

**GILGAMESH**

**Sharon Kaczorowski**  
New Castle, Delaware  
San Antonio, Texas

my name hides on the side of my tongue.  
i cannot remember it.

i remember other things:  
herds of strange cattle,  
heads bowed by mythic horns.  
the tips drag through bluebonnets,  
staining them purple as the tongues of children  
drinking grape soda pop.  
longhorn,  
such a strange name  
for an animal so sturdy  
it would be a fit mate  
for babe, paul bunyon's blue ox.

i remember the steam engine, the cotton gin, and repeating rifles.  
what I could have done with them!

recently, I learned a new name –  
ipod.  
i can download  
all the world's music, great and profane,  
carry it on my waist  
in the empty place  
my sword once filled.

no one sings my songs anymore,  
not the lullabies my nursemaid sang to keep me sleeping  
while my father,  
mad with fear  
of a cuckold's horns,  
stalked his harem.  
concubines and wives screamed  
as he tossed them on the waves of his passionate wrath.

i remember the end of harems;  
let a thousand flowers bloom.

i remember a day  
fit for a song, an epic, an ode, an edda.  
my friend at my back  
our eyes half-blind with blood and sweat,  
our own and that of our enemy.  
our arms trembled  
with the fatigue that follows too much killing.  
still, we brandished our swords.

i remember a nickname:  
“bull of heaven.”  
was it mine?  
that of an enemy?  
a friend?  
a fiend?

and I remember a word:  
“inkadu.”  
when I taste it on my tongue,  
i weep.  
inkadu,  
all that I long for,  
and all that I have forgotten,  
including the name  
of the witch  
who laid upon my shoulders  
this curse of immortality.

sometimes, just before I fall asleep  
i wonder if I paid for this long life,  
bought a charm, or a spell.

surely not.

what madman  
wants to live so long  
no one knows him  
not even himself