Todesfurcht, page xiii

- “fear of death,” German poet Rilke (1916)
- “the human longing for life eternal” (A. George)
- *Gilgamesh* is also a study in the “path to wisdom,” especially the proper duties of a king
The Deluge, xiii

- the gods attempt to destroy humanity
- the Flood story is found in at least three Ancient Near Eastern sources:
  - the Atram-hasis epic
  - The Epic of Gilgamesh
  - Bible
cuneiform tablets, xv

- “smooth, cushion-shaped rectangles of clay” (p. xxix)
- found in the ruins of many ancient Mesopotamian cities
Akkadian language, xv

- related to Hebrew and Arabic
- Akkadian texts appear in profusion in Mesopotamian sites from ca. 2300 BCE (= rise of Sargon of Akkad)
- the text of Chapter 1 of George’s translation is the Akkadian text
“He who saw the Deep,” xv-xvi

- the title of the epic as recorded in Chapter 1 of the translation we are reading
- the classical *Epic of Gilgamesh*
- in the Sumerian language originally
- but it is preserved best in an Akkadian translation which the Assyrians and Babylonians called by the same name
Sumerian language, xvi

- “without affinities to any known language” (George)
- “the medium of the earliest language”
- co-exists with Akkadian through the end of the third millennium (2000 BCE)
Sumerian language, xvi

• the Sumerian language stops being used as a spoken language by the Old Babylonian period (ca. 1800 BCE)
• Sumerian lives on as classical (written) language
• Mesopotamian proverb: “A scribe who knows no Sumerian, what sort of scribe is he?”
Shulgi, xvii

• a Sumerian king who reigned during the Sumerian Renaissance of 2094-2047 BCE
• “enthusiastic patron of the arts”
• founded libraries at Ur and Nippur
• *Gilgamesh* was originally a song sung at Shulgi’s court
Tablet Houses, xx

- Shulgi’s scribal schools
- most of our cuneiform literary texts derive from Babylonian scribal exercises written in Sumerian
Ashurbanipal, xxi

• Assyrian king (668-627 BCE)
• had a great library at Nineveh
• ordered scribes (in chains!) to copy old literature, including *Gilgamesh*
• by Ashurbanipal’s time (650 BCE), the focus of attention is on Akkadian text of *Gilgamesh* (not the Sumerian original)
• by then, the Sumerian original is long lost
“Surpassing all other kings,” xxv

- name for first known integrated version of the *Gilgamesh* epic
- cobbled together in the Old Babylonian period
- became the basis of “He who saw the Deep” (the text we are reading)
tablets, xxviii

- traditional divisions of the *Gilgamesh* epic
- tablet-divisions go back to the Old Babylonian period
Ninsun, xxxi

- goddess-mother of Gilgamesh
- Gilgamesh’s father is unimportant to the story
Anu, xxxi

- Sky-God
- in general, Anu is less important in Mesopotamian myth than Enlil (the god of the air)
Ishtar, xxxi

- Babylonian “Venus,” the goddess of love and sex
- but also the goddess of war
Enkidu, xxxii

- the conventional “wild man” (the Mesopotamian equivalent of Bigfoot?)
- Enkidu first lives in the hinterland north of Uruk but eventually comes to live in Uruk
- in Uruk, Enkidu becomes Gilgamesh’s close friend and traveling companion
Humbaba, xxxii

- an ogre that guards the Forest of Cedar (northwest of Mesopotamia, in modern Lebanon)
- the Forest of Cedar is a sacred area where the gods dwell
Shiduri, xxxii

• a barmaid goddess who is full of sage advice and common sense
• she runs tavern at the edge of world, along the shores of the impassable Ocean
• this Ocean leads to the waters of death
Ur-shanabi, xxxii

- the ferryman who ferries Gilgamesh to the island in the Ocean where Uta-napishti lives
- on this island, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers well up again
Uta-napishti, , xxxii

- the only Mesopotamian king to survive the Deluge
- he was spared death by the gods
- tells his story to Gilgamesh in Tablet XI
plant (of rejuvenation), xlv-xlvi

- shown by Uta-napishti to Gilgamesh who pulls it up from the sea bottom
- but a snake steals the plant from Gilgamesh
- henceforth, snakes shed their skin
celestial bull (Bull of Heaven), xlvi

- sent by Ishtar to destroy Gilgamesh after he rejects and insults her
- a symbol of drought
- equated with the constellation Taurus which rises in spring (droughts happen often in spring in Mesopotamia)
“document of ancient humanism,” xxxiii

• quote from William Moran, an Assyriologist
• Gilgamesh is celebrated for his human achievements, and not just his relationship with the gods
• the theme of Gilgamesh seems to center around our need to accept human limitations
“document of ancient humanism,” xxxiii

- Thorkild Jacobsen (Assyriologist): “a story of learning to face reality, a story of ‘growing up’”
Overview of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- on the next Pre-Assessment there will be fill-in-the-blanks drawn directly from the text of *Gilgamesh*
- for example:
  “_____ was his name from the day he was born, two-thirds of him god and one third human.”
- all answers will still be from the list of key-terms in the Chapter 2.II
Tablet 1 of
*The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Introduction of Gilgamesh: two-thirds divine, one-third mortal; also physically imposing
- causes problems because he “harries” the young men of Uruk and “lets no girl go free to her bridegroom”
- the people of Uruk complain to the gods who summon the mother-goddess Aruru
Tablet 1 of
The Epic of Gilgamesh

