

[DRAFT ONLY]

**THE ROMANCE OF *GILGAMESH*:
A JUNGIAN COMMENTARY**

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THE ROMANCE OF *GILGAMESH*: A JUNGIAN COMMENTARY [DRAFT ONLY]

Love and Romance in *Gilgamesh*

The story of Gilgamesh has been known of in modern times just within the last century or so, and a full and accurate translation has only been gradually built up with improved scholarship in the ancient languages, along with the recovery of an increasing proportion of the ancient middle eastern libraries, written on clay tablets and long buried in hillocks and mounds of barren dirt. Only in recent years has a fairly complete reconstruction of the full story been possible.

But from the beginning Gilgamesh could be recognized as one of the great epic heroes in literature, as well as one of the first. Indeed, as pieces of the story were placed together it was soon apparent that many shorter tales actually made up one **XXX155XXX** cycle of action, a heroic quest like the medieval romances (e.g., the Grail legends), full of tragedy, pathos, irony, and redemption. Just as Parcival, for example, fought the Red Knight and others, then went on to his great search for the wondrous Grail cup, so too Gilgamesh fought Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven, then went in search of the magic Plant of Immortality. As Joseph Campbell says in his book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, the story of Gilgamesh is one of the great “tale[s] of the elixir quest” (1949, p. 185).

Indeed, so clearly does the story of Gilgamesh resemble a romance of the Middle Ages that early translators automatically assumed that Gilgamesh, like the heroes of the medieval lays, also had a great “romantic interest,” **XXXXXXXXXX155XXXXXXXXXX**, some woman around whom romantic love swirled, even though no such figure was clearly apparent in the clay tables so far understood. But on looking closer they found her--Mua or Ragnua they called her, thereby bringing the figure of Gilgamesh more in line with the heroic ideal of their own times. In the translation *Ishtar and Izdubar* (1884), by Leonidas Le Cenci Hamilton, for example, Gilgamesh and Mua not only have a major love relationship, but in the end Gilgamesh must choose between staying with her in paradise or returning empty-handed to the ordinary world. It was not until further fragments were recovered later on that the alluring Mua was actually shown to be entirely a misinterpretation and that, honestly considered, there was no such romantic woman-interest anywhere in the story (Gardner & Maier, p.41).

However, the instincts of the early writers on Gilgamesh were not entirely off the mark, for practically everywhere the text is indeed saturated with themes of romantic love, and all the major actions in the story do revolve about a “love interest.” The similarity of Gilgamesh to other great romantic heroes is actually quite strong in this regard, and certainly even a rudimentary understanding of his story is impossible without seeing it as a romance in the full sense.

This simple fact can pose a dilemma for the modern reader attempting to understand the ancient story, however, in that it requires facing a modern taboo against the type of love interest Gilgamesh shows in the story. Especially to the translators of the Victorian era, this love—homosexual in nature—was “not to be spoken of among Christians” at all, so it was completely passed over and a corrective “normal” love interest was substituted.

However, as the storyline of *Gilgamesh* makes quite clear, one of the first great romances in literature was between a king and a man from the countryside: As the story opens, Gilgamesh is the king but immature, his nature unfulfilled. In response the gods create his “other half,” Enkidu, out in the wilderness, “the-man-as-he-was-in-the-beginning,” and when the two first meet they fall deeply in love, indeed, on the spot their feelings commit them to total union, both physical and eternal. Their bond is special: It is a “friendship,” “companionship,” “brotherhood,” specifically and repeatedly compared to that of “husband and wife,” and confirmed in a formal, sacred ritual ceremony by the high priestess of the city, Ninsun, in which she legally adopts Enkidu as her second son. He is initiated into the ranks of the love priestesses of the goddess

Ishtar, an elevation of his role as the “wife” of Gilgamesh to the plane of the sacral, the only level of intercourse commensurate to the stature and dignity of the king. Their union is celebrated and honored by the entire city, and from then on they are together constantly, and they “embrace” often. Gilgamesh places Enkidu in the “bed of honor” and “on the peaceful seat at his left hand,” where “the world’s kings” will kiss his feet as well as those of the sovereign.

Just after they meet, Enkidu inspires Gilgamesh to seek out the demon Humbaba, and together they do so, helping each other and aided by the Sun God, Shamash, whose will they enact to rid the land of evils. They are inspired by love to succeed, as Gilgamesh tells Enkidu when he falters at the forest gate, “Touch my heart [and] you will not fear death.” And again when they face the monstrous Bull of Heaven, it is their love-inspired teamwork that then, when this triumph proves too much even for the patronage of the gods, they punish the two companions by striking at the core of their power and success, their relationship, and so they cause Enkidu to die. At this loss, Gilgamesh is shattered and crazed with grief; he refuses to let go of the body until a worm drops out of its nose. Then he roams the hills in agonizing pain, and it is this pain in his “belly,” that is, in his heart, from the loss of Enkidu, the loved one, which drives him to retrace the path of the sun, and cross the Waters of Death to Utnapishtim and the Plant of Immortality.

Clearly, then, the story of Gilgamesh is centrally a romance of homosexual love, in which the passion and longing between two men drives the action of the story and leads to the transformation and redemption of the hero. Further, this tale is without any of the homophobic bigotry or homosexual apologia so prominently associated with this topic in modern discourse. Homosexual love is treated by the Mesopotamian poet as if he were “color-blind” to the orientation involved, matter of factly and as having its own intrinsic worth.

Although more recent translations of *Gilgamesh* have been relatively forthright in their portrayals of the story’s central romance, the true importance of love has still been hardly appreciated. On the other hand, recognizing the connection between love and heroism in *Gilgamesh* leads to a fuller understanding of the story’s meaning, which is essentially spiritual in nature.

C.G. Jung in his book, *Symbols of Transformation*, has talked about the close relationship of romantic sexual love and spiritual love:

It is, if you like, shameful and degrading that the more exalted longings of humanity, which alone make us what we are, should be so directly connected with an all-too-human passion....What? A helmsman with bronzed skin and black mustachios, and the loftiest ideas of religion? Impossible! (CW 5, par. 125)

Yet, as Jung shows so carefully in his book, even the most seemingly innocent musings of a traveling young woman, the Miss Miller fantasies, actually take one to the “strong and violent passions” (CW 5, par. 119) of “the erotic sphere” (par. 126), where great spiritual themes are played out. Sexual eros produces the most intense arousal of the *libido*, the “force of desire and aspiration” that powers the psyche, the mind (CW 5, par. 98). Through transformation of the libido, realization of God through the human personality can occur.

This is the sort of story we are dealing with in *Gilgamesh*, libido is transformed, in this case through a homosexual love saga. In Miss Miller’s story it was a chance encounter with a handsome Italian officer on a cruise ship that inspired her musings. In the case of Gilgamesh and his adventures, it was the man from the countryside, Enkidu. Through the tremendous and all-consuming love between Enkidu and the king, ordained and brought to fruition by the gods themselves, Gilgamesh is led through the great initiations of his life, each of which bestows on him a greater maturity and wisdom, culminating in his becoming like the God of Wisdom, Lord Enki, himself.

All this Gilgamesh is led to accomplish because it is his fate, written on the tablets of Father Enlil, Lord of the Air. Gilgamesh is to make his city Uruk to shine among the Sumerians in richness and power, through the actions of love working in concert with the other gods. "Love," say Jung, "proves to be the power of fate par excellence, whether it manifests as base *concupiscentia* or as the most spiritual affection" (CW 5, par. 98). In the case of Gilgamesh, it carries him on the impossible journey, "to where Shamash rises," to the other side of death, and to Utnapishtim, the immortal sage from before the Flood, who lives in the paradisaal land at the center of the Watery Abyss. Gilgamesh is born part divine, but at the start his personality is crude and immature, wholly "too human." This imbalance is corrected and the other side brought forward through love and its tribulations.

The Man Who Saw the Abyss

In modern life there are many kinds of "love," from love of chocolate chip cookies, to love between mother and child, to romantic love, to love of country. Of all these loves, one in particular casts a peculiarly personal fascination--romantic love. This is the basis for modern marriage--the modern love relationship--that uncanny feeling of bright oneness, of joyful completion in another person. It is a very powerful experience to "fall in love," and equally intense to fall "out" of it; indeed, to lose a lover can induce one of the most shattering emotions a person can experience, while to gain one is ecstatic.

In a recent review in the gay press of a novel, Paul Reed's *Longing*, the review noted that the novel had personal meaning for me because it spoke true to my own experience. While I did not have the exact experiences that the main character in the novel has, I did experience the same longing. I believe that every gay man starts out in a similar way, *pulled along by a mystical ideal of true love* that is tested and tried in the midst of modern gay life. (p. 56, italics added)

And the reviewer concluded by adding,

This novel is pertinent to our times and speaks to a part of us that many have abandoned. It calls you back to your own beginnings and makes you ask where you gave up adolescent ideals of true love with a man.
(p. 58)

The centrality and power in the gay male psyche and imagination of being "pulled along by a mystical ideal of true love" with another man, is a theme found repeatedly expressed. For example, Harry Hay, founder of the first major American gay organization, the Mattachine Society (in 1950), recalled a "long-ago fantasy" from his childhood in which he "started to think about--and fantasize about--*him*," a "fantasy love," to "whom I would reach out in love:"

In my dream (which I would go on having for years), he'd be standing just before dawn on a golden velvet hillside...he'd hold out his hand for me to catch hold of, and then we would run to the top of the hill to see the sunrise, and we would never have to come back again because we would now have each other. We would share everything, and we'd always understand each other completely and forever! (Thompson, 285-86)

Similar sentiments can be seen in a sociological study of gay identity by Leon Nungesser (ref) where he comments that "the sincere and noble benevolence we [gays] hold for our beloved is our most precious treasure, and one for such we struggle ardently" (p. viii). Indeed, in a study of homosexual themes in Western literature, Byrne Fone says, "Perhaps the primary theme of homosexual literature," the "central metaphor which governs the homosexual imagination," is

“the search for the other self, the mirror image, the ideal friend, the manly comrade, the understanding soul. Here is the source which would inspire generations of gay writers to search for the understanding heart” (p. 9).

This central metaphor in the homosexual imagination **XXX162XXX** this mystical ideal of true love, can be traced back into historical mists. It can be seen expressed a hundred years ago in the poetry of Walt Whitman:

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble
 I will make the most splendid race the sun ever
 shone upon,
 I will make divine magnetic lands,
 With the love of comrades,
 With the life-long love of comrades
 (Fone, xi)

More than half a millennium before Whitman, St. Aelred of Rievalux (1110-1167) said of love between men:

It is in fact a great consolation in this life to have someone to whom you can be united in the intimate embrace of the most sacred love; in whom your spirit can rest; to whom you can pour out your soul...; who weeps with you in sorrow, rejoices with you in joy, and wonders with you in doubt; whom you draw by the fetters of love into that inner room of your soul...in the embrace of love, in the kiss of unity, with the sweetness of the Holy Spirit flowing over you; to whom you so join and unite yourself that you mix soul with soul, and two become one. (Boswell, 1980, p. 225)

However, the most influential statement on the mystical ideal of homosexual romantic love is to be found some fifteen hundred years before St. Aelred, in the writings of Plato. In his Symposium he described a mythic time when humans were twice what they are now, ball-like creatures formed of two males, two females, or a male and a female fused together. When Zeus split these creatures in half, he thereby created love:

Men who are a section of that double nature which was once called androgynous are lovers of women...but they who are a section of the male follow the male...and while they are young, being slices of the original man, they hang about men and embrace them...and these when they grow up become statesmen are lovers of youth...and when one of them meets with his other half, the actual half of himself,...the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy and one will not be out of the other's sight, as I may say, even for a moment...Suppose Hephaestus...said [to them,] “Do you desire to be wholly one? always day and night in one another's company? For if this is what you desire, I am ready to melt you into one, and while you live **XX164XX** a common life as if you were a single man, and after your death in the world below still be one departed soul instead of two--I ask whether this is what you lovingly desire...?” [And each agreed] that this meeting and melting into one another, this becoming one instead of two was the very expression of his ancient need. And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love. (Fone, 19-20)

The homosexual love which reunite the original masculine wholeness according to Plato, is idealistic in essence, “selfless and always turned to the maintenance of true education and virtue,

generous and spiritually uplifting” (Fone, 8). Through this masculine love can be realized the ideals of wisdom, the good, the true and the beautiful, and through these, “to become the friend of god and be immortal, if mortal man may,” as Socrates says (Fone, 27). On this basis was established a Platonic code of true love, chivalrous and oriented to the heroic and sublime, the one true way to spirituality (Campbell XX165XXX) and this code of ideal love can be followed in literary and other artistic expressions from Plato’s day to our own.

The story of Gilgamesh, as we have seen, is also about the mystical ideal of true love between two men. Just as the search for this ideal stands as the historical center of the modern gay man’s imagination, so then does the story of Gilgamesh root that search in the dawn of recorded time, more than two thousand years before Plato. All those characteristics of the central metaphor outlined by Fone, “the other self, the mirror image, the ideal friend, the manly comrade, the understanding soul[,],...the understanding heart,’ describe Enkidu in relation to Gilgamesh, and vice versa, exactly. Their relationship is ideal, archetypal, made by gods. It bestows on the lovers a godlike power, able to challenge the gods themselves. This is just the sort of incursion into the deities’ jealously guarded domain that occurs in Plato’s story of the primordial humans--they too challenged the gods, thus incurring Zeus’s wrath. In the same way Gilgamesh and Enkidu are split apart in punishment, as Enkidu is condemned to the nether world. Likewise Gilgamesh’s regaining Enkidu at the end signifies his attaining to a degree of spiritual wisdom and productivity that Socrates says in the *Symposium* is the result of pursuing gay romantic love.

These parallels suggest how the story of Gilgamesh, in the words of the book reviewer, “is pertinent to our times and speaks to a part of us that many have abandoned. It calls you back to your own beginnings and [to] ideals of true love with a man.” The story of Gilgamesh roots today’s experience of masculine romance in a very ancient world of mythic proportions, of monsters and gods and treasures. Thereby it gives shape to the divine, numinous quality experienced in romantic love between men. This love casts a fascination that entrances and seizes the personality, exerting a determinative attraction for the ego so touched, which is “pulled along” to “search for the other half.” Such an encounter with the numinous occurs to Gilgamesh as well, but unlike in our secularized day, the world of Gilgamesh is dominated by numinous powers, populated and plotted by deities and demons, suffused by and with the creative dynamic energy of Divine Spirit, which imparts an intelligent, animating force to all things, expressing the will of deity. Because of this, as the story of Gilgamesh unfolds it reveals a spiritual world of meaning in romantic love, and so articulates the numinous in a way not easily available today.

As the ancient Mesopotamians saw it, the material world was but part of a larger universe whose main substance and nature were spiritual. Surrounding and interpenetrating physical reality there existed another lawfully dimensional world, as real as the material one but transcendent and extraordinary, and this other world-reality was the origin of deities and monsters, the source of the animating spirit, the father-mother of all. It is out of this other world that the gods send Enkidu, a star fallen from heaven, and it is into the other world that Gilgamesh must journey because of the ache in his belly.

Just as the story of Gilgamesh cannot be understood except as a homosexual romance, so too it requires an appreciation of the numinous, the spirit-world. Only in relation to the spirit-world does the romance in Gilgamesh attain the meaning that is its reason for being. Love in this story is the vehicle of spiritual initiation, connecting Gilgamesh to the divine nature within him. When Gilgamesh travels across the Waters of Death and returns with the Plant of Immortality, he enacts a shamanic ritual as old as humanity itself, in which there is a profound self-transformation, and he thereby becomes a servant of the divine.

