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World Literature

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Research Paper

The Transformation of Gilgamesh

In the epic of Gilgamesh, we read about Gilgamesh and how he goes through a transformation from god to human. Gilgamesh was a very intimidating person. He was two-third human, which made him greedy, cruel and atrocious king. He changes after meeting Enkidu, otherwise he would have remained the same Gilgamesh as before. It was because of Enkidu, he changes himself by the end of the story and came to understood the meaning of life. My research is focused on the adamant tyrannical behavior of Gilgamesh in the beginning of the story, his change in life because of Enkidu, how Humbaba changed Gilgamesh’s thought of himself, his futile struggle to search for immortality, and finally understanding the meaning of life.

In the beginning of the story, Gilgamesh proved himself as a tyrannical king, he made his people work tirelessly “worked his people almost to death building up the city wall” (page331). Hos people prayed for a savior from Gilgamesh’s tyranny.

Gilgamesh, being the two-third god never felt pain in his life, which made him tyrannical ruler, until he faces his equal, Enkidu. Enkidu dares to challenge Gilgamesh authority. Enkidu was the person who played a vital role in shaping Gilgamesh’s life. Gilgamesh finds himself a friend and trusted advisor to him, and more that he could become. And it is because of him; he learns to care about someone other than himself.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu grew a strong bond between them. Their friendship transforms Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh was determined to kill the monster Humbaba, a servant to gods and protector of a forest. “We must prove ourselves more powerful than he”(page\_\_\_) eh tells Enkidu. Gilgamesh wouldn’t change his mind despite Enkidu’s warning and pleas. They set off to kill Humbaba deep into this creature’s forest. It is then when he realizes fear of his own, and might of Humbaba. Eventually in the fight Enkidu is slain by the monster, by saving Gilgamesh. Enkidu tells him “You never cried before,” Enkidu tells him as he lies dying. Gilgamesh becomes terrified of his existence as a demi-god and realizes his mortality. These feelings are overpowering and he doesn’t know how to deal with them.

Gilgamesh falls deeply in grief and guilt, and couldn’t accept death. He sets off on a quest to find immortality. He is so adamant in his ambition that he ignores all the warnings in his path he receives that eternal life isn’t as perfect as it seems. Finally, after his successful accomplishment of retrieving the immortal plant from the bottom of the sea, he loses it because of his carelessness. It is this incident that allowed him to accept death as a part of his life. Though it was a crucial lesson for him but it taught him to be understood the meaning of being human.

In the end, Gilgamesh went back to his city. He becomes a wise ruler. It took him long to understand the meaning of life. He understood that it was his destiny to understand what he is, that’s why he didn’t went to any further quest of searching immortality. The important element that dealt in the story with; life, love and death. Gilgamesh, who was obstinate in the beginning of the story, finally becomes a wise, loving and caring king. The story tells us that we must learn, for better or worse for who we are rather than being denial.

Annotated Bibliography

1.) Bolchunos, Marilyn. "The Ax Of Gilgamesh." *Cricket* 25.7 (1998): 22. *MasterFILE Elite*. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.

Summary: This article tells us the beginning characteristics of the great King Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh was amongst the god, but not completely a god. He was two-third god and one-third human. He was the most powerful man in Uruk. Being the most powerful his tyranny toward to his people increased, its because of he never felt pain before in his life. He made his people work day and night. Even the women and children of Uruk couldn’t escape from his tyranny. Gilgamesh raised taxes incrementally, which made the life of the people of Uruk more worse. He made his people construct his boundary wall high and far. Eventually god saw his tyranny and sent someone equal to him to challenge his authority.

Evaluation: This author of this article articulately describes the tyrannical nature of the King Gilgamesh. The author explains why would someone act so harsh to his own people. Evaluating the source, I found this article relative to my research point because of its openness to the character, Gilgamesh. Our current elite personals and elite politicians are similar to Gilgamesh. They will make decisions based on their advantages rather than the poor people. Gilgamesh made his people

2.) Barron, Patrick. "The Separation Of Wild Animal Nature And Human Nature In Gilgamesh: Roots Of A Contemporary Theme." *Papers On Language & Literature* 38.4 (2002): 377. *MasterFILE Elite*. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.

Summary: This article distinguishes the nature of human and animals, and how it is relative to Gilgamesh. From the beginning, Gilgamesh nature was considered more like an animal than that of a human being. He didn’t feel compassionate toward any being. His action toward his people was gruesome. Whereas, Enkidu, who was living with the wild animals, developed compassion and love for the living beings. He saw harmony in wild. He rescued trapped animals. His appetite was like a deer. He grazed rather than consuming meat of animals.

