

Lucienne Marguerat, May 22, 2008

## **Sacred Feminine Energies III Inanna's Many Sisters. The Myth of Inanna's Death and Rebirth, Feminine Empowerment**

### **Inanna and Me**

The story of Inanna's descent stayed with me ever since I discovered it thanks to the tip of an analyst of mine in the early 1990s. Looking back I think that what hit me to the core in the myth was the meaning accorded to the full mystery and potency of the archetypal feminine. This was completely new to me.

I belong to these fathers' daughters Silvia Perera talks about in her profound essay (*Inanna's Descent*) who had a poor relation to their mothers and turned to the males and the masculine values for fulfillment, only to notice later in life how badly wounded their relation to the feminine is. Especially these women, she believes, who are more or less identified with their animus and well trained in devaluing the matter and the feminine, need models of a full-bodied, a coherent image of a feminine Self. Symbols like I and E, or Isis or Kali, will inspire and guide them, she says, and with them many other women and men, to engage in their own initiation journey to the dark forces of the archaic feminine with the hope of gaining a deeper, resonant awareness (Perera, 11-14).

My journey to the depths lasted about 3 years, and this opened up totally new dimensions in my life. It was the beginning of a new individuation phase that is not finished yet. And I hope to be able to keep Inanna's gate open to the underworld to my last day.

### **Sumeria**

Inanna in Eridu, southern Sumeria (Sumeria ~today's Irak), called Ishtar in Babylonia, Northern Sumeria, is clearly the descendant of the Great Mother Goddess of the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras. Her cult lasted 3 millennia. She was one of the 3 great goddesses of the Bronze Age (3'500 to 1'250 BC), together with Isis in Egypt and Cybele in Anatolia.

At the time where the hymns and poems were written, about 1'750 BC, the figure of the goddess is slowly evolving. The Primordial Goddess in Crete and Old Europe had been since the Neolithic androgynous, sometimes represented with males of a much smaller size. She was seen as Life-and-Death in one, according to the eternal cycle of decay death and renewal.

At Inanna's time the male gods are gaining in power, they are growing from passive consorts into active, sometimes violent partners. The society in Sumer is matrifocal, but together with the weakening of the goddess the status of women also changes.

A highly knowledgeable priesthood invents writing, the mathematical notation, astronomy, water engineering is mastered, the cities are expanding. The towering temples are the very first examples of monumental architecture in the history of civilization. The whole of Mesopotamia lives in relative peace at that time.

### **Inanna**

*Who is Inanna ?*

Numerous hymns and poems to the goddess were discovered written on clay tablets. 2350 BC. They tell of Inanna's glory as the Queen of Heaven and Earth, the Goddess of Love, the Lady of the Morning and the Evening.

She is sung as Venus, the Lady of the Morning and the Lady of the Evening, is also called the first daughter of the moon. She controls corn and the storehouses as well as the plants. One song describes how she pours out grain and plants from her womb before her lover Dumuzi. She is also the queen of the land and its fertility. She is the wet of the dew as well as the roaring storm and the devastating floods. The clouds are said to be her breasts. As evening and morning star, she watches over the changes of the night into the day and of the day into the night. As evening star she holds court at the time of the new moon to hear the gods' petitions and to be celebrated with music, feasting and staged, bloody battles. She is judge and "decrees fate" and "tramples the disobedient". She controls the ordering principles, potencies, talents and rites of the civilized world.

She is also goddess of sexual love. She sings ecstatic songs of self-adornment and desire and of the delights of love-making. She calls to her beloved Dumuzi, her "honey-man" who "sweetens her ever", invites him to her "holy lap" to savor her life-giving caresses and the sweetness of sex with her.

Inanna is finally also goddess of war. Battle is "the dance of Inanna". Giving victory, she is "the quiver ready at hand, the heart of the battle and the arm of the warriors". She is passionate and wild, of the same vene as Artemis in later Greece. In one hymn she is described as "all-devouring in power attacking like the attacking storm", having an awesome face and angry heart.

