would emerge, and tolerating the deep emotions that accompany that essential process for creating art (Carabine, 2011), we had allowed something more creative to develop than if we had just followed the processes that either of us would have initiated alone: we had found a new form. The performance format we developed here was certainly a strong influence on the format of *Restoring Inanna*: sections of *An Invitation* are included almost unchanged; at times I used the same weaving and focus shifting process; and songs that were originally in *An Invitation* are used in all three acts. Elements of the process and output of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* were also included, but I used and rewrote a much smaller portion.⁶⁹

Genesis of *Ready for Love*

The first draft of *Ready for Love* drew text from *The Courtship in Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* by folklorist Diane Wolkstein, and Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer (1983). In this publication of four stories Wolkstein shaped Kramer’s raw translations into a more readable form, removing some repetitions, filling in bits of text that were missing, and sometimes cross referencing with translations made by some of Kramer’s students. In addition to providing translations and answering Wolkstein’s questions about them, Kramer also wrote a contextual chapter for the book, while Wolkstein wrote an additional chapter analysing the myth. I will refer to this text as *Inanna QH&E* or *The Wolkstein/Kramer Text* from now on for the sake of ease.

⁶⁹ It is worth noting, however, that a large portion of the song which opens Act 3, *Ereshkigal’s Song of Grief* – the portion where she circles the stage chanting, and then delivers spoken text – is adapted from a portion of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*.

At the time I believed *The Wolkstein/Kramer Text* (1983) was the most up to date and authoritative translation of Inanna literature available. I wrote in my candidacy proposal:

While there are some published earlier translations of individual stories contained in this collection, (for example some of *The Courtship* and *The Descent* appear in Kramer's article on Cuneiform and Sacred texts in 1963) mostly they are fragmented and incomplete. Additionally most were also translated by Kramer either entirely or collaboratively (for example, *The Myth of Inanna and Bilulu* - which in part reads like a mistranslated portion of *The Descent* - was published by Jacobsen and Kramer in 1953). These earlier translations are somewhat less reliable as the language was still being deciphered and the text had many more gaps. In an interview⁷⁰ before he died (Wolkstein and Gordon, 2007, 1986) Kramer stated he believed the translations to be largely reliable now, and no longer based on guesswork. Thus Wolkstein and Kramer's 1983 publication is to my knowledge the most complete and recent translation available, and will be the primary source of text for the myth. It is referred to in most if not all writings on the subject of Inanna (e.g. Cargill-Strong, 2010; Tchana & Tchana, 2006). Even the seminal interpretation of the myth by Jungian Analyst Sylvia Brinton Perera (1981) published two years previously, cites this work as forthcoming, as does a doctoral dissertation submitted earlier the same year (Caperton, 1983). Thus Wolkstein and Kramer's 1983 publication will be the main source of the stories for this research, though others will be consulted and considered where available.

(Bruinsma, Candidacy Proposal, 2010)

It was certainly the only text in which I had read the Sumerian love poetry at that stage.

Many of the *Ready for Love* lyrics came from the following excerpt:

What I tell you let the singer weave into song,
What I tell you let it flow from ear to mouth,
What I tell you let it pass from old to young:
My vulva the horn,
The Boat of Heaven
Is full of eagerness like the young moon
My untilled land lies fallow.
As for me, Inanna
Who will plough my vulva?

⁷⁰ Wolkstein has created a DVD of one of her performances of her collection of stories, and it includes an interview with Kramer, who speaks mainly of contextual matters relating to Sumer. When I began this research, Kramer was already deceased (since 1990), but Wolkstein was alive, and I saw her perform another of her stories when she visited Perth in 2011. She passed away in early 2013.

Who will plough my high field?
Who will plough my wet ground?

Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth, (Wolkstein & Kramer, 1983, p. 36-37).

The first verse opens with a direct quote of the opening three declamatory lines, followed by “I am Inanna and I’m ready for love”. This last line was written to summarise the message of the verse with a kind of chorus-like hook, thus shaping the poetry into a song structure. While the words were mine, they seemed consistent with the boldness Inanna demonstrated throughout the story. For example:

Now I will caress the faithful shepherd Dumuzi,
I will caress his loins
I will decree a sweet fate for him. (p. 44)

or

Let the milk of the goat flow in my sheepfold⁷¹
Fill my holy churn with honey cheese
Lord Dumuzi, I will drink your milk (p. 39)

The next four to five lines formed the basis of another verse. This became verse three in the final draft:

My vulva clothed in beauty is like the crescent moon
My boat of heaven is eager for the bull
My moist watered field is an open waiting mound
Yes I am Inanna and I’m ready for love,
(You are Inanna and you’re ready for love).

Here I significantly reshaped the lines to fit the musical structure I had created when writing the first verse. I have also woven in images from other pieces of poetry, a process I will shortly explain in more detail.

From the last three lines of the excerpt I formed the chorus, again with noticeable reshaping.

So who will taste my sweet waters?
Who will plough my field?
Who will bring his ox to my gate?
Who will plough my field?

⁷¹ The ‘sheepfold’ is considered to be another metaphor for Inanna’s vulva.

The excerpt has its own poetic musical rhythm; it would have been possible to create a musical structure which entirely conformed to that shape and directly quoted all the text. This would have created a very different song, most likely more whimsical. But I was playing with the gospel bluesy overtones suggested to me by the opening text, and with interplay of raunch and religion which I felt was implied in much of the love poetry. I aimed to capture some of the sexual confidence Inanna displayed in a more strongly structured musical form, and thus the melody of *Ready for Love* was written to be both declamatory and to carry some of the joy, anticipation and sexual longing I felt was implied in the poetry. It begins with a descending melody to mimic the cry of someone calling out to get the attention of a group, and then the melody changes with verse two to move on the action of the song once the attention is gained. But the line length and the hook remain. Once I found that form I shaped the text to fit it.

This is in contrast to the much looser structure I created for *Sweet is the Sleep* where I allowed the rhythm and melody to loosely wind around into the feelings the text suggested to me. The words I added in that case were merely reiterations of the existing words to create an impression of extending and holding onto the tenderness a little longer. This section of song was wound into various parts of *Restoring Inanna* as a device to recall the tenderness.

Then in 2011 I had an experience which significantly altered my thinking about many aspects of my research, including my perception that the Wolkstein/Kramer text (1983) was the most authoritative and up to date. I took a research field trip to Pennsylvania University Museum where a number of Ancient Sumerian artefacts are stored. Although there was no 'Near Eastern' display at the time, I had the good fortune of an email introduction by a mutual acquaintance to Dr William Hafford who worked there. Through his facilitation, I was generously granted access to a range of resources: a tour of the tablet room, including the opportunity to hold one of the *Inanna's Descent* tablets with Inanna specialist Ilona Zsolnay; special private viewings of certain artefacts in a research room; a tour through the store room with archaeologist and museum curator, Richard Zettler, who has worked on Inanna's temple at the Nippur excavation site; access to an extensive library and some relevant

articles and theses that were stored there; and discussions with the above academics and some of their postgraduate students.

Through these discussions I was directed to the best research databases and some specific texts relating to my questions and research interests. These included two new sources of the love poetry, both of which offered a wider selection of poetry and alternative translations, alerting me to the fact that *The Courtship* was a story constructed by Wolkstein by combining poems, not an actual intended unified story.

The *Electronic Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL)* is a comprehensive online collection of Sumerian literature, dated from approximately 2100 to about 1650 BC. It was created as a project by the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford in 2003 because, as explained on the website:

Relatively few (Sumerian) compositions are yet published in satisfactory modern editions. Much is scattered throughout a large number of journals and other publications. Several important poems must still be consulted in twenty-year-old unpublished doctoral dissertations, some with translations which have now become unusable because of progress in our knowledge of the language. Major compositions have not yet been edited at all. The slow progress of research, with little organised collaboration until recently, means that Sumerian literature has remained inaccessible to the majority of those who might wish to read or study it, and virtually unknown to a wider public.

Given my goal to present Inanna's stories to a wider audience, this was an invaluable resource for me to actually find many of those stories. It was maintained and continually updated by a number of contributing scholars until 2006 at which time funding was sadly discontinued.

Because of the way in which the website is constructed, where several scholars may have contributed to a single translation without individual efforts being distinguished, I am unable to acknowledge the individual contributors to each translation. So I reference the website alone when I draw from it. Additionally, despite the efforts to make stories more accessible to a general public, many remain difficult to understand due to missing chunks of text, sometimes small and sometimes significant, and to a lack of shaping to create narrative cohesion. In these cases my research task was somewhat like that of a detective.

For example, when looking at the story *Inanna and Sukaletuda* much of the text seemed baffling. I had come across other versions, in an early Kramer (1956a) publication, a small excerpt in an article by Gadotti (2009), and references to the story in a book review by Alster (1999). This one was much longer, and sometimes directly contradicted the others. By cross referencing these resources, contacting Gadotti by email,⁷² and making conjectures based on agreed symbolisms in other stories, I eventually had a Eureka moment where everything seemed to make sense, and the puzzle fell into place. While this was still my own interpretation and remains un-validated by scholars who can read and translate Sumerian, it alerted me both to the amount of interpretation involved in translation, and the extent to which knowledge from other sources often provides a key to understanding.

Love Songs in Sumerian Literature by Yitzhak Sefati (1998) provides translations of the love poems, as well as contextual evidence, and interpretations and critical comparisons with other translations and interpretations. This level of rigour gave the Sefati text a level of accessibility, comprehensibility, and critical engagability that led me to choose it as the key text in my month of songwriting. I did, however, cross-reference many poems with both the Wolkstein/Kramer text and the Electronic Corpus of Sumerian Literature. While both these latter sources offered only a single interpretation of each poem without demonstrating the process leading to it (and in the case of the Wolkstein/Kramer text did not clearly indicate individual poems), sometimes certain images and phrases appeared more delightful in an alternative wording, and/or a difference in interpretation solved a narrative puzzle that bothered me about the poem.

It was through Sefati's text (1998) that I first learned that this tender, loving, and beautiful poetry of Inanna's sexual blossoming was also describing an ancient Sumerian ritual which 're-enacted' the consummation of her marriage in order to

⁷² I contacted Gadotti because there were elements of her translation that made more sense of the text for me than others. For example, where Kramer's text said that Sukaletuda's father tried to hide him, Gadotti's said that Enki helped hide him. Given that male gods are often addressed as 'father' in other texts, the difference did not seem contradictory, more that Gadotti's was possibly more precise. If I inserted Enki into Kramer's version, and the ETCSL version, other elements also made more sense. For example, why Enki seemed to be involved in a weird ritual at the beginning, and why Inanna turned to Enki when she finally found Sukaletuda became clear. I contacted Gadotti to ask if there was a full version of the translation she used. The translation was her own, and although she offered to help me in any way she could, she did not reply to further emails.

ensure fertility of the land. This ritual is often referred to as ‘The Sacred Marriage,’ as it is believed to be a forerunner of the Greek ‘Hieros Gamos’ (Sacred Marriage) ritual (p. 30).

This knowledge affected my creative work in many ways. In the case of *Ready for Love* it led to the decision to contextualise the song as belonging to a ritual, in both *An Invitation* and *Restoring Inanna*. My performed ritual did not attempt to faithfully depict the original, which I could not fully know,⁷³ but rather to create an engaging performance experience that had audience participation (as the Sumerians would have participated in the ritual) and included aspects of the ritual described in poetry. Feedback from Discussion Forum 2 participants⁷⁴, and a director in the audience in the Prague performance, was that they found the ritual elements engaging and embodied.⁷⁵ Although it is not uncommon for audiences to be “nice”, this feedback was unsolicited⁷⁶ and spontaneously and enthusiastically given. The success of the ritual elements was not well repeated in the final performance for reasons that will be explored in any future iterations.

In addition to providing contextualisation for the song, Sefati’s text (1998) contributed images and words to the lyrics as the song was redrafted. The second verse was shaped largely from the following poem:

⁷³ According to Sefati (1998) there are two poems which describe the ritual from beginning to end. However, while there are certainly common elements between the two descriptions (and the partial descriptions in other poems), there are also variations, and much of what would have actually happened is still conjecture, and probably altered slightly with each new king. I attempted to draw out some of the elements which were common - in particular the stages of courtship, preparation, the actual sex rites, and the post-rites celebration - and present something that would be performatively interesting and create a ritual space for the audience to enter. Due to editing, not all of these four stages are easily discernible in the performance *Restoring Inanna*.

⁷⁴ As explained in the introduction and methodology sections, participants in the post-performance Forums were drawn from the professional and social networks of me and my director. Forum 2 was the forum which took place in Canberra – the home of director Robin Davidson - following the performance of *An Invitation* and as such was comprised of a large number of his friends and colleagues as well as from friends and musical acquaintances I had made on many visits to Canberra as a musician.

⁷⁵ It would be interesting at this point to explore some of the ways that ritual and theatre have interacted historically, but this is beyond the scope of this research in which I intentionally approached the theatrical elements largely from a naïve perspective. However, Grammatikopoulou (2013), explores some connections between theatre and ritual, including the theory (which she questions) that theatre developed from ritual, and some of the ways in which a ritual approach to theatre, or performance art, is less interested in representation of reality than being real acts in themselves. My own experience was that performing the ritual helped to bring me into a feeling of greater presence on stage, although this effect was less strong on the night of *Restoring Inanna*.

⁷⁶ Forum participants were not asked specific questions about the performance and rather were asked to focus on the impact of the stories rather than the performance itself as far as possible.

Behold, our ("my") breasts have become firm
Behold, our ("my") nakedness has sprouted hair,
Baba, going to the lap of the bridegroom, let us rejoice!

"Dance! Dance! Baba, for my nakedness, let us rejoice!
Dance! Dance!
Afterwards it will please him, it will please him

"Let him bring, let him bring'
Please, let him bring abundantly!

Love Songs in Sumerian Literature, (Sefati, 1998, p. 137).

If we compare this to the verse I wrote,

Look at how my breasts have now become firm,
See how my nakedness has sprouted hair,
Let's celebrate my nakedness, oh dance and rejoice,
I am Inanna ...

we see that once again I have reshaped the words to fit the metre and structure of the verses I had already created. You can also see that this poem may have been written about a group of girls, or a single girl, Inanna, waiting to be married, suggesting the possibility of group marriages in Sumer. According to Sefati (1998, p. 148) the Sumerian word for 'my' is used on some tablets, but on others the word for 'our' has been used.⁷⁷

Another poem taken from the Sefati text (1998) demonstrates how my wording has been influenced by the body of poetry available. Note the word "ox", the "well watered ground/mound".

My uncultivated land, that which is left fallow in the steppe,
My field of ducks, where the ducks teem;
My high field, that which is well-watered,
My own nakedness, a well-watered, a rising mound

I, the maiden-who will plow it?
My nakedness, the wet and well-watered ground-
I, the young lady-who will station there an ox?⁶⁶

⁷⁷ The final two lines of this poem formed the chorus of another song I wrote for the performance *Let Him Bring*. The verses for *Let Him Bring* use also words from other poems describing some of the gifts Inanna hopes Dumuzi will bring when he arrives for the wedding.

Readiness for Love

The lyrical content of *Ready for Love* signals Inanna's physical and emotional readiness to enter her relationship with Dumuzi, a central aspect of the overarching storyline of *Restoring Inanna*. Inanna's readiness for, indeed her exuberant anticipation of, physical love is an aspect of the love poetry that speaks strongly to me. I explored this in the *Restoring Inanna* performance and will not repeat the discussion here. However, it also speaks to other contemporary women, for example Grijalva (2010), Tuana (2004), and Starhawk (1987), as an empowering image, and was the first topic of conversation initiated by the discussion forum participants following the Canberra performance of *An Invitation*.

One participant,⁷⁸ Jody, later informed me that while driving home she and Alana had observed, amongst other things, that the poetry appeared to be focused on sex and not love. I was privately stunned. It was the loving tenderness implicit in lines such as "man of my heart" and "sweet is the sleep of hand to hand, sweeter still is the sleep of heart to heart" – the piece of poetry I discussed in the performance - which had primarily drawn me to it, and it was this interweaving of tender love and sexuality that spoke to me most strongly in my early responses to the poetry. As someone who has struggled to allow myself to be vulnerable enough for such intimacy, I felt soothed by the image of two human beings softly naked together, joined by hand and heart in the trust of sleep, presumably following energetic love making. It did not seem a sexuality divorced from love at all. The music that I wrote around those two lines became a recurring theme in *Restoring Inanna*, longingly recalling for Inanna that early time of tenderness when her relationship was threatened.

Yet, it was true that the group discussion had focused on sexuality, both in a mythically symbolic sense and in terms of the role of female sexuality in our culture.

⁷⁸ All research participants are given pseudonyms.

One discussion forum participant, Becky, observed a cultural irony about interpreting Inanna's overt sexuality as empowering, resulting in the following conversation.⁷⁹

Becky: Sometimes when we talk about goddess culture it's like: "So, Inanna, she was really sexually liberated, and we're not"; or "India has sexually explicit images, and we don't." I'm sitting here thinking: "God, we've got sex everywhere." But that doesn't necessarily translate into women being valued, just because there's sex everywhere.

Me: I wanted to explore this theme in the show, but it was edited out: despite the fact we live in a sexualised culture, it lacks a sense of joy in, and acceptance of, our bodies.

Jody: In fact it's currently quite the opposite in Australia. There's a HUGE amount of repression.

Felicia: Perhaps one of the reasons we feel reluctant to see ourselves as sexual beings is because the outside world already does, so I think many of us feel reluctant to.

Me: This speaks to me of the dilemma of appearing too sexual or not sexual enough. I feel such shame either way.

Jody: But isn't that a woman's dilemma? Hasn't that always been a woman's dilemma? Is it any different now to what it was then? I would suggest it hasn't changed. It's always been that way.

Naomi: Surely not always.

In this conversation it seems that many participants are experiencing any depiction of sexuality as akin to the sexualised images prevalent in our culture. Perhaps it is the nature of the way in which sexuality is portrayed, and the cultural values applied to it, which informs whether its visibility in a society is experienced by women as empowering.⁸⁰ Liz Byrski (2012)⁸¹ speaks of our sexualised society as a cultural

⁷⁹ The group of eight women, including me, ranged in age from late twenties to approximately sixties. Director Robin was also present, but mainly just listened. This excerpt is edited to include only the comments that stayed with this theme.

⁸⁰ It is, of course, possible to find other explanations for the discrepancy. Some women may indeed find contemporary culture empowering, or believe they do, knowing nothing else and not having looked too closely. It could be that Inanna's sexuality, belonging to a goddess, brings sexuality into a spiritually sanctioned realm, as opposed to the sinful attributions that have been applied by the male dominated religions that have dominated for hundreds and thousands of years. These are possibilities and perspectives that could be useful to explore in future research, but the aspect that spoke to me most strongly in this research is the way in which women's sexuality is largely viewed as something for male consumption, rather than our own enjoyment.

barrage of ‘pornographic wallpaper’ which feeds us unrealistic sexualised images that we are meant to simultaneously emulate and reject.

While being barraged with sexualised images that deliver confusing and contradictory messages, we are also socialised with negative ideas about our genitals. Braun and Wilkinson (2001) outline six common negative socio-representations of the vagina: “...inferior to the penis; ... as absence; ... (passive) receptacle for the penis; ... sexually inadequate; ... disgusting; ... vulnerable and abused; and ... dangerous” (p. 3). This, they argue has consequences for women’s health and well-being, both through fostering negative self-perceptions, and because health professionals who care for our sexual and reproductive health have been similarly socialised. Presumably they also feed the perceptions of us by others in society with whom we interact.

The word ‘vulva’, referring to external genitalia, is rarely used in contemporary culture. Braun and Wilkinson (2001) acknowledge that in many of their research sources, the word ‘vagina’ sometimes refers to the vulva, due to incorrect common usage. Tuana (2004) associates this mislabelling - alongside the general failure of most anatomical diagrams to engage with the size and complexity of the clitoral structure and instead focus on reproductive physiology - with cultural discomfort around women’s potential for sexual enjoyment. Betty Dodson (2002) articulates the importance of correct labelling thus: “...I have objected to the word ‘vagina’ because it refers to the birth canal and leaves out the clitoris,⁸² the primary source of women’s sexual pleasure’ (p. xii)... and “...(I) want equal rights for women all over the world, and that includes sexual pleasure” (p. xvii). Braun and Wilkinson (2001) caution against completely dismissing the vagina as a potential additional source of female sexual pleasure when championing the clitoris, however, the point remains that the anatomical names of female body parts most associated with female sexual pleasure are rarely spoken.

In fact, female genitalia are rarely referred to at all, except as an insult. The word ‘pussy’, often used as a feminising insult to men, is sometimes used more neutrally,

⁸¹ This reference comes from a lecture.

⁸² Which is included as part of the vulva.

even affectionately, but even this is somewhat of a diminutive: it sounds cute, not strong, glorious or even adult. The word ‘cunt’, perhaps the most ‘grown up’ sounding term, is still commonly perceived to be the most obscene and disgusting word in the English language, which mirrors Braun and Wilkinson’s concept of ‘vagina as disgusting’ and the childhood feelings I describe in Act 1 of *Restoring Inanna* about seeing my grandmother’s vulva. As Inga Muscio (2002) says, “We are divided from the word (cunt). We are divided from the anatomical jewel. I seek reconciliation” (xxxix).

Given my use of the word vulva, references to nakedness, and relatively explicit sexual metaphors, *Ready for Love* was, in addition to being celebratory and lively, a potentially somewhat confronting opening song for a performance in this cultural context.

At various times throughout the creative process it was suggested to me, either by director Robin or a songwriting group member,⁸³ that, in a given moment, it may be preferable to use a metaphor for vulva, such as the word ‘field’ which Wolkstein (1983) claims was the same word in Sumerian. Occasionally I took the advice, as in the lyric “Who will plough my field?” which scans better musically, but most often I didn’t.⁸⁴ On the contrary, the cultural cringe in relation to female sexuality was one of the key reasons I chose to open both shows with the song. In Inanna’s praise of, and joy in, her increasingly womanly body, I hoped for some sort of antidote to sexual bodily shame. With this in mind, I wished to help myself and my audience over the hurdle of discomfort early in the show with humour and celebration. While Dodson (2002) argues that speaking aloud the names of the organs of female pleasure is not enough to effect social change, it is a beginning.

I am not alone in looking to Inanna’s stories for such antidotes. Psychologist Karen Grijalva (2010) explored a role for Inanna’s mythology in helping rape victims reclaim a joyous erotically embodied sexuality rather than simply a cessation of post-

⁸³ I belong to a group of songwriting colleagues who meet regularly to critique each other’s songs

⁸⁴ Even in opening the second act by singing the lyrics “Ah my vulva, who has done this to my vulva?”, I decided to risk audience laughter in an intended disturbing moment of heightened drama, hoping that the gravity of rape would adequately override any audience impulses to laugh. There was a small burst of laughter on the night, but it was short lived.

traumatic symptoms as was the traditional psychological goal. She discovered in her research participants an “ability to reclaim their sexuality outside of, and in spite of, dominant cultural myths” (p. 183). Tuana (2004) looked to Inanna’s poetry for images of a culture that was embracing of female sexuality.

However, I had to overcome some of my embarrassment about my body and sexuality to sing *Ready for Love*, and indeed to perform many of the more sexual aspects of Inanna’s stories. Early in my research I wrote in my research journal:

How can a contemporary woman who has had such an assault on her sexuality (through cultural “splitting” of women into mothers or whores; through actual sexual assaults; through the negative connotations associated with words that describe female genitalia; through the lack of words, or failure to use words to describe female genitals; through conflicting expectations and judgements of how we do or don’t express our sexuality), how could we relate to a goddess who upon entering adulthood leans against a tree and confidently praises her genitalia? Can I imagine myself leaning against a tree and praising my vulva? Even just in performance?

Research Journal Entry 13/09/2009

I am referring here to a moment in *Inanna and Enki* (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983) where Inanna leans against a tree and praises her wondrous vulva, before her quest to take possession of the *me* (pronounced may) from Enki.⁸⁵ It is a moment which is sometimes presented as evidence that in Ancient Sumer young girls celebrated and were affirmed in their emerging sexuality, and thus had more confidence in their bodies (e.g. Tuana, 2004; Starhawk, 1987).

I never completely overcame this discomfort. I was therefore very surprised by Felicia’s comments:

Felicia: At the beginning of the performance you said something about how unhappy you were trying on bras in the changing rooms at Myers, and you mentioned the incident again at the end. But your performance is about a woman celebrating being a sensual and sexual being and so

⁸⁵ The *me* (pronounced ‘may’) are a series of cultural attributes, sometimes tangible like a crown, sometimes intangible like ‘deceit’ which Inanna wins from, is gifted by, or tricks out of (depending on interpretation) her grandfather Enki. It was told in Act 2 of *Restoring Inanna* when Inanna reached the fourth gate of her descent. A full list of the *me* can be read in Appendix F.

on, so you had a transformation too. You didn't mention anything about the change that YOU made.

Me: Maybe I'm just a good actor.

Felicia: It's not about acting. You mention it at the beginning, yet you become another kind of woman, you know, there has been a change. You don't mention the change that you have made in becoming..., because you have become Inanna. That is a change. You don't refer to that change.

Me: You'd have liked more of my personal story?

Felicia: Well, maybe a little.....

Discussion Forum 2, Canberra, 17/09/2011

I had the impression that all the participants agreed, both about my perceived transformation and wanting more of the story behind it, and I was baffled: just because I was attempting to embody the goddess didn't mean that that the girl who hated her body, and who felt somehow sexually deficient, wasn't always part of me.

The issue was revisited when later Amanda spoke of the struggle in her relationship to re-vision sexuality away from traditional gender roles. She pondered what she could borrow from Inanna's story: "Grappling towards being comfortable and expressive in my sexuality would be nice. But what's the path?" Here again participants expressed a desire to know what my path had been. But I was still looking for a path myself: I was hoping the creative process with Inanna's stories would help me.

I addressed the issue of 'closure in my personal story' in the Prague performance by including the following words within my closing remarks:

What of my story? Some people have assumed that because I attempt to embody Inanna, I must have overcome my body image and sexuality issues. (snigger) Again the picture is more complex. Like Inanna, there are many versions of me: some have transcended, some have not.

Excerpt from "An Invitation to the Wedding of Inanna and Dumuzi", Prague Rewrite⁸⁶

⁸⁶ See Appendix C for the Prague Script.

On reflection however, the participants were partly correct. I WAS still the girl in the change-room, crying because I hated my breasts, but I wasn't *only* her. I wasn't at peace with my body, but I was MORE at peace with it; now sometimes I even quite like it. Sometimes I even revel in the pleasure of it, sexually, sensually and through exercise, and some of this learning had come through experiences that I had had since beginning my research. It felt as if engaging in this research had been my announcement of "readiness for love", or more accurately, of willingness to confront and attempt to transform some of my issues around love.

This more liberated part of me was the one I had to - with quite painful effort - draw on to do the performance. By doing such performances I was challenging myself to live from that part of myself more often, giving myself opportunities to practice tolerating my feelings of shame instead of being overwhelmed and crippled by them. On this occasion, however, my ever-present dilemma – excruciating humiliation at the thought of being seen as 'sexual' and even greater humiliation at the thought of being seen as challenged in my sexuality – was strongly enacted: I had exposed enough of that part of myself for one day, and was literally unable to share any of that journey with the group. In fact, I spent the entire next day crying. Luckily these feelings of overwhelming self-exposure were not repeated after subsequent performances.

The requests for more of my personal story, which were repeated in spontaneously offered feedback from *Restoring Inanna*, suggested that Inanna's stories were speaking to the audience through my stories. Or perhaps my stories were doing the speaking on their own. If so, they were stories I would not have told in performance without the connections and contrasts that had spoken to me through Inanna's stories, and I suspect there was something about the interaction between my stories and Inanna's that the audience was responding to. In any case, it seems that both my stories and Inanna's were speaking to this group of women. I am reminded of Ellis and Bochner's (2000) musings:

Maybe through writing and talking with other women about their experiences, I can figure out another story to live, one that might help me

cope better and not take so much out of me... Maybe I can both contribute to knowledge and help others – and myself – write a story we can live with... (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 756).

In one sense that is exactly what I had been trying to do: write a story that could help me, and hopefully other women, figure out another story to live; a story which would empower us in the (patriarchal) world in which we find ourselves. The story I was writing, and re-writing, wove together ancient and personal stories, and was being changed by, and hopefully helping to positively change, the stories of others.

Chapter 3

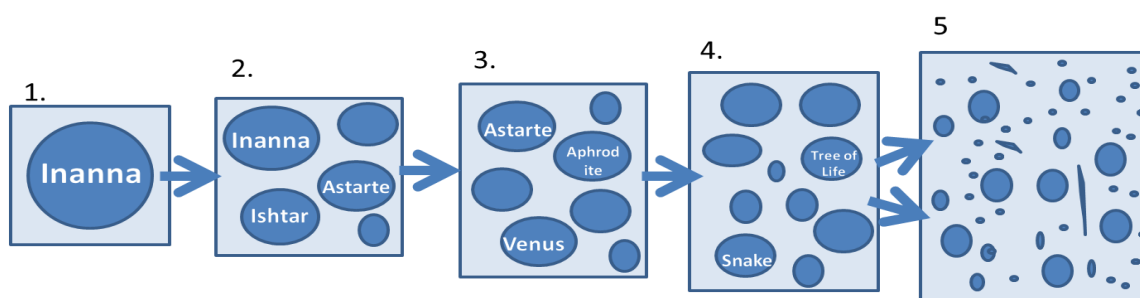
Ready for Love in restoration

I wrote *Ready for Love* in the spirit of my earliest concepts of ‘restoring’ Inanna. According to this concept I would explore and unpack the ‘duel pathways of transmission’ through which Inanna travelled the five thousand years from Sumer to now, a concept I developed early in my research. I would thus restore the original authentic archetype of Inanna to contemporary awareness through my performances, and re-story Inanna’s contextual ‘herstory’. Within this model *Ready for Love* would function to help me and other women restore to ourselves to a more healthy and empowered relationship to our sexuality through identification with a positive role model.

The first pathway: Informal Folkloric Transmissions

According to Seal in his book *The Hidden Culture* (1993), informal folkloric transmissions occur when, through the process of telling and retelling, items of folklore (songs, stories, poems) “cross vast distances, long periods of time, ... jump linguistic, cultural and national boundaries, and [become] amenable to various ‘literary’ re-uses” (p. 126).

This is how I imagined this process had applied to Inanna.



