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Creative Project Rationale

“When the Shadows Come”

A “Game of Rat and Dragon” and *Black Panther* crossover fanfiction story

“When the Shadows Come” is a science-fiction fanfic story based on the film *Black Panther* and the story *Game of Rat and Dragon*. The combination of the two come together to relay my interpretations of each, Shuri represents progressive change and the dragons are self-reflections of humans.

When writing this crossover, I made Shuri the main focus because she represents progressional change in a couple of ways to me. Firstly, when the film *Black Panther* came out, my personal view point of women in the STEM field was swayed drastically. Ryan Coogler, the director, showed a young female as the head scientist for a technologically advanced country. This led me to believe that minorities were not being properly represented in the field. So, by having Shuri, who is apart of a minority, as the face of science really inspired me. That is why she is still the head scientist in my story. To show that no matter what your skin color, gender, or sexual orientation is, anyone can be a scientist if they so choose. Secondly, I made Shuri the queen of Wakanda at the young age of 16 years old. Because T’Challa is dead in the story it makes since, she is the last living rightful heir to the throne. But I didn’t just do this because it flowed well with the story line. I wanted to show progression in its truest form, switching from an ancient-old tradition to something new, something different. Wakanda is known for having a patriarchal system, where a man leads. By making Shuri the Queen, the country’s dynamics

switch to a matriarchal system, meaning that her word is law. By portraying this in my story, I'm shattering that "this is a man's world" saying. In the movie itself, many strong female characters held lead roles, like Nakia or Okoye and her all female guard. Also, in the film Shuri states "Just because something works, doesn't mean it can't be improved." I want to make this quote a direct connection to her rising to the throne. Men had run Wakanda for generations and everything was functioning normally, nothing was broken. Wakanda could have been led by a male until the end of time, but by Shuri being the Queen, the country was improved. I want to say that a woman can be in a position of power and lead just as well as a man, maybe even better. Change is progression, and progression is vital for the world to continue to thrive.

The reader does not reach this conclusion until the very end, but the dragons are self-reflections of humans. This was the original interpretation I got from reading Cordwainer Smith's "Game of Rat and Dragon." The book itself left a lot up in the air and I believe the author did that on purpose by not explaining what the dragons truly were. They were merely described as "...people realized there was something else out there underneath space itself which was alive, capricious, and malevolent." I liked how it was left up to the reader on how they perceived the dragons. Nearing the end of my story, when the dragons finally arrive, they win the impending war. But, technically, everyone wins the war because the dragons have finally found their other halves. That's where the whole self-reflection theme comes into play. In the story of "Game and Rat and Dragon", when a human came into contact with a dragon they could go mentally insane, "...every man, woman, and child on board dead or insane." While reading this part, I imagined the humans seeing something within the dragons that they could not comprehend, hence why they went insane. Therefore, in my story I tell the opposite of that, when the dragons and humans come into contact with each other, they are transported to another realm

where they can merge and become one single being: essentially becoming eternal and going to a place where gods thrived. I want to negate the connotation that others may have gotten while reading that story. I want the sense of fearing the dragons to be terminated. They are misunderstood, when in actuality it is the humans who are the true sinners of life and the dragons are here to cleanse them of it. The dragons are the purest form of ourselves, they are what the Horned Gods intended to create in the beginning. I also relate this to my own religion in a way, Baptist Christian. God sees humans as his own creations, and he sees himself within us. Other than the fact that the Horned Gods have the word “God” in their name, I tried to make this connection as clear as possible.

In the story I explain everything very thoroughly because I don’t want readers to come out confused. But there is one thing I don’t explain on purpose and that is, why is light detrimental to the dragons? I want the readers to come to their own conclusion about this. There is always something left up for interpretation to which a reader can develop their own view on, and I wanted this to be it.

There are a few connections I made within the story that relate to myself. I wanted to integrate subtle meanings within the text, so in turn I felt like I was apart of this story too. For instance, the names of the lab scientists and Shuri’s cat, Arka, Kianga, and Jua, all mean light or sunshine in Swahili. I did this because light cannons are used within the story, so this makes it ironic. Also, Lion King is my favorite Disney film, and in the movie, they used Swahili terms. It relates to the sequel because Simba’s daughter’s name is Kiara, which is princess in Swahili. I’ve also integrated the phrase “bless her heart” which is a term my great grandmother used often.

In the end, I loved creating this project because my imagination held no bounds. I was able to bring together everything I learned during this course in a fun and exciting way. My

projects reflect this class because I was able to create two arguable theses based on my interpretation of the original texts and intertwine them within my project, as well as adding some aspects of my own life in it. I was taking the journey with these characters the whole time.

Work Cited

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