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Self and Other in Contemporary German Literature Confrontation With the Foreign World in the Novels by Renate Ahrens

Albrecht Classen

The University of Arizona, Tucson, USA

The experience of “The Other” has become a common one for people in the 21st century, and yet it continues to be a major problem for everyone involved. Increasingly, however, immigrants and their descendants adjust and soon participate in and with the new culture(s). At the same time, those who encounter “The Other” through the contact with immigrants, have also to adapt, to learn, and to realize considerable changes in themselves in that process. Recently, a new German novelist, Renate Ahrens, has created several major works in which she reflects on this intricate phenomenon typical of our times. The present study might well be the first critical analysis of her last two novels, *Zeit der Wahrheit* (*Time of Truth*, 2005) and *Fremde Schwestern* (*Alienated Sisters*, 2011), which prove to be outstanding and first-rate literary treatments of the theme of “The Other” in an intercultural context. As Ahrens illustrates in both novels, each individual carries a heavy baggage imposed on them by the own family history, and so in both cases the confrontation with “The Other” serves exceedingly well to break open the shell of self-isolation and self-alienation. Love finally overcomes ancient conflicts and paves the way for new integrative forces supporting the formation of the “global village” we all are really living in.

Keywords: “The Other”, immigration, foreign culture(s), Renate Ahrens, German novelist, German literature, postmodern literature

Introduction: The Foreign World and the Self Today

The global situation today is deeply, almost painfully, determined by the international flow of migration. All Western countries experience heavy immigrations, legal and illegal, which creates tensions and conflicts everywhere, or constitute, in neutral terms, challenges. But Arabic countries also witness strong influxes of foreigners mostly as workers. So this is not an exclusively Western phenomenon, but the result of global imbalances in economic terms, military conflicts, and religious persecutions. The receiving cultures feel various pressures, the own identity often seems to be at stake, conservative politicians are calling for strict new measures to stem the flood of immigrants, while, oddly, the flow of Western tourists to the countries where some of those immigrants are coming from is growing as well. Whether any of this is good or bad, productive or not, whether there might be strategies to help people improve their lives back home so much that they do not need to leave and cross dangerous territories or bodies of water and then hostile borders, in order to establish better lives in the new world, does not need to be discussed here.

Instead, the issue of central concern here will be the experience of the foreign at large as an epistemological phenomenon which can prove to be the catalyst for the discovery of the self, and this in psychological, mental-historical, political, religious, and social-economic terms. Insofar as many individuals today appear to have great difficulties to accept themselves or to understand who they really are, the contrastive exposure to other people and other cultures has often had a surprising effect overcoming profound alienation within the own self. Poets and writers have consistently dealt with this fundamental issue, the clash between self and other, so it does not come as a surprise that this theme continues to occupy the minds of contemporary authors as well (Wierlacher, 1985; Long, 1986; Demarest Button & Reed, 1999; Pettegree, 2011). Oddly enough, in this Postmodern world where cultural conflicts continue to vex us considerably, actually in some areas increasingly leading to violence by individuals and groups against minorities, this very contact among different cultures provokes and stimulates at the same time and transforms both the receiving and the giving cultures in a productive way. In fact, Western society has witnessed profound changes in its approaches to, handling of, and dealing with migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers, and hence also with an astonishing permeation of society by many people. Mixed marriages and children from parents of different races are no longer completely exceptional, on the contrary. Wherever one goes, there are ethnic restaurants, and ethnic communities, and newspapers from all over the world can be purchased at stands, while schools everywhere witness a steadily growing number of pupils from many different countries and with different mother tongues. Some of the most important inspirations for any national literature, music, and the arts seem to come from those with a "Migrationshintergrund" (who originate from abroad). The big question that looms large on the horizon virtually all over the Western World and elsewhere concerns integration, tolerance, communication, or the very absence of all of them, resulting in xenophobia, hatred, and violence. Language issues also matter, and so does religion. After all, as the common saying goes, we live in a "global village", which is hard to accept for some people, and which is enthusiastically welcomed by others.

Many of these topics deeply influence and determine what is being discussed in much of Postmodern literature, and there is no shortage of critical studies dealing with those topics at large (Tawada, 1996; Dietsche, 1984; Antor, 2007; Göktürk, Gramling, & Kaes, 2007; Langenohl, 2011; from the eastern perspective, Braginsky & Murtagh, 2007). As a side note, the premodern world was not completely isolated from those problems either, and had its own share of tensions and problems, involving the Jewish population, the Sinti and Roma (formerly pejoratively called "Gypsies"), but then also people from neighboring countries and continents. Only recently, for instance, have we begun to learn about the role of African blacks in Italy during the late Middle Ages and of white slaves in a variety of Mediterranean countries, including the Ottoman Empire (Bell, Suckow, & Wolf, 2010; Bisaha, 2004; for medieval perspectives, see Classen, 2002).

A New Literary Voice From Germany Dealing With the Other in Confrontation With the Self

Here the author would like to examine two novels recently published by a new German writer who has hardly gained any critical acclaim yet but who promises to be recognized soon as a major voice in the German-speaking world, especially in light of all of those aspects mentioned above. Renate Ahrens has so far published mostly novels for young readers, but has recently turned to novels for adult readers in which she

explores powerful themes with a deeply refreshing new perspective. On her own web page, she introduced herself as follows:

Renate Ahrens, born in Herford, Germany, in 1955, studied English and French at the universities of Marburg, Lille and Hamburg. She worked as a teacher for a few years, before she and her husband moved to Dublin in 1986. Since then she has been a freelance writer. She writes novels, stage plays and German-English children's books. In 1996-1997 she lived in Cape Town and in 2002-2003 in Rome, and is now based in Dublin and Hamburg. Renate Ahrens is a member of the P.E.N. Centre of German-Speaking Writers Abroad. (Retrieved from <http://www.renate-ahrens.de/biography.html>)

She has also published plays and radio and TV programs for children, yet her recent emphasis seems to rest on novels. In 2003 appeared *Der Wintergarten (The Winter Garden)*, followed by *Zeit der Wahrheit (Time of Truth)* in 2005, and most recently, *Fremde Schwestern (Alienated Sisters)* in 2011. They all explore human relationships and center on individuals who face deeply hidden problems that suddenly come to the surface when the external life conditions change, because the protagonists are suddenly confronted by people, cultures, issues, and ideas outside of their familiar horizon. In our context, Ahrens' last two novels prove to be the most interesting insofar as they explore topics of greatest relevance in our modern existence, because they illustrate in a moving and powerful way how much the "global village" interacts with all of us and gets us all involved as a result of intercultural contacts.

Zeit der Wahrheit: A German in South Africa

Let us begin with a brief summary of *Zeit der Wahrheit*, which intriguingly reflects on personal connections between Germans and the people of South Africa during the last half century. A young single woman, the journalist Pia Lessings, hears the name "Zoe" uttered by her father as his last word before he dies. After much research she finds out and suddenly remembers that Zoe used to be her nanny while the family lived in South Africa. When she was four, they abruptly returned home, and from then on no one ever mentioned the past experiences again. Naturally, when the opportunity arises, the journalist immediately assumes an assignment to report about the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, set up in 1995 after the fall of Apartheid, which allows her to search for this Zoe.¹ The novel thus opens up multiple narrative strands that constantly meet and intertwine, combining personal events with public and political events.

Soon Pia encounters a journalist, Jonathan, with whom she falls in love. He begins to help her in the search for the old nanny, whom they ultimately can discover, indeed. In the process, the two people begin to develop a close emotional bond and it appears as if they might decide to live together at the end, although this is not clearly developed because it is of very little importance. As it turns out, Pia's father used to have a love affair with that colored nanny, while his wife was not able to be affectionate in any way and threatened to commit suicide if he did not stop that affair. Tragically, however, Zoe was already pregnant, but since those two lovers had been afraid of becoming responsible in a way for his wife's death, they broke off their relationship, and the German family quickly moved back home. Although Pia's father tried several times to reconnect with Zoe, the two had no chance, especially because Zoe's father had threatened her with expulsion from the family and would have exploded if she had admitted her love for the white man. Zoe's son Adam

¹ Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_%28South_Africa%29.

never learned the whole truth and hated his biological father, because the young man, as a person of mixed races, never had a full chance to develop his life in South Africa.

The novel concludes with Pia at first planning to return to Germany in order to organize her life and to explore options how to meet up with her lover again. But then Zoe, already suffering from cancer in the intestines, dies of the shock resulting from the news that her son had murdered a woman. During the funeral ceremony Pia finally understands that she cannot play a careful card and hope for the best for a long-distance relationship. Instead, following Zoe's advice, she is ready to give love a true chance and might not return home to Germany, to her old job, her old family structure, and her old social environment. After all, as she realizes, and as the writer indicates with this novel, the prison in which herself had been caught can or must be overcome through the confrontation with the other, the foreign, which produces innovative and inspiring motivation, hope, and new idealism. While Pia had a boyfriend (Klaus) back home, this relationship had already collapsed over her failed pregnancy. Her new boyfriend Jonathan, similarly to Pia, suffers from personal isolation and loss of a child in metaphorical terms (deliberate alienation created by the biological mother), and we could imagine that the new couple might start a fresh life together, perhaps even bringing a child of their own to this world.

Interestingly, when the protagonist has begun to acclimatize to South Africa after her arrival, she observes one little scene which sheds much light on the new conditions in that country. While spending time in the botanical garden, she sees a young couple running by her, he white and she black, both around 20 years old, who then openly and freely kiss each other. Moreover, she notices that many people of different races spend time in the garden, clearly a sign of changing cultural conditions in that country (Ahrens, 2005, p. 69).

Embarking on the search for her former nanny Zoe, Pia visits the famous District-Six Museum in Cape Town, where the Apartheid government had torn down a whole district of black and other people to make room for whites. By 1982, more than 60,000 people had been forcefully moved into the squalor of distant townships, so the museum now documents that horrible history.² While talking with the curator Charlie Rive, and reflecting on the atrocity that had been committed in South Africa, she tells him that she is from Germany, which provokes him to remark: "Also a beautiful country with a dark history" (Ahrens, 2005, p. 66; the author's translation, here and following), a direct allusion to the Holocaust. As the entire novel indicates, past and present always intertwine, and the attractiveness of the natural environment cannot hide the horrors that might have happened in that country, brought about by the people. Moreover, as this brief exchange also signals, no country, no people, and no individual can completely claim to be free of all transgressions or to be free from all temptations to transgress. Although Ahrens would certainly not want to equate the Holocaust with Apartheid, she argues for a more historical and comparative perspective concerning past suffering, subjugation, dictatorship, and racism.

Ironically, the protagonist is regularly confronted with German tourists who behave like tourists always tend to do, being loud, ignorant, boorish, and selfish, demonstrating an astonishing degree of cultural insensitivity, not displaying any awareness about the social and economic conditions of the new environment. Pia, however, having been born in Cape Town and having to endure her mother's extremely cold treatment, while being haunted by the wonderful memories of the loving and caring nanny Zoe, finds herself in the middle of all the cultural tensions, especially because she falls in love with that journalist Jonathan. He has also a major conflict in

² Retrieved from <http://www.districtsix.co.za/>.

his life, being separated from his former girlfriend in New York who has forbidden him any contact with their son, and projecting the father as a monster to the young boy. Jonathan, being from South Africa, had returned to that country only a year ago, and now he suffers badly from the separation from his child. At the same time, as we learn in the course of the narrative, he is alienated from his parents, whites, because they do not agree with the new post-Apartheid policy, still adhering to the old racist ideology.

The novel increasingly reveals where the true problems rest, that is, in the devastating family structures of the old days, in the lack of love between parents and children, and in the loss of love between husband and wife. Pia realizes the huge void in her life only once she has left Germany, while for Jonathan that loneliness had hit him as soon as he had arrived in South Africa, after he had been forced to abandon his own child, because he had not been married to the mother. Both protagonists prove to be deeply wounded souls who now slowly begin to recover their own self through the love which grows between them. Ultimately, however, Pia's search for her old nanny creates the essential basis for these two people to work together in the quest, which connects her with many people in Cape Town of different races. The novel culminates in the critical scene where Pia talks with her old nanny who alerts her to the great need for all people to give love a chance, because she herself had failed, along with Pia's father, to follow their dream (Ahrens, 2005, p. 273). The author successfully combines the personal drama with the drama of the entire country, insofar as the global effort by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to establish peace and, as its label states, to reconcile, to close the abyss between the races, and to start reconstructing a new society, finds its reflection in Pia's personal efforts to retrace the history of her family and to overcome the drama that overshadowed her whole life.