1. Five thousand years ago in Ancient Sumer, Inanna is an important and powerful goddess in her own right (as opposed to having power bestowed upon her via relationship to a male deity). There are many stories about her.

2. Her stories begin to travel across cultures and through time. She takes on different names in different languages. Subtle and not so subtle patriarchal elements are already apparent.
3. Patriarchy takes hold. Inanna becomes less powerful, often a consort, her stories begin to fragment, and her original name lost.
4. Stories continue to travel across time, continue to fragment, becoming more diffuse. Names and details continue to change. Inanna's characteristics are divided amongst a range of different goddesses, diluting her power. Elements of her stories appear in myths about male deities, thus appropriating her power for the patriarchy.
5. In recent and contemporary times, pieces of Inanna's stories infuse many cultures, though they are fragmented. In a sense Inanna is everywhere but her name is forgotten.

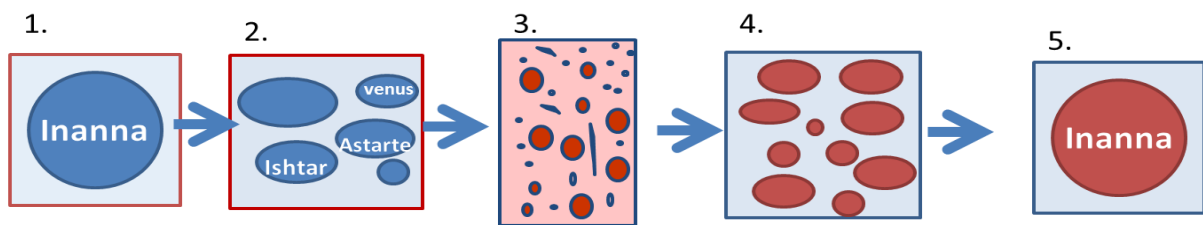
Although I challenge this idea later in the thesis, in my mind at the time, the Inanna of Sumer was original and whole: she was the undivided original female archetype that now desperately needed restoration in a culture where images and ideas of what it means to be female are proscriptive, contradictory, often oppressive, filled with judgement, and confusing.⁸⁷ According to this model, she became, over time, like Osiris in the myth of Isis and Osiris, whom Isis needs to reassemble because his body has been scattered throughout the land. Pieces of Inanna's 'body', as represented by her stories, were scattered throughout Biblical, Greek and Roman mythology, as discussed in the introduction. She was divided in the same way I, and many other women, feel about our roles and 'femaleness'. The divided Inanna was us; she, and we, needed restoration through painstaking research and reconstruction.

⁸⁷ Although I discuss this later, it is interesting to note at this point that Inanna is understood by several scholars (e.g. Harris, 1991) to embody contradictions and opposites, perhaps increasing her potential to address this confusion.

The pathway of ‘Academic Excavations’

The second pathway I have called ‘academic excavations’. By this I refer to both the actual physical excavations by which Sumer and the tablets with transcriptions of Inanna’s stories were found, and the academic processes by which they were translated and interpreted.

Interestingly, given my earlier Isis and Osiris metaphor, the pieces of clay tablet that contained Inanna’s stories became scattered amongst a range of museums in different countries.⁸⁸ Thus, piecing together the stories became an Isis-like task of reassembling and translating these pieces, further serving my metaphor that Inanna and her stories were in need of restoration. The process of academic excavations then was this:



1. Five thousand years ago in Ancient Sumer, Inanna is a powerful goddess in her own right. There are many stories about her.
2. Her stories begin to travel across cultures and through time. Patriarchy takes hold. Details change, names change, Inanna’s name is gradually buried, although she is everywhere in a divided and scattered form.
3. One hundred and fifty years ago evidence of Sumer is discovered. Pieces of clay tablets are discovered and scattered around the world.

⁸⁸ Kramer (1983) describes this process specifically relating to *Inanna’s Descent* in *Inanna QH&E*. Most fragments, he tells us, initially went to Istanbul or Chicago, but he eventually found one missing piece of text in a British Museum. The piece of text in question had been found previously, but on a section of tablet that was too damaged to decipher.

4. Sumerian is decoded; pieces of tablets are translated and reassembled. Other academics reassemble the picture of who Inanna was and what she represented.
5. Inanna is restored to herself and to us.

Using this logic, my own research task was to find and represent the essence of the original and whole Inanna of Ancient Sumer as well as I possibly could. In doing this I would be, in a sense, helping to restore Inanna, her stories, and her story (herstory) in an historical, or ‘her-storical’ contextual sense. This would link me to a long line of feminists, from Dale Spender (1982) to Bock and Thane (2012)⁸⁹ who argue that history is aptly named, because it tells the story of male achievements and power structures, while women’s stories and achievements are systematically erased from the officially transmitted stories of humanity, known as history. Women are largely invisible in historical accounts. Inanna’s contextual herstory, if we accept the theory that pre-patriarchal cultures existed, and that Inanna provides some sort of link to these, provides the archetypal story of how women became divided from ourselves. *Restoring Inanna* would, I hoped, help make visible a missing piece of herstory and help women to find a part of our own story which, like Inanna, has been buried and erased with patriarchy. We could reclaim an image of womanhood that is empowered and strong.

However, my experience at Pennsylvania University Museum, and the new research sources I began to explore, led me to view my research in a new way. It was not long before I realised that Inanna as an archetype was neither original nor unified.

Inanna as an original archetype

In reality I was always aware my ‘authentic Inanna’ idea was oversimplified, and that the Inanna I would discover in story was most likely already an evolution of an earlier deity or deities. Neumann (1955), who I read very early in my research, claims Inanna emerged from an earlier grain goddess, and several other authors I read early on (e.g. Wolkstein, 1983a; Rohlich, 1980) allude to earlier manifestations of Inanna. More recently Zsolnay (2009) has analysed and compared a range of

⁸⁹ While Bock and Thane (2012) do not use the word “herstory” in this book, it is in itself a writing of “herstory”.

perspectives by diverse scholars on Inanna's origins which include that she was a composite of a range of regional goddesses (Absuch, 1999, as cited in Zsolnay, 2009) and that the name Inanna was a derivation of the name of an earlier goddess called Anuna (Selz, 2000; and Lambert, 1989; as cited in Zsolnay, 2009). There is disagreement about the exact derivations, but seemingly not about the idea that Inanna is derived from somewhere. The theory of informal folkloric transmissions tells us that stories and songs are transmitted in ways that are not formally documented,⁹⁰ making the idea that such an entity as an 'original' Inanna could be uncovered somewhat naïve. It is never possible to categorically ascertain that any story or concept did not grow from an earlier one. However, as a concept I had still felt that restoring the earliest possible version of Inanna, a pre-patriarchal one, was a valuable exercise in linking us to herstory.

Inanna as a unified personality

In addition to not being particularly 'original', the Inanna I discovered in stories did not seem particularly unified. By contrast she appeared extraordinarily diverse. Sometimes she was powerful and strong, for example in *Inanna and An* where she takes the palace of heaven from the sky god, An;⁹¹ sometimes fearful, as in *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* where she cries in response to the creatures who take residence in her tree and runs to her brothers to rescue her.⁹² Sometimes she was ordered about by her brother, as in DI A where Utu insists that Inanna marry the shepherd despite her preference for the farmer;⁹³ sometimes she ordered him about, as in *Inanna and An* where she insists that Utu help in her bid for more power, and he agrees. In some stories Inanna appears irrational, jealous and angry, such as when she goes to war against the mountain in *Inanna and Ebih*;⁹⁴ while in others she was

⁹⁰ The fact that Inanna's stories have been documented does not change this as it is unlikely that the documentation was for purposes of preservation. It is unclear why the stories were written on tablets, but one theory is that they were set as writing practice exercises for students in school (Dalley, 1988).

⁹¹ *Inanna and An* is retold in the song *Earth is Mine* the song I sang at the first gate in Act 2 (see page 156, Appendix A)

⁹² In the small part of this story that I retell in Act 1, Gilgamesh, who is called Inanna's brother in the *Wolkstein/Kramer* text, is replaced by her lover Dumuzi in order to support the overarching narrative I developed. I suspect the term "brother" is not used literally in the Sumerian, but rather to denote a peer relationship, in much the same way as the term "father" is used to refer to any of the male gods who are of an older generation to Inanna in other stories.

⁹³ At the opening of the poem Utu is said to speak tenderly to Inanna, but the tone of the poem strikes me as paternalistic.

⁹⁴ Although this is the initial impression I and many others had to this story, I actually favour other interpretations of Inanna's behaviour. I explore these reactions in detail in Chapter 3.

compassionate, such as in the laments where she grieves for her defeated people in Erech (Kramer, 1983a), and/or tender and loving, such as in the love poetry that I was initially drawn to.⁹⁵

Within the range of love poems themselves, Inanna sometimes seemed subjected to strictly patriarchal laws of behaviour, and at others appeared to command sexual agency, even though within the boundaries of marriage. Sometimes Inanna capitulated to these rules, such as in DI H where she resists Dumuzi's advances for pre-marital sex citing her mother's disapproval as an excuse,⁹⁶ then at others she seemed to fight them, as in *The Shepherd and the Farmer Suitor's Rivalry* (Sefati, 1998, pp. 324 – 343) where she contemptuously refuses to marry the shepherd, deeming him below her status. The stories of this diverse Inanna did not appear to be constructed from minds free of patriarchal thought.

How we understand Inanna's diversity has implications for the ways in which she speaks to us, and I explore a few possibilities below.

Diversity as a function of lifespan

One possible way of reconciling Inanna's differences in different stories is to see the stories as episodes and events that occurred at different times in her life. As people we all change across our lifespan both as a function of our changing minds and bodies, as well as in response to different life experiences. One way of reading the stories is to see Inanna as a persona, albeit one with divine characteristics. This is in effect what Wolkstein (1983) did in collating her four stories as chapters/stages in a

⁹⁵ I unpack this idea in the performance *Restoring Inanna*, and so do not do so further here.

⁹⁶ This poem is ambiguous in that it is unclear if Inanna is using her mother as an excuse, or if she wishes to succumb but is afraid of parental disapproval. It is also unclear whether Inanna maintains her refusal, or eventually succumbs as the relevant lines of the poem were, ironically, obscured on the tablet. Sefati believes it is more likely that Inanna "refused to yield to him outside in the street like a prostitute" (Sefati, 1998, p. 189), a conclusion which possibly relates to the last verse in which it seems Inanna is joyfully awaiting marriage, although it seems to me that Inanna could also be speaking here with knowledge of carnal delights as she comments on the tastiness of Amausumgalanna's (another name for Dumuzi, as is Usumgalana) plants. More salient to me than her actual decision is that her responses did not seem to come from a sense of what she herself wanted or desired, but rather she seemed caught between conflicting demands of parental expectations of chastity and male pressure for pre-marital sex. There is no indication of clarity around her own feelings and desires, a situation which speaks to me strongly of what I, and many young women, experience(d) coming into adolescent sexuality. I wrote a song based on this poem called "Usumgalana" which was performed in both versions of *An Invitation*. The lyrics are included on page 198 of Appendix C.

female life cycle, and it is in part what I did by creating an overarching storyline for *Restoring Inanna* which interprets the stories as sequential events in Inanna's life. As a goddess, however, it could be said that Inanna's 'life' traversed grand stretches of time, and changes that happened to her stories as a result of historical political changes also form a part of Inanna's 'life'.

Diversity as a function of historical political change

Richard Zettler, archaeologist at Inanna's temple at Nippur and museum curator at the Pennsylvania University Museum, warned me via an email from his colleague William Hafford (personal communication, 2011) against trying to reconcile Inanna's stories into a unified and cohesive narrative whole. They were, he said, written by different people at different times with different political agendas, and not conceived of as a unified package. As well as solidifying my growing realisation at the time that the format of Wolkstein/Kramer text was a construction of Wolkstein's rather than the 'true' form of the myth, the warning also spoke to my later perception that some of Inanna's stories seemed more a product of patriarchal thought, i.e. written by different people at different times, than others.⁹⁷

This perception, which is illustrated to some extent by my description of Inanna's different responses to different situations in different stories above, is consistent with the theory espoused by authors such as Rohrlach (1980), who attempts to trace the growing subjugation of women in tandem with a timeline of Sumerian state formation, and Starhawk (1987) that Inanna was originally a peaceful domestic goddess associated with date palms and storehouses, before the emergence of patriarchy and militarism, at which time she became more a more fearful, unpredictable and warlike goddess, perceived more and more negatively over time. According to this theory "...the religious ideas associated with this goddess were adapted at each new stage of Sumer's history to support the emergence of patriarchal structures of society" (Wakeman, 1985, p. 8).

⁹⁷ Most of the patriarchal elements I discovered in the love poetry came after I discovered the Sefati text, which was after this early communication from Zettler. However, even at this stage I was already troubled by some aspects of the story *The Courtship* in the Wolkstein/Kramer text: the initiation of the process by Inanna's brother; Dumuzi's entreaty to be "set free" to take up his kingly duties; the pressure on Inanna to marry the shepherd when she preferred the farmer.

My reasons for ultimately going against Zettler's advice are explored in more detail in Chapter 4, but to some extent I accommodated the idea that Inanna changed as a function of contextual political change by treating this change as part of Inanna's lifespan. As a human-like character in a story, Inanna's lifespan may be limited to a certain length. However, as a goddess, her lifespan can be thousands or millions of years, in which case the various aspects of her personality can be read as responses to the life events of how history has treated her. In this way context and story are woven together in the overarching narrative.

Diversity as a function of essential nature

Some writers consider Inanna's contradictions and diversity to be her archetypal essence. Stuckey (2004) for example says that Inanna is a "boundary crosser"⁹⁸ whose functions all relate to transition and transformation, thus unifying her contradictions as part of the cycle of life. In her analysis of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* (2001, 2005) Stuckey further speaks of Inanna's earthly aspect (represented by the tree trunk/her body) functioning to hold together the tensions between her heavenly aspect (the branches) and the underworld aspects (the roots). Harris (1991) summarises a number of scholars on the matter and concludes that Inanna embodied contradictions and paradoxes thereby transcending them and reconciling them for the people.

From a personal feminist perspective, I find this attempt to integrate Inanna's diversity into a unified 'self', quite validating. In

addition to changing across the lifespan, we as humans can embody contradictory behaviours and feelings concurrently, presenting different parts of ourselves in

**From Discussion Forum 1 on
*Inanna and the Huluppu
Tree.***

MARULA: *The thing that came to me immediately was the number of threads of womanhood represented by the tree with all its branches.*

ROCELLE: *The three creatures in the tree (the snake, Anzu bird, and Lilith) are what I engaged with the most. They are quite different, and Inanna is trying to negotiate her way between them.*

JANE: *She needs these other personas (the creatures in the tree) to expand her, stretch her and... make her more real if you like...they have to be part of her, because if they're not, she's just too goody.
(GENERAL LAUGHTER)
..... well, we are all those things, aren't we?*

⁹⁸ Most of Stuckey's articles have been published in an online journal which does not have page numbers.

different settings and circumstances. Although the above writers are speaking of inexplicable and dangerous spiritual energies, such as power over life and death, it is possible to continue to imagine Inanna to be a unified identifiable narrative female character who embodies contradictions, as we do ourselves. Women are capable of great ambition, strength, confidence, rage and sexual desire, which we often suppress due to social expectations of perceived appropriate gender-linked behaviour: we mute our strong emotions and drives in order to be 'good'. For me Inanna's paradoxes can provide a permission-giving mirror to accept ourselves in all our forms.

Diversity as a function of unrelated multiple Inannas

Ilona Zsolnay's (2009) PhD in Assyriology brings a new perspective to the issue of Inanna's variety. In her introduction she discusses some of the ways in which Inanna, who she calls by the Akkadian version of the name, Ishtar (Ištar), has been perceived by different academics. She says the following about the different feminist lenses through which Inanna has been interpreted:

During the mid-twentieth century, the "mother-goddess" hypothesis was applied by psychoanalysts, such as Carl Jung and his protégée Eric Neumann, to the theory of archetypes. Ištar became, alternatively, a nurturing and caring figure and a feared and sexually ferocious man-eater. These psychoanalytical conclusions, and those propounded by the earlier Victorians, were later re-contextualized by Second Wave feminists who read Ištar's connection to sex and fertility as a sign of empowerment: Ištar's role as a "mother-goddess" gave feminist scholars hope that patriarchy had not always been a constant. Beginning in the 1980's, when Third Wave feminism and literary and post-structuralist criticisms came to the fore, Ištar began to be re-imagined as a principle or concept which served societal "agendas." (Zsolnay, 2009, p. 17-18).

While I feel this paragraph oversimplifies the 'hopes' of second wave feminists,⁹⁹ it provides a succinct summary of some different ways in which Inanna has spoken to feminists and Jungian theorists.

⁹⁹ Several authors speak of Inanna's connection to sex and fertility as empowering without interpreting her as a 'mother-goddess'. On the contrary, it could be argued that the lack of emphasis placed on Inanna's motherhood is what is empowering about her sexuality. It allows contemplation of sexual enjoyment without it needing to result in pregnancy. Inanna's sexual fertility is perceived as part of a more generalised fertility of the land, which, in my reading of the poetry, is equated with orgasmic pleasure, rather than her own need to procreate. Likewise, it was not necessary for Inanna to be a mother-goddess in order for her stories to provide hope that patriarchy did not always exist. The fact that she presented a different model of femaleness than most mythical stories, at a much earlier

Zsolnay then continues by explaining that it is difficult to ascertain Inanna's 'true' religious function in antiquity because she appears in so many manifestations in the different texts, is described with different political, descriptive and regional titles, and her name is written in different ways. She observes that Mesopotamians themselves accepted a multitude of seemingly independent manifestations of Inanna, whom they did not consider to be identical.

In other words, Inanna was not only not unified and whole; if Zsolnay is correct, there were many different and completely separate Inannas even in antiquity: possibly a different one for each town.

Other scholars, such as Stuckey (2004), directly contradict Zsolnay, saying that Inanna clearly was perceived as a unified deity by the Sumerian people. In this case Zsolnay probably has a more recent and comprehensive analysis of the primary data. All the same, this diversity of opinion about who or what Inanna was and represented made it difficult to categorically ascertain a 'truth' about her. I could apply critical thought to the arguments I read, and I could take a position on which opinion was more recent or authoritative, and which arguments were possibly more unconsciously biased. I could also place myself as best I could within the debates¹⁰⁰ based on the research I did. However, without endless time to obtain expert knowledge and research skills in all of the fields that posed these different opinions, find all of the evidence archaeological and otherwise, critically evaluate it according to feminist and other criteria, the attempt to decide who was 'right' was somewhat daunting. I realised that the advice of a university department head – that I couldn't expect to get to the bottom of all the issues my research exposed – was absolutely correct. Effectively, all I COULD do was become another – hopefully informed - voice in the kaleidoscopic discourses.

time to most known mythology, gives hope that once in history there was some alternative construction of womanhood upon which gods were made in the image of humanity, even if that was some time earlier than the time the tablets were inscribed. The research which argues for the existence of pre-patriarchal societies draws on wide ranging evidence which, while debated, is much more comprehensive than a shaky theory of Inanna as mother-goddess.

¹⁰⁰ For example, concluding that there probably was a pre-patriarchal society (although probably not matriarchal) but not asserting this as a known fact.

I had what felt like an epiphany about this problem. One afternoon as I left the Pennsylvania University Museum, my head spinning with the effort to reconcile the new perspectives I was being introduced to, I suddenly realised: all these different opinions about Inanna? They WERE my research! My job was not to try to uncover the ‘real’ Inanna; it was to explore the variety of interpretations people had made to understand how she speaks to us. These interpretations themselves were the ways in which Inanna and her stories have spoken to contemporary minds, many of whom are women.

Contemporary reconstructions of Inanna

Just as there were many Inannas in antiquity, there are a huge variety of contemporary (re)constructed Inannas. One could even say that there are as many contemporary Inannas as there are people who have cared to contemplate Inanna as a character, idea, or construct. Despite the relatively recent re-discovery of Inanna and her stories, there are too many stories and sources of contextual information for any one person to have studied all of it, even for a scholar with access to the primary data (e.g. the tablets and archaeological records), and the ability to translate Sumerian. Therefore each interpretation is based on data sets which may be slightly, or even hugely, different.

Additionally, even where two or more people may have studied an identical set of data, there is much that is open to interpretation. The different life experiences and areas of knowledge brought by each individual reading the data create very different lenses through which the data is viewed,¹⁰¹ even where strong academic scholarship is involved. As noted earlier, Eisler (1987) explains how before carbon dating, for example, archaeological discoveries were dated based on the assumption that progress was linear and therefore more sophisticated tools and complex societies

¹⁰¹ In the story *Inanna and An*, for example, An “the sky god and father of all the gods”, as I describe him in my song, makes a surprised comment that Inanna is stronger than he is when she takes over his palace, and then adds somewhat puzzlingly that she has made “night equal day”. My first instinct when reading this was to interpret it as meaning that through her quest she had made ‘feminine’ attributes, often perceived as belonging to the night, be valued equally with male ones. Robin (director), without having heard my thoughts, saw the comment as referring to the winter equinox. For him the story told of the time of the year that the night lengthened to become of equal length to the day. Interestingly, a discussion group participant, someone with an interest in goddess religions, read the story the same way as I did. Of course it is possible for both to be true, but the example illustrates the different ways we interpret what we see according to our own experiences.

were always more recent, an assumption that carbon dating later proved to be inaccurate.

Even the most bland and basic translation is already an interpretation. I became very aware of this as I read different translations of the same poems and stories.

Sometimes a single word translated differently could change the entire possible meaning of a story.¹⁰² Additionally, although it is clear that dialogue is occurring in some stories, the Sumerian transcribers did not indicate which character was speaking, possibly signifying that there were conventions that Sumerians would have instantly known. So translators have to use other cues to deduce this. In some cases the use of a women's-only dialect called "Emesal" indicated a female speaker, but it was not always used by female speakers (Sefati, 1998), and according to Stol (1995) it was also sometimes used by men at funerals. Consequently different attributions are made by different translators, strongly affecting the possible surface meaning, not to mention the deeper meanings made by a reader.¹⁰³

As these translations move into the hands of those of us who do not read Sumerian, they become yet another step removed from the source, and new layers of interpretation are added. Zsolnay's (2009) explanation of how Inanna was differently interpreted during different waves of feminism suggests the way that the contemporary political thought of the time shaped interpretations. To some extent, we create the Inanna we need to believe is revealed by the texts. Some of the reverberations of those interpretations were felt by me in my initial responses to Inanna and her stories. Even as my perceptions have altered and grown, my core response and my sense the *The Descent* is central, have remained a basis of perception upon which my other responses have been built.

¹⁰² For example, when I worked on the story *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* in creative practice I worked with a translation that read "Inanna cared for the tree with her hand. She settled the earth with her foot" (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983, p. 5). In the ETCSL version that I discovered later the line reads: "The woman planted the tree with her feet, but NOT with her hands" (emphasis mine). This implies some significance relating to the hands and feet upon which I can only speculate. Was it holier to use the feet? Or unclean to use the hands? As a goddess who ruled over earth would she lose some power if she touched it with her hands (given that in another story Inanna's servant has power over water because she has not touched it with her hands or feet)?

¹⁰³ In the poem from which I wrote the song *Honey Man*, for example, (DI-E, Sefati, 1998, p. 165; ETCSL) there is a garden - a possible metaphor for sexual flourishing - which some translations say is Dumuzi's, and others Inanna's but tended by Dumuzi.

The Wolkstein/Kramer text (1983) is likely the most common source of distribution of Inanna's stories beyond the fields of Sumerology and Near Eastern Studies, and thus could be seen as the source of a large body of responses to, and interpretations of, Inanna and her contemporary significance. It is cited as a source in most of the non-Near Eastern scholarship and artwork on Inanna I examined early in my research (e.g. Perera, 1981; Sturges, 1993; Caperton, 1983), and was the only textual source in some (e.g. Tchana & Tchana, 2006). As we have already seen, Wolkstein shaped the stories into a very particular construction, which appears to have been selective rather than representative of the Inanna material.¹⁰⁴ In her introduction, Wolkstein describes how she came to perceive Inanna's story as following the "same pattern as the archetypal Moon Goddess: the young girl who is courted; the ripe woman who enjoys her feminine powers and continuously offers her bounty; and the mature woman who meets her death in the underworld" (p. xvi). Her construction was clearly influenced by her preconceptions of the concept 'the goddess'.

This construction appears to have been read by many, including initially by me, to be the actual form in which the stories were intended. By email correspondence, as one example, author Katrin Tchana (2010) wrote "...the part of the myth that is most meaningful to me is the journey to the underworld to visit Ereshkigal, so anything else I included was to frame that...".¹⁰⁵ She had used the Wolkstein/Kramer text as her source and in so speaking implied that this four part construction was indeed Inanna's full story.

Following from this idea, there would most likely be people who read the texts which cite Wolkstein and Kramer (1983), or who heard or read retellings of Wolkstein's retellings of Inanna stories, but who had not actually read the Wolkstein and Kramer text itself. Such people may include, for example, audiences who heard a live performance by Jenny Cargill-Strong of her *Exultant Myth Cycle of the Goddess Inanna* (2010) based on *Inanna's Descent*. Thus their knowledge of Inanna is removed yet another step from the primary data but is indirectly shaped through Wolkstein's lens. Further, many people who have heard of Inanna contemporarily

¹⁰⁴ In truth, however, I do not have data on the order in which stories were found and translated, and it is possible that Wolkstein did use all that was available to her at the time.

¹⁰⁵ Tchana gave me written permission to quote her emails in my exegesis.

may never have read anything, just heard someone else, like me for example, tell one or more of the stories, or speak about them. Thus new contemporary pathways of informal (and formal) transmissions are created whereby stories again travel, altering as they do, and are again used for “various literary uses and reuses” (Seal, 1989, p. 126).

While *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983) are one source, there are most likely others. For example the author of *Enheduanna, Lady of Largest Heart*, Betty De Shong Meador (2000), learned Sumerian and translated the stories and poems of Inanna that she believed to have been composed by Enheduanna.¹⁰⁶ Meador’s interpretations of the stories are also very specific, and anyone who comes to Inanna’s stories via these translations may begin yet another new pathway of transmission with an alternative Inanna.

In other words, the idea of ‘Inanna’ can relate to a proliferation of ancient versions of the goddess, and a myriad of contemporary interpretations based to a greater or lesser degree on one or more of those Inannas. For me, each new perception of Inanna, gained through contextual reading, the ideas of another academic, or ideas articulated by discussion forum participants, was influenced by other perceptions of Inanna, making any idea of tracing my way back to an ‘original’ impossible.

Conclusion to part one

Thinking about Inanna in this way, I felt myself to be standing in a hall of mirrors looking for reflections of myself and my culture in never-ending merging, separating, and sometimes overlapping images of Inanna. One could suppose that the historical Inanna (or rather our contemporary inferred perceptions of who or what Inanna would have been perceived to be in her historical Sumerian context) became irrelevant as my research began to focus more strongly on these contemporary manifestations of Inanna and how her stories spoke to contemporary women.

¹⁰⁶ Enheduanna was the daughter of King Sargon in the Sargonic era (2334 to 2279 BCE), and also priestess to the moon god, Nanna. Her allegiance, however, was to Inanna, and to Inanna she wrote many hymns. She is the only authorial name I have discovered in my research for Inanna’s stories and poems.

On the contrary, however, I often found that the historical context, or my perceptions of and projections onto the historical context, was an important part of how the stories spoke to me. When I imagined Inanna to be a reflection of emancipated Sumerian womanhood, the stories spoke to me as being a possible model of how to live a more emancipated existence. When I imagined Inanna's stories to reflect a culture in which patriarchy was taking hold, I saw the implied culture of her stories as a mirror image of our own culture in which patriarchy's hold is loosening, but where the struggles for women may in many ways be similar to those Inanna faced in her stories.

Like the Inanna I imagined I saw in the stories, sometimes we as women attempt to subvert patriarchy; sometimes we fight for and reinforce it; sometimes we fall unseeingly into it; and sometimes we are seduced by it, either wanting some of that type of power for ourselves, and sometimes wanting to be taken care of by a 'strong man'.

I noticed a similar hunger for contextual information in research participants. This was most marked in Discussion Forum 2, the one following *An Invitation* in Canberra, where I felt for more than half the conversation as if I was fielding questions about historical context while doing a bad job of trying to steer the focus onto participants' perceptions and reactions to the stories and poems themselves. In retrospect, I suspect the participants felt they needed to know more about Sumer to arrive at their conclusions about Inanna and the stories; or perhaps, like me and like the second wave feminists that Zsolnay (2009) describes, they wanted to know if maybe there had been an earlier time when things were different for women. Often their questions were similar to those that had obsessed me earlier in the research. Was there evidence of earlier suppression of goddess culture? Was there evidence that women had been treated better in Sumerian society? Did Inanna's apparent sexual autonomy reflect the way women behaved in Sumerian culture? And – from Discussion Forum 1 in response to the moment when the axe fell on the snake – How old *is* this story? How long has violence against women's sexuality been going on?

While we found no definitive answers to these questions, and while it was not

possible for me to locate one 'true' Inanna, these types of questions and discussions suggest that Inanna's stories, in all their variety, were indeed speaking to the contemporary women who participated in my research. However, while my concept of what 'Restoring Inanna' meant was a useful conceptual framework initially, it needed to give way to more complicated conceptual models that could better hold the complexity of my deepening research. In the words of archaeologist and writer William Hafford (email communication, 2013):

... any story is about interpretation at different points in time. These things evolve in the telling and what they mean to one person or group or culture isn't always the same as what they mean to another. Even actual people have stories arise around them that are symbolic rather than 'true'. I'm not sure we can ever come up with truth about what Inanna meant, but we can definitely talk about different projections/concepts she has embodied or may be seen to embody.

PART TWO

WHO IS THE GIRL?

A Song Prelude:

Who is the girl who stands in for me?
Is she as pretty as I am?
Is her hair like the mane of the ibex, my red deer?
Is she fit for the king who stands in for my love?

Is she a young temple maiden?
Scared to lie down with a much older man?
Or is she excited to be opened to pleasure?
Is she happy to serve me and her people this way?

*Oh I remember Dumuzi, the first time
He shaped my loins with his own fair hands
How he watered my womb, how it ended too soon
How he smoothed my vulva with milk and cream*

I am the queen full of loveliness
I am also the goddess who returned from hell
And I wish the same courage and joy for this child
Is the king fit for her who stands in for me?

