An adaptation of the ‘Epic of Gilgamesh’ for the screen

Loretta Judd
University of Wollongong


This paper is posted at Research Online.
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
The Game of Uruk

Annotations
THE GAME OF URUK

The Game of Uruk is an adaptation of The Epic of Gilgamesh and is set in the Ancient Sumerian world. The framing story is the deciphering of the Epic in England in the 1870s, based on the lives of George Smith and Sir Henry Rawlinson, cuneiform scholars.

The Game of Uruk is in four movements: Prologue, The Choice, Civilization and The Journey.

The Prologue: the context of the deciphering of the Epic.
The Choice: Tablet I of the Epic of Gilgamesh.
Civilization: Tablets II - VIII.
The Journey: Tablets VIX - XII

NOTES ON THE SCREENPLAY

These annotations include expansion on visual language of the scene or moment, character notes and some literary and historical material. Scenes in the screenplay have been numbered for convenience. Scenes 1 and 26 have more detailed suggestions for cinematography and editing to indicate a style for the whole.

Sumerian names have been used, rather than the later Babylonian with the exception of Tammuz, (Sumerian Dumuzi). Names for minor characters are taken from Oppenheim’s Letters from Sumer. I have attempted to match the character with an appropriate counterpart, for example, Yarrim Adu was an official, though probably not a mythological beast.
Opening sequence

1 EXT MARKET PLACE

*The Game of Uruk* might open with an extreme closeup. Deep within an image there is revealed only texture, light and some sharper edges. The beginning of words on stone - one of the major motifs throughout the film.

The camera pulls back to reveal that these edges are part of a single sign, which fills the screen: a pictograph in ancient script.

We see briefly a European hand tracing the outline of a pictograph. This hand belongs to the Rev William Wright, Irish archaeologist.

The pictograph might come from within the detail below:

![Detail from Hamath Stones.](image)

The camera is William Wright reading the lines. We share his perspective and his knowledge as the camera reads the lines *boustrophedon* ("as the ox ploughs") The past is speaking through a forgotten language and script, now being read according to the agendas of a different age.
We see the lines, a progression of images moving slowly like an early cartoon sequence. At the same time the camera is distancing itself, moving back, revealing the vastness and age of the lines.

We reach a ‘face’. The camera now follows the lines of horns. This image is a prefiguring of Enkidu, who symbolises joy and life. A message of less importance to Wright than the acquisition of the stones themselves. We glimpse the whole face which might be a gazelle for an instant before a pickaxe smashes into the frame. The hand that caressed the stones, now destroys their context, symbolising the rape of a culture.

At this point we hear the enraged crowd and see the full size of the stones.

A shot juxtaposes the crowd against the base of the stone, revealing its vastness.

Then that the stone is the wall of a house. We see individual faces in the crowd.

A series of shots show that Turkish soldiers of the Pasha are keeping the crowd back.

There is noise of an explosion as the stone is ripped from its position. Closely followed by sounds of panels from two other houses being taken.

Shots of crowd becoming more violent, and being subdued more savagely as several ox-drawn carts are positioned by soldiers to take the stones.

Close-up of original panel hoisted onto the cart. Brief glimpse of gazelle face in extreme close-up.

Overhead shot of wagons dragging stones out through the narrow streets.

Shot of sun beginning to set. Close shot of damaged house.

Wide shot as VOICE of mezzin accompanies wagons out of the centre.

The final long shot as the stones are removed is from an alien European ‘orientalist’ perspective. I have attempted as far as possible to avoid ‘orientalist’ assumptions in this project by critiquing the power relationships of European imperialism. This adaptation begins, not from a desire to explore or exploit the exotic, but as a response to a story.

The voice of the mezzin is detached from the battle that is taking place; it suggests a religious perspective seemingly allied with Wright, linking with a theme of betrayal. Overhead shots could make ironic reference to watchfulness of the ancient gods.

The ‘East’ is shown here through the eyes of the European (Wright). Ironic tone, always difficult, might be indicated by the clash of image and sound, careful use of point of view shots and the juxtaposition of shots which tell opposing stories. All of which can only be hinted at by a screenplay. Wright is to be seen as alien and foolish when later he must rely on Ottoman threats to make his point. A sense of political agendas far from Syria is intended.
museum in Constantinople. Removal of the stones resulted in ‘riots’ by local people, who believed that the stones could cure rheumatism.

4 INT THE COSPOPOPITAN CLUB

Henry Creswicke Rawlinson is a Gilgamesh figure. At this point Rawlinson had given up his parliamentary seat in order to serve on the India Council. In this screenplay he is linked with the party of Disraeli because of its foreign policy.

The dull but comfortable setting of the Club is an incongruous contrast with the Syrian scenes where the consequences of such political scheming actually take place.

3. Portrait of Rawlinson at 42 from biography.

Rawlinson’s portrait suggests an openness in his gaze unusual in a man of his age. I have interpreted this to mean that his world view was at this time rarely challenged. In *The Game of*
Words on stone is used as a motif in both Ancient and ‘modern’ strands of the screenplay. ‘Words on stone’ refers to the vain attempts of Gilgamesh to gain an immortal reputation and is also connected with discourses of imperial rivalry. The hand symbolises the ambiguous relationship between European scholarship and ancient cultures.

2. One of the Hamath Stones

The Hamath Stones were known in Europe through the writings of travellers like the colourful Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, also known as ‘Sheik Ibrahim’, who published a description in 1822. Wright gained access through skillful manipulation of the Pasha Subhi Bey, Greek representative of the Ottoman Empire and antiquarian enthusiast who had set up a
Uruk he is twenty years older but retains the physical energy that makes him seem younger than his years. I see him as having been substantially changed by his leaving England at seventeen to spend most of his adult life in India and the Middle East. Rawlinson’s facility with languages and love of oriental scholarship became an important part of his subjectivity and influenced his career choices. He returned to England in his late forties due partly to shoulder problems caused by a fall from a horse but also because he wanted to oversee publication of his works on Assyrian cultures. In this screenplay Rawlinson is depicted as being out of step in England. Rawlinson resigned his last post as Embassy to Persia, in protest when the Foreign Office took control out of the hands of the East India Company. Rawlinson felt that views of the Foreign Office would make it impossible to deal with local cultures, as they were totally opposed to the custom of giving gifts to facilitate official transactions.

6 EXT COMET SEQUENCE

The shot shows the gaps left by the stones’ removal; gaps in the shape of the Game of Uruk.

This reference to the game, forshadows the theme of destiny which features in both plots, and introduces the supernatural. It is intended to suggest cosmic forces, which will be represented by the gods Enlil and Anu.

