



The healing power of women's myths - How Inanna's path of development helped me to reorientate myself in midlife

A personal report by Helga Weule¹

Pain, loss of health, public image, livelihood and fear of public speaking, as well as fear of death and magic, are most and increasingly repressed in our culture, and the associated feelings of anxiety, anger, pain and grief are made taboo. They are dammed up, cemented in, locked behind walls of diseases, pills and diagnoses and rules and formulas - just like Giny the "genie" - and channelled and standardised through the media. All this is done by the "blue-bearded" zeitgeist, called consensus reality. I was also able to unmask it through my love and appreciation of fairy tales and myths. They depict heroic journeys and give structure to processes of transformation, dazzling form and space for all the emotional qualities with which we connect. One example is the fairy tale of "King Bluebeard" described in "Women Who Run with the Wolves".² Another is the Inanna myth, which has accompanied me since 1993.³

In 1998, about thirty women of different professions between 25 and 60 from Austria, Germany and Switzerland founded a "spiritual women's cooperative" in which women once or twice a year design creative community rituals that support their own path. One of these rituals is particularly impressive because we had placed a mythological female figure - the Sumerian goddess Inanna - at the centre. We developed a creative community ritual around this myth. Paul Rebillot's work with myths encouraged us further.⁴

Literally, the name Inanna means "the Queen of Heaven", queen and goddess of the city of Uruk in Sumer. Her city embodies a flourishing culture and Inanna symbolises this flourishing. Her development shows the cycle of rise and success, but also descent and defeat as well as the return with experiences.

Both Inanna and the Gilgamesh myth come from the time of profound cultural change, when patriarchy becomes dominant and the political-economic dynamics of steady growth, monocultural expansion and periodic destruction set in, deepening and spreading to the present day.⁵

The ancient symbols of the seven attributes that Inanna has to give up when descending into the

1 According to: WEULE, Helga (2013/2015), In verschiedenen Welten wandern (*Wandering in different worlds*) p.137 ff. Wilhering, Austria: Bayer Verlag. In this book, the authoress' path of experience appears much more vividly.

2 PINKOLA ESTÉS, Clarissa (1992), *Women who run with the wolves*, New York: Ballantine books

3 WOLKSTEIN, Diane and KRAMER, Samuel Noah (1983), *Inanna. Queen of Heaven and Earth*. Her stories and hymns of Sumer. Harper & Row, New York

4 REBILLOT, Paul (1981) *Dancing with the gods* under Publikationen / Artikel anderer on <https://www.i-cons.info>

5 QUINN, Daniel (1992): *Ishmael*, New York: Bantam Books

underworld - symbols of the zodiac cycle - open a physical and spiritual access to how plants in energetic exchange with the biosphere strive towards the sun in six seasonal steps (evolution, literally: unwrapping; extraversion) and withdraw back into the earth in six further steps (involution, literally: wrapping; introversion).⁶

The structure of this myth and the creative women's community rituals have helped me greatly to sort out and understand more deeply my personal experiences from midlife onwards. I briefly tell the story here, and add to it my own experiences that I have had in community ritual.

Rise and success

In the Sumerian myth, Inanna rescues the Huluppu tree from the river, plants it in her garden and - leaning against the trunk - admires her beautiful vagina, her femininity and her garden or gifts.

After a long search, I go into the wilderness, find the Chihuahuacu tree in the Peruvian jungle, a mighty jungle giant, dive into rituals and feel I have come home. I recognise myself as my mother's daughter on the other side of the world, walk through the vagina opening of the tree and admire my beauty, all my gifts and my courage to go into the wilderness as a woman.

The tree is occupied by three beings from the wilderness - the serpent, Lilith and the bird Anzu. Inanna cries; her brother Gilgamesh drives these beings away and makes the tree into a throne, bed and sceptre.

After this experience I can weep for the loss of my wilderness so far, half my soul remains in the jungle, the other half returns to the ruling culture.

Inanna visits God Enki, God of Wisdom, who himself was also in the underworld, and drinks beer with him - and since she can take more (beer is old "goddess drink") than he can (he gets drunk), she lets him give her all his divine gifts (the Més) and, with the help of her magical friend, also brings them safely to her kingdom.

I visit science, research and the male economic world, collect what I can use for my work, think with the men with pleasure "around the bet" and build with this work supported by other female thinkers on spiritual and material bridges between different worlds.

Inanna seeks a mate and marries him, praises his manhood and strength, is praised in her beauty and sensuality and they indulge in fifty days of sensuality in bed, have children and reign together in their kingdom.

I find lovers, men and, after a long search, an equal companion, hold a wedding, enjoy eroticism and sexuality. We give each other the promise of love and walk the further path together. Our "common child" is the work towards the purpose of life.

⁶ WEULE, Helga and WEULE, Manfred (2020): Seminar handout *Symbolic constellations & ritual prescriptions*

Inanna, at the peak of her solar power, listens into the "below" and hears the call of her dark sister wailing from the darkness.

I retreat at the peak of my professional success, listening into the void, hearing the call, "When are you going to start working?" That was the question the snake in the jungle tree asked me and it won't let me go. What is my path? I must dare the descent into the dark yet unknown and "forbidden" spaces of my soul.