She is healer, life-giver, creative in all realms. All emotions, the whole range of them, are hers. As says this song of praise:

To pester, insult, deride, desecrate – and to venerate – is your domain, Inanna.  
Downheartedness, calamity, heartache – and joy and good cheer – is your domain,  
Inanna.

Tremble, afright, terror – and dazzling and glory – is your domain, Inanna...

(Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* in: Sylvia Brinton Perera, *Descent to the Goddess*, 18)

Inanna, great goddess like Isis and Cybele (Egypt and Anatolia) : has a lot of the archaic, paradoxical, many-sided primordial goddess. Later got more and more broken up between the different Greek goddesses and went almost completely lost in the christian era. Even if scholars were able to trace many a feature of the Virgin Mary (or of saints) back to the ancient Great Mother.

## The Descent

The poem known as "The Descent of Inanna" is according to the scholars the greatest and the most influential of Bronze Age myths apart from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

By the time of her descent to the underworld, Inanna has accomplished everything she wanted. She has managed to get from Enki the God of Wisdom the "holy me" which are the hundred Laws of Civilization, defining the religious and social rules in Uruk. She has married the mortal shepherd Dumuzi and has born 2 sons. She has enthroned her husband as king at her side and he seems to enjoy governing by now.

Inanna is Queen of Heaven and Earth. While her ancestor the Great Goddess used to reign over the Great Above and the Great Below, including the Underworld, Inanna doesn't know it. The world of the dead is the territory of her older sister Ereshkigal. The 1<sup>st</sup> line says: "From the Great Above she opened her ear to the Great Below."

*(story, Perera, 9-10)*

## **The Return**

Today I will dwell on Inanna's return.  
We'll ask:

*What has changed ?  
How can we understand these changes symbolically ?  
What has been gained by these changes ?*

Before we come to ask:

*What can women learn from this about feminine strength ?*

*What has changed ?*

The events after Inanna's re-birth:

After 3 days she is finally brought back to life by Enki's compassionate little envoys. Although She will be allowed to leave the underworld – from where no one usually ever returns – but will have to send someone else in replacement. The death-bringing demons at her heels will give no rest until she points to Dumuzi, the person once dearest to her heart. The sentence to death on Dumuzi throws him into a panic. He flees to different places, escapes several times. But the demons are after him. His bravado is gone, he is in utter misery:

His heart was filled with tears.  
The shepherd's heart was filled with tears.  
Dumuzi's heart was filled with tears.  
Dumuzi stumbled across the steppe weeping:  
(...) If she does not find the five breads,  
If she does not find the ten breads,  
If she does not know the day I am dead,  
You, O steppe, tell her, tell my mother.  
On the steppe, my mother will shed tears for me.  
On the steppe, my little sister will mourn for me."

Again and again the demons find him. He seeks as a last refuge his sister's sheepfold. But Dumuzi has told her of a dream he has had that foretold his death. When she sees him, she knows what awaits him and is desperate:

"When Geshtinanna found Dumuzi in the sheepfold, she wept.  
She brought her mouth close to heaven.  
She brought her mouth close to earth.  
Her grief covered the horizon like a garment.  
She tore at her eyes.  
She tore at her mouth.  
She tore at her thighs."

Now the demons have got him. They beat him, smash his attributes and kill him.  
3 women lament in moving verses the loss of their son, husband and brother.

Inanna wails over the death of her husband:

“Gone is my husband, my sweet husband.  
Gone is my love, my sweet love.  
My beloved has been taken from the city.  
O, you flies of the steppe,  
My beloved bridegroom has been taken from me  
Before I could wrap him with a proper shroud.  
(...) The wild bull lives no more.  
The shepherd, the wild bull lives no more.  
Dumuzi, the wild bull, lives no more.”

Geshtinanna mourns her brother:

“O my brother! Who is your sister?  
I am your sister.  
O Dumuzi! Who is your mother?  
I am your mother.  
The day that dawns for you will also dawn for me.  
The day that you will see I will also see.  
I would find my brother! I would comfort him!  
I would share his fate!”