The comets symbolise the scale of the attack on the local culture, and provided impetus for protest by the local delegation. Although dissipated by the payment of compensation, this anger remains unappeased and will later fuel attempts to throw off Ottoman rule.

The notion of the relationship between gods and humanity as characterised by disturbances in nature, is also introduced. This is developed later in sequences dealing with the Deluge.

This sequence is based on accounts by Rev William Wright.

9 EXT DOCKS BASRA

This shot is intended as a note of finality to the previous transactions. It suggests the power of foreign empires operating in the East.

A visual reminder of the maritime power of Britain. It is later developed with a scene showing working conditions on the docks, intended to show what kinds of force underpinned naval power.
The British Museum is depicted as a temple to scholarship. It stands for ‘civilisation’ as interpreted by the City. The museum is a ‘modern’ counterpart to Gilgamesh’s temple, hence the emphasis on its ‘ancient’ facade, indicating both its respect and appropriation of ancient artefacts. A building both impressive and ridiculous. One of a series of shots that punctuate the narrative with buildings and cities which represent various discourses of power. Their intrusion precedes sequences which deal with power struggles. Others are: 8 Pasha’s summer house; 17. Leighton’s Hall, 68 Balmoral Castle, 131 Gladstone’s home, Hawarden, 184 Constantinople, and 203 Birmingham.

4. Portrait of George Smith.

George Smith is an Enkidu figure to Rawlinson’s Gilgamesh.

George is introduced entering the Museum which is home, but which is ultimately responsible for his death. George Smith is a brilliant young man whose original trade was engraving.
Smith had several children and financial worries. The world of scholarship offers the chance to pursue his talent and his passion for Assyriology, which originated in his fascination with the Bible. Smith is never fully part of this world of scholarly prestige.

Smith’s bushranger beard is intended to link him with the hairiness of Enkidu.

He is deciphering Tablet XI of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

5. Tablet XI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*

This tablet is seen in closeup shots which juxtapose it against George’s own writing utensils. These shots develop the theme of writing introduced in the opening scene.

The quill in George’s hand becomes the stylus of Urshanabi, Crocodile Man, but we see only Urshanabi’s webbed fingers. The two remain linked with Urshanabi’s VO line ‘Look about thee and see that all men are fools’... (This line is not part of the *Gilgamesh* material but comes from an anonymous Sumerian.)

George has not yet become caught by the spell of the epic.
The scene begins with a close-up of this ancient piece which represents Enkidu with wings, i.e. after death. Enkidu is watching George about to begin deciphering Enkidu’s story.

6. Winged gazelle

The POV shot indicates that the joyful and the exuberant is always within reach. There are gazelle references, that is to Enkidu, throughout the screenplay. Enkidu is a benevolent ‘animal spirit’.
In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Enkidu is the ‘wild ass’ rather than gazelle. I chose a gazelle from the many depictions of gazelle in Mesopotamian art and also having read Jean Claude Armen’s *Gazelle Boy*, an account of a boy allegedly living with a gazelle herd on the edge of the Sahara in the late nineteen sixties.

This scene links George with Enkidu’s ‘double’ in the Victorian world.

In Scene 179 Gilgamesh is given this winged ibex as a gift by the artist who is designing Enkidu’s official memorial. A scene paralleled by references to Victoria’s memorials to Albert. However this gift is meant to show how Gilgamesh has changed since the early days of his tyranny. It is a personal gift of compassion which symbolises that barriers between Gilgamesh and his people have been broken down because of his friendship with Enkidu.

Close-ups of the stylus and the quill continue the emphasis on writing - the attempt to communicate, to reach out to others. George’s hand blends with Urshanabi’s and it is the blending of the voices of Urshanabi and George that ends the screenplay.

At this stage George is untouched by this message, though later he will die at 36 searching for the rest of the story.

16 INT EGYPTIAN ROOM

What Mesopotamia is not. Egyptian artefacts provide contrast with visual arts of the Fertile Crescent.

Smith ‘of humble origins’ is dominated visually by the bas-relief of captives of war. This foreshadows his own miserable fate. Rawlinson’s patronage of Smith is intended to parallel the relationship of Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Like Enkidu, Smith loses his life as an indirect result of connection with a more powerful friend. Both are outsiders who gain the affection of Rawlinson and Gilgamesh, but this affection is not enough to keep them alive.
Detail from Rawlinson’s biography by his brother George.

Fate of the stones symbolic of the power of the Ottoman Empire over local peoples.

19 EXT LONDON ZOO

The leopard is a symbol of the East, i.e. the ‘East’ as Rawlinson has experienced it.

Fahad the leopard was a pet Rawlinson obtained when he was Consul at Baghdad and brought back to England. Incident from biography of Rawlinson by his brother George who is also used as a character in the screenplay.

Rawlinson’s view of the East while mediated by his army life in India, Persia, Afghanistan has been shaped by his interaction with local cultures, leaving him to become partly ‘oriental’ himself. His experience of daily life, his knowledge and use of local languages and his studies of oriental literatures mean a great deal to him. His discoveries of Mesopotamian antiquities and his groundbreaking work on translating cuneiform, symbolise a personal interaction with many cultures, an important part of his subjectivity. His interest in making geographical discoveries in the same regions show part of the range and depth of these interests. In Parliament Rawlinson was often an advocate for local rulers against the Foreign Office. Rawlinson’s perspective is different from those sections of the Victorian public who orientalised the East, and valued it as an imaginative contrast to their own way of life.

The leopard is also one of the animal motifs in the film. It symbolises the personal; a natural and physical response to life that contests political and social ‘realities’ that condemn humanity to be ‘fools’.

20 INT LEIGHTON’S HOUSE

Introduction of the Pre-Raphaelites, whose rich confusion of fantasy and orientalist imagery seems an appropriate visual motif for the Victorian period. Leighton’s Moorish Hall is a reminder of the prevailing fascination with copying art and architecture of the East.

Dancing indicates the safety of Rawlinson’s world, juxtaposed against the danger of the journey that George is taking.

Mrs Disraeli’s remark is a reference to the indirectness of women’s political outlets. Also that every social occasion was a political occasion.

21 INT BRITISH MUSEUM

Rawlinson is capable of great patience in reconstructing the delicate cylinder seals. Especially given his restless physical energy which had had more outlets - riding, travelling, sports, war -
Rawlinson could not have lived the life of a conventional English gentleman without getting himself into some kind of trouble.

Sir Edwin Arnold later wrote such works as *The light of the East*. Poet and translator.

