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Epic of Gilgamesh: The Strive and Search for Glory and Immortality

Gilgamiş Destanı: Şan ve Ölümsüzlük Çabası ve Arayışı

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Abstract: Mankind has always looked for ways to extend their worth and life. It is, then, of great benefit to understand how mankind sought glorified livelihood and immortality. As the past shines light on the present, a conclusive comprehension of today's technological advances and medicine becomes proof of man's deeper inquiry into and in life. This paper looked at the Epic of Gilgamesh and explored the need for man in search of glory and immortality. The analysis of the epic is eclectic in nature. The paper questions the meanings of glory and immortality. It provided answers to the connotation of glory and the desire for an extensive life span. It brought the past into the present by looking at the evolution of glory and hypothesized that immortality might have been achieved through the lens of technology. It further suggested that the search for glory and immortality might forever be with mankind as the passage of time continues. The paper emphasizes the search of meaning as the human story furthers itself in the perpetual epic of mysteries. The epic is as rich as mankind's curiosity. In that, the paper ended up building a bridge that the past to the present and possible tomorrow.

Structured Abstract Introduction:

The search for a fully worthy and extended life has been a significant part of mankind's history. Today's global understanding of life has been dramatically changing due to developments in science as well as viewing history, morality, and individuals' deep desire to be recognized. Since the world is taking a different shift drastically compared to the previous century, it is of great benefit to take a look at the past and eliminate what works and what does not so a better probable tomorrow can be achieved.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this study was to analyze the Epic of Gilgamesh and find the benefit of mankind's understanding of life in the past. In doing so our understanding of today's convoluted global exchange of ideas can be filtered and scaled to see where mankind stands and what steps moving forward can be taken.

Methodology:

This paper was an eclectic study and analysis of the Epic of Gilgamesh. The primary material used was the Epic of Gilgamesh. Alongside the epic, the plight in search of glory was taken into consideration as well as the primary need of mankind in searching for immortality. The connotation of glory was also given

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considerable thought. The paper followed the shift in lexeme alteration, of glory, as well as man's desire to live longer than ever before. This understanding paper looked at how language usage and meaning-making take place from one time to another.

Findings:

The strive and search for glory was the center of this paper. The analysis of the epic showed that mankind used to equate glory with virtuousness. Gilgamesh was only able to move forward to establish total supremacy in his kingdom by gaining a virtuous quality in accepting a challenger that he cannot defeat and calling the challenger a "brother". (p. 13) What is more, the analysis of the epic unveiled a reality that as man keeps moving forward in life, the more he asks to remain at the top of the social hierarchy. This is to say, as man comes to a new horizon, a new horizon opens itself up for more scrutiny in questioning the worth of one's life and the curiosity of what tomorrow holds. Thus the wish to be immortal becomes embedded in the soul of man in one or the other way.

Immortality, the analysis of the play showed, is the need to have a meaningful life and be acknowledged more deeply than others besides family. For Gilgamesh, this person was Enkidu. Enkidu's death was what forced Gilgamesh to strive for immortality comes what might. Apparently, Gilgamesh did not achieve immortality, although he got the means, but the epic showed us that immortality can be achieved from different views of understanding.

Conclusion:

The analysis findings force us to ponder or even accept that man's life trajectory is what shapes and defines him. What this means is that for a man to be glorified in the past, he had to be a virtuous person as today, and glory is often seen in one's success in life. This success may not necessarily engulf only the good deeds of the individual. Our individual life is globally interconnected but often locally segregated in thoughts or not even at the surface except what social media exposes. Thus, man's search for glory has shifted. This manifestation of the shift may be food for thoughts.

The epic showed us that mankind is a unique individual but only unique if a service to a society is done. The question is what service to society is; today's world is rather different from the epoch gone. In that, we find ourselves in a moral quandary in which a possible solution is morality is not fixated and will never be fixated. Therefore, the burden of asserting something logical alongside emotion is upon the living. As a reasonable understanding is being reached, the history of tomorrow taking into consideration, even if unexpected reality arises, is significant. The epic showed us that destiny is inescapable yet grappling with it to make life richer is doable. In the end, only in struggles can mankind find the meaning of life.

As for immortality, the epic showed us that moving from point A to B does not bring about it. Nonetheless, it is crucial to take a look from another angle. We live in a modern world where medicine and technological advances continue to advance life expectancy and even in the poorest nations life expectancy compared to a thousand years ago is higher. What is more, the fact that we now have the Internet means that one can store their life within and be remembered forever in the heart of others. Gilgamesh is a rich and exciting epic but probably only readers and story listeners know about him. Gilgamesh was mortal but his life story was not necessarily mortal. In the same manner, today there are thousands upon thousands of Gilgamesh on the Internet and their lives are forever more stored. Finally, the search for glory and immortality may take different shapes and forms, in the end, they are the story of man.