• Aruru creates for Gilgamesh a “friend” named Enkidu who is nearly as powerful as Gilgamesh himself
• she puts Enkidu out in the wild where he lives in harmony with the animals
• Enkidu starts freeing his fellow animals which have become trapped in human snares
• the people of Uruk face starvation
Tablet 1 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

• a hunter reports about Enkidu to Gilgamesh
• Gilgamesh sends a prostitute named Shamhat to seduce Enkidu and bring him to Uruk
• Gilgamesh dreams of Enkidu’s impending arrival and his mother Ninsun interprets his dreams for him
Tablet 2 of

*The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Shamhat seduces Enkidu
- after having sex with Shamhat, Enkidu’s animal companions reject him
- Enkidu can no longer run fast or live in the wild
- Shamhat feeds Enkidu human food and cleans him up
Tablet 2 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Shamhat escorts Enkidu to Uruk
- in Uruk, Enkidu finds Gilgamesh at a wedding where Gilgamesh is about to take the bride for himself
- Enkidu stops Gilgamesh from asserting his *droit de seigneur* and they fight
- then they become best friends
Tablet 2 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- there is a major gap in the text during which for some reason Gilgamesh has decided to fight Humbaba, the dreadful ogre that guards the Forest of Cedar
- Enkidu tries to convince him not to go but does not succeed
- the elders of the high council of Uruk also try but fail to dissuade Gilgamesh
Tablet 3 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- a poorly preserved tablet
- Ninsun prays to Shamash (the sun god) to help Gilgamesh on his journey
- Gilgamesh and Enkidu make preparations for their journey to the Forest of Cedar
Tablet 4 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- another poorly preserved tablet
- Gilgamesh and Enkidu travel to the Forest of Cedar
- Gilgamesh seeks guidance from a series of dreams which Enkidu interprets
- at the end of the tablet Gilgamesh and Enkidu reach the Forest of Cedar
Tablet 5 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Gilgamesh and Enkidu encounter Humbaba and, with Shamash’s assistance, defeat him in battle
- though Humbaba begs for his life, Enkidu encourages Gilgamesh to kill him, which he does
- before Humbaba dies, he curses both heroes
- Enkidu and Gilgamesh fell many trees in the Forest of Cedar
Tablet 6 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Ishtar (goddess of sex and war) tries to seduce Gilgamesh but he insults and rejects her.
- Ishtar is enraged and demands that her father Anu (the sky god) allow her to ravage the earth with the Bull of Heaven.
- Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight together against the bull and destroy it.
Tablet 7 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Enkidu dreams that the gods have decreed he must die in Gilgamesh’s place because they have killed the Bull of Heaven
- he curses his life and Shamhat who seduced him but at the bidding of Shamash he renounces his curse
- Enkidu dies (most of this passage is still lost)
Tablet 8 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Gilgamesh holds an elaborate funeral for Enkidu
- Enkidu’s death has made Gilgamesh see his own mortality
- he tries to repair his relations with the gods
Tablet 9 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Gilgamesh wanders the world mourning the loss of his friend Enkidu and seeking eternal life for himself
- he encounters the scorpion-men who guard the boundaries of the world
- recognizing Gilgamesh’s divine nature, they let him cross the mountains at the edge of the world
Tablet 10 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- at the shores of the Waters of Death (the great ocean which encircles the world), Gilgamesh meets the barmaid goddess Shiduri
- Shiduri warns him about the dangers that lie ahead but he insists on continuing his journey to meet Utanapishti, the one mortal who has escaped death
Tablet 10 of

The Epic of Gilgamesh

• Gilgamesh encounters the ferryman Urshanabi and kills many of his assistants, the Stone Men
• Urshanabi tells him that he now has no one to row them across the Waters of Death
• Urshanabi orders Gilgamesh to cut down huge trees and hew punting poles out of them
• Gilgamesh cuts down the trees and makes many punting poles
• he and Urshanabi set out to cross the Waters of Death
• when Gilgamesh runs out of punting poles, he and Urshanabi use their clothes as a sail and Gilgamesh’s great frame as a mast
Tablet 10 of
*The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- they reach the other side and meet Utanapishti
- Gilgamesh explains to Utanapishti about Enkidu’s death and his own fear of death
Tablet 11 of
*The Epic of Gilgamesh*

• Utanapishti explains how he survived the Deluge and was granted eternal life by the gods
• he then tells Gilgamesh he must conquer sleep before he can escape death and bids him stay awake for seven days
• Gilgamesh fails the test as Utanapishti proves with the “bread test”
Tablet 11 of
*The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- at the bidding of his kindly wife, Utanapishti shows Gilgamesh a “plant of rejuvenation” which grows deep in the sea and gives the one who eats it new life
- Gilgamesh recovers it but a snake steals the plant of rejuvenation and eats it
- this explains why snakes shed their skin
Tablet 11 of
The Epic of Gilgamesh

• Urshanabi takes Gilgamesh back to Uruk
• in the closing lines of the epic, Gilgamesh points out to Urshanabi the sturdy grandeur of the walls of Uruk
• the implication is that Uruk and its walls are Gilgamesh’s true path to “immortality”