Arnold is depicted as an opportunist courting popular taste. He is shallow, with genuine but shortlived enthusiasms but is ruthless at heart. Another clown figure. Represents the Victorian 'public'.

Rawlinson and Arnold place Smith on the board. The tone of the scene is intended to suggest George's lack of power.

Exposition introduces the character of Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh's fate is here linked with that of humanity in general.

Scene emphasises the role of imperialism in scholarship.
9 Assyrian ritual

POV shot from the griffin intended to foreshadow that the present is about to connect with the past.

22 INT MUSIC HALL

Trick comes from *Stage Illusions and Scientific Diversions* first published in England in 1897. Illustrates the pervasiveness of orientalism.

23 EXT STEAMSHIP

George on the boat. A man, a boat and water used as a motif in the script. Symbolises the psychic journey of the individual, but also intended to add a note of discord: the man out of step with the world which he is about to enter.

24 INT TENT

George sees the gazelle. This is Enkidu country. George's seeing the gazelle which then vanishes, foreshadows both his success and failure with the Gilgamesh tablets.
Contrast between George’s work and the landscape. The tent and the work cut him off from directly participating in this land. His drawing links with the theme of writing, and emphasises George’s talent, poorly recognised due to barriers of class.

Dissolve

First depiction of the ancient world. The room is empty to prepare the spectator for the shift in time.

Repetition of the scene intended to echo poetic repetitions of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*

29 EXT ASSURBANIPAL’S LIBRARY

Rassam, like Rawlinson is a man of two worlds; a Syrian Christian educated at Oxford whose discoveries did not seem to have earned the level of recognition enjoyed by his European colleagues.

27 EXT HENRY’S LAKE

One of the ‘man and water scenes’. Foreshadows the story of Adapa.

Henry needs to be alone to escape from some parts of English life. He is more used to being alone than to being part of a family. The child’s ball out of reach symbolises his difficulties in relating to his wife and children.

As a Gilgamesh figure Rawlinson is cut off from others. Like Gilgamesh he gradually changes and becomes more open, only to lose those closest to him.
10. Long shot of dig.

Camera follows George and Rassam to site of library. Medium shot as George kneels among finds and begins comparing them.

Closer as George cleans one of the tablets

Close-up of tablet, followed by Voice Over of George reading.

DISSOLVE
To fresh tablet being written on. Closer to hand with claws. George’s Voice over continues.

Camera pulls back and we see a medium shot of something like this:

![Image of Winged Lion](image.png)

11. **Winged lion**

Sin Lequi Uninni a winged lioness is writing in a temple. Her character is suggested by the many depictions of winged lions among Mesopotamian art works. This version included as it might be interpreted as being linked with writing.

Sounds of battle outside as we see her in a small alcove, writing hurriedly.

Sin Lequi symbolises the power of writing, one era speaking to another but the fact that she is not human is never discovered by the Victorians, indicating the limitations of attempting an understanding of another culture. Sin Lequi helps to link the two eras; and is a device intended to indicate the importance of writing. Something survives of the original culture but the message is ambiguous and will be read through different agendas.
SECOND DISSOLVE     SUMERIAN PALACE

Sound of pounding on heavy doors throughout. The camera pans slowly across a wall painting that depicts a lion hunt. We have seen it before in the British Museum.

An occasional listless phrase from a strange stringed instrument, punctuates a series of glimpses of the dying lions.
We see the instrument a harp. The camera pans up the strings to the musician’s hands, then to his face. He is obviously exhausted but his eyes do not leave a point on the other side of the room.

The camera abruptly follows the direction of his gaze to reveal the back of the head of a man seated at a low table. We see across his shoulder the face of his opponent: Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh is young, unshaven and his hair is disordered, despite the elaborateness of its style. On each biceps is a curled snake made of gold. He shakes the die and the camera follows his arm to the board which we see in close-up:

![Board Image]

13. The Game of Twenty Squares

Gilgamesh is reaching across the board, playing with the pieces of his opponent, someone who is in shadow out of range of the camera. Gilgamesh does not like the result, so he throws the dice again. And again.

He is sweeping the pieces off the board

CUT TO OUTSIDE THE DOOR

We see heavy carved doors and a fist pounding on them in closeup. We have seen this hand before, Sin Lequi Uninni’s. Beside the hand is the tip of her wing. The camera follows the line of the wing to her face. She is distraught.
The camera pulls back to reveal her companion. Yarrim Adu, an eagle griffin. We have seen him before, in the British Museum.

The camera pulls further back to reveal the group arranged in a large chamber before heavy doors. Beside Yarrim is a group of men. Sin Lequi nods to Yarrim and steps aside. Yarrim gives the order to break down the doors.
The men begin attacking the doors with a battering ram, to no avail.

CUT TO THE ROOM

Gilgamesh has reset the board. He is oblivious to the noise outside but the musician plays a few bars.

We see Gilgamesh’s face, then follow his hand as he pours a cup of wine and passes it to his opponent.

He sets the cup down. The camera now pans up to reveal his opponent’s face. It is Enkidu. He has been dead for many days and has begun to decompose.

We see the two with the board between them, as Gilgamesh goes back to shaking the die.

FADE TO BLACK

Sin Lequi’s VO: The one who saw the abyss.

This is where Gilgamesh’s story begins. Black symbolises death which is the ‘universal’ at the heart of the screenplay. ‘The one who saw the abyss’ comes from Sin Lequi Uninni’s version of the epic but this line is intended to suggest that we all see ‘the abyss’.
30 INT RAWLINSON’S BREAKFAST

The audience now is aware of whose story is about to unfold. This domestic scene interrupts the narrative to suggest the fragmented way knowledge of the past was obtained.

The room is intended to show how ‘easternised’ Rawlinson is, partly to link him with Gilgamesh.

The domestic setting echoes the games room of the palace. The mongoose is one of the animal motifs of the script. Louisa is quite at home in this room and sees the mongoose much in the same light as one of her favourite dogs. She is ready to share Henry’s world because she loves him, but he is not able to understand this fully until the end of the screenplay. There a parallel scene indicates that he will lose her, as well as George, just as Gilgamesh lost Enkidu.

The message sent by Smith somehow became distorted and led *The Telegraph* to withdraw funds. Smith comments on this in a puzzled way in his writings.

31 EXT THE DIG

The bulls symbolise the Mesopotamian gods and prepare the audience for their appearance.

Shot of the damaged main street indicates the brutality of the aquisition process by the European museums. This lack of awareness is also intended as a sign of George’s naivety for which he will later pay with his life.
As the gods sink into the waters. The humans barely escape with their lives - especially the locals employed by George and Rassam. Based on an account of an incident that occurred to Austen Layard.

