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ENG 3140: The Colonization of the Ipthins

Milan Bows

Michael Gercak

Thomas Hoffman

Allyson Parker

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Milan Bows, Michael Gercak, Thomas Hoffman, and Allyson Parker

English 3140

Dr. Begum

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The Colonization of the Ipthins

Over the course of the semester, we have read many texts that would have been useful one way or another in our film project. We selected five texts to help us develop the plot of our film: *Zahra's Paradise*, *Toward the African Revolution*, *Tulip in the Desert*, *Pyongyang*, and *Maskarade* from *Mixed Company*. Combining the themes of these works with the traditional hopeful tones of classic *Doctor Who* episodes, we were able to blend them all together into one believable—though fictitious—universe. When the Doctor arrives to the planet the Humans have colonized, he instantly realizes that something is a little off. As the film develops, he discovers that the Ipthins are taught at a separate school, denied their freedoms, kept from interacting with humans after childhood, and being punished by humans in ways that are illegal. Using his sonic screwdriver and diverse knowledge of colonization, the Doctor is able to help the two races of people put aside their differences and gives them hope that they may have a better, more harmonious future.

In our film, we incorporated ideas from Frantz Fanon's *Toward the African Revolution*, specifically the ideas about racism. Fanon wrote that racism was but one piece of larger puzzle, the puzzle of the oppression of a people. He wrote, "We witness the destruction of cultural values, of ways of life. Language, dress, techniques, are devalorized" (Fanon 33). In our film

project, we used these ideas for the conception of the university the Ipthins (the alien race in our film) are educated within by Humans. The background story of the film, (as far as it relates to the Fanon's afore mentioned ideas) is this: humanity has explored distant planets in space, and found this particular planet inhabited by the Ipthin race. Humanity establishes trade and peace relations with the Ipthins. At first the university seems harmless enough, teaching the Ipthins about the Human race and the Human culture. What was actually happening was the university was being used as a tool of oppression, teaching the Ipthins Human languages and customs/traditions. It is oppressive in its nature, because the Ipthins were not spending much time learning about their own traditions and culture.

In the film the Doctor makes a remark as to where the students were, since it was a place of learning. Humanity doesn't want the Ipthins wandering around the establishment, as that would imply a sense of freedom that the Ipthins are not allowed by Humanity. The Doctor is not allowed to enter a particular room because in that room, they are disciplining the Ipthins with an experimental form of punishment, not yet approved by Earth Council (though the oppression of the Ipthins is Earth sanctioned). The Doctor does not allow the oppression of any race in the Universe, so he was quite upset with the reconditioning program in the university's computer network. The reconditioning program is but another product of incorporating Fanon's ideas into the film. To get a feel for racism being a big part of this film world, we have the scene in the beginning when Hermione is talking on the phone with her childhood friend, who is an Ipthin. Her mother doesn't want her conversing with other Ipthins, because they are deemed "lower" than Humans. This contrasts with the revelation of Hermione being Ipthin, but was raised as a Human by a Human mother.

In our film project, we also incorporated ideas from Sir Muhammad Iqbal's *Tulip in the Desert*, particularly the ideas of Humanity being creative/ hopeful beings, and slightly with the ideas of slave culture. The slight incorporation with the slave culture ideas is seen towards the end of the film with the rebel Ipthin that comes in to assassinate the Headmistress of the university. The idea taken from Iqbal is that a people who are enslaved have their own selves for part of the blame, as they are the ones who do not take matters into their own hands to change their present state. The rebel Ipthin does take matters into her own hands, being bold enough for an assassination attempt, so it's sort of the reverse of what Iqbal's thoughts on the matter were.

On the topic of Humanity being creative beings, we incorporated this idea, however briefly, in the Doctor's speech at the end of the film. The Doctor has always believed in Humanity, despite the many reasons he should not, illustrated within the entire history of Humanity's existence. We felt it was important to bring some of this belief into the film at the end, because it would give a more hopeful ending to the film, instead of a dismal finish. As a result, the film has a bittersweet ending, where a character we wanted to live, died. However, there is hope for the Ipthins in her death. Therefore, the idea of Humanity being a force for good is shown in the Doctor's speech at the end, and also the changes the Headmistress will be putting forth in the university. She will change it to become something good, not oppressive. Also, we show this side of Humanity in the Headmistress character, because there was a part of her all along that did not fully believe in the oppression of the Ipthins, for she did have an Ipthin daughter. The incorporation of Iqbal's ideas was subtle and seemingly small, but we felt it was important to draw ideas from the poems, rather than incorporate them fully into the film for better flow and story/dialogue progression.