Shamanism, the original spiritual tradition of humanity, is the art of relating to the spirit-world, and to the spirits whose home it is, and this ability is gained and developed through

undergoing heroic initiatory experience, “the great quest undertaken during [a] state of painful rapture” (Halifax, 6XX168XXXX). The importance of shamanism in ancient Mesopotamia can be seen in a list drawn up by one Sumerian temple scribe that ranked more than a hundred social attributes and functions by importance: “Descent to the nether world” and “ascent from the nether world” are listed as fifteenth and sixteenth, following those of godship, kingship, several high priestly offices, and just after “truth” (ref). Sin-Leqi-Unninni, the Babylonian poet of our version of the story, was himself a specialist in “exorcism,” in “the way of the underworld and in control over demons” (Gardner & Maier, p. 36). In the same shamanic way Gilgamesh makes the descent to and return from the spirit-world and gains, more than mere “control over a demon,” the companionship and guidance of his dead lover’s ghost. Furthermore, he gains a symbolic union with the God of Wisdom, Father Enki, himself.

This crowning achievement, the fruit of his quest, is spelled out clearly in the first words of the prologue. There the poet, summarizing the story for his listeners, says it is about a man “who saw the abyss.” The abyss referred to is the *apsu*, a sort of bottomless, fresh water ocean that surrounds the earth. The Lord of the Apsu was named Enki, God of the Deep Waters, the Lord of Spiritual Wisdom. Indeed, the word *apsu* also means “the all” or “everything.” Thus, the man who saw the abyss is he who journeyed to the source of wisdom in the spirit-world. And indeed, the poet confirms, that in the *apsu* Gilgamesh opened the “hidden places” and saw the “secrets” of Enki, he became “he who knew everything,” he became “as the lord of wisdom.” And after achieving this initiated state, the poet adds, Gilgamesh was able to return from the ordeal with the knowledge he had gained there, from “the time before the Flood.” *Gilgamesh* is a myth of masculine initiation, through which shamanic wisdom is attained.

It is possible to rediscover the spirit-world today, for, according to Jung, it has always existed, it is an objective reality that lies inside the human psyche itself, it is the unconscious. Jung says the unconscious is “an independent, productive activity,” such that its realm of experience is a self-contained world having its own reality, of which we can only say that it affects us as we affect it--precisely what we say about our experience of the outer world. And just as material objects are the constituent elements of this world, so psychic factors constitute the objects of that other world.

The idea of psychic objectivity is by no means a new discovery. It is in fact one of the earliest and most universal acquisitions of humanity: it is nothing less than the conviction as to the existence of a spirit-world. The spirit-world was certainly never an invention in the sense that fire-boring was an invention, it was far rather the experience, the conscious acceptance of a reality in no way inferior to that of the material world. (CW 7, p.85)

The spirit-world lies in the unconscious. It is the source of images and dreams, of all the great and subtle feelings, desires, and ideals (the “powers”) that for people mold life and determine life’s meaning. Shamanism was a means to relate to and integrate the unconscious. Today, the great gods and demons, upwelling from the subconscious in the form of feelings and images, still entrance and involve people. This is the psychological meaning of falling in love: It is to be grasped in the power of a god who lives in the depths of the unconscious. A major value of old myths today lies in how they reveal this interior world and its workings. By exploring the old stories in a psychological way, new light can be shed on the roots of today’s experiences, one can personalize an archetypal story and so enter on the shamanic journey of initiation as Gilgamesh did, and thereby penetrate to the depths of one’s inner being, where the two halves of the inner world, the conscious and the unconscious, can be reconciled to attain a profound wholeness of personality.

Gilgamesh is the role-model for attaining a sort of spiritual “kingship” within, which requires a transformation of the untempered personality that is Gilgamesh at the start. As the story opens, he is king in name but irresponsible, dissolute, lustful, petty, and destructive. Lacking any higher purpose or goal in life than to carouse, fight, or have sex, not only is Gilgamesh incompetent as a king, but he insults and degrades the people and his own divine nature, thereby mocking the gods who made him.

Such a man is deeply unaware of who he is or should be, and behaves in the world by acting out his undifferentiated feelings and urges, blindly and ruthlessly. Gilgamesh has become a man physically and by rank, but his ego personality, its libidinal organization, is still selfishly infantile. He thinks only of his needs, he takes but does not give back, he relates to others only to use them, while his awareness is narrow and limited, he lacks insight, he is unconscious of himself. He does not know his own soul.

To gain the kingship of spiritual initiation requires transformation of the untempered personality through a “dark night-sea journey.” Gilgamesh is born unique, peerless, a paragon in potential, an archetype; fully realized, he is the “joy-woe man,” that is, the uniter of the opposites within himself, achiever of inner wholeness. As the Hindu sage Ramakrishna has commented, “He who knows darkness also knows light. He who knows night also knows day. He who knows happiness also knows misery” (Gospel, 321).

The conscious development and unity of all the disparate aspects of the whole self, from the animal to the divine, is the kingship attainable by the spiritual seeker, the shaman and his descendents (e.g., the magician, the mystic, the Gnostic, alchemist, etc.), whose kingship “lies in being answerable to no human power, no chieftan, or totem clan; he is alone with the Supernatural Beings who have claimed him as their instrument” (Henderson, 65-66). To achieve this goal the novice must go on a long quest, and experience the mysteries of love and death within. Thereby the contending parts and potentials in his psyche are brought forward into a uniquely unified expression of the Will of God. This is the process of personality development that Jung has called *individuation*, “the process of forming and specializing the individual nature” (CW 6, par 757) as a uniquely personalized expression of the Sacred Spirit. The Gilgamesh of the story’s beginning represents the man who has not yet found himself, who is unaware of his inner spiritual nature and destiny. The Gilgamesh of the end is self-aware, whole and complete, his destiny fulfilled.

The story of Gilgamesh, therefore, is revealing of the deep psychology of masculine romantic love as it relates to adult psychological maturation. The figures and motifs of the story are symbolic of “psychic factors” in the unconscious involved with love’s experience as an inward journey, the journey of individuation. They reveal the meaning and goal of love between two men in the scheme of the gods, the numinous personalities of the unconscious.

World of the Gods

The reality of the psyche begins with the words, "Once upon a time." Everybody acknowledges having an unconscious, but still it is a dark mystery to most. To pierce this mystery is the quest of the shaman. In the story of Gilgamesh, the hero is called to this initiation by a love sent from the spirit-world, from the great gods who rule the universe. Gilgamesh thinks he is supreme, the typical attitude of the immature inflated ego. But, as Jung notes, "the individual wielding power, who thought he was all of the ocean, who thought he was the whole of the Sahara, is reduced by individuation to a drop of water, to a grain of sand" (DreamAnal, 288). In reality there is more to the inner universe than the ego knows.

This is how the world was back in the time of Gilgamesh: The earth was a gigantic round plateau, and in the middle regions lay the known cities and lands, while out from there increasing wilderness led to the great, forested mountain chains inhabited by fearsome animals and monsters. The earth was ringed by towering peaks, the greatest of which held up the vault of the starry heavens at the four directions. Beyond the mountains, the earth was surrounded by and also rested in the bottomless freshwater ocean, the *apsu*, the abyss. Also, deep below the earth, in the rock, there was a shadowy land of dry dust known as the *kur*, the nether world.

All the parts of this universe--the sky, the earth, the air between them, the abyss, and the nether world--were ruled and supervised by a small group of luminous, immortal beings with vast powers. At the highest place in heaven, at the center, lived Grandfather Anu, Lord of the Sky. He was the father of all, and so accorded the supreme god, who others turned to when danger threatened, or when there was a complaint. He created the stars, who were his "soldiers," and he walked among them, an old man with a white beard, along "Anu's Way," a bright band of stars stretching across the night sky. Anu kept the Sacred Plant of Life, and he administered the Assembly of the Gods, presiding over the destiny of the universe.

Anu was the father of Enlil and Enki. Enlil was the Lord of the Air, god of winds and storms and the hurricane. Pictured as a powerfully built man with a full beard, Enlil also walked along the stars like his father Anu, but usually he lived on the Great Mountain of the East. There he kept the Tablets of Fate, which the future was written on, and he decreed good and evil. He could be arbitrary and wrathful, the cruel father, and, whereas the messengers of Anu were benevolent angels, those of Enlil brought destruction, war and famine, fire and pillage, hurricane and flood. In the meetings of the high gods, it was Enlil who actually presided, his father Anu remaining majestically aloof from such hands-on busy-work.

The other son of the Sky Father was Enki, also called Ea, and he was the Lord of the Apsu, where he lived in a paradise at the center, the "source of the fresh waters," sometimes called **XXX174XX**. From the *apsu* came forth the life-giving springs and fertilizing rivers of the earth, and, as "the waters of the Apsu spread abundance and happiness over the earth, they were also the source of all knowledge and wisdom." (Guirand, 56). Long ago, when Enki had taken the abyss for his home, he seized the "brightness [of the *apsu*] and clothe[d] himself in it" (Eliade, v.1, p.71), and he was known as Lord of the Sacred Eye, "he whom nothing escapes" (Guirand, 56), the god of spiritual understanding and wisdom, patron of shamans, the great magician, the creative serpent, teacher of the Way, born already initiated, a figure analogous to the Egyptian Thoth, Greek Hermes, and alchemical Mercurius. Enki was often portrayed from the waist down as a fish, from the waist up as a goat, source of the zodiacal Capricorn and meaning, he "who can traverse the depths and heights" (Perera, 67). He was also pictured as a crowned man holding a vase of water from which two streams flow, and he was frequently shown attended by two naked athletes (fig). His chief minister, Isimud, had two faces that looked in opposite directions.

The lord Enlil, in his turn, was the father of Nanna, Lord of the Moon, also called Sin. He was a god of wisdom, "Lord of the Diadem," an enemy of darkness who sent dreams and oracles.

He was pictured as an old man with a beard the color of lapis lazuli, wearing a turban. Enki, on the other hand, was the father of Ningel, “the Great Lady,” the Lady of the Moon, and the union of Nanna and Ningal produced Shamash, Lord of the Sun, and Ishtar, Lady of the Morning Star.

Each morning the scorpion-people opened the gate in the Mountain of the East, and Shamash came forth to mount his chariot and ascend the sky in blazing glory, returning at sunset to the earth at the Mountain of the West, then to cross back underneath during the night over the waters of the apsu. Shamash caused the plant life to flourish on earth, he drove away storms and disease, he “triumphed over the night and put the winter to flight” (Guirand, 57). Vigorous and brave, portrayed as an athletic man, Shamash promoted truth and righteousness, and in particular, he was the God of Justice and judge of the world. His streaming rays banished the dark shadows where crime and injustice lurked, and he was known as Averter of Evil (Gardner & Maier, 28). In addition, he was the god of divination and dreams, through which he revealed truth. His emblem was a four-pointed star, source of the Maltese cross (Jobes, 1491).

The sister of Shamash was Ishtar, Lady of the Morning and Evening Star, that is, the planet Venus. Represented by an eight-pointed star, her name means “Daughter of Light” (Jobes, 844), and she was also addressed as “Holy One who appears in the heavens” and “Queen of Heavens” (Wolkstein & Kramer). Often shown as a beautiful young woman the archetypal Feminine, Ishtar held the source of life in the power of fecundity, she was “giver of plenty, deliverer from evil and sickness” (Jobes, 844). She controlled the life cycle, and as such she was creator, preserver, healer, and destroyer. Thus she had many aspects, each with its own name: As creator goddess she was called Aruru, shaping humans from clay, as nurturing mother she was Mama, as destroyer she was “Lady of Battles” and “Star of Lamentation” (Guirand, 59), as the Great Goddess she was the Creator and supreme ruler of the universe. Most importantly in our story, Ishtar was the Goddess of Love, “the awakening force that stirs love in man and ripeness in plant” (Wolkstein & Kramer, 154), she who “gives forth desire that generates the energy of the universe” (p. 169). She gave freely of her love as the Great Harlot, and her temples were staffed by her sacred prostitutes, both female and male, who represented the goddess and brought her ecstatic blessings in bodily union with the (male) worshipper. Ishtar was passionate, always active, often headstrong and impulsive, and she could also be rageful, ferocious, and greedy. But at the same time she was a great spiritual initiate, First Daughter of the Moon and “Honored Counselor, Ornament of Heaven, Joy of An[u]” (Wolkstein & Kramer, 103).

Ishtar also had a dark sister, Ereshkigal, Lady of the Great Place Below, Queen of the Netherworld. She never took part in the meetings of the other gods in heaven, spending all her time in her lapis lazuli palace of dust and shadow, the House of Ashes. There she presided over the realm of the dead, and upheld the laws of the nether world. Her vizier was named Namtar, “fate” (Perera, 25), and her stare conveyed pitiless death to anyone entering her presence.

The earth itself also had a Lady, Ki, later called Ninhursag, the great nurturing mother, “the exalted lady,” “the lady who gave birth,” Mother Earth. However, the god Enlil, Enki, and Ishtar were each said to be the ruler of the earth. In addition, from the perspective of the Great Goddess, Ishtar, Ninhursag, and Ereshkigal were all various of her aspects.

Now the high gods Anu of the sky, Enlil of the air, Enki of the abyss, Nanna of the moon, Shamash of the sun, Ishtar of the Morning Star, and Ninhursag of the earth, supervised the affairs of the universe in council, the meetings presided over by Anu but led by his son Enlil. This Assembly of the Gods took an active interest in human life on earth, which the gods had created to serve them, and they fixed the fates of all. However, they had also introduced a dynamic element to human nature, a divine potential, a capacity for mental evolution, for consciousness, knowledge, and wisdom. The Lord Enki was the special patron of this capacity in humans, aided by his grandson Shamash and his granddaughter Ishtar. Although he worked in secret and was a great trickster, Enki was notorious for his devotion to human consciousness. In one famous

incident recounted by Utnapishtim to Gilgamesh, the council of gods had decided to destroy humanity with the great Flood, taking a vow not to tell anyone about it. Yet Enki came down to the city Shururppak and, hovering before a reed wall, spoke to it about gods' plans. It so happened that Utnapishtim was standing on the other side and so heard Enki warn him, while not breaking his vow, to build the ark and save life.

The main conservative in the Assembly of the Gods was Enlil, Lord of the Air. Haughty and contemptuous of mortal humanity, he loved authority and hierarchy, an understandable position since he officiated at the meetings. It was Enlil who had successfully moved to exterminate humanity in the Flood, and it was he who extracted the promise not to tell anybody about it. Likewise, in the story of Gilgamesh, it is Enlil who decrees the death of Enkidu, and sneers at the last minute pleas of Shamash to spare him. You are too much like the mortals, Enlil replies mockingly, "much like one of their comrades."

This barb is aimed at Shamash's role in promoting Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Shamash wants the Companions to rid the earth of evils, and the first chosen is Humbaba. It just so happens that Humbaba was placed in the Cedar Forest quite particularly by Enlil to guard it from just such depredations as happened after the Companions had their way. So the attack on Humbaba is really a move by Shamash against Enlil, who gets his revenge with the death of Enkidu.