Keywords: Glory, immortality, connotations, Gilgamesh, epic

Öz: İnsanoğlu hayatını, değerini ve ömrünü uzatmanın yollarını geçmişten bugüne dek aramıştır. Bu ihtiyaç arayışı ve nedenleri anlamakta büyük fayda sağlar çünkü bu arayışı şan ve ölümsüzlük arayışıdır. Geçmiş bugüne ışık tutarken, günümüzün teknolojik ilerlemelerinin ve tıbbının kesin bir şekilde anlaşılması, insanoğlunun yaşamı daha derinlemesine araştırdığının kanıtı haline gelir. Bu sebepten dolayı bu makale, Gilgamesh Destanı'nı inceleyerek insanın şan ve ölümsüzlük arayışındaki ihtiyacını araştırmıştır. Analiz yapma aşamasında, eklektik yöntemden yardım alınmıştır. Bu makale, şan ve ölümsüzlüğün anlamlarını sorgulamaktadır. Şan ve ölümsüzlük temaları çoğu toplumlar tarafından bilinmediği veya kullanım alanları farklı olduğundan, bu makalede filozofik bakış açısından ele alınmıştır. Şanın çağrışımlarına ve geniş bir yaşam süresine duyulan arzuya yanıtlar vermiştir. Şanın evrimine bakarak geçmişi günümüze getirmiş ve

ölümsüzlüğün teknolojinin merceğinden elde edilmiş olabileceği varsayımında bulunmuştur. Makale, insanoğlunun geçmişte şana verdiği anlam ve şanın zaman içinde ne anlam taşıdığına dair cevaplar sunmuştur. Ayrıca zaman geçtikçe ihtişam ve ölümsüzlük arayışının insanoğluyla birlikte sonsuza dek sürebileceğini öne sürmüştür. Bunun yanında, şan ve ölümsüzlük daima insanoğlu ile kalacağına dair hipotez öne sürülmüştür. Gilgamesh Destanı insanoğlunun merakı kadar zengindir. Böylelikle, içinden hayatımıza aktarabilecek birkaç hayat dersi bulunabilir. Elbette, bu derslerin, insandan insana farkı algılanması oldukça doğaldır. Bu sebepten dolayı, bu makale geçmişten günümüze bir köprü görevinde olup geleceğin olasılıkları üzerine tahminlerde bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şan, Ölümsüzlük, Çağırışım, Gilgamesh, Destan

Introduction

The Epic of Gilgamesh is a story of a man who ventures into wilderness and bewilderment of life, sorrow, the existential crisis and quest of life, glory, and the fear of death. It is a story in which a narrative man goes around his known and unbeknown territories to him to explore and learn but also to glorify himself in the name of immortalizing himself literally and metaphorically. The tale narrates how Gilgamesh's identity changes. He is seen as a hero whose desire is to conquer, organize, and lead but then the narrative takes a turn in which Gilgamesh becomes a hero: a symbol of admiration and quintessence of mankind to his people. As a man, Gilgamesh is no different from other men in his company what distinguishes him is his character. He must learn the ways of life and the psyche of his fellow men just as his fellow men must take the same journey. Gilgamesh's ability to learn and adapt to the circumstances that he finds himself in is extraordinary. He understands, beyond any men of his companion that grappling with the challenges in life is what will set a man distinguishable. He realizes that he must strive to embrace the challenges but face them with wisdom either that of his production or that which is given to him. He knows that biology has favored him with an abundance of energy and the will to comprehend hindrance and to remain strong even if it is crushing. His ability to grasp wisdom allows him to navigate through the challenges he faces by compartmentalizing his skills and using them where necessary. This study, therefore, is an attempt to bring the wisdom of the past as well as their failure so can learn and move forward. The aim of the study is to provide a world full of fears and desires and grandeur amount of choice with possible two. In the analysis of the epic, the hero, and the time, the questions of possible tomorrow can be reached.

For better or worse, Gilgamesh comprehends what is at stake and how to bypass it. He is determined to achieve what he set as his goal or goals (often a goal because the narrative is that in which Gilgamesh pursues one thing at a time). With such consistency, that any hero must persist, Gilgamesh climbs the ladder of hierarchy and becomes a king. His monarchy, as the epic would have us have it, is precious. People are obedient and loyal to him. He reigns without a challenge. However, since every great presence must face its ends, the arrival of Enkidu, an invincible man molded by the goddess of creation from clays as a quintessence image of Anu', the sky-god, Gilgamesh cycle of the dearth of defiance comes to an end. A trap is set against Enkidu to allure him and destroy him via the deception of a harlot. Even though Enkidu falls into the trap, he emerges as if the trap has never been set. He challenges Gilgamesh to a fight, but his challenge has no negative ramifications on Gilgamesh's strength in leadership, psyche, physique, and or power, and nor does Gilgamesh is able to overpower him. In the end, Gilgamesh ends up taking him as a brother and a right-handed man.

