Emiliano Aguilar Jr.

EQ Abstract

The De-Structuring of the Hero

Through the discussion of several texts, the class has discussed the archetype of the hero, in my paper I would like to discuss what a hero is? Upon exploring the idea of what a hero is I will explore the two sides of the hero as it pertains to our classroom discussion, whether or not the hero is being de-structured in the following three texts, *Gilgamesh, Watchmen,* and *The Power and the Glory.* By being de-structured I mean to say that are the heroes being presented as un-heroic, even villainous to the extent of some situations. Despite my own biased opinion, and the same opinion the class seems to present in discussion of this issue, the two sides are conflicting enough to provide an array of issues in the respective plots.

In determining what a hero is I would have to explore how several are portrayed in the three readings. This is a divided question among with two sides in itself. For the positive rendition there is no pure model of a hero, perhaps Nite Owl and Laurie as the Silk Spectre could pose as good models. They each have the heroic, noble qualities of the typical image of a hero; yet at the same time have a realistic background to their behavior in the graphic novel. Even the Whiskey Priest has these nobler qualities in adhering to his duty, despite the immense danger he is placed in by the Red Shirts' persecution. To a sense as a martyr the priest is a hero, but differs slightly from Rorschach, which may be a nice analysis between the two that I would like to make. However, for this section I would reserve to talk only how their positive, redeeming factors make them heroic, such as Rorschach's sense of justice, a problematic one to work with.

However on the negative perception of what a hero is I could explore the isolation of men like Ozymandias or Dr. Manhattan. Both of these characters had a certain interest in humanity in mind, but their actions seem to have been in the best interest through unjust means. Also Gilgamesh is introduced as a scourge to his people, having sexual encounters with newlywed brides, and using his partial god-like powers for ignoble reasons. Once again I can explore the negative side of men like the Whiskey Priest and Rorschach in this section, taking their negative qualities and arguing that they are not heroic. These would include the Whiskey Priest momentarily lapse of duty, during his affair with Maria that led to a daughter, or his alcoholism.

Once providing a nice foundation on what a hero is, I would declare a stance so I can proceed to the second question of whether the archetype of the hero is being de-structured. The affirmative stance would allow for me to declare that these characters actions are changing the perception of the hero, but in the light that the characters seem more realistic. Through a conflicting set of morals, or ethical line, these characters come across as more realistic, and presented the flaws of humanity properly. These superhuman beings in Watchmen specifically are being presented as no different from the ordinary people who read the series. However, Gilgamesh is being de-structured into a similar character, which commits as evil acts as he does benevolent ones, however, his benevolent actions are fueled by some ulterior motive.

The other stance would argue that the hero is not being de-structured and would rely heavily on the superhuman abilities of Dr. Manhattan to explain the archetype is still valid. This argument would be difficult to use the Whiskey Priest, as he is probably the most ordinary of the array of characters. Asserting what a hero is I would claim that Gilgamesh and the Watchmen exemplify the heroic figure of physical prowess and abilities that make them heroes. This area is probably where the most work will need to be done.

Steven Magura

E.Q. Section E

April 18, 2012

Paper Abstract

For my paper I will be looking at the idea of masks. I will introduce this conflict by detailing the idea that people act differently in various social settings. After this, I plan to explore both sides of the argument.

I will present the idea that a person is still being their true self when they act differently in various social settings (applying masks to be more appropriate in the business world or new groups of people). As an example, when a business man sits down for dinner with his boss he/she will act with a different social behavior to adapt to this new setting. Perhaps they will refrain from using explicit language or present their best food to be someone they are not. Another example of this is how superheroes feel more themselves when they are beneath their physical masks. This side of the issue presents the side that although these people are acting differently than they would naturally would, they are still themselves; maybe even showing their true side more.