Shamash, who personifies the solar brightness of consciousness, its dynamic will to penetrate and overcome ignorance, is drawn forth by the love of the two Companions to befriend, guide, and protect them, much as Orpheus and his boys were embraced by Apollo (ref). In doing so Shamash serves the will of his grandfather Enki, that humans bridge the animal and divine within themselves, and expand the scope of their involvement in the world of the gods. Enki is also helped in his work by the Lady Ishtar. The mother of Gilgamesh, Ninsun, was the central representative of Ishtar at her temple in Uruk, the Eanna, House of Heaven. Ishtar's creator aspect, Aruru, produces Enkidu, and her representative, the temple prostitute, civilizes him. It is into the cult of Ishtar that Enkidu is initiated by Ninsun, who likewise serves Shamash through her prayers and dream interpretations. And over all, the great love between Gilgamesh and Enkidu is itself the gift of the goddess.

Ishtar was especially loved by the Mesopotamians, and she was the patron deity of the city Uruk. Father Enki had specially guided her own shamanic initiatory descent to the underworld, and had given her the great powers, the *me*'s, to bring to Uruk. Throughout the story of Gilgamesh the goddess appears in her many guises: as the creator Aruru, the mother Ninsun, the nameless sacred prostitute, the vindictive Ishtar **XX182XX** even the barmaid Siduri, and finally, the grateful Ishtar of the last chapter, bestower of the sacred drum and beater.

Gilgamesh never acts alone, but always in relation to the gods. These *archetypes*, "primordial images" as Jung would say, lie embedded in the deep unconscious, and it is they who express the "independent activity" of the unconscious psyche. In relation to these, Gilgamesh is but one small player in the great drama of love.

The Star from Heaven

His power without peer, there were none who dared to challenge him, so the depredations of the unfermented Gilgamesh finally raised the abused people's cries to heaven, where lived Grandfather Anu, the final arbiter. Since Gilgamesh is two-thirds divine, it is right that Anu should hear the complaint. He decides to send one of his stars, his "soldiers," to earth.

This act is an example of what Jung called "psychic compensation:" "Just as the body reacts purposively to injuries or infections or any abnormal conditions, so the psychic functions react to unnatural or dangerous disturbances with purposive defence-mechanisms." Thus, "when the conscious attitude tends too exclusively in a direction that would threaten the vital needs of the individual," the unconscious produces a response "with a strongly contrasting but purposive

content” (CW 8, p.253). And when a person’s “conscious attitude is unadapted,” then the “merely compensatory function of the unconscious becomes a guiding, prospective function capable of leading the conscious attitude in a quite different direction which is much better than the previous one” (CW 8, p.257).

The problem, as we have seen, is the immaturity of the king, his infantile, impulsive, shortsighted expenditure of his creative powers and talent, his libido. He is all too crude and instinctual in his habits. It is most appropriate and just, then, that Anu’s response should manifest as a “wild man,” as if that part of Gilgamesh had materialized itself autonomously outside of him, now to confront him face to face with his own unbridled narcissism--“I am the greatest!”

The falling star, the angel from heaven, will come to earth to redirect Gilgamesh and in this way he will find and fulfill his true self. As Edward Edinger notes,

The notion that one’s identity has an *a priori* existence is expressed in the ancient idea that each person has his own individual star, a kind of celestial counterpart, representing his cosmic dimension and destiny. The star of Bethlehem was Jesus’ star, having a brightness commensurate with the greatness of his destiny,

And he quotes Wordsworth:

The soul that rises with us, our life’s star,
Has had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar (E&A, p. 159).

Jung, in *Symbols of Transformation*, refers to the story of Buddha’s mother, Maya, who ...dreamed that a star from heaven--
Splendid, six-rayed, in colour rosy-pearl...
Shot through the void; and, shining into her,
Entered her womb upon the right. (CW 5, p.320)

And also a poem by Heine: “A star is falling/ Out of the glittering sky!/ The star of Love!” (p. 319).

Enkidu, then is the “celestial counterpart” to Gilgamesh. Like Jesus, he also comes to redeem, to bring his “cosmic dimension and identity,” and he carries in his heart the image of his “father,” Anu, put there at the core of his physical being by Aruru. In a further parallel, Enkidu will later be sacrificed by the gods, and though descending to the nether world, he will return in a spiritual form to guide the king.

The star gains a physical form in its fall to earth, becoming a man. Anu is very specific in his instructions to Aruru: fashion a “second image of Gilgamesh: may it be equal to the time of his heart.” Anu’s warrior is made to be a man particularly suited to Gilgamesh, his reflection made substantial and personified in a divine mirror, thereby expressing the will of the Sky God. This is the meaning in the wild man, who reflects the animal in Gilgamesh. But Enkidu, the psychological double, is more than mere animal, for he is also “equal to the time of his heart.”

The heart has generally been thought of as the seat of the soul, because experience of the soul is felt as love in the heart. The soul “quickens your spiritual heart, opens your mouth and eyes to the Real” (Herbak, 198), said the Egyptians. Notes Jung, it is “in the heart” that mystics find “their own life-force which they call the ‘sun’” (CW 5, p. 122). The Hindus would agree, as espoused by Ramakrishna:

The soul through which God sports is endowed with His special power. The landlord may reside in any part of his estate, but he is generally to be found in a particular drawing-room. The devotee is God’s drawing-room. God loves to sport in the heart if His devotee. (Gospel, 320)

Thus Ramakrishna's advice: "Can one ever bring God under control through wealth? He can be tamed only through love" (p. 322).

The life of Gilgamesh lacks love, and the landlord in the house of his heart is silent. This landlord, the *soul*, is "essentially the life of the body, the life-breath, or a kind of life-force which assumed spatial and corporeal form" (Jung, CW 8, p. 345), the "cold breath of the spirits but also a vivid flame, "an intangible, living presence" (CW 8, p. 346). The soul is the source of all the inspirations in life, in particular the inspiration of God. According to James Hillman,

Other words long associated with the word "soul" amplify it further: mind, spirit, heart, life, warmth, humanness, personality, individuality, intentionality, essence, innermost, purpose, emotion, quality, virtue, morality, sin, wisdom, death, God. (Suicide, 44)

The soul is that faculty within the psyche which feels the spirit of God, and the spiritual seeker must awaken to and turn towards his soul in order to reach the divine land. It is through love that relationship to the soul is gained, and it is love that is the feeling of the sacred Spirit, for love is "the mightiest force in the psyche" (CW 5, par. 98), "it is God himself" (par. 97).

In the story of Gilgamesh, the star of God that brings his true identity and destiny is clothed in a personal form, a figure of the soul-twin, through its descent from heaven; "the soul 'comes from the stars'" (Jung, Kerényi, p.170). This idea of the heavenly soul-twin was widespread in the ancient world, and was systematically developed by the Egyptians, in their doctrine of the *ka*. When a man was created by the Maker, Khnum, they said, so was his soul-twin, the *ka*. Some of the Light of God in heaven, the Akh, was formed into a center, around which an ethereal body then developed, called the *ba*. The *ba* had wings, and then flew down from heaven, carrying the Akh, and entered the body of the mother. There the *ba* served as a seed around which formed a spiritual body in the growing fetus coequal to the physical one, and this spiritual body in turn was the *ka*. From within the *ka*, the Light of God radiated forth, animating the body and mind of the gestating baby, embracing him in nurturant love. A man and his *ka* were born together, and from the embrace of his *ka* he obtained his vitality and all his virtues and attributes.

Although it existed in a man's body, and grew in life as he did, the *ka* as a spiritual being also and in reality lived in heaven, and a man was not normally conscious of his *ka*. But if he had led a virtuous life he would be reunited with his soul in heaven, in paradise, after his death, or, as elsewhere, through spiritual initiation. If the spiritual seeker, retracing the path of the Sun God, Re, descended to the underworld and passed through its twelve "hours," he would re-emerge and rise into heaven reborn like the sun, united in perfect wholeness with his soul (ref).

In ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt can be found the historical beginnings of the notion of a heavenly, divine romance with the masculine reflection-soul. Later expressions of this idea can be found in the thought of Plato, as we saw earlier, and also in Gnosticism and Sufism. Gnosticism was a powerful spiritual movement of the first centuries A.D. in the Mediterranean world. An important Gnostic story called the Hymn of the Pearl (date) tells of a youth who, through love, finds his "robe of glory," and, "as I now beheld the robe, it seemed to me suddenly to become a mirror-image of myself," he says (Jonas, 115). This robe "symbolizes the heavenly or eternal self of the person, his original idea, a kind of double or *alter ego* preserved in the upper world" of heaven (ref). In XXXXXX28XX "the encounter with this divided-off aspect of himself, the recognition of it as his own image, and the reunion with it signify the real moment of his salvation" (Jonas, 122). In Sufi thought, in turn, which developed in the Islamic tradition after 800 A.D., there exists a person's Divine Angel, "the divine Alter Ego" (Corbin, p. 272),

“his origin and end, his eternal companion...[in which his] whole person being is fulfilled” in the Sacred Temple of the heart (Corbin, 278).

Gilgamesh is an originating tale in the spiritual tradition of romance as heavenly and divine. Just so in the union with Enkidu does Gilgamesh find favor with Shamash, Lord of the Sun, and is then inspired by him to destroy evil, and from this beginning is led through Enki's great initiation. Enkidu comes to activate the sleeping heart of Gilgamesh, and does so by serving as the focal object for all of the king's libidinal attention, “a symbolic figure who attracts libido to himself in the form of wonder and adoration, in order to lead it over the symbolic bridge of myth to higher uses” (CW 5, p. 314). Psychologically considered, then, the story of Gilgamesh describes the advent of homosexual romantic love as the constellation of a figure of the reflection-soul, it is the call of this soul to relationship with it, to initiation through the masculine, and thereby to individuate a relationship to God.

Eros is a great power, as his teacher Diotima explains to Socrates in the *Symposium*: Eros is “the intermediary between mortals and immortals...a mighty daemon, dear Socrates: for everything daemonic is the intermediary between God and man.” Eros serves to “interpret and convey messages to the gods from men and to men from the gods,...thus bridging the gap between them, so that by his meditation the universe is at one with itself.” Eros is

bold and forward and strenuous, always devising tricks like a cunning huntsman; he yearns after knowledge and is full of resource and is a lover of wisdom all his life, a skilful magician, an alchemist, a true sophist. He is neither mortal nor immortal; but on one and the same day he will live and flourish (when things go well with him), and also meet his death; and then come to life again through the force of his father's nature. (quoted in Jung, CW 5, p. 166)

The Sacred Marriage and Fight with Humbaba

Enkidu begins his mortal life as “the-man-as-he-was-at-the-beginning,” and he is gradually civilized and brought to the city. Impelled by his destiny, the soul-figure develops out of the wilds of the unconscious, he gains thought and language and his own ego-identity as he assimilates to the conscious life of the personality. He is enabled to do so through the embrace of the Love Goddess’s priestess, sent unwittingly by Gilgamesh to solve the hunter’s problem **XX189XX** can soothe and tame even the most wild of beasts. But after her embrace, Enkidu feels a nameless yearning in his heart, mirror of the king’s own emptiness. Guided by Ishtar, the two are inexorably brought together.

As we have seen, Enkidu comes to compensate the imbalance in Gilgamesh, and to do so is to challenge the ego, which will not change on its own. Their confrontation shapes up in a doorway, appropriate symbol of exits and entrances. There the malicious Gilgamesh and his good-willed double face off. This is itself an archetypal situation, a mystery of the masculine, the fight of the twin-opposites. In Egyptian mythology the brothers Horus and Seth, Light and Darkness, struggled over the throne of kingship. In the Bible Jacob and Esau fought over Isaac’s patrimony.

The fight of the twin-opposites, a reverse or negative aspect of the double motif, symbolizes the dynamic of archetypal polarity, the conflict of opposites, but it also leads to their harmonious integration. It is through the rough struggle of the twins that the opposites are brought together. The action of the struggle itself works this turn, as it brings about a reversal, a blessing--so it was with Jacob who, by wrestling with the angel of God all night before facing Esau, gained a new name from God as well as the harmony of his brother (ref). The wrestling, the balanced push-and-pull, brings the two halves of the original wholeness into deeply intimate contact, penetrating further to the core as the struggle is sustained--this is why Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight so long and hard, for the resulting union must be the most thorough, the most heroic. By the time Gilgamesh gains an advantage, the chrysalis of struggle has done its work, and the transmuted content swiftly breaks free, the butterfly of unifying love.

This libidinal transformation constellates masculine Eros in a binding relationship to the soul-brother, and such relationship is the greatest thing in the world--it generates a powerfully focused libido that can accomplish anything. The soul-brother inspires, empowers, brings the Lord of the Sun, Shamash. The twins oppositional wrestling is transformed into a propulsive give-and-take, their individual strengths are tripled, and Gilgamesh becomes “the figure of the sun-hero, the ‘well-beloved’” (CW 5, p. 105), as Shamash guides the Companions to conquer evil. He travels to the edge of the spirit-world and makes a “name” for himself.

Such a relationship is sacred and precious, signified by Ninsun’s adoption of Enkidu as her son and his induction into the cult of Ishtar. These rituals elevate his status and bring his development from out of the wilderness to new heights as the brother of the king, representative of the fecund great goddess and beloved of the Lord of Justice, the bright Sun God. Out of this relationship will come fruitful “children,” as Socrates says of this homosexual union:

Those who are pregnant in body only, betake themselves to women and beget children--their offspring....but souls which are pregnant--for there are certainly many who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies--conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain...wisdom and virtue in general[,]...temperance and justice. And he who in youth has the seed of these implanted in him and is himself inspired, when he comes to maturity desires to beget and generate...When he finds a fair and noble and well nurtured soul, he embraces the two in one person...and tries to educate him...and they are married by a far nearer tie and have a closer friendship than those who beget mortal

children, for the children who are their offspring are fairer and more immortal.
(Fone, 24-25)

Likewise in Egyptian mythology, the god Thoth, the Great Shaman, archetypal initiate of the wisdom of God was said to be the child of Horus and Seth, the son of the two brothers (Boylan, p.27; Bullough, 1976, pp. 65-66).

It is a culture-bound notion to believe that only a male-female union can be generative, because in psyche men too can become pregnant, and children can have two fathers.

Union with Enkidu brings Gilgamesh relationship with his “star of heaven,” the Light of God that is within but normally unconscious, that archetype which Jung called the Self:

The Self is the ordering and unifying center of the total psyche (conscious and unconscious) just as the ego is the center of the conscious personality....[It] is thus the supreme psychic authority and...the inner empirical deity...

There are a number of other associated terms and images that refer to the Self. Such themes as wholeness, totality, the union of opposites, the central generative point, the world navel, the axis of the universe, the creative point where God and man meet, the point where transpersonal energies flow into personal life, eternity as opposed to the temporal flux, incorruptibility, the inorganic united paradoxically with the organic, protective structures capable of bringing order out of chaos, the transformation of energy, the elixir of life--all refer to the Self, the central source...(Edinger, 3-4)

Suddenly, the life of Gilgamesh has a center, and the life-force, the “Breath of the gods,” wells up in him, he is possessed by the elixir of Wholeness, made passionate and ecstatic by it. How appropriate that this new situation should be symbolized by the friendship of the Sun God, since “the sun is perfectly suited to represent the visible God of this world, i.e., the creative power of our own soul, which we call libido, and whose nature it is to bring forth...” (CW 5, p. 121). Here is the secret of romantic love: Through its experience one gains the Sun.

