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Prof. Caffee
Hum 110
8/30/2022 & 1/1/2022

Week 1 Hum 110

Notes on Gilgamesh

Enkidu as a bottom: <https://twitter.com/skymochi64/status/1562872135592607752>

Ideas for comparative essay: <https://twitter.com/skymochi64/status/1563913140471234562>

Lecture #1 on Gilgamesh

What is the humanities? (pt. 1)

- Humanities is based on the word human: what is a human? What makes us human? *Who* is human?
- The concept of humankind as a species is only thought of as a concept within the past ~500 years. Humanities comes from “homonitas” and used since the 15th century. Related to anything *not* divine, and centered on humans.
- Humanities is not concrete. Profs. Opinion is that Humanities is something we *use* (verb) not something that is static (noun). Type of inquiry & thinking: humanistic inquiry.
 - Analyzing, questioning, etc. systems of power, cooperation, etc. for the purposes of upholding, understanding, or even dismantlement.
- Famous individuals are only based on countless unknown figures.
 - Slaves who built America
 - Women forgotten by science who “famous” scientists based their research on
 - The soldiers of Alexander the Great (and the few thousands he conquered)
- Individual authors of older times help us understand our current systems and what we *choose* to do.
- Cultural artifacts help us understand the past and present
 - Art: literature, paintings, theater, music, cinema, etc.
 - Philosophical, political, etc. narratives
 - Material culture: buildings, monuments, everyday life (tools, etc.) – things created by humans
- Critical thinking: how do you analyze these cultural artifacts?
 - What is critical thinking?
 - Ok the definition is too long.

Gilgamesh (pt. 2)

- One of, If not the, first example of the heroes journey
 - Heart of many myths and legends
 - Heavily male – centric
 - Mystery about the birth of the hero
 - Special powers, but not all-powerful
 - Focused on a quest, task, or journey to achieve a goal
 - The hero must use strength and wits to overcome obstacles
 - Common for the hero to travel to the underworld

- Heroes tales symbolize what a human should be, and what aspects of humanity are valued at any given point in history
 - The ancient Mesopotamian value a just and benevolent king
 - and that evil-doers will be righteously punished by just deities
 - Uncertainty in life; the inevitability of death
 - Gilgamesh has been living a pretty shit life after Enkidu's death
 - Can focus on being a better king after the failure in achieving immortality
 - (opinion): the end of Gilgamesh is genuinely really rushed. It feels like the fact Gilgamesh returns to Uruk *to be a better king* is interpretation of the like last three lines. I think there is also a very grim reading of the end of Gilgamesh, due to the deus ex machina, that any search for what is outside your mortal means (ie. immortality) will inevitably be pointless for reasons *entirely* outside your control: IE. a fucking snake taking away the flower of eternal youth. I know Gilgamesh is *supposed* to have a poignant lesson at the end, but it sometimes does not feel that way.
 - Life should be enjoyed, there are many things to be grateful for in life even in ancient Mesopotamian life
- The idea of "Great Men"
 - "Non-males" cannot be great
 - These men are set with attributes more important than others & regarded as heroes
 - (opinion): some really good examples of this are the divine right of kings, being born with intelligence, literally the concept of racism, etc.
 - (opinion): A lot of the men mentioned by Kroll (from Napoleon to Einstein to Musk) are also seen as heroes not *just* due to what is perceived to be inherit traits (Napoleon: leadership, Einstein: godly intelligence, Musk: "innovator") but also due to meritocracy, which Kroll describes as "sheer willpower, tenacity, ingenuity." Meritocracy and the hero narrative seem to be heavily interlinked? Explore further.
 - These men are supported by countless unknown individuals
 - Ursula Le Guin a good example – a few stories including *those who walk away from omelas*
 - (Opinion): haven't fully read omelas but a genuinely fantastic concept.
 - (Paraphrased Le Guin Quote): 65% of what was eaten in tropical regions in paleolithic times was from hunter-gatherers ... the avg pre-historic person could make a good work-week in 15 hours ... leaving a lot of time for other things ... so the skillful hunters would choose to go hunt mammoths ... the load of meat didn't matter, but the story did.
 - This kind of story has a *hero*
 - (Paraphrased Le Guin Quote): But this hero has the support of *everyone* else. The gatherers, the singers, the makers of tools. But in the end the story is that of the *hero*.
 - (Opinion): In Gilgamesh, Shamhat, the citizens of Uruk, Uta-Nipasthi, Enkidu, etc. are the people who support the hero.
 - No one cannot achieve anything alone – The *caring of gilgamesh* rather than *the epic of gilgamesh*
 - Refer to Soc 221 reading: The looking glass self
 - <https://skymocha.github.io/Soc%20221/Week%201.pdf>
 - Stopped @ 15:10 – Going into how Gilgamesh was constructed from the caring self. Need to stop.

Conference #1 Tue 8/30/2022

- *Classroom will be changed for Thurs. class*
- *What does it mean to read a text?*
 - Active reading (from the paper)
 - Survey
 - Take a birds-eye-view. Read what the author may have thought, read historical context, etc.
 - Form questions
 - Ask questions about what I am reading. What do I expect to learn?
 - Read
 - Were my first impression correct?
 - Recite
 - Jot down notes, annotate, re-read certain key points
 - Review & Reflect
 - I am very dumb. Look over it again. It'll bring about new points & ideas
 - Active Reading from the chalkboard
 - What are my expectations?
 - Connections
 - Physical
 - Emotional
 - Themes & Literary Devices
 - What are the themes the book is telling me?
 - Gilgamesh: The search for immortality, maternal culture
 - The epic repeats itself many times
 - What does that mean?
 - Symbolism
 - Compare & Contextualize
 - Biases
 - Register (linguistic)
 - How is something written for a specific audience
 - IE legal documents are for lawyers
 - How is it consumed
 - Gilgamesh is an epic poem mostly to be oral rather than written
 - How do I read it?
 - Historically?
 - From a literary perspective?