The bitter relationship between her parents, oddly locked together on the basis of moral obligations, not through the power of love, proves to be the major cause for the female protagonist for having failed in establishing a positive relationship in her own life. As she has to realize at the end, her father had truly loved Zoe, completely irrespective of their racial differences, and had wanted to separate from his wife, which then, however, had not been possible because of the suicide threats. As Ahrens conveys through this novel, *Zeit der Wahrheit*, the time for truth has arrived for everyone involved here because they all come together from different worlds and finally realize the enormous need to allow the past to be revealed without casting an eternal shadow on the present.

Pia recognizes how much her parents had greatly profited from the Apartheid system in economic terms, although they had come from Germany. But her father had also discovered that he did not love his wife, who could never develop or demonstrate any warm feelings for him. Although her father kept this a secret for the rest of his life, he had truly loved once, the nanny Zoe. Tragically for them, the racial differences would have made it impossible for both to live out their love, either in South Africa or in Germany, because external racism would have prevented them from realizing their dream. In a way that was the reason for Pia's inability to bond with any man in her own life, because she had lost the one person with whom she had felt an emotional bond, her nanny Zoe, truly a caring person, while Pia's biological mother was not capable of reaching out to her own daughter.

Ahrens here presents a fascinating novel which explores the impact of old scars resulting from a horrible racist society. The political structure of South Africa had deeply influenced lives, forcing the German man to abandon his one and only true love, Zoe, and to move back to Germany with his wife to whom he only had felt committed to due to moral and ethical concerns. As Pia realizes, her own, newly found happiness did not grow

out of the security of her job or her professional success, but out of the ability to move into a different cultural world. Only there is she finally able to accept herself, because she reconnects with the love which she feels so profoundly for her old nanny, and because she discovers true love for the journalist Jonathan.

The book is properly entitled *Zeit der Wahrheit—Time for Truth*. This complex truth is being unraveled in South Africa during Pia's stay in that country, while she works reporting about the hearings set up by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and, more important, while she carries out her own investigations of her personal past intimately connected with South Africa. Once the truth has been revealed, both of the previous horrors committed in that country and of the repressed childhood experienced by Pia, reconciliation can set in, even if only tentatively so, because both the country itself and the protagonist encounter their personal history and acknowledge it as part of their own identity, without losing the perspective toward the future. This is precisely the same issue for all those immigrants who feel more or less as new members of their chosen country and thus, in a way, also have to accept the country's history with all its pluses and minuses (see the introduction in Langenohl, 2011, pp. 36-38). The central point proves to be that the modern heterogeneous society turns into a location with "Erzählgemeinschaften" (communities of narrators) where the past is kept alive by way of narrative accounts (Langenohl, 2011, p. 37). Not surprisingly, that is precisely the critical point which determines literature in the best sense of the word (Harzig, 2006, pp. 7-19; Gramling, 2009).

Nevertheless, there is hope, both for South Africa and for the protagonist since she finally allows love to determine her life, instead of any external family bonds, social obligations, and professional constraints. As we learn from this novel, the extraordinary experience of cultural, racial, and linguistic otherness can remove the lid that keeps all history bottled up, and once the secrets have come out, both of the Apartheid police and terror, and of Pia's tormented family history, the world experiences, even if only in small steps, a remarkable transformation. As terrifying and fear-inducing Pia's first few days in South Africa appear to be, faced with the squalor of the townships, the masses of poor people, her inability to speak with many of the native population, and the foreignness of the cityscape of Cape Town, ultimately the very exposure to that foreign world allows her to reconnect to her own childhood and thus to establish a new basis in her self which makes it possible for her to embrace true feelings of love.

The Foreign Comes to the Self: Alienated Sisters Find Themselves

In *Fremde Schwestern*, the "foreign" suddenly and unexpectedly enters the protagonist's comfortable world at home and forces her to rediscover her own identity, to analyze her family's past, and hence to reorientate herself thoroughly, whereby she ultimately finds herself and also gains the inner strength to accept love in her life after all (see the author's review, forthcoming in *Trans-Lit2*). The writer captures her readers' attention immediately with the young woman Lydia appearing one early morning at the door to her sister Franka's apartment in Hamburg, Germany. After having spent many years living in South Africa, India, and Nepal, surviving by means of menial jobs, living with suspect boyfriends, and finally through prostitution, she has now returned with her seven-year-old daughter Merle, because she knows of her imminent death. Her illness is rather complex, yet could be handled if she completely submitted to the doctors' advice and care. Suffering from Hepatitis C, she desperately needs a liver transplantation, but it takes much time to find a donor organ, more time than the patient is willing to invest. Consequently, at the end Lydia rather follows her own dreams and travels

back to India with a new boyfriend, Chris, hoping to regain her health there with the help of a mysterious, if not voodoo, healer. As to be expected, this plan fails utterly, and Lydia suddenly dies of a hematorrhea.

As much as these two sisters hate each other, both representing strongly different cultural values, and this already since their childhood, Franka must now take care of her niece, who shares many character features with her mother. At first she does so very grudgingly, yet then she realizes how much this girl represents her own blood, so she finally goes so far as to accept her virtually as her own daughter when Lydia has died. Basically, Lydia had always tried to develop the artist in herself, but since she had lacked inner discipline and self-control, she has basically failed in all her efforts, hence finally has to seek refuge with her sister, although the latter's orderly lifestyle proves to be almost repulsive for her. Franka, on the other hand, leads a rather superficial life as a successful writer of scripts for television films who has built a secure existence within a stable bourgeois environment. However, this also means that she cannot open up to her own boyfriend, Jan, and always keeps a safe distance to all people. For instance, she never gives him a key to her apartment, that is, until her life has been profoundly transformed through the appearance (and death) of Lydia and of Merle.

The young girl grudgingly accepts the necessity to live with her aunt, because she has no alternative, with her mother lying in the hospital and later living in social housing by herself, too weak to take care of her own daughter. By the same token, her aunt, Franka, is deeply challenged by this different kind of young person who indirectly forces her to change her world view and attitude toward life. As much as the novel focuses on these two sisters, the true protagonist proves to be Merle, because she represents a kind of foreigner in this novel, and yet still is her aunt's closest relative. She has spent her formative years as a child abroad, under highly suspect conditions, yet she seems to have enjoyed her life there and now idealizes her past in those distant, exotic countries as the only mental refuge for her to maintain the former identity. In the course of the novel, however, a remarkable rapprochement process takes place involving both sisters and the young girl, ultimately because both sides begin to accept the foreign element in the respective other and thereby discover a part of themselves they had not yet known.

The narrative really hinges on the conflictual conditions in their old family, with the father having cared little for the daughters, especially not for the thieving and lying Lydia, while the mother had clearly given preference to the younger one, Lydia, who seemed to represent her own dreams of turning into an artist. Franka had no real alternative but to struggle as hard as possible to achieve the best possible grades in school and then to move on to the university and subsequently to find a job, establishing her own life free from her parents' debilitating influence. Having grasped the profound injustice already from early on, she had developed a strong hatred of her sister, which carries over to her adult life. Curiously, she emphasizes toward her friend Esther that she had loved her sister in their early youth, but then this all had turned to hatred because of extenuating circumstances. Nevertheless, as Esther observes, even in this form of hatred the two sisters appear to her as very similar (Ahrens, 2011, p. 38).

Franka has a very hard time coming to terms with her niece, whom she oddly loves and yet also rejects at the same time. On the one hand, right at the beginning, she carries her emaciated body to the sofa to give her a better sleeping accommodation, suddenly sensing maternal feelings. On the other, she mistrusts her and is even suspicious of her that she could steal money (Ahrens, 2011, pp. 42-43). As much as they are both closely related, as little do they know how to build a bridge of trust between them, especially because Merle represents a foreign

world, a foreign culture, and foreign memories, having lived most of her young life in South Africa, India, and Nepal. Nevertheless, she is Franka's niece, and despite all tensions, conflicts, and problems, eventually these two people open up to each other and begin to develop a closer relationship. This is also the case between the two sisters, although they are worlds apart in their attitude, character, dreams, and ideals. However, the artistic talent in Lydia also comes forward in her daughter, and since Franka's boyfriend is a musician, the young girl finds a chance to live out that ability, playing her own songs on the piano.

Most interesting proves to be the way Ahrens explains how the slow disappearance of the mutual hostility is made possible, insofar as this might represent a fascinating model case at large for how people from different cultures, races, genders, and age groups can find ways to communicate with each other after all, leading to mutual respect and acknowledgment. Merle carries over her mother's hatred for Franka without understanding any of the reasons that go far back to both their own childhoods in a basically broken home. However, Franka has never had a child of her own, apparently because of her fear to get too close to another person, to be committed, and to share love (Ahrens, 2011, p. 168). At one point, for instance, we learn that her father's death had hurt her deeply, not because she had simply loved him, but rather because she had waited all her life in vain to receive her father's love, which never happened (Ahrens, 2011, p. 119). Without that love she was obviously afraid of a child, because she would not be able to love it, just as her father had rejected Lydia outright.

Now, however, the situation is different since Merle is simply "thrown into her lap", and she must take care of her. Yet that girl hates her for quite some time until her aunt suddenly hits on the brilliant idea of taking Merle to the zoo, where the first decisive transformation in the girl takes place, because she is suddenly confronted with many animals that remind her of the time in India. Especially the monkeys lighten up her entire personality since she used to have a pet monkey in the past. Full of joy she beams at her aunt: "I had such a monkey, just like that" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 86). Franka smiles back and thinks by herself: "For a moment I am no longer an enemy" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 86). Surprisingly, but significantly, when the two take a break, they order a coke, a soft drink which Franka otherwise would have never ordered out of health concerns. As she later comments to her boyfriend, "Sometimes one can make an exception" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 89). In fact, the requirement to deal with her niece in practical terms forces this woman to abandon some of her traditional strictures and to let things go as they come. She does not realize that she thus assumes some of the characteristics of her sister, who had freely roamed the world and had slept with many men without any care, until she had become pregnant, her only true desire, not caring for a husband. Of course, both Lydia and Franka represent fundamental differences in their personalities and cultural values, but in Merle, who seems to combine the foreign with the familiar, a combination of both emerges, as the subsequent scene in Jan's apartment illustrates.

Merle immediately espies the piano and wants to play on it, which Jan, being a professional musician, strictly prohibits. However, he invites her to accompany him with her voice while he is playing, and so we learn that Merle knows her childhood songs in English, which Franka laconically comments quietly: "More than one language" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 91), observing a striking difference to herself. In another episode, very trivial by itself, Franka realizes to her astonishment that Merle had always brushed her own teeth when she lived in Nepal. This degree of "civilization" in that distant country astonishes her aunt, who thus reveals her own cultural ignorance in that moment and has to accept the girl's criticism (Ahrens, 2011, p. 115). Step by step Franka's life also changes, because she has to adapt to Merle. For instance, she even begins to make a warm lunch (spaghetti),

what she has never done before (Ahrens, 2011, p. 122). Most significantly, she also buys a gift for her niece, a toy monkey, which creates instantaneous happiness in the girl, because it reminds her of the pet animal back in India (Ahrens, 2011, p. 123). This also encourages Merle to talk about their life there, where her mother had sold self-made jewelry. Merle had a friend called Bakul, the son of another street vendor, and Bakul owned a cobra which he made to rise out of a basket and dance when he played on his flute.

Ahrens here evokes the stereotypical image of the exotic Orient, but the critical aspect quickly proves to be the radical contrast between both sisters. While Lydia had roamed the world as a free-wheeler, Franka had stayed home, studied, and started with her career. But now, full of admiration she admits to Merle that she in her age had never been abroad (Ahrens, 2011, p. 126), and now she can only invite the girl to go to the Baltic Sea for vacation sometime in the future, which seems pedestrian in comparison to what Lydia had exposed her daughter to. The narrator, however, does not evaluate this huge difference; instead we only observe how much the foreign world and the ordinary existence in Germany begin to approximate each other, and on that basis the relationship between Merle and her aunt improves considerably. As Franka admits to herself, after a very ordinary dinner with Jan and her niece, during which her older boyfriend and her niece enjoyed a simple conversation about Merle's life in India, she wished she could slip out of her own skin and simply be happy about Jan's ability to interact harmoniously with the child (Ahrens, 2011, p. 141).