The intoxication which emanates from contact with the source of libido, is obtained from the marriage with the soul-double. The powers of shamanism are always gained and effected through ecstatic trance (ref), and with Enkidu Gilgamesh has found the perfect method. Their passion raises the power of libidinal transformation, as the Hindus described the spinal Kundalini force awakened in tantric sexuality (ref). Led by the Sun Lord and guided by Enkidu, Gilgamesh can now turn inwards to the spirit-world and begin his initiatory quest, the journey into the unconscious.

Within the psyche lie great treasures, enriching to the personality if they can be integrated from the unconscious. But the unconscious is guarded by fearsome demons. Ugly feelings, impulses and experiences, rejected by the ego, combine with undeveloped aspects of the personality into a malevolent form, what Jung called the “inferior side” of the psyche, the *shadow*, “all the wants, longings and fears that have accumulated down there--a repulsive and sinister sight” (CW 5, p. 357). In the journey to become self-aware and self-realized one must always confront one’s shadow unconscious, if the opposites of good and evil are to be reconciled:

The fight against the paralyzing grip of the unconscious calls forth man’s creative powers. That is the source of all creativity, but it needs heroic courage to do battle with these forces and to wrest from them the treasure hard to attain. (CW 5, p. 334)

When two men fall in love, and have projected the soul-twin onto each other, they are bound to the Self and suffused with inspiration. They feel they can accomplish anything, as the *I Ching* notes, “They shatter even the strength of iron or bronze” (ref). The most valuable potential of such a bond is the psychological growth of the partners. In such a relationship shadows can be brought out and conquered, thus not only overcoming the problems which always arise in intimate friendship but feeding individuation, the integration of psyche to itself in the Light of God. This is the theme modeled by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, the manly lovers, by entering on their quest.

Through the magic of partnership Gilgamesh is brought to face his split-off shadow, in the form of the giant Humbaba. When Gilgamesh has faced Enkidu in the bride’s doorway, he was confronted by his own bullish ignorance and instinctuality--his crudely phallic libido--for the first time. In Humbaba he reaches a much deeper, more primordial form, correspondingly ugly and ferocious. He is helped to get there through his three dreams in the Cedar Forest, prospective messages from the unconscious, each closer to the shadow, each talked out with Enkidu to “untie” its meaning. Facing a nightmare of the psyche is horrendous, but with the help of Enkidu and Shamash Gilgamesh does so. To face a shadow part of oneself in the light of consciousness and understanding, to feel the terror but not run away, renders the shadow powerless, beheads it, and then it can be integrated, the Cedar Forest made accessible to treeless Uruk. This is a principle used to great effect in psychotherapy, here obtained through romantic friendship. The prior sterility of the king’s rule is reversed, the fecundity of the sacred marriage is fulfilled. Gilgamesh is now a hero, he has gained a proud identity for himself, grounded in love, centered on the star of heaven, guaranteed by the Lord of the Sun. He has achieved a further stage on the road to the Lord of the Deep Waters.

The Bull of Heaven and Loss of the Soul

To join with the soul-twin and enter on the quest of psychic initiation brings profound change to the whole of the inner world. The ego gains a bond with the Self, and thereby begins to feel its divine nature and power. Such an elevation of the ego creates a state of *inflation*, “in which something small (the ego) has arrogated to itself the qualities of something larger (the Self) and hence is blown up beyond the limits of its proper size” (Edinger, 1972, p.7). This new psychic imbalance, brought on by heroic success, triggers in its turn a compensatory reaction from the spirit-world, as earlier Enkidu was formed in response to Gilgamesh’s kingly irresponsibility. In this way, “every psychological extreme secretly contains its own opposite” (CW 5, p.375). Individuation is a cyclical process of give and take between conscious and unconscious, and now it is to turn again for Gilgamesh.

The godlike beauty of the king, outward expression of his inner achievement in libidinal transformation, seduces the Goddess of Love herself. But Gilgamesh, elevated to the level of divinity, now behaves as if he were a god, scorning mighty Ishtar, showing up her bad traits. Such an act is blasphemous in the Mesopotamian context, where the king unites ritually with the representative of the goddess each year to renew the land and the state. Such arrogant self-inflation the Greeks called *hubris*, and it brings about a downfall.

On the other hand, Gilgamesh has been traveling the shaman’s road and thereby has gained a certain measure of true individuality, of self-awareness, he has begun to differentiate from the mass of people unconscious of themselves. From this point of view, to reject Ishtar’s advance, “the hero’s renunciation of the terrible Ishtar” (CW 5, p.262), is to reconfirm his commitment to Enkidu and the road of knowledge, to follow his own way of becoming, not merely the traditional role laid out for him, the way of instinct. Aided by Shamash, Gilgamesh was able to overcome Humbaba. Now he believes he is strong enough to overcome the will of Ishtar.

Although Ishtar is the great Nurturer throughout the story, when she falls in love she seeks to engulf Gilgamesh, and when she is spurned it brings out her spiteful revenge. It is a severe challenge to establish relationship with the powers of the unconscious by entering the shamanic path, because the archetypes, the spirits encountered thereon, are not merely “good” beings: “Just as all archetypes have a positive, favourable, bright side that points upwards, so also they have one that points downwards” (CW 9i, p.226). The intent of psyche can be both beneficial and malevolent. It is the process of individuation by which this profound opposition is transformed within the individual personality into a centered wholeness, and in this way the gods too are enabled to develop.

At the same time as it is destructive, Ishtar’s rage is still serving the initiatory process for Gilgamesh. In forcing Anu to create the Bull of Heaven, Ishtar gives shape to Gilgamesh’s old demon for a third time, his instinctual nature renewed in yet a more awesome, terrifying form of phallic brutality. Enkidu opposed Gilgamesh at the gate, but their union brought forth Humbaba. The death of Humbaba brings about a dark expression of the libido to match that of the triumphant Solar heroes. The awesome bull is like a negative form of God, of the great Sky Father, the power of the center reversed, an aspect of the Self which Gilgamesh has to face once he begins a relationship to it.

Through this challenge Gilgamesh and Enkidu reach the sun’s zenith: Without the direct intervention of Shamash they overcome the celestial Bull, and offer his heart to the Sun Lord. Now their power is greater than ever, supreme in all the land, for “the hero becomes equal to the sun: he renews himself” through this integration of phallic libido (CW 5, p. 261). Only now, at this high point, has Gilgamesh been strengthened and readied by the unconscious for the main part of his journey: “Animals represent instinct, and also the prohibition of instinct, so that man becomes human through conquering his animal nature” (CW 5, p. 262). Yet at the same time,

the killing of the bull...[is] a secret and furtive overcoming of the law, and hence a criminal usurpation of justice. Since the better is always the enemy of the good, every drastic innovation is an infringement of what is traditionally right, and may sometimes even be a crime punishable by death. (CW 5, pp. 261-62)

In this way has individuation always been known as the *opus contra naturam*, the work against nature (ref).

Now a fourth form of the old enemy can appear form out of the spirit-world. Now that the boastful companions have so well approached the majesty of the Sun, let them partake fully in the journey of the sun. As Jung comments,

Every psychological extreme secretly contains its own opposite...and the more extreme a position is, the more easily may we expect an enantiodromia, a conversion of something into its opposite. The best is most threatened with some devilish perversion just because it has done the most to suppress evil. (CW 5, p. 375)

By following the libidinal sun Gilgamesh has been seduced onto the shamanic road of initiation, Lord Enki's way, the way of the goat-fish: "The symbol...in which the sun re-enters the yearly cycle at the time of the winter solstice is Capricorn," meaning "the sun mounts like a goat to the tops of the highest mountains, and then plunges into the depths of the sea like a fish" (CW 5, p. 198).

It would be a mistake to see the death of Enkidu as a punishment, for it is a necessary event, requiring only the right pretext to bring it about. As Jung notes, the libido is "not only a ceaseless forward movement, an unending will for life,...[but] like the sun, the libido also wills its own descent, its own involution" (CW 5, p. 438). Enkidu has brought the source of life to Gilgamesh, he is the manifestation of the soul. But to gain his full initiation Gilgamesh must journey to the spirit-world, and how is he to do that when it is a mystery whose terrors make those of Humbaba and the Bull puny by comparison, unless the symbol of life-joy itself should sink into the spirit-world and guide him there in the below as it did above.

When Anu's star fell to earth and became a man, this was not the completion of its transformations. Enkidu's death initiates the sacrifice of libido, by which descent to the other world is obtained: "The act of sacrifice is a fertilization" (CW 5, p. 432). Just as Gilgamesh was confronted with a negative side of the Self in the Bull of Heaven, so he must face the dark side of the soul-relationship, its loss: to be stripped of all his majesty, then of his dignity, finally of the last shreds of any self-regard or hope. In this way is he finally purified of his immature selfishness once and for all, and only then can he securely serve the Will of God, consciously, humbly, faithfully, only then is he trustworthy to receive the role of spiritual initiate, Friend of God.

Enki says nothing in the heavenly debate after the Bull is killed. But there is no need: As surely as night follows day the ache in his belly will inspire Gilgamesh to find the gate of the sun, to cross the dark tunnel within. Romantic love builds up relationship to the soul, and ultimately the soul is to be sought inside. So just as the soul-figure emerged out of unconscious psyche to rescue the king to a further maturity and a greater achievement: "By sacrificing these valued objects of desire and possession, the instinctual desire, or libido, is given up in order that it may be regained in a new form" (CW 5, p. 431).

The Journey to the Spirit-World

Only after Gilgamesh had known a soul relationship would he be capable of yearning for it. This is how romantic love calls back to the beginning, to seek the lost soul once known in a prior wholeness. The “search for the understanding heart” becomes the central metaphor in the imagination of Gilgamesh in the second half of his story. This search leads to the spirit-world, into the unconscious.

Gilgamesh could never be brought to sacrifice himself on his own; only because of Enkidu can he do so. This, essentially, is what occurs on his journey to the underworld, he is led to give up his libido, “a human self-sacrifice, a renunciation of egohood” (CW 5, p. 435), for the sake of his beloved: Thus the nature of true romantic love, to give your life for the other. The same occurred to the Greek twins, the Dioscouri:

Polydeukes ran to his brother and found him at the last gasp. He raised his voice to Zeus and besought his father that he might die also. Zeus approached and...he gave Polydeukes his choice, either to live henceforth on Olympos or to pass one day under the earth with his brother, the next with Kastor in the celestial palace with the gods. What Polydeukes chose was to share light and darkness too, for ever. (Kereny, 1959, p.111)

By vanquishing the Bull of Heaven, Gilgamesh and Enkidu reach a triumphant pinnacle, and, “that the highest summit of life can be expressed as death is a well-known fact, for any growing beyond oneself means death” (CW 5, p. 285). Thus sacrifice and death enact the true climax for the libido aroused and transformed through romantic love, its ultimate Dionysian expression. Enkidu will again lead the way, and in facing his own death he reaches a new level of growth that began as the wild man who ran with the gazelles. After Enkidu’s bewildered cry, “Why are the great gods in council?”, the companions swiftly realize its meaning, and Enkidu curses in rage. But then Shamash points out to Enkidu what love has done and will do for him, and Enkidu realizes equanimity, he is freed from the domination of his emotions and desires, he becomes resigned to death. This is something Gilgamesh refuses to accept, his own inevitable death.

With the conquest of the Bull of Heaven, Gilgamesh had subdued his instinctual nature, and now a further development could occur, “symbolized by the death of a human being,” and demand[ing] a surrender of the whole person--not merely a taming of his animal instincts, but a total renunciation of them and a disciplining of his specifically human, spiritual functions for the sake of a spiritual goal beyond this world. (CW 5, p. 435)

This is what occurs in the journey to the spirit-world, the grieving Gilgamesh enters into “this act of supreme courage and supreme renunciation” (CW 5, p. 263). He strips off his clothes, wears dogskins, roams in agony the wild hills like Enkidu once did, is unable to sleep and gains no rest. The libido consumes him in a regressively negative form: “The feeling tone of the classical *hieros gamos* [sacred marriage] has here changed into its opposite: torment instead of lust, and the martyr’s stake....What was once felt as pleasurable...is now felt as painful” (CW 5, p. 433). And thereby Gilgamesh passes from the sun-hero to the suffering initiate:

There is one striking difference between the hero myth and the initiate rite. The typical hero figures exhaust their efforts in achieving the goal of their ambitions; in short, they become successful even if immediately afterward they are punished or killed for their *hybris*. In contrast to this, the novice for initiation is called upon to give up willful ambition and all desire and to submit to the ordeal. He must be willing to experience this trial without hope of success. In fact, he must be

prepared to die; and though the token of his ordeal may be mild...or agonizing..., the purpose remains always the same: To create the symbolic mood of death from which may spring the symbolic mood of rebirth. (Henderson in Man, 131-32)

Gilgamesh's journey to the apsu is such an initiatory ordeal, where with every tormented step he gives up further his will, desire, and hope. Each step on his journey is another agonizing twist in the irony of his proud boast at his apex: "Who is the best formed of heroes!" Driven relentlessly, his face turned dark with dread and woe, Gilgamesh regresses, he goes backward until he is retracing the sun's path through the mountain at the world's edge. There he "travels through a world of darkness. Hour after hour he travels; thick the darkness; there is no light...[This] is a stunning image of the agony of Gilgamesh's dismemberment" (Gardner & Maier, p.31).

Passing through the torture of the Sun Lord's tunnel, Gilgamesh has been rendered from the sun-hero into the penitent, the spiritual renunciate: "In search of a windpuff," that is, "for the sake of a spiritual goal beyond this world," he rushes by the garden of jewels, and encounters the barmaid Siduri, who represents Ishtar as joy, dance and play (ref), only for directions to the Waters of Death.

The people he meets on his otherworld journey, the scorpion-man, Siduri, and finally Urshanabi the Boatman, all help Gilgamesh after he tells of the ache in his belly, the search for his windpuff, because this ache, this windpuff, is the libido--the sun--making its descent. This descent has a goal: "When the libido leaves the bright upper world...it sinks back into its own depths, into the source from which it originally flowed, and returns to the point of cleavage, the navel..." (CW 5, p. 292), that is, the "source of the waters," in the center of the great abyss. The descending libido, a reverse or negative sun, leads Gilgamesh to the paradise in the apsu through his self-sacrifice.

Crossing the Waters of Death with the Boatman is an archetypal motif found in other mythologies, such as the Greek, where Charon ferries the dead across the river Stix. To cross the Waters of Death while alive most aptly pictures the experience of "symbolic death" that is at the core of the shamanic initiation. Gilgamesh had already "died" once when Enkidu died, and then a second time in his passage through Shamash's tunnel. Each time, hope was renewed--first by arriving at the Gate of the Sun, then by entering the jeweled garden. Each brings him further on, each atones for "a criminal usurpation of justice:" first his union with Enkidu (who had been sent to fight him), then his killing of Humbaba. The horrific ride over the elixir of Thanatos, then, atones for his insult to Ishtar and murder of her mighty Bull of Heaven. So with this heroic sacrifice he arrives at the paradise land of immortality, he has found the center of the great abyss, source of the Waters of Life.

Here is the goal because it is the home of Enki, Lord of Initiations, goatfish god of the Two Streams, he of the two-faced minister. Gilgamesh has been on this god's path, so it will ultimately bring him to Enki himself. Earlier we saw the wisdom and power of the goat-fish expressed in the great enantiodromia, the reversal, of the solar myth: he rises to the heights like the goat, then plunges to the depths like a fish. So likewise when the bottom of the depths has been reached, there lies another enantiodromia, the opposite reversal to that one in the sky. This is why, after leaving the tunnel of Shamash, and even moreso, after crossing the Waters of Death, there is found the wonderful paradise, beautiful and without evil, without death, without sin, of perfect joy and happiness. At the center of Death's elixir lies the Fountain of Life. The Goatfish God is he who has mastered the two reversals, the one above and the one below, and so united life and death into the spiral of evolution. He is

the archetype of the spirit, who symbolizes the pre-existent meaning hidden in the chaos of Life. He is the father of the soul...[the] wise magician,...an immortal daemon that pierces the chaotic darkness of brute life with the light of meaning.