*Oh I remember Dumuzi, the first time
He shaped my loins with his own fair hands
How he watered my womb,
How it ended too soon
How he smoothed my vulva with milk and cream*

*Yes, I remember Dumuzi, the first time
How I lay down beside him amongst the fig trees
Amongst his dates I recall,
How his cedar stood tall
I de-creed him a sweet fate and made him a king.
I made him the king.*

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Who is the Girl? was written during the month of love poetry-inspired songwriting in 2011, and was performed as part of both the Canberra and Prague performances of *An Invitation*. It was almost excluded from *Restoring Inanna* for space and narrative reasons, but was re-included at the eleventh hour as I searched for an ending for the show. It seemed a fittingly reflective ending for an Inanna who, having now completed her descent, could view her relationship with Dumuzi more clearly and apprehend both the positive and negative elements.

Chapter 4

Who is the Girl? in context

Searching for Inanna in a Hall of Mirrors

While the concept of excavating an ‘original’ Inanna to assist in restoring her stories to a wider audience never completely left me, the new metaphor of standing in a hall of mirrors, along with the consequent acceptance of multiple Inannas, became dominant. This had implications for my creative practice and for other elements of my research.

Firstly, I felt the new metaphor better served my research goals in relation to introducing empowering mythological stories for women to a wider audience. In attempting to restore an ‘original Inanna’ I had been working largely within the conceptual framework that Inanna’s four part life story, as presented by Wolkstein and Kramer (1983), provided a “fleshed out multi-faceted model for female development” (Sturges, 1993, p. 65). I have already discussed some of the literature which argues the case for better literary, and particularly mythological, role models for girls and women, and the potential role for Inanna’s stories in providing this (e.g. Sturges, 1993; Perera, 1981). The concept of modelling comes from Albert Bandura’s (1977, as cited in McLeod, 2011) social learning theory and refers to the process of learning from example and observation. But, thinking in terms of mirrors reminded me that, psychologically speaking, effective mirroring can be much more empowering than modelling, because while a model shows us what to do, a good mirror helps us explore, discover, accept and express who we are.

The concept of mirroring comes from the psychotherapeutic theories of Bowlby (1969, as cited in McLeod, 2009) and Winnicott (2005).¹⁰⁷ Effectively it speaks of the way in which we need to see ourselves and our feelings mirrored back to us through others – especially as children – in order to: learn about and understand our feelings and how to manage them; develop the capacity for empathy; and to know that somehow we are okay, and that our feelings are okay. Wallin (2007)

¹⁰⁷ This was first published in 1971.

draws heavily on the work of Fonagy and others (Allen & Fonagy, 2002; Fonagy et al, 1995; Winnicott, 1995; as cited in Wallin, 2007) to explain that “emotionally attuned mirroring is absolutely critical” (p. 49) in early childhood development as it: lays the groundwork for [self] regulation and impulse control; allows the child to gradually come to understand herself as a “feeling, believing, desiring and mentalizing individual who responds to experience not only in terms of physical realities, but also in light of mental states [and] develop[s]... the awareness that her mind is her own” (p. 49).

Inadequate mirroring, on the other hand, can lead to what Wallin describes as “various versions of the false-self theme” (p. 51). In other words, the child internalises her parents’ responses to her feelings, and so additionally feels the despair/anger/overwhelm/ridicule of the parent each time that feeling re-emerges, instead of learning how to manage and calm it. The feelings are not really her own. Thus she often feels empty.

Another way of understanding this is to say that we often tend to see ourselves through the way the world reflects us back to ourselves, rather than as we are, and that this can cause a great distortion of self-concept, distress, and feelings of emptiness. The stories we hear, in particular the mythical ones, often do not acknowledge certain types of feelings and behaviours in women, or condemn them, providing inadequate mirrors. So we deny these feelings and behaviours, or condemn them, in ourselves. A story which mirrors us makes us feel less alone, while a story which provides only a role model may give us yet another expectation to live up to.

Kimmitt (2000) speaks of the woefully inadequate way that our symbolic cultural parents, the deities of the dominant myths which have shaped our culture,¹⁰⁸ have provided mirroring for women. In the Garden of Eden, for example, God did not reward or appreciate Eve for her natural inclination to seek knowledge; instead he punished her for tasting the apple. Further, he accepted Adam’s interpretation that his

¹⁰⁸ I am referring here to the theories I discussed in the Introduction where Kimmitt identifies Freudian thought and Christianity as the mythologies that have so deeply entered our collective Psyches that we are unaware of the extent to which our culture and thinking is shaped by them. She is speaking here of America, but I would argue that in this case, despite our cultural differences, Australia shares these mythological roots, making her argument valid also in Australia.

own behaviour was Eve's fault, rather than forcing Adam to take responsibility for his own actions. Kimmitt sees this as translating into unconscious cultural attitudes which continue to simultaneously see women as less capable of morality, at the same time as holding us responsible for men's immoral behaviours. Women thus internalise self-blame, including for things beyond our control, and our sense of self-worth drops as our knowledge and achievements increase (Sturges, 1993). Inanna in her variety provides such a diverse hallway of mirrors, giving more possibilities of seeing ourselves and our dilemmas reflected. In a sense *Who is the Girl?* presents an Inanna who is herself looking into a mirror.

The second major implication for my creative practice of this new model was a greater feeling of creative freedom to shape Inanna and her stories to reflect my ever evolving responses to the research question. I had always been aware that I was working somewhere along a spectrum where simply retelling ancient stories was at one end, and creating something entirely new with mere resonances or echoes was at the other, but my early ideas of restoration kept me from taking too many freedoms with the narrative. Knowing that my performances would provide the first, and possibly only, contact with the stories for many people, I felt a sense of responsibility to be accurate and not move too far from the 'simply retelling' end. I also felt reined-in by the fact that

most of my audience would not understand vague allusions to the stories as are often made when art is inspired by the better known Greek or Roman myths.

Helen (supervisor): When you watched this, did you think it was Raelene's loosely inspired story, or something really, really old?

Dylan: That question was ringing in my head, but I didn't have an answer.

Jane: Me either. But I was taken into another space.

Marula: Yes, I was drawn into the space you made straight away. You invoked an ancient memory or visual with the opening chanting, and from there it became your creation. There was so much of you in it which was fantastic. Obviously it would have been completely different with anyone else.

Me: I haven't answered that for myself yet. I want to stay relatively true to the story, but I don't know to what extent it is an interpretation. I have a sense of where the line is, but I can't articulate it yet.

Gail: The juxtaposition of the old and the new in the music was interesting: you used an ancient sounding scale for the creature song, but then used a loop pedal!

Melanie: It seemed a very, very old traditional mythic story of good and evil that was contemporised by the Australian blokey brother and the sense of humour.

Excerpt from Discussion Forum 1
(*Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*), 17/09/2011

I could now, however, allow myself more freedom to move further along the spectrum towards creating something new because, as Jessica from the Second Discussion Forum said, “other people have created their versions of Inanna, and now you’re creating yours”. No matter what I chose to do, my Inanna(s) could only ever be a reflection of a reflection. Borrowing Wilber’s (1996) idea that human development is not a process of growing and leaving the previous stage behind, but transcending AND including the previous stage simultaneously,¹⁰⁹ my feelings of responsibility to represent Inanna accurately did not end, so much as transform into a need to acknowledge the process by which my Inanna(s) was (were) woven from threads, both historical and contemporary, of my own and others’ making.

Who is the girl?

Who is the Girl? wove an imagined Inanna from threads made of my contextual research about the sacred marriage, and my intellectual and emotional responses to what I was finding.

Jones (2003) tells us “the narrative [of Iddin-Dagan A which describes one version of the ritual] describes the goddess coming down from the heavens and consummating a marriage with the king...” (p. 292). He also tells us, that “(t)he king, much of the populace, and various exotic cultic personnel parade beneath the heavenly gaze of the goddess” (p. 292), implying by virtue of both sentences that Inanna was both within the proceedings, and watching them from on high.

My mental image of Inanna in her heavenly cloud watching on, led me to wonder how she felt about the sacred marriage. Did she approve of the social and political function(s) it performed in relation to supporting the office of kingship? Did she share the agenda(s), or was she being appropriated and compelled by someone or something else? Did she enjoy being married to the celestial original Dumuzi AND marrying the earthly kings? Did she resent it? Two songs emerged in response to some of these questions, both of which imagine a ‘real Inanna’ hidden somewhere amongst the hall of mirrors reflecting upon the reflections of herself.

¹⁰⁹ For example, Wilber (1996) would say that when we grow beyond the instinctual urge to have sex whenever the desire comes upon us, we have only truly reached the next stage of development when we integrate our need for sexual expression into our personalities, rather than avoiding and condemning sex as base and beneath more intellectual concerns.

The first of these, *They Dragged Me Here to Marry the King* (Appendix E), imagined an angry Inanna being summoned to a ritual of which she did not approve,¹¹⁰ but in which she was compelled to take part by the magic of the ritual itself. In this song, a grungy blues which was performed only in the Canberra version of *An Invitation*,¹¹¹ Inanna is annoyed at being compelled to marry a series of men masquerading as her husband when she would rather be at home in the sky with the real Dumuzi, a deity. Although some theories of myth (Armstrong, 2005) argue that historically a ritual was not understood as a repeated event, but rather as something which kept a cosmic event ‘ever present’,¹¹² I have here imagined that an original event, marriage between a goddess and a god, was repeated in re-created form in a linear¹¹³ fashion each time a new king was named.¹¹⁴ Inanna’s anger reflected some of how I felt about the idea that the love poetry which I had found so tender and inspiring was connected to a ritual whose intended political purpose was possibly oppressive of women.

For *Who is the Girl?*, Inanna is more reflective than angry. I place a contextual question in her mouth, a device which largely assumes Inanna to have the same knowledge as I do (and do not). This device also functions to explore some of my responses to the reasons for asking the question through Inanna’s speculated feelings, thus illuminating how the material speaks to me through a contextual mirror. The

¹¹⁰ The reasons for her disapproval are drawn from a feminist response to some of the possible political agendas of the ritual. This will be explored later in this chapter.

¹¹¹ It was left out of subsequent performances largely for reasons of space, time and narrative line.

¹¹² This theory presupposes that ancient people thought in a ‘mythopoeic’ rather than logical and rational manner. Kramer (Jacobsen and Kramer, 1953) refutes this, arguing that the evidence suggests people thought much like we do in contemporary times. The description of mythopoeic thinking that Segal (2004) ascribes to Henri and H.A. Frankfort (p. 40-41), reminds me of the state that one sometimes experiences in meditation or certain types of ritual in contemporary times, and so it would not surprise me if some people were able to think both mythopoeically and logically depending on circumstances.

¹¹³ The idea of linearity played out in many ways with this research. While linearity is often considered masculine, it seemed to me that feminist interpretations of Sumerian contextual data attempted to be much more rigorously linear than those who denied those interpretations. On the other hand both linear and cyclic concepts were represented in the staging of *Restoring Inanna*. Inanna’s descent in Act 2, for example occurred sequentially, but after Inanna looked directly across the stage at the throne, she proceeded to do a half circle around the back of the stage to progress through the gates, which was reversed on her ascent. Apart from this ascent Inanna always circled the stage in a clockwise manner, while Ereshkigal circled it in an anti-clockwise manner as if in an attempt to undo some of what had been done by patriarchy. This reversal was then, of course, continued by Inanna in her ascent.

¹¹⁴ There is some suggestion that the ritual was also repeated with the same king several times (Sefati, 1998; Stuckey, 2001).

question ‘who is the girl?’ arises from learning that while the king is known to have represented Dumuzi in the Sacred Marriage rites, there is no written record of who represented Inanna.

I explored the feminist implications of this in more detail in *An Invitation* than in the *Restoring Inanna* performance,¹¹⁵ as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

Raelene as Researcher:¹¹⁶

Was there an earthly stand-in for Inanna? And if so, was this day the greatest honour of her life? Was it a day where she was lovingly initiated into the joys of sex, or did she initiate the king perhaps? Or was she raped? Why is there no written record that glorifies her, as the kings are glorified?¹¹⁷

Who is the Girl? sung here.

Some scholars believe that the sex rites were purely symbolic. Most, however, favour the idea that sex did take place, but cannot identify who the female was. Since writing the song, I have read of newer evidence that a high priestess, considered the earthly embodiment of Inanna, lived in the temple and probably stood in for Inanna during the sex rites.

Much of the evidence for these comments came from Sefati (1998) who says: “As for the identity of the female character in the rite, the matter is not sufficiently clear. In contrast with Dumuzi, usually represented by the king, in all texts Inanna herself is the figure appearing at Dumuzi’s side or at the side of the king representing him” (p44 – 45). Sefati then speculates that one of a few differently appointed priestesses

¹¹⁵ This is simply because the former was a more in-depth exploration of the love poetry, where the latter was a representation of the way in which the totality of the material I had researched spoke to me, and so necessarily lost some of the finer details. However, it is relevant to an examination of the song and what it represents of how the stories spoke to both me and other women.

¹¹⁶ While ‘researcher’ is one of my identities, this was of course a performed version of that identity.

¹¹⁷ This question goes not only to my own feelings about the representation (or lack thereof) of women in history, but also to the theories around how women and their role in Sumerian and Mesopotamian life were esteemed, which is fundamental to the way in which Inanna’s have spoken to many women. It arises contextually from the fact that the kings’ names are known from a record known as “the King List” (see ETCSL). Harrison (1993) refutes the usual argument that the early kings on the list are believed to have been mythological, because the recorded length of their lives was impossible, arguing that inflated numbers were used as a sign of respect and supplying a formula by which the actual years of reign can be determined. The names of later kings are verifiable via other sources of data.

may have stood in for Inanna. Stuckey (2005) suggests “the likeliest candidate would be the priestess known as *nin-dingir*, Sumerian for ‘Lady Deity’ or ‘Lady Who Is Goddess.’”¹¹⁸

In relation to the question of whether or not sex actually took place, Sefati (1998) says “...the sexual union of the coupleis not equally developed in all of the cultic marriage songs, and a number of short songs do not mention it explicitly, but there can be no doubt that it did in fact take place” (p. 104). It is possible that Sefati’s assertion “that it did in fact take place” could mean symbolically within the ritual, but the wording suggests that he means in actuality. Stuckey (2005) identifies scholars on both sides of the debate without voicing an opinion, but gives fewer examples of those who believed it was symbolic than those who believe it was actual. Jones (2003) says: “Given the literary nature of our evidence, this ceremony may have been only an intellectual construct, rather than an event in real life” (p. 291), thus questioning the actuality of the entire ritual. Evidence that the ritual did actually take place is presented by Sefati, and is explored in more detail later in the chapter.

From a feminist perspective, if sex did take place it raises the question of how willingly and/or joyfully it was entered into by the girl or woman.¹¹⁹ If there was any coercion or force involved, it again challenges the theory that the love poetry offers a model of sexual agency for females. However, it does perhaps offer a mirror of the types of issues women face today, providing us with an opportunity to reflect upon and grapple with them. Additionally, some of the poetry continues to provide sensual, tender, and loving images which speak to me, and to other women, no less because they may be constructions. Someone imagined them, and I would question whether it is in fact possible to write such knowing depictions of the possibilities of female pleasure unless someone somewhere once experienced and/or observed them. As Kramer argues, deities are reflections of humanity (1963a). The hope that women may not always have been subordinate to men, and their sexual pleasure insignificant in constructions of the meaning of sex, is thus not erased. However, the possibility

¹¹⁸ This reference is from an online journal which does not supply page numbers.

¹¹⁹ My choice of the word ‘girl’ in the song does not reflect any knowledge of the age of the female who stood in for Inanna, but rather one of the possibilities. It also reflects the probable imagined age of the character in the poetry.

that Inanna may have been represented by a young coerced virgin, one of many possibilities, does add darker layers of story and text which also speak to me, and do so in a different way to my initial readings of the poetry.

Genesis of *Who is the Girl?*

Given I had placed this question in Inanna's mouth, I wanted my musical choices to reflect her feelings while watching the "man of her heart" marry an unknown woman or girl who was taking her role.

I reached for a Renaissance-like lament: simultaneously wistful, beautiful, sad, nostalgic, and regretful. The backing needed to be simple, soft, and delicate, so I wrote it on my small travel guitar, which is pitched a fifth higher than the regular guitar, to give something of the timbre¹²⁰ of a lute or harp. I exaggerated this lute or harp-like pretence with my strumming pattern: slow downwards thumb strokes in which each string is sounded separately, with two individually plucked notes on the second and third beat of the bar on the upstroke. This shifted into a running picked pattern for the chorus, one note for each quaver (half beat note) to support the extra intensity of Inanna's emotions without bringing in the extra weight and drive of a strumming pattern.

At times I fell into strict time, and at others I played and sang with rubato,¹²¹ speeding up or slowing down to reflect the emotional moment. I also strove to sing in a light vocal quality with subtle variations in timbre to reflect different emotions rather than a fuller richer classical singing palette of sound. Listening back to the DVD, the timbre I achieved was closer to the classical than I would have preferred, but did avoid strongly operatic sounds and had something of the sweet wistful coloured sound I was seeking.

The time signature I chose was 3/4,¹²² sometimes referred to as waltz time, to create a lilting lament feeling. The melodic rhythm, however, did not follow a simple 1 2 3,

¹²⁰ Timbre in music means 'tone colour'. Every voice or instrument has a specific timbre (or set of timbres) by which we recognise it for what it is.

¹²¹ Flexibility in the tempo

¹²² Spoken as 'three-four time'. In music notation it is written with the 3 directly above the 4 and no fraction line.

or 12 3, standard waltz rhythmic groupings, but was more nuanced. Words, like “Who” (Who is the girl?), rested on longish notes to give the sense that Inanna was thinking over the question, whereas words such as “in for me” (at the end of the same line of text) were tripped over more quickly to provide a sense of forward movement. Sometimes when faster notes fell on the first beat of the bar they accented a particular word such as “pretty” and “I am”, providing an emphasis on what Inanna considered important in that moment. The overall impression was intended to be as if Inanna was watching the ritual and thinking aloud at the same time, the rhythm of her words following patterns of speech and thought, as well as to be musically more engaging than standard waltz time. These nuances were then contrasted with more regular and traditional divisions of beats in lines like “fit for the king who stands in for my love” where each one-syllable word takes up one beat.¹²³ Such contrasts allow for a sense of stability in the music, and shift the responsibility for musical light and shade from the harmony and complex instrumentation to melodic and rhythmic subtleties, giving some delicacy to the music.¹²⁴

To create a sense of beautiful melancholy I used the musical convention of a minor key, B minor in this case. This tonality is maintained throughout the verses to support Inanna’s wistful, thoughtful and at times regretful air. For the first verse at least, the melody is loosely shaped around the intonation¹²⁵ that may be used if the words were spoken, but in a heightened and exaggerated way to allow variations and subtleties within the emotional palette. For example when she sings “I wish the same courage” the lift in the melody functions as a cry from the heart.

Inanna has subtle shifts in feeling and mood throughout the verses, the most salient for me being her shift from appearing slightly jealous of her husband’s lover in the words “is she as pretty as I am?”, to being concerned that the woman be “fit for the

¹²³ Sometimes in performance I make a slight variation on this, but at least three of the four bars still follow a more predictable pattern.

¹²⁴ As music has developed historically, Western music has tended towards less variety in melodic and rhythmic patterns, relying more on instrumentation and harmony for drama. This is not true of the music of all cultures.

¹²⁵ Here I am referring to the rise and fall in pitch that happens when we speak. Songwriting teacher, Pat Patterson (2012) does an analysis of the way people speak and how it relates emotionally to the music theory of tonality. For example when people are confident of what they are saying their voice sits around the tonic, or home note of a key, and when they are driving a point home they may speak near the dominant note, a fifth higher. Uncertainty is expressed around the sub-dominant, or fourth note of the scale.

king who stands in for [her] love,” and finally being protective of the girl in “is the king fit for her who stands in for me?” By using similar phrasing in the second two examples I am drawing attention to the shift in attitude which I think is an important one. Inanna’s initial responses of jealousy and judgement are stereotyped ones that we might expect of a woman watching her husband about to have sex with another woman. When Inanna turns her concern to the wellbeing of the girl it is intended as a reminder of how easily we are seduced into thinking of ourselves and other women as ‘not good enough’, rather than as deserving. If the king is standing in for Dumuzi, who supposedly gains his power through the more powerful Inanna, how much more worthy should we consider the woman who stands in for Inanna? Here I am hoping to challenge my audience to remember it is not always for women to be worthy of men, but that we have our own intrinsic worth.

The chorus returns to the idealised romance of some of what is to me the most beautiful erotic poetry. Images from a range of the poems such as the fig trees, the watering of the womb, shaping of the loins, smoothing the vulva with milk and cream (a double entendre as Dumuzi is a shepherd), and the cedar standing tall are drawn together to imply that Inanna is nostalgically recalling that heady romantic time of her early relationship with Dumuzi. Here the tempo moves forward¹²⁶ and the tonality slips temporarily into G Major as Inanna is joyfully recollecting their first sexual experience.

Most commonly such a modulation would be to the relative Major key, in this case D Major, where the tonic chords share two of their three notes. However G Major shares only one note with B minor (“d”) making the modulation feel slightly less stable, and leaving the joyful shift slightly incomplete or unsettled. It is as if Inanna’s recollection, though joyful, is still tinged with sadness. By the end of the second line the chorus has modulated back into B minor. The minor key makes sadness sound beautiful: there is nostalgia in it.

Bringing together in the one song both the romantic beauty of some of the poetry, and some of the possible darker contextual functions to which it was put, was in some ways an attempt to highlight this juxtaposition between poetry and the possible

¹²⁶ Speeds up slightly.

historical political agenda of the ritual. The poetry was speaking to me as a contemporary woman in both ways simultaneously; it *was* both of those things.

In Chapter 1 I provided a relatively comprehensive analysis of how the lyrics of *Ready for Love* relate to the source material, thus demonstrating some of the processes and challenges involved in using ancient sources. Lyrically *Who is the Girl?* differs from *Ready for Love* in as much as the starting point and inspiration was not the poetry itself, but its historical context. Thus, writing it was less about shaping ancient text into a musical form, than drawing on ideas and imagery from my impressions of the poetry as a whole, and the Inanna(s) I glimpsed therein, to colour my own original lyrics. Rather than repeating the textual analysis approach of Chapter 1, I have opted to simply provide a table here showing some of the resonances between poetry, song and context.

<p>Who is the girl who stands in for me? Is she as pretty as I am? Is her hair like the mane of the ibex, my red deer? Is she fit for the king who stands in for my love?</p>	<p>Maiden, glossy mane, lovely beauty, Inana, glossy mane, lovely beauty! Maiden, mane of the ibex, red deer, red deer, Inana, mane of the ibex, red deer, red deer! DI-R, ETCSL</p>
<p>Is she a young temple maiden? Scared to lie down with a much older man? Or is she excited to be opened to pleasure? Is she happy to serve me and her people this way?</p>	<p>Stuckey (2005) speculates that the sacred marriage ritual may have grown from an earlier ritual of “goddess-making” in which a women/priestess is “activated” to fertility through sex to be a “Goddess on Earth”.</p>
<p><i>Oh I remember Dumuzi, the first time He shaped my loins with his own fair hand How he watered my womb, how it ended too soon How he smoothed my vulva with milk and cream</i></p>	<p>Words and images like these appear in a range of poems. Drawing from a range poetry allowed me to include fleeting images I glimpsed in incomplete and largely incomprehensible poems, which otherwise would not have been represented in my creative practise.</p>
<p>I am the queen full of loveliness I am also the goddess who returned from hell And I wish the same courage and joy for this child Is the king fit for her who stands in for me?</p>	<p>I am the queen, I am the queen, I am full of loveliness! DI-R, ETCSL</p>
<p><i>Oh I remember Dumuzi, the first time He shaped</i></p>	<p>This refers to the <i>Inanna’s Descent</i>, and thus assumes in a narrative sense, that the Inanna watching on has already completed her descent. It could also imply that all versions of Inanna co-exist in the “ever present now.”</p>
<p><i>Yes, I remember Dumuzi, the first time How I lay down beside him amongst the fig trees Amongst his dates I recall, How his cedar stood tall I de-creed him a sweet fate and made him a king.</i></p>	<p>Words and images like these appear in a range of poems.</p>
<p><i>I made him the king.</i></p>	<p>See below.</p>

“I made him the king”

The words “I made him the king” are not derived directly from the poetry but are my own and, as with much of this song, are created from weaving together my responses to contextual research and the poetry itself. They go to the heart of some of what I am trying to express in this song; of regret, ambivalence, the complexity of the human heart, and of the relationships between men and women, both in the microcosm of individual relationships, and the macrocosm of the social constructions which inform and guide the way we interact as groups and individuals in all sorts of settings. They speak of a female figure so strong that a male figure gains his power through her, and conversely, borrowing from the theories of Stuckey (2001, 2005), Rohrllich (1980), and Wakeman (1985), of the consequences of placing female power in the hands of a male king, potentially, in Inanna’s case, having heralded five thousand years of patriarchy (Stuckey, 2001).

My performative intent in singing these words is twofold. The emotional impetus for the first iteration flows from Inanna’s abundant loving generosity towards Dumuzi in the first flush of infatuation, an impulse implied in much of the poetry, and in the commentary upon it (Wolkstein, 1983; Stuckey, 2005). The second iteration is more regretful; Inanna now realises what has been lost by undiscerningly giving away so much, thus representing the contextual reflection.

There is ample evidence connecting the sacred marriage sex rites with validation of kingship, not only in Sumer, but in parts of Mesopotamia “throughout the third millennium, and for a few centuries after” (Westenholz, 2000). However, there is debate about the nature and social meaning of the connection. Many of the wider contextual implications of this will be explored in the next chapter, but here I explore something of the debate around whether Inanna did in fact confer kingship upon Dumuzi, and how that impacted on how the poetry spoke to me.

Some of the evidence connecting the ritual to kingship comes directly from the poetry itself, as can be demonstrated through an examination of the penultimate line of my song: “I decreed him a sweet fate.” Unlike my final line, these words *are* taken from the poetry in slightly altered form. They point towards Inanna granting some sort of boon to her spouse as part of the marriage rite.

In the Wolkstein and Kramer text (1983, p. 44), where I first encountered them, the words appear thus:

Now I will caress **my high priest** on the bed
I will caress the faithful shepherd Dumuzi
I will caress his loins, the **shepherdship of the land**,
I will decree a sweet fate for him [emphasises mine]

This excerpt suggests a possible link between Inanna's sexual intentions towards Dumuzi and his role in providing shepherdship for the land.¹²⁷ I have always read this line as implying that shepherdship of the land is part of Dumuzi's "sweet fate," as granted to him by Inanna in the fullness of her love for him. But in revisiting the passage, it could also be read that Dumuzi's loins themselves, and/or Inanna's act of caressing them, represent the shepherdship (in as much as by being caressed they contributed to the fertility of the land). Either way, his shepherdship of the land seems connected with the sex rites, and several authors connect Inanna's generosity to Dumuzi as being a direct reward for his giving her sexual pleasure (Frymer-Kensky, 1992), a very different relationship to the father/son relationship of Christianity, and one which seems more affirming of female sexuality thus far.

I am not sure from which original source Wolkstein (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983) shaped this excerpt, as she has only identified general sources (pp. 201-202) without connecting them directly to individual passages, and I have not found an obvious match in the other sources I have used, the ETCSL, and the Sefati (1998). However I suspect that, like me at times, Wolkstein saw related themes and images in several similar poems and drew them together. In creating such a readable text, Wolkstein had clearly done a lot of informed, and probably selective,¹²⁸ repair work on the

¹²⁷ This turn of phrase reminds me of biblical symbolism, of Jesus being chosen by his father, God, to be the shepherd of the people, rather than Dumuzi being chosen by his lover goddess, thus providing yet another of the resonances in the poetry which feed the temptation to see contemporary myths and religion as patriarchal appropriations. It also feeds the idea that Inanna's story is herstory, the story of women being further and further oppressed.

¹²⁸ By "selective" I mean that Wolkstein most likely chose to repair and combine pieces of the poetry that she most liked or that spoke to the reading she wished to make of the Inanna literature. In her introduction, she states "...the story of Inanna as I began to perceive it followed the same pattern as the Archetypal Moon Goddess..." which she then relates to the stages of a woman's life (p. xvi). Thus it is likely that she selected the stories and poems that fitted this reading. When I first read her and

sometimes fragmented translations by Kramer and his students she worked with. It is possible these have since been retranslated drawing on more up-to-date academic knowledge.

The most likely source poem I have read is DI-P¹²⁹ which appears thus in the ETCSL version:

22-27. I gazed over all the people, and **chose Dumuzid as god of the Land**. For Dumuzid, beloved by Enlil, I exalted his name and **decreed his destiny**. My mother cherishes him constantly, and my father speaks his praise (emphases mine).

and thus in the Sefati (1998, pp. 223 – 224):

22 **I set my eyes to provide the nation abundantly,**
23 **I chose Dumuzi for the godship of the land,**
24 For Dumuzi, the beloved of Enlil,
24a I exalted (his) name, **decreed (his) fate**,
25 My mother cherishes him always,
26 My father speaks his praises. (emphases mine)

In the first lines there is a clear and strong implication that Inanna did the choosing. The word ‘godship’, not present in the Wolkstein and Kramer version, even implies that the king was elevated in status from mortal to god by being chosen.¹³⁰ However, there is also a mention that Dumuzi is beloved by Enlil.¹³¹ This also does not appear in Wolkstein’s text, but its inclusion here, alongside

Kramer’s book, I incorrectly assumed this was all the material that existed, aside from some hymns to Inanna, and in fairness it is possible that this is all the material that was available to Wolkstein at the time, but I think there are enough references to some of the other stories and poems in her analyses to suggest that Wolkstein was aware of more material, but chose by whatever means to focus on that which fitted the triple goddess concept.

¹²⁹ According to Sefati (1998) the first cataloguing of Sumerian literature was undertaken by Samuel Noah Kramer. For the purposes of this thesis, the categorisations I use are the ones I have discovered in the various texts I have described as sources, and which are consistent. ‘DI’ stands for Dumuzi-Inanna, and is followed by a letter, such as ‘A’. All these poems can be found in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL).

¹³⁰ Dumuzi the god is considered to already be ‘divine’ as the child of Enki, however, the earthly king could well have been considered to have been raised to godship.

¹³¹ Enlil, the air god, is an older generation deity: the son of the earth goddess, Ki, and the sky god, An. Ki and An were believed to be the first deities of Sumer, having emerged from the primordial sea, Nammu.

the approval of Inanna's mother and father for Inanna's choice, already begins to suggest that narratively and/or contextually something more is going on in relation to the choice of king and the bestowing of kingship than Inanna's power and/or choice of lover.