The epic is full of dangerous missions that Gilgamesh and Enkidu have to take rigorously (more elaboration in the analysis section is given). They are on missions that require both parties to participate fully where one's abilities surpass the others. For instance, when they embark to kill Humbaba who guides the forest of cedar, Enkidu is more familiar with the forest and nature because he has risen in it. He, apparently, leads and Gilgamesh follows. Yet, when Enkidu's

courage starts shrinking due to the fact that he knows and understands Humbaba's nature of terror, Gilgamesh steps in and incites his spirit. In the end, their mission is successful. Another success that Gilgamesh and Enkidu complete is killing the Bull of Heaven, a personification of drought created by Anu for Ishtar. Without the combination of both parties, the Bull of Heaven has the odds to him to wipe out the wheat and the grass for the cattle, and therefore, humanity. Thus, creating famine and destroying everything worthwhile. All in all, the one completes the other. What is more, Gilgamesh is more than a mere king, he is also a god. Enkidu comes to meet his death. The death of Enkidu makes Gilgamesh rather worried and the epic tone takes a different tone. Gilgamesh goes to search for immortality. Even though he has succeeded in finding what changes the elderly to revive their prime years, he has failed, or at least failure strikes for him to be able to get what he calls "The Old Men Are Young Again" (p. 22). To get this herb, Gilgamesh has to go through mental and physical torture. While he has not become a god literally, the narrative would have us believe that he has become a god in the eyes of his people. Once again, the death of Enkidu has provided Gilgamesh to reach his dream of becoming a god and to eliminate his fear of dying.

The analysis of the epic can unveil to the past for us and allow us to see a possible tomorrow. The analysis of the epic will then be qualitative in nature and an eclectic approach. The reason behind choosing an eclectic approach is because the study is not fully on the frame of reference of objectivity. This should not imply that the study focuses hugely or based on bias assumptions.

On Connotation of Glory

An obvious inescapable question lends itself to security here. What is it that man has in him that he needs to prove himself over and over again to his fellow men? The answer may sound simple and it is but simplicity is not a universal concept. This is because across civilization traditions differ and while civilization may look at the same concept, they are bound to come up with different connotations as to what it stands for. Patri looks into the different connotations of the word "glory" across time and civilization. She finds that the Scriptures of Hebrew glory has some undesirable meanings attached to it. For instance, it means, as Patri finds it, "(1) weight or burden, (2) riches or wealth, (3) importance, and (4) prestige, renown, honor (royal prestige, majesty)" (Patri, 2007, p. 10) The first meaning is often not the image pops in one's head when the word "glory" is uttered. Nonetheless, it may carry some element of truth in it. Consider how Gilgamesh has to fight for his people at the same time be their leader. He is their protector, on the other hand, he is their laborer. Because for him to protect them he has to put himself in danger for them. What is more, as time passes by, the meaning of glory seems to have dropped meaning responsibility and lives on the second, third, and fourth meaning. In other words, the word glory becomes something that shines he who has it as his wellbeing. What is more, Patri finds that by the ancient Greek era, the word glory has emerged with a different connotation which is "fame" or "rightly fame" (Patri, 2007, p. 13) and it is also connected with divine manifestation. Patri writes "God is glorious, and God's ways are glorious for human beings, who are made in the image of god." (Patri, 2007, p. 13) and she concludes that in the end the ". . . Church . . . gives glory to God in the work of human salvation with an unending cascade of doxologies." (Patri, 2007, p. 13)

So, glory is once seen as greatness of an individual who strives to get it has been taken and given to the divine and the divine becomes the reflection of human greatness. This is to say, the shift of meaning goes hand in hand with the shift of power. By the time power moves to the Romans, the word "glory" has taken another shape. Patri writes that glory is now defined as an "enduring and praiseworthy personal reputation" (Patri, 2007, p. 13) So, the meaning of glory has taken many turns but, in the end, and in a sense, it still carries its early meaning. The early meaning that defines glory is one taking great responsibility as their life duty. But then again, glory is not all labor. It furnishes the individual who has it and puts them at the peak of the social hierarchy.

The Strive and Search of Glory in the Ancient World

The nature of man can be seen as rather inquisitive. Ever since the dawn of time, man refuses to himself to be defined as simple. He rejects his livelihood to be merely a hunter. He strives to find a comfortable zone for himself and he strives to build a society for himself and his descendants. Yet, building the future does not quench his thirst. He needs to be glorified and to glorify himself, he has to push the limits that bind him to his territories. Najera for instance, talks about man's need to surpass his ancestors. Najera gives an example of Sepulveda, the son of a humble tanner, who lacks of psychological or metaphysical fulfillment of life that he needs to rise above his social norm, setting, and wellbeing arbitrary design for him. In that, for Sepulveda to climb the ladder of the social hierarchy, he needs to harness all that his civilization has to offer. These include graduating from university and maintaining strong social relationships in which he successfully gained the rest of Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Castile, Francisco Jimenez de Cisneros. Sepulveda's determination to be more than a mere tanner's son or the statics of the general populace is the epitome of a man searching for glory.