Intriguingly, however, this very process slowly takes place, as reflected not only by Franka's increasing confidence in dealing with her niece and her own sister, but also by her ability to rewrite her movie script in a meaningful way. While before her supervisor had disliked her crime story because it had distributed good and evil in a too simplified manner, she begins to change the narrative plot and includes sufficient elements that reveal how much the situation in her script actually falls between the two extremes, indicating that even the best intentions could lead to a devastating outcome, and vice versa. In her own words: "The perpetrator also ought to be a victim. Or the female perpetrator" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 156). Fittingly, in the reality outside of Franka's script she observes a new truce between her and Lydia (Ahrens, 2011, pp. 159-160), although countless problems continue to torture both sisters. Simultaneously the tensions with her boyfriend mostly disappear, and Merle is eventually even allowed to play on his piano, where she suddenly demonstrates a remarkable musical skill. The melody that she plays she had learned from her friend Baku, who had used it to charm his snake back in India (Ahrens, 2011, p. 173). For Jan this is a frightening scenario because he is afraid of snakes, while Merle had had only an eye for the beautiful movements of the cobra and so continues not to fear snakes.

In the course of time, the two sisters begin to talk more openly to each other and Lydia shares some of her horror experiences in Nepal, where she had prostituted herself to earn enough money for the flight home to Germany (Ahrens, 2011, pp. 191-192). Subsequently the narrator takes us back to the childhood years of both sisters, revealing one major problem after the other incurred by the young Lydia, from theft to lying, finally to taking drugs. But we also gain insight into the painful tensions between them, resulting from mutual jealousy often quite typical for young girls and women, pertaining to the first boyfriends, the different body shapes, and the like. However, the old conflicts are now more safely couched in the narrative itself and no longer mutually hurt their feelings, especially because the central focus rests on Merle, her interest in playing piano, and her need to lead an ordinary life, going to school, making friends, etc.

Ultimately, however, in a radical shift, Lydia breaks off all her medical treatment and escapes, together with her boyfriend Chris, to India where she hopes to experience a miraculous healing from a sacred man. Of course, this dream quickly proves to be nothing but self-illusion and she suddenly dies of her Hepatitis C. Franka's boyfriend, Jan, who always proves to be the calmer, more insightful character, is the first to formulate his idea why Lydia left Germany so abruptly, "in order to die in India" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 273). Although Franka expresses her deep disappointment, Jan alerts her to a different perspective: "Franka, there is no right and wrong. Lydia is different from you. Who would guarantee that she might survive a severe operation [here in Germany]?" (Ahrens, 2011, pp. 273-274). Moreover, Jan also commented: "Lydia is more capable than you to let go. This also pertains to death" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 274).

It is precisely at this point where the foreign world dramatically confronts the German existence, almost like death confronts life, as Merle recounts one of her mother's fundamental desires: "Rather to die in India than here. Mama has always wanted to die in India" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 282). Subsequently, when a postcard arrives, Franka also finds out where Lydia had lived in India, before her return to Germany, in Varanasi, a most holy town, as she learns from Google online: "Varanasi is one of the holiest cities and targets of pilgrimage for Hindus. As the place where Siddhartha Gautama gave his first sermon to his disciples, Varanasi is the city where Buddhism was founded".³

In that moment, Franka also remembers that Lydia had converted to Buddhism, which makes her final move, the escape from Germany, leaving her own daughter behind, comprehensible. But the term "escape" might be too harsh, since she really knew that she was dying. Once she had realized that Merle had found a good home and was loved by her aunt, she could die more calmly. All three, the young girl, her aunt, and Jan subsequently travel to Varanasi and say goodbye in symbolic terms to the dead woman, so they return precisely to the same location/country where the dead sister had lived out her dream, typical of Western Orientalism and characteristic of the hippie movement during the 1960s to 1980s (Murti, 2001).

Back in Hamburg, we observe a very different scene. Merle leads a quiet life, rather withdrawn and mourning, but she has found a new "father" in Jan who loves to take care of her and to give her piano lessons. Franka no longer feels jealousy and accepts the arrangement, because she does not lose out either. In fact, she has undergone perhaps the biggest transformation, suddenly being open to Jan's own suggestion that they both might move to his place one day (Ahrens, 2011, p. 296), something which she had radically refused even to consider in the past (Ahrens, 2011, pp. 162-163). Moreover, she rediscovers her love for her sister Lydia and now remembers only the positive moments in their youth, particularly when Lydia sang with her beautiful voice (Ahrens, 2011, p. 297). Although Lydia is dead, new life has developed and hope determines from now on the existence of all three people.

In light of this situation, we begin to understand the meaning of the very first passage of this novel, in which Franka noticed the setting-in of rain: the arrival of hundreds and thousands of little beings stepping forward. This rain is the first after a long drought of two months (Ahrens, 2011, p. 9). As much as that rain replenishes parched life, as much Franka is finally drawn back to life through the arrival of Lydia with her daughter Merle. In fact, we might say that before that moment Franka had spun a safe cocoon around herself and felt secure in her isolation,

³ Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varanasi>. This is not included in Ahrens's novel, where she only transcribes the information borrowed obviously from this webpage.

despite her relationship with her boyfriend Jan. As much as the narrator makes us feel rather negatively about Lydia and her hippy lifestyle, we finally realize the major thrust of the novel, in which the foreign and the self must come together in order to free the individual from its self-imposed imprisonment and to return to life, accepting it in all of its chaotic yet also beautiful conditions. By the same token, the foreign, here represented by the failed artist Lydia and her obviously highly talented daughter Merle, needs to return home in order to find its base again without which all world explorations would be a failure.

Significantly, this realization also finds its reflection intradiegetically in Franka's movie script which gains in substance only once she has changed the stark contrast between good and bad into a mutually shared grey, because life can never be so easily divided into just two contrastive categories. This proves to be the decisive reflection of the two sisters in their strongly differing individualities. Once both have realized, though often not fully expressed in words, that they are closely related, after all, and share the same love for Merle, they can actually move forward in the development of their personality. While Franka's and Lydia's parents had utterly failed as parents, and hence also as individual characters, and while their daughters almost would have suffered the same destiny, the intersection of the foreign with the self, the merging of the outside world with the inside, and the blending of opposite experiences allows them to bury their mutual hatred and to turn their deep maternal feelings of love toward the young girl, Merle.

Conclusions

Altogether, Ahrens has created two most remarkable modern novels predicated on the clashes of foreign worlds, which at first results in bitter tensions, if not even hatred. In the course of the respective narrative development, however, both protagonists, Pia (*Zeit der Wahrheit*) and Franka (*Fremde Schwestern*), learn to overcome the personal distance; they abandon their self-isolation and turn more openly to their social environment. Because the symbolic foreign had entered their lives, those are transformed and there is suddenly promise that true love can be found and integrated, each time resulting in a deep sense of hope for the future. The writer powerfully combines political with personal, historical, and fictional accounts to develop literary scenarios of universal value. As we learn so intriguingly, past and present intertwine intimately and do not allow us simply to live today without a sense of history. The pain of the past carries over to the present and challenges the individuals to come to terms with it. Each time love proves to be the decisive catalyst, helping both female characters to leave the shadow of the past behind them and to step forward, and to embrace their male partners and accept life in all of its complexities, contradictions, promises, and disappointments. As Ahrens indicates through her two novels, we exist in a global village, and all attempts to shut out the foreign as the complementary to the self are doomed to fail. In fact, identity develops only fully when the outside is allowed to enter the inside and when both then merge with each other. This also proves to be a great metaphor of the meaning of love itself.

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Birth is the Fall From Grace: Children in the Films of Ingmar Bergman

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The world of Ingmar Bergman is notoriously dark. He exposes us repeatedly to the isolation of human subjectivity and to our desperate attempts to break free of it. To be human for Bergman is to be imperiled, to move in an atmosphere of relentless anxiety, and to be driven by passions whose source and power we can neither master nor understand. Is there a period of innocence, a time before we are caught in the coils of the human condition? The author will argue that Bergman's treatment of children demonstrates that in his world birth is the fall from grace.

Keywords: Bergman, film, children

The World of Bergman and the World of Dreams

Much of the work of Ingmar Bergman is relentlessly dark. Even admirers of his artistry have often been repelled by the unremitting bleakness of his vision. Yet critics continue to hold his work in the highest esteem, crediting his films with a psychological depth few, if any, have approached. The author's purpose here will be to shed some light on the symbolic importance of children in Bergman's films. But the author wants to begin by trying to resolve the paradox of this frequent dual reaction to Bergman, that is, repulsion at his extremism and a no less profound appreciation for the elemental depth of his work. And the author wants to call attention to those who may be the most important of Bergman's symbolic children: us, the viewers of his films.

Pervasiveness of Mood

If we consider only his great films of the 1960s, these characteristics can hardly fail to strike us: First, a pervasiveness of mood so complete and inescapable as to inflect everything we see and hear. In film after film, Bergman achieves what every artist of cinema must aspire to: What we perceive is the material embodiment of what we feel. Consider two examples: In *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961), two men in a rowboat confront each other coldly with raw long-unspoken truths. They are the father and the husband of a young woman incurably schizophrenic. The sky is overcast, the air chill; the hollow knocking of the oars and gentle plashing of the water beat in counterpoint to their mutual lacerations. The scene is shot in frigid black and white, the figures shot singly in low angle against a grey sky, thus emphasizing the threat they pose to each other. In *The Silence* (1963), a severely ascetic woman preoccupied with her thoughts stands in the foreground of a richly over-furnished hotel suite, her sensuous sister in the deep background applying cream to her legs, a plaintive

cello on the radio. “Whose music is that?” asks the sister. “Bach”, the woman replies. “Johan Sebastian Bach”, she says again slowly, staring out at us, the macabre distraction in her words and face conveying at once the grotesque deadness of her life.

Austerity, Anxiety, and Urgency

After the pervasiveness of mood, the second prominent characteristic is Bergman’s austerity. The screen of the films of this period, its palette black and white, is with few exceptions uncluttered, spare, as is the soundtrack, suggesting at once a reduction to the elemental. The tone is serious and intense, the faces expressive, the interiority of the characters unwittingly exposed. Throughout there is an atmosphere of urgency and anxiety, the sense that at this fundamental level of human reality, anything may happen. Above all, what is clear is that something of great importance is being decided here, that in this mysterious world, the stakes are very high for the characters and for us.

The Atmosphere of Our Most Revelatory Dreams

“All this is too exaggerated, too portentous, the focus too narrow; what is shown is too limited a sector of human life”, we may say when leaving the theater, trying to shake off the experience of what we have seen. But the experience is, in fact, familiar. For this concentration of focus, this seriousness, this atmosphere of urgency and anxiety are exactly the qualities that mark the world of *our most revelatory dreams*. Deprived in the dream world of the concrete grip that keeps us in contact with an ordered time, the time of our tasks and projects, nothing protects us from the ultimate temporal horizon of our lives: the time of our death. And from this perspective, the question is unavoidable: What is my life? What does it amount to? What is its affective significance? What is its worth? The recurrence of clocks and loudly ticking watches signals the urgency in Bergman’s world. What will be decided must be decided now. We accept Bergman’s relentless concentration of focus, his world—uncanny and often depraved, because we are intimately acquainted with it in our troubled sleep. And the ultimate question he pursues in his films, the judgment he seeks of human life itself, mirrors the questions about our own lives that come to us in our dreams.

The Dreamer as Child

And who is the dreamer, the observer of the dream? Solitary, fascinated, powerless before the assault of the (dream) world, vulnerable to the destiny he/she will endure there, a questioning but helpless regard, who does this come closest to resembling but *the child in us*? Does this not help us understand why Bergman opens *Persona* with a hungry child, who never appears in the film itself, reaching out to the screen? “The child in all his or her yearning and uncertainty, in his/her hunger for clarity and emotional sustenance”, we can imagine Bergman saying, “this is who my films are for”.

If the author is even partly right in saying that the emotionally hungry child in the adult is Bergman’s intended audience, it would seem that we should pay special attention to Bergman’s express treatment of children in his films. That is what the author will turn to now.

Bergman’s Children

In *Wild Strawberries* and *The Seventh Seal* (both released in 1957), children are symbols of vitality, renewal, and hope. Especially birth seems to hold for Bergman the promise of a better future. But after *The Seventh Seal*, it is not until *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), 25 years later, that we see a birth again in a Bergman film. In the films

of the 1960s and in *Fanny and Alexander*, Bergman dwells more deeply on the child than he had in the 1950s films. Here there is no period of innocence or unspoiled vitality as in *Wild Strawberries*. Instead, Bergman is interested in showing us how children are inducted without appeal into the human condition.

There are five elements of Bergman's understanding of this condition that the author wants to explore: Abandonment, separation from nature, internal contradiction, and paradox are the first four. The author will conclude his discussion with the fifth element: the possibility of redemption.