DI-F is another poem or 'song' with similar wording to the line in my song, which, as well as making it a possible alternative source for the Wolkstein and Kramer version, suggests that the expression "to decree a sweet fate" may well have had ritualised significance to Sumerians, and thus offer another piece of the puzzle as to Inanna's role in kingship.

[17-28](#). I am perfect for the **lord** in E-kur. We are a fitting ornament in the joyful palace. In the house of Enlil In the house of Enlil in E-kur

approx. 3 lines missing

I shall decree a good destiny from the abzu for my **king**, a meš tree properly, verdant, full of beauty, of his mother and father, my who was born: (Emphases mine) (DI-F, ETCSL version).

- 25 My [**king**], mes-tree [which] faithfully [bears fruits],
26 [...sh]ining, full of allure (son)to his father and mother
27 My [bride]groom who was born [...],
28 From [the brickwork]of the Abzu¹³² **a good destiny I will dec[ree] for him:** (emphasises mine) (DI-F, Sefati version, 1998, p173).

Here again we see Inanna's bridegroom referred to as a king, and in the ETCSL version first as a lord and then a king, possibly even suggesting that the marriage would elevate him from lordship to kingship. And again we see a suggestion of abundance in the words "verdant" in the first translation and "bearing fruits" in the second. In the second example, the Sefati (1998), it is appears that Dumuzi himself is characterised as a tree bearing fruits, whereas in the ETCSL it is difficult to tell, but seems more likely that the tree bearing fruits is a gift from Inanna. Confusion of

¹³² The 'Abzu' was the name of Enki, god of wisdom's, temple. One of the songs (DI I, p. 194, Sefati, 1998) tells us that Dumuzi was considered Enki's son. While relationships appear to have changed over the course of the pantheon's 'existence' this could explain the reference to the Abzu here.

attribution occurs in different translations of several poems. In this case, it is thus not entirely clear who is granting abundance to whom.

In the rest of this poem Inanna continues to lovingly speak of the bounty she will give to Dumuzi, but there is also an implication that she will be petitioning both An and Enlil (both older generation male gods), in order to make this happen. Increasingly it is implied Inanna may not be entirely her own woman here, or as powerful in the pantheon as I originally thought.

At this point, the idea that the sacred marriage is in some way implicated in bestowing abundance on Dumuzi, and therefore the king, seems fairly consistently implied. Sefati (1998) identifies in total five “songs”¹³³ which emphasise that abundance will flow to the king, his land, and his people by marrying Inanna, and indeed the contextual literature in general appears to agree on the point that the sacred marriage was a rite that promised prosperity to the king and the people (Westenholz, 2000; Stuckey, 2001; Sefati, 1998). Stuckey (2005) goes so far as to suggest the same king repeated the ritual annually in order to continually ensure abundance for his reign, and several authors directly attribute the abundance to the sexual congress between Inanna and Dumuzi, saying that Inanna’s body was the earth bursting into bloom (Stuckey, 2001; Hron, 2004).¹³⁴

However, the introduction of the three older generation male gods, and Inanna’s mother and father¹³⁵ complicates matters. While it does not influence whether or not the sacred marriage ceremony was the vehicle by which kingship was bestowed, it does bring into question the idea that Inanna bestows kingship, and is in control of

¹³³ One of these is DI P which is quoted above, the others are: Sulgi X, Iddin Dagan A, DI D1, and Inanna G. Of these, only the poems with a classification of DI are published in his book. Sefati bafflingly has not included DI F, which I have discussed above.

¹³⁴ I accepted this metaphor in my own retelling of the Inanna/Dumuzi love story, largely because it seemed to me implied by the language and imagery of some of the poems. My song, *Honey Man*, which I sang at the third gate of Inanna’s Descent is conceived of as Inanna expressing how her orgasmic joy was the bursting forth of the abundance of the land. The words are printed on page 160 of Appendix A.

¹³⁵ Usually taken to be the moon god, Nanna (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983; Meador, 2000), and Ningal whom Wolkstein calls the grain goddess, but Wakeman (1985) identifies as goddess of the reeds. Given that moon goddess sounds like an epitaph probably derived from her marriage to the moon god, I describe her as the moon goddess in my song *I am Inanna* in the second half of Act 1.

her own destiny. It suggests that even if the ceremony bestows kingship, Inanna may not be directly responsible.

Congruent with this increasingly complex picture, is the debate as to the exact nature of the connection between kingship, Inanna and the sacred marriage ritual, and whether or not Inanna bestowed kingship upon her spouse. As Westenholz (2000) says, scholarly opinion about Inanna's role in the corridors of power in antiquity "covers the spectrum from those who hold that politics and public sphere of influence are an exclusively male preserve and rarely question this assumption, to those who believe that Inanna is the bestower of kingship and use this belief as evidence of matriarchy¹³⁶ and matrilineal rights to the royal throne in ancient Mesopotamia."

Like Sefati, Wolkstein (1983) argues in her written interpretation of *The Courtship* (p. 150-155) that abundance follows the union: "At that moment [of the sexual union], at least in ritual, the bounties of heaven are assured on earth for the kingdom of Sumer" (p. 155). Although she doesn't say so directly, she also seems to imply that it is through marrying Inanna that Dumuzi attains royalty and kingship. For example in the sentence "Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth, will serve her husband, who **will be** the king..." (emphasis mine) (p. 152), when describing events before the ceremony and when describing events following, "Although the shepherd **has become king** and Inanna found a consort for her royal marriage bed" (emphasis mine) (p. 153). However, she later says "A lion of a man is demanded [for the ritual]: a king who is equal to Inanna in ferocity, rage, greed, power and passion for life" (p. 155). Here Wolkstein is discussing the man who is still to marry Inanna, in other words the marriage to Inanna seems now to follow kingship, not precede it.

Sefati (1998) gives a comprehensive analysis of indirect and direct evidence that the sacred marriage rites actually existed and that the king was the stand in for Dumuzi in the rites. From this evidence he draws some conclusions about the sacred marriage ritual that are relevant to the debate.

¹³⁶ I discussed the objection to the term 'matriarchy' by scholars such as Eisler (1987, 2011) and Starhawk (1987) in Chapter 1.

Amongst the indirect evidence he includes the epic “Enmerkar and Enshesdanna” (p. 31), also noted by Wolkstein (p. 154). In an argument over Inanna and the throne, Enshesdanna eventually agrees that Inanna loves his rival better and thus concedes the throne, clearly suggesting that when the poem was written Inanna’s love was important in qualifying for kingship. Other indirect evidence includes: royal inscriptions on steles and vases in which it is suggested that the king is Dumuzi and the beloved husband of Inanna; and documents/ economic texts in which offerings to temples are referred to as gifts for the marriage ceremony, or in which preparations for such a ceremony are described in similar language as used by Inanna to describe her preparations in the love songs.

Direct evidence includes the five love songs listed above which, Sefati (1998) informs us, all comprehensively, or partially, describe the ceremony and, in some cases, identify the actual king who was involved.¹³⁷

Despite each king being considered the earthly embodiment of Dumuzi, Sefati concludes about our debate:

According to widespread hypothesis, advanced by several scholars¹³⁸, the sacred marriage rite was associated with the coronation of kings of the Ur III¹³⁹ and Isin dynasties. This hypothesis is based largely on Sulgi X, in which there appears to be a connection between Sulgi’s appearance before Inanna, dressed in royal garments and the goddess’ declaration that Sulgi is indeed worthy of kingship and its symbols (crown, staff, and sceptre).¹⁴⁰ Yet if we accept the view that the above description is merely a recollection of the rite by the goddess¹⁴¹ then the only evidence for a connection between the sacred marriage rite and the king’s coronation is omitted (Sefati, 1998, p. 48).

¹³⁷ These ‘actual kings’ are known from other sources of evidence to have truly existed, as opposed to having existed only in mythology.

¹³⁸ Sefati (1998) does not identify these scholars, but provides a reference: Cf. J. Renger, RLA 4 (1972-75) 257.

¹³⁹ Also known as the “Sumerian Revival” which existed from around 2,100 BC – 2000 BC.

¹⁴⁰ In a footnote Sefati gives further evidence of this possibility in “Lipitstar B 47 – 49a” presumably another poem, but one which I have not discovered.

¹⁴¹ In speaking of the above as “merely a recollection of the rite by the goddess” Sefati is referring to the opening of the poem which, he tells us (p. 39), recounts a tale of Sulgi arriving in Uruk by boat and visiting Inanna’s temple. On seeing Sulgi at her temple, Inanna bursts into a song in which she joyously recollects their initial erotic union, believed to have taken place as part of the sacred marriage in the poem’s past.

Having found no evidence for a connection between coronation and sacred marriage, Sefati further concludes that the purpose of the king's union with the goddess was the promise of fertility and abundance for the land and its inhabitants. He also says that in *Sulgi X*, Inanna promises the king success in war (p. 40).

At this stage the idea that Inanna "made him the king" is severely brought into question, though not entirely ruled out.

Westenholz (2000) speaks to this issue in her article "King by Love of Inanna – An Image of Female Empowerment?" by asking what part Inanna played in the "legitimation myth of kingship." She reveals an extremely complex scenario, showing that Inanna's relationship to the kingship was different at different times and even in different places at the same time. She postulates that the sacred marriage, and the other ways in which kingship was theologised, was a political ploy by rulers to legitimate their reigns in the minds of the people, a kind of rubber stamp, if you will.

According to Westenholz's (2000) evidence, both Inanna AND Enlil seem to have played a role in raising a leader from 'lordship' to 'kingship' initially. When Enlil was considered the head of the pantheon, Inanna's role was considered to have been given to her by Enlil. The words "king by love of Inanna", appearing in royal transcriptions on art works and the like pertaining to several Mesopotamian kings, are sometimes believed to be evidence of Inanna's role in creating kingship. However Westenholz concludes, upon examination, these words did not imply sexual love but rather divine celestial love for a mortal. She reaches this conclusion because according to other royal transcriptions kings could also be, and frequently were, "kings by love of Enlil". Some kings were both "king by love of Inanna" and "king by love of Enlil" in different transcripts.

The sexual love element, she argues however, WAS realised only by Inanna and by no other deity. This occurred, of course, in the sex rites, whose main function again, by her analysis, was to bestow fertility, and thus abundance, on the land. In Westenholz's (2000) analysis, however, the rites also played a role in legitimating

kingship: while kings may have been granted kingship by more than one deity, Westenholz provides evidence that it was as the spouse of Inanna that most kings wished to be remembered. So, while Inanna may not always have “made him the king” or been the only deity responsible for bestowing or legitimating kingship, and while the Sacred Marriage may or may not have been the vehicle by which it happened, Westenholz’s analysis of the data does suggest that Inanna as a deity played an important role in legitimating kingship, and that the sacred marriage was an important aspect of this.

Jones (2003) offers an interesting perspective. He states it is generally agreed that in functional terms the sacred marriage ritual is seen as either conferring power on the king, or providing abundance for him and/or his people, and that in cosmologic terms the king is seen as mediating figure between earthly and divine matters. However, he argues, little attention has been paid to what is meant by legitimation – i.e. whether it is a rubber stamp of his pretensions, or a subversion of them - and mediation (p. 291). His own view is that the role for the king was hazardous and feminising – after all when Inanna rises from the Underworld he is chosen as the substitute. Jones bases his discussion on the poem of Iddin-Dagan A, and later contextualises it amongst a broader selection of Sumerian literature, arguing that in Mesopotamia, scribes would have had at least some knowledge of other texts.

If he is correct, and Inanna was perceived as dangerous for the king, it may in part explain why in time kings sought to avoid marriage to her. In the Gilgamesh epic, for example, Gilgamesh angers Inanna by refusing her offer of marriage. He ultimately meets his demise for defying the goddess, but eventually in Assyria goddess worship was completely outlawed (Hafford, personal communication, 2011). Conversely, the role of mediation is sometimes considered to be Inanna’s domain (e.g. in Stuckey, 2005, 2005a), and ‘king as mediator’ may be an example of appropriation of power.

It seems possible only to conclude that: according to the perceptions of the people at the time the ritual was performed,¹⁴² marrying Inanna made the king’s reign more abundant and probably more successful in war; that Inanna most likely played some

¹⁴² I did not say “in Sumer” here, as the sacred marriage ritual continued into the period of the Akkadian Empire, the Sumerian Revival and possibly beyond into Babylonian and Assyrian times.

role in legitimating and mediating his reign, despite not being the only deity to do so; and that the exact meaning of the rites most likely varied according to time and place.

Now that I was no longer looking to create an uncompromisingly accurate historical Inanna, but instead a contextually informed one (or many), woven through with the perceptions and meanings of her stories made by myself and other women, this is good enough to justify my words “I made him the king.” To narratively attribute ‘kingmaking’ to Inanna made sense of the way many of Inanna’s stories spoke to me, especially in terms of gender relationships, and certainly of how they spoke to other women, such as Stuckey (2005, 2005a) and those referred to by Zsolnay (2009) and Westenholz (2000). Attributing ‘kingmaking’ to Inanna also made sense of how many of Inanna’s stories were speaking to me as a collection; a collection which formed itself into an interlinking web in my mind which formed the basis of my overarching narrative for *Restoring Inanna*.

Chapter 5

Who is the Girl?: Problems of Power

Reflections upon gender relations and gendered constructions of power formed perhaps some of the most important threads in the interlinking web of connections forming the overarching narrative of *Restoring Inanna*. My reflections grew in response to various strands of my research: what I was reading in the stories; what I was reading in both the historical and contemporary contextualising literature; and the discussions that took place with research participants. The song *Who is the Girl?* speaks to some of these reflections, particularly in relation to Inanna's role in legitimating kingship. The evidence that Inanna had a role in the legitimisation process was discussed in the previous chapter as part of the contextual background of *Who is the Girl?*, alongside discussions of my creative decisions relating to the song. In this chapter I reflect on some of the broader resonances of Inanna's legitimisation role in relation to my research question and how these resonances are woven into the overarching narrative.

Raising a king to power: an image of strength or subjugation?

In the previous chapter I briefly commented on my conflicting perceptions relating to the idea that Dumuzi, and thus the king, gained his power from marrying Inanna. On one hand, in relation to Dumuzi as deity, it narratively subverts, and inverts, traditional gender representations of power in mythology, and in this Inanna could be seen as a feminist icon. While an inversion of roles does not mirror or model my utopian ideal of balanced gender power relations, the challenge to traditional perceptions of gender provides alternative potential mirrors and models for women, and men, as to how life can be lived. Anecdotal evidence that Inanna's stories do in fact function this way for some women came to me from women I spoke with as I began my research. One woman even described how she left an unhappy heterosexual marriage and began a fulfilling gay relationship when Inanna's stories awoke her to the idea that there are more ways for women to live than she had previously been taught. Additionally it is clear from my contextual reading in fields such as feminist psychotherapy, spirituality, and history (e.g. *The Chalice and the*

Blade, Eisler, 1987) that Inanna has been discussed and promoted as just such a symbol of feminism.

On the other hand, Inanna's probable role in legitimating kingship, in raising a human male to a position of power over others, implicates her as a tool of patriarchy in the historical context of the stories. This is a significant challenge to the notion of Inanna as a feminist icon, especially if that notion is based on a belief that Inanna's strength is an indication that Sumerian women were also powerful.

Of course it is possible for Inanna as a symbol, especially given the theories that she developed from an earlier goddess in a pre-patriarchal time, to have been used both as a tool of oppression in antiquity, and a symbol of subversion in more recent feminist history. And it is likely that the situation is still more complex than this and that Inanna has spoken in many ways to women both in antiquity and contemporarily. Enheduanna, daughter of the king Sargon and a priestess of the god Nanna (but seemingly even more devoted to Inanna), wrote hymns of praise to Inanna once kingship and patriarchy were well established (Meador, 2000). In her writing Inanna appears to have provided a sense of succour, sharing her distress, comforting her like a mother would a child, and caring for her when she was sexually assaulted, possibly raped, and cast from the temple. Additionally, the fact that the Assyrians eventually banned goddess worship (Hafford, personal communication, 2011) suggests that the increasingly patriarchal regime probably decided that goddess worship was politically inconvenient. In other words, Inanna may have continued to provide a symbol of hope for women into patriarchal times to such an extent that the patriarchy banned worship of goddesses such as herself.

Conversely the ways in which Inanna speaks to contemporary women is varied. Within my discussion groups, for example, a range of opinions were expressed about Inanna's behaviour. In Discussion Forum 3, having heard *Inanna and Ebih*, in which Inanna goes to war against the mountain, the participants interpreted Inanna's behaviour to be that of a tantruming child. In Discussion Forum 1, one participant found her "too goody", and in Discussion Forum 2 she was met by some general scepticism as to the value of stories about goddesses at all.

Stories of power, and the power of stories

The paradox that Inanna has been seen by many contemporary feminists (e.g. Starhawk, 1987; Cargill, 2009; Stuckey, 2001, 2005; Caperton, 1983; Hannan, 2005; Kimmitt, 2000; Lickus Cravens, 1999) as an empowering figure, while in antiquity she may have been used as a political tool for promoting patriarchal kingship, came to fascinate me as my research progressed. It spoke to me of the way stories function differently in different hands. While stories are sometimes espoused as potential tools of ‘healing’ (e.g. McKay and Dudley, 1996) -- indeed my own search for mythological stories that are affirming of power in women’s hands could be seen as a form of this -- healing is only one of the many uses to which story and storytelling can be put. Stories can be used, consciously or otherwise, to both heal and hurt. It also reminded me that in folkloric theory, stories, as items of folklore, change as they travel across time and space (Seal, 1993), and that some of these changes are in response to political agendas.

Political use of stories, especially mythical stories, as a tool for controlling the attitudes and beliefs of people is not an uncommon phenomenon. There are religious stories which, regardless of what truths they may or may not genuinely tell, instil guilt about natural human feelings and desires, and ascribe greater levels of sin to behaviours which challenge the hierarchy than those which palpably cause more harm.¹⁴³

There are, and have been, also oppressive regimes which try to control artistic expression. Some proscribe the types of stories that can be told; others go so far as to only allow art which glorifies its rulers. In other words they try to control who has a voice, and which opinions are allowed in public discourse. Authors, such as Brazilian Paulo Coelho (e.g. *The Alchemist*, 1994) have been jailed and tortured for subversive (or perceived to be subversive) writings. Under Stalinist Russia, Shostakovich, formerly celebrated as a composer, was publically humiliated and reviled for failing to follow the doctrine of Socialist Realism requiring “Soviet music to express ‘the victorious progressive principles of reality in images that are heroic, bright and

¹⁴³ For example religious beliefs which are used to justify punishment of women for sex outside wedlock, regardless of consent, but not men for rape or wife beating, or which view homosexuality as a crime requiring greater punishment than murder.

beautiful” (Levi, 2014).¹⁴⁴ In Sumer, according to Rohlich (1980), times of creative artistic flourishing coincided with times of greater equality and personal freedoms. In times of greater structural hierarchy, conversely, art became more formalised and proscribed as “artists were compelled to glorify the military exploits and power of the rulers” (p. 83).

That political agendas were present in Sumerian stories seems likely on many levels. I have already noted variations relating to discernible patriarchal attitudes between love poems. In addition, several authors (e.g. Saggs, 1962; Volk, 1995, as cited in Alster, 1999; Averbeck, 2003) theorise that many stories about Inanna - whatever other spiritual, ritual or social functions they also may have had - provide a kind of ‘mythologised history’ of actual political events.

An example can be seen in the story *Inanna and Enki* (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983; ETCSL), which I retell at gate four of Act 2 in *Restoring Inanna* (Appendix A, p. 162). Here, Inanna steals/wins/is given or tricks Enki into giving her (depending on which interpretation you read) the *me* (pronounced ‘may’). The *me* are usually translated as being something along the lines of ‘attributes of civilisation’ (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983) and include both concrete items such as symbols of power like a throne, and abstract concepts such as ‘honour’ and ‘deceit’ (see Appendix F for a comprehensive list of the *me*). This plot is often connected by theorists (e.g. H. Crawford, 2013) to an actual historical event whereby the seat of power in Sumer was moved from the town Eridu, where Enki was considered the patron deity, to Uruk where the patron deity was Inanna. According to Kramer (1983) the most powerful deity in Sumer at a given time was the patron deity of whichever town held the seat of political power at that time. So this translocation of the seat of power, symbolised by the *me* in the story, rendered Inanna the most powerful deity, and the story itself reads as a quest myth in which Inanna gains power. This gaining of power is sometimes psychologically interpreted as a step in Inanna’s ‘coming of age’ (e.g. Wolkstein, 1983), an interpretation which fits with the Freudian idea, as described by Segal (2004), that hero myths¹⁴⁵ are about establishing oneself as an independent person in the world, and as such deal with what Jung calls the ‘first half of life’

¹⁴⁴ This is from an online source without page numbers.

¹⁴⁵ Hero myths are essentially quest myths.

(birth, childhood, adolescence and young adulthood). If so, it seems that mastery of the first half of life involves gaining power over others, or taking power from others, which is reminiscent of Kimmitt's (2000) argument that mainstream theories of psychological development have a decidedly patriarchal slant. There are a number of such stories about Inanna in the literature; stories in which she appears to be seeking greater and greater power through her quests.

In the story, Enki fights very hard to keep the *me* by sending hordes of monsters after Inanna. His anger and determination to get them back is so intense and unrelenting that his sudden, complete, and un-foreshadowed¹⁴⁶ reversal of heart when Inanna succeeds in her quest – an unreserved expression of friendship towards Inanna and Uruk, including a statement that Inanna was indeed the rightful keeper of the *me* – smacks of the politics of submission. Even before I knew this story was believed to be 'mythologised history', I suspected these lines indicated a military defeat in which the rulers of Eridu were avoiding future attack or harsh treatment by the new power, and/or that those now in power sought to convince the people of Eridu to accept the new order as having being endorsed by their own god to avoid future uprisings. Whether this had been a story composed at the time to mythologise history and glorify Inanna and Uruk, or whether it was an appropriation of an earlier story for political purposes I would not hazard to guess, although Kramer (1972) suggests that all the stories found on tablets came from an earlier oral tradition. Either way, if my suspicions are correct, it can be argued that both Inanna and Enki were being used in the story as political tools to control and subdue the population and justify the political hierarchies of power at the time.

Inanna as a tool of patriarchy

The irony that a contemporary symbol of subversion was possibly previously an agent of subjugation was not lost on the participants in the post-performance discussion of *An Invitation*.

¹⁴⁶ This feels particularly stark when read, given that Sumerian myths are constantly telling us what is about to happen, what is happening, and what has just happened in huge chunks of text repeated word for word. For example, Enki lists the *me*, as he gives them to Inanna, Inanna lists them again as she puts them in her boat of heaven, and then again as she presents them to the people of Uruk. Just before Inanna descends to the Underworld, she instructs Ninsubar, her servant, what to do in great detail as if she knows exactly what is going to happen and how each character will respond. These passages are repeated when in fact Inanna does not return in the required time, and again, when Inanna explains why she does not wish Ninsubar to be sent to the Underworld in her place.

Alana: I saw two themes in the performance: there was the poetry that showed Inanna as a strong and powerful woman¹⁴⁷ who could openly celebrate her body and her sexuality in the culture of the time; and the alternative interpretation - I was actually thinking in my own head “Inanna’s a tool,” and then *you* said Inanna was a tool - to make a man a king. You’ve left me thinking that the women’s organisations that use Inanna’s name¹⁴⁸ have only thought about half the story.

Jody: The celebration of women rather than Inanna as a tool?

Alana: Yes

(Discussion Forum 2, 17/09/2011)

One of the participants went further, questioning the entire concept that a goddess can provide an empowering image for women.

Becky: I have no interest in, or knowledge about, ancient myths, but your performance did bring up issues of how women are represented and how the goddess functions as ... – some sorts of feminists hold up goddesses as empowering figures, but I’ve always found goddesses to be really..... I don’t ... I mean, once you have a kind of womanhood that has been abstracted to the point that she’s a goddess and she’s perfect... and it always seems to be about wombs and tits, you know, and well..... I know that fertility is meant to be symbolic of all sorts of other things but... where are the images of strong women who aren’t obsessed with romance?¹⁴⁹ ...who have a more altruistic impulse? Isn’t the dark side of the goddess, the marriage and her being a symbol of giving power to men, isn’t that just the inevitable other side of abstracting womanhood to the point of perfection?

(Discussion Forum 2, 17/09/2011)

¹⁴⁷ Early in the discussion some of the group revealed that they had not realised Inanna was a goddess and saw the story as a story of a young woman marrying a king.

¹⁴⁸ In Canberra, for example, there is a crisis service with a specialisation in women’s distress called *Inanna Inc.* (www.inanna.org.au, 2009).

¹⁴⁹ This perception was based, at least in part, on Becky having not heard any of the other stories of Inanna in which romance is not the focus. Interestingly, author Katrin Tchana (2006) left the love story out of her retelling of the Inanna myth for children, based on the Wolkstein construction, due to a similar perception that the love poetry was overly focused on romance. She told me via email (2010) that she felt children have enough images of love and marriage thrust upon them, and she was more interested in setting up the Descent myth as an alternative model for children. I read the poetry somewhat differently to Tchana, feeling at the time that instead of reinforcing the marriage in order to have children myth, it provided an image of celebration of our bodies and sexuality that was separate from the expectation of procreation.

Another participant, Jessica, also suggested that Inanna, a goddess, being allowed to express her sexuality in such an exuberant way, didn't mean that the women of Sumer had also been allowed to do so. On the contrary, she suspected that Sumerian women had not been allowed to do so, and cited contemporary cultures, e.g. Hindu Indian, where goddesses are sometimes depicted as sexually expressive but the same freedoms are not extended to women.

Mirroring the thoughts of the discussion group, Westenholz (2000), who in the previous chapter asked what part Inanna played in the "legitimation myth of kingship,"¹⁵⁰ also asks whether raising an "appointed candidate to kingship through her love for him is a genuine image of female empowerment". Like Jessica, she expresses doubt as to whether "mythology reflects society", and is critical of the "blatant assumption" by some theorists (unnamed) that Inanna's wielding of political power is proof that women also once held power in a matriarchal society. Again like Jessica, Westenholz notes that there are other cultures in which the belief in powerful female deities has not translated into female power within the culture, thus implying that it is presumptuous of feminists to assume Sumerian women had political power because Inanna did. On the other hand, she observes that women did play an active role in the economic life of Sumer, and even of later Assyria and Babylonia, and also that it is possible that many of the rulers and important people previously assumed to have been men, may in fact have been women, as their sex is not identified in the source documents. Continuing the theme of obscured data around the relationship of mythology to society, Westenholz debunks other common feminist ideas about Inanna (for example that a female priestess, an 'entu', acting on Inanna's behalf held the highest position of power in Sumerian society), but concedes that, for example, the Sumerian pantheon (not the culture) was once most likely gender-balanced in relation to power. She logically concludes that it is impossible to know exactly what the situation was for Sumerian women in relation to political power.

Westenholz's (2000) conclusion around the opaqueness of the circumstances of Sumerian women is reinforced by the evidence offered by other authors. Meier (1991) debunks the common theory that women were little if at all represented in

¹⁵⁰ Page numbers are not available for quotes by Westenholz as the article was retrieved from an online source with no page numbers.

receiving and dispensing education, giving strong evidence that women were well represented in the occupation of messenger/scribe which was of great importance to Sumerian culture and communications, and further argues that such an occupation was well-paid. Wakeman (1985) speaks of how, when read “flatly” (p. 8), the history of ancient Sumer shows that women bought and sold land, engaged in trade and managed estates. Stol (1995), on the other hand, outlines a number of ways in which Mesopotamian women were treated more poorly than men, stating, for example, that women were paid half the wage of men for the same work, and that a wife who divorced her husband (by saying “you are not my husband”) was bound and thrown into the river, or thrown from a tower, whereas men who divorced their wives paid twenty or thirty shekels of silver.

As well as agreeing with Westenholz (2000) that it is impossible to know the exact situation for women in Sumer, I also agree that it is faulty logic to say the existence of a powerful goddess proves matriarchy once existed. However, I do wonder if it would have been possible for any writer to imagine female power of this nature if women had only ever been perceived as weaker and subordinate to men. I suspect that, while the existence of a powerful goddess in the Sumerian pantheon is definitely not *proof* of an historical matriarchy, it is perhaps an indication of a strong possibility that something other than patriarchal structures have existed somewhere sometime.

I have already discussed my position on the ideas of matriarchy and other forms of pre-patriarchy, and my conclusion that some sort of pre-patriarchal, closer-to-egalitarian culture probably did exist in Chapter 1. While I imagine such sweeping claims about matriarchy as Westenholz (2000) alludes to may have been made by some theorists, the theorists I read spoke more modestly of the ‘matrifocal’ (Starhawk, 1987) or ‘partnership’ (Eisler, 1987) models of society. They also presented a much wider range of evidence for their claims than the existence of a powerful goddess. It was beyond the scope of Westenholz’s paper to address these other pieces of evidence, however, I allude to them here because Rohrlich’s (1980), Stuckey’s (2005), Starhawk’s (1987) and Kramer’s (1983)’s theories of ever increasing patriarchy throughout Sumerian, and Mesopotamian history are not without evidence, and created a useful concept for the construction of my

overarching storyline, as did the idea that Inanna as an archetype was appropriated as a tool of the patriarchy, and changed in response to it (Wakeman, 1995; Stuckey, 2001; Eisler (2013); Starhawk, (1987).

Giving away power: Inanna as agent or victim of patriarchy?

The question that Westenholz (2000) set out to address, whether raising an “appointed candidate to kingship through her love for him is a genuine image of female empowerment” is one that I increasingly asked myself during the research. However, my concern was less with whether mythology reflected society, and more with plot and Inanna’s narrative role as a character. By raising her beloved to kingship, by ‘making him the king’, is Inanna implicated in the demise of her own power? If so is she then by association implicated in the loss of women’s worldly power in general? Did she give up too much of herself by ‘loving too much?’ (Norwich, 1985).