To hear the sister's grief touches Inanna's deeply. Now she wants to help find Dumuzi back.  
At the final reunion of the 2 women with him, Inanna takes her curse back. She gives it over  
to the earthly couple, the brother and the sister to stay in the underworld every 6 months. She  
“places D in the hands of the eternal”.

At the close of Inanna's willful adventure, life on earth is profoundly changed.

It had to be according to the laws of the underworld. Didn't Ereshkigal's judges decret:

“No one ascends from the underworld unmarked.  
(If Inanna wishes to return,  
She must provide someone in her place.)”

By Inanna's final proclamation, Dumuzi and Geshtinanna are now entrusted with the task of  
keeping open the passageway from Inanna's wet, radiant world to the dry, dark world of  
Ereshkigal. This gate into and out of the underworld was later called Ishtar's door (now  
installed in a museum in Berlin as K. Casanova mentioned).

For half the year D will actively rule over Sumer. He will join Inanna on the sacred marriage  
bed, nature will blossom, milk will flow, the wheat will ripen. But as the harvest passes D will  
surrender his worldly powers and will die to the world. The earth will be bare and dry and  
Inanna will experience her sister's loneliness and deprivation.

## **The Moon Cycles and Renewal**

*How can we understand these changes symbolically ?*

The scholars Anne Baring and Jules Cashford have gathered and analyzed an impressive  
amount of material about the myth of the Goddess. Their knowledge of the religion and the  
way of life in Sumer in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium until 1'000 BC (Notice the 2 millennia,  
as long the whole Christian era!) will help us understand the symbols in the myth.

The moral order of the culture of the goddess was based on the relationship of the visible to

the invisible. What was seen was the manifestation of the invisible deity. The Great Mother Goddess was regarded as the (invisible) whole containing all opposites, she was both, life AND death, she was eternal AND for ever changing, she was matter AND spirit. Imagine we would have one word for these opposites, for all of them. This she would be. She was what IS. This is why, being this and that, she gives us the impression of a paradoxical, confusing being. Everything on earth was an emanation of the Goddess, men and women took part in her.

A central aspect of the cult of the goddess were the moon phases, bringing dew and moisture, nourishing and fertilizing the land. The *invisible* whole contained the *visible* phases. What people saw came from and returned to the unseen whole. So when the new moon rose after 3 days it came from her womb, reborn *from* the darkness. Cycles of light and darkness, of fertility and bareness, of new life and decay were the divine order. The Goddess was the endless, eternal cycle of life and death.

The Sumerians were honouring her when they held their rites of collective mourning and rejoicing at the changes of the seasons twice a year (all over Near East and Mediterranean). After the harvest of the corn and other crops (in mid-July), came a month of collective mourning dedicated to the sacrificed lover of the goddess. We know that at least up to this time there were actual ritual sacrifices of the king as the vegetation god. He was killed together with the high priestess who personified the goddess. Later on an animal would take his place.

6 months later, when the apple trees, the date palms, vine and corn showed signs of renewed life, came the rites of greeting of the newly risen god. A sacred marriage was celebrated (enacted by the high priestess and the high priest) in the spring at the return of the god from the underworld. The re-union of the goddess with the young god personifying the life of the earth brought fertility back to the land.

*We understand that: Inanna's progress thus follows the order of the moon phases: the descent - the waning moon, her death - the 3 days of the black moon and her return - the rising of the new moon.*

*If Inanna is here the goddess of the eternal, unchanging, invisible moon, then Dumuzi represents the successions of decay and renewal on earth and it is in the order of things that he would disappear and re-appear cyclically.*

Another, poignant aspect comes forth when we take into account how Sumerian religion changed around 2'500 BC. At that time *the old lunar concept of death and rebirth prevailed no longer*. The death aspect of the goddess was now broken off, death was regarded as an absolute end and the opposite of life. The ancient Mother Goddess was receding into the background and the father gods began to move to the center of the stage. Considering this we understand that Ereshkigal, whom Inanna calls her *older* sister, may well stand for the rejected, forgotten death aspect of the Great Goddess.