Abandonment of Children

Abandonment is the harshest experience in Bergman's world. The child feels it first in rejection and neglect by parents, and this is a precursor of the abandonment he/she will feel with lovers and spouses, and finally, in face of the world itself, the cosmic abandonment that Bergman will symbolize as the silence of God. In *Through a Glass Darkly*, adolescent Minus has lost his mother first to madness then to death. As the film opens, it becomes clear that the father he reveres takes little interest in his life. Later, his adored sister, too, deserts him for a permanent escape into madness. Elisabet Vogler, the mute actress in *Persona* (1966), tears up the photograph of the son she despises. In *The Silence* and *Fanny and Alexander*, the prepubescent boys, Johan and Alexander, suffer humiliation and defeat by their adult rivals for their mother's love. Each boy feels abandoned by his mother in favor of another male. As his mother seeks reprieve from anxiety and guilt in sexual frenzy with a stranger, Johan is left to wander the halls of the opulent and funereal hotel. Alexander must be dragged to his father's deathbed because of the boy's own imagined Oedipal treachery against him.

And childhood will not be too soon for the suffering of the ultimate abandonment, the sense of being thrown upon one's own feeble resources in searching for meaning in one's life, the sense of isolation in the world itself, where it is natural for the child to expect a response to his anguish. Perhaps it does not surprise us that adolescent Minus, guilty now of incest with his sister, would feel the need for an answering and absolving God. But 10-year-old Alexander, too, has felt this question about a larger order: He rejects "shit and piss God" for his absence.

Separation From Nature

The separation of human beings from nature is another aspect of our condition that perplexes Bergman in his films of the 1960s. Think of the night scene in *Persona* with a great stretch of boulders at the seaside, with an afflicted Alma crouching among them, trying vainly to absorb and imitate their coldness. Think of the city in *The Silence*—a city conspicuously without nature, except for a pitiful desiccated horse, ribs exposed, drawing an anachronistic wagon down a bustling narrow street. Remember Anna in the last scene of that film, having left her sister to die among strangers, trying to cleanse her face and breast in the industrial rain angling down through the open train window.

And Bergman uses children when he wants to express the defilement of *adult* nature. In the hull of a beached ship, its boards rotting in the black water, Karin suddenly pulls her brother Minus to her, her eyes transported and delirious, and joins him in the chaos of human sexuality. In *The Virgin Spring* (1960), a girl is raped and bludgeoned to death and later her father in savage revenge hurls a small boy to his death against a rock wall. Rocks, harsh and forbidding, are prominent again in an uncanny scene in *Hour of the Wolf* (1968), perhaps the

most transgressive in Bergman's oeuvre. Here a child of nine or 10 suddenly appears among the rocks as a sexual tempter, circling the artist, Johan Berg, then leaping on his back, like a preying animal. His small arms hanging around Berg's neck, he bites the artist repeatedly, his quick mechanical movements accentuated by sharp screeches of a violin. Berg, tall and strong, struggles with the boy, overwhelms him, then bashes his head with a rock and drops the boy's dead body into a calm eddy, where the boy's long hair wafts gracefully in the overexposed sea.

Contradictions in the Soul

The child is introduced very early to another aspect of the interior landscape: the contradictions in the soul. These will often involve sexual and especially Oedipal passion. In *Through a Glass Darkly*, Minus' devotion to his sister is in tension with his hatred for the sexual desire she provokes in him. In *The Silence*, Johan is encouraged in his physical closeness to his mother, invited to bathe her, to sleep unclothed beside her naked body. The strong attachment he feels toward her must compete with his resentment for her abandonment of him in favor of random lovers. The same conflict besets Alexander, where the condition is exacerbated by his simultaneous love and betrayal of his father.

Paradox

Closely related to these internal contradictions are the paradoxes of human life. In *Through a Glass Darkly*, Karin's seduction of her brother is her decisive exit from reality—but it is simultaneously *his* most intense experience of the real. "Reality broke out!" he cries, explaining to his father, seeking his absolution. In *The Silence*, Anna embraces her son Johan with a desperate devouring energy and he must find a way to reconcile this passion with her abrupt rejection, her preference for a stranger's sexual embrace. And Alexander, motivated by his powerlessness, is able miraculously to kill both his father and the bishop with only the power of a wish.

Redemption

Abandoned and isolated in an inhospitable world, alienated from nature by our inwardness, capable of depravity, beset by irresolvable contradictions, and thrown against an ultimate mystery, we must somehow endure. How? Is there anything in Bergman's understanding of our condition that enables us to hope? The author thinks Bergman's answer is symbolized in the child at the beginning of *Persona*, the child searching with his hand for clarity and love, the opening of the heart to mystery. Whatever salvation there is in human life inheres in certain of our attempts to break the chains of our isolation: our effort to open ourselves toward the very other who is the source of our imperilment. Only in our will to love can we hope to escape the crippling isolation of the dream-world. But this effort battles within each of us with an equally powerful impulse—the will to become the master of our isolation by embracing it, enlarging the domain of our privacy by sealing it against the other, whom we then seek to control from our impassable distance. To the extent that we allow this rage for self-enclosure to prevail, we live in Bergman's hell. But to the extent that we open ourselves to the mystery of other men and women, we achieve the only salvation possible for human beings in Bergman's world. We are not saved from the wrenching failure of human love, or from the betrayals of our own heart, but we are saved from living death.

There is a redemptive if ineffable sweetness in Minus' protective embrace of his sister after their exodus into chaos. His devotion to her is unshaken. And at the end of the film, we celebrate his awakening hope that meaning may come of hopelessness. "Papa spoke to me!" he says in baffled joy in the closing moments of the film. There are openings in this forbidding terrain: openings toward another. In their compartment in the train in the final scene of *The Silence*, Johan studies the Timokan words his dying aunt had translated for him, the words for "face" and "hand" among them. Anna, his mother, dismisses this letter with an uncomprehending shrug. But Johan understands Ester's gift: an instrument he can use to reach toward the world. He opens toward his dying aunt, even as a bitter nascent wisdom turns him from his mother. The experience of living in the bishop's house has taught Alexander the value of imagination, magic, and art: an opening to mystery. The bishop wore a single mask that by his own admission "grew into [his] flesh". But masks for the Ekdahls were parts, roles that one played only long enough to experience them. And the purpose of the play?—To engage with others in the invention of something new, to engage together that part of ourselves that surpasses, if only for a time, the strictures of the human condition, and to make something new together: a pilgrimage with those we love toward mystery.

Conclusions

Like Kafka in literature and Chirico in painting, Bergman in cinematic art can be seen as a chronicler of the dream world, a world marked so often by a sense of peril and an atmosphere of anxiety, and a world in which we experience the vulnerability and helplessness of the child. The fact that the child is in this sense so intimate to Bergman's ambitions as a film-maker should prompt in us an especial alertness to his express treatment of children in his work. What is the world of the child in Bergman's view? In particular, we would want to know whether there is a period of innocence, and whether childhood might be, at least for a time, a reprieve from the myriad threats to meaningfulness that haunt adult life in Bergman's vision. What we learn upon analysis is that the life of the child as Bergman understands it is marked by the same key elements of abandonment, separation from nature, internal contradiction, and paradox that characterize adult life at its core. But we find, too, that redemption is possible for the child, just as it is for the adult: redemption in the form of openness to the mystery of the other. As with the adult so with the child, our loving relationship with another—though itself fraught with peril—is our only hope of escape from the suffocating isolation of the dream world.

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Are There Tea Parties on Mars?

Business and Politics in Science Fiction Films

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This paper will apply a politically oriented description-critique paradigm developed from the works of Whitehall and Grewell that offers a way to examine works of popular culture, particularly Mars-based science fiction films. Because of the unique nature of these films, primarily which they are set in a future and distant world, they allow us to explore the socio-political landscape in which they were created from a remove that does not exist in “real-world” based works. Specifically we will be examining the governing power (in any particular Mars-based science fiction film) that might be either wielded by business interests or governmental interests. Although it is possible to have both a strong government and a strong business in a society, in many Mars-based science fiction films, government and business seem to represent two sides of a continuum. The stronger the business power structure in the film, the weaker the governmental power structure, and vice-versa.

Keywords: science fiction, Mars, political structure, governmental power, Geoffrey Whitehall, Gary Grewell, colonization, film

Introduction

It is becoming more clear—as we journey through the flat world of the 21st century—that as we have more contact with those who are different than “us” in society, we also have new and different expectations when communicating and dealing with this “other” entity (Friedman, 2005). Of course, this other entity could be coming from outside our societies, our ethnicities, or our religious and philosophical mindset. In the 1950s, the “other” could have been anyone who was not a WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant). “We/us” were WASPs and the “other” was not WASPs. Now, it can be argued that “we/us” could perhaps be more inclusive of other increasingly prominent American cultures and ethnicities. Certainly it can be argued that African American and Hispanic cultures are in the process of “becoming us”. The *newer* version of the “other” can be seen as coming from the Middle East, China, or India, to name but a few. Weldes, in the book *To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links Between Science Fiction and World Politics* (2003), pointed out that science fiction, “through strategies like extrapolation and estrangement, helps us to transcend our mundane environment” (p. 1). That transcendence of the environment, coupled with *distancing-critiquing* function of science fiction can allow us to critique ourselves and our expectations in our interactions with “the other”. This paper will apply a politically oriented description-critique paradigm developed from the

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works of Whitehall (2003) and Grewell (2001) that offers a way to examine works of popular culture, particularly Mars-based science fiction films.

Methodological Perspective

As we look at our behavior in science fiction films, we (the contemporary viewing audience) are constantly being told—through modeling behavior embedded in the plot of the film—of what to expect of ourselves, of what to expect of an alien/other, and what we might expect from interactions with the alien/other. Expectations of what is appropriate and what is important with regard to human/alien communication are dependent, to a large degree, on the philosophical outlook of the author and the dominant political mindset of the era in which the film is made (Schatz, 1981). In terms of story/film content, our study of Mars-based, science fiction films will focus on the relationships between *business* and *government*. Specifically we will be examining the governing power (in any particular Mars-based science fiction film) that might be either wielded by business interests or governmental interests. Although it is possible to have both a strong government and a strong business in a society, in many Mars-based science fiction films, government and business seem to represent two sides of a continuum. The stronger the business power structure in the film, the weaker the governmental power structure, and vice-versa.

In using the term *business*, we mean to discuss the amount of corporate-related business or political power that a corporate entity has in any particular movie. In our use of the term *politics*, we mean the running of, the management of, and the electing of Earth and Mars-based governmental authorities/entities. These governmental authorities could take the form of an overriding governmental body—such as “Earth-Gov” (in *Babylon 5* (1994)), a form of local government on Mars (as in *The Martian Chronicles* (1980)), or some sort of solar-system space-based alliance. The treatment of Martian citizens and workers from mundane things, such as their access to water and electricity, to their treatment in the workplace (in terms of their rights to secure a living wage that is fair and safe) all fall under the heading of politics.

In addition to the above points of focus, the paradigm for our study of Mars-based science fiction films will also examine 1950s-current Mars-based, science fiction films thru the paradigm of both *critique* and *description*, pulling from especially from the work Geoffrey Whitehall and Gary Grewell.

Grewell analyzes the concept of *colonization* in a descriptive way in his analysis of the idea of colonization in science fiction literature and media. And certainly, politics also deals with the concept of colonization. We might only think of the concept of politics as it relates to colonization in Mars films when we think of films might that portray the struggles of Martian colonists (who are former Earthers) as they struggle against an Earth-bound government (or business) that refuses to grant their independence. The television show *Babylon 5* portrays a situation like this, as does the film *Total Recall* (1990). Grewell also observed that the act of colonization occurs from the first moment a band of explorers (or even just one—as in *Robinson Crusoe on Mars Babylon-5*) sets forth to *explore*, then *domesticate*, and then ultimately fight for the right to exist on Mars.

Whitehall, in his article “The Problem of the ‘World and Beyond’” (2003), critiqued the ways in which science fiction films deal with the “alien/other” on three different levels. How we deal with “the other”—the aliens that we find in particular Mars-based science fiction films—is also a question that relates to and touches upon the concept of politics. According to Whitehall, there are three basic directions that an encounter between Earthers and “the other/aliens” might take. One direction a Mars-based science fiction film could take is that the Earth-based government could assertively (yet somewhat invisibly) *manage* the relationship with the aliens.

