Queen of all cosmic powers, bright light shining from above,
Steadfast woman, arrayed in splendor,
beloved of earth and sky,
Consort of Heaven, whose gem of rank is greatest of them all,
Favored for the noblest diadem, meet for highest sacral rank,
Who has taken up in hand cosmic powers sevenfold,
My lady! You are warden of the greatest cosmic powers,
You bore them off on high, you took them firm in hand,
You gathered them together, you pressed them to your breast.

You spew venom on a country, like a dragon.
Wherever you raise your voice, like a tempest, no crop is left standing.
You are a deluge, bearing that country away.
You are the sovereign of heaven and earth,
you are their warrior goddess!

Tablet inscribed with “The Exaltation of Inanna”
Mesopotamia, Nippur (modern Nuffar)
Old Babylonian period, ca. 1750 BC
Yes, I took up my place in the sanctuary dwelling,
I was high priestess, I,
Enheduanna.
Though I bore the offering basket, though I chanted the hymns,
A death offering was ready, was I no longer living?
I went towards light, it felt scorching to me,
I went towards shade, it shrouded me in swirling dust.
A slobbered hand was laid across my honeyed mouth,
What was fairest in my nature was turned to dirt.
O Moon-god Suen, is this Lugalanne my destiny?
Tell heaven to set me free of it!
Just say it to heaven! Heaven will set me free!
I am Enheduanna, let me speak to you my prayer, 
My tears flowing like some sweet intoxicant: 
"O Holy Inanna, may I let you have your way? 
I would have you judge the case. 
[ . . . ]

Appeal to Inanna

"O precious, precious Queen, beloved of heaven, 
Your sublime will prevails, let it be for my restoration! 
[ . . . ]
Show that you stand high as heaven 
Show that you reach wide as the world 
Show that you destroy all unruly lands 
Show that you raise your voice to foreign countries 
Show that you smash head after head, 
Show that you feed on kill, like a lion, 
Show that your eyes are furious, 
Show that your stare is full of rage, 
Show that your eyes gleam and glitter 
Show that you are unyielding, that you persevere, 
Show that you stand paramount, 
For if Nanna said nothing, he meant, ‘Do as you will.’”
TRANSLATION: B

Creative Process

“One has heaped up the coals (in the censer), prepared the lustration. 
The nuptial chamber awaits you, let your heart be appeased! 
With ‘it is enough for me, it is too much for me!’ I have given birth, 
oh exalted lady, (to this song) for you. 
That which I recited to you at (mid)night 
May the singer repeat it to you at noon!”
TRANSLATION: C

Restoration of Enheduanna

The almighty queen, who presides over the priestly congregation, 
She accepted her prayer. 
Inanna’s sublime will was for her restoration. 
It was a sweet moment for her [Inanna], she was arrayed in her finest, she was beautiful beyond compare, 
She was lovely as a moonbeam streaming down. 
Nanna stepped forward to admire her. 
Her divine mother, Ningal, joined him with her blessing, 
The very doorway gave its greeting too. 
What she commanded for her consecrated woman prevailed. 
To you, who can destroy countries, whose cosmic powers are bestowed by Heaven. 
To my queen arrayed in beauty, to Inanna be praise!
TRANSLATION: B/ET