

May the winds of
heaven blow softly:
wind and spirituality
in world masterpieces



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In many cultures, wind has taken on its own personal identity. Through story telling wind has been given power of the supernatural in order to be used by the gods to influence or punish the heroes of Earth. The supernatural power of wind can be found within works across the world, including the Epic of Gilgamesh and Hong Gildong. In these stories and several others, wind plays the part of God. While the wind holds supernatural powers it is how the heroes in these works confront the wind that brings them closer to true divinity; heaven or hell. The heroes in these works either follow a path of righteousness, such as Hong Gildong, or a path of ungodliness, such as Gilgamesh. It is dependent upon the characters' actions towards the gods and loyalty toward the spiritual elements on Earth whether they will be punished by the supernatural or protected by it. In the works of Gilgamesh and Hong Gildong, the wind has three functions; a supernatural guide toward the spiritual world, protector of the righteous, and punisher of the ungodly. Through these acts of justice, the supernatural entity of the wind is able to expose the heroes to a larger entity, either the gods or God, Himself.

First as seen in The Epic of Gilgamesh, the wind appears to play the role of punisher. The characters of The Epic of Gilgamesh believed that they could live on Earth without acknowledging the power of the divine. While these characters knew they were born of gods, the characters believed themselves to be just as divine. Gilgamesh and Enkidu set out on their journey not to become gods but instead to claim the domain of divinity for themselves. When they turn against their gods, their punishment is awaiting them. In order to assert dominance over the divine, the “ heroes” set out to steal from the gods, but standing in their way is a being of the divinity. When

Gilgamesh and Ekidu decide to fight Humbaba, the divine guard of the enchanted forest, they are unaware of the supernatural forces that will bar against them and foreshadow the turmoil ahead. Before their encounter with Humbaba, Ekidu says, “ we shall capture Humbaba, him we shall slay, we shall cast down his corpse on the field of battle. And next morning we shall see a good sign from the Sun God” (George 31). Ekidu and Gilgamesh believe themselves to be as strong as the gods and favored above all men. The crime they are willing to commit is not only murderous but it is heresy. Humbaba is a supernatural being that follows the gods’ orders and acknowledges their presence as well as the supernatural. Instead of living as Humbaba does, Ekidu and Gilgamesh instead wish to wipe out the supernatural being as well as disregard the power of the gods as greater than their own. While the Sun God does honor his protégés by sending the thirteen winds against Humbaba, this act becomes not protection for the heroes but instead seals their punishment.

Even though Ekidu and Gilgamesh thought they were above the power of the supernatural, when they fought Humbaba it seemed they had met their match. Before the heroes could be killed by the protector of the divine, Shamash, the Sun God, “ roused against Humbaba the might gale wind: South Wind, North Wind, East Wind, and West Wind, Blast, Counterblast, Typhoon, Hurricane, and Tempest, Devil-wind, Frost-Wind, Gale and tornado: there rose thirteen winds and the face of Humbaba darkened- he could not charge forwards, he could not kick backwards” (George 42). Thus the heroes, Ekidu and Gilgamesh, killed a being that had served the gods for many years. The heroes’ infidelity to the gods is represented by the winds. Like the

winds who whipped against Humbaba and paralyzed him, Ekidu and Gilgamesh's disloyalty and disregard to the gods rendered the gods useless. While the wind acted as the protector of Ekidu and Gilgamesh in this instance, it foreshadows the turmoil and desolation that will whip through them and their home due to their lack of spirituality. Upon killing a creature of the divine, the gods seek harsher punishment than just the wind for the heroes. Shamash honors Ekidu and Gilgamesh as having been worthy of divinity; however, the rest of the gods having seen the "heroes" intentions to go against their rule plan a harsh reality for the two men utilizing the supernatural elements, like the wind, on Earth. The first supernatural occurrence to wreak havoc in Ekidu and Gilgamesh's life is when Heaven's bull comes to destroy the city. It was by Gilgamesh's refusal to become the lover of a goddess, that this event occurred. Gilgamesh not only refuses to accept Ishtar as a goddess but also as a lover. When Ishtar makes her love offer to him, he scornfully rejects her saying that she is a terrible lover and was not worth it. It seems as if he believes he is too good for her. After rejection Ishtar has her father send down the Bull of Heaven to the heroes' home. As the bull entered the city of Uruk, "the Bull of Heaven snorted a pit opened up, one hundred men of Uruk fell down it. The second time it snorted a pit opened up, two hundred men of Uruk fell down it" (George 51). After the Bull had destroyed the half the city, Ekidu and Gilgamesh were able to slaughter it. The gods seeing that their supernatural creature has been killed by the heretics, become even more enraged. Ekidu and Gilgamesh's dishonor does not end here, for when Ishtar arrives on the scene Ekidu says, "Had I caught you too, I'd have treated you likewise, I'd have draped your arms in guts" (George 52). Once again it is the heroes' denial to serve the