Secondly, for the other side I will explore the notion that when people change their behavior to adapt to new situations they are not themselves. This side entails that the masks implied are just that, masks. These masks are used to hide character flaws that the user deems inappropriate for certain social situations. When a working man sits down for dinner in a refined restaurant, or perhaps with an attractive new lady, he changes his behavior or appearance to seem something he is not. The mask applier acts in this fashion to become more appealing, thus changing their natural attributes. By applying this shield from their natural form, this person is not the true person they once were or are in everyday life.

For both of these arguments I plan to cite Watchmen (Rorschach and the Nite Owl), "The Presentation of the Self" by Goffman, and, "On the Inconcistencies of Our Actions," by Montaigne. After I have detailed each side of the argument I will look into how these changes in behavior provide insight to the human element. I would like to explore the idea that maybe naturally humans are insecure. By manipulating their actions they are able to become something they would like to be. This manipulations would conclude that masks are necessary for the social world to continue. I could also look into how maybe the receiver of the applied masks needs these social manipulations to ease into the people they meets true personality. However, it could also be argued that maybe when humans are put into an uncomfortable new social setting their true form shows. While I am not sure at this point, I am going to look into how this true form affects the relationship of new acquaintances. I would like to conclude with whether it is natural for people to believe that they cannot be liked by people they loosely know by being themselves or not.

Ryan Schilling

Colloquium

Paper IV

Abstract

I have decided to write more about what it truly means to be human and to explore how the Daodejing relates to the choices made by the characters in Blade Runner and Watchmen. In my paper, I hope to relate how the lessons in humility and piece in the Daodejing can be related to the actions of Rick Deckard as a former Blade Runner and to why Rorschach made all the choices he did and also chose to stick by what he believed in even though it ultimately killed him at the end of the book.

Basically, in chapters 33 through 48 in the Daodejing, Laozi writes about knowledge and humility and how it relates to everybody. I noticed that this is a rather important concept that has kept reoccurring in the class. What makes someone human? What inspires choice? Why do people act the way that they do? These are all questions that Laozi wrote about in these chapters. All of these questions relates to everyone on the planet. These questions are what inspire people to make the important choices that need to be made in their lives. I feel that Laozi has a point in all this. Answering these questions as an individual is a very important part of the human experience.

This now leads me to Blade Runner. Rick Deckard had to make a choice to peruse the Replicants. He was after all a former Blade Runner. After he decided to take on the job, he began making all new choices. He had to decide what it really means to be human. He then had to decide if a Replicant who doesn't have long to live, should be allowed to extend their lives so that they may continue to exist. Deckard was faced with this during the final showdown at the end of the movie as Roy explains how memories are memories no matter who they belong to and decides to let Rick live. This brings a question that the viewer has to ask: Is it possible for something non-human to be given the rights of a human?

I then venture into Watchmen. The whole concept of personal can be applied dramatically in Rorschach's case. In the beginning of the story, after the Comedian was murdered, Rorschach took it upon himself to figure out who was behind his murder. After more murders of masked heroes and villains, he came to the conclusion that someone was out to kill all the masked heroes and villains. The story develops more when we learn more about his past and how he was abused as a child. This leads me to the conclusion the Rorschach chose to rather get back at people for his past, he sought to vindicate himself in the eyes of those who harmed him. By being a hero and doing what needs to be done no matter what, he could stand for something virtuous. He stood by this until the end where he was faced with the choice to tell the world of what has been done, or die by the hands of Dr. Manhattan. He died knowing that he stood for something beyond himself. And in the end, his journal will tell the tale that he failed to live to tell himself.

In conclusion, Laozi's Daodejing in chapters 33 through 48 tell about how man's choice affects his humility and knowledge. I hope to describe how this applies to Rick Deckard in Blade Runner and how it applies to Rorschach in Watchmen. I also hope to draw a conclusion of how our choices effect who we are.

Andrew Weyler
Freshmen EQ
Paper #4 Abstract

Change the World

The actions that we do or don't do today will affect every generation to fallow us. As one person in a world of billions, can we change the world? We must gather together to accomplish goals of the society as individuals. Change does not happen on its own. In the world of modern communication, we are able to communicate with each other at never before speeds. This is good for change. This allows people to be aware of certain people's conditions and situations more quickly and efficiently.