*Although Inanna is not the primordial virgin Goddess any more, self-sufficient and procreating by herself, the myth can be seen as an homage to the ancient goddess of wholeness. It says that a tribute has to be paid to death and suffering if life is to be renewed. And that the dark archetypal feminine has its place in the cyclical order of regeneration.*

## **Symbolic Meaning of the Lysis**

*What has been gained by these changes ?*

*We have seen that the myth expresses a concept of the cyclical life process. The result of Inanna's ordeal is the continuation of life on earth.*

*Does it make sense to compare real women to an archetypal image ?  
Can we learn something from the myth about feminine strength ?*

But then:

*What has been the gain for the archetypal feminine ?*

Silvia Perera in her profound essay about Inanna has pointed to the different transformations of Inanna. On her return to earth, Inanna is an initiate and knows of her dark power. That she would point to her husband to be killed in her place feels gruesome and unrelated, just like the work of fate. This is precisely what she is at that moment, as the goddess of life and death. But then once Dumuzi is dead, Inanna shows feelings. She weeps on her loss. Now that she has to endure the consequence of her own curse, she feels the deep sadness of separation.

Another change, even more important in my eyes, happens through Dumuzi's sister. Geshtinanna is mortal, like her brother, and her bond to Dumuzi has a deeper quality than Inanna's. Geshtinanna understands his hopeless situation long before he does, but she helps him and remains adamant in her attachment and loyalty to him, even under torture. She shows human wisdom and is genuinely caring, something that Inanna lacks, for all her archetypal intensity (notes Perera, 88). But when Inanna's hears Geshtinanna's selfless offer to take her brother's place in the underworld, she is deeply moved. From now on she is not driven any more but makes use of her power to change the course of things. She takes her sentence back and lets brother and sister alternate, each spending 6 months in the underworld and 6 months on earth. So we see that the sister's love-force was necessary, had to complete the power of the goddess.

*We see that the primordial energies of the androgynous goddess creator are no more as formidable as they used to be - they are divided between the 2 goddesses. That the masculine energies made king (and later god) have a significant part to play in the divine order.*

*And most important for us: That the feminine energies themselves are humanized by relatedness and empathy (both E and I). And that both, the archetypal and the personal feminine, have to combine to keep the vibrant oscillation of life going.*

One thing has to be understood: the process experienced by Inanna and her mortal consort Dumuzi can not be transposed to a *human couple*. Inanna, like Ereshkigal, embodies a part of the archetypal, eternal feminine. Dumuzi on the other hand together with Geshtinanna represent the material, ever changing world. The meaning of the myth, from a Jungian point of view, applies essentially to the cooperation *within the psyche* between the archetypal and the personal feminine, whether man or a woman. Today I will dwell on women.

## **Descent to The Dark Feminine**

*What can women learn from this about feminine strength ?*

Quite a number of women but also men scholars use the metaphor of the descent into the depths when they talk about the necessity to re-connect to the innerpsychic sources of vitality and through them to nature and the cosmos. Along with Jung they believe that only individual transformations can induce a change in collective thinking and feeling. Considering the pace at which our environment is being destroyed, a change of minds is indeed urgent.

*What do women gain from experiencing their "night sides" ?*

Today images of the dark feminine dwell indeed in the depths of the collective shadow. Only remainders of the Great Lady can be made out on the surface, under harmless guises. But she is dimly perceptible in art, fairy tales, legends, songs. Snakes f.i. are associated with women in paintings (as K.Casanova has shown on Monday), they also appear in the dreams of many women. And we have all loved to shudder at the stories of Baba Yaga or of the evil