He is the enlightener, the master and teacher, a psychopomp...the lofty spirit of...enlightenment and ecstasy...the driving daemon of wisdom...the revealer and...the speaking fountainhead of [the] soul...*the archetype of the wise old man, or of meaning.* (CW 9i, pp. 35-37)

This mystic power of the god is expressed in the person of Utnapishtim, a living man made immortal. He represents the archetypal great sage, the Wise Old Man, made real through an individual human personality.

When Utnapishtim steps forward to greet Gilgamesh, the hero meets his distant forebear from before the Flood, he has reached back to the tips of his own roots as a man. Here there can be a true union of the conscious and the unconscious to produce the wisdom of understanding:

Wisdom dwells in the depths...being one with [it] means being granted a vision of deeper things, of the primordial images and primitive forces which underlie all life and are its nourishing, creative matrix.

Utnapishtim proceeds to teach Gilgamesh. First he explains the goatfish wisdom: There is always change, things reverse into their opposites, death and life express a greater whole. By these words Utnapishtim points to what Gilgamesh has not yet sacrificed, his yearning for immortality, what has driven him into and through the apsu, the search for his missing soul. Even the love for soul, then, is another attachment to libido which must be sacrificed.

The Utnapishtim, in recounting the Flood story, reveals his own entry into immortality. In doing so he discloses secret things, probes the mystery of origins, for all alive were descended from Utnapishtim, and the Flood marked the beginning of "recorded time," that is, consciousness, "when gods were replaced by mortals on the thrones of the city-states" (Sanders, 1972, p.13). With the passage of the Flood, human consciousness begins its irrevocable emergence from the grasp of primordial unconsciousness, primordial instinct. So in telling his story Utnapishtim conveys explanatory knowledge that "unties" the inaccessible: how the Flood came about, how its intent was thwarted, why there is evil in the world, and how justice was established. Utnapishtim reveals to Gilgamesh the great rivalry between Enlil and Enki, between ignorance and enlightenment, how Enki tricked Enlil to save life and he chastised the Air god: "how is it--how could you--without talking through, send the Flood?" The two-faced power of the clever Lord of Wisdom shows throughout the story, particularly in his words for the people of Shupurrak, every one of which is true while simultaneously concealing the truth (the last sentence, "At dawn bread he will pour down on you--showers of wheat" is a pun on the words for "bread," *kukku*, and "darkness," *kukkû*, and for "wheat," *kibtu*, and "misfortune," also *kibtu* [Gardner & Maier, p. 230]).

With these revelations Gilgamesh gains an understanding of the spirit-world and its relation to humans, and especially the role of Enki; he is now enabled to become a disciple of the Goatfish Lord. But first the understanding must sink deeply into him, there must be another sacrifice. So Utnapishtim challenges the king to another heroism, to stay awake for a week, and then he will give the long-sought treasure. The once-mighty Gilgamesh agrees to try, but immediately falls asleep, he who sleeplessly roamed the mountains and seas. Thus a further irony, a further humiliation of a long-gone boast.

However, the sleep is also an incubation, a week of deep rest, compensatory, curative to the never-ending agonies of before. Something has been implanted and readied in him, for the moment when, on being awakened, Gilgamesh realizes he has failed the test. Then his despair is total and consumes the last hope he feels, the triumph of inner devastation: "Wherever I set my feet, there Death is." Now the power of the initiatory rite rises to a peak. At the sage's command,

the Boatman takes Gilgamesh, cleans and redresses him, and drapes on his shoulders the Robe of Life, “always new,” a symbol and source of rebirth, a mantle of phallic libido in the service of wisdom. A similar motif occurs at the climax of the Gnostic initiatory tale, Hymn of the Pearl:

My robe of glory which I had put off and my mantle which went over it, my parents...sent to meet me...Its splendor I had forgotten, having left it as a child in my Father’s house. As I now beheld the robe, it seemed to me suddenly to become a mirror-image of myself: myself entire I saw in it, and it entire I saw in myself, that we were two in separateness, and yet again one in the sameness of our forms...And the image of the King of Kings was depicted all over it...I also saw quiver all over it the movements of the gnosis. (Jonas, 115)

Likewise, then, the Robe of Life for Gilgamesh can be considered a symbolic return of his soul-twin now transformed into self-knowledge, establishing a new connection to the self and the libido, through a new union with the soul.

Now Gilgamesh is prepared for a crowning achievement. Utnapishtim reveals the final tunnel, points down to the last heroic descent, and Gilgamesh, now transformed, dives harmlessly into the Waters of Death and sinks through the special channel found thereunder, to the lowest part of the apsu. There, with a symbolic offering of a drop of blood, Gilgamesh has made amends, has atoned for himself, and plucks the fruit, the treasure, that for which all was sacrificed. There is another enantiodromia, and he rises in ecstasy. No longer the selfish, impulsive narcissist, Gilgamesh vows to save the Plant for the sake of everyone, he has himself become a wise man, a seer. Now the return from the Waters of Death is quick and easy, the journey through the mountains uneventful, for the power of “the magic herb...brings him safely over the sea to his native land” (CE 5, p.332).

A quite similar motif occurs in the Hymn of the Pearl, in which a youth takes on the quest assigned by his Divine Father in heaven:

When thou goest down...and bringest the One Pearl which lies in the middle of the sea which is encircled by the snorting serpent, thou shalt put on again thy robe of glory and thy mantle over it and with thy brother our next in rank be heir in our kingdom. (Jonas, 113)

In his descent the youth “allow[s] himself to be devoured by the monster” so as to “vanquish it from within” (Jonas, 120), and so retrieves the One Pearl of great price, which symbolizes his own “self-integration” (p. 126) with his “‘soul’ in the supranatural sense” (p. 125), “reintegration of the divine self--even of his own self, only not in the sense pertaining to an individual person” (Jonas, 128-29).

This symbolism applies equally well to the Robe of Life and the Sacred Plant of Immortality, representing the achievement of self-realization as the union of opposites, expressing the archetypal Self individuated:

The Sumerian pictograph for plant displays the complexity of the synthesis wonderfully. The two sets of four lines cross each other at right angles, forming a mesh, which is a third new entity, yet maintains the equal identities of the opposing forces. (Wolkstein, p. 144)

However, the full initiatory experience is not quite complete. Having lost everything, Gilgamesh feels he has regained it, he has defeated death and will now become immortal. But did not Utnapishtim say that death is inevitable? Therefore the goal is not yet reached. How better to stamp out the final illusions than by crushing the flower of renewed hope and conscious life so arduously achieved? Therefore comes a final irony: After the all-consuming struggle to

win the Plant of Immortality, he loses even that. So everything slips through his fingers until there is nothing.

Now, at last, is the “symbolic death” of Gilgamesh complete, the true nadir in his surrender, his purification. Here he gains the final “crushing defeat for man’s animal nature,” yet also an earnest of supreme salvation, because such a deed alone seems adequate to expiate Adam’s sin of unbridled instinctuality. The sacrifice is the very reverse of regression--it is a successful canalization of libido...a spiritualization of it. (CW 5, p. 263)

When Gilgamesh came back from the apsu he brought the Sacred Plant to earth with him. By bathing in the pool he enabled the snake at the bottom to work Enki’s will. Pools were sacred to the Lord of Wisdom, and his phallic snake representative, taking the Plant of Immortality, sheds his skin “while turning in the water.” Notes Jung, “The idea of transformation and renewal by means of a serpent is a well-substantiated archetype. It is the healing serpent, representing the god” (CW 12, p. 144), “symboliz[ing] the numen of the transformative act as well as the transformative substance itself” (CW 5, p. 436). In this way the sacred plant, holding a numinous power from out of the unconscious, the power of rebirth and renewal, of evolving libido intelligence, is integrated into the land, the foreground of the conscious personality.

When Gilgamesh returns to Uruk empty handed and resigned he has thereby gained immeasurably, for he still bore the Robe of Life. Said Jung, “Through sacrifice man ransoms himself from the fear of death and is reconciled to the demands of Hades” (CW 5, p. 431). The descent and return has “establish[ed] a relationship between the ego and the unconscious” (CW 5, p. 301) in which “the journey to the underworld was a plunge into the fountain of youth, and the libido, apparently dead, wakes to renewed fruitfulness (CW 5, p. 293).

With his return to Uruk Gilgamesh has been regenerated and born anew, he is the Wearer of the Robe of Life, and he has gained a new identity, as the man “who saw the abyss,” who has become conscious of the unconscious as it was understood shamanically, and thereby gained the guidance of Wisdom, the true Pearl of rare price. Now he is redeemed to himself and to the great gods, capable of bestowing an enlightened rule over Uruk and all Mesopotamia, returning to an extrovert life made fruitful as a conduit for the healing, nurturant powers of the Self, the spirit of God. This journey in self-transformation through the romance of love is aptly put in a quote from the Hindu *Rig Veda* cited by Jung:

Then the one, that was hidden in the shell,
Was born through the force of fiery torment.
From it there arose in the beginning love,
Which is the germ and the seed of knowledge.
The wise found the root of being in not-being
By investigating the impulses of the human heart.
(CW 5, p. 382)

The Last Chapter

The last chapter tells how the soul-brother was renewed from beyond death and reunited with the ego in a new, spiritualized form. This is the final transformation of Enkidu. When he dreamed of his descent as a bird and meeting with the baneful Ereshkigal, he foresaw his own journey back to the spirit-world. But whereas he was born from heaven, he dies into the Mesopotamian underworld as all mortals did--thereby further extending his humanization, his personal expression of the star of God carried in his heart. It is the profoundly human nature of the soul-complex that allows it to develop in tandem with the conscious personality, in a reflective give-and-take, to individuate the fully realized personality: "Soul is always a vision of the personal" (Monick, 1986, p.11).

So Enkidu must go and live in Ereshkigal's domain, to suffer death and eat dust among the other shades of the dead, in the House of Darkness. In this way he is also initiated through suffering into wisdom, into "the powers, omniscience and magic possessed by the dead" (Cooper, p. 147). However he is powerless to leave.

Gilgamesh, in turn, even though he was seeking his lost friend, did not go to Ereshkigal's realm but instead to the apsu. The reason for this was to gain Enki's initiation into the goat-fish wisdom, that is, mastery of the door to and from the spirit-world. With this mastery the door can be opened as well for Enkidu in the kur, thereby returning the favor that Enkidu first gave by delivering the hero from a wasted life.

The rebirth of Enkidu culminates the transformations in libido undergone in the story, and expresses the achievement of a consciously mediated relationship between the ego and its own inner world. Through the process of reflective give-and-take with the soul-figure, the ego has made the inner world "objectively real," symbolized by the risen Enkidu, who is now an initiated spirit. Realization of the soul-figure as a guide and teacher within is an ancient wisdom. Socrates, for example, was famous for his *daimonian* (ref?). For the Sufi Ibn 'Arabi, it was his Divine Youth. So too in Egyptian thought the soul evolves into the "Divine Ka," "the guidance of the Spiritual Witness" (Schwaller de Lubicz, p. 37). In shamanism, spirits become *allies* for the initiated shaman:

An "ally," he said, is a power a man can bring into his life to help him, advise him, and give him the strength necessary to perform acts, whether big or small, right or wrong. This ally is necessary to enhance a man's life, guide his acts, and further his knowledge. In fact, an ally is the indispensable aid to knowing. Don Juan said...:

"An ally will make you see and understand things about which no human could possibly enlighten you." (Castaneda, pocketbooks ed 1974, orig. U of CA Press ed 1968, p. 51)

The story of Gilgamesh is about acquiring the fruitful soul-figure as an ally within, the power of this bond reflecting the powers of love, of the heart, of phallic libido transformed into symbolic union with the Goatfish Lord.

To emphasize the importance of Enkidu's rebirth, the storyteller goes back to where Gilgamesh and Enkidu had killed Humbaba, and he then recounts a second version of the story from that point on. In this alternate story, Ishtar's great tree cannot be harvested for her throne and bed, for it is enwrapped by the dark powers of the unconscious, by an evil dragon. When Gilgamesh kills the dragon the tree is harvested, and he receives a special drum and beater made from its roots and crown.

Like the sacred Plant of Immortality, the great tree of the goddess is a symbol of self-realization, of wholeness achieved through the union of opposites:

The *huluppu*-tree...reflects the reality and struggle of the gods...[and] embodies the dual forces of the universe:...consciousness and unconsciousness, light and darkness, male and female, and the power of life and the power of death...[It represents] the synthesis of these numinous powers..., for the tree grows from the darkness and underworld into the light and consciousness. It is anchored in the underworld and grows toward the heavens. The tree is a part of the three kingdoms: the underworld of Ereshkigal, the earth of Enlil, and the heavens of An[u]...[and expresses] the mystery of the *first* seed, [for] we can take the seed in our hand and say, here is the beginning of life. It will emerge from the underworld, strive toward the heavens, and die back into the underworld, from which one of its descendants will emerge. (Wolkstein, p. 144)

This imagery of dying and rising we have seen described earlier by Diotima in the figure of Eros, the transformer. So the phallic tree, then, also represents the transformations of libido by which self-realization is gained. Its encirclement by the dragon is then the domination of ego-consciousness by instinctual unconsciousness, “the earth-encircling dragon of the original chaos, the ruler of evil principle of this world” (Jonas, 116), whose splitting apart enables emergence of the fruit of consciousness, the reward, the libido as an instrument of transformation, symbolized by the sacred drum and beater, whose origin in the crown and roots, the high and low of the great tree, reveals the goatfish road of the two-faced lord. We may then also surmise that the dragon in the roots is Enki’s agent as well, like the snake at the bottom of the pool. So then the motif of the tree and its harvesting by Gilgamesh represents his initiatory entrance onto the road of discipleship to the God of Wisdom, into bearing the Cross of Love over the Road of Death, like the Nordic god Odin who hung himself on the World Tree, Yggdrasill, in order to attain wisdom:

I’m aware that I hung
 on the windy tree,
 swung there night all of nine;
 gashed with a blade
 ...

None gave me bread,
 none gave me drink,
 down to the depths I peered
 to snatch up runes
 with a roaring screech
 and fall in a dizzied faint!

Wellbeing I won
 and wisdom too,
 I grew and joyed in my growth;
 from a word to a word
 I was led to a word
 from a deed to another deed.

(B. Branston, 1980. *Gods of the North*, NY: Thames & Hudson, 1st paperback ed published w/revisions in the USA. Original work published 1955. p.115)

The sacred drum and beater of the shaman are ubiquitous instruments used to assist in generating the ecstatic trance necessary to travel to the other world. In contrast to the celestial Bull sequence in the first version, the death of the dragon in the second is treated as a great boon to Ishtar, for

which the drum and beater made from her tree are her gift in return, Ishtar was a great shamanic initiate, and in her own famous descent to Ereshkigal, she had had to strip off another piece of her jewelry and clothes at each of the seven gates to the House of Ashes, only to arrive before her sister stark naked, where she was hung like a piece of meat on a hook. So Ishtar's gift to Gilgamesh of the drum and beater is so that he, now the triumphant sun-hero, the great dragonslayer, can also follow the second half of the goatfish way and make the descent into the watery abyss, and so gain the "treasure hard to attain."

