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*Gilgamesh sien die Diepte : van Skande tot Eer*  
*deur*  
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**Department : Antieke Tale**

**Degree : Magister Artium**

Hierdie verhandeling neem die Standaard Babiloniese teks van die Epos van Gilgamesh as vertrekpunt. Die teks word gelees vanuit 'n post strukturalistiese benadering wat die leser se respons beklemtoon, maar terselfdertyd word die konvensies van die immanente teks gehandhaaf. Bruce Malina se sosio-antropologiese model van eer en skaamte word op die epos toegepas om te ondersoek of 'n moderne teorie inderdaad lei tot 'n beter verstaan van antieke letterkunde. Die hipotese stel dat eer en skaamte 'n belangrike rol speel in die karakterontwikkeling van Gilgamesh terwyl hy groei van jeug na volwassenheid. Die-eer-en-skaamte-momente in die epos word uitgelig en aan die hand van die teorie getoets.

Gilgamesh word voorgestel as 'n eerbare koning, maar sy skaamtelose gedrag skok terwyl hy daarna strewe om nog meer eer te bekom. Sy eer word uitgedaag deur Enkidu: na 'n aanvanklike stryd om eer, word hulle geswore vriende. Saam streef hulle na nog meer eer, en oorweldig Humbaba, die monster wat die god Enlil aangestel het om sy sederbos te bewaar. Daarna verwerp Gilgamesh die huweliksaanbod van die godin Ishtar. Enkidu help hom om die Hemelbul, waarmee sy haarself wil wreek, dood te maak. Diep verneder, besluit die gode om hul geskonde eer te herstel en neem wraak met die finale troefkaart van mag wat hulle in hul hande het: die dood. Hulle laat Enkidu siek word en sterf - hy sterf nie eerbaar soos een wat in die oorlog gesneuwel het nie, maar in skande, deur siekte.

Beang dat hy ook soos Enkidu in skande gaan sterf, gooi Gilgamesh alle eersimbole weg en dwaal hy rond op die steppe, op soek na die hoogste eer: die ewige lewe. Uiteindelik kom hy uit by Utnapishtim, die enigste wat die Groot Vloed oorleef het, en vir wie die gode met die ewige lewe vereer het. Utnapishtim openbaar die geheim van die ewige lewe aan Gilgamesh: die toets wat hy moet slaag, is om slaap vir 'n week lank te weerstaan. Gilgamesh faal skandelik. Dan, deur sy eie nalatigheid word hy weer eens beskaam as 'n slang sy afskeidsgeskenk, 'n plant wat as verjongingskuur werk, letterlik voor sy neus wegraap.

Paradoksaal, eers dan, nadat Gilgamesh vernedering en skande ervaar het, kan hy na sy stad terugkeer as 'n volwasse en eerbare koning.

## SUMMARY

### *Gilgamesh sees the Deep : from Shame to Honour*

by

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**Degree : Magister Artium**

This thesis takes the Standard Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh as point of departure. In reading the text, a post structuralistic approach which emphasizes the response of the reader is followed, whilst respect for the conventions of the immanent text is being maintained. Bruce Malina's social anthropological model of honour and shame is applied to the epic in order to examine whether a modern theory does indeed lead to a better understanding of ancient literature. The hypothesis proposes that honour and shame play an important role in the character development of Gilgamesh as he grows from youth to maturity. Incidents featuring honour and shame in the epic, are highlighted.

Gilgamesh is introduced as an honourable king, but his shameful behaviour shocks as he strives towards even more honour. His honour is challenged in the person of Enkidu: after an initial contest for honour they become close friends. Together they aspire towards more honour and slay Humbaba appointed by the god Enlil to guard his cedar woods. Thereafter Gilgamesh spurns the marriage proposal of the goddess Ishtar. Enkidu assists him to kill the Bull of Heaven with which she wishes to take revenge. Deeply shamed, the gods restore their violated honour and retaliate with the ultimate power they have in their hands: death. By their hands Enkidu becomes ill and dies - not in honour as one who has fallen in battle, but in shame, by illness.

Petrified that he might die shamefully like Enkidu, Gilgamesh strips himself of all symbols of honour and roams the plains, in search of the ultimate honour: eternal life. Eventually he reaches Utnapishtim, survivor of the Deluge, whom the gods honoured with eternal life. Utnapishtim reveals the secret of eternal life to Gilgamesh and puts him to the test of defying sleep for a week long. Gilgamesh shamefully fails. Then, by his own carelessness he is shamed once again when he loses his parting gift, a plant with rejuvenating capacities, to a snake.

Paradoxically, only then, after experiencing humiliation and shame, he can return to his city as a mature and honourable king.



## **SLEUTELTERME**

Assiriologie

eer

skaamte

Epos

Gilgamesh

diadiese persoonlikheid

strukturnalisme

post-strukturnalisme

dekonstruksie

leser-responskritiek

## **KEY TERMS**

Assyriology

honour

shame

epic

Gilgamesh

diadic personality

structuralism

post structuralism

deconstruction

reader response criticism