14 Mesopotamian winged bull.

This sequence shows the link between the gods and the elements, especially water. Leads into the flood sequences.
15 Tigris marshes

River provides link with the past.

Repetition of scene to suggest parallelism of ancient poetry.

Adapa’s story explains how humanity became mortal. From the most ancient Sumerian fragments. (Adapa is sometimes described by European scholars as the Sumerian ‘Adam’.)

A man on water scene. Adapa is a king, son of Ea, god of magic. Has the power of a king, but something makes him want to challenge the gods. He does not wrestle with Imdugud entirely as he later says, in order to save his own life.
POV shot from Imdugud gives a visual perspectives of humanity from the heavens.

16 Imdugud

38 INT HEAVENS

Ea, Enlil and Anu are from the Sumerian pantheon. The gods symbolise limitations of human life.

The winged bulls of Assyrian art are used in The Game of Uruk to create the appearance of the gods. The game of Gilgamesh is seen being played by Enlil and Anu. It is the game of life or destiny.

It has been suggested already as its absence, in both the comet sequence, and in the floor design of the British Museum.

Adapa is betrayed by his father Ea. In Sumerian mythology Ea was usually helpful to humanity but in this story is responsible for Adapa choosing death instead of immortality. In the screenplay this is a reference to patriarchal betrayal that will be developed later in the Humbaba sequences.

This sequence is also a prologue to the Gilgamesh story. It establishes the connection between mythical narrative and questions about life and death. Both
Adapa and Gilgamesh have to reconcile themselves to the inevitability of death and the Netherworld.

40 INT BRITISH MUSEUM

George Smith's obituary describes him as coming from 'humble origins' and his formal education ended when he was fifteen. The same obit comments on what was seen as awkwardness in some of his writing. There is something 'modern' about the way that the press in England reported his death. The first reports were published before official confirmation which gives a feeling of the public watching over his last moments.

Smith was a brilliant Assyriologist who published several groundbreaking accounts but on his death his widow and children were impoverished. I have depicted him partly as a victim of the class system. He drove himself to exhaustion and starvation searching for archaeological evidence.

Part of the pressure on George which drove him to his early death is symbolised by this (fictitious) relationship with a young married woman. The woman is used as a symbol of the idleness of the privileged, as well as the plight of women to whom marriage meant despair.

George's own marriage occurred early and he had several children. I have attempted to avoid the cliche that George might have 'outgrown' his young wife. It seems just as likely that she would have shared his fascination with decipherment and enjoyed his success. However, she may not have had the leisure, or wealth to share the social side of his new life. Earlier drafts had more scenes with Anne.

'Ve must be getting close' is ironic when seen from George's perspective.

THE CHOICE

This section introduces two other Sumerian myths; the myth of Adapa and the Descent of Inanna into the Nether world.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is introduced in the screenplay, with Tablet XI, the Deluge sequences.
(As it was introduced to the ‘modern’ world through decipherment of Tablet XI by George Smith.)

36 EXT THE RIVER

Adapa on water. The river is a symbol of continuity of time. A visual link between the past and the present

Adapa and the storm. Deals with the power of the gods. Leads into the Deluge sequences.

Imdugud another creature of fantasy (Sumerian) links with Sin Lequi, Yarrim and Urshanabi to develop the mythological.

This sequence represents a crucial break between humanity and the gods.

40 INT MUSEUM

The Sumerian view of the Underworld seems to have influenced the Greeks. It was a dark subterranean place that could be reached by openings in the earth.

The Flood. The story of the Flood is part of the Gilgamesh story but is not connected with the myth of Adapa. I have linked the two to balance the long section at the end of the story about the sage Ziusudra. The destruction of humanity by water is symbolic of the fragility of life.

Jungian symbolism of water as the unconscious is also intended. Adapa foolishly pits himself against the gods and the parameters of human life are redrawn. Humanity experiences death for the first time. The Adapa sequence also deals with betrayal by the father.

This sequence relates to the central concerns of life and death in the Gilgamesh story, which I hope are central to this screenplay.

Henry and George are both disturbed by the story of the flood. To some extent their futures touch them. George will die early, at 36, Henry will deal with loss.

42 EXT GATES OF THE UNDERWORLD
I have linked the Inanna story to the Gilgamesh story of the flood. This is not part of the original myth. Here Inanna descends to the Underworld to plead the cause of humanity whom the gods intend to destroy totally.

She secures the survival of one man, Ziusudra and his family.

Inanna’s death at the stake in the Underworld is a fate not shared by others in known Sumerian texts. Her husband’s sacrifice in taking her place is obviously the origin of the Greek myth of Orpheus.

44 EXT HENRY’S HOME

Henry lived at 1 Barclay Square London.

Henry’s own journey is just beginning. He has enjoyed great public success in all that he has attempted. He also has the knack of surviving situations where others do not. Here he finds himself at odds with his personal and political life (Louisa and Disraeli) because of the spell of the past. Scenes are linked visually through darkness and doorways.

47 INT UNDERWORLD

Tammuz is the first of those who sacrifice everything because of their love for a more powerful other.

The Sumerian text deals enthusiastically with the sexual union of Ereshkigal and Tammuz. Only after a very satisfactory six days and seven nights does Ereshkigal allow Tammuz to stay. I have compressed the timeframe here. While there is an element of betrayal in Tammuz’ taking Inanna’s place, I have not used versions of the story where Inanna tricks Tammuz into taking her place.

This story is incomplete. Perhaps it was one of the sources for the Hades/Persephone myth. Tammuz, like Persephone was linked with the seasons as ‘the shepherd of the people’.

In this screenplay, Tammuz is linked with Enkidu.
Inanna and Tammuz, Victoria and Prince Albert, Rawlinson and George are all used as parallels to the relationship of Gilgamesh and Enkidu. The dominant character survives, the beloved does not.

Without Tammuz, Inanna becomes the ferocious Ishtar who sends the Bull of Heaven to destroy humanity.

53 INT ASSYRIAN TEMPLE

The narrator Sin Lequi intrudes to remind the spectator that the narrative is based on ancient myth, which George Smith is deciphering.

Sin Lequi is depicted as having lived over two thousand years, that is for the lifespan of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

55 EXT EUPHRATES AFTERNOON

Flood Sequences based on Tablet XI Epic of Gilgamesh

Ziusudra prepares the ark. This section is used to balance the disproportionate space allotted to the Deluge in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Still one of the most complete sections of the Epic; a section where Gilgamesh is an audience, not an active character.