Gilgamesh's great abuse in this second version of his fall is his misuse of the numinous powers of the drum and beater, instead of undergoing the descent, because "he does not yet have sufficient consciousness to use them wisely" (Wolkstein, p. 143). The story at this point emphasizes the initiatory undertaking as a purposeful act of consciousness, and highlights the ignorance of Gilgamesh. It is this lack of appreciation that brings about the enantiodromia, as the drum and beater themselves fall into the nether world. When Enkidu, out of love, offers to retrieve them, Gilgamesh unwittingly assents to the sacrifice of his soul-brother, compounding the irony by warning him in detail how to be careful in the nether world. So Enkidu, like a clown, a fool, or a trickster, does everything he was warned not to do, thus guaranteeing that the spirits of the nether world would catch hold and bind him tight. He gives himself for his beloved. Here Enkidu serves his master, the two-faced Lord of Wisdom, more obviously than in the first version, where Enki is better hidden.

Enkidu suffers the fate of death, and must face Ereshkigal. Then Gilgamesh, enacting his vow of the first version to plead the case of Enkidu before the great gods, goes to the shrines of Enlil and Sin, only to be rebuffed. Finally he turns to Enki, and so discovers his patron: Enki is greatly moved by his plea. Here the story of Enki's education of Gilgamesh along the goatfish road merges with that recounted in the first version, so that when Enki turns to Shamash and orders the great vent opened, he acts as much in repines to Gilgamesh's return to Uruk I the first version, as to the simple pleas made in the second version. In this way the second version complements, extends, and completes the first to show the full initiatory context and sequence of shamanic adepthood, by which romantic true love completes its journey from first awakening to final form, from the teaching of Enkidu to the teaching of Enki, how homosexual libido is transformed in the service of the Spirit and consciousness.

The scene in which Enkidu issues from the great Eye of the nether world and embraces Gilgamesh enacts a second sacred union, a reunion of the two companions, a marriage on a new, sublime level. A similar idea occurs in European alchemy: A "lesser coniunctio" of the King and Queen is followed by death and rebirth in the "greater coniunctio" of spiritual realization, "the goal of the *opus*, the supreme accomplishment" (Edinger, 1985, p. 211). This greater union of the two Companions is a merger of human and divine, of conscious and unconscious, of the universal opposites, based on an immortalized love, a love that truly has lasted beyond the grave, the promise of the star of Anu, of the Sacred Plant, the great tree, the one Pearl of great price, fulfilled.

Through love is achieved the mystery of true immortality: This is the great spiritual understanding conveyed in *Gilgamesh*.

Guided by the high lords, Enki, Shamash, and Ishtar, the heart of Gilgamesh is shaped and opened for love, so that romance with the reflection-soul can take him on the journey of self-realization. At the end Gilgamesh returns to a full mortal life on earth, reborn, renewed, with the soul of Enkidu alive in his heart.

The Cycle of Gilgamesh

The story of Gilgamesh recounts the constellation of libido in a masculine figure of the soul, in the service of maturation of the personality, followed by its sacrifice and return to the unconscious, then its renewal. Here is a cycle of transformation, the cycle of Enki, of Thoth, of Mercurius, of Eros as Magus, Teacher, successive enactments of which produce further alchemical refinements in the product. In his book *Ego and Archetype*, Edward Edinger has describes this cyclic pattern as the process by which consciousness develops:

Psychic growth involves a series of inflated or heroic acts. These provoke rejection and are followed by alienation, repentance, restitution and renewed inflation. This cyclic process repeats itself again and again in the early phases of psychological development, each cycle producing an increment of consciousness. Thus, gradually, consciousness is built up. (p. 42)

By undergoing this process, by working it through or, as Jung put it, “having-it-out” (quoted in Monick, 1987, p. 107), one becomes the willing partner of the Intelligence of the libido, such that eventually there occurs “a state in which the ego is related to the Self without being identified with it. Out of this state there emerges a more or less continuous dialogue between the conscious ego and the unconscious” (p. 96). Elsewhere Edinger says,

The psychotherapeutic process is likewise an “alternating to improve.” One is thrown back and forth between the opposites interminably. But very gradually a new standpoint emerges that allows the opposites to be experienced at the same time. This new standpoint is the *coniunctio*. (Edinger, 1985, p. 216)

The story of Gilgamesh describes such a process of inward development, of individuation, occurring through masculine romantic love, and guided by the wise Lord of Wisdom. As such this story can serve as a model to inform that love whenever it is experienced. Such experience contains a message from psyche to the lover: It is your heavenly star, your hidden magic-brother, your wraith-buddy soul that you feel, calling to you from your heart. The soul is a mystery that casts a hypnotic spell--who is not captivated by the search for true love? The story of Gilgamesh can illuminate that search, which ultimately is for one’s true self, for one’s own psyche and the great initiation by which psyche is realized in the conscious personality.

In this way the story of Gilgamesh can facilitate the awakening of the reflection-soul, of self-awareness, and can guide the journey of working-through the cycles of libido’s evolution, can bring redemption and healing, can reveal the secret treasures promised by love. Through facing and entering the unconscious, for example through dreaming and dream interpretation, through feats of imagination, through synchronicity (ref), through inner suffering and joy, through facing death, through coming to terms with the archetypes, a psyche shapes and individuates a uniquely conscious personality. When this understanding becomes the basis for a relationship between two men, then relationship serves the individuation process, which in turn refines and strengthens the quality of relationship. Together, then, the experiences of outer and inner reality can work to fulfill the potential wholeness of the personality. When a man can see the mythic level in his romantic yearnings and losses, he can begin to differentiate true “outer reality” from his inner fantasies, and thereby to reclaim projections of the unconscious (attractions and repulsions) onto others. This is the beginning of loving another person as that person truly is, rather than illusorily as part of a mythic epos. Projections draw one into experience, yet they also grip one in a state of unconsciousness.

Recognition of the living truth and power of the myth of romantic love in psyche, at the same time as it allows a new awareness of outer reality, also enables the search for the one Pearl of great price, the soul, and its integration of conscious and unconscious. The story of Gilgamesh

describes a sequence of experiences, a series of images and feelings that redeem the soul. Gilgamesh wrestling Enkidu in the doorway, marrying him before Ninsun, killing the Bull of Heaven, wailing over the corpse of Enkidu, wandering through the wilderness, plucking the Plant of Immortality, crying at the waterhole, embracing the ghost of Enkidu, and so on. These are the archetypal scenes, the templates or patterns for actual experiences that are fleshed out in a uniquely individual way for each person, through which the soul is constellated and made “real” in successive refinements. The challenge in individuation is for the person to take on and work through the unique aspects of inner experience to discover the universal, the archetypal, for then this root-level of the experience can be known directly and immediately, and can be facilitated toward integration, toward the further actualization of the personality.

Through the descent into psyche one becomes an active partner in the story of Gilgamesh, and the myth lives in one knowingly:

For the parts of divinity lost to the darkness can be reached only down there in the depth in which they are swallowed up; and the power which holds them...can be overcome only from within. (Jonas, 127)

The tremendous force of the libido is accessed and harnessed by living out the archetypal cycle of the joy-woe man in experience while working it through, during which the inherent intelligence of phallic libido is personified within to guide and work the libidinal power like Vulcan working iron in his great furnace within the volcano. This god of libido has many faces, for he is mercurial, a wanderer like Gilgamesh, but he is a great friend, and loyally awaits and encourages a man to find him, through love. Through his embrace a man can be drawn into the mysteries of his force, a man can learn to embrace and transform the joy-stick of his phallus and thereby sink below the waters and climb up to heaven. His divine lover will teach him, the finest guide because his love is the desire for wholeness itself personified in the perfect partner, the Companion, the wonderful soul-buddy, who struggles, suffers, and grows along with his man. Through him a man can become one of the Companions of Enki, one of the athletic heroes in the god’s retinue, an initiate at the source of libido, the paradise in the abyss. Through him a man can make the myth real, can personalize it in a give-and-take experience with the soul, and so for the sake of love make his soul real, and accomplish the goal of the hero-shaman in mortal life, the immortal union with his soul that constellates the archetype of the Self, the center of the psyche and neumen of God.

Shamanic initiation is the birthright of the homosexual lover, whose fertility can bear the child of wisdom. In *Gilgamesh* masculine romance is fecund and fruitful, child of the gods, blessed by Ishtar and Shamash, midwifed by the goatfish Lord of Wisdom. It tells of initiation through love into the powers of life and the mysteries of death, into the “kingship” of spiritual self-realization that wise teachers have always spoken of. An image that aptly sums up this theme, seen on a Roman coin from the reign of Augustus, shows the Goatfish Lord steering a rudder connected to a globe of the world, with a beribboned cornucopia riding on his back (MacNeice, 1964, p. 122), the original dragon of chaos replaced by the triumphant Lord of Wisdom.

THE STORY OF GILGAMESH

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Prologue

“The one who saw the abyss I will make the land know, of him who knew all, let me tell the whole story. As the lord of wisdom, he who knew everything, Gilgamesh, who saw things secret, opened the place hidden, and carried back word of the time before the flood--he travelled the road, exhausted, in pain, and cut his works into a stone tablet.

“He ordered built the walls of Uruk of the Sheepfold and the walls of holy Eanna, stainless sanctuary. Observe its walls, whose upper hem is like bronze; behold its inner wall, which no work can equal...Ascend the walls of Uruk, walk around the top, inspect the base, view the brickwork. Is not the very core made of oven-fired brick? As for its foundation, was it not laid down by the seven sages? ...

“Find the copper tablet-box, slip loose the ring-bolt made of bronze, open the mouth to its secrets. Draw out the tablet of lapis lazuli and read it aloud: How Gilgamesh endured everything harsh,Gilgamesh, dazzling, sublime. Opener of the mountain passes, he crossed the ocean, the wide sea, to where Shamash rises, scouted the world regions: the one who seeks life, forcing his way to Utnapishtim the remote one, the man who restored life where the Flood had destroyed it, peopling the earth.

“Is there a king like him anywhere? Who like Gilgamesh can boast, ‘I am the king!’?”

Ch 1: The Confrontation at the Gate

A long time ago in the great city of Uruk, a man named Gilgamesh became the king. He was young, intelligent, handsome, big and muscular--beautiful to behold--and very strong, being two-thirds divine and one-third human, son of the warrior-king Lugalbanda and the goddess Ninsun, the Great Wild Cow.

However, at first his rule was not good, for Gilgamesh lacked a sense of real purpose in life. Out of arrogant idleness and boredom he engaged in brawling and wenching, oppressing his people like a ruffian, insulting them and taking from the weak. Finally, the people could bear it no longer and cried to the gods in lamentation. Anu, god of the sky, heard them and spoke to Aruru, the Great Lady: "You, Aruru, who created humanity, create now a second image if Gilgamesh: may the image be equal to the time of his heart. Let them square off one against the other, that Uruk may have peace. So Aruru shaped a picture of Anu in her heart and, pinching off some clay she put Anu's image in it and threw it into the wilderness, and there fashioned the wild man Enkidu, big and hairy as a bull.

At first Enkidu was innocent of all things human, he was "the man-as-he-was-in-the-beginning," and he ran in the forests with the gazelles, eating grass with them and drinking at the waterholes. One day a hunter saw him tearing up traps he had set and he was deeply troubled, for Enkidu was awesome and terrifying to behold. On a second day the hunter saw Enkidu at the same watering place, and then again on a third day. Sorrow and distress filled his heart, and his face looked like someone on a long journey. He went to his father, saying,

there is a man who has come from the hills. In all the land he is the most powerful; like a shooting star of the god Anu, he has awesome strength. For terror I cannot go near him.

The hunter's father advised him to seek out Gilgamesh in Uruk, saying of the king, "In all the land he is the most powerful: like a shooting star of Anu, he has awesome strength. Go, set your face toward Uruk."

So the hunter went to the city, to the royal palace. He spoke to Gilgamesh, who told him to take a love-priestess of Ishtar and return with her to the watering hole. This the hunter did, and he waited with the courtesan there for three days. Then the animals came, and Enkidu was among them. The hunter encouraged the love-priestess to strip off her clothes and open her legs where Enkidu could see her. The woman was not shy, and when the curious Enkidu came near she embraced him, and seduced him into sexual union with her for six days and seven nights until he was exhausted.

When Enkidu on the seventh day turned again towards his animals, they all fled from him, the gazelles bolting at his approach. Enkidu now had the thoughts of a man in his head, he knew language, he had acquired a human identity, a name. Then the priestess took him to a shepherd's house and taught him the ways of civilized people, how to eat human food, drink wine, and dress himself. And she told him about the great city Uruk, where "every day there's a festival," and of mighty Gilgamesh the king, who lorded over the people like a ruffian. When Enkidu heard these words, he felt a deep yearning, but at the last part a great anger surged up in him, and he said, "I will call to him, I will cry out in Uruk, 'I, I alone, am powerful. I am the one who changes fates, who was born into the wild, might and strength belong to me!'" Then the priestess beckoned Enkidu to come to Uruk with her, saying, "I will show you Gilgamesh the joy-woe man. Gaze at him--observe his face--beautiful in manhood, well hung, his whole body filled with sexual glow: he is stronger than you." There, she continued, "you will embrace him like a wife. You will love him like yourself."

Meanwhile, that night in Uruk as Gilgamesh slept he had two dreams, and in the morning he sought out his mother, Ninsun, and told them to her. "There was a star in the heavens," he said, and

like a shooting star of Anu it fell on me. I tried to lift it; too much for me. I tried to move it; I could not move it. The people swarmed around it; companions kissed its feet. I myself hugged him like a wife, and I threw him down at your feet so that you compared him with me.

And then he told Ninsun the second dream: An axe fell over Uruk, the people pressed up to it, and then "I lay him down at your feet and I hugged him like a wife, so that you compared him with me." After listening to these dreams, the wise Ninsun said to Gilgamesh,

The axe you saw is a man. You loved him and hugged him like a wife and I treated him as your equal. Go find him, I say: this is a strong companion able to save a friend, strong in the land; power belongs to him. Like a shooting star of Anu he has awesome strength.

Soon after this, Gilgamesh went one day, not thinking of his dreams at all, to the house of a new bride to have her before the groom. But as he walked up to the gate a great bull-like man, a stranger, stepped between the posts and blocked the way. It was Enkidu, who had come to Uruk to stop the king's injustice. The people cried out, "A hero has come for men of decency, for Gilgamesh the godlike, his equal has arrived!" Then Gilgamesh grabbed at him, but Enkidu was as strong as he was, so they grappled in the doorway, locked together like two angry bulls. They broke the doorposts and the whole house shook. They tumbled into the street and fought there, knocking over a wall. They wrestled together for a long time, as a vast crowd gathered around them.

Ch 2: The Sacred Marriage

As the lord Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, wrestled against Enkidu, the strong man from the wilds who opposed him in the bride's doorway that day, he was eventually able to throw Enkidu over his knee. But when he did so, his anger suddenly cooled and he turned away, saying "Enkidu has no match, in the wilderness he was born; no one stands against him." He had realized that Enkidu was the star of Anu foretold in his dreams. When Enkidu heard these words spoken in the abrupt calmness, his eyes filled with tears of joy, and he sat down crying. Gilgamesh came over, took his hand, then embraced him tightly. As Enkidu returned the embrace he said to Gilgamesh, "A man without match your mother bore you, your head is raised above other men's." Then they kissed each other deeply, and as they did so their hearts were joined together as one. From that day forward they were inseparable, sharing even the same bed.