While the timeline of Sepulveda and Gilgamesh cannot be further apart, their stories show the same conviction. The epic of Gilgamesh narrates a tall hero who is a great warrior and shows mantle bravery who is always ready to show his courageous nature and rise higher and higher in the social hierarchy. For instance, when Enkidu walks into the market of Uruk with Gilgamesh's harlot, who allures him to the city, people accolade him with praise like "Gilgamesh has met his match. This great-one, this hero whose beauty is like a god, he is a match even for Gilgamesh." (p. 6) This is a challenge that will not elevate Gilgamesh's merits among his people. So, in order to defend his glory, despite it being a night in which he is wedded, the narrator of the story explains that the two get on each other for quite some time: they "blocked", "grappled" "snorted", "shattered" and in the end Enkidu utters to Gilgamesh that:

'There is not another like you in the world. Ninsun, who is as strong as a wild ox in the byre, she was the mother who bore you, and now you are raised above all men, and Enlil has given you the kingship, for your strength surpasses the strength of men.' So Enkidu and Gilgamesh embraced and their friendship was sealed. (p. 6)

The two fighting here are for glory and their masculinity is one of the same. Gilgamesh cannot allow his position to be thrown and Enkidu seizes the opportunity to shine himself considering that he is now in a civilized society. It may be seen that the way their approach works is simply a matter of testosterone or men in their arrogance to arrive at peace through violence. The history of man is full of violence in any case. In that, the focus here is what is the extent that man is willing to take in order to remain glorified. Gilgamesh does not count the fear factor as he wishes to defeat Enkidu and neither does Enkidu. They also put aside emotional factors, especially on Gilgamesh's side seeing that he has just been wedded, for emotion where emotion lies sympathy may seem to alter an outcome. Nonetheless, it should also be taken into consideration that they embrace each other when they understand the pressure each puts to stand his position. One is forced to derive from this that man will do anything within his prowess to glorify himself and remain at the peak of the socio-economic hierarchy. Najera writes "There is also a suppression of the emotion of fear: Alonso suppresses his fear of death and puts his life in danger by fighting courageously so as to honor his family name, the Patria, and the Catholic faith." (Najera, 2012, p. 17)

What is worth noting here is not that Alonso is ready to sacrifice himself nor that he is courageous enough to face danger without fear in his heart but that he is doing it to glorify his family and his faith. A similar pattern can be encountered in the epic. This is where Gilgamesh has a dream and Enkidu interprets the dream stating with a heavy heart that the gods have given him a kingship. And the kingship is bound to reach its end sooner or later. As a result, Gilgamesh should not despair or be saddened over it, but he should use his power to bring his people together and

destroy his enemy. In other words, Gilgamesh should be the darkness of horror that men tremble when his name is uttered and the light that gives tranquility to his loyalty. His supremacy over people is to remain victorious in battle. Enkidu ends up advising Gilgamesh not to abuse his power but to be a just leader for his people and in the eyes of Shamash who is the judge-giver, a warrior, and the god of wisdom. (Shamash, in the epic, is sometimes also referred to as the Sun.) Upon hearing the words of Enkidu and seeing how Enkidu appears worrisome, Gilgamesh utters incentive words to strengthen Enkidu. Gilgamesh states that:

I have not established my name stamped on bricks as my destiny decreed; therefore I will go to the country where the cedar is felled. I will set up my name in the place where the names of famous men are written, and where- no man's name is written yet I will wise a monument to the gods. Because of the evil that is in the land, we will go to the forest and destroy the evil; for in the forest lives Humbaba whose name is "Hugeness" (p. 7)

Gilgamesh is set to boost Enkidu's morale but importantly in doing so, he is glorifying himself and his kingship. It is already known to all that none can dare challenge Gilgamesh until Enkidu comes along. While Enkidu has not defeated him, he has risen to the level that Gilgamesh will come to call him "brother" (p. 13). Considerably, if Gilgamesh is to establish his total supremacy over all facing a higher challenge is only logical. Once again, we are forced to see that the pursuit of glory in the eyes of Gilgamesh is not only to be the superpower but also in it virtue can be gained. Nonetheless, when one is seen as virtuous, this is simultaneously related that one is glorious. Gilgamesh strives for further glory.