Gilgmesh transformed after meeting Enkidu. Enkidu taught him morality, compassion and wisdom. People of Uruk now praised him and Enkidu. Later, Gilgamesh ruled with wisdom and compassion after Enkidu’s death. Although, Enkidu lost his animal behavior but retained the exemplary nature of both human and animals, which he passed to Gilgamesh.

Evaluation: The article exposed the transformation of Gilgamesh’s nature after having Enkidu in his life. The writer used examples of animals and humans, and their positive behavior. A mother takes care of its infant, nurturing him and providing him with food and love. We can see this sort of examples both in civilized human communities and between wild animals. In our current situation we can how people take advantages of underprivileged people. Gilgamesh did same thing to its own people until Enkidu became a resistant. Tyrants like Gilgamesh have lived on earth. For example, Hitler, Stalin and Saddam Hussein. They ravaged wars; until they met their equal resistance who fell their regime. This article provided the hostile and resistant nature of human.

3.) Gilgamesh, and N. K. Sandars. *The Epic of Gilgamesh: An English Version with an Introd.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972. Print.

Summary: Enkidu was the prototypical "wildman". Gilgamesh was the prototypical socialized lord. Both were exceptionally solid willed and physically effective. The article basically says that Enkidu was appointed to test Gilgamesh so he would have less vitality to bug people of Uruk. Gilgamesh acculturates Enkidu and Enkidu gives Gilgamesh an associate. After their introductory battle, they picked up a lot of admiration for each other. They got to be quick companions. They then started to go on missions together. Not just did they adjust each other, they complimented one another were stronger together than they were separated. Eventually, it is Enkidu's passing that humbles Gilgamesh by making apparent to him that even the solid and apparently unassailable could be struck down and made into worm nourishment. This prompts the Gilgamesh to go on a mission for unceasing life. Once more, the starting objective of diverting Gilgamesh from his kin is working. As eventually, unceasing life evades him, Gilgamesh is adjusted by the attention to his dead companion. As happens with numerous individuals when their associates begin to die. Gilgamesh picks up another point of view on life that generally changes and mellows his prior interests.

Evaluation: Prior to Enkidu, Gilgamesh was more like a savage animal. Their friendship gave Gilgamesh wisdom. Nowadays, if we think of our lives, friendship is a relation, which teaches us many virtues. The relevancy of this section of the book is quite realistic to our lives and matches many circumstances.

4.) Graff, Sarah B. "The Head Of Humbaba." *Archiv Für Religionsgeschichte* 14.1 (2013): 129. *Publisher Provided Full Text Searching File*. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

Summary: The article represents Humbaba as a mythological creature. Humbaba, was an ugly beast in a deep cedar forest. He was one of the gods and protector of forest. In this article, his physical appearance is that of an ogre. The gods created him ugly to scare the people away. Gilgamesh wanted to confront Humbaba to challenge his strength. Enkidu pleads him not attack the forest for he is mightier. The arrogant king still didn’t fed to Enkidu and finally went along the quest. Encountering the giant beast, Gilgamesh questioned his strength. He for a while trembled seeing the beast. It wasn’t easy for them to fight the beast. Yet, they were amazed to see the power of Humaba, when they came to find out that he wasn’t in his usual form. Humbaba wore seven-layered armor to protect him. Learning this Gilgamesh and Enkidu took chance of the situation. However, they were successful in slaying the beast. But, Gilgamesh lost his precious friend Enkidu and undeniable fate of death.

Evaluation: The article “The Head of Humbaba” presents a detail record of the giant beast. It gives a detail archaeological history and story related to Gilgamesh. The article demonstrates Gilgamesh’s state while confronting the giant. We can relate such circumstances in real lives. For example, Hitler tried to invade its neighboring countries and challenge his power to an extinct until he crumbles every nation.

5.) Freeman, Philip. "Lessons from a Demigod." *National Endowment for the Humanities*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2014

Summary: The article tells about the adamant quest of Gilgamesh after the death of his friend, Enkidu. The king who could conquer men and monsters couldn’t save his beloved friend. He got afraid watching his friend die. He started to question his own existence as a demi-god. He started on a quest to find immortality. In his path he met many allies who helped him throughout his journey. Finally, he met Utnapishtim, the survivor from the great flood. The gods granted him immortality. Utnapishtim suggested him that he wouldn’t like immortality. Yet, Gilgamesh was adamant. Finally, Utnapishtim decided to take a trial of Gilgamesh, which he failed. However, due to the adamant nature of Gilgamesh he offered a solution for him. There is a plant at the bottom of a sea, which could provide him immortality. Gilgamesh found the plant, but lost it due to his carelessness. His only solution of immortality was lost.