Whitehall points out that many—if not most—science fiction films use this dynamic, with the benevolent, Earth-based government gently controlling relationships with Alien cultures, all the while managing the relationship with benevolent-yet-firm human guidance. Another direction a film could take would be to portray the relations (and potential conflict of relations) between us and the Martians/others in an ironic light—in which some of our values might be questioned. Here, Whitehall discusses the functions of satire and irony in *Starship Troopers*. Finally, Whitehall argues that—although it is rare—a true understanding between us and alien cultures is at least possible. Indeed, citing Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles*, Whitehall argues that it is possible that humans might, indeed, truly transcend humanity and *become* “the other”. Ultimately we are going to look at the sub-genre of “we go to Mars” science fiction films to see if they might offer a critique of our encounter with “the other/Martians” or to see if they offer a description of who we think we are, or who we might desire to be.

Not every film will touch upon every area of business, politics, or international (human/other) relations. But every film will at least deal with the political concept of colonization. In sum, we will examine the role of business, government, foreign relations, and the concept of colonization in Mars-based science fiction films from the 1950s to the present. Particular attention will be paid to the expanding role of business and to the dynamics of the roles of government and business within post 1970s Mars-based science fiction films.

Application

In his inaugural speech in 1981, President Reagan—in an attempt to find the source of malaise within society—famously labeled government as the problem. Indeed, Reagan seemed to be tapping into a national consensus that because of the failure of government in both Vietnam and in Watergate, that government as an institution had failed. Films, books, and television shows of the 1970s also reflected a growing disenchantment and distrust toward the institutions of government. Mars-based science fiction films from the 1970s were no exception. In *Capricorn One* (1977), the director of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) will break any law and perform any crime in order to save his manned-Mars project. His actions include lying, obfuscating, kidnapping, and finally the killing of the NASA/Mars-mission astronauts. The message was clear: Government was not to be trusted. As President Reagan said, “Government is the problem”. But representations of the role of government in Mars-based science fictions films were not always negative.

The Films of the 1950s

Rocketship X-M. *Rocketship X-M* (1950) is a particularly fascinating film, especially in terms of the way its functions within popular culture. The film tells the story of a spaceship (Rocketship X-M), which is originally headed to the moon. A meteor shower forces the ship to veer off course and sends the explorers on a heading towards Mars.

In *Rocketship X-M*, the government is shown to be somewhat oppressive (using control over the news media), but generally effective. This is unlike the way the functions of the U.S. government are portrayed in *Destination Moon* (1950), which premiered in the same year as *Rocketship X-M*. In *Destination Moon*, which was scripted by the conservative-minded Robert Heinlein, the government is shown to be basically incapable of sending a manned expedition to the Moon (Booker, 2001). In Heinlein’s script, only the brilliant, sharpened, and non-bureaucracy-oriented men of big American business are shown to be capable of mounting a space expedition (Booker, 2001). For several decades after *Destination Moon*, most of the organizations supporting, funding, and running space missions are almost always part of the federal

government. By the late 1980s, however, that began to change, as big corporations were shown to be increasingly involved in Mars movie expeditions.

Rocketship X-M's explorers begin their mission with the desire to colonize and dominate the moon. Indeed, the moon represented a somewhat combative form of colonization, as the crew was trying to establish "control world peace", while gaining superiority over a "foreign power" (*Rocketship X-M*) on the moon. But a leftward turn (after the encounter with the meteor shower) takes the crew to Mars, where the nature of the journey becomes *explorative*. The lesson learned from the Martians (from the demise of their society through weapons of mass destruction) allows the would-be colonizers to learn *from* the Martians. In this way, the contact with the "other"/Martians allows for a critique of the dominant, pro-military, and pro-atomic weapons thinking of the early 1950s. The science fiction films of the 1950s which dared to critique official policy in this way were few and far between. Notable exceptions include *It Came From Outer Space* (1953) and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951).

In the resolution of the *Rocketship X-M*, the remaining crew perishes as the ship enters the Earth's atmosphere. The ship's pilot (Floyd Graham) and the crew's fuel scientist (Dr. Van Horne) developed feelings for each other during the return trip from Mars. As the ship breaks up in the atmosphere, Graham and Van Horne embrace as explorers and lovers, and this embrace seems to reaffirm the pacifistic, *non*-militaristic lessons learned from their trip to Mars. Upon hearing of their heroic sacrifice (as they were determined to let Earth know the lessons learned from Mars), the America's space commander/general affirms that mankind will continue to explore.

The Angry Red Planet. Although it edges into the horror end of the horror-science fiction continuum (as defined by Sobchack, 1999), *The Angry Red Planet* (1959) managed to squeeze in some interesting political and social ideas among its uneven special effects and plodding direction. In terms of the presence of "government/politics" or *big business* themes in the film, the effect is largely neutral. The mission (as is the case in most "We go to Mars", 1950s science fiction films) is supported by the government and the role of business is not seen in the film. The crew has a lack of focus with regard to their mission, and this is seen in the lack of intensity in the crew's "exploration" of the red planet. Warren (2010) noted this as he mentioned, "At no time does there seem to be any rationale for their wanderings" (p. 44). Interestingly, the intelligent Martians—and there are plenty of examples of man-eating, non-intelligent, and angry red fauna—reveal that they consider attempts to explore the planet by the humans to be some sort of prelude to an invasion. Although the attempts of the astronauts to discover the red planet never go beyond the explorative category, the Martians who have monitored mankind's long and conquest-oriented history interpret the human's mission to the planet as invasive and combative. The Martian's spokesman tells the people of earth (through a recorded message), to "go now [and] warn mankind not to return unbidden. When we consider man mature, the planet Mars will call her sister Earth" (Warren, 2010, p. 46).

Interestingly, the action in the film contradicts the threatening Martian message, as the human explorers are mainly shown first to be rather unfocused and foray-seeking explorers, who then have to fight for their survival. Warren (2010) pointed out that, because the explorers in *The Angry Red Planet* do not behave in "destructive" or "ill-considered ways", the effect is that the Martians are threatening "to no good end" (p. 46). One could argue that, because the Martians know human history so well (e.g., they have monitored all of our history), they know that the journey from collecting specimens, to trading for tracts of land and to finding oneself on Martian "reservations" is a short trip indeed. The Martians have watched *Little Big Man* (1970), and they have learned.

The contact with the civilized Martian/other is brief in *The Angry Red Planet*. The crew's scientist/professor says he senses a "controlling presence" (Warren, 2010, p. 45) on the planet, and the mission's female scientist, Iris, briefly sees an intelligent Martian. The intelligent Martian's voice gives the above-mentioned warning to humankind at the end of the film. The effect of this message is that the Martians have seen how we treat "the other" throughout history and they want none of that. In *The Angry Red Planet*, it is "the other" who is critiquing us, and we have been judged unworthy of interspecies contact. If only the Native Americans had possessed such power.

Conquest of Space. A gold-standard for colonizing plots (along with twisted familial relationships) is the aptly-named *Conquest of Space* (1955). Although a lot of attention is placed on the film's orbital-launch-platform space-station (which is called the "wheel"), the true goal of the film's space mission is that of exploring the Moon, until the destination changes to Mars.

The force behind this change of destinations is the mission's (and the film's) governing body, the Supreme International Space Authority. Although the Moon would be a strategic target in terms of "controlling space", the Space Authority feels that Mars has the raw materials that Earth most needs. It is interesting to note that even the name of the film's governing body, the Supreme International Space Authority evokes the specter of the what Eisenhower (1961) would five years later call "the military-industrial complex" (sec. IV, para. 5). Adam Knee (as cited in Noonan, 2005, p. 50) identified the fear of the military industrial complex as one of the important and identifiable social tensions in 1950s science fiction films.

Interestingly, the regular crew/dock-workers of the space station (*and* the potential astronauts) are furious at this change of destinations. In the wheel's mess hall, the regular crew must now come to attention when the selected astronaut crew enters. The regular crew-workers of the wheel now mock the "select" crew, and the "select" crew, in turn, calls the regular workers "peasants" (Haskin, 1955). Indeed, the men who build the space traveling ship are shown to be more blue-collar than astronaut. They just want to punch their time-cards and go home. The idea of union dock workers in space—not completely affected by starry-eyed notions of discovery—is reminiscent of Grewell's (2001) speculation that "Some select few working and middle class people will have access to space—as food servers, maids, receptionists, etc." (p. 38).

All of the men (both the space station support crew and the astronauts) are said to be "volunteers" who serve on the space-station/wheel, but in reality, they are treated much more like conscripted privates. The mission commander's son is one such volunteer (who would like to see his wife and children on Earth), but in reality, he cannot leave the space station. He is a true conscript. Stress eats away at the son.

In terms of questions regarding the concept of colonization, a Japanese astronaut mentions that he has a *good* reason for going to Mars. The Japanese astronaut states that just as Japan needed resources following WWII (World War II), the world will soon need to appropriate Mars' resources.

But—as mentioned earlier—as the ship nears Mars, the commander begins to feverishly wonder if God had ever intended for Man to explore space. The commander now wonders if he and the ship's crew are invaders of God's Heavens rather than space explorers. In seeking to reassure him, his son goes straight to the *colonial-combative* mode, telling his father that the universe "is here for man to conquer" (Haskin, 1955; Grewell, 2001, p. 5).

Unfortunately, the mission commander/father, still obsessed with the idea that Man must not invade Space, attempts to crash the ship upon landing on Mars. As Warren (2010) said of the commander/father's logic, "If Man was meant to go into Space, [God] would have given us built-in rockets" (p. 157). Ironically, for all talk of

aggressively colonizing Mars, the crew does not do an effective job of exploring the planet. Fortunately, there is a snowfall and after the snow melts, life is discovered. The discovery of Life (and with it perhaps the idea that Mars can at least be domesticated) animates the crew and they are able to return home.

There is not a large, corporate/business presence in *Conquest of Space*, but—as mentioned above—the government presence in the film evokes feelings of the Cold War/military industrial complex. The government is overbearing and somewhat dictatorial and yet all who serve in the governmental space organization are shown to be volunteers. As Althusser would say, the men are in the grips of the process of “interpellation” (Barry, 2002, p. 165). The men seem to think they are free to choose, when in reality their choices are forced upon them.

Two fascinating tentacles tether *Conquest of Space*, to two later Mars-based productions, both in different ways. The idea of “dock workers in space” (which spans the idea of both government and corporate involvement in society), is dealt with in fascinating ways in the TV series, *Babylon 5*. In addition, the presence of an implied corporate influence in *Conquest of Space* (via the “military-industrial complex”) is similar to the implied corporate presence (in addition to the strong and overt government presence) in the Roger Corman film, *Battle Beyond the Sun* (1959).

Corporate Presence

***Babylon 5*.** We will discuss the developments surrounding the *Babylon 5* television series first. *Babylon 5*'s plotline parallels developments in recent American history in that corporations became much more prominent in 1980s, “Reaganomics-influenced”, American life. The Martian colony, as depicted in *Babylon 5*, desires freedom from the unified Earth government, or “Earthgov”. The colonists have used both non-violent and violent methods to protest to Earthgov. Suppression of the rebellion has been both non-violent and violent, as both diplomatic and military efforts have been used to manage the rebellion. It is important to note that the colonists on Mars came from Earth, although new generations of colonists are being born on Mars. In political-colonization terms, “combative” means are being used to fight not Martians, but fully domesticated colonists (Grewell, 2001).

The “other” presence on Mars is also a transplant. Just as the humans in *Babylon 5* are not native to Mars, neither is the menacing “other”/alien presence that is discovered on the planet. The alien on the planet is the incubating hulk of a buried “Shadow” creature. The “Shadows” are one of the oldest creatures in *Babylon 5*'s universe, and (for most of the series) it is shown that the Shadows' strongest desire is to control and enslave all free species (Straczynski, 1994). Thus it is only natural that co-existence with this alien cannot be tolerated. Just as the survival of the alien/other bugs in *Starship Troopers* (1997) cannot be tolerated—“It's either them or us!”—so too must the “Shadows” be destroyed in *Babylon 5* (Whitehall, 2003).

The corporate presence on Mars is also strongly felt in *Babylon 5*. One of the solar system's largest corporations is headquartered there, and it is partially controlled by an enigmatic billionaire—William Edgars. Using his money and political clout, Edgars is slowly taking control of the political situation on Earth. Workers and day-laborers on Mars are shown to be *not* well represented by unions and thus more vulnerable to corporate and state violence than workers elsewhere. The series presents the plight of Martian workers and “average citizens” in a sympathetic light. It is implied that conditions will improve when the Mars colony gains its independence and can establish its own central government (Straczynski, 1994). Interestingly, space-dock workers on the *Babylon-5 space station* were able to negotiate improvements in their pay and working

conditions in a collective bargaining agreement with Earthgov. It seems that workers on Mars are struggling (with Edgar's industries) to achieve those same basic rights.