The Strive and Search of Glory in the Near Past

The Concept of glory, as seen in the previous chapter, has been with man since man figured out that in society people are labeled by their actions and position. While in the ancient world glory is often related to the strongest facing adversities and overcoming successfully and in doing so, they remain at the peak of the social ladder. Man evolves as the passage of time goes by. His philosophical thoughts toward life change but he makes little change or no change at all in and around the concept of glory. The correlation of glory and man's action can be related to what fuels his vision of tomorrow. Hale sees glory as having disguised itself in the shape of a monarchy. However, it should be noted that kingship in the ancient world and monarchy in recent history are not necessarily an exact copy of one another but that monarchy to kingship is what horses are to cars. In other words, the system of governance in the ancient world has the pattern as it is in the recent past. What differentiates the two is the complexity that the system has become. Where the king, say Gilgamesh in this case, goes to the battlefield alone or with a few companions, the recent past monarchy allows the king to stay in his kingdom, and with the help of his companions and the generals on the battlefield, he manages what may rise to challenge his position. In doing so, the king controls his glorious manifestation indirectly. What is more, just as Enkidu challenges Gilgamesh, every system of governance is destined to face a challenge in the name of glory. Let us consider one of the most important endeavors in the recent past: the French Revolution. The French Revolution is one of the most rebellious revolutions in the history of man. And in its center is the desire to conquer and be glorious. Hale asserts that the French Revolution is a revolution of overthrowing, destroying, rising and falling, and that Napoleon achieves his glory by being alert of all that discourses that were present. (Hale, 2017, p.8)

Keeping the French Revolution aside, Napoleon desired to conquer and rule. If it is up to him, he might have conquered every landman dwells on. However, by the time Napoleon came to power, there were a number of strong civilizations that he had to take into consideration. In Europe alone, strong governments, are his neighbors such as the English, Spanish, and Italian. In a sense, these governments are his Humbaba which is to say gaining the glory he is after is directly proportional to the glory that they are after colonizing the world for themselves. Consider how Gilgamesh vindicates his glorious position. As Enkidu and Gilgamesh dive into the wilderness of

Humbaba's forest of cedars, Enkidu fears that they might not be strong enough to destroy Humbaba. On the other hand, Gilgamesh is not ready to just go back to his people and gives up earning his glorious stand as the strongest, and the bravest of all. He, therefore, looks at Enkidu and speaks to him with a precision of what is it they are after and what the odds of man are. He states "[W]here is the man who can clamber to heaven? Only the gods live forever with glorious Shamash, but as for us men, our days are numbered, our occupations are a breath of wind." (p. 7) Gilgamesh is sure of where he stands. He understands that he is mortal, and for him to be glorious like the gods that live with Shamash, he must strive for what he can and achieve what is achievable while he can. Giving up his position is out of the question since sooner or later he is bound to die. In that, for his glory to sustain he must strive to partake what men cannot dare think of it, what is the phantom of a man's world. So, to give courage to Enkidu, he states "[H]ow is this, already you are afraid! I will go first although I am your lord, and you may safely call out, 'Forward, there is nothing to fear!' Then if I fall I leave behind me a name that endures; men – will say of me, 'Gilgamesh has fallen in fight with ferocious Humbaba.'" (p. 7) Apparently, Gilgamesh does not fear death so long as it brings him his glory. The pain that Gilgamesh has to go through is what brings him his glory. Bertolin writes that:

For the Greeks, it was clear that the saying "no pain, no gain" holds true. Certainly, without reenacting the sorrow through means of narration no *kleos* [kleos means glory] can be achieved. Any sorrow that is not narrated because it seems too hurtful will not be transformed into *kleos*. Since *kleos* is the result of narration and in this sense parallels the concept of truth, and *penthos* avoids making the sufferings objective through narration, *penthos* is therefore not concerned with *aletheia*. That which remains in the realm of *penthos* remains not remembered by society in general and, consequently, no one can ascertain whether it is true or not. (Bertolin, 2016, p. 80)

Gilgamesh is no stranger to pain and sorrow. His whole endeavor is to manage what he can with little help or no help. To approach Humbaba, Gilgamesh needs to harness every ounce of psychological energy that he might and draw every emotional resource he has into a viable energy source that can help him defeat Humbaba. Close scrutiny into the whole idea of Gilgamesh striving for glory may lend us a perception. A perception in which we are bound to see that the change in time alters the connotation of what glory is or what gaining glory stands for. For instance, for the Europeans of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, the meaning of glory can be interpreted as how far an empire or the system of governance they have can further its territory in search of resources. Consider this degree of comparison that Gilgamesh seeks glory for himself and to protect his subjects as they are, the Europeans seek glory in order to control the market system. Both parties in one sense are after the well-being of their nations but on the other hand, the former party's perception of glory is what an individual can participate in without exploiting his fellow men to remain glories. In other words, the circumstances that man finds himself in define where and how he will look for glory.