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gods that spurns the course of the unraveling of their lives. Due to Ekidu and Gilgamesh's belief that they belong among the gods, Ekidu dies an awful death, a sign that even he can not escape the fate of man. The separation of Ekidu from Gilgamesh, is representative of the heroes' separation from spirituality and the divine. Once Gilgamesh's equal is dead he decides that he must become one among the gods because he is above the humans. However, when Gilgamesh tries to become immortal he is unable to and loses his only chance. Had he honored the gods, his journey to immortality might have been protected and assisted by the supernatural instead of thwarted. Gilgamesh thought he could become divine without the commitment and acknowledgement of it, but instead he is punished by the supernatural over and over again.

Punishments of the supernatural do not end within the Epic of Gilgamesh; again the wind can be seen beating down on individuals who deny the laws of the divine within Dante's Inferno. The entire work of Inferno is about divine punishment through the supernatural powers of the spiritual world. However, the wind has made an appearance within the second circle of hell. Sinners who have committed the sin of lust are whipped and bashed about by the wind preventing the sinners from finding peace and rest. Strong winds symbolize the restlessness of a person who is led by desire for fleshly pleasures. The lust could be for man, power, or even immortality like the heroes Ekidu and Gilgamesh. Sinners are blown around endlessly by the unforgiving winds of unquenchable desire as punishment for their transgressions. As Dante observed the sinners in their turmoil, the wind was "bellowing like the seas racked by a tempest, when warring winds attack it

from both sides. The infernal storm eternal in its rage, sweeps and drives the spirits with its blast: it whirls them, lashing them with punishment” (Dante 110). The infernal winds that never rest hurtles the spirits, whirling them round, and smiting, it molests them. When Dante sees these sinners he sympathizes with them, but fails to recognize the power of the divine until he goes further into Hell. It seems that wind is not an evident supernatural entity when viewed as a punishment. Neither Dante, Ekiu or Gilgamesh were able to recognize that the punishment of wind was foreshadowing ultimate suffering. These sinners like Gilgamesh did not acknowledge or repent for their acts against the divine, therefore the winds will batter and beat them about for all of eternity.

Next, the wind takes on a spiritual guidance role in the story of Hong Gildong. In the story of Hong Gildong, Hong’s struggle with self-identity only fuels his search for the divine. He says: Of all things created by Heaven, a human being is the most precious. So it is the most fortunate thing to be born a human in this world. And being born a human, it is the most fortunate thing to be born a man. And being born a man, it is most fortunate thing to be born in the capital city. In addition to these three fortunes, I have inherited Your Lordship’s abundant spirit and strength, and I have grown up to become a sturdy man... Yet all of my life I have had to bear this sorrow inside me which prevents me from looking up at Heaven with pride. (Kang 5). While Hong feels as though he is now disconnected from his family, his loyalty still lies with them much like the loyalty of the divine. Hong’s search for power among his family leads him upon the path of scholarship. When the High Minister denies Hong as a son, “ He dedicated himself to studying