The problem is that people today do not realize how much of an influence they can have in society. You do not have to be a politician or a person in power to make a difference. Also, also certain individuals assume too much power and use it in a negative way and refuse to relinquish it.

First I will talk about how the graphic novel, *The Watchmen*, uses characters such as Rorschach to initiate change throughout society. He and his fellow watchmen take it upon themselves to fight crime and use vigilantism to secure the city from danger. The watchmen are just normal people doing things above and beyond of what society expects of them.

Another aspect of this point can be raised by the movie, *City of God*. In the movie, many characters seek power and take it upon themselves to decide the fait of others. One person in particular, lil ze, kills anybody that is in the way of his drug trade.

In a smaller look at the bigger picture, one could think of instances that if changed in some miniscule amount could potentially affect the entire future and therefor in a snowball affect one person could change the series of events that happen.

This theory that one person can change the world also contradicts itself. In almost all of the examples, the person is a leader of a group. The person is not solely responsible; it is the group as a whole to fallow out the action. We see this in Watchmen and in City of God in the way that other vigilantes and how lower class drug runners are used to help the leaders

This can also be seen in the recent video about Joseph Kony. He is a man in Uganda that is the leader of a terrorist organization that abducts children and uses them as soldiers and sex slaves. He is the face of the organization, but there are tens of thousands of people working for him. Also, in the fight against Kony, there are many activists that are involved including the United States. A single person could not possibly take down Kony or his organization.

Patrick Wright

EQ Abstract

Throughout the course of the semester we have examined many different works in different mediums. While the specific application of each lesson has varied according to each lesson, there have been a few undeniable themes which have reoccurred throughout. Each reading, film, or song challenged us to think outside of ourselves, both figuratively and very literally. Some questions seemed very strange, yet upon further analysis were revealed to be surprisingly relevant. Many lessons could be drawn from the works presented in the course, but perhaps the most relevant and intriguing debate is that concerning personhood.

Personhood is a nearly indefinable term, yet we all seem to define it in our own way. In *In Defense of Dolphins* arguments were made for the personhood of Dolphins. This text forces the reader not only to determine whether or not Dolphins qualify as non-human persons, but to first establish a criterion by which personhood can be defined. This distinction proved difficult, and was not limited to the example of Dolphins. In the film *Blade Runner* artificially intelligent "replicants" were outlawed and hunted down. Through their many human-like actions and thoughts, the viewer was forced to ask if they too were not persons.

Beyond the simple question of personhood comes the question as to what exactly personhood warrants. What kind of treatment is reserved for persons and why? Many agree that anything qualifying as a person deserves to be treated better than something that is not considered a person. This concept invokes many more ethical questions. In works like Watchmen and The Power and the Glory many characters make sacrifices for what they believe to be a greater good. Veidt's actions at the end of Watchmen are particularly puzzling as they are so drastic and costly yet also yield a seemingly positive outcome for many.

Almost everyone could agree that killing is wrong. It is engrained in us through biology, spirit, or both. Clearly this idea can be complicated through many circumstances, such as self defense. The Watchmen example would seem to argue strongly for killing as a conditional necessity, while *City of God* seems to portray the absurdity and inherent evil of killing.

In a world of conflict, compromise, friendship, and opposition, it is not unreasonable to say that killing can become necessary in certain situations. Few people can see war as a positive thing, but many great things have been achieved, and terrible things prevented, through war. Almost any man would kill in order to protect his family from danger.

Countless examples could argue the necessity of killing, yet all of these scenarios include an aggressor, one who must be killed so that they will not harm or kill another. Following the principle of nonaction found in The Daodejing of Laozi we can eliminate the aggressor as a factor.

This principle is difficult, as it requires nonaction from every member of a society. A single aggressor destroys the efficacy of the system, yet this principle provides perhaps the only way a society without violence could exist. If every person shared the same ethical code, no one would be forced to compromise that code, and thus no one would suffer violent death.