In asking these questions I was associating Inanna with contemporary women who give up their own lives and passions to support the goals and passions of a partner, only later realising what they have lost of themselves. This was once considered appropriate behaviour for women, but, according to Norwich (1985) even women who see this behaviour as problematic are often unable to avoid it in the face of infatuation. While the consequences for individual women can be dire, when seeing Inanna’s story as symbolic of herstory the consequences are catastrophic: the beginnings of five thousand years of patriarchy. Stuckey (2001), in associating the story *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* with the sacred marriage¹⁵¹ expresses it thus:

Initially the ‘sacred-marriage’ rite undoubtedly would have given Inanna and her temple great power. However, the cost to Inanna and for society was high. In return for the influence afforded her by the throne and the bed, Inanna actually had to instigate the murder of one part of herself¹⁵² and the banishment from her city of two others. Perhaps a more important point, she had to sanction, indeed beg for, the destruction of the Huluppu Tree, that is her united self. In return, she got two items of furniture and a central role in a king-making ritual. However, the furniture, which was essentially constructed from her own body, was no longer entirely hers. The institution had appropriated it to its use, and, with the furniture, Inanna herself. What is more, the poem presents her as willingly cooperating in her own demotion (pp. 100-101).

¹⁵¹ Because it provides the furniture of the bed and throne which are crucial to the rite.

¹⁵² Stuckey is referring here to the killing of the snake. Like me, she interprets the creatures that took residence in Inanna’s tree as aspects of Inanna’s Self.

In speaking of ‘demotion’, Stuckey is here referring to her understanding that Inanna’s power in the pantheon was reduced as patriarchy took hold. The truth of Inanna’s changing power status in the Sumerian pantheon in response to rising patriarchy may be much more complex than this;¹⁵³ however, the idea of ‘demotion’ as described by Stuckey can usefully be equated with Inanna’s loss of personal power; with her giving of power to Dumuzi, who in this context symbolises patriarchy, as a narrative device in my overarching story construction.

Speaking of Inanna, and indeed contemporary women, as ‘giving away power’ is potentially somewhat problematic as it implies that Inanna, and women, are to blame for our own oppression, an implication I did not wish to make. This problem was intensified by my decision to view Inanna’s rape by Sukaletuda as the consequence of patriarchy that was the tipping point for Inanna; the moment in which she realised something had gone deeply wrong and she needed to look somewhere new for answers. Blaming women for our own rapes is a cultural pastime that I do not wish to endorse. According to Grijalva (2010) undeserved self-blame and misplaced shame¹⁵⁴ are already key legacies of rape that women, and indeed men who are victims of rape, need to overcome in healing from it.

To conceive of blame and fault in such concrete terms seems to me, however, an example of patriarchal thinking at work. It not only oversimplifies motivations for behaviour by ignoring the internalisation of inadequate mirroring, it is also a way of again making women responsible for other people’s morality, as in the story of Adam and Eve, including being at fault for what is done to us.

Ironically women have often been the biggest gate-keepers in maintaining the cultural practices that are oppressive to ourselves, so deeply have we accepted cultural expectations. I speak here not only of practices of other cultures that so clearly (to us) seem oppressive, such as foot binding, female circumcision, or the

¹⁵³ For example: Meador (2000) suggests that Inanna’s rise in power could be related to Sargon’s attempt to rule over what was previously two kingdoms, an occasion which Kramer (1983) describes as “a humiliating defeat” (p.117) for Sumer by Akkad; the legitimating sacred marriage ritual itself could be seen as an instrument in Inanna’s rise in power actually connecting her rise in status for a time to the rise of patriarchy; and power in the pantheon was to some extent related to which town held the seat of power at a given time making the patron deity of that town rise in the pantheon (Kramer, 1983).

¹⁵⁴ Misplaced from the perpetrator where it belongs.

enforced wearing of burqa; but also of wearing high heels, or having our bodies cut and sliced in cosmetic surgery to meet often arbitrary and unrealistic ideals of female beauty. But we have done so usually in the belief, conscious or otherwise, that this is the way to remain ‘insiders’ in society and feel acceptable in our communities (Devlin-Glass & McCredden, 2001). Often we are blind to the ways in which we have been socialised to perpetuate our own oppression. In the words of Starhawk (1987):

we live embedded in systems of power-over¹⁵⁵ and are indoctrinated into them, often from birth ... Power-over shapes every institution of our society. This power is wielded in the workplace, in the schools, in the courts, in the doctor’s office. It may rule with weapons that are physical or by controlling the resources we need to live: money, food, medical-care; or by controlling more subtle resources: information, approval, love. We are so accustomed to power-over, so steeped in its language and implicit threats, that we often become aware of its functioning only when we see its extreme manifestations (p. 9).

While Starhawk (1987) is speaking of American culture, and from over twenty-five years ago, what she says here speaks to my own lived experience. I have often felt that sexism’s more extreme forms are less visible in countries like the USA and Australia which has at times led me to feel a form of ‘white guilt’. My life as a white Australian woman of Anglo-European heritage is so privileged in so many ways, sexism, gender imbalance and the forms of patriarchy that bind me seem insignificant in comparison to those of women who may be stoned to death for the ‘crime’ of being raped because in their culture it was interpreted as sex outside wedlock. Unconsciously, I felt I had no right to a better life than any other woman, and so I created my own internalised set of glass ceilings. I wrote a poem about this as part of a show I created some years ago.

*They tell me I am lucky,
And I collude.
My feet are not bound,
I am not covered,
Denied humanity
Nor stoned.
And so my protests wither on their way to my mouth.
Mutely, I bind myself to expectations,*

¹⁵⁵ This is Starhawk’s term for what I would call “patriarchal power”.

*Cover my passion, deny my power,
And stone myself silent.*

*Still,
Within me lives a Power:
A Passion;
A Joy so strong,
So exultantly wild,
It can find no foothold
In this feminine wasteland.*

*Demoted to rage
It bubbles and boils within.
Molten mercury
Seeping through cracks and crevices
Like unexpected vapours in unexpected moments.
Saying without saying,
Accusing without sound.
If I could find my voice I would scream:*

*“Do not bind me to half a life
With false gratitude
To a society which paints me
For a lesser creature than I am.
For there is no more room
Left within me
To be less
Than I am.
I am woman,
And that is enough.”*

(Bruinsma, 2003)

Inanna's 'giving away of power', not only through 'making him the king', but also in asking to have the creatures of her garden banished, and her tree felled, and in lending her power to the winning of wars, spoke to me of something similar. Stuckey (2001), in discussing Inanna's "willing cooperat[ion] in her own demotion" (p. 101), suggests Inanna has 'already' been alienated from her own self and "already co-opted by male dominated society" (pp. 98-99). In other words, she is equating Inanna's actions with cultural blindness due to patriarchal enculturation, and speaking of Inanna as being estranged from herself, a concept central to Starhawk's constructions of power.

At this point it may be useful to bring in Starhawk's (1987) model of constructions of power as a way to better understand my point. Starhawk describes three types of power: power-over; power-with; and power-from-within.

“Power-over” (p. 9) I have already discussed. It comes from patriarchal constructs and is the type of hierarchical power that comes from having control of other people. Starhawk describes it as coming from the consciousness of “estrangement” (p. 9), where we view the world and its contents as non-living and mechanised and no longer see the ways in which the different parts are connected and rely upon each other. Living in a world dominated by power-over constructs, we therefore judge ourselves and others by some external (patriarchal) standard instead of understanding our unique value. It is this sense of estrangement that allows us to willingly submit to procedures and practices which are in fact harmful to us and others.

“Power-from-within” (p. 9) is empowerment and agency within our own lives. It comes from a sense of connectedness to the strength we have within, the things that help to realise our skills, talents and potentials as human beings, and through bonding with other people and the environment. Starhawk (1987) describes this as “akin to the mastery we develop as young children with each new unfolding ability” (p. 10), but also the deeper sustenance we derive from acts of creation and connection. It can also be seen as resilience and commitment and self-care and respect for self and others.

“Power-with” (p. 9) is ‘people power’: the power of influencing each other through the strength of our ideas, and joining in with others ideas because we see them as good. It is working together towards the good of ourselves and each other, and is represented in community action and teamwork. It can become power-over very easily if one group dominates another, and thus vigilance is required when exercising it. Starhawk's (1987) model of constructions of power is a useful one for understanding Inanna's stories.

While I would not align myself completely with the values of 1970's ecofeminism, agreeing with Kate Rigby (2001) that associating women too closely with ideas of embodiment, environment and nature, and considering us to be the guardians of such

knowledge, can feed back into gender stereotyping, I do believe that these are some of the values and qualities of us as humans that patriarchy has estranged us from, and Inanna's stories can, at least in part, be seen as allegories for an attempt to reconnect us to these qualities and values.

The narrative device of Inanna as a tool of the growing patriarchy

In my overarching story line the moment in which the snake is killed and the tree is felled in the story of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* represents the moment that Inanna's power was appropriated, or given, for patriarchal ends.¹⁵⁶ In this I borrow from Stuckey (2001, 2005a) who perceives the tree to represent Inanna's undivided self, and the creatures aspects of that self: the anzu-bird Inanna's heavenly self; Lilith, her embodied earthly self; and the snake her deeper self that is able to descend into the Underworld. Here by 'power' I mean something similar to Starhawk's (1987) power-from-within. By allowing, even asking for, the tree to be felled, Inanna is asking for her own self to be used to create the tools of patriarchy, demonstrating estrangement from the true value of what she is and what she offers, reducing it to a few of its component parts; those valued by patriarchy.

Earlier I referred to the story of *Inanna and Enki* as a patriarchal-style quest myth in which Inanna's 'coming of age' story was somehow associated with patriarchal concepts of power. For this discussion I can now call this power-over.

There are a number of such quests in the lesser known Inanna literature: quests in which Inanna seeks more and more of power-over, the power also of "domination and control...which ...perpetuates war so that it becomes a chronic human condition" (Starhawk, 1987, p. 9). I used some of these stories -- told in excerpts, songs, and brief oral formats -- to create the fabric of what had happened to Inanna in the interim between the blushing bride of Act 1 and the powerful arrogant angry seeker we see attempting to enter the Underworld early in Act 3.

¹⁵⁶ This story is included as a flashback from the opening wedding, because I wished to open the show with the most joyful image of Inanna's relationship to Dumuzi. In this case the relationship represents a male female relationship at one level, and the relationship of women to men, and women to patriarchy at another. As a symbol Dumuzi sometimes represents a fallible man, at others the concept of "maleness" and at others patriarchy. I do not wish to imply that all men are intentionally agents of patriarchy, merely that patriarchy is often enacted by them.

I placed a story at each gate as a flashback which I hoped would slowly reveal to the audience, how Inanna reached this point in her life. The flashbacks were delivered in reverse chronological order¹⁵⁷ to reflect the idea that ‘in descent’ Inanna was stripping herself gradually back to nakedness, towards the core truth of herself which had been overlaid with patriarchal conditioning.

Wakeman (1985) takes exception to the idea that Inanna is a feminist goddess or role model, saying that “the religious ideas associated with this goddess were adapted at each new stage of Sumer’s history to support the emergence of patriarchal structures of authority” (p. 8). She prefers to regard Sumer as a laboratory for studying the rise of a patriarchal order. Following from this, it is perhaps fair to say that the desire to use Inanna’s stories to subvert patriarchy is as much a political agenda as the use of them to justify it, and every bit as much an appropriation of the idea of ‘Inanna’. It could also be fair to say that early feminist attempts to find “a new myth of origins that will re-empower women” (Wakeman, 1985, p. 7) was in itself an attempt to ‘restore’ her by reaching back to her earliest known form in the same way I originally imagined my research would. Wakeman’s view is complementary to my theories of Inanna’s stories being used in different ways to serve different political agendas, and given my framework of mirrors rather than models, seeing Inanna as changing in response to the rise of patriarchy makes her potentially no less a feminist goddess than if she had always consistently represented some abstracted ideal. Perhaps more. Further, the concept of an Inanna who has changed in response to patriarchy is one who provides me with a useful narrative tool, and gives me a new concept of what it means to restore Inanna. If, like all of us, Inanna has been shaped and moulded to patriarchal agendas, like us she has a need to find her way out of the maze to a self that she can live with.

This leads me back to the myth of descent. If the stories of Inanna’s rise to power are patriarchal quest myths, and Inanna has now realised that she can no longer live that way, that something is deeply wrong in the state of the world, she now needs to go in search of the power -- the empowered self-agency of power-from-within -- she lost when she asked Dumuzi/Gilgamesh to banish the creatures from her sacred garden

¹⁵⁷ The chronology here refers to Inanna’s imagined lifespan.

and cut down her tree to make the items of kingship for her future 'joyous marriage'. In descent she can look for the part of herself which was severed: the roots that are still in the ground, and the pieces of the snake that was killed.

Inanna approaches the Underworld with the same attitude of conquest with which she approached her other quests. In my interpretation, Ereshkigal, who I strongly identify with as the symbol of those parts of the personality or women that have been rejected and buried by society, is angry at Inanna's arrival at the first gate, not because Inanna wishes to enter the Underworld as some scholars (e.g. Reuther, 2005) have stated, but because she has approached it with the patriarchal attitude of conquest. My Ereshkigal has wanted Inanna to visit her, to return some of her qualities and values to the world, and has at times reached out to her (such as through the Huluppu Tree which she is implicated in helping to create).

In *Who is the Girl?* Inanna is no longer in a state of anger: after her descent Inanna is enraged at what she sees of the negatives in her relationship with Dumuzi, but she also remembers what is good about it. She is an Inanna faced with the task of finding a new way to be in relationship with Dumuzi so as not to lose what she has learned from her descent, but also not to lose what is good about Dumuzi and her relationship with him.

Conclusion

The Problem of Ascent

I began this thesis with a dream excerpt which, mirroring elements of *Inanna's Descent*, ended at what I described as “the point of having descended” and an “invitation to dig deeply”. Following through on this invitation, the exegesis has been an attempt to convey some of what I discovered when I looked Ereshkigal/Kali, the goddesses of truth telling, in the eye. In this conclusion I cycle back to this mythical story of Inanna, and my dream version of it, at the point of ascent. As a metaphor, the idea of ascent speaks of the problems of how to move forward, a problem I discuss here in relation to my own research quest.

Inanna's Ascent

In the ETCSL translations there are a range of stories additional to *Inanna's Descent* which all pertain to the events that take place between the moment of Inanna's death and Dumuzi's banishment to the Underworld to take her place. The version in the Wolkstein/Kramer text incorporates several of these, thus drawing out the process by which Dumuzi attempts to escape, and is granted a softened sentence of sharing his fate with his sister Geshtinanna. For *Restoring Inanna* I chose to stick to the simplest version of events, as presented in the single unified story of *Inanna's Descent*, partly due to the huge amount of material already in the performance, but mainly because I was more interested in Inanna's story than Dumuzi's. Here I briefly address three of the challenges and mysteries presented by Inanna's story which together speak to the problem of moving forward.

Challenges and mysteries of Inanna's Ascent story

The first mystery is around the word that Ereshkigal shrieked at Inanna: “Guilty!” What exactly was Inanna guilty of? One option suggested by some writers (e.g. Reuther, 2005) is that Inanna was guilty of attempting to overthrow Ereshkigal, which would understandably leave Ereshkigal angry. Others (e.g. Perera, 1981; Wolkstein, 1983) argue that Inanna's descent was motivated by a mid-life search for wisdom, and that Ereshkigal, as gatekeeper, jealously guarded the secrets of her

realm. In this interpretation Inanna's guilt could be seen less as her own, than an undeserved projection by Ereshkigal. My own conclusion for my meta-narrative was that both stances hold some of the truth. My Inanna was seeking wisdom, but the only model she had for approaching the Underworld, the only way she knew having been so drunk on 'power-over', was the way of a conqueror. In my version of events, Inanna was indeed perhaps greedy, and did perhaps wish to overthrow Ereshkigal's kingdom, but she had an even deeper, possibly not entirely conscious, motivation: a need to find answers and begin to put the world back to rights. She was seeking to restore herself, and the world. In my interpretation, Ereshkigal's anger was not that Inanna entered her domain and wanted its secrets, but that she did so with the wrong attitude and inadequate respect.¹⁵⁸ In this sense I felt that Inanna was guilty of all manner of collusion with patriarchal values. I have already discussed my stance that Inanna was not to blame for her rape, but in this context she had, probably unknowingly, been 'guilty'.

Secondly, it feels somewhat puzzling to observe the extent of Inanna's grief at losing Dumuzi, when only moments before she was the one who sentenced him to his fate with such rage. On reflection, it is not as strange as it initially feels for someone to make a decision or take an action in the heat of anger that they later regret. In fact, it is extremely common. For me, however, Dumuzi's punishment, harsh as it seemed, is appropriate. Although the ETCSL text doesn't seem to offer clues as to the reasons for Inanna's change of heart, on closer inspection the rage she turns upon Dumuzi is described in the same words as the rage which Ereshkigal had turned upon her.

¹⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that in all the other Inanna stories that I studied, a verse of praise to Inanna concluded the story. In this story, the final verse was to Ereshkigal. My feeling is that Ereshkigal was not only stronger than Inanna (although she is often also seen as a part of Inanna), but that she was her elder. Theorists such as Perera (1981) and Wolkstein (1983) take Inanna and Ereshkigal to be sisters, because Inanna calls Ereshkigal "my sister". However, throughout the stories filial terms of address (e.g. "my brother") seem to denote a sense of equality rather necessarily of familial relationship, while parental terms of address (e.g. "my father") seem to denote respect for an elder, also without necessarily denoting the exact relationship we might imagine. I suspect Ereshkigal's rage at Inanna's desire to descend may have been due to Inanna using the term "my sister", instead of, perhaps "my mother." Certainly there is a passage in *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* which suggests possible symbolic or "spiritual" parenthood by Ereshkigal to Inanna. Additionally Ereshkigal was Enki's twin, and Enki is Inanna's grandfather in terms of the Sumerian pantheon, which would make Ereshkigal, in contemporary terms, a great aunt.

Ereshkigal to Inanna:

They¹⁵⁹ looked at her -- it was the look of death. They spoke to her -- it was the speech of anger. They shouted at her -- it was the shout of heavy guilt. The afflicted woman was turned into a corpse. And the corpse was hung on a hook.

Inanna to Dumuzi:

She looked at him, it was the look of death. She spoke to him (?), it was the speech of anger. She shouted at him (?), it was the shout of heavy guilt: "How much longer? Take him away." Holy Inanna gave Dumuzid the shepherd into their hands.

It seems that Dumuzi is guilty of the same crime as Inanna, and Inanna has carried her new understanding and some of Ereshkigal's rage back into the world.¹⁶⁰ If Inanna is guilty of misappropriating power, so is Dumuzi, and in so far as he personifies patriarchy, probably more so. It took a descent to the Underworld for Inanna to see what was happening. Much as in a relationship where one of the partners has been in therapy and done their inner work necessitating the same from the other partner if the relationship is to survive, Dumuzi too must look Ereshkigal in the eye. In Perera's (1981) Jungian analysis, Dumuzi's descent was necessary in order that he be married to all of Inanna, her earthly and heavenly aspects he coveted, and also the reviled and undervalued Underworld aspect. Inanna acted in rage when she sentenced Dumuzi, but she did what needed doing. When the rage subsided, however, she also remembered the good things about the relationship; she didn't stop loving him, and she grieved the loss of him,¹⁶¹ and she decided to not send him away forever.

¹⁵⁹ In the ETCSL translation of *Inanna's Descent*, seven "anuna" judges sentence Inanna to death, after she has pushed Ereshkigal off the throne. However, in the Wolkstein/Kramer text the "Anunna" (as they are spelled there) sentence Inanna to death, and then Ereshkigal gives the "stare of death" and utters the "cry of guilt" (p60), which is consistent with Kramer's earlier published translations (1950, 1951) of the story. I chose to have Ereshkigal speak the words in *Restoring Inanna* to simplify the narrative and make the link between Inanna and Ereshkigal more direct. Although the exact words used are different between translations, the point that Inanna repeats them identically is consistent in each.

¹⁶⁰ This concept of repetition was conveyed in *Restoring Inanna* by me standing in the same place on the stage, and using the same stance, words, action, and tone of voice for both moments.

¹⁶¹ I am aware that there are many possible ways I could deconstruct even this for resonances with contemporary relationships. I am largely interpreting the ability to hold anger and love towards the

Besides this small clue, however, the text of *Inanna's Descent* gives little information about the process of ascent. It describes some of her 'Overworld' journey back to Uruk, but not how she passes back through the Underworld gates. This brings me to what in a sense is the largest mystery for me: having seen a 'truth' in the Underworld, how does one ascend? How does one return to a life in the same (patriarchal) world that one left, without losing the (usually reviled) wisdom and knowledge of the Underworld? In Inanna's case, how would she once again take up the trappings of power, without falling into the same lust for "power-over"? In my case, how do I take what I learned from my PhD into my future life and work? What can any contemporary woman take from Inanna's stories that might address the problems of existing in a patriarchal world without either cooperating in being oppressed by it, or sucked into perpetuating power-over against others? Inanna perhaps made a start by sending Dumuzi to do his time in the Underworld, but then what? And what do we mere mortals do who do not have the power to send people to the Underworld? Or can we, metaphorically speaking do this through our art and our research?

The problem of ascent

Upon later reflection, the part of *Restoring Inanna* that I was least happy with was the third act, which I did not feel reflected the issues that the idea of ascent raised for me, and that I felt spoke so strongly to my own life. This was ironic because the question of how one ascends was one that had dominated my thoughts for over a year in relation to the performance, and even longer in relation to my life which I felt I had lived largely in descent.¹⁶²

In the improvisation stage of third creative production phase, I improvised telling a 'flashback story' at each of the gates of the Underworld both in descent and in ascent. I preferred the version where I told stories as I ascended. It felt more natural, it really spoke to my question and, probably because of that, it felt easier to do. As

same person as positive and healthy, but I could equally see Inanna as a 'co-dependant' woman in love with her abuser, who won't let go.

¹⁶² By this I mean that I often felt myself to identify more with the abandoned misunderstood Ereshkigal than the externally successful Inanna. I had made life choices which did not see me wielding worldly power or creating wealth, instead choosing to try and live a more creative life and explore the 'secrets of life and death'.

Inanna I was able to look at each item, see the story behind it more clearly for what it was, and ponder how to take possession of the item again in a different way. How could I hold it more lightly? Wield its power more wisely? As Inanna in ascent, I could grapple with the problem that I would re-emerge into the same world that I had left, which still had the same values, and the same hierarchy, and I would need to be able to survive and thrive in that world without getting too caught up in its harmful values. But I couldn't go back to the same way of living.

Robin, however, gave me the feedback that the other version was stronger from an audience perspective, and when I drafted the script, I took his advice to place the stories at the gates of descent. I tried various mechanisms within the script to address the theme, but directorial feedback when we went into rehearsal suggested that they did not work.

I still feel ambivalence about the decisions to remove what spoke to me most strongly in the third act. But most likely, these themes belong to future study, to another performance. Certainly, as I gained a little distance from *Restoring Inanna*, I began to think that *The Ascent* was unfinished because the issue of how to ascend was unresolved in my life, and in our culture. In relation to the research/descent metaphor, ascent, or an attempt at it, would begin after the PhD was finished, or at least during the writing up stage as I tried to find ways to share my research-gained knowledge in the world. For me the PhD itself is a beginning attempt at ascent from a place in my life where I had felt stuck for some time, but, as in much qualitative research, I felt I was still asking more questions than I had answered. I am still trying to find my way back out through the seven gates.

Like Skeleton Woman, we need to re-flesh the bones of the feminine given to us in the ancient mythology of the Great Goddess. This story shows us it is a joint task in which men and women must show compassion for each other, a task which takes a strong heart and the willingness to look at and work with the ancient bones of the woman who would not succumb to the father. When men can cry tears which foster growth and relationship and women can free their authentic voices and sing themselves and their stories back into being, then women and men can become co-creators, bringing balance and wholeness to a culture badly in need of healing.

(Sturges, 1993, p. 70)

In terms of the ways in which Inanna's stories speak to more broadly to women in society, to the extent that Inanna's story can be read as herstory, women have been looking at these issues and asking these and similar questions for some time. But while some people, (e.g. Sturges, 1993; Eisler, 2011),¹⁶³ feel they have at least a partial answer, and while progress has been made and there are both men and women who are willing to look into Ereshkigal's eyes, we are still grappling with how to survive and thrive in a predominantly patriarchal social structure. As a culture we are simultaneously still in descent/in various stages of ascent/and in denial of the need to descend.

My feeling that as a culture, particularly as women within this culture, we are still in descent and struggling with how to ascend was reinforced for me at an all-female dinner party I attended shortly following the performance of *Restoring Inanna*. I spoke to my friends of this concept, and the atmosphere of the room suddenly became electric, as if I had spoken a previously unidentified truth for us all. We all expressed slightly different ways in which we felt 'stuck' in the Underworld, but the metaphor fitted. For one woman it was about how to bring her musical creations into the world without needing to do so in a traditional 'performer' sense, something she had done in the past, but which felt wrong for her now. For me it was more about how to find financially viable activities without taking on my defensive "warrior woman" stance which cuts me off from my creativity, but which I often feel I need to cope in a patriarchally-constructed society that punishes expressions of vulnerability. All of us were in some way feeling the need to balance Inanna-type worldly endeavours with Ereshkigal-type values and knowledge.

The future

F. Crawford (1997) says there are basically two different functions performed by research: a quantitative or empirical approach seeks to focus in on more and more precise details and test for the accuracy of an hypothesis; while the exploratory approach of qualitative research seeks to more generally open out a topic, often as a precursor to more intense focused research in the future. F. Crawford was speaking particularly about social work practise. The type of broad to narrow focus she was

¹⁶³ Eisler manages a centre devoted to developing leadership skills in those who attend for training for developing a partnership model of society.

describing, was largely about moving from qualitative research, which uncovered areas that need close attention, to quantitative research to find out more precisely what types of interventions work.

While it is unlikely that future quantitative research will be predicated on *Restoring Inanna*, my research is nothing if not an ‘opening out’ exploratory endeavour which uncovered many more themes, stories, ideas, and issues than I could ever do justice to in my PhD research products. Instead, I hope that what I have done is create a type of large generalised map of some territory for future exploration; a map which shows the range of Inanna’s stories and poems and some of the ways in which they speak to contemporary women and some of our issues, and the ways in which I have creatively responded to them.

My map is unevenly drawn. The best laid out areas show some topographical detail: they map some contours and complexity; they include some themes and debates and their possible social implications. Amongst these more detailed sections I could include my discussion of the gendered power implications of the love poetry; some of the nuances of descent; the time I spent in music exploration of the love songs; and, on the performative side, some of my ‘filling out’ of Ereshkigal and her motives and role in Inanna’s journey through journal entries, improvisation, and attempting to embody her as one of two narrators¹⁶⁴ in my performance of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*.

But even here there is so much more that could be said and explored and mapped. I would have loved to have navigated, for example, some of the roads running between Inanna’s relationship to Dumuzi her lover, and Utu her brother; to explore some of the ways in which these relationships were useful or harmful to Inanna’s search for identity. Then I would like to further explore the ways in which these brother/lover relationships speak to gendered relationships in general; to women’s struggle to develop healthy relationships to men; to the sorting we need to do around what to

¹⁶⁴ The other was an adult Inanna looking back on an earlier part of her life. I did not appear as ‘Raelene’ in that performance, but attempted to embody nine characters in total, three of which were non-human, and another three of which were Inanna at different ages. I chose to narrate this way because Robin (director) felt I showed more vulnerability (which we felt was desirable) narrating as Inanna, and I wanted to have the device of Ereshkigal narrating to provide the audience with more than one possible interpretation of events.

fight and what to accept in the patriarchal culture we still find ourselves in. I would then have loved to have taken my exploration of gender further, beyond the dichotomy of male and female and explored how, if at all, Inanna's stories speak to a more fluid concept of gender.¹⁶⁵ There are many more love poems than I was able to put to song, more love poetry theorists I haven't yet read, and more possible nuances of meaning, not to mention musical styles that could be explored. And, although I spent much time and thought working with Ereshkigal creatively, my exegesis barely scratches the surface of how she spoke and speaks to me as an aspect of Inanna, or what I learned about and from attempting to embody her in relation to the research question.

Other sections of my map are more like splodges of a page with a red diagonal stamp across it reading 'unmapped jungle', or 'dig here'. In some places I have begun to dig a little and others barely at all. In researching the story *Inanna and Sukaletuda*, I tried to piece together a coherent story from a confusing and often fragmented ETCSL translation, cross referencing with other mentions of the story in early Kramer publications (e.g. Kramer, 1956), and research articles (e.g. Gadotti, 2009), where it is often mentioned in passing with perhaps a fragment of a translation. But sometimes the fragment seemed to offer a clue to what seemed incomprehensible in another translation. I even emailed the author of "Why it was rape" (Gadotti, 2009), to see if she could point me to the full translation from which she'd taken the fragment in her article. Her reply confirmed she had done the translation herself, and sounded somewhat surprised that I was researching Inanna's stories without first having learned Sumerian. I sadly did not receive a full translation. The moment *Inanna and Sukaletuda* suddenly seemed to make sense felt like an exciting epiphany, but I had inadequate time and resources to check the historical validity of my interpretation. The largest critical work on the story is in German (Volk, 1995), and with time and resources to get this translated, or bring my German reading skills to a higher level, I may have had better insights. Learning to read Sumerian may also have helped, and is something I will consider for future research.

¹⁶⁵ I have seen little discussion of this in academic texts, although Bullough (1971) explored Sumerian attitudes to "deviant" sex, and Roscoe (1996) suggests that certain passages in some literature are describing homosexual sex and that Inanna had the power to change a person's gender.

The list of areas of story and/or resonances that I would like to explore further in future is endless. I have imagined a Kundera (1980) style theme and variations¹⁶⁶ performance of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*, in which the story is first told and then retold in different ways to explore how things may be different both for Inanna and herstory if Inanna had made different choices. I have imagined ever deepening rewrites of *An Invitation* influenced by action-research style discussion forums, and exploring the themes in much more detail. In relation to my ‘unfinished’ Act 3, I would like to do further research and exploration of the theme, but in the short term, rewrite it with more personal anecdotes, tying more of my own story back in with Inannas. I have also imagined working with many more of the stories in more close focus, and writing much more music.

Given the personal nature of my research, the most likely person to do this future work is me, but I hope also that other performers or researchers may find the seeds of future research here too. My map is in part an attempt to draw together knowledge from a range of disciplines and get them speaking to each other at least in the autoethnographic weaving I have done in my work. It is my hope that my work also speaks to these disciplines, and might inspire a psychologist or a teacher to think about development in new ways, or that an artist of another discipline may wish to do some of their own creative work based on Inanna’s stories.