military treatises, including the Six Teachings and the Three Summaries, and mastering astrology, geomancy, and the magical arts of invisibility and metamorphosis. He assimilated all this knowledge so thoroughly in his mind that there was no task that was impossible for him" (Kang 11). This includes his studying of religion and the supernatural. In his search for divinity Hong is able to conquer the power of the wind. When he is faced with death he is able to use the wind to his own advantage and punish the man who was sent to kill him. When the man arrives at Hong's cottage, Hong had already created a spell bound by the wind spirit. Hong using his powers, " Unleashed his sorcery and attached the trigram of the southward direction to the northward direction, the water trigram trigram of the northward direction to the southward direction, the thunder trigram of the eastward direction to the westward direction, the lake trigram of the westward direction to the eastward direction, the heaven trigram of the northwest -ward direction to the southeastward direction, the wind trigram of the southeastward direction to the northwestward direction, the mountain trigram of the northeastward direction to the southwestward direction, and the earth trigram of the southwestward direction to the northeastward direction" (Kang 16). Not only was Hong able to acknowledge the supernatural but he is able to use it to his own advantage due to his devotion to the divine and spirituality. Hong was able to morph and use the supernatural to protect himself through his own dedication to the divine. Not only does Hong spare his own life with the protection of winds, he is able to bring the others to his bed chamber who had plotted against him and his family. With the wind's help he assassinated those against him as well. Hong's loyalty to the divine enabled him to prove his loyalty to his family and his nation. After leaving his family, Hong is able

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to continue to work alongside the wind punishing those who go against the laws of the divine. The wind works to transport Hong Gildong and helped to conceal Hong from those against him. When Hong eventually dies, he is given a gift from the divine. He is made young again and eventually rides the wind off to heaven. Due to his devotion to the supernatural, Hong grows close to true divinity and finds his journey's resting place in heaven.

While in Hong Gildong the wind acts as a guide toward the divine, in The Golden Ass the wind takes the role of protector of the righteous. The story of The Golden Ass is full of magic and the supernatural, but it is the story within the book of Cupid and Psyche that truly represents a pure relationship between man and the divine. In The Golden Ass, the story of Cupid and Psyche taught just how the wind could act as a savior. It is the wind that carries Psyche to her lover, Cupid. As she stands on the ridge of a mountain the wind named Zephyr " carrying her on his tranquil breath smoothly down the slope of the lofty crag he gently let her sink and laid her to rest on the flowery turf in the bosom of the valley that lay below" (Apuleius 76). It is in this flowery dale that she encounters the divine being, Cupid. The love and devotion Psyche has for Cupid is pure and exhibits the ideal walk with spirituality; not being able to see the divine but yet believing in it. Cupid ultimately changes her life for the better, but her evil sisters, representative of religious doubt, cause Psyche to lose her connection with the divine. Cupid warns her of her cruel and evil sisters, but she is too curious and easily swayed that she disobeys his commands and eventually severs the ties between them. Her sisters' persuasion represents the liberty that they like Gilgamesh wished to have from the supernatural and the divine. When the

sisters persuade Psyche they say: Call to mind the Pythian oracle that declared you destined to marry a direful and tremendous monster. The inhabitants of this valley say that your husband is a terrible and monstrous serpent, who nourishes you for a while with dainties that he may by and by devour you. Take our advice. Provide yourself with a lamp and a sharp knife; put them in concealment that your husband may not discover them, and when he is sound asleep, slip out of bed, bring forth your lamp, and see for yourself whether what they say is true or not. If it is, hesitate not to cut off the monster's head, and thereby recover your liberty. (Apuleius 86) The words of her sisters tempted Psyche as the serpent tempted Eve. Psyche unable to resist, betrayed her devotion and promise to the divine and looks upon Cupid injuring him with the burning wax. When Psyche accidentally hurts Cupid and ruins their relationship, Cupid's mother tests her devotion to the gods. To prove her devotion to Cupid, an element of the divine, Psyche has to complete a lists of tasks for the goddess, Venus. However, she did not complete them single-handedly. On her way to speak with Venus Psyche encounters a mess of corn and decides to clean. Through this action of separating grains, her pious nature helped to honor the other gods as well. The holy Ceres, whose temple it was, finding her so religiously employed, thus spoke to her, " Oh Psyche, truly worthy of our pity, though I cannot shield you from the frowns of Venus, yet I can teach you how best to allay her displeasure. Go, then, and voluntarily surrender yourself to your lady and sovereign, and try by modesty and submission to win her forgiveness, and perhaps her favor will restore you the husband you have lost" (Apuleius 95). While it seems as Psyche will still face her punishment for infidelity, the powers of the supernatural protect her due to her devotion and piety. After <https://assignbuster.com/may-the-winds-of-heaven-blow-softly-wind-and-spirituality-in-world-masterpieces/>