Battle Beyond the Sun. Earth-based corporations (as such) are either *non-existent* (with the notable exception of the Heinlein-written *Destination Moon*), or *nearly non-existent* in 1960s "we-go-to-Mars" science fiction films. One interesting exception is Roger Corman's *Battle Beyond the Sun*, which—under the surface—shows a sinister (and perhaps corporately influenced) side to the explorers from "North Hemis". This sinister side of the "North Hemis" explorers is shown through an overly competitive personality on the part of the lead astronaut from "North Hemis"—perhaps reflecting an overly-developed sense of corporate greed. Admittedly, when considering the origins of the film, it is hard *not* to read the idea of "corporate greed" in *Battle Beyond the Sun*. *Battle Beyond the Sun* was a *Russian-made* film (entitled "Nebo zoyvot") that was originally meant to be a critique of the ways in which American interests will stop at nothing in order to defeat the Russians in a future "space race" to Mars (DVD Savant). The "space race" of the 1960s between the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and the United States was heating up in the early 1960s and the Russian producers used this subject as a point of departure for the film's story and theme. The "American mindset" (as seen through the ways in which the American astronauts were originally presented in the film) has a strong corporate/Capitalistic tinge to it. Roger Corman purchased the rights to the film in 1962. He decided to add monsters to the story and take the political/moral lessons and themes *out* of the film (DVD Savant).

The taint of "corporate greed" still comes through even after Corman took the USSR and the United States out of the movie and replaced them with the countries of "North Hemis" and "South Hemis". Interestingly, it is the astronauts from "North Hemis" (or the nation of the Northern hemisphere) that are shown to be greedy and absorbed with competition. Usually, in depictions of the globe (even in space-dramas set in the future), we would identify *ourselves/American/heroes/protagonists* as coming from North America. Instead, Corman shows that the honest, humble, and peace-loving heroes of the film hail from South Hemis—in real, contemporary, and 1960s American life, the southern hemisphere might be viewed as being populated with peoples and societies which come from the category of "other". In *Battle Beyond the Sun*, our *heroes* come from the southern hemisphere. In any event, the honest and focused astronauts of South Hemis have to rescue the greedy and glory-seeking astronauts of North Hemis when they wreck their ship in a vain attempt to beat the South Hemis astronauts to Mars.

The rescue mission results in the crash-landing on a Martian moon. After battling monsters, which were not in the original Russian version of the film, the ship is allowed to take off and return to Earth. The monsters the crew battles are some of the most anatomically interesting monsters ever created for general, horror/science fiction Saturday-afternoon matinee audiences. They resemble human genitalia with teeth. In the film, the monsters convulse and consume each other while a trapped, nearby South Hemis astronaut watches in horror. It is possible that we may be making too much of this, but if the representations of the monsters are extended to the symbolic level, Corman seems to be saying that there will never be any sort of peaceful consummation between the US and the USSR. On the other hand, Corman could have simply decided to create the most anatomically provocative monster suits that he could get away with in a grade-B and general audience science fiction film.

Films of the 1990s-2000s

Mission to Mars. Although corporate interests dominate more recent films (starting with *Total Recall*), an exception to the completely corporately-funded and corporate-venture-on-Mars film is *Mission to Mars* (2000).

Produced in the last years of the Clinton administration, *Mission to Mars* shows two manned Mars landings, although events on both landings go disastrously wrong. After successfully landing on Mars, an attack by an unknown force all but wipes out the first expedition. A strong and financially secure version of NASA then mounts a rescue mission. The landing for the rescue goes awry, resulting in the death of the rescue mission's commander. The remaining crew members link up and discover the still (mechanically) active and ancient remains of a Martian society. Even though the repairs to one of the NASA rockets are successful (allowing the crews to escape), one crew member decides to activate the ancient Martian spaceship, in the hopes that he may be taken to the aliens' home planet.

Interestingly, the Martians in *Mission to Mars* are "us". Millions of years ago, as the Martians were being forced to evacuate Mars, the remaining Martians decided to seed nearby planets with their DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid). Earth, of course, was one such planet. Thus Martian DNA is actually human DNA and that DNA became Homo Sapiens. So in returning to the home planet (of the Martians who were forced to evacuate Mars), the crew member is joining with others like us. Seen in this light, the human colonization of Mars would be perfectly natural, as the film postulates that humans are the rightful inheritors of the planet.

Earth-based societal events (and the environmental events that are causing them) are of a much more dire nature in both *Red Planet* (2000) and *Escape From Mars* (1999). Whereas the Earth-based scenes in *Mission to Mars* reflect a world that is free of environmental problems and depicts a strong and beneficent NASA (and Earth government), the "Earths" of both *Red Planet* and *Escape From Mars* are both populated with problems, overpopulated, in fact. In *Red Planet*, overpopulation and pollution have led Earth scientists to the de facto colonization of Mars. Indeed, the terra-forming of Mars (via the seeding of the planet with oxygen-creating materials) is shown to be underway as the film begins. And while there are some general discussions amongst the crew over the existence of God—as the crew lands on Mars—there is almost no discussion with regard to Man's seemingly "natural" right to terra-form, "own", and colonize Mars. The organizing power behind the mission is shown to be strictly governmental in nature. After landing on Mars, *Red Planet's* crew returns with a dangerous Martian organism that eats blood, but farts oxygen (This dangerous life form can be used on either Mars or Earth to help repair the planet's atmosphere—as long as there are plenty of band aids present!).

Escape From Mars. The crew of *Escape From Mars* faces some late-20th century cultural stresses in the form of dwindling resources and an overly budget-cutting guiding organization (the "consortium"). The film reflects the tension of trying to achieve an admirable goal, that of landing on Mars, while also bringing back tangible and potentially valuable rocks and minerals from Mars, all in an era of declining resources. The consortium in this film seems to represent what former Speaker of the House and science fiction writer Newt Gingrich holds up as an ideal in a science fiction film (Disch, 1998). The consortium represents business, which Gingrich believes has inherently less bureaucracy than does government. "One of the major reasons that the spirit of adventure has gone out of space exploration is that we have allowed bureaucracies to dominate too many of our scientific adventures" (Gingrich, as cited in Disch, 1998, p. 179). If you were to ask any of the harried flight controllers in *Escape From Mars*, they would say there was adventure aplenty, especially in the form of shoddily constructed *corporate*-supplied equipment. The mission control technicians in *Escape From Mars* are forced to worry about "the consortium" using out-of-date computers in mission control. Nonetheless, the film attempts to resolve the tensions of declining resources and increased corporate demands by demonstrating (in the resolution of the film) that mission success (and perhaps societal success) is indeed

possible. After landing on Mars (after undergoing a period in which the ship and crew physically and psychologically unravels), the crew manages to pull together and repair the ship. The rejuvenated crew also discovers a form of life on Mars. In terms of the colonization-quotient in *Escape From Mars*, it is only when the crew decides to move into the explorative mode that life is discovered and that they have the will to go on (Grewell, 2001). It is implied that future missions will further domesticate Mars.

In sum, in *Escape From Mars* a financial consortium runs the government and NASA. The consortium hopes that the return on its investments (and future colonization) will be met through the discoveries of precious elements on Mars. After the ship finally blasts off from Mars, the captain mentions that she now views as home, and that this is but “the first step” in reaching Heaven. These lines reflect a definite and domesticative stance. Hopefully, despite demands from the consortium, a more combative stance (with both the Martians and with other civilizations) can be avoided.

Of course, the gold standard for corporate-themed and man-on-Mars films is Paul Verhoven’s *Total Recall*.

Extreme corporatism in *Total Recall*. In *Total Recall*, the process of colonization is well under way. There are people who have lived on the Red Planet for years, even generations of children who have been born there. The movie actually begins on Earth, with Douglas Quaid watching a news broadcast about the current events on Mars, the discovery of ancient Martian artifacts and civil uprising against the major corporation that controls the planet. Mars is, in fact, overseen not by a standard government, but by a corporation that mines tribinium, an obviously valuable element.

The person in charge of running things is not a politician. Coahaagen is a corporate villain who is known for selling cheap air domes to the general populace, the common workers who do the mining. These domes allow in large amounts of radiation and cause mutations in the colonists who live in them. Financial gain is more important than the genetic damage caused by the dangerous conditions he is creating. The workers are then looked down upon for bearing the marks of corporate greed. When the mutants assist Quato, their psychic leader, and Quaid, a man who may or may not exist outside of the mind of his alter-ego Hauser, Coahaagen has the air shut off in Sector G, planning to allow the people to die as a “lesson to the others”.

The corporate entity uses thugs and machines to keep the common man, the mutants, under control. Much like the strikebreakers of the early 20th century, the company’s henchmen will do whatever it takes to control the workers. They chase Quaid from Earth to Mars and through the back alleys of the slums. They threaten and beat women, children, anyone who gets in their way, and shoot a helpless mutant so that he cannot reveal the secrets of the artifacts. They even go so far as to use greedy mutants, who lie about having children, to win the confidence of Quaid and Melina as they struggle to use the artifacts of the original Martians to preserve the lives of the new Martians, the colonists.

It is only by destroying Coahaagen, the figurehead of the corporation, and activating the ancient artifact, that the people of Mars will be able to live a healthy and normal life. Coahaagen is exposed to the unaltered atmosphere of Mars and dies of decompression. Quaid and Melina, on the other hand, are saved by the creation of a new atmosphere and thus a new world on Mars. As the new world is created, the power of the corporation is destroyed. They no longer control the air and therefore they no longer are able to control the people.

In contrast to the ancient Martians saving the colonists in *Total Recall*, the original inhabitants of Mars are far less friendly in *The Ghosts of Mars* (2001). In this film, which truly is a horror film set in the sci-fi genre, the colonists are infected by the spirits of the old Martians. As this happens, they then begin to self-mutilate and become blood-thirsty, killing anyone who is not infected. The contagion is carried on the wind and moves

along the railway tracks from mining camp to mining camp. The new colonists are definitely no welcome and are forced to pay the ultimate price for their trespass upon the soil of Mars.

The situation on Mars is made more complex by the machinations of the corporate entity to which the ruling matriarchy answers. The company is concerned that word will get out that people are dying on Mars. They are worried that production will fall and people will lose confidence in the company. Again, this is an organization that definitely values profit over the lives and needs of its workers. The company deliberately obfuscates when signing people up for employment on Mars. As noted by Natasha Henstridge's character Melanie Ballard, "What they don't tell you when you sign up for a year is that it is two Earth years".

A company that so blatantly misleads workers is not going to be happy if their productivity is negatively impacted by "troubles" on Mars. They do not even send investigators to determine the truth of the situation. Instead, they are worried about bringing a thief into the main city for punishment. If something is learned about the problems in the outer reaches of the colonies, that is, a happy accident. In one of the final scenes of the movie, the matriarchal tribunal that is listening to Ballard's explanation of what happened scoffs at the idea they can tell their superiors what is occurring. Instead, they send Ballard to rest and seem to do nothing while their city is attacked by the rampaging Martians. The corporate structure is happy to exploit the workers but it is up to the workers to protect themselves.

A Call for Sanity: *The Martian Chronicles* Miniseries

Sandwiched between the extremes the big government missions to Mars of the 1950s and the powerful and Mars-based corporate consortiums of more recent films, is the cool and thoughtful sanity of *The Martian Chronicles* (1980).

The Martian Chronicles television miniseries is one of the few television or film productions from the 1970s that deals with the concept of humans going to Mars. Although much research has been undertaken with regard to *The Martian Chronicles* book, little has been done with regard to the television miniseries. The theme of colonization as a moral concept was explored in Ray Bradbury's 1950 book, *The Martian Chronicles*, and the TV miniseries deals with this concept as well. Indeed, the idea of colonization as a theme to be explored, and certainly the examination of colonization as a moral concept is almost unique to this particular "Man goes to Mars" film. For the purposes of this study, we will examine the miniseries adaptation of the book and the historical time-period in which it was produced.

The three-part TV miniseries was produced for NBC (National Broadcasting Company) in Britain and was adapted by noted science fiction author Richard Matheson. Upon landing on Mars, astronaut Spender is completely taken with (or perhaps even absorbed by) the purity and beauty of the remains of an ancient Martian civilization. Spender is part of the third team of astronauts sent to the red planet. The commander of the mission—astronaut Wilder—had sent Spender out to investigate the Martian cities and look for signs of life. Upon returning, Spender reports of finding beautiful Martian cities. Some cities are very old and lifeless, but in some cities, Martian life and culture appears to have been thriving as recently as one month ago. Spender reports that chicken pox (brought by the astronauts in the first two missions) has ultimately wiped out the Martian race, much in the same way that diseases from Europe—brought by colonizers and conquerors in the 1500s—infected and weakened entire populations of North and South American Indians. When Spender sees his callous fellow crewmates littering the Martian landscape with their wine bottles and human refuse, he leaves the group and seemingly joins with the spirit of the now-dead Martian civilization.