In an interview with Sut Jhally shortly before he died, Stuart Hall (2012) said he felt that Cultural Studies had lost its way because it has become too theoretical and had forgotten to engage with the range of discourses – social, economic, ideological, class, race, gender, cultural, political, education – upon which it is predicated. While he felt that it should not be overly defined and could encompass a range of focuses, Hall felt that a re-engagement with some of the more cross-cultural discourses was needed, a questioning of how these different elements work together to produce culture. E. Barratt and Bolt (2007) tell us that artistic research has the capacity “for illuminating subject matter of both the artistic domain as well as that belonging to other domains and disciplines of knowledge”. Practice-led research brings other ways of knowing and understanding to the discourses, and through performance, also

¹⁶⁶ Kundera (1980) appropriated the musical form “theme and variations” for his literary work *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*.

provides a unique opportunity to take academic knowledge to a wider audience, and possibly a cross-disciplinary one.

In the case of this research, in addition to the academic processes of performing and/or presenting papers at conferences and publishing, the songs and performances can be presented via folk and storytelling circuits. I also intend to explore still other arenas for performing *Restoring Inanna*, in part or in a rewritten whole. Continuing the map metaphor, I intend to create performances which ‘zoom in’ on areas of the map, and sometimes expand on what is found there through further research and creative work. I wish to continue spreading Inanna’s stories to a wider audience, and hope to inspire people to consider some of the cultural and personal issues it raises while following a storyteller’s ethic of allowing the performance to continually evolve.

Restoring Inanna was never intended as a study which researched an area of praxis in order to create better praxis models. Rather it is a research project which has attempted to use praxis as a jumping-off-point to explore and present other areas of interest. Nonetheless, as far as I know I am the first to bring such a large selection of Inanna’s stories into conversation with each other through performance, and the first to do so with an autoethnographic weaving together of anecdote, ancient story, original songs, and contextual research.¹⁶⁷ The performance style and process I am developing for myself is still in its infancy, but it does have potential for further development. By making this enquiry through studio practice I developed insights and ideas about the material I would not have done otherwise.

¹⁶⁷ Although I am aware of an opera (Griffin, 1996) which does, in quite a different manner, combine Inanna’s contextual story and with some of the actual stories, showing some of the historical changes that happened in Inanna’s worship. Griffin reports on the website that it involved seven years of research.

DREAM POSTLUDE

Inanna's descent required a death and rebirth. My own dream descent took a slightly different direction.

(Continued from Introduction)

... I reach the Underworld. The figure of Kali emerges from the dark. All I see, though, is her cape, the turning of her face towards me, and a huge third eye.

Suddenly, I am surrounded by shadowy figures –women- in black capes with cowls. Somehow I know they have no special authority; they are acting on instructions from Kali. We are in a basement. A man is being tried for a crime in the manner of witch trials, but we are the witches. He is magically put in a cold well. The lid is on. It is a test: if he dies he was innocent, if he gets out he is guilty and will be put to death.

I am angry. He is not being given a fair trial. I know he is innocent. So do they, but they don't care. It is revenge. It takes me several attempts to pull him out through the narrow metal cylinder near the entrance of the well: I have to line him up with the gap just right and I can't see him. When I succeed I wrap his naked body in mine: skin against skin is the only way to warm him.

We push. I don't even care that the others can see. I lead him along a corridor to my rooms. We don't make love. Instead, he tells me about a place he wants to live on top of a mountain. He's sure I'll love it. I don't know if he's inviting me to come, or thinking we will eventually live there together. But I have a PhD to do first. I want to get to know him slowly, and this mountain is close to where I live. I can visit. As the dream ends I am climbing up to the mountain village. I look around with wonder. Maybe I am heading towards the sort of relationship I'd always wanted.

(Bruinsma, Journal Extract, 28/8/2010)

In my dream I was not the one to die, but instead rescued a man from death. This reminds me of the later Babylonian version of the descent story (Foster, 1995), in which Ishtar descends in order to bring her beloved Tammuz back to the earth.

There is much in this dream and its associations that I could unpack in relation to the research, but this too is perhaps part of the ‘ascent’ of future research. However, I will say that if I take this man to represent ‘men’, in much the same way I have taken Inanna and Dumuzi’s relationship to represent both an individual relationship but also the relationship between men and women in general, one could say that my Psyche was somewhat hopeful for the future at the beginning of this research quest.

And at the end?

We are often told that stories have a beginning, middle, and an end. In performance, in songs, and in writing this is true. But while this exegesis also has an end, my story and the story of Inanna’s stories continue. For as long as Inanna’s stories continue to speak to me, or until I find a different way of ascending, I shall continue to weave them together with mine. In doing so I hope to continue to contribute to a conversation in which we “can figure out another story to live, one that ... we can live with.” (Ellis and Bochner, 200, p. 756).

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Working Script for *Restoring Inanna*.

ACT 1

Introduction

Enter behind audience, SR, descending to centre stage while singing.

Ready for Love

Sung as Inanna:

What I tell you let the singer weave into song,
What I tell you let it flow from ear to mouth,
What I tell you let it pass from old to young:
I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.
I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.

Look at how breasts have now become firm,
See how my nakedness has sprouted hair,
Let's celebrate my nakedness, dance and rejoice,
I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.
I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.

*So who will taste my sweet waters?
Who will plough my field?
Who will bring his ox to my gate?
Oh, who will plough my field?*

Spoken:

In ancient Sumerian there was one single word for both field and vulva.

Sung:

Oh, who will plough my field?

SPOKEN:

These words relate to an ancient religious ceremony. Can you imagine going to a modern Christian Church and hearing the Minister say....?:

"Hallelujah, praise the Lord. I am an ox. Who will let me plough their field slash vulva?
Hallelujah."

Appendix A

PAUSE

Cross to Lectern, SR

Thousands of years ago in the parched lands between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers – what we now know as Iraq – was a country called Sumer. In Sumer Inanna, goddess of love and sexuality; patroness of music and art; Queen of heaven and earth; became at one time the most powerful deity in the entire pantheon. We know about Inanna largely from the stories and poems that were inscribed on clay tablets 5000 years ago.

I came to Inanna looking for a heroine, for mythic stories to inform a woman's life journey. Influenced by those who believed Inanna to be a messenger from a pre-patriarchal world, I hoped she would provide me with a model for empowered femaleness: a model I hadn't found elsewhere.

I was particularly moved by the beautiful tenderness of the love poetry, and the implied promise of a male female relationship unpolluted by 5000 years of patriarchy.

So tonight's journey begins with a love story: a re-enactment of the sacred marriage of Inanna to her heavenly consort, the man of her heart, Dumuzi the Shepherd.

Sumerians believed that the ritual re-enactment of Inanna and Dumuzi's sexual union would bring the rains – fresh clean water –and thus abundance – to the thirsty land. According to some scholars, the sacred marriage ritual grew from an earlier ceremony which celebrated the first blossoming of a woman's sexuality.

Leave Lectern: To CS

The Sacred Wedding was a joyous occasion. There was music. There was singing. There was a chorus.

I am Inanna with audience

So I need a chorus.

That's your job. It's simple. When I sing
"I am Inanna and I'm ready for love"

You sing:

"You are Inanna and you're ready for love".

Let's try it:

I am Inanna and I'm ready for love

You are Inanna and you're ready for love

Then when I sing

So who will taste my sweet waters?

Continue teaching song to audience.

Look at how my breasts have now become firm,
See how my nakedness has sprouted hair,
Let's celebrate my nakedness, dance and rejoice,
I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.

You are Inanna and you're ready for love.

So who will taste my sweet waters? Dumuzi will

Who will plough my field? Oh, Dumuzi will

Who will bring his ox to my gate?

Oh, who will plough my field?

Oh Dumuzi will, yeah, yeah, yeah Dumuzi will.

My vulva clothed in beauty is like the crescent moon

My boat of heaven is eager for the bull

My moist watered field is an open waiting mound

Yes I am Inanna and I'm ready for love,

You are Inanna and you're ready for love

So who will taste my sweet waters? Dumuzi will

Who will plough my field? Oh Dumuzi will

Who will bring his ox to my gate?

Who will plough my field?

Oh Dumuzi will, yeah, yeah, yeah Dumuzi will.

When was the last time you heard a teenage girl

Spoken:

When was the last time you heard a teenage girl express sexual longing with such bold and unashamed sweetness?

I want some of that!

"See how my breasts have now become firm"

Appendix A

I wish I'd felt like that when I grew breasts.

Bra shop story

Instead of celebrating like Inanna, I stood in a bra shop change room and cried. I was 13 and the first girl in my class to get a bra. I was embarrassed and ashamed of those horrible lumps of flesh that got in the way of doing things.

when I first saw a vulva

"My vulva clothed in beauty is like the crescent moon "

I love that image.

But it's not how I felt when I first saw a vulva.

When I was little girl I would sometimes stay with my grandmother. She had this massive dining room with windows around three sides looking out onto her magnificent garden. I would sleep in a low daybed in the corner of a room just below the height of the windows.

Every morning, while I was still in bed, Nanna would come and open the curtains. No matter how often I would tell her to leave it and I would do it when I got up, she always came.

One morning, still in her nightgown, Nanna put one foot on the bed near my head, and stepped across so she could reach the curtains.

She wasn't wearing underpants.

I don't remember how old I was, between 7 and 10, I think, but I do remember how horrified – how repulsed – I was.

Why wasn't my child self curious, or intrigued?

Sadly, Nanna didn't tell me I was wrong, that a vulva is a beautiful thing.

"Yes they are revolting, aren't they?" she laughed.

I come from a line of women who hate their bodies.

My first readings of Inanna's love poetry

My first readings of Inanna's love poetry were like fresh clean water.....

Appendix A

Sweet is the sleep

Move upstage to little guitar, sing to self from upstage:

Sung:

Sweet, Sweet, is the sleep
Of hand to hand
Sweet, Sweet-er still
Is the sleep of heart to heart
It's so sweet, It's so sweet

The Sacred Marriage Ritual

Spoken:

The young Inanna prepares for her wedding to Dumuzi.

Perform ritual as Inanna:

Move to behind table USR

- *Pour Water*
- *Wash arms then face*
- *Dry Face then arms*
- *Fold and put down towel*
- *Prepare hair*

Move to table USC

- *Put on robe*

Move to behind table USL

- *Anoint self with oil*
- *Oil in Bowl*

Walk to DSL, behind audience around and back to behind table USL, sprinkling them with water.

Let him bring

Move to centre stage, put arms in air

INANNA spoken:

When he comes, let him bring abundantly.

Pause

Appendix A

INANNA, sung:

Let him bring.

Oh oh let him bring, oh oh let him bring

Please let him bring abundantly

Oh oh, let him bring, oh let him bring

Please let him bring abundantly

Let him bring lambs and let him bring goats

Please let him bring abundantly

Let him bring fowl, and butter, and sweet wine and cheese,

Please let him bring abundantly

Oh let him bring

Oh oh let him bring

Please let him bring abundantly

Oh let him bring

Oh oh let him bring

Please let him bring abundantly

Let him bring fish and let him bring meat,

Please let him bring abundantly

Let him bring wool, and honey and flaxen and wheat

Please let him bring abundantly

Oh-oh, Let him bring, oh let him bring

Please let him bring abundantly.

Oh-oh, Let him bring, oh let him bring

Please let him bring abundantly.

Oh-oh, Let him bring, oh let him bring

Please let him bring abundantly.

Cut off abruptly, as if seeing Dumuzi appear SL behind audience.

Move to microphone.

Welcome Dumuzi

Inanna, whispered:

Welcome Dumuzi

My mother who bore me, gave birth to me for you

Come to me, and I will rejoice in you

You have threaded these beads for me

With your own hands

I shall wear them against my heart

Always

Appendix A

Now you must place my right hand on your genitals,
While your left hand rests on my head,
Bring your mouth close to my mouth,
And take my lips in yours,
Thus you shall make an oath for me.
This is the oath of women,
My brother of the beautiful eyes.
My bridegroom, let us embrace on the luxuriant couch now,
Let us lie together.

Mime putting left hand to Dumuzi's back
Walking with him USR to space between tables,
Slide hand down Dumuzi's back
Remove robe and place on table
Then step between tables as if entering a chamber with Dumuzi.
Turn and return to CS.

Narrator:

With head held high, the king goes to the holy embrace,
Dumuzi goes to the Holy embrace of Inanna.

FLUTE AND GUITAR DUET

To microphone

As Inanna arises from the king's holy embrace
The flax rises up with her
The barley rises up with her
The cattle multiple on the steppe
And the rivers overflow with fish
Within Inanna the desert is filled with a glorious garden

TELL YOU A STORY:

INANNA, Sung:

Oom pa oom pa chucka X 3 oom
Oompachucka x 8
Oom pa oom pa chucka X 3 oom – harmony
Oo oo oo oo oo oo, oo oo oo oo oo,
Oo oo oo oo oo oo, oo oo oo oo oo, harmony

Stepping back from Microphone

I wanna tell you a story
About the man of my heart
He's my big wild bull and he
Is my shepherd

Appendix A

And he brings me sweet honey cheese
And he churns it in my holy churn
And yesterday I married him
I bathed for him my holy loins
I bathed myself in scented oils
And he came to me head held high
He came to me, arms out wide
My Dumuzi, my sweet Dumuzi.

Stepping forward to work with loop pedal.

And I granted him a sweet fate
The shepherdship of all my lands
And with my blessings
He has made the floods come
He made the birds sing in the trees
He made the fish jump from the streams
Yesterday he married me
Caressed my loins so tenderly
Ploughed my vulva hard and long
He played that sweet game with his tongue
He played that sweet game at least fifty times
And I rejoiced, how I rejoiced

Stepping forward to microphone to turn off loop pedal.

Unpacking

Spoken:

Phew. It's getting hot in here.

First I get a huge dowry, then the floods come and the land – my body – bursts into orgasmic bloom – and then Dumuzi “does that sweet thing with his tongue at least fifty times.”

I mean, What's not to like?!

Except perhaps not being able to walk the next day.

But what about: “My mother who bore me gave birth to me for you?”

Not for my own worth, or to share myself with you, but FOR you.

The most powerful deity in the pantheon was born just to give herself in marriage to a less powerful god?

Appendix A

Cross to lectern.

Hang up beads.

It could be a romantic turn of phrase, or even a bad translation. But there are other examples that disturb me in the love poems. In one, Inanna's brother successfully pressures her to marry his choice of partner over hers. In another, Dumuzi tries to pressure Inanna into premarital sex against her parental wishes. But her wishes are unclear. She is buffeted by conflicting demands upon her sexuality.

And that sounds familiar.

You may have noticed that in the wedding "the king" goes to the Inanna's holy embrace? But wasn't Dumuzi a shepherd?

However the sacred marriage began, it was now a ritual of kingship. The king was considered the earthly stand in for Dumuzi. He married Inanna to ensure a successful reign. Some scholars also believe this ritual helped legitimate his patriarchal rule.

Was Inanna a tool for the patriarchy?

It is likely a high priestess performed Inanna's role in the sex rites. But she is not mentioned the way the kings were.

Did Inanna's stories really come from an egalitarian culture where women had status?

Is there perhaps more than one Inanna?

Let's see what we find in some of the other stories?

Leave lectern to CS.

The rest of tonight's performance weaves together a variety of stories in ways probably never intended by the authors, but which reflect how they speak to me.

The Huluppu Tree

We will continue with the story behind Inanna and Dumuzi's marriage bed.

When Inanna was a young girl she loved to play on the banks of the Euphrates River

Little Inanna

Move US, pick up small guitar and sit on table.

Appendix A

Little Inanna, sung:

I am, (bum note)

I am, (bum note)

I am Inanna,

I am Inanna

I love to sing and I love to play

I am Inanna

I'll be goddess of music and art some day

Gestures to Neil to take over bass line

Joins in adding chords

I am Inanna

I'll be goddess of beauty and love

I am Inanna

I'll be Queen of earth and heaven above

I am Inanna

Daughter of the moon god and the goddess of the reeds

I am Inan....

Spoken:

What's that?

Inanna stops playing but Neil continues bass riff, changing mood to fit whatever is happening

The Tree

Little Inanna reaches out and mimes pulling a tree from the river. As she pulls her hand out and turns her palm upward, a beam of light appears on her palm.

What a beautiful tree! I'm going to plant it in my sacred garden

Little Inanna brings her palm to her chest, light out,

Walks DS puts her palm out and a beam of light appears over her palm again

She mimes planting the tree

The light for the tree grows, and

Little Inanna watches and sees her own body grow

3x pulse in lights

Shift in mood in backing music

Inanna reacts to snake, Anzu, and Lilith

Spoken:

Appendix A

Who are you?

Brief freeze, slowly come out and walk to mic

The Creature Song

Cross to mic, lay down vocal loops. The light that is the tree pulses rhythmically throughout the laying down of the loops and the song.

I am the scintillating snake
Whispering Secrets they will never see
I have risen from the Great Below
To make my home in the roots of your tree

I am the Anzu bird
Lion's face for roaring
Eagle's wings for soaring
Across eternity

I am Lilith
Some say I'm a demon and some say I'm a liar
But I know powers
For balancing earth with water, wind, and fire

Looping the remaining verses

I am a sinuous snake
Sensuously serpentine, with secrets of delight
Don't be afraid of the bed I've made
You can join me in the earth any time you like

I am a wily bird
My home is in the branches
For heavenly advances
And stealing destiny

I'm laughing Lilith
Contemptuous of those who just want safe and tried and true
I'm wild and voracious
My home is in your tree trunk for staying close to you

Inanna, spoken:

Go away! I won't have it!

Turns off loops, cross to DSL.

Appendix A

Utu, my brother the sun god, my beautiful pure and tall tree is infested with vermin!! Help me get rid of them!

Utu:

Leaning against wall DSL

Inanna, those wild things need a home.

Inanna stamps her foot, crosses to USR, between tables.

Inanna:

Dumuzi, my friend, my beautiful pure and tall tree is infested with vermin! Help me get rid of them!

Dumuzi:

It would be an honour.

Move DS.

Narrator:

Dumuzi follows Inanna back into her garden. He sees the snake.....

Mime Dumuzi killing the snake – music stops as ax comes down.

Establish – Dumuzi is SR of Inanna, Inanna is directly US of tree

Dumuzi *(looks at tree)*

What a beautiful tree. I could make you a good bed out of that. And a throne.

Inanna *looks at tree and looks at Dumuzi in indecision.*

Then she steps back and nods.

Lights reduce to the tree light and a soft light on Inanna.

Sound effect of an axe chopping wood.

Beat.

Blackout.

Appendix A

ACT 2

Darkness

Sitting on table USC, SR corner, where Lil Inanna caught the H-tree

Narrator:

It is night. Years have passed and Inanna, now Queen of Heaven and Earth, goddess of love and war, and the most powerful deity in the pantheon, is asleep beneath a different tree.

Leans back

Lights fade up

Morning comes, the sun rises. Inanna slowly awakes and begins to examine herself.

Stands. Comes forward.

The Rape of Inanna

AHH!

My vulva

Who has done this to my vulva?

He must paaaaaY!

Walks in a circle to SL, round to front in front of mic, to beside lecturn

I was walking around, I was wlaing around the earth
I was circling around, and climbing the sacred mountains,
I was flying the skies like an eagle to see
Which humans were worthy,
And which ones were false,
It grew hot, I grew tired
I found this strange tree
I rested a while
Then while I was asleep
...aaahhhhhhhHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.....
Someone raped me

Ascend to lecturn

Some say Inanna was never a victim: always powerful; always revered. They don't know the story of Inanna's rape by the royal gardener, Sukaletuda.

AHHHHHHH... why can't I find him?
I sent blood but I still can't find him
I cannot find him

Appendix A

I know I'll send storms
Storms storms storms storms storms
Let the people all shake as the trees are ripped up
And my thunder and lightning destroy all the grain
I'll send them a plague of storms
So the people will give him to me

He must pay

Or is Inanna's response exactly what I was seeking?

Tennis Lessons

Cross to DSC

Raelene:

It's a Tuesday afternoon, February, 1982. I'm 14.

I've just finished an after school tennis lesson at a High School in Victoria. Sweat is dripping into my eyes.

So when "Ron" – the very red-headed father of a red headed boy in my class, and the only adult in the tennis class – offers me a lift to the bus stop, I'm in the car before he finishes the offer.

It becomes a weekly ritual. We sit in the car and chat till the bus comes.

On the last occasion, Ron unexpectedly drives me to a secluded place for a "special goodbye conversation." He asks for my phone number. He wants to be "more than friends."

(confused) I'm only 14.

(frightened) I'm only 14.

"Um, if I give you my number, my parents might answer the phone.
//// No, I won't throw it away."

As soon as Ron leaves me at the bus stop, I throw his number away.

I never see him again.

I tell one person: a female teacher friend. She laughs and insists "you knew what was going on. You liked it."

Appendix A

Crossing to Lectern

After Inanna's plague of storms, she sends a third plague which blocks all the streets in and out of Sumer. But she still can't find her rapist. In her despair, she appeals to Enki, god of wisdom, the god who had helped and then hidden the gardener. But Inanna was insistent

Stepping down from Lectern, directed to DSR stairs:

Enki, you must help me
He cannot go unpunished
This is the law!

Enki gives in and hands over Sukaletuda

To DSR:

So you dog! Pig! Ass! Account for yourself!

Step forward and SR, then, during speech, circling USC to DSC, to finish SL of Inanna.

Sukaletuda:

Goddess Inanna, have mercy! My garden was withering in the sun. I prayed to Enki, god of wisdom. Suddenly, where there had been only desert, there was a huge shady tree. I squinted to see the tree against the setting sun, and through the haze I saw you asleep.

I thought you were part of Enki's gift. I "ploughed your field" so the garden would burst into bloom. Protected from the scorching sun by the shade of the tree, my garden would live!

Inanna, goddess of love and mercy, let me live also!

Step SR and directed to SL:

Inanna:

No! You will die! What's that to me?
Yes, you will die.....

Raelene:

My "special goodbye conversation" with Ron was the first of a series of similar experiences in my adolescence, culminating in losing my virginity in the front seat of of my year twelve teacher's car.

I have never screamed so loudly from pain before or since.

I didn't tell anyone – except one school friend – for years

Narrator:

Crossing to Lectern

Appendix A

After Inanna pronounces Sukaletuda's death sentence she continues:

"So you will die.

Your name, however, shall not be forgotten.

It shall exist in songs and make the songs sweet.

A young singer shall perform them most pleasingly in the king's palace.

A shepherd shall sing them sweetly as he tumbles the butter churn.

A young shepherd shall carry your name to where he grazes the sheep.

The palace of the desert shall be your home."

I could only make sense of this by theorising that Inanna's rape was a metaphor for over cultivating the land, her "field slash vulva." Perhaps, rather than decreeing his future honours, Inanna was simply acknowledging how the Sumerian people would memorialise Sukaletuda when they saw the immediate benefits of a plentiful garden, and not the long term devastation of depleted land, which in fact is believed to have contributed to the eventual demise of Sumer.

HANDS OFF LECTURN, PACIER, SOME ANGER:

It took a long time for my rage to find me. It transported me to horrible dark places within. It killed friendships and caused havoc.

But eventually it taught me that I deserved to be treated with better respect. It gave me energy to change. Abusive experiences became fewer. Life became richer. I had myself.

HANDS ON LECTURN, SLOWER MORE MEASURED:

Was Inanna's rape a trigger which sent her on a quest to find what was so wrong in the world that one of her people could rape her, and others hide him from her?

There was only one realm whose secrets Inanna did not already possess: the land of the dead, the Underworld, the Great Below.

Directed to the throne (light fading up)

From the Great Above, the goddess Inanna set her mind on the Great Below

Walk towards throne then suddenly turn US to walk behind the table USL

Remove glasses

Wash face and hands

Dry face and hands

Put on Robe

Step SR

Put on measuring rod

Move SR to front of table USC

Put on gold bracelet

Put on hip scarf

Put on Beads

Appendix A

Walk to behind table USR

Put on beads

Put on Crown

Look at self in bowl

The Descent

Narrator:

Leaving behind the 7 great cities, and her 7 temples, Inanna set out.

Steps forward.

1st Gate (Crown – Inanna and An)

Inanna:

(To SR) Ninsubar, from here I must go alone. You know what to do if I do not return.

Turns to face US

Neti open up. It is I, Inanna, on my journey to the east. I wish to visit my sister Ersehkigal.

Pause

Because.. her husband Gugulanna died, and I wish to..... share in the funeral libations.

Pause

I will wait while you speak to Ereshkigal.

Pause

What's this? You want my crown?

Neti: Be Silent Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect and may not be questioned.

Inanna:

Lighting change

I won this crown. With it my power is unequalled in heaven and on earth!

The Palace of Heaven/Earth is Mine

Rock beat begins:

Narrator: (Crossing to SL:)

In the dead of night, the Palace of Heaven, which was home to An the sky god and father of all the gods, came forth and filled the Heavens with its splendour.

(lighting effect)

Inanna, in her heavenly form of the Planet Venus, entered the sky. She gazed upon the Palace of Heaven, otherwise known as the E-ana, in awe, wonder and longing. She called across the sky to her brother Utu, the sun god.

Appendix A

“Brother” she said, “my husband the king has kissed me and made love to me. In return I wish to give him rule over all the lands on earth. But An the sky god and father of all the gods has refused to give us his palace known as the E-ana, and so I cannot give my husband the lands which are governed by that palace. Yet, it was Father An himself who decreed that I should rule over all of Heaven and all of Earth. Utu, you must help me for....

Earth is mine,
Heaven is mine
Earth is Mine.. so
The Palace of Heaven should be mine”

To far DSL

Utu agreed
To do as she bid
Stayed longer in bed
To extend that night
Her barge travelled gently (*To SL*)
Through the reeds
Beside the starry river
Of milky light

To DSC

Thus she hid
From the evil south wind
Who was tangling the fishermen’s
Nets for fun
But the sport he loved most
When he saw them pass
Was to drown every boat
On that heavenly run

She whispered:
Earth is mine,
Heaven is mine,
Earth is mine,
The Palace of Heaven will soon be mine.

TO SR Then she arrived and,
The Herdsman tugged
On the cosmic rope
To bring the Palace in view
Then he tethered her barge
Fought off the guards
To win that palace
Inanna had one task left to do

Appendix A

Spoken Bridge:

Only the constellation of Scorpio now stood between Inanna and the Palace
She took a deep breath, then she drank deeply of the cleansing waters of the River of
Heaven to protect herself from the Scorpion's poison. Inanna reached into the sky to pull
the scorpion towards her. Then quick as the lightning she rules, she stomped on him and
sliced off his poisonous tail. Scorpio bellowed his pain like a lion roaring.
And as Inanna threw him down and tied him, An, the sky god and Father of all the gods,
came out of the Palace to see what all the noise was (*track him moving from US to SR*)
Inanna turned to him and said (*To SR*)

Earth is mine
Heaven is mine
Earth is Mine
Now the Palace of Heaven is also mine
You must leave forever, for this Palace is mine

Earth is mine
Heaven is mine
Earth is Mine
Now the Palace of Heaven is also mine

Move To SR In his grief
The god slapped his thighs
Crying "Daughter mine
How how can it be
You are stronger than me
You've made night equal daytime?
Now all the gods and people
Must bow to thee.
You have broken my heart
But I fall at your feet, singing

Earth is yours,
Heaven is yours,
Earth is yours
The palace of heaven is also yours
The lands of the palace are also yours
(Removing Crown) The crown of heaven is also yours...

Transition Back to Inanna

Earth is mine
Heaven is mine
Earth is Mine
The crown of heaven is also mine

Appendix A

Lighting transition back to first gate

Inanna hands the headdress over slowly. Sound effect of gate opening.

Inanna steps through.

Sound effect of gate slamming shut.

She stoops a little and continues to the next gate.

The 2nd Gate

(Transition Back to First gate of Underworld):

She stops suddenly and brings her hands to her lapis beads.

What is this? You want my lapis beads?

Neti:

Be Silent Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect and may not be questioned.

Lights Fade

Inanna:

(Turning to audience and crossing to mic)

These beads are tribute from the treacherous Mt Ebih, who I conquered. My people petitioned me, and for them I went against the will of the fathers.

Inanna and Ebih

(Star gobo up while loops are being laid?)

Inanna, Inanna, Inanna, hear our prayer (layered with almost round and harmony)
Drenched in Blood, clad in terror,
Carrying weapons we call on you
You roar like a lion, you roar like thunder
Goddess divine, hear our prayer

Cross to CS, facing SR

Neil fade song to very low background level

Father An, sky god and father of all the gods. Please hear me.

Listens then I\makes gesture of respect

Thank you.

Father, can you hear the people singing? They fear the mountain. *(Indicates the mountain – it is SL beside audience – stair 4 or 5)* Even the deities fear the mountain. Mt Ebih terrorises us all. Let me go against him. I will teach him to fear the gods. *(walking out)*

Appendix A

Turn back

Father An, why do you resist? You're the one who gave me the job of watching over heaven and earth to make sure that all respect the proper laws. Yet just the other day as I was circling heaven and earth to see who was worthy and who was false, I turned towards the mountain, and Ebih showed me no respect! Why did he not put his nose to the ground before me? Why did he not kiss his lips to the dirt for me? *(Walking out)* Let him become like a city that the god Enlil has cursed. Let him never lift his nose from the dirt again!

(Turning Back)

I do know what I am taking on! I am not just a simpering weak girl. I am the goddess of war. Look at the weapons I am carrying. So the mountain is full of abundance. What do I care about that? So there are mountain lions lying in the shade waiting to ambush the army as passes. *(Leaving)* My husband's army will be like snakes slithering from the mountains crevices. *(Turning back)* We will pass through.

Narrator:

(Moving USR) Inanna left An's temple fuming with rage. She roared like thunder and sent storms and floods against the mountain. She poisoned its rivers. Dumuzi's army appeared from the cracks and crevices of the mountain like poisonous snakes and attacked its people. *(Comes DSL to the Mountain)* Inanna sharpened her dagger and pressed it into Mt Ebih's throat. She took him in the other hand and shook till the great mountain was reduced to rubble. *(Moving to USR)* When all the fight had left the mountain, Inanna spoke:

Inanna:

Ebih, you are defeated. From this day forward you must give all your food wine beer clothing and precious stones as offerings to my temple. Your lapis lazuli will adorn the entrances to my temples and pave the banks of the quay. It shall be inlaid in my bed and throne and I shall wear beads of lapis at my throat to remind you that all you do is in service of me. May you and your people know nothing but shame and degradation from this day forward.

Lighting change back to Underworld

She hands over her necklace and the arrogance and pride goes out of her body.