witch.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés (*Women Who Run With the Wolves*) evokes an archaic image of this dark feminine in the figure of La Loba, the Wolf Woman. She has heard about this figure from old Spanish land-grant farmers and Pueblo people of the Southwest. This is how she describes her: "In mythos and by whatever name, La Loba knows the personal past and the ancient past for she has survived generation after generation, and is old beyond time. She is an archivist of feminine intention. She preserves female tradition. Her whiskers sense the future; she has the far-seeing milky eye of the old crone; she lives backward and forward in time simultaneously, correcting for one side by dancing with the other. La Loba, the old one, the One Who Knows, is within us. She thrives in the deepest soul-psyche of women, the ancient and vital Wild Woman. (...) She is not from the layer of the mother, the maiden, the medial woman, and she is not the inner child. She is not the queen, the amazon, the lover, the seer. She is just what she is." (32,33) ". "(Hers is) a place where the biological and psychological worlds share headwaters, where biology and psychology might mingle with and influence one another. Throughout human memory this place – call it Nod, call it the home of the Mist Beings, the crack between the worlds – is the place where visitations, miracles, imaginations, inspirations, and healings of all natures occur." (34)

*(Ancient Inanna)*

Looking at this archaic goddess :

*How do we feel ?*

We may feel confuse, disgusted, embarassed, afraid. But then there is also a stirring as if a deep longing would be awakened, we also feel fascinated. Most of us are ambivalent. At any rate the image of the goddess has a diffuse, forceful impact on us.

To penetrate these depths means to be confronted with repressed parts of ourselves (the mother complex basically), and finally to dark, archaic, instinctual forces.

The Jungian analysts Polly Young-Eisendrath and Florence Widemann report of intensive feelings of depression and rage by women trying to restore their self-esteem.

They warn against the desire to "look into the darkness of (their) arrangement with men (in our society)". They liken this desire with Psyche's lifting the candle to see Amor. "The inward look into the character of female identity (they say) must be supported with a fundamental understanding and confidence in one's own worth. If there is no such foundation, a woman may remain captured by the resentment, bitterness and loss that she encounters in her darkness." (119)

Silvia Perera reflects about the persona identification of many of us, how we struggle to adjust to the female role and: "mutilate, depotentiate, silence, and enrage ourselves trying to compress our souls into it, just as surely as our grandmothers deformed their fully breathing bodies with corsets for the sake of an ideal." (12) She says: "We are filled with self-loathing and a deep sense of personal ugliness and failure when we can neither meet nor mitigate the superego's standards of perfection." Young-Eisendrath & Wiedemann make the same, sad observation. They have experienced that "most women define themselves in terms of inadequacies and deficiencies."

We know of the tremendous amount of energy contained within an archetype. We have seen what Ereshkigal was capable of. Our depths, inhabited by our archetypally charged complexes, have to be approached with great respect and honesty if they are to deliver their potential for renewal. Just as Enlil's little envoys did with Ereshkigal, and as Geshtinanna did with Dumuzi, we need to have an open heart and to show compassion for the suffering and the bitterness contained in the wounded, rejected feminine (for like Ereshkigal "we want to be seen as we are", as Penelope was saying yesterday) . And like them, we'll have to keep our minds set on the purpose of our search if we don't want to get seduced and engulfed by the emotional intensity that comes up. Again Silvia Perera: "(These depths) are embodied, ecstatic, and transformative, (They) are preverbal, often pre-image, capable of taking us over

and shaking us to the core.(..) On those levels the conscious ego is overwhelmed by passion and numinous images.” (14)

In this realm the qualities of both will be needed: Inanna’s audacity and purposefulness and Geshtinanna’s empathy and endurance. Without these, the journey might end up in a disaster: either in total confusion (if the Ego boundaries are not strong enough and break in, in the case of a positive mother complex when the hold of the identification with the mother is still too strong) or (if the internalized oppressor or negative animus still retains too much power and blocks the longing for a true self, as in the case of a too crippling negative mother complex) with even strengthened inner tensions and increased suffering.

Like Inanna at the 7 gates, we are confronted first with our defenses, our persona, our shadow and our complexes. Gradually in the course of the process we come closer to the domain of the Great Mother. Every step has to be sensed, digested, brooded over, perhaps painted. The way down is not straight, it spirals down, with ups and downs, and you never know where it goes next. A personal sense of the transcendent feminine develops slowly. The journey takes usually several years but can also be short and intensive in the case of terminal illness (as we saw in the beautiful video about David Blum shown by Penelope on Tuesday). Different figures of the feminine may come forth and be visited again and again in imagination, each one of them with their distinct looks, ways, sex, clothes, housings, etc.