To conclude, while the definition of glory may change as the passage of time changes, the pursuit of glory defines man's action. Man will reject any outcome that might disentangle him to climb the highest possible position he can in the social hierarchy. Maslow's hierarchy of needs summarizes it best. In the frame of physiology, Gilgamesh has long achieved it. For one he is a leader. As for safety, Gilgamesh is not only protected but his whole means is to protect others and glory himself. What is more, he has family and turns his opponent into what will make him the greatest person that he is. And what puts him in the position that he is in is his ability to defy challenge and confrontation despite any hindrance that there might be. As for self-actualization the next chapter expenses on it. However, it is significant to understand that Gilgamesh keeps the fire ignited because it keeps his priorities straight. Taormina and Gao write that ". . . human beings would be likely to be more satisfied with their lives if the five important needs Maslow identified are satisfied and less so if those needs are unsatisfied." (Gao, 2013, p. 173) Whatever the outcome of man's need might be, the higher man climbs on that ladder, it seems that the more he desires to

glorify himself and stay at the peak. Gilgamesh's story paints a picture that man is a creature that does not appreciate instability. The story's reason is that for every edge that man comes to he looks for another edge. In that, man's horizon to glory is infinite as man is able to envision the future and has needs and or desires in his heart.

The Strive and Search of Immortality

The tale of Gilgamesh would have us believe that a true friend or companion is the reason we strive and become determined to push any obstacle on our path to glory. For Gilgamesh this friend is Enkidu. The friendship that seals the bond of Gilgamesh and Enkidu is what strengthens their vision to remain glorious and be celebrated. Having killed Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven, the gods decide that either Gilgamesh's life or Enkidu's life is to be exchanged. Gilgamesh is favored and Enkidu becomes the victim. Enkidu falls sick and after twelve days of agony, he dies. Enkidu's final words to Gilgamesh "[M]y friend, the great goddess cursed me and I must die in shame. I shall not die like a man fallen in battle; I feared to fall, but happy is the man who falls in the battle, for I must die in shame." (p. 14) Gilgamesh is moved by the words of Enkidu and at the same time, he is petrified. The death of Enkidu instantaneously changes Gilgamesh's perception of life. For one Gilgamesh's bravery towards everything is now weakened. He understands that death is upon every living thing but he has never contextualized it since he has never had someone as dear to him as Enkidu been taken away from him. He mourns Enkidu's death as he repeats over and over again whenever he is asked why is he gravitating toward danger, he would say "For Enkidu; I loved him dearly, together we endured all kinds of hardships; on his account, I have come, for the common lot of man has taken him. I have wept for him day and night, I would not give up his body for burial, I thought my friend would come back because of my weeping." (p. 16). However, gone is Enkidu forever. In that what is there left for Gilgamesh to do but to strive and gain immortality wherever it can be found? And to find immortality he needs to find Siduri who is a divine wine-maker and brewer. Since Siduri has divinity in her she might as well grant him immortality. Abusch explains that:

His unrealistic wish not to experience death does not mean that he believes that in finding Siduri he has found the way to Utnapishtim. Rather, it means that he wants to stay with the goddess and, thereby, attain immortality. He is proposing to the goddess. Meeting Siduri, he recognizes that he now wishes to live with a woman rather than remain in spirit with his dead male friend. But instead of choosing a normal, mortal woman, he has focused on a goddess. He wishes to live with an immortal woman because she is capable of endowing him with eternal life. (Abusch, 2015, p. 111)

The search for immortality has surely clouded Gilgamesh's judgment. He fears death so much that his past hunts his presence. All he sees is the future but the future that he seeks has already been destined not to come and pass. Gilgamesh is merely a man. Understanding Gilgamesh's absurdity and loss, Siduri sets to solve Gilgamesh's existential crisis. She realizes Gilgamesh's wellbeing is not with her so she must gently let go by leading him towards another path of marriage that suits him best. Gilgamesh needs to free himself and learn to control and manage the phantom that haunts every mortal: death. Gilgamesh, for instance, tries to reach to Siduri to reward him with immortality and reason with her ". . . young woman [referring to Siduri], maker of wine, since I have seen your face do not let me see the face of death which I dread so much." (p. 17) However, Siduri does not want to sadden him any more than he is, so she tells him where and how another shape of immortality can be achieved. She also warns him that immortality cannot be gained because the one certain destiny of ever man is death. Having said that she uplifts his spirit by reasoning with his faculty of sense to live fully to:

. . . fill your [Gilgamesh's] 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. (p. 17)

The fulfillment that Gilgamesh may find in a mere mortal companion can be more than satisfactory if Gilgamesh knows anything. One has to interpret that this is what Siduri is trying to appeal to Gilgamesh with but in interpreting Siduri's appeal we must not conclude that Siduri appeals to his sense of please with another female but rather the whole experience of living a life with a mate that balances Gilgamesh's emotional and psychological needs. But for Gilgamesh life has lost all its meaning unless one strives as he might to find what makes it everlasting. Enkidu is what gives full meaning to his life and Enkidu is no more and since he has him no more, he needs his replacement not in dying but in living forever. Upon realizing that Siduri will not grant him the immortality he wishes for he asks her to give direction to the whereabouts of "Utnapishtim, the son of Ubara-Tutu?" (p. 17) Siduri tries for the last time to appeal to Gilgamesh to come to his senses. She reasons with him that no one has ever crossed the ocean and that the one person that crosses it is Shamash. She explains the difficulties of the path. Siduri has failed to grasp the torment that Gilgamesh is willing to take so long as his desire is reach. The hero's ultimate end is catastrophic yet Gilgamesh is determined to see that comes what might his desire is reached.