Sound effect of gate opening

Inanna takes a step

Sound effect of gate slamming

3rd Gate

Inanna steps forward, stops suddenly, puts hands to beads at her chest.

What is this?

Recorded Neti Voice:

Be Silent Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect and may not be questioned.

Appendix A

Lighting Change

The quarrel with Dumuzi

Inanna sings: (fingering beads)

Sweet, Sweet, is the sleep of heart to heart

Moving DSL a little

Dumuzi, the man of my heart

Gave me these beads on our wedding day

He threaded them with his own hands

And placed them around my neck with love.

Come to me, I said

And I will rejoice in you

(Turning to USR) We embraced on the luxuriant couch

His cedar sprang to life

He ploughed my field,

He played that sweet game with his tongue

And afterwards, I sang

HONEY MAN

He has sprouted, he has burgeoned

Bringing garden to my desert

The favourite of this goddess

My first class fruitful apple tree

Honey Man, He's my Honey Man

With honeyed hands and honeyed feet

Honey man, oh my honey man

With honeyed thighs to make me sweet

I have sprouted and I flourish

My garden he has nourished

Well watered me and fed me

With some sweet fruit from his tree

But then he stopped paying attention to me

He needed to get on with the job of being king, he said

He only had time for a short quick plough of my field, he said

Every night

Crossing to DSL

He wouldn't listen when I told him

That I needed his sweet caresses

Appendix A

And his loving attention to bring forth my waters
So that the land could truly bloom

I cannot keep producing these same boring crops in rows
I will die inside without tenderness

Moving to CS

I went away
To give the earth, my body
Time to rest and recover

Dumuzi didn't understand
He thought I didn't love him
He would not come
When I called for him to meet me
And to love me
In the place where the land had rested

And so now the land of Sumer is dry, barren and salty
My people are in famine
(Addressed to USR) They blame me for withholding myself from my love

Dumuzi made these beads for me with his own hands

Lights transition back to third gate

Inanna hands over beads

Sound of Gate opening

Inanna takes a step

Sound effect of gate slamming

Gate 4 (Breastplate Enki)

Inanna begins to move forward, stops suddenly.

Puts her hand to hip scarf

What is this?

Recorded Neti Voice:

Be Silent Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect and may not be questioned.

Lighting transition

I was given this hip scarf by Enki, god of wisdom and sex.

(lean against US table SR corner)

Appendix A

It was before my wedding, I was leaning against a cedar tree and delighting in my amazing new body. My vulva was wondrous to behold. It was time Enki gave me the knowledge of life.

(Moving DS then turning SR)

I climbed into my boat of heaven and travelled the waterway till I arrived at Enki's temple.

(Stepping DSR as if led by servant, then turning DS and spinning to CS as if led by servant)

His servant offered me food. He offered me honey cakes, and wine. I accepted his hospitality, and so, by law, Enki had to offer me gifts.

Step forward

I was led to the inner sanctum. It was wild. Enki ordered his servant to bring out all the best beer and keep filling up the glasses. But Enki didn't notice that for every mouthful he drank I only took a sip. Soon he was so drunk he could hardly speak.

Enki moves around Inanna as if indicating objects on shelves – SR, then US, the SL.

My daughter," he said "what can I give you? Here, take the art of lovemaking and kissing the phallus. Take music and the arts of war. Take courage and honesty and deceit."

I took them

Before long there was nothing left. Enki fell into a drunken coma.

(Moving to CS/SL) I put it all in my boat, and I was out of there!

Enki woke up before I got back to Uruk. He was furious. He couldn't believe he'd given everything to me, so he sent sea monsters after me to steal it all back. The sea monsters grabbed my boat, they shook it, huge waves rose up against me.

Bugger that! I thought. It was mine, fair and square. He fucking GAVE it to me. *(pause)* I got MY servant, Ninshubar, to help me. Ninshubar has power over water because she never touched it with her hands or her feet. With one wave of her arms she sent the sea monsters scuttling back to the ABZU.

Enki didn't give up so easily. He sent 50 uru giants after me. Every step they took made the earth shake, my boat was tossing about from wave to wave. I held onto the sides. They reached out with their hands. They could have crushed me with one finger, but I called Ninsubar again, and once again with a single wave of her arms she sent them hurtling back to Enki's temple.

Appendix A

Enki sent another 8 different hordes of monsters. Each time my faithful Ninsubar sent them scuttling back a wave of her arms.

Move SL to in front of throne.

Finally I arrived at the lapis lazuli quay.

People of Uruk. *(Pause)* I present to you all the knowledge of civilisation.

(Moving USR) Enki conceded defeat. He wanted to make sure, now that my town Uruk was more powerful than his, that we remained friends. From that day, for a time, Uruk was the seat of power for all of Sumer.

Lights transition back to third gate

Inanna hands over hipscarf

Sound of Gate opening

Inanna takes a step

Sound effect of gate slamming

5th gate Gudam

Inanna steps forward, stops suddenly, puts her hands to the gold bracelet on her wrist

What is this?

Recorded Neti Voice:

Be Silent Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect and may not be questioned.

Lighting transition

Inanna:

Moving to flute stand I won this gold bracelet the first time I had to raise arms to defend my people.

Bass riff begins

Take flute then move to CS

Repelling the attack (Gudam)

Inanna sings:

A warrior came to Sumer
So tall and strong and mean
He pulled together an army
The first we'd ever seen
They gathered in our taverns
They ate up all our food
Then they poured out into our streets
And began to loot and kill

Appendix A

Cross to SL while playing flute

The warrior's name was Gudam
From Zabalam he came
He turned against my temple
And began to hack it down
He crushed my people with his mace
Their blood flowed through my streets
Till my junior fisherman
Struck Gudam with an axe

Musical Interlude with flute

Gudam the warrior
Began to grieve and weep
Be begged me to spare his life
And promised ne'er to sleep
But to worship me throughout the night
And to serve me through his days
Bring me cows and sheep and jewellery
If I'd keep him from his grave.

Cross back to CS playing flute

FLUTE DOWN

Sumer had been a peaceful place
Before the warrior came
But we had learned our lesson
From Gudam's little game
As well as for abundance,
I now turned my skills to war
And Gudam brought gold from Zabalam,
My temple to adorn.
Yes, he brought me gold from Zabalam.....

Move US

Lighting change

Inanna hands over bracelet

Sound of Gate opening

Inanna takes a step

Sound effect of gate slamming

6th gate Measuring Rod

Inanna steps forward, stops suddenly, puts her hands to measuring rod

What is this?

Appendix A

Recorded Neti Voice:

Be Silent Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect and may not be questioned.

Lights transition

Taking one step CS

The measuring rod that Enki, god of wisdom, gave me.

It brings the power of measurement, discernment and accounting, and the responsibility of the Storehouse for the people of Uruk.

Every day, the people bring offerings to me temple. Arriving in a grand procession, they lay out meals before me. They leave robes, jewellery, grains, beer and wine. More than I can use. I store the excess for use by the community in times of need.

With this measuring rod I bestow upon the king the power and responsibility of measuring, recording, and later distributing, the stores. A worthy king makes sure his people are looked after.

Lighting transition

Inanna hands over measuring rod

Sound of Gate opening

Inanna takes a step

Sound effect of gate slamming

7th gate dress

Inanna moves forwards then stops suddenly

What's this?

Recorded Neti Voice:

Be Silent Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect and may not be questioned.

Inanna removes robe

Sound of Gate opening

Inanna moves forward

Sound effect of gate slamming

The death of Inanna

Lights fade down

Cross to mic

Underworld soundscape

Drone

Then weird other sounds

Appendix A

Narrator:

Inanna has entered the realm of Queen Ereshkigal: the place where everyone goes, but no one leaves. The place where the dead rest for eternity.

*Inanna stumbles forward to the throne and sits
Stand and move a few steps towards SR*

Narrator:

Ereshkigal fixes the eyes of death upon Inanna.

Ereshkigal:

Guilty!

Narrator:

Inanna's body crumples to the floor.
One of Ereshkigal's servants lifts up the corpse, hangs it on a meat hook, and leaves it there to rot.
Inanna is dead.

ACT 3: THE ASCENT

Ereshkigal's song of grief and birth

In darkness

Drone begins

Enter behind audience SR, crossing to SL behind audience, and down stairs

(sung Ab drone, melody on D)

I've been grieving

I've been grieving

I've been grieving

All through time

It keeps repeating

This grief I'm bleeding

Time after time after time

The people fear and hate me

The other gods forsake me

And no one understands me or the gifts I have to give

Arrive DSL

During the following lines, Ereshkigal circles the stage, moving US, SR, DS, SL finishing in front of the throne

I've been grieving

And waiting

Inanna

(sung on monotone unison with drone, with plain chant-like endings on occasional lines)

In the first days

In the very first days

In the first nights

In the very first nights

In the first years

In the very first years

Everything needed was brought into being

Everything needed was properly nourished

And the earth goddess

And the sky god

Were joined together as two parts

Of an equal whole

Appendix A

In front of throne, spoken over drone

Then their son, the god of air
Came between them
Pushing them so far apart that they could no longer even touch
The sky god cried two perfect tears of sorrow at being separated from his
beloved
And from these tears twins were born
I, Ereshkigal, and Enki, god of wisdom
The male gods divided the powers of earth and heaven between them
And abandoned me to that place of death and despair: the Underworld
Little did they realise that by doing so they gave me more power than all the
other deities combined
Without me to house the dead, there could be no life at all

I learned its secrets
Became its ruler
And I waited for the day

But Inanna wouldn't listen
To the whispered gifts I'd given (her)
She tried to win the Underworld as if she was at war.....
the word 'war' becomes a scream of pain

Ereshkigal and the 2 creatures

Ereshkigal:

Oh my insides!
Ohhhhhhhhh!

Raelene:

Ereshkigal's groans of grief had become moans of labour.
The goddess of death was giving birth.

Ereshkigal:

Oh my insides!

Collapses into chair

Lighting: 2 points of light appear on the side wall of the theatre, SL. These are the creatures.

Creature:

Oh your poor insides! (your poor insides)

Ereshkigal brief look of surprise

Appendix A

Ereshkigal:

Oh my outsides!

Creature:

Oh your poor outsides! (your poor outsides)

Ereshkigal:

Where are those voices coming from? I can't see anything, but..

Oh, my back!

Creature:

Oh, your poor back (your poor back)

Ereshkigal:

There you are. You two are so tiny. I haven't seen you before but

Oh, my front!

Creature:

Oh, your poor front. (your poor front)

Ereshkigal:

Who are you? How is that you understand what I feel? No one has ever....

Ohhhh!

Creature:

Oh your poor pain! (poor pain)

Ereshkigal:

What can I give you? You can have whatever you want: a field of grain, or a river of water, or.....

Creature:

We just want the corpse on the hook (on the hook)

Ereshkigal:

Oh, that's just Inanna's corpse. That's no use to you.

Creature:

We just want the corpse on the hook.

Ereshkigal:

But you could have whatever you want. Why don't you take.....

Appendix A

Creature:

We just want to corpse on the hook

Ereshkigal:

Ok. Neti, give Inanna's corpse to these.... Ohhhhhhhh!

Lights change – not possible if creatures still on stage.

Stand, stepping USR

Inanna is reborn

Narrator:

Inanna's corpse is placed on the ground.

The first of the creatures feeds her the food of life, and the second feeds her the water of life. Inanna stands.

Inanna:

Stepping DS

I am, I am

Lighting effect: daylight shines from SR.

Inanna looks around, then takes a step towards the light. She stops suddenly and puts her hands up, as if trying to prevent something from getting too close to her.

What is this? What is this?

All around me

All around me pressing close

I can't move

Looks around some more with the bass note

Demons with green skin and yellow skin

Who've never seen.... Daylight

Demons with seven heads, sharp teeth

Dripping with poison

Pressing all around me like a plague

Threatening me with claws and teeth and blades

I can't move

Demons who've never known, children,

Or joy, or sex, or warmth, or love

Appendix A

Stepping back towards the throne and facing SR

Ereshkigal:

No one has ever entered the Underworld then left.

If you are to leave, these demons will make sure you send someone to take your place.

The Ascent

Inanna walks to the 7th gate where the dress/cloak is. She looks at it strangely and picks it up.

I am

I am

She puts it on

I am Inanna

Daughter of the moon god and goddess of the reeds

I am Inanna

Inanna walks to the next gate and sees the measuring rod, she picks it up, looks at it.

Keeper of grain and of fertility

Rod around neck walks to the 5th gate

Looks at gold bracelet, picks it up, looks at audience, then sings

I am Inanna

Goddess of beauty, abundance and

War.

Puts on hip scarf

She walks to the 3rd gate, picks up the beads, looks at audience, sings:

I am Inanna,

Goddess of music and art and love

Speaks to beads as if they are Dumuzi:

Dumuzi,

Slowly puts beads back on

Walks to second gate, picks up beads from Mt Ebih, looks at them,

Looks at audience, sings:

Appendix A

I am Inanna
Queen of Earth.....

Puts on beads

Walks to first gate, picks up crown, looks at it, Sings:
..... And Heaven above

Emerging back into the overworld

Inanna shields her eyes from the brilliance of the sun, squints, smiles, speaks to DSR

Ninshubar!.... Nooooooooooooo!

Narrator:

The demons have surrounded Inanna's servant Ninshubar. They beat her with heavy sticks. They kick her with heavy beats. They drag her towards the Underworld.

Inanna:

STOP!

You cannot take Ninsubar. See how her face has been lacerated by her own fingernails? See how she wears rags of mourning? She has beaten the drums of grief and petitioned the gods on my behalf.

Narrator:

When Inanna did not return from the Underworld within three days, Ninshubar petitioned father Enlil, the air god, and then Father Nanna, Inanna's own father, the Moon god. Each condemned Inanna for venturing too far. "Inanna wants too much, she cannot expect to return."

Finally Ninshubar petitioned Enki, the god of wisdom. "What has my daughter done?! Without Inanna, the world cannot flourish." From the dirt beneath his fingernails, Enki created two tiny creatures – small enough to fly through thye gates of the underworld undetected – and gave them the food of life and the water of life to carry to Inanna.

Inanna:

Step back USR

If it were not for Ninsubar / would still be dead in the Underworld. I will not let you take her.

Narrator:

Through this speech crossing to DSL

Inanna and her demons continue their journey towards Inanna's home, Uruk.

Stand

Appendix A

Along the way, they pass through several towns. At each, one of Inanna's sons is found kneeling at her shrine, dressed in rags of mourning, face lacerated, praying for her safe return.

Move

At each town the demons surround the grieving son. They beat him, kick him, and drag him towards the Underworld.

NO! Inanna responds each time. You cannot take my son. He has grieved my absence. He has observed the proper rites. I will not let you take him.

Take Dumuzi

Finally Inanna and her demonic entourage arrive in Uruk.

Sit on throne

They find Inanna's beloved dressed in a magnificent garment, cloaked in jewels, partaking of the bread and wine which had been left as offerings to Inanna, and seated on the throne he had carved for her from her Huluppu Tree. He was smiling.

Step USR to where Ereshkigal stood

Inanna:

Guilty! Take him!

Dumuzi's turn

Narrator:

The demons surround Dumuzi. They beat him with heavy sticks, kick him with heavy boots, and drag him towards the Underworld. Dumuzi appeals to the sun god, Utu.

Dumuzi:

To DSL Please have mercy.

Narrator:

Crossing to SR

Utu accepts Dumuzi's tears and grants him legs and arms made of snakes. Dumuzi slithers away, hides, and is caught.

Crossing to SR

Utu grants Dumuzi gazelle legs, He leaps away, hides and is caught; escapes, hides, and again, his demons find him, and beat him to a pulpy corpse.

Back to CS

Appendix A

Inanna rips out her hair like dead grass. Her cries of grief echo like thunder throughout heaven and earth.

Inanna:

Other women lie in their husband's embrace, but I have lost my precious husband!

Narrator:

Dumuzi's mother weeps, his sister Geshtinanna begs to be sent to the Underworld in his place.

Inanna:

TO the audience, excited

Since you have offered, Geshtinanna, I will grant that you share your brother's fate. Dumuzi will dwell in the Underworld for half of each year, and you for the other half.

While my beloved is in the Underworld the land will bake in the hot sun. Nothing will grow. On the day that Dumuzi returns, our reunion will be sweet, and once again the land will burst into bloom.

Move US to get guitar.

Sweet is the Sleep/ Since you've been gone

Sweet, Sweet, is the sleep
Of hand to hand

Sweet, Sweet-er still Is the sleep
Of heart to heart

It's so sweet, It's so sweet
And the sweet-ness lives on
E-ven though you're

Neil steps out from behind music stand gone.

Since you've been gone,
The days grow longer,
And this in-fernal heat
Grows stronger and stronger

Can't wait for the days
To get a little bit shorter
To bring you back
Into my arms where you oughta be again.

Appendix A

Since you've been gone I just can't sleep at night
Come back to me and put my world back right

My fallow land
Is dusty and dry now
I need your loving arms
To make my waters flow again

Since you've been gone I just can't sleep at night
Come back to me and put my world back right

Since you've been gone,
The days grow longer,
And this in-fernal heat
Grows stronger and stronger

Replace guitar and cross to lectern

What I found is more of a mirror than a model.

Raelene:

So who is this Inanna I set out to find? An avenging lover? A ruthless warrior? An ambitious feminist who succeeded in a man's world? A visionary looking to put the world back right? Or a tool of the patriarchy?

I set out on a quest for an empowered mythic female role model. What I found was more of a mirror. Or rather a hall of mirrors, each set at a different angle, each holding a different image of Inanna, or myself, or both of us dancing together....

This reflection from an archaeologist, this from a feminist, this one a psychotherapist, this one a religious scholar, and here my interpretations of their interpretations. Reflections of reflections or reflections....

Was there hiding amongst the reflections, a single true face of Inanna?

I no longer care. The reflections are more interesting.

But, along the way, I did sometimes imagine how a "real" Inanna might have felt about the ways in which her name and her stories have been used and abused.

I'd like to leave you tonight with a song, in which a "real" Inanna wonders about the girl who stands in for her in the Sacred Marriage Kingship Ritual.

Down from Lectern, pick up little guitar, and move to CS

Appendix A

WHO IS THE GIRL?

Who is the girl who stands in for me?
Is she as pretty as I am?
Is her hair like the mane of the ibex, my red deer?
Is she fit for the king who stands in for my love?

Is she a young temple maiden?
Scared to lie down with a much older man?
Or is she excited to be opened to pleasure?
Is she happy to serve me and her people this way?

Oh I remember Dumuzi, the first time
He shaped my loins with his own fair hands
How he watered my womb, how it ended too soon
How he smoothed my vulva with milk and cream

I am the queen full of loveliness
And I am also the goddess who returned from hell
And I wish the same courage and joy for this child
Is the king fit for her who stands in for me?

Oh I remember Dumuzi, the first time
How he shaped my loins with his own fair hands
How he watered my womb, and it ended too soon
How he smoothed my vulva with milk and cream

Yes, I remember Dumuzi, the first time
How I lay down beside him amongst the fig trees
Amongst his dates I recall, how his cedar stood tall
I de-created him a sweet fate and made him a king.
I made him the king.

Working Script for *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree*

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BREATHE

*In darkness Ereshkigal creates a C Drone,
She then walks as if performing a ritual and sings:*

In the first days, in the very first days
In the first nights, in the very first nights
In the first years, in the very first years
When everything needed was brought into being

Spoken: (matter of fact)

Before time began there was only the primordial sea,
Arms opening (Black water)

The watery deep from which emerged earth and sky
Left round arm / right gesture upwards

Shift mood –tender

Two joined as one, brother and sister
Hands move towards each other right hand open left hand open

Husband and wife
Hands clasp

Shift mood – bitter

Their son the air god came between them and pushed them apart
(slight) Separate hands strong weight – right hand up left down

Shift Mood – tender?

The sky god wept to be separated from his beloved
Look towards right hand Look towards left hand

Two perfect tear drops fell from his eyes
Fingers my eyes

And splashed into the watery womb of (*his mother*) the primordial sea
Gesture down

From this union divine twins were born: the god Enki and the goddess Ereshkigal
Hard voice hand to right gentle voice and hand to left

Appendix B

Enki was given wisdom, knowledge, water, and the power to create life.

Gesture and look right – sarcasm

both hands down birth gesture

Ereshkigal was exiled to the Underworld, The Great Below, that dusty, dead domain from which no one returns.

Pity - gesture down

-lower body gesture all around

I am Ereshkigal. I was abandoned, but I learned the secrets of The Great Below, and I became its queen.

PAUSE

Sung – return to ritual

In the first days, in the very first days

Everything needed was brought into being

Everything needed was properly nourished

Food wine and water flowed to all through the land.

Walking very slowly Ereshkigal turns off drone, walks back to centre stage then speaks:

Light Sarcasm

My brother Enki,

Beloved of humanity,

Receiver of gifts of beer, wine and honey

Rage:

Stole the secrets of wisdom and creating life from the earth goddess

Then he wanted to steal *my* secrets

Laugh:

From above he set sail for my realm

So I threw small windstones up at his boat

But still he kept coming

So I threw large hailstones against him

Like onrushing turtles they charged the keel of Enki's boat

And yet, Enki kept coming

So still I pushed him back

The waters of the sea devoured the bow of his boat like wolves

The waters of the seas struck the stern of his boat like lions

As I pushed up and Enki pushed down

Light

heavy

Up and down

Light Heavy

Up and down

Light Heavy

BREATHE

CHANGE MOOD – reel them in

Did Enki ever make it to the Underworld?

I'm not telling you all my secrets

But I will tell you:

One of my stones glanced off Enki's boat

Onto the banks of the Euphrates

And in the place where it landed a single Huluppu Tree grew

And there it stayed, nurtured by the waters of the Euphrates

An Huluppu tree whose whispering would reveal the secrets of my underworld

So I sent a south wind which pulled at its roots

And ripped at its branches

Hurling it back into the Euphrates and carrying it away

My grand niece was walking that day

My grand niece Inanna who is now queen of heaven and earth

Turns away from audience, full circle becomes Inanna half way around

Inanna stands looks at audience, smiles and nods, walks to music stand

Pick up Guitar SAVE LOOP, CHANGE CHANNELS, BASS LOOP immediately sing

I am Inanna

Goddess of music and beauty and love

PUT ON CAPO AND GET FINGERS READY

I am Inanna

Queen of earth and heaven above

Lay down picked loop

Sing

I am Inanna

Daughter of the moon god and goddess of the reeds

I am Inanna

Keeper of grain and of fertility

Appendix B

VOCAL LOOPS

I am Inanna

Thunder and lightning and strength are mine

I am Inanna

Abundance to all who worship at my shrine

Capo to 5th fret

Speaks over music backing

Although I was born to divine parents, I had to earn my powers.

My journey towards adulthood and queendom began one day as I played near the banks of the river Euphrates

**Turn off loop,
guitar down,
full circle into little Inanna
pick up little guitar on the way**

Little Inanna runs, stops

looks at river,

sits on bank, puts guitar down, plays with water

picks up guitar plays and looks at audience (melody this tree my life)

sees tree

puts down guitar, rescues tree

Stands and says:

I've never seen a tree like this before. I'm going to plant it in my sacred garden.

Skips to right and in circle to tree spot

Plants tree

Firms with feet -begins to hum this tree my life

Waters with earthenware bowl

Looks at it and shows it grow a little?

BREATHE

Child Inanna picks up with travel guitar

Capo 3rd fret - play as if in G (really F)

When I think of the laws the Gods have made

My fate they've decreed, I'm afraid

But as I tend my Huluppu Tree

The future I embrace

She lends her strength to me

Appendix B

Guitar down,

move to tree

*How long, How long,
Hands on tree –mime object -*

Till I have a shining throne to sit upon?

How long will it be?

Her trunk grows thick she's strong and tall,

Hands widen on tree, look at branches

Her bark hasn't cracked, she has no faults

Left hand down tree both hands my body grow

I dream of the bed that she will make

Hand wiping body - look at self

And of the lover I will take,

Look at audience

So how long, how long,

Till I have a bridal bed to lie upon? **Walk towards big guitar**

Look at audience

How long will it be?

Pick ready to play for:

Ooooooo

Em – F, Em – F, Em – F G A

Now play as if in D (really G)

Years have passed five, ten

I've watered this tree from the fountain within

Queen of heaven and earth is my fate

So how much longer must I wait

To audience:

How long, how long,

Till I have a shining throne to sit upon?

How long, how long will it be –

Till my bridal bed is rendered from this tree?

To tree:

How long, how long?

Appendix B

To audience:

How long, how long,

Till I have a shining throne to sit upon?

How long, how long will it be –

Till my bridal bed is rendered from this tree?

To tree:

How long, how long?

How long, how long?

How long, how long?

Four bar intro (A F#m D E)

A f#m
Her branches circle |heaven

D E
Her roots dig |deep below

A f#m
And she whispers |secrets

D E
Of a life I |long to know

D A D A
This tree my |life, This |tree my |life

Bm E
This tree my life she |lives in me

D E
And she whis|pers

Bm E
When she whis|pers

D E
I'll lis|ten

BREATHE

Pause

Walk – put down guitar

Return with a sense of wrongness

Appendix B

Speak:

Something's out of place.

Look at snake position - Recoils and gasps

Move to snake position as snake:

Sssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssss

As Inanna:

Who are you? What are you doing in my garden?

As snake start loop from earlier:

Sing:

I am the scintillating snake

Whispering secrets they will never see

I have risen from the Great Below

To take my home in the roots of this tree

Speaks:

You don't have to wait for your bed Inanna.

You can lie down in the dirt whenever you want, with whomever you desire.

Come into the dirt, Inanna.

Inanna:

Your scales are so smooth and shiny.

No,.... Go away. I won't listen to you.

Inanna Looks Up and starts

Anzu bird roars and says:

Listen to me then Inanna. You want a throne? You want power?

Inanna says:

Who are you? What are you doing in the branches of my tree?

BREATHE

Anzu bird sings:

I am the Anzu Bird

Lion's face for roaring

Eagle's wings for soaring

Over land and sea

Appendix B

Speaks:

Climb on my back – together we will fly and take the tablets of destiny from the gods.

You don't have to wait for your throne.

I'll make you queen of heaven and earth.

Inanna:

Queen of heaven and earth.....

No. I'll be queen, but I'll do it my way. Go away. Get out of my tree.

Responds to seeing Lilith

Lilith:

Argghhhh! You stupid cunt! You think you can make us leave.

After what the gods have already done to me.

Inanna:

Who are you?

Lilith sings:

I am Lilith

A warning from the wastelands, reminder to stay bold

The gods have raped me

They want women to be sissies who'll do just as they're told

Speaks:

Don't just what the gods tell you Inanna.

Inanna:

Argghhhh! I'm not going to listen to you! Go away.

Lilith:

That's right Inanna, get angry. Rampage with me and no man will ever hurt you.

BREATHE

Adolescent Inanna:

No..... Just give me back my tree.

Inanna bursts into tears.

Looks at Lilith, then Anzu, then snake.

Appendix B

Become snake –snake to microphone.

I am the scintillating snake

Whispering secrets they will never see

I have risen from the Great Below

To take my home in the roots of this tree

Anzu:

I am the Anzu Bird

Lion's face for roaring

Eagle's wings for soaring

Over land and sea

Lilith:

I am Lilith

A warning from the wastelands, reminder to stay bold

The gods have raped me

They want women to be sissies who'll do just as they're told

(turn off loop here?)

Adult Inanna:

I wept but the creatures would not leave my tree.

So I went to my brother Utu, the sun god to ask for help.

Walks towards Utu's place.

Turns and becomes Utu

Utu leans against wall drinking coffee

Is cold, acknowledges audience

Looks sees Inanna and smiles

BREATHE

Utu:

(Yawns.) Inanna, what are you doing here?

You want me to do what?

Appendix B

What do you need me for? You're the one who's gonna be Queen of heaven and earth.

You deal with it mate. I've got the sun to pull across the sky.

Adult Inanna:

So I went to my other brother, Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh:

Inanna. My dear girl. Of course, I would be delighted to assist you. Gilgamesh the Great at your service.

Adult Inanna:

Gilgamesh effortlessly took up his heavy armour and his huge axe,

and followed me into my sacred garden.

Gilgamesh:

Where are the blighters, eh?

Looks around with nose in the air

Then looks down and jumps:

Arrrrrr!

Snake:

What a great glittering axe you have Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh:

It's about to split you open.

Snake:

You're such a strong heroic man.

Gilgamesh:

Yes, I am and you're about to feel my strength.

Snake:

You don't really need that axe do you?

I bet you could tear me asunder with your bare hands. I'd like to feel your hands on me.

Gilgamesh:

Would you?

BREATHE

Snake:

Just put down the axe Gilgamesh. I won't hurt you.

Gilgamesh:

I really shouldn't you know

Appendix B

Snake:

Go on, just for a minute. I want to touch you.

Gilgamesh:

Well Maybe just.....

Adolescent Inanna:

Gilgamesh! No!

Gilgamesh:

What? (looks at Inanna, looks back) Arrrrr! **STRIKE**

Adult Inanna: :

At the moment Gilgamesh's axe split the snake in two,

the Anzu Bird roared and flew off into the mountains,

and Lilith screeched and returned to the wastelands.

Upon my request, Gilgamesh cut down the Huluppu Tree to carve into my bed and throne.

Inanna walks to microphone

Picks up guitar

Keys up drone

and sings – key of G:

G Em
I watched that |tree fall

C D
Wond'ring whether to |laugh or to cry

(D) Em C D
Waving childhood good|bye

G Em
For Gilgamesh I made two gifts

G D
From her roots a |harp to hold dear
(D) G
From her branches a |spear

Appendix B

C G C G
This tree my life, This tree my life

Am D
This tree my life still |lives in me

C D
And she whis|pers

G Em
Lovingly he carved my |throne

C D
And a bed for |loving and mirth

(D) G
For ruling heaven and |earth

C G C G
This tree my life, This tree my life

Am D
This tree of life still |lives in me

C D
And she whis|pers

Am D
When I'm sleep|ing

C D
When I'm lov|ing

Am D
When I'm resting

C D
She whispers

Am Cdim
She still whispers

on last strum add drone,

turn, put down guitar

become Ereshkigal

BREATHE

Ereshkigal: (Lightly)

Was that my plan?

To send Inanna into the strong male arms of her brother?

To have her slay my serpent and hack my tree into furniture?

SHIFT OF MOOD:

I'm not telling you all my secrets.

Sing and resumes ritual:

In the first days, in the very first days,

In the first nights, in the very first nights,

In the first years, in the very first years,

Everything needed was brought into being

Appendix C

Working Script for
An Invitation to the Wedding of Inanna and Dumuzi.