Evaluation: The relevance of the article matches with my point. It portrayed the nature of Gilgamesh that is similar to kids. Children has a stubborn nature, they wouldn’t change their decision until an adult explains the cons of the circumstances. It provides good information of how an adult still retains a nature of a kid in nature. This story is eternally relevant to human. It could be an ancient scripture, but the instinct of human is clearly exposed within this mythological creature.

6.) Fieser, James. "CHAPTER 1: THE MEANING OF LIFE." *CHAPTER 1: THE MEANING OF LIFE*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Dec. 2014.

Summary: The writer talks about moral of the story. The first and obvious one is that, as strongly as we desire to live forever, the inevitable truth is that we will all die. Virtually all of us would jump at the chance to live forever, and the fact that we can’t creates a dark cloud over life’s meaning. The second and more interesting moral is that we cannot easily accept our deaths and we may do some crazy things to cheat the grim reaper. Gilgamesh’s futile struggle to find immortality gained him wisdom. However, he learned wisdom in a hard way. He understood that wisdom isn’t easy to gain and it is hard to absorb within. The writer generalized the situation of Gilgamesh to that of normal human.

Evaluation: The article is interesting and the author stressed the futile quest of human on every aspect of life. What we believe to benefit ourselves might actually become a problem in later part of life. For example, if we lie about something to escape from a certain situation, those lies may affect us in our lives. Gilgamesh had gone through same phase. He learned a lot from Enkidu, but he didn’t realize that Enkidu also being a demi-god wasn’t afraid of death. For Gilgamesh this was is lgreatest lesson in life. Enkidu took death as part of his life, whereas it was hard for Gilgamesh to accept death.

7.) Brown, Arthur R. "EAWC Essay: Storytelling, the Meaning of Life, and The Epic of Gilgamesh." *EAWC Essay: Storytelling, the Meaning of Life, and The Epic of Gilgamesh*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

Summary: The author stresses the meaning of life through Gilgamesh and his struggles. There are people who do not want to die, but the humans cannot escape death. Death is written in every human’s fate. Gilgamesh learnt his life’s meaning after realizing what Utanipishtam’s saying “You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things; day and night, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice. Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace; for this too is the lot of man (102)”. According to the writer, it is mans destiny to live and die like a flower. The eternity of men lives on his deeds and works. The author gave famous speeches of Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi and John F. Kennedy. They have marked their steps in human history and will be remembered for it.

Evaluation: I found this article excellent, because of its content. The author did an excellent job giving examples of recent excellent leaders who had been marked in history. The meaning of life is not an easy subject to grasp. According to Quran “Know that this world's life is only sport and play and gaiety and boasting among yourselves, and a vying in the multiplication of wealth and children, like the rain, whose causing the vegetation to grow, pleases the husbandmen, then it withers away so that you will see it become yellow, then it becomes dried up and broken down; and in the hereafter is a severe chastisement and (also) forgiveness from Allah and (His) pleasure; and this world's life is naught but means of deception.[ Chapter (57) sūrat l-ḥadīd (The Iron)]”. We can also find similar verse in Bible. The main thing to consider in here is that the story Gilgamesh was earlier than any of this scripture. Yet, it teaches us the virutes of life.

8.) Ataç, Mehmet-Ali. "'Angelology' In The Epic Of Gilgamesh." *Journal Of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 4.1 (2004): 3. *Publisher Provided Full Text Searching File*. Web. 1 Dec. 2014.

Summary: The article writer, Th. Jacobsen, interpreted him and his followers primarily as the story of a hero who struggles beyond his capacity to find immortality, gets disappointed, and finally faces the truth, maturing and turning to 'normality' on the premise that it is his achievements and not himself that will last. This paper challenges a literal reading of the plot of the Epic along these lines, and through select comparison with the ancient Egyptian, 'heterodox' Hebrew, Iranian, and Gnostic traditions, argues that the meaning system embedded in the Epic can be thought to point to notions of 'mysticism' and 'soteriology', expressed in a distinctively Mesopotamian idiom that suppresses an explicit display of such concepts.

Evaluation: The article is interesting contrary to my research points. It delegates his teams struggle to find the literary context of Gilgamesh story, in early scriptures such as Hebrew Bible. However, they found many clues such as flood stories, but that is only a part of the story of Gilgamesh.