Tablet XI gives a very full account of the Great Flood which is often omitted in adaptation. In this screenplay the flood story serves as a framing device linking the Epic with the other Sumerian myths.

Dramatically this sequence is intended to foreshadow The Journey. The use of the forerunner character is a device to prepare the spectator for the appearance of Gilgamesh.

The Sumerian story has differences which not only give a familiar Biblical tale freshness, but hopefully make it disturbing through intertextuality. Being both familiar and unfamiliar, the story emerges in a ‘new’ light.

In this screenplay, the story of Gilgamesh is also framed within the stories of other heroes coming to grips with destiny.

The introduction of Ziusudra at this point allows Rawlinson and George to enter the narrative.
The destruction of humanity by water symbolises the fragility of life.

59 EXT LONDON STREET

The huge question of human fragility which is the subject of the Sumerian section is juxtaposed against the blindness of the Victorians, as they attempt some form of human equality.

The twelve year old girl is invisible to Rawlinson, and even to his kindly but limited brother as they debate educational reforms.

The screenplay contrasts two (by no means internally consistent) opposing points of view: Gladstone’s and Disraeli’s. Both are represented as clowns, or ‘fools’ as Urshanabi says. On the one hand, is Gladstone, whose conscience leads him to make significant social reforms despite his puritanical personality. On the other, the flamboyant Disraeli represents the theme of England’s imperialism. Disraeli is represented more directly than Gladstone in this screenplay. Gladstone is spoken about, rather than to, by the main characters.

Victorian society is presented as a site of conflicting forces: social justice and social oppression; vision and blindness; change and sterility. The struggle for social reforms, being won in a climate of confusion and opposition - on both sides of the house - are used in this script as a link with the present, where each gain seems under attack. Where the word ‘reform’ usually means regression. (By ‘present’ I am most familiar with the Australian context.) The Victorian context draws parallels with our own time where the fools have it.

The character of George Rawlinson, was originally written as William Sayce an Oxford academic who organised a pension from public subscription for the widow and family of George Smith. (It is interesting to note that Rawlinson did not originate this plan) I intended this character as a tribute to his kindness, but as the character changed I substituted George Rawlinson instead.

Henry is not naturally callous, but his mind is on other things. His dealings with people have been restricted to the policy makers and he is out of touch with ordinary life. His career has distanced him from the personal. He is more familiar with war and the possibility of war, than with peace. Like Gilgamesh in Tablet 1, although attractive he is something of a tyrant.

64 INT TEMPLE
The first appearance of Urshanabi, the Crocodile man, whose voice and hand have already featured.

Urshanabi was the boatman for the dead who accompanies Gilgamesh across the sea of Death, despite the fact that Gilgamesh destroys the 'things of stone'. He is an Enkidu figure, and partly fills Enkidu's place in the final phase of Gilgamesh's story.

The eye of knowledge is from a design on the side of the Sumerian gaming board, used as a symbol for the game of life. The crack that destroys Gilgamesh's walls marks the end of a culture, the end of this way of seeing reality.

The walls are a sign of love and protection, despite the savage means that Gilgamesh used to construct them.

64 INT BRITISH MUSEUM

Once again the more mundane Victorian world intrudes, to remind the audience that each generation/society has its own chance to get it right.

17 The carving symbolises the spirit of Enkidu - reminding us to delight in life, to value what it offers. From Sumer.

George puts himself into the game. George is linked visually both with the carving and the game. The scene again hints at his death.

65 EXT RAWLINSON'S HOME
Representation of Rawlinson's wealth and privilege. The outdoor context allows a glimpse into the relationship of Rawlinson and his much younger wife.

Louisa tries to make Rawlinson see, particularly the nature of the society's treatment of women. Henry is not willing to question the status quo because he senses the 'abyss' that this could open within him.

The character of Louisa is not based on an actual character, but is a depiction of the kind of woman with the education, and independent mind to oppose the status quo.

This political astuteness is an important element in the relationships of both Disraeli and Gladstone with their wives, women's political interactions being restricted to operating mainly through their husbands. Twenty years earlier, Gladstone had been instrumental in preventing a women's suffrage bill, which had passed at first reading. Gladstone's interactions with women, his wife, his sister and the women of the night, seem to be characterised by his belief that his own views were grounded in Biblical truth.

67 INT THEATRE

The Victorian theatre is linked to other references to performance in the screenplay: the shadow horror play, Sumerian speaking contest; George's presentation - not to mention parliament itself. This is a reference to the role and power of cinema.

Early days for Gilbert and Sullivan, who were later to immortalise Rawlinson as the 'very model of a modern major general' in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* (1880). Victorian society was ready to be daring - but not too daring.

George Smith records his puzzlement with the publication of his expedition ending as the 'season for excavation was ending'. However, the *London Telegraph* did sponsor three of Smith's expeditions.

Arnold is used to symbolise the 'public'. He takes an aquisitive approach to cultural matters: art, science etc.
EXT BALMORAL

One of a series of shots of buildings which are used throughout. At Balmoral Castle Victoria simultaneously represents and attempts to escape discourses of royalty.

INT VICTORIA’S PALACE

An interaction between different kinds of power: Victoria as hereditary monarch, Gladstone as elected politician. The style is theatrical, almost music hall to underscore the artificiality of this power struggle.

Conflict over redistribution of social power. At this point Victoria had withdrawn from public life, necessitating a journey to Scotland each time the Prime Minister had legislation to pass. A time of republican enthusiasm in England. Gladstone’s attempts to solve the ‘Irish Question’ lead him deeper into the political wilderness.

This scene is intended to suggest that social reform was often won by champions whose views in other ways might be seen as oppressive.

Victoria’s mourning for Albert is used to parallel Gilgamesh’s loss of Enkidu. Both have lost the one person who provided a bridge to the rest of the world.

Like Gilgamesh, Victoria cannot recover from her loss: both attempt memorials. Victoria tries to bring Albert back by rituals: setting a place for him at the table, laying out his clothes every day, preserving his room as he left it and by the photographs of his head and shoulders on the pillow of every bed in the castle in which he had slept. Gilgamesh chooses a quest for immortality.

INT ZIGGURAT PREDAWN

Based on Tablet I of the Epic of Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh is linked visually with the lion, symbolising his strength, and the locked-up part of himself released by friendship with Enkidu.

However, as Gilgamesh is the lion and Enkidu, the gazelle, the association inevitably ends badly for Enkidu.

The final scene shows Gilgamesh holding the lion cub (based on a Sumerian seal) indicating that he has tamed and come to terms with his own nature.
Scene suggested by the Diaries of Arthur Munby.