PRAGUE VERSION

What I tell you let the singer weave into song,

What I tell you let it flow from ear to mouth,

What I tell you let it pass from old to young:

I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.

I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.

Look at how breasts have now become firm,

See how my nakedness has sprouted hair,

Let's celebrate my nakedness, dance and rejoice,

I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.

I am Inanna and I'm ready for love.

So who will taste my sweet waters?

Who will plough my field?

Who will bring his ox to my gate?

Oh, who will plough my field?

Spoken:

In ancient Sumerian there was one single word for both field and vulva.

Sung:

Oh, who will plough my field?

These words relate to an ancient religious ceremony. Can you imagine going to a modern Christian Church and hearing the Minister say....?:

"Hallelujah, praise the Lord. I am an ox. Who will let me plough their field slash vulva? Hallelujah."

BREATHE

Thousands of years ago in the parched lands between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers – what we now know as Iraq – was a country called Sumer. In Sumer the goddess Inanna, Queen of heaven and earth, was ritually married to the man of her heart, Dumuzi the Shepherd. Sumerians believed this sexual union brought fertility to the land. According to some scholars, this ritual grew from an earlier ceremony that celebrated the first blossoming of a woman's sexuality. We know about Inanna largely from

I came to Inanna looking for a heroine, for stories to inform a woman's journey into the world, having seen hero myths provide that for some men. Influenced by feminists I knew who believed Inanna to be a messenger from a pre-patriarchal world, I hoped Inanna would provide me with a better model for empowered femaleness.

My practice led Ph.D. investigates how the stories and poems of Inanna continue to speak to contemporary women, including myself. Through creative practice – developing songs and performance - I explore my own responses to the stories, and present some findings. Contextual reading, and post-performance discussion forums add to my information. I weave these strands together autoethnographically in academic writing and creative performance.

Today I focus on some of the love poetry about Inanna's Sacred Wedding, weaving personal stories with the stories within and around these poems.

All the music is written by me. Some of the lyrics are direct quotes from one or more of the poems, some lyrics are my words inspired by the poetry.

The re-enactment of the sacred marriage was a joyous occasion. There was music. There was singing. There was a chorus.

Appendix C

Pause.

(DAWNING AWARENESS) So I need a chorus.

(EXCITED) That's your job. It's simple. When I sing

"I am Inanna and I'm ready for love"

You sing:

"You are Inanna and you're ready for love".

Let's try it:

I am Inanna and I'm ready for love

You are Inanna and you're ready for love

So who will taste my sweet waters?

Spoken:

You sing:

"Dumuzi will"

So who will taste my sweet waters? **Dumuzi will**

Who will plough my field? **O Dumuzi will**

Who will bring his ox to my gate?

Who will plough my field? **O Dumuzi yeah, yeah, yeah Dumuzi will**

(remember that for later)

Spoken:

When was the last time you heard a teenage girl express sexual longing with such bold and unashamed sweetness?

I want some of that. (Keep energy)

Appendix C

"See how my breasts have now become firm"

I wish I'd felt like that when I grew breasts. Instead of celebrating like Inanna, I stood in a bra shop change room and cried. I was 13 and the first girl in my class to get a bra. I was embarrassed and ashamed of those horrible lumps of flesh that got in the way of doing things.

My mother also hated her breasts when she was young. It seems to run in the family. I remember, as a child, watching her squash them inside a too small bra to make them look smaller. Now, she blames her youthful wish that they'd go away for the cancer that is causing them to disintegrate.

Listen to this:

"My vulva 😊 clothed in beauty is like the crescent moon 😊"

I love that image. It's not how I felt when I first saw a vulva.

When I was little girl I would sometimes stay with my grandmother. I would sleep in a low daybed in the corner of a dining room which had big windows around three sides looking out onto my grandmother's glorious garden. In the morning while I was still in bed my grandmother would come and open the curtains. No matter how often I would tell her to leave it and that I would do it, she always came. One morning, still in her nightgown, my grandmother put one foot on the bed near my head and stepped across to put a foot on the other side so she could reach the curtains. She wasn't wearing underpants. I don't remember how old I was, maybe eight, maybe seven, or ten, but I do remember I was horrified. Disgusted. Repulsed. Why would such a young child be so disgusted by female genitals? Why wasn't I curious, intrigued, interested? I have no idea. But sadly my grandmother did not tell me I was wrong, that a vulva is a beautiful thing. She felt the same way I did. "Yesthey are revolting, aren't they?" she laughed.

I come from a long line of women who hate their bodies.

Appendix C

My first readings of Inanna's love poetry were like fresh water to someone dying of thirst. Not only were they positively self-loving, they expressed vulnerable and tender love for another. Was it possible to find my own capacity for tenderness through singing the beautiful lines in Inanna's love poetry?

Sweet is the sleep

Em *Am Ebm C* *Am*
b-d- e-g-e e g bflat - b a g ag
Sweet, Sweet, is the sleep

Am *C*
d e g b
Of hand to hand

Am Em *Ebm* *C*
b-a- b-d-b b d bflat a g ag
Sweet, Sweet-er still Is the sleep

Em *C7*
d e a f
Of heart to heart

C *Em* *C*
b d b b d b/
It's so sweet, It's so sweet

Am *Em*
g a b a g b
And the sweet-ness lives on

Em *Em*
b a b d b
E-ven though you're gone.

Appendix C

SPOKEN:

The stories describe the young Inanna preparing for the wedding, the arrival of Dumuzi bringing gifts, the ritual itself, and the celebrations afterwards.

PERFORM RITUAL

SPOKEN: When he comes, please let him bring abundantly.

Let him bring.

Let him bring, oh let him bring

Please let him bring abundantly (once)

Let him bring lambs and let him bring goats

Please let him bring abundantly

Let him bring fowl, and butter, and sweet wine and cheese,

Please let him bring abundantly – cut off

INANNA BREAKS OFF MID LINE:

SHE WHISPERS INTO MIC:

Welcome Dumuzi

My mother who bore me, gave birth to me for you

Come to me, and I will rejoice in you

You are to place my right hand on your genitals,

While your left hand rests on my head,

Bring your mouth close to my mouth,

And take my lips in yours,

Thus you shall make an oath for me.

This is the oath of women,

My brother of the beautiful eyes.

My bridegroom, let us embrace on the luxuriant couch now,

Let us lie together.

Appendix C

**Left hand to Dumuzi's back,
undress facing him,
turn, conversational:**

*With head held high, the king goes to the holy embrace,
Dumuzi goes to the Holy embrace of Inanna.*

RECORDER SOLO

*As Inanna arises from the king's holy embrace
The flax rises up with her
The barley rises up with her
Within her the desert is filled with a glorious garden*

HONEY MAN (2.5 mins)

Honey Man

He has sprouted, he has burgeoned
Bringing garden to my desert
The favourite of this goddess
My first class fruitful apple tree

Honey Man, He's my Honey Man
With honeyed hands and honeyed feet
Honey man, oh my honey man
With honeyed thighs to make me sweet

I have sprouted and I flourish
My garden he has nourished
He tended me and fed me
We ate some sweet fruit from his tree

SPOKEN:

And that was officially Inanna's first sexual experience. Some of the poetry is even more explicit. Inanna tells us that Dumuzi "played that sweet game with his tongue, time after time." Her "brother of the beautiful eyes did so at least 50 times" and she rejoiced.

Appendix C

I was at a storytelling evening recently where party hats were handed out. The instruction was to wear one if your first sexual experience was fantastic. In a room of about 200 people, only one person was wearing a hat.

It wasn't me.

No surprises there, given my earlier stories. Maybe that's why I am so delighted by some of the images in Inanna's love poetry.

"His limbs are honey sweet: they sweeten me ever"

But first impressions can conceal. As I looked at more of the poetry, some of it made my feminist soul downright squirmish.

This is spoken by Inanna's brother Utu:

Sister mine, may the shepherd marry you!

Maiden Inanna, why are you unwilling?

Was Inanna, who in this same poem expressed a preference for the farmer, being pushed to marry against her will?

This is spoken by Dumuzi:

I have not carried you off to be my slave girl,

Your table will be a splendid table,

At a splendid, table you will eat,

Was Inanna reliant on the Dumuzi's generosity for a good life? Inanna, who once ruled over all the Sumerian pantheon? *

And there's that awful line I've already spoken:

"My mother who gave birth to me, gave birth to me for you."

Appendix C

Did Inanna, like many women in more recent history, see her whole existence as being given meaning by a man? *

This next song comes from a courtship poem which feels uncomfortably contemporary.

Usumgalana

Um chu-ka chi chi

2 layers of sung usumgalanas Db C C Bb F, F Eb Eb D C (descending)

(USUMGALANA = DUMUZI)

As I the lady was passing the time yesterday

As I Inanna was passing the time in play,

I was dancing I was singing all day.

Clapping?

Usumgalana, Usumgalana, Usumgalana met me

Usumgalana, Usumgalana, Usumgalana embraced me

He took me in his arms, he put his arms around my neck and embraced me.

He said:

As for us, let us stay together tonight

As for us, let us make love by the moonlight

Stop pedal

“Set me free” I said, “Set me free, set me free that I may go home,

For what would I tell my mother?

What could I tell my mother for a lie if I stayed?”

just start loop again?

More bluesy

As I the lady was passing the time yesterday

As I the lady was passing the time in play

Appendix C

I was dancing AND I WAS SINGING ALL DAY (big money note –hold)

Usumgalana, Usumgalana, Usumgalana met me

Usumgalana, Usumgalana, Usumgalana embraced me

He took me in his arms, he put his arms around my neck and embraced me.

HE SAID:

LOOP OFF

“Let me teach you, let me teach you, let me teach you the lies of women,

This you could tell your mother

This is what you could tell your mother for a lie and stay with me

Bring back loop

Say:

“My girlfriend was dancing with me in the square

She danced around me playfully, banging on her drum

She sang her sweet songs for me

As for us let us stay together tonight

As for us, let us make love by the moonlight

Let me loosen you hair on the holy luxuriant couch let out hair?

Come on and tell your mother, tell your mother a lie

ONLY ONE LOOP

As I the lady was passing the time yesterday

Usumgalana, Usumgalana met me

As I Inanna was passing the time in play

Usumgalana, Usumgalana embraced me

As for us let us stay together tonight

Dumuzi

As for us let us make love by the moonlight

Dumuzi

Come on and tell your mother, tell your mother a lie

Come on and tell your mother, tell your mother a lie

REMOVE LOOP

I turned to him, I turned to him and I said.....

At that point, the rest of the tablet is obscured.

There are many ways of interpreting this poem. But clearly it describes a society where young women were caught between pressure from men to have sex, and pressure from their parents not to. It is not a society which celebrated young women's sexual autonomy.

We don't know if Inanna was not interested in Dumuzi and was just using her mother as an excuse, or if her mother's attitude to sex all that held her back. And we don't know if Inanna submitted to the taboo on pre-marital sex as most scholars think, or if it went more like this:

(holding mime phone) Um, Geshtinanna? Yeah, it's Inanna here. Look, if mum asks, I stayed at your place last night. Yeah, yeah – Dumuzi. I'll tell you about it at the temple.

☺Actually, there's a lot we don't know. What we do know is constructed and reconstructed from scraps of sometimes incomplete texts and other archaeological information. There are as many versions of Inanna as people who have studied her. Even in antiquity, each city probably had its own unique version of Inanna. And each of these Inannas changed over time.

One thing that we do know is that the sacred marriage ritual had become a ritual of kingship. In the lands around Sumer it was believed that by ritually marrying Inanna, the King would be successful in war, & bring abundance and prosperity to the land & its people. Some scholars believe this ritual legitimated the king's rule.

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So, this poetry that seems to celebrate the female body and its sexuality, actually described a ritual that helped legitimate the rule of a patriarchal king..

In this ritual, the King was the earthly embodiment of Dumuzi.

Was there an earthly stand-in for Inanna? And if so, was this day the greatest honour of her life? Was it a day where she was lovingly initiated into the joys of sex, or did she initiate the king perhaps? Or was she raped? Why is there no written record that glorifies her, as the kings are glorified?

The next song asks this question as if from Inanna's perspective. The words are mine, though I borrow images from the original poetry.

WHO IS THE GIRL? (*On small guitar as if in Em (really Bm)*)

Em Am Em
Who is the girl who stands in for me?

Em Am B7
Is she as pretty as I am?

Am Em Am
Is her hair like the mane of the ibex, my red deer?

Em B7
Is she fit for the king who stands in for my love?

Em Am Em
Is she a young temple maiden?

Em Am B7
Scared to lie down with a much older man?

Am Em Am
Or is she excited to be opened to pleasure?

Em B7
Is she happy to serve me and her people this way?

C G
Oh I remember Dumuzi, the first time

C G B7
He shaped my loins with his own fair hands

Em Am Em Am
How he watered my womb, how it ended too soon

Em B7
How he smoothed my vulva with milk and cream

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Em Am Em
I am the queen full of loveliness

Em Am B7
And I am also the goddess who returned from hell

Am Em Am
And I wish the same courage and joy for this woman

Em B7
Is the king fit for her who stands in for me?

C G
Oh I remember Dumuzi, the first time..... Etc.....

C G
Yes, I remember Dumuzi, the first time

C G B7
How I lay down beside him amongst the fig trees

Em Am Em Am
Amongst his dates I recall, how his cedar stood tall

Em B7
I de-creed him a sweet fate and made him a king.

Em
I made him the king.

Some scholars believe that the sex rites were purely symbolic. Most, however, favour the idea that that sex did take place, but cannot identify who the female was. Since writing the song, I have read of newer evidence that a high priestess, considered the earthly embodiment of Inanna, lived in the temple and probably stood in for Inanna during the sex rites.

GUITAR DOWN

When I began researching Inanna, I naively imagined her stories could provide a model for ideal female development. Now I see them as less of a model than a mirror. Inanna struggles with power and gender in a changing society. Sometimes she transcends patriarchy; sometimes she is caught and blinded.

What of my story? Some people have assumed that because I attempt to embody Inanna, I must have overcome my body image and sexuality issues. (REACT) Again

Appendix C

the picture is more complex. Like Inanna, there are many versions of me: some have transcended, some have not.

Despite this complexity, I've never stopped being inspired by the beauty of the poetry. I am convinced that someone, somewhere in antiquity did understand and value female sexuality, and did understand the beauty of a couple joining as equals. How else could they have imagined those images?

I wish I had known their words at the age of 13, crying in the women's change room.

Sing with me:

What I've told you the singer wove into song

What I've told you has flown from ear to mouth

What I've told you has passed from old to young

Inanna the goddess is still ready for love,

Inanna the goddess is still ready for love ----- CHORUS

Break down of stories used within each Act.

ACT 1

The Inanna/Dumuzi Love Poetry

Inanna and the Huluppu Tree

ACT 2

Inanna and Sukaletuda

Inanna's Descent to the Underworld

GATE 1: Inanna and An (The palace of heaven/ Earth is Mine)

GATE 2: Inanna and Ebih (Drenched in Blood)

GATE 3: The love poetry:

Inanna's quarrel with Dumuzi was invented, but drew on scraps of love poetry and contextual reading. The songs used, *Honey Man* and an excerpt from *Sweet is the Sleep* are both derived from single poems. *Honey Man* combines conflicting interpretations: one verse using one, and the other using another.

GATE 4: Inanna and Enki

GATE 5: Inanna and Gudam:

Much of this story, told through the song *Gudam*, was also invented, due to large chunks of missing text. It was shaped to meet the requirements of the overarching story: I was looking for a story that told of Inanna's first taste of war. In my version Gudam attacks Uruk and Inanna quite likes the wealth it brings her when she defeats him, and so she takes the offensive in the future.

GATE 6: There was no specific story for the final two gates: just some dialogue based on *Inanna's Descent*, and some contextual reading.

ACT 3:

The Ascent

There are several possible stories that could be said to be the story upon which *Inanna's Ascent* is based which dramatise what happens to Dumuzi, and Inanna's responses in various ways. Wolkstein (1983) seems to combine several of these. I chose to mainly stick to what was suggested in the part last of *Inanna's Descent* in the ETCSL translations.

Inanna and the Huluppu Tree

The chanting section of *Ereshkigal's Song of Grief* which begins "In the first days" was borrowed from a different song written for her in the original performance of *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* and based on text from the Wolkstein and Kramer (1983) translation of this.

The Love Poetry

N.B. Translations of all these stories can be found at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/> . This website is difficult to navigate. Click on "corpus content by category" and then either "Unicode" or "Ascii" next to a category under the heading "Narrative and mythological compositions." At this point you are given a choice of "transliteration" or "translation". Choose "translation".

THEY DRAG ME HERE

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They drag me here to marry the king
They beg for my blessings to rain down on him
They ask that our union bring abundance to the land
They ask that my power bring fighting victories to this man, they say

“Make him our shepherd, our bringer of mirth
Our farmer, our fisherman, our god here on earth”
They’ve harnessed my power to elevate this man
Why must they put so much power into one man’s hands?

Cos he’s a mean mean man
And he’s a greedy man
Oh he’s a mean man
He’ll take what you give him and won’t give back

But I’ll do what they ask of me, I really have no choice
They’ve taken me and twisted me and silenced my voice
They summonsed me to the ritual, and I must heed their call
They pretend that I’m his ruler, but really I’m his tool

And he’s a mean mean man
And he’s a greedy man
Oh he’s a mean man
He’ll take what you give him and won’t give back

I’ll make this man the king, help him conquer the lands
For a short time in history he’ll hold my powers in his hands
He’ll make them fight and kill, till the rivers run red
Then a few years later, you’ll ask me to do this once again.

With another mean mean man
With another Greedy man
With another mean man
Who’ll take what you give him and won’t give back

Oh he’s a mean....

Appendix F

List of The *Me*,

Taken from *Inanna and Enki* (ETCSL)

the office of en priest, the office of lagar priest, divinity, the great and good crown, the royal throne

noble sceptre, the staff and crook, the noble dress, shepherdship, kingship

the office of egir-zid priestess, the office of nin-diĝir priestess, the office of išib priest, the office of lu-maĝ priest, the office of gudug priest

constancy,,, going down to the underworld, coming up from the underworld, the kur-ĝara priest

the sword and club, the cultic functionary saĝ-ursaĝ, the black garment, the colourful garment, the hair-style, the hair-style

the standard, the quiver, sexual intercourse, kissing, prostitution, running

forthright speech, deceitful speech, grandiloquent speech,, the cultic prostitute, the holy tavern

the holy niĝin-ĝar shrine,, the mistress of heaven, loud musical instruments, the art of song, venerable old age

Heroism power, wickedness, righteousness, the plundering of cities, making lamentations, rejoicing.

deceit, the rebel lands, kindness, being on the move, being sedentary.

the craft of the carpenter, the craft of the coppersmith, the craft of the scribe, the craft of the smith, the craft of the leather-worker, the craft of the fuller, the craft of the builder, the craft of the reed-worker

wisdom, attentiveness, holy purification rites, the shepherd's hut, piling up glowing charcoals, the sheepfold, respect, awe, reverent silence.

the bitter-toothed (?), the kindling of fire, the extinguishing of fire, hard work,, the assembled family, descendants.

strife, triumph, counselling, comforting, judging, decision-making.

Appendix F

The following me do not appear in the ETCSL translation until the last time the me are listed, after Inanna has completed her quest and is presenting them to the people of Uruk. Presumably this was the same in the Kramer translations that Wolkstein (1983) uses as she says "Then suddenly more me appear than Enki had given. These me center on feminine attributes..... (following her quest) Inanna emerged a fuller woman" (p. 150). In the ETCSL translation, however, there is an indication that some parts of the tablet were damaged and unable to be translated at the very place where Enki most likely would have given these me to Inanna had he done so, suggesting that it is only to contemporary audiences that these me suddenly appear. None-the-less, this probably vagary has influenced the way in which this story "spoke to" Wolkstein.

the establishing of plans, the attractiveness of women,

..... to handle the perfect divine powers,

small, exalted,

the holy tigi, holy lilis, ub, meze and ala drums,

the of holy An, the of holy An, the of holy An, the of holy An, the of holy An, the of holy An, all of the, beer."

Contextualising document:

Provided to examiners who attended *Restoring Inanna* December, 2011.¹⁶⁸

Restoring Inanna.

a one woman show of story, anecdote and original songs as a part address to the research question:

How do the five thousand year old stories and poems of the Ancient Sumerian goddess Inanna continue to speak to contemporary women?

Raelene Bruinsma,

PhD Candidate, School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts, Department of Humanities, Curtin University.

Supervisors: Helen Merrick, John Freeman.¹⁶⁹

N.B. This document is provided to contextualise the above performance within the research project for the examiner's benefit, and does not form part of the official thesis. The performance itself is a research outcome, to be later complemented by a thirty to forty thousand word exegesis. These two elements in combination will provide the thesis.

Five thousand years ago in Ancient Sumer (present day Iraq) Inanna is “Queen of Heaven and Earth,” and goddess of love. She is married to the man of her heart, Dumuzi. Life flourishes sweetly. But something goes wrong, sending Inanna to look for answers in the place of despair from which no one has ever returned. Along the way, she relives the stories that brought her to this point in her life.

Inanna's stories were captured in cuneiform writing on clay tablets in the Sumerian language five thousand years ago. The process of excavating and reassembling the tablets, deciphering the Sumerian language, and translating the stories began as recently as a century and a half ago.

¹⁶⁸ This appendix retains the text but not the formatting of the document, which originally fitted one double sided page.

¹⁶⁹ Helen Merrick and John Freeman were my supervisors at the time of the performance; at the time of submission the supervisors are Helen Merrick and Leah Mercer.

As the stories emerged, it became clear that Inanna was not just a minor deity, or a consort, but a major - and at one stage the most powerful - deity in the Sumerian pantheon. In addition to being goddess of love, she was goddess of war, and ritual marriage to Inanna by the king of the day was believed to ensure the success of war and prosperity of the people.

Many of Inanna's stories contain images and narratives that appear to be precursors of Greek and Roman mythology, and to hold the seeds of the Abrahamic religions. Given Inanna's importance and strength, this can be seen to challenge the notion that patriarchal structures and attitudes have always been the norm for humanity. As an archetype, Inanna is also seen by some contemporary groups as supporting a range of challenges to traditionally defined sexualities and gender roles. She has inspired feminist psychological theories, a range of art works, and is a key figure for many who explore feminist approaches to religion and/or spirituality. Anecdotally, women have described to me huge life changes they made in response to learning of Inanna and her story of *Descent to the Underworld*.

Additionally, the Sumerian culture is believed by many to have been the first to invent writing and agriculture. The arts flourished. Yet, despite the arguable significance of Sumer and Inanna's stories to the development of Western culture and history, Inanna remains widely unknown outside specialist interest groups, such as those mentioned above.

My exploration of Inanna's relevance to contemporary audiences began by examining the translation of four of Inanna's stories, as published by Samuel Noah Kramer and Diane Wolkstein, in *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth* (1983). At the time I believed these four interconnected stories which described a lifespan, to be the most recent and complete translations available. I intended to re-interpret and re-contextualise them in relation to my research question: *How do the five thousand year old stories and poems of the Ancient Sumerian goddess Inanna continue to speak to contemporary women?*

As my research deepened, I discovered that Wolkstein's four-part chronological myth was her own construction, and that there were alternative and more recent

translations for some of the stories. One of the stories, “The Courtship,” was really a collation of several separate love poems.

There were also many additional stories, sometimes confusingly incomplete, and some of which have contradictory translations. Some translations were hidden away inside academic papers where they were only mentioned in passing.

My performance, *Restoring Inanna*, largely preserves Wolkstein’s concept of chronology for the original four stories, but within a more complex “meta-story” construction of my own. It includes several additional stories and examines a broader range of issues. These issues relate to the concerns of my research question. At times I challenge some of the most popular feminist interpretations of Inanna, but I maintain that the stories remain significant.

In addition to examination of texts, I visited specialist museums in the USA. In Philadelphia at the Penn University Museum, I spoke with archeologists, tablet translation specialists, and other experts on that period of history. I have investigated different interpretations of the archeological data and context, considered the different ways in which Inanna and her stories have been understood both historically and contemporarily, and contemplated how Inanna’s stories have been used as tools of repression and liberation in different contexts. I have compared texts in a range of disciplines: feminism, religion, psychology, psychotherapy; Sumerology, Assyriology. I have looked at some of the ways Inanna has been represented in children’s and adult’s texts, music, and art works, in particular visiting Judy Chicago’s *Invitation to a Dinner* installation in New York. This large installation includes a comprehensive examination of Chicago’s take on the historical oppression of women, the efforts to overcome this, and a dinner table set for many different goddesses, including Inanna, and her Akkadian counterpart, Ishtar.

Restoring Inanna is the culmination of an iterative process of preparing several stories for performance. Three resulting “trial” performances were given to small invited audiences who then participated in a discussion forum. The first of these was highly a dramatised one woman musical; the second occupied a territory somewhere between a singer songwriter gig, a lecture, and verbal platform storytelling; and the

third was a more informal weaving together of telling tales and group discussion. Discussions were recorded as audio with proper attention to ethics. Rather than seeking feedback on the performance itself – although this was gratefully received - I encouraged exchanges about the ways in which the stories spoke to the participants.

The creative process of devising the performances has contributed to my understanding of how the stories speak to me, while the content of discussion forums helped me position my responses in a wider cultural context. I have also kept a research journal which has not only helped me document processes, but also assisted me in further exploring my perceptions of the stories and their related themes.

Some of the material in this final performance – musical, mimed and spoken - is taken directly from earlier performances, though most is highly edited; some is inspired by improvisational work done during earlier creative development, and some is new. All of it draws heavily on other aspects of my research.

Restoring Inanna Program

RESTORING INANNA:

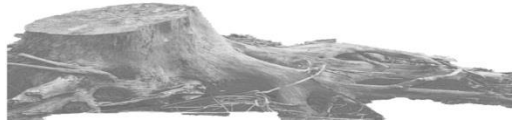
an evening of theatrical storytelling and original music
with Raelene Bruinsma.



5000 years ago in Ancient Sumer, Inanna is "Queen of Heaven and Earth," and Goddess of Love. Life flourishes sweetly and abundantly.

So why does she venture to the place from which no one returns?

Music and script writer: **Raelene Bruinsma**
Direction and script assistance: **Robin Davidson**
Music assistance: **Neil Steward**
Lighting designer and technician: **Emily Telfer**



RESTORING INANNA:

an evening of theatrical storytelling, personal anecdote & original music
with Raelene Bruinsma.

Directed by **Robin Davidson**

The stories and poems of the powerful goddess Inanna were written on clay tablets 5000 years ago in Ancient Sumer (present day Iraq). They are most likely much older. At the time they were written, women were becoming increasingly oppressed in Sumerian culture and many different Inannas emerge in the stories. Some appear strong and empowered, some are seemingly ruled by, or collaborating with, patriarchy; still others fight against it.

In fact Inanna, as a character or archetype, has been interpreted very diversely both by contemporary commentators, and in antiquity. There is perhaps no single unified idea that is "Inanna." Tonight's performance pulls together a number of stories, poems and concepts of Inanna under a loosely constructed overarching narrative. It also explores my own relationship to the stories as a feminist, researcher, and struggling human being.

The title: *Restoring Inanna*, could be taken to refer to a number of processes and concepts of restoration: restoring the stories and poems to contemporary awareness; the possible restoration of an "empowered feminine archetype" to individual or collective psychologies via this restored awareness; and/or Inanna's own need for psychological restoration that emerges in my retelling of her stories.

The music has all been written by me, with collaborative assistance on several of the arrangements by **Neil Steward**. The songs are varied, as I explored different musical styles for expressing various emotive and narrative elements. Lyrics are sometimes my own, and sometimes quote directly from translations of poetry. These quotes can be a single line, or occasionally an entire song.

I hope you enjoy tonight's show: the fruit of three years of research and creative work.

Raelene Bruinsma



Appendix H

Act One: Goddess of Love

Here we meet Inanna and the love of her life, at their wedding, and are introduced to some of the history of their courtship.

- SONGS:**
- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Ready for Love | 4. Music to make love by |
| 2. Sweet is the Sleep (excerpt) | 5. Tell you a Story |
| 3. Let Him Bring | 6. I am Inanna/ The Creature Song |

10 Minute Intermission

Act Two: The Descent

When we meet Inanna again, many years have passed, and all is not well in the world. Inanna searches for answers in the place from which no one returns. On the way she relives some landmark life events.

- SONGS:**
- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. What have they done? | 4. Sweet is the sleep (backing music) |
| 2. Earth is Mine | 5. Honey Man |
| 3. Drenched in Blood: A hymn to Inanna | 6. Gudam |
| | 7. Underworld Soundscape |

20 Minute Intermission

Act Three: Who will take Inanna's place?

Following the events of Act Two, a replacement must be found for Inanna. A demonic entourage emerges from the Underworld, as a search to find who is worthy, and who is not, again takes place. The choice may be a surprise.

- SONGS:**
- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Ereshkigal's Song of Grief | 3. I am Inanna |
| 2. What is this? | 4. Sweet is the Sleep/ Since you've been gone |
| | 5. Who is the Girl? |



Robin Davidson is a writer, actor and director based in Canberra, working with communities and professionals. He is a founding member of Canberra Playback Theatre, director of the Mental Health Foundation ACT's Imperfectly Sane Productions, and is occasionally seen dressed as an unusually large bogong moth. His role in supporting the creation of tonight's performance goes far beyond that of "director" and could perhaps be best described as "general creative collaborator and support person." Robin has been involved in helping me achieve my theatrical vision for the performance since the project's inception.



Playing guitar and bass for the last 25 years has been one of **Neil Steward's** deep and abiding joys. Neil is also a songwriter and one half of the duo "Sanguine". He moved to Perth two years ago to be with his partner (both musical and life) and step daughter. They share an old rambling house with three cats, 12 guitars and a piano. In addition to playing on many songs, Neil has played a key role in developing some of the song arrangements you will hear tonight.



Emily Telfer's passion for lighting began in high school at IONA Presentation College. From there she continued to study Lighting at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), graduating in 2012. Emily has participated in numerous theatrical performances in and out of WAAPA and the Mandurah Performing Arts Centre.

A big thank you to the crew above, without whom I would be a locked up furry mess!

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ALL OF YOU FOR COMING TONIGHT. THANK YOU!

This performance fulfils part of the requirements for Raelene's practice-led PhD in creative arts in the Humanities Department at Curtin University, Bentley, WA.