There are of course other approaches than psychotherapy. Most artists, painters, sculptors know how to “open their ear to the Great Below” (think of Niki de St Phalle, or Picasso!). The same for writers and poets (like Ursula K. Le Guin or Adrienne Rich). Even philosophers, such as Lucie Irigaray and Andrea Günter, can be inspired by the goddess.

*If everything goes right, by the end of the journey, a passageway between the above and the below will be kept open. By lending our ear to our depths and accepting sacrifices, changes and losses as a part of life, says the myth, our lives will gain in richness and creativity.*

## **The Three Obstacles**

Once we get started, we are sure to bump into 3 main obstacles on the way: men’s anima projections on us, our animus and our negative mother complex.

### **The Anima**

#### *Getting rid of the anima introjections*

Our problem at the onset is that we have trouble defining who we are. Many men but also women analysts have said it: Most women don’t have a definite ego identity. Carol Christ says: The spiritual quest of a modern woman begins in the experience of nothingness, the experience of being without an adequate image of (herself) (Carol Christ in: Wehr). Perera quotes an analysand with more than a decade of Jungian analysis. This woman told her “I have spent years trying to relativize something I never had – a real ego.” Perera agrees: “Indeed she has only an animus-ego, not one of her own, with which to relate to the unconscious and the outer world. (...) She has almost no sense of her own personal core identity, her feminine value and standpoint.” (12) The reason for that: What has been valued in the West in women has too often been defined only in relation to the masculine.

Our problem is that what men say about women has more to do with their anima projections than with us. They project on us the incredible power, the “magic authority” of the great goddess. In reality however, we have little power in patriarchal society. The fantastic abilities that are attributed to us are flattering but they do not correspond with reality. And this makes us feel confuse and inferior. We feel personally incapable and inadequate as long as we do not make the difference between men’s fantasies about the archetypal feminine and

us plain women. At this point we will have to sacrifice the illusion of being his princess (as a client of mine puts it) or a goddess or a wise witch, and be content to be humble pedestrians. This will enable us to sense what we really feel and who we really are.

But then when we start to speak up, comes the 2<sup>nd</sup> problem with the anima projections. We have seen how dependent men are on their anima's power and how this dependency frightens them. Since our culture has evacuated and devalued what has to do with physicalness, human frailty, emotionality, dependency and vulnerability, all things associated with women when we want to say our minds *outside of the home* we may trigger deep fears in men.

We will have to watch for our mechanisms of compliance and stop ourselves from absorbing men's fears. We will have further to resist the pressure of hostility and remain in our own psychic space before deciding whether or not to enter a confrontation.

Then there is a 3<sup>rd</sup> problem, this time *from within*, that makes the situation more difficult. Added to men's, and much more of a challenge, come *our fears*. When we enter the public realm, we enter masculine territory. In these moment of insecurity the learned values and rules of behavior will rush back and the inner ruler, our animus, will take over. He will try and undermine the remainder of our poise and say f.i.: "Come on, give it up, what are you doing that for ? Do you want to ridicule yourself ? You will never be more than half as good as *them* etc.". For this task they will need the help of the animus in a positive sense this time.

## The Animus

### *Channeling animus' energy*

The animus contains all qualities that society considers masculine, and not compatible with our sex. These masculine capacities and qualities, which we possess in different degrees, will be repressed in the unconscious and constitute the animus. Qualities such as assertiveness, authority, personal agency won't be expected of women, men won't expect them of us and we won't either.

So, women who want to assert themselves in the outer world will have to learn the masculine ways. They will have to overcome their inhibitions, these inner voices telling them that they are not capable or will be ridiculous or will antagonize other women etc. Look at the women politicians, they have learnt ! Once they have learnt, there is the possibility to decide what to take and what to leave and to find their own style, neither feminine nor masculine but theirs. Look how Hillary Clinton has relaxed during the campaign. She was constricted and stiff like a political robot at the beginning, until she loosened up more and more. Now she is herself, you can feel her warmth, spontaneity, humour and braveness.