The plight of the working class, especially women is often sanitised in ‘period’ films. I have attempted a more realistic depiction to suggest parallels between the vulnerability of Victorian working class and the current deterioration in working conditions and employment practices. I am interested in including a subtext that deals with the struggle for social reform in order to highlight what is currently being lost under economic rationalism.

Enheduanna is a priestess of Inanna’s temple. She may have been a female counterpart of Gilgamesh, that is her role may have been to provide ritual marriage, in order to ensure the Gods’ protection for the city. (The opposite of the Greek Vestal Virgins perhaps).

The temple was also an orphanage where abandoned children were raised, probably in the service of the gods. The Epic of Gilgamesh suggests that there were also male counterparts to the priestesses.

Once again the Victorian world intervenes suggesting the timelessness of drudgery. My Fair Lady it is not.

The inclusion of a Standard of Ur that comes to life suggests the mechanicalness of Gilgamesh’s life. He is like a circus strong man who entertains (and protects) the population. This motif may be used later with the introduction of the circus strong-woman, a popular entertainment in Victorian times.

The procession in this case is led by Yarrim Adu, Gilgamesh’s vizier.
Yarrim leads the procession, like something out of an art work himself. Yarrim's only interest in people is that they do the right thing.

18 Sumerian official

19 Winged figure detail

Yarrim's characterization has been derived from blending these two depictions. The figure on the right suggests the quintessential official (another 'universal' perhaps.)

79 EXT ZIGGURAT

This is the period of tyranny described in Tablet I of the *Epic* as the reason why the gods create Enkidu.

Gilgamesh like a circus lion is obliged to perform. He is despairing of his position, and is driven by his energy, strength and 'restless heart'. Alienated and hating the city which he serves.
From Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*. This remark, if reliable, sheds some interesting light on his relationship with Victoria. Disraeli is depicted as a partial outsider himself, with contradictory attitudes to English society, and to Victoria.

Yarrim and Disraeli linked as being part of the mechanism of the state.

This is a reference to a Gilgamesh story that is not part of the *Epic*. Agga, the African king, represents the constant desire for conquest which is the main theme of many of the ancient world’s surviving written records and art works. The need to protect Uruk from attack is one of Gilgamesh’s responsibilities. I see Gilgamesh regarding this as a heavy burden and feeling alienated by Uruk.

The fight sequence also forshadows the battle with Enkidu.

The unending threats of war and conquest are also indicated in the sequences that deal with the building of the city walls; the invasions of the Assyrians and Urshanabi’s final vision of the future.
The gods here respond to the suffering inflicted on the city by Gilgamesh. Their decision is to create Enkidu to 'contend' with Gilgamesh and leave the city in peace. It is not clear in the epic how long they saw this being effective.

Enkidu is animal-man to Gilgamesh’s god-man. He is Gilgamesh’s mirror image, his ‘other’ who brings understanding of physical life and the people.

20 bas relief of gazelle.

21 Anatolian plain - the wilderness
The wilderness with its fields of wildgrain, represents the psychological wilderness; the personal and emotional, contrasting with the rational and the political. It lies outside the city but is always visible from certain vantage points.

87 EXT WATERHOLE

Enkidu is part of the herd and yet separate. Like Gilgamesh he is unfulfilled. He sees his face beside the gazelle and knows that he is not one of them.

The water here links with the water jug that Gilgamesh breaks in the next scene.

Both Gilgamesh and Enkidu are unable to make sense of their identity.

90 EXT RIVER

The gentleness of Enkidu is contrasted with the savagery of the human hunters.

92 EXT URUK

The walls of Uruk are both protection and a trap for Gilgamesh. He hopes to leave the city but cannot leave the city unprotected.

The eye of knowledge on the walls is taken from the design on the gaming board.

96 INT PALACE

Enheduanna is to be sacrificed to the wild man, just as Tammuz was sacrificed for Inanna.

95 EXT WATERHOLE SEQUENCE

Tablet II Column I.

This is the first section I envisaged in my adaptation. My first idea was of the epic as ballet. I conceptualised the scene as dance.
Tablet I Columns v and vi
There are two dreams where Gilgamesh forsees his coming battle with Enkidu. Ninsun, his mother, tells him the meaning of the dreams and that he must 'untie' the meaning.

For the purposes of rhythm in the epic, I felt that there should have been three dreams. I suspected that a fragment was missing. This was confirmed when I read the Kovacs translation, which does include a third dream.

Tablet II Column I

Enkidu's effect on others is unpredictable.

Enheduanna falls in love with him. She becomes a kind of Delilah - cutting his hair, and getting him drunk. As Gilgamesh predicts, the gazelle do reject him, but unlike Samson he gains as much as he loses. Enheduanna reminds Enkidu that he is a man, not an animal, and that he belongs in the city. Enkidu is Tarzan to Enheduanna's Jane.

Later, when Enkidu discovers that he is marked to die, he curses Enheduanna for taking him away from the wilderness. She reminds him that he has gained his humanity and he quickly agrees and forgives her, even in the face of his coming death.

In some translations, the seduction is followed by a section where Enheduanna introduces Enkidu to human 'civilization' by taking him first to live with the shepherds. In an earlier draft, I included these scenes.

101 INT RAWLINSON’S STUDY

Rawlinson is inserted here to develop the connection between his character and Gilgamesh.

The mongoose represents Enkidu - the personal, the unpredictable which Rawlinson has not explored greatly in his very public life. The pages of the book symbolise knowledge of the past, scholarship and Rawlinson's doorway to different knowledges. That the pages are torn indicates that the emotional and the instinctive often has a disruptive quality.
On another level, the mongoose represents the ‘Eastern’ side of Rawlinson as depicted in this screenplay. Both are out of place in England. Rawlinson has become the ‘other’ in his homeland. He experiences more difficulties dealing with English society and politics than he did as a representative of a foreign power abroad dealing with a range of different cultures. In coming to England he has given up the dreamworld where he and various royal ursurpers played their roles: from Herat to Bokhara to Baghdad.

He attempts to recreate the ‘East’ visually in his own home, with Persian decor and clothing.

105 EXT LONDON DOCKS

A comment on the way that working men were treated like beasts on the docks, even down to the cage.

Linked with Enheduanna’s comment. Indicates the way that humanity needs to keep re-learning the same things.

106 INT BALMORAL

Gladstone and Victoria again. According to Strachey, Victoria’s early enthusiasm for social progress ended because of her husband’s conservatism. Perhaps this strongly-held relationship did not open up the more life-affirming aspects of her personality.