Siduri ends up as a disappointment for Gilgamesh. She does not grant him immortality and for Gilgamesh, she does not even comprehend the gravity of his endeavor. His existential life crisis continues because Siduri's advice does not reach him and going back home after all that he has been through sounds more like punishment upon punishment. To that, Siduri is useless in Gilgamesh's eyes. Therefore, the only possible solution for him is to go further where immortality can be gained: to find Utnapishtim and get his wish granted. Gilgamesh continues his journey until he finds Utnapishtim and asks him a question "[O]h father Utnapishtim, you who have entered the assembly of the gods, I wish to question you concerning the living and the dead, how shall I find the life for which I am searching?" (p. 18) Utnapishtim's response sounds a lot more like that of Siduri. Utnapishtim's reasoning is that nothing is everlasting. Whatever begins must end. That is the law of nature that is entropy. Utnapishtim states that "Life and death . . . [are] allotted but the day of death . . . [are] not disclose. (p. 18)

Once again Gilgamesh is disappointed. He is back where he started. How can there be no immortality? How is it that no matter how one strives to eliminate death, the endeavor often corresponds to nothing? We must infer that these are the thoughts that trouble Gilgamesh. Nonetheless, Gilgamesh gives us a clear picture. He sees that Utnapishtim bears no extraordinary features. In fact, he is just like Gilgamesh. So, Gilgamesh questions him ". . . how was it that you came to enter the company of the gods and to possess everlasting life?" (p. 18-19) Gilgamesh's question is answered in the manner of another story: the story of the flood.

The story of the flood goes like this. Once mankind and the gods lived together in the city of Shurruk. Mankind's population grows dramatically and mankind's needs increase just as much. The gods are tired of man's clamor. Enlil, who is the God of earth, wind, and the universal air, goes to the council of gods and says that "[T]he uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel." (p. 20) So, the one possible conclusion for Enlil is to end the life cycle of man. Meanwhile, Utnapishtim is warned about Enlil devised by Ea, the god of the sweet waters, wisdom, a patron of arts, and one of the creators of mankind, to tear down all the houses and build a boat. The boat is supposed to be an escape pod for mankind. Utnapishtim builds it as ordered. Rain pours and with it, everything sinks. The gods depart to the heavens and mankind's cycle almost comes to an end. However, the gods are not particularly happy about Enlil's deed but Enlil's reason is as such:

Lay upon the sinner his sin,

Lay upon the transgressor his transgression,

*Punish him a little when he breaks loose,
Do not drive him too hard or he perishes,
Would that a lion had ravaged mankind
Rather than the flood,
Would that a wolf had ravaged mankind
Rather than the flood,
Would that famine had wasted the world
Rather than the flood,
Would that pestilence had wasted mankind
Rather than the flood.* (p. 21)

The reason as Enlil might, the gods are not happy with his actions. On the other side of the story, Utnapishtim has managed to save himself and his wife. (As for the number of people, animals, and plants are not mentioned specifically in the story.) In the end, Enlil appreciates Utnapishtim. So, he rewards Utnapishtim with immortality and a place to live by the rivers. Gilgamesh's travel has taken its toll on him and he finally understands that immortality is not achievable. However, Utnapishtim will not let go away empty-handed. So, he tells him where he can find a plant that when eaten man gains back his youth. Although Gilgamesh has managed to pick up the plant, he wishes for his people to eat it first then him. Alas, luck is not with him for while swimming a serpent smells the sweetness of the plant and eats it all.

Gilgamesh remains mortal and dies. The harsh reality catches up to every living thing. However, the epic of Gilgamesh is far from being mortal. It has set many enthusiasts and scholars alike to scrutinize the concept of the epic thoroughly and draw their own interpretation. In order words, the hero, Gilgamesh, is mortal his story may as well be in its infancy. Ziolkowski shows the epic of Gilgamesh can be said to have achieved immortality. He writes:

... Gilgamesh is alive and well in the first decade of the twenty-first century: in art, music, and literature from North America by way of Europe to Australia and in forms varying from translations and poetic re-visions to fictional post figurations and thematic analogies, and in presentations for audiences ranging from awestruck children to jaded postmoderns. All the approaches that arose during the preceding century to interpret the ancient epic, from psychology and feminism to gay rights and ecology, are still in force. But in the desecularized society of the new millennium, religion once again has taken center stage in many world civilizations, while the clash of these civilizations, notably Western and Muslim, has brought the political dimensions of the epic into the foreground to a degree unmatched in earlier adaptations. Not unsurprisingly, then, these developments show up in recent treatments of Gilgamesh. The extensive and broadening popularity of the epic and its hero attests not simply to the universality of the ancient work but also to the powerful identification of contemporary writers and audiences with its many implicit themes. (Ziolkowski, 2012, p. 188)

Gilgamesh's success is not in the obvious fact that he has attained an everlasting life but that his story is everlasting. One is then forced to see our technological era and its instance news presence and the desire to be acknowledged is all, for one thing, to remain a factor of importance.