Then Enkidu began to cry again. When Gilgamesh asked what was the matter, Enkidu told him of the fearsome demon Humbaba, who guarded the great Cedar Forest in the distant mountains. "His shout is the storm-flood, his mouth, fire, his breath is death," said Enkidu in obvious fear. But Gilgamesh was inspired and said, "Let us kill him, you and me, and drive evil out of the land!" Then grabbing Enkidu's hand, Gilgamesh rushed off down the street, to the great temple where his mother lived, the goddess Ninsun. They entered and approached her presence, and Gilgamesh asked for advice. Ninsun listened carefully, then retired to her inner chamber and put on beautiful robes and jewels. She climbed a tall parapet to the roof, and there she prayed to the sun god, Shamash, whose will it was that Gilgamesh kill Humbaba and, indeed, all the evil things that infested the land. Ninsun returned from the parapet and called Gilgamesh and Enkidu to her, and there enacted a sacred ceremony. While Gilgamesh offered incense in honor of Shamash, Ninsun said to Enkidu, "Strong one, you are not the child of my womb. Now I adopt you, along with the cultic lovers of Gilgamesh." Then she placed necklaces of many beautiful and precious gems around his neck, and he was taken away by the sacred love-priestesses of Ishtar and made one of them, that his sexual powers in love-making would be spiritually increased for the sake of Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu were now bonded in a sacred union of love and sexual companionship, they were married as brother to a brother and like husband and wife, a union acknowledged and celebrated by the entire population of Uruk, and then they lived in the king's great palace, near the house of Ninsun in the middle of the city. They did everything together, went hunting lions in the nearby hills, sat side by side in the king's audience chamber.

Gilgamesh ordered great armor, battle axes, and swords forged for himself and his Companion, and as soon as they were ready the two men took them and set off together that morning with a prayer to Shamash, to seek Humbaba in the distant mountains of the Cedar Forest. The people gathered to see them off, and the city elders entrusted the life of Gilgamesh to Enkidu, saying to him, "Enkidu will protect his friend, safeguard his companion: he will carry his body over pitfalls." Then to Gilgamesh they said,

Let Enkidu go ahead of you, who knows the way, has travelled the road. The one who goes in front guards his companion. Shamash grant you your wish. May he open for you the barred path, unclosethe road for your footsteps, unlock the mountain for your foot. May the night give you things that please you, and may you be granted your wish as a child is.

Then Enkidu turned to Gilgamesh, saying, "Since you must fight, be on your way! Make your heart fearless. Follow me. I know where he lives, and the road Humbaba travels." With that the Companions departed from Uruk and soon put its gates far behind them. Gilgamesh had now

been thoroughly transformed by Enkidu's companionship, leaving behind his adolescent prankishness to find his true manhood and purpose in life.

Ch 3: The Fight with the Demon Humbaba

After leaving Uruk, Gilgamesh and Enkidu encouraged each other with such eagerness that in three days they had crossed the distance that usually took a month and fifteen days. So they soon came to the high mountains, and after climbing for some time and seeing no one, they finally reached the edge of the great Cedar Forest, and there they stood facing a huge bolted gate. The path was well-travelled here, and so they knew that the Guardian of the Forest, the giant demon Humbaba, came by frequently. Then Enkidu walked up to the gate and threw back the bolt. But as he began to push the door open, he was overcome by fear, he stopped, he stepped back. Then Gilgamesh said to him,

Touch my heart, you will not fear death. Shouting together we will rise up like a kettledrum. Stand, friend, we will go up together. Forget death, fear nothing. With unwaning strength the wary man, going in front, guards his body and protects his companion. Even though they fall, they have made themselves a name!

And with these rousing words, Enkidu's heart was lightened, and together they stepped through the gate. Then they stood still, marvelling at the view now revealed to them: Towering cedars marched away to distant mists from which the great slopes of the Cedar Mountain rose up to a white-crowned loftiness, the home of the gods, the base of Ishtar's throne. Below its great bulk, they saw how vast, lush and beautiful the great forest really was, empty of all human beings.

Then they entered the forest, walking along the path made by Humbaba, and travelled for three days into its heartland. On the first night, after they had embraced and gone to sleep, Gilgamesh was awakened by a bad dream at midnight and he reached out in fear, saying to Enkidu,

Friend, I took hold of a wild bull. He bellowed and kicked up earth; dust made the sky dark. I ran from him. With terrible strength he seized my flank, tore out [my guts. Then] he provided food [and water. I] drank, he gave me water from his waterskin.

After listening closely, Enkidu then untied the dream, saying the bull was "bright Shamash. When we are in trouble, he will seize our hands." Enkidu encouraged his master onward, saying together they would finish what neither could have accomplished alone, their united strength was more than twice what either had by himself, it was like a three-stranded tow-rope.

On the second night Gilgamesh was again awakened by a bad dream, and he said to Enkidu,

A mountain toppled. It laid me low and took hold of my feet. [But] a man appeared, the handsomest in the land. From under the mountain he pulled me out, gave me water to drink. My heart grew quiet. He set me on my feet.

In reply, Enkidu said the mountain was Humbaba, the dream meant "we'll seize [him] and throw down his shape, and his height will lie prone on the plain." On the third night, Gilgamesh had another, terrifyingly bad dream--darkness covered all light, lightning and fire spewed from roiling clouds, and it rained death. Then the fire died and whatever had fallen out of the sky turned to ashes. After listening to this, Enkidu again interpreted the images as highly auspicious, and urged his frightened Companion to be of strong heart.

On the fourth day they still saw no one, so Gilgamesh, his courage regained, took his great ax and felled one of the cedars. When Humbaba heard the noise he came immediately, bellowing, "Who has come and slighted the trees grown on my mountain!" As the giant suddenly rushed out of the underbrush at the two Companions in a raging battle frenzy, they were struck by terror and turned to run. But then the sun god, Shamash, spoke down from the sky, saying to them, "Draw near, fear not." Gilgamesh cried out to Shamash with tears in his eyes, and the god raised eight mighty storm-winds and sent them against the charging demon. They beat against his eyes and swirled around his arms and legs, immobilizing him.

Then Humbaba cried out, "Let me go, Gilgamesh. You will be my master and I your servant." As Gilgamesh hesitated, Enkidu said to his blood-brother, "Friend, catch the bird now." Gilgamesh felt the truth of it, so he drew back his great ax and struck Humbaba in the neck. Then Enkidu did the same. On the third stroke, mighty Humbaba fell, shaking the cedars for two leagues around. Then they cut off Humbaba's head, and turned back toward Uruk in triumph. A great natural treasure was now opened to the city artists and artisans, and the young king was no longer a useless wastrel, but a hero and benefactor instead!

Ch 4: The Mighty Bull of Heaven

When Gilgamesh and his Companion Enkidu reentered Uruk with the head of Humbaba, they were greeted with great joy and acclaim. Going to the palace, Gilgamesh washed himself and brushed his hair and put on clean clothes, covering himself with a beautiful cloak. He then put on his crown.

The goddess Ishtar looked down from heaven and saw Gilgamesh in his glory. She fell in love, and called to him, "Come, Gilgamesh, be my lover! Give me the taste of your body!" But Gilgamesh immediately refused her. In angry tones he recounted all her previous mortal lovers, such as Tammuz, whom she had turned into a wolf, and Ishullann, who became a frog. The Goddess of Love lives forever, Gilgamesh told her, while humans can only die. So, concluded Gilgamesh, "you'd love me in my turn and, as with them, set my fate!"

As soon as Ishtar heard these words, she flew to her father and mother, Anu and Antum, crying. "Father, Gilgamesh has insulted me," she sobbed. But, replied Anu, "Didn't you yourself pick a fight, and Gilgamesh recited your iniquities, your bad faith and your cursings?" Ishtar, however, was unmoved by these words, and told her father to create the Bull of Heaven and send him to kill Gilgamesh. She threatened to break open the gates to the underworld so that the dead would arise and eat all the living, if he didn't do it.

On hearing this, Anu saw that Ishtar could not be deterred. So he made the Bull, and Ishtar led him down to the earth, to the river near Uruk, the Euphrates, where she loosed him. At the first snorting of the Bull, a hole split apart the ground and two hundred people fell in it. At his second snorting, another hole swallowed three hundred people. As Gilgamesh and Enkidu ran towards him the Bull snorted again, and a big crack yawned right in front of Enkidu. But he leaped up and grabbed ahold of the Bull by his horns. The Bull spat on him and threw shit at him, but could not shake him off. Then Enkidu called out to Gilgamesh, "Friend, we have made ourselves great. How shall we overthrow him? Friend, I see a way. Stick him behind the neck!" Gilgamesh then drew his great sword and as the Bull rushed upon him rose up and plunged it into his neck just behind the horns. The great Bull faltered and blood gushed forth, and then his legs fell under him. At once Gilgamesh and Enkidu killed him, and cut out his heart. They offered it to Shamash, and then they sat down to worship the sun god together, the two blood-brothers.

But Ishtar, disguised as a mourner, went to the wall of Uruk and called out a curse against Gilgamesh for killing the Bull of Heaven. Enkidu, when he heard the curse, cut out one of the Bull's thighs and threw it in her face, and he called out angrily to her, "If I could reach you, as I can him, it would have been done to you: I'd hang his guts around your arm!" With this said the, Ishtar set up a mournful wailing with the sacred love-priestesses gathered along the wall.

Meanwhile Gilgamesh called all the artisans together, and the great horns of the Bull, each covered with thirty minas of lapis lazuli and filled with three measures of oil, were removed and brought to the shrine of the king's ancestors, to the Sacred Bedchamber, where they were hung, while the oil was offered to the god Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh's father.

Then Gilgamesh and Enkidu washed themselves in the Euphrates, and embraced each other warmly. Afterwards they rode back into Uruk, and the cheering people crowded around them. Then Gilgamesh spoke to them, asking, "Who is the best formed of heroes? Who is the most powerful among men? Gilgamesh is the best formed of heroes! Enkidu is the most powerful among men!" Then they returned to the palace where a great feast was held, and at last, tired but happy, the sated heroes got into bed and slept.

Ch 5: A Great King Loses His Soul

After the heroes of Uruk, Gilgamesh the king and his lover Enkidu, had celebrated their conquest over the dreaded Bull of Heaven in a great feast at their palace, they went to sleep, but in the deep night Enkidu suddenly jolted awake in terror, and he turned to Gilgamesh with great agitation. “Friend, why are the great gods in council?” he cried out, and proceeded to tell his dream: He saw the gods Anu, Enlil, Enki, and Shamash debating, and Anu told Enlil that Gilgamesh should die because he and Enkidu had killed Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven. However, then Enlil said that Enkidu, not Gilgamesh, must die. Then Shamash spoke, saying, “Was it not by my order that they killed the Bull of Heaven and Humbaba? Should now innocent Enkidu die?” But Enlil only sneered, dismissing Shamash as too much like the mortals, “because, much like one of their comrades, you went down to them daily.”

When Gilgamesh heard Enkidu’s dream, he began sobbing and cried out, “My brother, my dear brother! They would free me at the cost of my brother! Must I beside the shade of the dead sit down, at the shadowy door, never again to see my dear brother with my eyes?” Then Gilgamesh desperately vowed to plead for Enkidu in front of all the great gods, while Enkidu angrily cursed everything that had happened to him, because now “the paralysis demon has been sicked on me.” But just then Shamash heard Enkidu and spoke down to him from heaven:

Listen: hasn’t Gilgamesh, your beloved friend, made you lie down in [his] great bed? Hasn’t he made you lie down in a bed of honor, and placed you on the peaceful seat at his left hand? The world’s kings have kissed your feet. He will make the people of Uruk weep for you, the whole city, fill up with sorrow for your sake. And afterwards he will carry the signs of grief on his own body, putting on the skins of dogs and ranging the wilderness.

And with these words, Enkidu’s heart was comforted, and he then blessed what he had just cursed.

That night Enkidu had another dream, and he told it to Gilgamesh: A monstrous, dark-faced man with the paws of a lion and the talons of an eagle grabbed at him and transformed him into a bird, and then led him down to the House of Darkness, “the house where one who goes in never comes out again, the road that, if one takes it, one never comes back.” There Enkidu entered the House of Ashes and came before the Queen of the Underworld, Ereshkigal. She was listening intently to her scribe, Belit-tseri, who was kneeling in front of her throne reading aloud from a tablet. At Enkidu’s entrance, Ereshkigal lifted her head to stare at him, and said, “Who has brought this one here?”

Enkidu was sick that day, lying in bed without strength. For twelve days he lay sick in bed, wasting away without seeming cause. By the night of the twelfth day, Enkidu had arrived at death’s door. All night Gilgamesh sat there holding him in his arms. At the first glimmer of dawn Enkidu died, and then Gilgamesh spoke to his friend, crying out a mournful lament:

I have been to you, Enkidu, your mother and your father; I will weep for you in the wilderness. For Enkidu, for my friend, I weep like a wailing woman, howling bitterly. [You were] the axe at my side, the bow at my arm, the dagger in my belt, the shield in front of me, my festive garment, my splendid attire. An evil has risen up and robbed me! My friend, my little brother, together have we gone everywhere and climbed mountains; we caught the Bull of Heaven, we brought down Humbaba. Now what is this sleep that has taken hold of you? You’ve become dark. You can’t hear me. I touched his heart, it does not beat.

With these words, Gilgamesh covered Enkidu's face with a veil. Then he stood up, pacing and tearing at his hair. He ripped off all his fine clothes, and covered his body with unshorn dog skins. He set up a wail and refused to leave Enkidu's body or let it be prepared for burial. For six days and seven nights he refused, until a worm fell out of Enkidu's nose. Only then did he let the undertakers come in. He called all the artists and craftsmen of the land to make a beautiful statue of Enkidu, an image of gold, with a chest of lapis lazuli, inlaid with carnelian. Finally, he filled lapis lazuli bowl with cream, and offered it to Shamash.

Ch 6: How the King Sought His Lost Soul

After Enkidu died, Gilgamesh could not get him out of his mind, and took to roaming the hills in pain for his lost Companion. He resolved to seek out Utnapishtim, the only man made immortal by the gods, so he set off across the land until he came one night to a great mountain. There he saw lions and was afraid, but took his weapons and slew them. Climbing up, then, he saw he had come to the great mountains called Mashu, the Twins, the twin peaks that protect the sun god when he comes and goes: "Their tops touch the vault of heaven; their feet touch the underworld."

In the side of the mountains Gilgamesh saw a gate, and coming closer he saw it was guarded by a Scorpion-man and his woman, terrifying, dreadful creatures. His face grew dark and he stopped, but gathering his wits again, he stepped forward and approached them. The Scorpion-man called out to him, addressing the divine part, the "flesh of the gods," asking, "Why have you undertaken this long journey? Why have you come here before me, to this place whose crossings are troublesome?" And walking up Gilgamesh replied, "Death and life I wish to know." But the Scorpion-man said, "Never has a mortal man done that, Gilgamesh. Over the mountain, no one has ever travelled the remote path." And then Gilgamesh said, "because of the pain in my belly, though my face is wasted by cold or heat, I will go, sighing...Now therefore open the gate of the mountain." So the Scorpion-man loosed the bolt and let him inside the Twins of Shamash, and Gilgamesh entered on the Road of the Sun therein. Twelve double-hours it took to reach the center, and almost all the while it was pitch dark. Not only that, but at the eighth double-hour heat shot out at him and he became feverish, and at the ninth hour the frozen north wind cut into his face and chilled him to the bone. But as the eleventh hour came, there was a faint light, the "shadow of Shamash," and by the twelfth hour the light was bright. Soon Gilgamesh came to the end of the tunnel and entered a garden formed entirely of gemstones, plants with lapis lazuli leaves and carnelian fruits, beautiful to look at, and a wonderful cedar tree encrusted with precious stones in many bright colors.