107 EXT ASCOT

Louisa is lobbying for women’s rights, to little avail with this group of parliamentarians. Issues of Empire are more to their taste.

Incident from Rawlinson’s school days, from biography.
108 EXT BRIDEHOUSE

Tablet II Columns iii and iv.

End of the first phase of the script. The major turning point in Gilgamesh’s life; begins the friendship that transforms his life. Completes adaptation of Tablets I and II of the *Epic*.

CIVILIZATION

109 EXT STRAITS OF DOVER

A scene depicting the arrival of the Shah of Persia in England. Based on Rawlinson’s biography, and the Shah’s diary.

POV switches from East to West and back.

Shah’s observation of the crows from his diary.

(Interestingly Rawlinson’s descriptions of Eastern palaces, and the Shah’s descriptions of the wonders of Europe share a similar tone of tourist fascination with the exotic.)

114 INT BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Incidents from Shah’s diary.

Details of these scenes written from the Shah’s perspective.

Lady in waiting incident from popular mythology.

115 - 119 SERIES OF ENGLISH SCENES

These sequences show aspects of ‘civilization’ from a British perspective. Contrasted with corresponding Mesopotamian scenes which indicate that materialism and ruthlessness are at the heart of certain Victorian notions of ‘civilization’.
Indicate that both Enkidu and George will remain out of step with their new societies.

137 EXT ZIGGURAT

Tablet II Column vi

The venture against Humbaba remains as a fragment. Translation of Maureen Kovacs (1989) gives additional detail which I have added to that given in the Gardner/Maier version used in earlier drafts of the screenplay.

140 EXT ABANDONED MONASTERY

Based on one of Etienne Gaspard Robertson's Fantasmagorie, performed before 1830 and quoted in Antonia Lant’s ‘The Curse of the Pharaoh or How Cinema Contracted Egyptomania’ from Visions of the East. Orientalism in Film. (1997)

142 EXT ORCHARD

Based on Tablet XII Column i

Enkidu's descent and return from the Underworld. I have linked this with a separate story about Gilgamesh's father Lugalbanda, who also visited the Underworld and managed to return.

149 INT TEMPLE

Tablet II Column iv

Scene inspired by bas relief of Assyrian sacrifice featured in British Musem.

152-157 HUMBABA'S FOREST

This section was expanded with detail from the Kovacs translation.
I have given a variation on Gilgamesh's dream of the wild bull. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* this dream relates to the ill-fated conquering of Humbaba. Enkidu interprets the hand with the waterskin, as belonging to Lugalbanda who offers (symbolic?) support for the venture.

In the screenplay this dream foreshadows the coming of the Bull of Heaven, sent by Inanna. Gilgamesh kills the Bull of Heaven with the help of Enkidu. The gods punish Gilgamesh by decreeing Enkidu's death.

In the screenplay the hand that offers the waterskin will be Enkidu's.

The series of dreams are a premonition of the punishment that follows both of Gilgamesh's victories.

**Tablet V Column vi**

22 Face of Humbaba
Visual and written depictions of Humbaba (aka Huwawa) seem to disagree as to what kind of evil being he was, or whether he was 'evil' at all. This section remains the most incomplete.
Kovacs provides additional detail from the Old Babylonian version.

Kovacs refers to Humbaba's 'changing face'. I see the battle as being against unseen forces, played out by light and winds.

Humbaba is sometimes described as a 'dragon' however as dragons have become favourites with cinema audiences, a dragon would not be appropriate here. Enkidu advises Gilgamesh to cut off Humbaba's head and Enkidu's judgement is to be seen as reliable throughout.

159-161 MOUNTAINSIDE

Suggested by the Sandars translation. Both Kovacs and Gardner/Maier follow the killing of Humbaba immediately with Tablet VI Column I dealing with Inanna's marriage proposal to Gilgamesh.

162 BEDROOM

Rawlinson's nightmare is included to link him with Gilgamesh. It is a dream of the kind of violence that has resulted in the 'East' when official policy was particularly inept. It foreshadows the massacres in the Balkans in 1876 which will challenge Henry's outlook.

Based on incident from the obituary of Sir Henry Rawlinson published in the London Times and mentioned in Rawlinson's own writings on Afghanistan.

165-167 GATES OF Uruk / Leighton's Studio / Palace

These scenes deal with the taking of trophies. Gilgamesh returns empty-handed to Uruk and discovers that he is welcomed warmly by the people.

Leighton's drawing, and Disraeli's gift of the Suez canal, symbolise the objectification and aquisitiveness of 'orientalism'.

168 Gilgamesh's Palace

Tablet VI Column I - Tablet VII Column vi

Gilgamesh rejects his traditional role and tries to take control of his own destiny.
Leads to the death of Enkidu following a short battle with the vampire. The *Epic* contains versions of Enkidu’s death prolonged by sickness over some days.

Repetition and extension of key scene which introduces Gilgamesh and Enkidu in this adaptation. This scene is the heart of the screenplay.

Gilgamesh is released from the horror of his futile game with the gods by his mother’s appearance.

This sequence brings the experiment in ‘civilization’ to a close.

180 MUSEUM

George Smith, the second Enkidu is about to begin his own journey towards death. He is forced back to the Middle East to find the rest of the Gilgamesh story, in order to make his career. However, Smith lacks the resources and experience which have enabled Rawlinson and other British archaeologists to be successful in the past.

THE JOURNEY

183 CONSTANTINOPLE

Shot of the city, symbolising the declining and corrupt Ottoman Empire.

George refuses to contemplate the custom of gift-giving. An attitude which some contemporaries felt contributed to his death since it delayed his progress throughout.

Rawlinson held opposite views on ‘baksheesh’, resigning from his post as Ambassador in Baghdad after only six months, and returning to England when the Foreign Office curtailed the practice by its representatives abroad. Included to bring out differences between the attitudes and backgrounds of Smith and Rawlinson.

191, 193 DESERT/DARKNESS

*Tablet IX Column I*

Gilgamesh begins his journey to challenge death. Driven on by a sense of guilt for Enkidu’s death, he sets out to pit his godlike nature against the patriarchal gods.
This massacre which outraged public feeling throughout Britain was treated ambiguously by the British parliament. Disraeli reluctant to admit that it had occurred, for fear of Britain being obliged to offer support to the Christians who were massacred.

In the screenplay Henry finds his old beliefs about the Empire’s affairs changing. He is beginning to question the ruthlessness of British foreign policy.

These scenes based on biographies of Gladstone and Disraeli as well as several articles and letters which were published by the London Times in the adjacent months.

This Hittite depiction of the carnival of animals symbolises experiencing the joy of life. George discovers the piece but is unable to connect with its meaning.