Conclusion

The epic of Gilgamesh in one aspect can be seen as dejected. It is an evolved story in which the evolution of man is seen. It is a story in which the search for glory is also proportional to a search for meaning. Gilgamesh's perception of life is on a trajectory of predicaments, comes what

might. Yet, whatever the quandary may bring about Gilgamesh subsists on his path. The path shapes him and defines him. It first serves him to be the ultimate and unique among his fellow man. It then leads him to be the quintessence of grappling with life and what it throws at one's destiny. His struggles can be interpreted as finding the meaning of life. The hero pursues the pursuit of pushing the edge limit of man's capability and competence. And that ability to sustain challenge however and wherever it comes builds his glorious epic. Therefore, glorious is Gilgamesh for he tackles the burdens on his shoulders to remain at the peak of the social hierarchy. In that, glorious is Gilgamesh for he reaches the unreachable to find meaning. For that, glorious is Gilgamesh for in finding meaning he expands the edge of man's story, territory, and faculty of thoughts. For that, glorious is Gilgamesh for his strive and search for immortality debunks superstitions and takes what may be seen as an empirical approach.

Gilgamesh may not have been the first to strive and search for glory and immortality, and for sure he is not the last. If anything, he is the epitome of the quest of humankind. His time is eons ago, but humankind's need to stay alive is ever more ubiquitous. A few questions of great significance then arise. Will humans ever achieve the immortality they strive for? Or is the endeavor to attain immortality in itself an absurd quest? If not, how far does science need to be before it discovers what Utnapishtim describes as not existing? If yes, should humankind look at immortality as what they gloriously add to the evolution of its species? Whatever the answer to these questions will come to be, for the time being, there remains room for great improvement. So long as humans persist, they may as well discover Gilgamesh's eternal source of power or as he called it "The Old Men Are Young Again" (p. 22). For now, man continues to strive for glory and life appears to have an end however long it might be delayed. Man's possible tomorrow is real. The abundance choices that wrap humanity's days in days out must not and should not deter mankind. Modern technological development offers glorious and heroic tomorrow. However, to achieve the epic of tomorrow humankind might consider taking a challenge at time. Today's youth's impatience can be costly yet the curiosity that lies within them is significant. In the meantime our epic of tomorrow is held by our striving of today. Siduri and Utnapishtim might be right that tomorrow has an end and we can forgive their ignorance for they do not know. We can take their wisdom and forgive their ignorance of our achievement. Our possible tomorrow waits.

The epic takes its readers from point A to B in different tone. Gilgamesh strives best he can to reach the unreachable: immortality. Was his search futile? The postmodernists of our time might ask "what do you mean by 'futile?'" and the question is for sure legitimate here. Absurdism is not the lack of meaning but the desire to create meaning. Futile or not and absurd or not, Gilgamesh's strive and search for immortality should make a reader ponder deeply. Surely among mankind's deeper desire is to live forever or as late as they could. A simple look at religious can mirror this notion. All the Abrahamic religions promise an everlasting life after death: immortality. The far eastern religions promise incarnation. Most regional African religions promise being with one's ancestor. More examples can be given, such as the Scandinavian faith or Native Americans. Suffice it to say a deeper inquiry of mankind is to strive for immortality here and now or in the afterlife.

Gilgamesh might not have achieved the immortality he looks for but our modern epic gives us an appearance of immortality. The modern technology and medicine would appear to Gilgamesh as the greatest magic to have ever been spelled. Take any of the social media for instance; we get to share everything if we can capture it. That instance can remain on the Internet forever more. It is not difficult to predict that tomorrow's technology can surpass that of today's which is saying our modern social media footprints can dissipate but everything would have been archived and the moment captured. In the past only the witty mind were able to produce something that go beyond their generation but today everyone can by simply taking a picture and uploading it on the Internet. What is more, our modern medicine has developed to a level that we are not being killed by malaria or any other diseases that the best doctor could not cure even a few hundred years back. Our life span has increased reasonably enough compared to our ancestors. Centenarians are now

common. In the next five hundred years or millennium who is to say how far mankind could have gone? Mankind's growth is exponential and the strive for immortality is visible. As for the strive of glory, no amount of guessing can predict exactly what will happen but we can always give it a go. Understanding that mankind is a creature of habit, so will his search for glory be habitual. Whatever connotation it may take and shape of form, the desire to be glorified and acknowledge shall remain with mankind's forever tomorrow.

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