We also used *Mixed Company* in the making of our film, specifically the play *Maskarade* by Sylvia Wynter. In the play, one of the themes present is the idea that children of any status may interact, but once they reach a certain age, it becomes unacceptable for them to continue socializing with each other. When we decided to include this idea in our film, we wanted to set the film on Hermione's (Milan's character) birthday, as a sign that once a human turned a certain age, it is no longer acceptable for Ipthins and humans to interact. Even though we cut out specifically stating that it is Hermione's birthday on the day the Doctor visits, we still believe the way we presented the idea makes it clear nothing but social status is tearing the two best friends apart.

Stemming from this separation of class past childhood, we also focused on the overall separation of peoples. The humans, who colonized the Ipthins, created a separate system of education and society, much like the culture in Jamaica when Wynter wrote *Maskarade*. We wanted to emphasize the fact that, before these groups of people were taught to dislike each other, they got along fine and saw no reason not to live in peace. We used the end of the film to emphasize why colonization is never a good idea: because we are all the same, and refuse to realize it. Even though this theme was not apparent through the entirety of our short film, it was a great jumping off point for Hermione to have some suspicion into who she really is, and why her mother is hiding it from her.

Amir and Khalil's, *Zahra's Paradise* is a story that explores the loss of identity that the oppressed feel in their homeland. We express this in our film as well with the faceless, nameless Ipthins that are oppressed by the humans on their planet. In *Zahra's paradise* we follow the story of a family that is plagued by the unknown fate of their son and brother. In our film, the family

dynamic is a little different as we are dealing with a mother who is the one keeping the secret from her daughter, but it is still shrouded in secrecy. The Ipthins of this world are oppressed by the humans for no other reason than the fact that they are different internally. In Iran, the oppression is of those that are the same race, but are only different in their resistance of the dominating culture. In our film, there is also little room for resistance of the dominating human's way of life. The reform school for the Ipthins is a cold place that serves as proof of their daily oppression by the human race. The one Ipthin that we are actually able to see is a "volunteer", which suggests that this may be their only way of getting out of wherever else they are kept. The film also relates back to Zahra's paradise in the secrecy that surrounds the location of the Ipthins. Although we are told that this is their school, we only see one which begs the question, where are the other Ipthins?

Many of the things in the film are also reminiscent of Guy Delisle's *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea*. The idea of oppression from an internal source is prevalent in this book as similar to Zahra's paradise. In *Pyongyang*, there is the idea of volunteers that work tirelessly and selflessly for their leader. In our film, we also show an Ipthin working in the school. When the Doctor asks about why she is cleaning, Hermione tells him that all the Ipthins "volunteer" for the school, and that they like it. The Doctor, much like Delisle, is skeptical about how much these people actually are volunteering, and questions if the use of fear is being used to control the people.

Another similarity between this graphic novel and our film is idea of a special school. In *Pyongyang*, there is special school for child prodigies where they are taken at a certain age to learn their craft. In our film the Ipthins are also taken to this school after a certain age and forced

to learn “how to become productive”. It is also similar to a reeducation camp, but not as grim as those found in North Korea are. After a certain age, it becomes appropriate for Ipthin children to leave home and come to this school, which is why in the beginning of our film Hermione tells her friend that they can no longer spend time together. This is why it is important when the Doctor realizes that Hermione herself is an Ipthin, because she should technically be attending this school. Another part of our film that relates back to this is the lack of answers that the doctor receives regarding this strange new place he is discovering. Despite his asking questions about the school, he is unable to receive a straight answer about what is actually going on. The Doctor attempts to look inside of “classroom” and is immediately stopped by Hermione. This is like in Delisle’s Pyongyang when the outsider is only told about the school’s accolades and allowed to see performances but nothing more.

Overall, we found combining these texts together to be both a challenging and informative task. By choosing which texts and themes would go well together, we had to assess what each text had to offer, forcing us to take a close look at the themes and topics of each text. It was also helpful that among the four of us, our group had worked closely with almost all of the texts, either by writing a paper or presenting questions in class. This allowed us all to give the texts another, deeper reading that we would have otherwise done. One of the most common themes is creation of power one group uses to lord over another. By making the power gap so drastic between the Ipthins and the Humans, we were hoping to give viewers a farcical effect that is obviously stemming from a great, and more realistic, problem in the world. The film closes with an (adlibbed) speech that we felt encompassed and briefly touched on everything that we had learned over the course of the semester. We all had a great time creating and developing this project!

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