seeing the first task set out by Venus, Psyche believes she will never see her husband again. The grains that she was meant to separate were to jumbled. Upon entering the first task of separating grains, magical ants came to Psyche's aid. Venus instructed Psyche that her next task was to fetch a sample of the golden fleece. Psyche obediently followed the instruction of her goddess, but it is the river god who comes to her aid. Through the murmurs of the river reeds the god said, " Oh maiden, severely tried, tempt not the dangerous flood, nor venture among the formidable rams on the other side, for as long as they are under the influence of the rising sun, they burn with a cruel rage to destroy mortals with their sharp horns or rude teeth. But when the noontide sun has driven the cattle to the shade, and the serene spirit of the flood has lulled them to rest, you may then cross in safety, and you will find the woolly gold sticking to the bushes and the trunks of the trees" (Apuleius 99). Following his instruction Psyche returned to Venus with an arm full of golden fleece.

The last task that Venus set out for Psyche was to travel to the Underworld to retrieve beauty from Proserpine. Psyche knew that this task would kill her but yet she went willingly. When she looks into the box of beauty her body is put into comatose. It is Cupid who revives her and ultimately gives her immortality. Her selfless actions throughout her tasks as a human are that similar to Christ, dying for her loved ones but yet coming back again as savior. Through these tasks Psyche is not only able to find redemption in faith but instead is able to become an element of the divine due to her purity and devotion to the divine, much like Hong Gildong. Both characters were pure of heart and were able to rise to the level of the divine with the help of

wind and supernatural elements during their time on earth. Not all the characters in these works followed the straight and narrow path, however. Again we see the punishment through the supernatural by wind in *The Golden Ass*. Due to the Psyche's connection to the divine, the gods, she is able to escape death from jumping off of the cliff and is carried by the wind, Zephyr, to the safety of her lover's home. However, the sisters of Psyche were greedy and tried to cheat their way into the grace of the divine. The sisters having ruined their sister's relationship with the divine believe that now they control the supernatural. They believe that with Psyche's lack of devotion for Cupid, they now have a chance to be loved by the divinity. The sisters rejoice that their sister's act of heresy has condemned her of a life of sac religion. With this idea, each of the sisters ascended the holy mountain home of Cupid, and called upon Zephyr to carry them to divinity. Each sister took a leap of faith but neither sister was sustained by Zephyr's power. The sisters wished for a perfect life but due to their imperfections and evilness they lack to find it even in death. Upon hearing of Psyche's betrayal, the following events occurred: There, though the wind was blowing from quite a different quarter, yet besotted with blind hope [the eldest sister] cried: 'Receive me, Cupid, a wife worthy of you, and you, Zephyr, bear up your mistress', and with a mighty leap threw herself over. But not even in death did she reach the place she sought: for as she fell from one rocky crag to another she was torn limb from limb, and she died providing a banquet of her mangled flesh, as she so richly deserved, for the birds of prey and wild beasts. The second vengeance soon followed. For Psyche again in her wanderings arrived at another city, where her second sister likewise lived.

She too was no less readily taken in by her sister's ruse, and eager to

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supplant her in an unhallowed marriage she hurried off to the rock and fell to a similar death. (Apuleius 91) Due to their cruelty and unfaithfulness when the sisters go to jump off of the cliff to find Cupid, the wind does not carry them off to safety and protect them but instead chooses to let them fall- a cruel punishment for their infidelity. The sisters' death was not redeemed by the supernatural as Psyche's comatose, but instead it seems that their doubt of divinity and the supernatural has condemned them to an eternity of suffering in the Underworld.

In the world masterpieces of The Epic of Gilgamesh, Inferno, Hong Gildong, and The Golden Ass the supernatural power of wind plays the role of determining what type of life each hero will have after their life on Earth. While there are many supernatural elements in all of these stories, it is the wind that plays the part of God; spiritual guide, protector, and even punisher. The wind's choice of punisher or protector is often based upon the character and actions of the individual. It is through the interactions with the wind that determines the hero's relationship with spirituality and the divine. The wind is the divine's form of justice and through justice the heroes of the works are brought to true divinity or fall to the pits of hell.

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