CMLIT 212 Essay 1

Prompt

Themes of travel and journeying, in not only a physical but also a spiritual, chronological, and cultural sense, are central to many of the texts we have studied in this unit. Looking at three texts in detail, discuss how these themes are developed, how they reflect their specific cultural contexts, and the kinds of existential and practical issues such journey narratives raise. How do these narrative and poetic accounts of journeys reflect or inform your sense of your own journeying?

Readings

* Journey to the west
* Narrow road to the deep north
* Don Quixote

Themes

* We shape our journeys
* Our journeys shape us
* The spiritual journey is just as important as the physical

How are these themes developed?

1. We shape our journeys
   1. In Don Quixote, Don Quixote shapes his journey by literally seeing only what he wants to see. Every situation he comes to he molds to his own view of reality
   2. Journey to the West: Monkey was punished by the Buddhas and forced to go on a journey with monk. Monkey shapes his journey by taking every opportunity to help out Tripitaka.
   3. Narrow Road to the North: the author shapes his journey by choosing which areas to go to. He literally shapes the path of his journey and this in turn shapes the experiences he has
2. Our journeys shape us
   1. Don Quixote is shaped by his journey. His journey is the exploration of his fantasy. In the end, Don Quixote finds himself at home, no longer a believer of the old chivalric codes and the world of knights. His journey lead to his complete disenchantment from society, ultimately dying shortly after returning from his journey
   2. Journey to the West: pretty obvious. The journey reveals the potential within the travelers. They are all appointed to some order of the heavens
   3. Narrow Road to the Deep North: the author is shaped through the experiences of those who came before him and what they did in each place.
3. The spiritual journey is just as important
   1. Don Quixote’s spiritual journey is one that explores his imagination. How important is logical thinking? Is fantasy just as important as reality?
   2. Journey to the west: The physical journey is to find the scrolls. The spiritual journey is the journey to overcome their faults.
   3. Narrow Road to the North: what the author learns about each historic spot and the people involved there helps him gain a better perspective on the world.

How do these themes reflect specific cultural contexts?

1. We shape our journeys
   1. Don Quixote: Don Quixote is obsessed with the dead age of knights and chivalry. His molding of reality to his dreams is a reflection of the disillusion people feel in society
   2. Journey to the West: there are satirical elements in the story that are shaped by the current Chinese cultural, specifically those poking fun at Buddhists
   3. Narrow Road to the North: ancestry plays a huge role in Japanese culture
2. Our journeys shape us
   1. Don Quixote: People have become trapped in an endless cycle of logical thinking. Don Quixote comes back from his journey and, after sleeping for several days, declares his insanity is gone and disavows knighthood and the chivalric code. The journey drives Don Quixote from his delusion which ultimately leads to his death. A lack of fantasy in the world drives people to lose the joy in life.
   2. Journey to the West: Chinese cultural has a lot to do with spiritual enlightenment
   3. Narrow Road to the North:
3. The spiritual journey is just as important as the physical
   1. Don Quixote: People have become fed up with logical thinking and have abandoned fantasy. Is logical thinking over-rated? What place does fantasy have in our minds?
   2. Journey to the West: Chinese culture has a lot to do with spiritual enlightenment
   3. Narrow Road to the North: the spiritual journey the author goes on is enhanced by what happened there before him. Everywhere he goes plays a part in history and he learns about and appreciates those parts of history.

What kinds of existential and practical issues do such journey narratives raise?

1. Don Quixote
   1. Is logical thinking overrated? What part does fantasy play in our lives?
2. Journey to the West
   1. How do our journeys shape our lives and test our character? How does this make us better people?
3. Narrow Road to the North
   1. What part does the past play in our future?

How do these narrative and poetic accounts of journeys reflect or inform your sense of your own journeying?