Indeed, when thinking about the miniseries with the concept of colonization in mind, several exchanges—primarily between astronaut Spender and the mission commander, astronaut Wilder—come to mind. Even before leaving for Mars, astronaut Spender expresses doubts about the overall intent of the mission. In a scene in which the famous Martian, triple-lens/TV-camera-device (from the 1952 version of *The War of the Worlds*) can be seen in the background, Spender tells Wilder that it would be wrong to colonize Mars. Wilder asks, “What’s wrong with colonization?” (Anderson, 1980). When Spender responds that there could be life on Mars, Wilder acknowledges that, “That could [indeed] change everything” (Anderson, 1980). Spender, though, is still shown to have concerns over the idea of human colonization of the planet.

After landing on the planet and subsequently discovering that the Martians had died of chicken pox, Spender tells Wilder that he is ashamed that an Earth-based virus has wiped out the Martians. Spender goes on to say that it will be impossible for mankind to do anything but destroy what is left of Mars. Spender tells Wilder that, “No matter how hard we try to touch Mars, we won’t be able to really touch it. That will make us angry and we’ll just rip it up and ruin it—like we ruined Earth” (Anderson, 1980). According to Spender, any peaceful domestication that the humans might have in mind will ultimately result in the destruction of the Martian civilization (Grewell, 2001).

After a week-long absence, Spender returns. He now views himself as a Martian who must violently protect his home and civilization from invasion and colonization. Spender kills most of his fellow astronauts before asking for a chance to meet with Wilder. He feels that Wilder is different than the others and is capable of understanding the Martian way of life. Spender tells Wilder that the Martian culture blended religion, art, and science, and that “The enjoyment of pure being was the key to the Martian way of life” (Anderson, 1980). In some respects (and in broad terms), what Spender says may reflect a late-20th century understanding of the values and philosophies of Native American cultures. Spender then runs off. He returns, wearing a Martian mask and holding a Martian weapon. When Spender fires the weapon at the remaining astronauts, Wilder is forced to kill him. It is at this point that Wilder first realizes that the colonization and domestication of Mars may turn violent. He fearfully asks, “Dear God, is this how it’s going to be?” (Anderson, 1980).

In terms of political and governmental themes, an interesting moment occurs in the second part of the miniseries, when the narrator intones that “transplanted technocrats” have come to Mars (Anderson, 1980). The government-oriented technocrats are on a mission to domesticate Mars. Using modular buildings and efficient construction techniques, the government-construction bureaucracy will “beat the Martian landscape into familiar [Earth-oriented] shapes and bludgeon away the strangeness” (Anderson, 1980).

Importantly, the theme of colonization is transformed into something different at the end of the miniseries. The impetus that drives the transformation of the colonization theme forward emanates from the actions of Colonel Wilder. After mass exodus on Mars and nuclear war on Earth have rendered both planets devoid or nearly devoid of life, Colonel Wilder seeks out the few remaining inhabitants of Mars. His last visit is with the only other living member of the third expedition to Mars, Sam Parkerhill. Parkerhill recently shot a Martian, who he thought was threatening him. Instead of retaliating, the remaining Martian gives Parkerhill a deed to one half of the planet. After giving Parkerhill the deed, the Martian infers that the human will need the land, as something disastrous will occur on Earth. And indeed, that very night, all life on Earth is completely extinguished in a war that had been building for months.

After leaving Parkerhill, Wilder, perhaps thinking what he and his family must do in this brave new world, returns to the original city that he, Spender, Parkerhill, and the original members of the third expedition to Mars

had discovered. Wilder thinks of Spender's transformative ideas toward the Martins as he wanders the ancient city. He is hoping to find, talk with, and learn from one of the few remaining Martians.

Suddenly, a Martian appears in the distance. He walks toward Wilder. Both men attempt to communicate in their native languages. After the Martian holds his hand toward Wilder's mind, he is able to speak English. When they attempt to reach out and perhaps shake hands, their hands "pass through" each other. After some discussion, they realize that it is possible that neither human nor Martian exists in the same temporal plane. When Wilder points out that the Martian's city is in ruins, the Martian replies that he sees his city as alive and vibrant. The Martian suggests that Wilder is perhaps seeing the future ruins of his own civilization. When Wilder acknowledges that the Martian could perhaps be correct, he begins to open his mind to new possibilities. When the Martian refers to his own planet as Tier, Wilder, realizing that Tier is the correct name for the planet, does likewise.

Although Wilder has at last met a Martian and is open to the moment, he is still frustrated over the fact that it is a fleeting moment, an anomaly that is the result of a transitory moment in time. The Martian tells Wilder not to be despondent. That they still have this moment and are able to communicate and learn from one another. Wilder tells the Martian that he wants to learn the secret of the Martian way of life.

Whitehall views this encounter between Wilder and the Martian as a Deleuzian "Event", an encounter that has transformative possibilities. Out of this, "The Event re-emerges so [both] Human and Martian become different" (Whitehall, 2003, p. 189). In the miniseries, the Martian goes on to explain to Wilder some of the tenets of the Martian way of life. The Martian tells Wilder that Martians seek to "make common cause with the forces of existence, and to hold that which lives in all reverence" (Anderson, 1980). The Martian also states that, "Life is given by the sovereign of the universe, and [that] it is to be savored... and respected" (Anderson, 1980). After their fleeting meeting, the series narrator intones that "Wilder leaves the Martian and leaves his dreams of sharing this new world with a race that had lived for eons" (Anderson, 1980). Visually, Wilder looks to be at peace, perhaps coming at last to a personal understanding of what it is to be human, or Martian, and how it is possible to live peacefully on the planet. Perhaps the idea that he must become Martian—by giving up the idea that he is from Earth—is forming in his mind.

Interestingly, the next event mentioned in Whitehall's analysis of the book, is also the next and final act of the *miniseries*. In the *book*, the two vignettes which Whitehall analyzes are widely separated and are parts of different stories (or chronicles) concerning Mars. In the final scene of the miniseries, Wilder gathers up his family and takes them on an outing. He tells them that they will meet Martians. The kids are bored, very few humans are left on Mars, and one can sense that the family (as well as Wilder himself) is desperately in need of a sense of direction.

For Wilder, that new direction is to become one with Mars. In order to do this, Wilder must become "the other"; he must take on the mask of the strange outsider who exists beyond societies' limits. In order to do this, Wilder must take his family to a *liminal* space, to the ruins of the ancient Martian city that exists on the borders of both space and time. Whitehall (2003) wrote, "[T]here is now the possibility of becoming the Other. Humanity is becoming meaningless... but because of Bradbury's politics of encounter, it is a positive, not negative change. Humanity's loss is humanity's gain" (p. 189).

Using the Martian canals, Wilder takes his family by boat to the ancient Martian city. After they set up camp, Wilder builds a fire. Into the fire he tosses old, Earth-related, and once-important papers that had tethered him to his job and the family to Earth. Wilder seems to know that his family's access into this liminal

space—this place of Martian/Human betwixt and between—will be fully granted only when the documents that had grounded him to his previous existence are destroyed. Wilder watches his ties to the past disappear into the smoke. His son comes up to him and reminds him that they are supposed to meet some real Martians. Wilder smiles, and then takes his family to the edge of the canal. He points down and says, “There they are” (Anderson, 1980). The reflections in the rippling water stare and then nod and smile back.

Of these moments, Whitehall (2003) suggested that the burning of the documents in the fire represent a rejection of the limits of humanity and an “embrace of the limitless and beyond” (p. 190). Whitehall (2003) posited that now:

Instead of managing [the Other, as in *Star Trek*], or mobilizing the beyond to produce a sensible world [as in *Starship Troopers*], [that Wilder’s family] are willing to affirm that they exceed the category “human”, and [are willing] to embrace its meaninglessness as the virtual condition under which new and creative possibilities emerge. (p. 190)

Wilder is at peace at last, because the need, justification, and rationale for the ideal of colonization has not been defeated or submerged. Instead, the quest for colonization has been *transcended*. Rock Hudson played the part of Wilder in the mini-series. An amateur online reviewer asked why Hudson could not have lost just a little more weight for this important role. But let us look at this issue just a little differently: Rock Hudson—because of his middle-aged and somewhat portly self—helps *us* to feel more like *him*. And that is what makes the end of the film even more powerful; we have taken this journey, along with Wilder and his family. Perhaps it is possible for us, too, to embrace the Other, “and exceed the category human (Whitehall, 2003, p. 190).

In terms of societal stresses, the fact that the miniseries was made in the late 1970s seems to make perfect sense. At a time in which we (as a society) looked into the mirror and saw the twin spectres of Watergate and Vietnam, perhaps we could finally accept the idea that “the Other” (fully representing different values and ideals than our own), had not only something to say, but represented something we should *become*.

Conclusions

One observation with regard to the effect of business can categorically be seen through our analysis of Mars-based science fiction films. That is, since 1992, Mars has been open for business. The presence of *business* as a moving force in Mars-film planetary affairs has grown tremendously since the mid-1990s. Similarly, the power of government as a controlling force in Martian affairs has declined. As mentioned above, *Total Recall*, *Ghosts of Mars*, and *Escape From Mars* address this changing government power/corporate power dynamic. Although several Mars-based science fiction films show the growth of the power of *business*, it is interesting to note that ultimately, very few films portray this as a positive or healthy development for Martian society.

It is more difficult to make broad generalizations regarding the concept of colonization. It would be an encouraging societal sign to report that an increasing number of recent we-go-to-Mars films are more sensitive to the issue of the colonization of Mars (Grewell, 2001). With regard to Mars-based science fiction films, *The Martian Chronicles* makes the strongest case for at least considering what we might be *doing* to a planet as we terra-form it, although more recent films such as *Total Recall* and *Total Recall 2070* (1999) force us to examine the consequences of the effects of “combative” (Grewell, 2001, p. 28) colonialism.

Can any generalizations be made with regard to our ability to embrace the “other” in science fiction films in which man journeys to Mars? Although there are certainly exceptions, it seems our ability to communicate

with, deal with, or even embrace the “other”/Martians seems to be at least as much dependent on the worldview of the writer-director filmmaking team as it is on the prevailing, dominant, and ideological way of thinking which may hold sway in society at a given moment in time. Even so, is possible to perhaps make generalizations. *The Martian Chronicles* was adapted into a mini-series at a time in which society had witnessed the failures of government, but was still impressionable enough to learn from its mistakes. Spielberg’s *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *E.T.* (1982) expressed similar themes with regard to embracing “the other” and these films were also embraced by audiences. It seemed as if we (as a society) were interested in what “the other” had to say, were interested in the “other’s” values, and felt we could learn from the experience of communication. However, by the mid-1980s, the nation began to celebrate its *own* values again. President Reagan proclaimed this time of national reaffirmation as “Morning in America”. Just as it seemed that it was necessary for America to expunge the collective guilt that emanated from the pasts of Vietnam and Watergate, it also seemed that it became necessary to ultimately redefine and banish the “other”, all in a vain attempt to delineate and celebrate our own culture. Only one we-go-to-Mars major feature film made since the mid-1980s features an encounter with an “other”/Martian that is celebrated in any way. That film is *Mission to Mars*. As of this writing, a new adaptation of *The Martian Chronicles* has been green-lighted by Paramount. How will we greet the Martians now? Will they be *greeted* at a Tea Party meeting? Will they be asked to produce their Martian picture ID, or their space vehicle operator’s license, or interplanetary passport in order to attend? Or will they invite us to their *their* Tea Party? Time will tell.

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The Bitter Butter Knife: Puttermesser's Problematic Paradise

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This paper analyzes how the themes of magical realism and female divinity intersect in the novel *The Puttermesser Papers* (1997) by Cynthia Ozick. In the "Introduction", the writer defines magical realism and discusses its connections to Women's Studies. The next section, "The Bitter Butter Knife", discusses the protagonist's (Ruth Puttermesser) boring existence and pathetic attempts to connect to her Jewish ancestry. In "The Problematic Paradise", the author focuses on Puttermesser's attempts to take control of her life by creating the first female golem and the ups and downs of paradise. This author argues that the female protagonist of the novel utilizes magical realism as a tool of empowerment over personal oppression.