Our biggest problem with the animus is the inner critics. This inner voice is basically depreciative. It tells us that we are not attractive enough, not nice enough, not smart enough, etc. Doris Lessing calls it in her novel *The Four Gated City* the "self-hater". Demaris Wehr calls it the "internalized oppression" and finds it a "crippling factor" in women's psyche. Emma Jung describes in *Animus und Anima* how unfair and unreliable the animus is. It sucks every bit of self-confidence out of us, and then sometimes praises us in a grossly exaggerated way.

Which woman has never experienced his crippling effects ? The negative animus will make us depressed and will undermine our self-esteem. It will make us far too dependent on others for approval and far too fearful of overstepping the place patriarchy has prescribed for us.

As with all complexes the only way to gain some control over the animus is to get to know him and make use of his energy.

The 1<sup>st</sup> task will be to become aware of his voice, to notice his effects on our relationships, in our work; and then to watch for the tone of his voice: to welcome his helpful comments but then stop him from denigrating us.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> task will be to take the responsibility for our so-called masculine qualities and take back our projections onto men, male authority figures and male-dominated institutions. Penelope said on Wedn. that feminine thinking was diffuse, whereas masculine thinking was focussed. This focussed thinking is something women have learned to consider improper. This is therefore something they will have to make use of willfully and they will have to take the responsibility for it against men's eventual disapproval or mistrust. They will have to learn to channel their aggression into assertiveness to achieve what they want. But they will also have to learn to control their emotions if they want to have stimulating relationships to men.

## **The Mother Complex and the Goddess**

### *Embracing the mother*

Polly Young-Eisendrath and F. Wiedemann in their book on *Female Authority* believe that women with a "heroic animus" need to "embrace the mother", i.e. to free themselves from the domination of the negative mother complex.

Silvia Perera notices that women with a strong animus often had a poor relation to their mothers. She quotes a female analysand who told her early in analysis: "I insist on caring coming from a man. A female source enrages me. A male is in charge of the universe. Females are second best. I hate tunnels and Kali and my mother and this female body. A man is what I want." This is pure self-hatred and hatred for the Self as well. Since our mothers were those through which the Self constellated first in our lives, hating our mothers comes to hating or cutting ourselves off from our Self as well.

The signs for a negative mother complex is an overly critical, judgemental attitude towards other women. The negative mother inside will give a quick look and *a/ways* find something wrong. She will bring distrust, resentment, envy and jealousy. A wrong word, a harmless vexation will suffice to make her close up to the relationship.

A reconciliation with the mother inside cannot be brought about by will. But the tension in the complex will be reduced when there have been appeasing encounters with images of the goddess. The encounters with the images of the great goddess can convey love. There we can "feel seen" and can take in her sense of self worth and her vital forces. When a true surrender, an opening up to the image of the archaic feminine (dying to the False Self ) can happen, our relationship to the inner mother will ease up and her voice will mellow. And as we become friends with ourselves, we will notice a growing understanding and acceptance of others, especially of other women.

Our relationships to our real mothers will become more affectionate. We will be better able to see them more as persons, and to recognize their qualities, accept their weaknesses and understand the limitations of their lives.

With other women we will also be less driven, more warmhearted and relaxed.

Inner and outer life will not get easier but richer. The encounters with the transcendent feminine will bring warmth into the inner psychic space. This will ease things up in the inner realm. Even though we will more receptive to our emotions, and the inner tensions may grow, the air within won't be as tight and the inner space will expand. The ego will get less easily sucked into our complexes and will be freer to pull back and contain our emotional

upheavals. This enriched inner life will fuel creativity and spontaneity into our our outer life.

Thank to the goddess for this.

(These are the last lines of *Inanna's Descent*.)

Holy Ereshkigal! Great is your renown!

Holy Ereshkigal! I sing your praises!

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