



Between what the U.S. says and what it does, how the world sees it and how it chooses to see itself, I think about the gulf between life and death, and I think about Inanna (Ee-na-na).

Inanna was a Mesopotamian goddess, worshipped by the people of Sumer, the people who invented the first alphabet, who lived on the banks of the Euphrates, in lands that are now Iraq, Kuwait, and other middle eastern countries. In my twenties I come across the myth of the Descent of Inanna, and am so inspired by the tale that when I start a small business publishing limited edition books of poetry and literature, she becomes the namesake of my press.

Inanna is the Queen of Heaven, the daughter of the moon. When a crisis occurs in her kingdom, she is called to the Great Below. She enters the seven gates of the underworld willingly, shedding her earthly possessions. She is slain, her beautiful body hung on a hook. Magical forces intervene and she is revived and confronted with further challenges and trials. She is beset by demons and gatekeepers, used her own death sister before she succeeds in making her way back to the Great Above to rule her Kingdom. This myth is the only one I know of in which a woman enters the underworld of her own choosing and returns by way of her own strength, skill and intelligence. In Mesopotamian mythology Inanna is one of a pantheon of gods and goddesses, the female deities as formidable as their male counterparts. Inanna herself is described as being "as tall as Heaven, as wide as the Earth, and as strong as the foundations of the city walls. Inanna, the Holy Priestess of Heaven, travels to Hell and back, and does not need to be rescued.

It's springtime and the dust is entering Iraq with a full ornamentarium. The whole thing seems both impossibly unbelievable and eerily inevitable. News accounts of battles and bombing raids have the same celebratory tone as the first Gulf episode - there is no sense of solemnity, much less sorrow or shame. It's like a sudden flash of *dojo va*, or a nightmare forgotten until its recurrence. I meditate upon the poetic associations of the phrase "the Gulf." The gulf between the possessors and the possessed, between simple needs and infinite greed. Between fact and fiction, real lives and media representations.

During the first Gulf War images circulate in the media of ruined tanks, tires, and other refuse strewn across the desert. I read a quote in the paper by a government official who says that it doesn't matter what we leave behind, it's only a desert. These words, "It's only a desert" plant an image permanently in my mind. I see piles of military wreckage covering the sands above while precious Sumerian relics, the flowers of a great civilization, are buried safely below. I imagine delicate opal and sapphire necklaces, the tiny throne of Ur, a throne of Lapis Lazuli, a shining silver diadem. The businessmen and corporations and figureheads who run my country and who now want to control Iraq, will never discover these wondrous jewels. There is only one buried treasure they are after, and it is as black as their hearts, and as crude as their minds.