Inanna consciously and wisely prepares her descent, adorns herself with her royal attributes and secures help for her return from her magical friend.

The statement of the oracle of Malidoma Somé helps me to set out. Then I go on, downhill, downhill ...

Descent into the underworld and death

From here on, other laws apply, there are gates, guards who regulate the passage and demand a release for it. I too must obey these laws.

At the first gate, the guards demand Inanna's steppe crown, the "Shugurra".

I leave behind my successful company, my functions and institutional securities.

At the second gate, she surrenders her precious lapis necklace.

I lose my hometown and family by moving to the countryside and my small fortune through an investment - I surrender my entire fishing net.

At the third gate Inanna gives up the double strand of pearls .

I end my physical fertility and pass through the change.

The guardians of the fourth gate demand Inanna's breast ornament "Come man come" .

I notice how I lose my youthful erotic radiance, my powerful sexuality - a new one is not in sight.

At the fifth gate Inanna gives the golden ring to the guards.

I lose the recognition of my very own gifts in many areas of my activities, what unsettles me, but nevertheless I go on.

At the sixth gate, Inanna leaves her royal measuring stick behind.

My previous construction of reality disintegrates and I "no longer understand the world".

Inanna can pass the seventh and last gate only "bent and naked", she leaves her royal robe behind and lands at the lowest point.

I lose my "healthy body", my last safe shell, I am in despair and for the first time consciously face death.

Inanna is killed with a glance by her underworld sister Ereshkigal and hung on a hook as a rotting piece of meat.

I realise that I am killing myself by deciding "I don't want any more", terminate friendship with my living, moving body and put the spike in my flesh.

I was late in understanding what the seventh and final gate is, through which Inanna had to pass naked and crawling: it is our solid body, which our spirit takes as a "royal robe" or prison. And I also only slowly understood what the deadly contemptuous look of her dark suffering sister Ereshkigal, Queen of the Underworld, means: it is the magical self-enchancement that materialises: in the body, the cells, the synapses as symptoms, as illness, as death; it is the powerful also destructive Giny energy, the magical, liberated but not yet tamed spirit from the bottle that "King Bluebeard" has locked up for a long time.

The time when I had arrived in the underworld and hung on the hook as a dead piece of meat was not pleasant. However, it was the time when trust in life-affirming spiritual forces in one's own body and in the power of community could develop.

New beginning and return

Inanna's magical friend becomes active, goes to the gods and asks for their help. Some say "if she had not descended" and refuse. Only God Enki helps with "dirt beings with consciousness" so small that the guards of the underworld do not notice them. He gives them the action order of "empathic listening" to Ereshkigal's lamentations and bread and water of life for Inanna's dead body.

Malidoma's oracle tells me about my half soul that I left in the jungle, at the Chihuahuacu, and strongly recommends that I go there again and retrieve it. Later, my sister, who knows magic, and my friends also look into the oracle for me and uncover my pathogenic self-enchancement and give me small, important impulses for change in order to solve it.

Inanna's dark sister has been given empathic listening in the darkness by the two "dirt beings", Ereshkigal gives them Inanna's dead flesh in return, which comes alive again with the water and bread of life.

My dark side - my deep-seated fear of death and my traumas - get compassionate attention, it is water and bread for my new aliveness and feelings. With each gate back, I look closely at what I get.

Inanna gets her robe - I make friends again with my sixty-something year old witty, scarred body, listen to its slowness and feel proud of the scars, wounds, experiences and discover a new, different body awareness.

The measuring stick of Inanna at the next gate - are my new "reality constructions" for my actions - a central one is "I am in a witty body, connected to my dream body and all living things".

Inanna's golden ring brings me new recognition and work with my central gifts again - as a practical philosopher, artful counsellor and oracle reader who not only wanders in different worlds but can also accompany others meaningfully in doing so.

Inanna gets her chest jewellery and I enjoy a new kind of eroticism and love in relationships with men, women, trees, animals, places, weirdness and much more.

Her double strand of pearls, her fertility is my new self-confidence as a mentor for younger people, who can give development impulses and travel recommendations to people.

The lapis necklace and the crown "Shugurra" tell me that I am slowly putting down roots, my biological and spiritual family is developing well and I am consolidating my survival unit. I can also recognise and enjoy "my kingdom", in which I am queen, for myself, it is the right size for me and my work.

Inanna seemed to walk back quickly, she is accompanied by two messengers from the underworld who have been tasked to take someone (whom Inanna designates) to the underworld in her place. I walk slowly and deliberately to secure the knowledge from the underworld for myself and others. And who did Inanna send to the underworld? Her high-spirited husband Dumuzi! He runs away, hiding here and there and finally with his sister, who protects him. With her and him, the arrangement is also negotiated with the underworld messengers that they each spend half a year alternately in the underworld.

A happy outcome: the dark magical realm of the underworld can now be visited not just by gods, goddesses, messengers of the gods and other gurus, but simply by women and men. It is frequented, compassionate listening brings some things back to light and King Bluebeard (our personified zeitgeist), standardiser and murderous dismemberer of our magical powers, has lost his power over us.

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