The deterioration of Fahad symbolises the ailing condition of the ‘East’ and a severing of Henry’s relationship with his old self.
Henry is more emotionally vulnerable than he has ever been before. Links with the Carchemish discovery.

211 GARDEN WALL

The scorpion-people symbolically represent the politicians of previous sequences, sentries in charge of a jewelled garden which is essentially worthless.

24 Scorpion man

215 SIDURI'S TAVERN

Tablet X Column I

Siduri is another nurturing female character. Siduri speaks of the impermanence of life and urges Gilgamesh to accept his destiny.

Siduri as winemaker to the gods is linked with Enheduanna who gave wine to Enkidu, as a symbol of his humanity.

217 FOREST OF SNAKES
Battle with the Urna-snakes given in the Kovacs translation but little detail is
given. This scene has been written based on a recurring dream of the writer’s
husband.

Gilgamesh defeats the snakes by gradually taking on their nature. This is the only
way that he can pass through the forest of snakes. This sequence foreshadows the
loss of the Plant of Openings to the snake. (Oddly as I write a diamond python is
moving through the trees in the garden.)

218 SEA OF DEATH

Gilgamesh breaks ‘the things of stone’. None of the versions of the Epic make
clear what the ‘things of stone’ actually were.

I have interpreted these as stones where the names of the dead are carved. They
offer an ironic comment on human desire to be immortalised. Characteristically
Gilgamesh challenges this finality by breaking the stones. However, the stones
also contain the power of Humbaba, as this escapes Urshanabi is no longer able to
ferry Gilgamesh across the Sea of Death.

Gilgamesh remains undaunted and works out his own way to cross the waters by
cutting poles to propel the boat.

Urshanabi becomes an Enkidu figure and goes with him.

222 MUSEUM BAGHDAD

George reaches a dead-end in his search for the Gilgamesh tablets.

From this point his decision not to give up begins a movement towards his death.
George does not have the finance to continue his journey but drives himself
onwards.

(Note: Smith’s was not the only death on this journey. A German scholar, Herr
Eneberg, who accompanied him also died a few weeks earlier. However, I have
compressed the time and have not included this character. It seems that wealth and
privilege were almost essential for success with archaeological work.)
Gilgamesh and Urshanabi cross the waters. Tableau effect of winged crocodile using his wings as a sail.

Gilgamesh collapsed in the boat.
Scene stylisation intended to give a visual comment on film narrational aesthetics. Links visually with Adapa on water.

224-229 ZIUSUDRA’S ISLAND

Tablet XI Column i - iv

The Deluge sequences. These symbolise the fragility of human life, in conflict with destiny.

Gilgamesh learns from Ziusudra that there is no point in angering the gods; that they will not give him immortality. Once again he does not listen.

It is also the first part of the Gilgamesh story to be deciphered by George, to which he owes his reputation.

The Deluge is the negative climax of the screenplay.

238 ABYSS

Gilgamesh is described in the opening lines of the Epic as the ‘one who saw the abyss’. the abyss represents how far Gilgamesh will go to challenge fate. It is the point of the gaining of wisdom. Gilgamesh’s victory is not for himself but for his people. Gilgamesh dives into the depths without hope. He has nothing further to lose. It is the limit of his endurance. He reaches a place never before seen by humanity and rises to the surface having found the plant.

242 FOREST

The loss of the Plant of Openings ends Gilgamesh’s attempt to challenge Death. Humanity was never meant to become immortal. Gilgamesh must finally accept mortality, though he has held the secret in his hands.
244 CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS

Gilgamesh and Urshanabi stumble on this celebration of life, and find that they join in despite everything. Gilgamesh has seen the abyss but here learns the value of living. He takes this wisdom which he takes back to his people.

This is the positive climax of the screenplay.

245-6 VILLAGE HUT

Illness and death of George Smith. Smith dies from hunger and fever.

Based on quite detailed accounts given in letters to the *Times*

247, 8, 150 LONDON STREET / BREAKFAST ROOM

The incident where George’s voice was heard to call out near the time of his death, actually occurred though not to Rawlinson. German scholar Delitzsch who had worked with Smith at the British museum on the way to the house of another Assyriologist heard Smith call out at between 6.45 and 7.00 on the night of Smith’s death. Smith died at 6.00 pm. From the *London Times*.

Henry begins to realise what George has meant to him.

Henry will deal with loss and a feeling of having somehow contributed to George’s death. He looks up to sense that he might one day be without Louisa as well.

Henry is about to find himself where Gilgamesh is at the start of the screenplay. As depicted in this screenplay, Henry’s whole story corresponds to the first phase of Gilgamesh’s development, told in Tablet I. The screenplay ends with questions about whether Henry is capable of growing towards wisdom as Gilgamesh has done, or whether he will cling to the illusions of the past. Henry’s real journey is about to begin.
Final scene with Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh has reached his full potential, symbolised by holding the lion.

26 Gilgamesh with lion
George Smith’s drawing of this scene features in the first phase of the screenplay.
Gilgamesh is reconciled to his city, and to his own limitations.

He is also reconciled with Inanna/Enheduanna who comes to stand beside him.

252 DEATH OF SIN-LEQUI-UNINNI

The introduction of Sennacherib is intended to link with the theme of the constant presence of war. While Gilgamesh tablets have been dated as late as 600 AD in Syria, the late Assyrian period is intended to suggest the end of the life-span of the Epic in the Ancient World.

Sin-Lequi-Uninni is the ‘artist’. Her perspective is less pessimistic than Urshanabi’s. Urshanabi, as boatman for the dead has always seen humanity in its worst light. Urshanabi is a pragmatist.

Final moments of the film belong to Urshanabi and to George.

Urshanabi has a vision of the future which sees Rawlinson’s sudden awareness of the value of those he loves. As he reads the letter about George’s death, he is suddenly aware of his need for his wife and the fragility of life. (Louisa was to die in 1889 at 53; Rawlinson in 1895 at 85)

However, through the French doors we see his sons playing war games. Sennacherib is bayoneting a tree, an incident based on Rawlinson’s own late adolescence as remembered by his brother George. ‘Sennacherib’ or Henry Junior, played a prominent role in World War I.

Urshanabi’s ‘pitiless’ gaze then takes in twentieth century wars and suffering in the Middle East and the Balkans. The countries chosen because of their geographical connection with the Gilgamesh story.

Urshanabi who has seen the dance of life, is appalled by the recurring nature of war and human stupidity. He sees ‘all men’ as fools. The final comment is George’s. George’s voice concurs with Urshanabi’s viewpoint.