But feeling only the pain in his belly, Gilgamesh walked on with hardly a glance, and soon he came to a house by the sea, the house of Siduri the Barmaid, who made wine in golden bowls and vats. Having seen this strange man coming, Siduri thought from his ruined looks he could be a murderer, and so she had bolted herself behind the door. But Gilgamesh walked up and called out to her, and so she asked him,

Why is your strength wasted, your face sunken? Why has evil fortune entered your heart, done in your looks? There is sorrow in your belly. Your face is like that of a man who has gone on a long journey. Your face is weathered by cold and heat because you roam the wilderness in search of a windpuff.

And Gilgamesh then answered,

Barmaid, it is not that my strength is wasted, my face sunken, not that evil fortune has entered my heart, done in my looks. It is not the sorrow in my belly, not that I look like a man who has gone on a long journey, nor that the cold and heat have weathered my features--not for that do I roam the wilderness in quest of a windpuff, but because of my friend, companion Enkidu loved-one, we overcame everything: climbed the mountain, captured the Bull of Heaven and killed him, brought Humbaba to grief. My friend whom I love dearly underwent with me all hardships. [But] the fate of mankind overtook him. Six days and seven nights I wept over him until a worm came out of his nose. Then I was afraid. The case of my friend lies heavy on me. How can I be still? How can I be silent? The friend I

loves has turned to clay. Enkidu, the friend I loved, has turned to clay. Me, shall I not lie down like him, never again to move?

When she heard these words, Siduri said to Gilgamesh, “None but Shamash crosses the sea, painful is the crossing, troublesome the road, and everywhere the Waters of Death stream across its face.” But then she told him where to find Urshanabi, the Boatman, who could take him across. So Gilgamesh went down to the water and Urshanabi spoke to him, asking why he roamed the wilderness in search of a wind-puff. To which Gilgamesh repeated what he had said to the Barmaid about his beloved. Then Urshanabi agreed to help, and had him cut down and prepare poles from the forest. With these they entered the boat and cast off. In three days they had covered the distance usually travelled in forty-five, and so arrived at the Waters of Death.

Then Urshanabi made Gilgamesh move the boat by poling along the bottom, but warned him not to touch the Waters of Death, even though each heave on one of the poles wore it down. But just in time they came upon land--it was “the source if all rivers,” the garden of paradise within the watery abyss--and the immortal Utnapishtim stepped forward. Gilgamesh spoke to him, saying,

My friend, the one I love dearly has turned to dirt--Enkidu. I said, “I will go to Utnapishtim, the remote one about whom they tell tales.” I turned, wandering, over all the lands. I crossed uncrossable mountains. I travelled all the seas. No real sleep has calmed my face. I have worn myself out in sleeplessness; my flesh is filled with grief. I have killed bear, hyena, lion, panther, tiger, stag and ibex. I ate their flesh, covered myself with their skins. I slept in dirt and bitumen. I lay down with animals. I am the unlucky one, the fated.

Then Utnapishtim asked Gilgamesh,

Why, Gilgamesh, are you full of woe, you who have been made of the flesh of the gods and man? Do we build a house forever? Do we seal a contract for all time? Does hostility last forever between enemies. Does the river forever rise higher, bringing on floods? From the beginning there is no permanence. The sleeping and the dead, how like brothers they are! The man-as-he-was-in-the-beginning and the hero: are they not the same when they arrive at their fate? The Anunnaki, the divine judges, Mammetum with them, mother of Destiny, set the end of things. They settle death and life. As for death, its time is hidden. The time of life is shown plain.

Gilgamesh looked long at Utnapishtim, and then he said, “Your features are no different than mine. I’m like you. And you are not different, or I from you. Tell me, how did you stand in the assembly of the Gods, asking for life?” And Utnapishtim replied, “I will uncover for you, Gilgamesh, a hidden thing, tell you a secret of the gods.” Then he told the story of the Flood.

The Flood

The great gods in council resolved that the Lord of the Air, Enlil, should send a flood to destroy humanity, and they all took a vow not to forewarn anyone, so as to keep their plans secret. But then Father Enki, Lord of the Abyss, came down from the meeting hall in heaven to the city of Shurippak, and there he hovered before a reed wall. Pretending to muse out loud, he addressed the wall thus:

Reed-wall, reed-wall! Wall, wall! Reed-wall, listen! Wall, pay attention! Tear down the house. Build an ark. Abandon riches. Seek life. Load the seed of every living thing into your ark, the boat that you will build,

and he then gave instructions for its building.

It just so happened that on the other side of the reed wall a man was standing when Enki talked to it, so he heard everything. It was Utnapishtim, the wise sage, Enki's disciple, and he replied to the God of Wisdom, "My lord, what you have thus spoken I will do in praise of you. As for me, I will need to answer the city, the people, and the elders." So Enki told him to say this:

Enlil hates me--me! I cannot live in your city or turn my face toward the land which is Enlil's. I will go down to the Abyss, to live with Ea, my lord. He will make richness rain down on you--the choicest birds, the rarest fish. The land will have its fill of harvest riches. At dawn bread he will pour down on you--showers of wheat.

Utnapishtim did as he was told, and the people took his words with great joy and helped him enthusiastically. In seven days the great ark was finished and Utnapishtim loaded on it all his family and "the seed of all living creatures. The animals of the fields, wild beasts of the fields, the children of all the craftsmen I drove aboard." When the sky next dawned, a terrible sight could be seen: Roiling black clouds surged up from the horizon laced with streaks of lightning, and a great wind and roaring thunder rushed ahead to cover all the land. Then the great rains lashed down so thickly that even the air was turned to darkness, and the din was overwhelming.

Even the gods shrank back in terror when they beheld the fruit of their plan, and Ishtar cried out in pain, "How could I speak evil in the Assembly of the Gods? How could I cry out for battle for the destruction of my people? I myself gave birth to my people! Now like the children of fish they will fill the sea!" And all the gods sat weeping.

For six days and seven nights the storm raged over the land, until only the ark of Utnapishtim rested on the waters. On the seventh day it grew quiet, and the clouds fell away. Opening a window, Utnapishtim cried for joy. After awhile an island rose from the sea and the ark grounded on its shore. Then after seven more days, Utnapishtim sent off a dove, but it soon came back. Then he sent a swallow, but it too returned. Finally he released a crow, and it circled overhead and left.

With rejoicing Utnapishtim made an offering to the gods of sweet perfumes. Not having received any offerings for some time, the gods came down to Utnapishtim to enjoy the fragrant scents. Ishtar, raising a special amulet, an iridescent fly made by Grandfather Anu for love-making, said, "Gods, let me not forget this, by the power of this lapis lazuli on my neck. These evil days I will remember and never forget." Then she said, "But let not Enlil approach the offering, for without discussion in the Assembly of Gods he brought on the Flood, and my people he numbered for slaughter."

Then Enlil came out of the sky, and as soon as he saw the ark he grew furious, bellowing in wrath, "Has life-breath escaped? No man was meant to live through the devastation!" But Enki stepped forward and addressed him:

You, shrewd one of the gods, warrior, how is it--how could you--without talking it through, send the Flood? Punish the one who commits the crime; punish the evildoer alone. Instead of your bringing on the Flood, let lions rise up, and the wolf, [and] famine, [and] Plague.

Then Enlil realized the wisdom of it, and walking up to the ark, he took ahold of Utnapishtim and his wife, and touched their foreheads in blessing: “Now Utnapishtim and his wife are transformed, being like us gods. Let Utnapishtim live far off, at the source of all rivers.” Then they took Utnapishtim and his wife, and they lived from then on in the paradise land of eternal joy in the middle of the great Abyss, the home of Father Enki, Lord of Wisdom.

After relating his story, Utnapishtim challenged Gilgamesh to a test, if he wished to gain what he sought: to stay awake for six days and seven nights. But even as he sat there Gilgamesh fell asleep, and he slept for seven days. Utnapishtim’s wife baked bread each day and put it by his head. When Gilgamesh awoke at Utnapishtim’s touch, he said, “As soon as I was ready to fall asleep, right away you touched and roused me.” But Utnapishtim showed him the seven loaves, and then Gilgamesh cried out in despair, “What can I do, Utnapishtim? Where can I go? A thief has stolen my flesh. Death lives in the house where my bed is, and wherever I set my feet, there Death is.” Utnapishtim then turned to the Boatman and ordered him to take Gilgamesh, cast off his filthy animal skins, wash his body, and dress his hair with fragrance. Then, said Utnapishtim, “have him put on a garment, the Robe of Life, so that he may go back to his city. Let him put on an elder’s robe, and let it always be new.” These things Urshanabi then did to Gilgamesh, so that his beauty shone again, and he wore the Robe of Life. Then they returned to the boat, and Utnapishtim there told Gilgamesh a secret of the gods: “There is a plant,” he said. “It’s roots go deep, like the boxthorn; its spike will prick your hand like a bramble. If you get your hands on that plant, you’ll have everlasting life,” and he pointed into the water. Gilgamesh saw a channel there, and he immediately resolved to open it and enter the conduit therein, so he tied rocks to his feet and jumped into the water, dropping down into the great abyss. Suddenly he saw the plant and seized it though his hand was pricked, pulling it out by the roots. Cutting away the stones he rose to the surface on exultation, crying out,

This is the plant of Openings, by which a man can get life within! I will carry it to Uruk [and] give it to the elders to eat. It’s name is The-Old-Man-Will-Be-Made-Young. I too will eat and return to what I was in my youth.

Then Gilgamesh and the Boatman sailed back across the Waters of Death, and travelled toward Uruk. After a long time they came to a pool, and Gilgamesh got in to bathe. Then a snake that lived at the bottom smelled the perfume of the sacred plant and, coming up through the water, took it away, throwing off its skin as it turned in the water.

When Gilgamesh saw the plant was gone, he sat down with tears streaming from his eyes. But after awhile he got up and went on, and soon enough he arrived back at Uruk.

Ch 7: How the King Found His Lost Soul

After his long quest to seek his lost friend, Gilgamesh finally returned empty-handed to Uruk, the city of his kingship. But now he accepted Enkidu's death, and he took up again his duties. There was also something else. He had crossed the Waters of Death, and this ordeal had changed him in a fundamental way: From then on, the spirit of Enkidu lived inside him and was with him in counsel, returning from the nether world. That is, Gilgamesh became a powerful wizard, a shaman with a great spirit ally.

His initiation happened in this way: After killing Humbaba, he had attracted the attention of Ishtar, who saw his heroic stature and strength. She then called to him and asked him to help her with a very vexing problem. It seems she had a special *huluppu* tree growing in her garden in Uruk. It had been torn up by the violent south wind ages ago, and carried away by the raging Euphrates, but was later found by a woman and taken to Ishtar's fruitful garden, where it grew mighty under her tender care. Now she wanted to cut the tree down, to make a throne of fruitfulness to sit in, and a bed of fruitfulness to lie down on. But after the tree had been growing in the garden for awhile, a great dragon had come, "the snake who knows no charms," and it built a nest in the roots. Now the dragon lived there, and no one could approach the tree safely. The monstrous Imdugud-bird, an eagle with the face of a lion, placed its young in the crown, and the vampire Lilith built a house in its midst. Ishtar wept in frustration. She asked her brother Shamash to help her, but he refused. Then Ishtar saw how powerful Gilgamesh had become, and so now she turned to him.

Gilgamesh did not fail to respond to the call of Ishtar. He donned his heavy armor and took up his mighty ax, and he went with Enkidu to the *huluppu* tree in the garden. There he waited, and when the snake who knows no charms came forth among the roots, Gilgamesh swung his ax and smote him in two. The Imdugud-bird scattered with its young, and Lilith bolted away to the wilds. Then Gilgamesh and Enkidu uprooted the tree and gave it to Ishtar for her throne and bed. Ishtar, in turn, made from the roots and crown a sacred drum and beater, and these she gave to Gilgamesh.

With these special possessions, Gilgamesh gained great power, for with the drum he could travel to the spirit world, he could gain the shamanic initiations. But instead of doing so, he proceeded to abuse the drum, using to call forth young men to Uruk to fight and carouse. Just like before, the abused people cried out in lamentation. And then Gilgamesh lost his drum and beater, he lost hold of them one day and they fell through the hole into the nether world. He reached his hand in but could not touch them, then he put in his foot but still they were out of reach. So he sat down there by the Ganzir, the great gate, the "eye" of the netherworld, and he cried bitterly for his lost drum, and for his own foolishness.

Then Enkidu, there by his side, bravely offered to climb down through the eye of the great gate and retrieve the drum and beater from the other world. Gilgamesh agreed to let him try, and told him how to protect himself from the monsters he would encounter there. But Enkidu ignored everything Gilgamesh told him, and so as soon as he descended through the gate he was assailed by the monsters and spirits, and "the cry of the netherworld held him fast." He was now unable to return to the surface. Enkidu was dead.

Weeping in lamentation, Gilgamesh went to the city of Nippur, to the house of the air god, Enlil, and he cried out, "Father Enlil, my drum fell into the nether world, my beater fell through the Ganzir, I sent Enkidu to bring them up, [but] the nether world holds him fast." But Enlil was unmoved. So then Gilgamesh went to Ur, to the house of the moon god, Sin, but Sin was also unmoved. Finally, Gilgamesh went to the city of Eridu, to the house of Enki, the water god, the God of Wisdom, God of the Deepest Well, and weeping he repeated his story once more. Father Enki was greatly moved, and turning to Shamash said, "Open now the vent of the

nether world, that the ghost of Enkidu may issue from the darkness and tell all the ways of the underworld to his brother.” Shamash then did as ordered, and opened the vent. Enkidu arose and came out of the great eye into the room where Gilgamesh was standing, he “issued from the darkness like a dream.” When they saw each other, they ran together and embraced, kissing, then they sighed and held each other tightly. After a while, Gilgamesh said to Enkidu, “Tell me, beloved, tell me friend, tell me the ways of the underworld that you’ve seen.”

Thus began Gilgamesh’s education, as the shade of Enkidu set about teaching him the ways of the nether world. Through finishing his resolute journey in suffering and loss after the death of Enkidu, Gilgamesh had redeemed his earlier mistakes through love, and did gain the secret wisdom of life and death. His cries to the gods were finally heard, even as he returned to Uruk seemingly in total failure. Gilgamesh had successfully passed through the baptismal fire, and so now his lover Enkidu rose from the ashes to guide him and protect him again. This is the greatest lesson of the story.

In time, Gilgamesh became with Enkidu’s companionship a great spiritual initiate, thus able to rule Uruk not only as secular king but also as a source of sacred wisdom, a power in the spirit world. In this way, the life of Gilgamesh grew from its seed, from wasted idleness to love and heroism, from triumph to despair to a greater triumph in the wise and benevolent stewardship he finally bestowed on Uruk. And after he dies, he was praised as a paragon of justice, virtue, and achievement, and stories of Gilgamesh and Enkidu were told in every village and town, inspiring the people with tales of bravery, mystery, love, and wisdom.