Keywords: Cynthia Ozick, magical realism, Women's Literature, Women's Studies, Jewish American Literature

Introduction

Women have been central to nature since the world began. Givers of life, traditionally we also are the caregivers of all life because of connection to all of nature. Indeed, women's spirituality espoused a belief that humans, nature, and the divine are equal but yet respects difference (Reich, 1993, p. 429).

Magical realism, like women's spirituality, transcends all boundaries, because they both deal with where the supernatural and reality intersect, collide, and/or coexist. Even though this phenomenon suggests dualism or binary opposition, that is not the case since all things can equally interact in the magically real plane, just as in nature and in women's spirituality. As time goes on, the magical becomes ordinary and commonplace, so much so that it becomes virtually unnoticeable (Danow, 1995, pp. 65-101; Zamora & Faris, 1995, pp. 1-11). So, if one looks closely enough, the origins of magical realism have been a part of our everyday lives since the world began. Whether one calls it women's spirituality or magical realism, it is still a similar natural reality because, according to the position of magical realists, everything is connected in the universe. To these various group of people, magical realism can be construed as reality.

The Bitter Butter Knife

In the *Puttermesser Papers* (1997) by Cynthia Ozick, 34 years old Ruth Puttermesser (known mainly as Puttermesser in the text), a woman who does not have much of a life, eventually creates a fantasy life that becomes real—the very embodiment of magical realism. Puttermesser lives up to her last name, which means butter knife in Yiddish. Much like the utensil, she gets the job done, but that is all. A butter knife may be an essential mainstay to our culinary repertoire (in fact it is one of our most used utensils); however, it lacks versatility. It can only cut semi-hard food or spread it around. It is dull and innocuous, yet very necessary to

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eating. And like the usefulness of the butter knife Puttermesser, a lawyer, is “not quite a civil servant and not quite *not* a civil servant—one of those amphibious creatures hanging between base contempt and bare decency” (Ozick, 1997, p. 9) in New York City. Industrious and intelligent, she moves from task to task in the civil service wherever she is needed. Hence, she is ignored, much like a butter knife. She is even isolated from other Jews at the workplace because of her pronunciation of certain vowels and consonants for “almost all of the regionalism was drained out, except for the pace of her syllables, which had a New York deliberateness, Puttermesser could have been from anywhere” (Ozick, 1997, p. 8). Like the butter knife, she can fit in anywhere with minimum fuss, making it easy for her to be overlooked.

Single and living alone, she spends all of her spare time reading about a variety of subjects that make up her fantasy world:

(...) How was it possible that a whole language [Hebrew], hence a whole literature, a civilization even, should rest on the pure presence of three letters of the alphabet? The Hebrew verb, a stunning mechanism: three letters, whichever fated three, could command all possibility simply by a change in their pronunciation, or the addition of a wing-letter fore and aft. Every conceivable utterance blossomed from this trinity. It seemed to her not so much a language for expression as a code for the world's design, indissoluble, predetermined, translucent. The idea of the grammar of Hebrew turned Puttermesser's brain into a palace, a sort of Vatican; inside its corridors she walked from one resplendent triptych to another. (Ozick, 1997, p. 5)

Despite books being her only friend, Puttermesser will not change her position in the municipal building because “The difficulty with Puttermesser is that she is loyal to certain environments” (Ozick, 1997, p. 12). She is loyal to places, because they are the only tangible and concrete links she has to the world while books represent her abstract one. The space/place between the tangible and the abstract is where magical realism resides.

Besides her home and workplace, Puttermesser communes with nature in a city park near work where “to postulate an afterlife was her single irony” (Ozick, 1997, p. 13). Sitting under a tree in what she calls her “Eden”, she reads stacks of books while munching on sweets (Ozick, 1997, p. 13). While many people would consider these simple pleasures means to while the time away, to Puttermesser, these pleasures are her whole life. Sad, but true, this scenario constitutes her ideal afterlife for “[I]n Eden insatiable Puttermesser will be nourished, if not gluttoned” (Ozick, 1997, p. 14).

Puttermesser may be Jewish, but her family was not religious. She studies Hebrew because she wants to belong to something. So, she creates another fantasy Eden in which she imagines visiting a great Uncle Zindel who was “a shammas of a torn-down shul [a sexton in a synagogue]”. Puttermesser imagines this uncle teaching her Hebrew; unfortunately, he died before she was born:

Of the world that was, there is only this single grain of memory: that once an old man, Puttermesser's mother's uncle, kept his pants up with a rope belt, was called Zindel, lived without a wife, ate frugally, knew the holy letters, died with a thorny English wilderness between his gums. To him Puttermesser clings. America is blank, and Uncle Zindel is all her ancestry. Unironic, unimaginative, her plain but stringent mind strains beyond the parents—what did they have? (Ozick, 1997, p. 17)

According to the above passage, it is not enough for Puttermesser to read Hebrew; she has to imagine herself totally immersed in it to give her a connection to her religious faith and Russian heritage.

Judaism and Womanhood

Judaism, like many religions, has many branches and varying beliefs; however, it does have some basic ones that all the variations follow. In Judaism, the written word is very important. The religion prides itself on

scholarship to gain knowledge of God and the world around them (Eliade, Couliano, & Wiesner, 1991, pp. 167-183).

The role of women in this religion has interesting significance. Jewish women are considered separate but equal and have different duties than men. Indeed, God is considered to have both masculine and feminine qualities as opposed to Christianity, and both sexes were made in the image of God. Women have more “binah” (intuition, understanding, and intelligence) than men. However, in the *Talmud* women are denigrated as lazy and evil and are discouraged from seeking higher education or studying religion, because they may become too spiritually devoted and neglect their families. Despite these issues, Jewish women have rights such as buying, selling, and owning property, and in the last 20 years or so have more religious rights that previously were reserved just for men (Rich, 2005; Werblowsky & Wigoder, 1997, pp. 726-729).

Taking these ideas into consideration, note that the relative that Puttermesser relates to is a male. This fact has relevance, because he is the one that she knows links most to Judaism and her Russian ethnicity. A shammas is responsible for the everyday upkeep of the synagogue. Therefore, by maintaining the physical structure of the synagogue, a shammas maintains the abstract and symbolic attributes of Judaism. Judaism, despite women having more rights, is still like most religions that are based on a male deity, patriarchal. Despite the fact that Jewishness is matrilineal or traced through the mother's bloodline, Jewish women are still denigrated and treated like second-class citizens.

Puttermesser teaches herself Hebrew, but she feels she has to validate her studies through a dead male relative she never knew because of Jewish beliefs. Although Jewish males are the “legitimate” Judaistic scholars, Puttermesser's scholarship demonstrates that Jewish women have the same right to an education, or the same ability to acquire one. Symbolically, going through a man may be problematic, but the fact that Puttermesser studies the language of her religion and culture is revolutionary since it shows that women can be religious scholars as well.

The First Female Golem

Next, the novel jumps ahead to when Puttermesser is 46, and her life has gotten worse. Her married lover, Morris Rappoport, has just dumped her, because she would rather read Socrates than have sex, and she gets demoted because of office politics and bemoans that she will never have children. At this lowest point in her life, her butter knife becomes a decisively proactive sword (both knives obviously phallic); she creates her own golem. In Judaical mythology, a golem is a figure or creature typically made out of clay that comes to life. What typically brings a golem to life is a slip of paper with writing that is placed on its tongue (Werblowsky & Wigoder, 1997, p. 280). The first mention of a golem appears in *The Bible*, for Adam is considered to be the first one since he was made out of earth and water. Therefore, if one is Jewish or even Christian, a golem is not a legend—but a real creature, which makes the myth a magically real one. Over the centuries, the legend changed and grew, so that eventually the golem becomes soulless and eventually cannot be controlled. Hence, the only difference between humans and golems is that humans have a soul. Also, the legend changes according to the various branches of Judaism (Sherwin, 1985, pp. 3-14).

Many of these characteristics appear in the novel. Indeed, by creating a golem, Puttermesser has become the creator/Goddess. Instead of relying on a man's sperm to impregnate her and waiting nine months, she, like the original Jehovah, creates life by mixing reddish clay and dirt from her plants and water after Rappoport leaves. However, she does not remember doing it:

A naked girl lay in Puttermesser's bed. She looked dead—she was all white, bloodless (...) The body had a look of perpetuity about it, as if it had always been reclining there (...) Puttermesser peered down at the creature's face. Ugly. The nose and mouth were clumsily formed (...) it was clear that the nostrils needed pinching to bring them closer together, so Puttermesser tentatively pinched. The improvement was impressive. (Ozick, 1997, pp. 37-38)

Despite her confusion, Puttermesser continues to shape the golem. Obviously, Puttermesser is the mother of her female golem. Even though Rappoport is not present when she is made, he is symbolically her father, because it is his departure that leads to her creation.

After the golem comes to life, Puttermesser tries to recollect creating her: It was true she had circled the creature on the bed. Was it seven times around? It was true she had blown some foreign matter out of the nose. Had she blown some uncanny energy into an entrance of the dormant body? It was true she had said aloud one of the Names of the Creator. (Ozick, 1997, p. 42)

Puttermesser does not remember creating her golem, because she was in such a mindless emotional state of despair that she blanked out. She instinctively made something that would help her fulfill her fantasy Eden, as well as fill that emptiness from not having children or making a lasting impact on humankind.

Significantly, Puttermesser's actions do make history. Besides being the first woman to make a golem, she is the first to make a female one out of clay. According to Jewish lore, 11th century poet and philosopher Solomon ibn Gabirol makes the first female golem made out of wood and hinges for sexual purposes. Of course, besides the negative feminine connotations, because of the material it is made out of, this creation seems more like a robot than a golem (Ozick, 1997, p. 16). By making her golem out of clay rather than other materials, Puttermesser legitimizes her creation by demonstrating that women can create life just as well as men can. According to Judaism, men do not have the monopoly on emulating or being close to God. Puttermesser's butter knife is no longer a flaccidly innocuous phallic symbol; it becomes a positive feminine weapon in the fight for feminist power and autonomy.

Puttermesser's creation is eventually named Xanthippe after Socrates's wife. Xanthippe is mute yet knows all languages and writes all messages. Muteness in a golem depends on the story. Xanthippe writes, "I know everything you know. I am made of earth but also I am made out of your mind" (Ozick, 1997, p. 42). Like the first golem, she has the letters aleph, mem, and tav inscribed on her forehead. Therefore, Xanthippe knows everything Puttermesser does and Xanthippe obeys Puttermesser, because Puttermesser is her mother. Furthermore, Xanthippe represents the soulless Puttermesser, a being that is much like her creator yet has no scruples about doing something that Western society may find morally reprehensible.

What takes the golem from the mythological to the magically real realm is that real historical people supposedly created golems as well. Giving birth is miraculous, but physically creating life literally out of clay and water is certainly magical. Puttermesser researches that Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, circa 1520-1609, created the first golem. He created it after having a dream of heaven, giving the golem a magically realistically spiritual slant. This golem was used to fight the persecution of Jews in that city, a task the golem did very successfully by killing anti-Semites. Unfortunately, the golem eventually had to be destroyed by erasing the first of the three letters of its creation from its forehead. The golem grew too big to be controlled. It was placed in a barn, and one of the stories claimed that whoever touches the cobwebs around the golem would die (Ozick, 1997, pp. 44-46). Puttermesser discovers in her research that golem-makers were scientifically minded scholars and intellectuals, like herself (Ozick, 1997, p. 48). Having scientists create something magically real legitimizes the creation, especially in Puttermesser's eyes. The act of creating a golem still falls within the realm of magical realism since the creator is godlike.

The Problematic Paradise

Besides her unusual entry into the world, Xanthippe's obedience to Puttermesser helps her in miraculous ways. After Puttermesser is fired for complaining, she runs for mayor of New York and wins. Puttermesser spreads peace around much like a butter knife, making a paradise on earth. Because of the golem's efforts, New York City has no crime, everyone has a job and happiness reigns:

The coming of the golem animated the salvation of the City, yes—but who, Puttermesser sometimes wonders, is the true golem? Is it Xanthippe or is it Puttermesser? Puttermesser made Xanthippe. Xanthippe did not exist before Puttermesser made her: That is clear enough. But Xanthippe made Puttermesser Mayor, and Mayor Puttermesser too did not exist before. And that is just as clear. Puttermesser sees that she is the golem's golem. (Ozick, 1997, pp. 78-79)

Who made whom? It is not Puttermesser but her innocuous ways that give her success; it is Xanthippe's actions on her behalf. Xanthippe takes Puttermesser's inner desires and makes them shine in the real world.

Unfortunately for Puttermesser, her creation destroys what she creates. The reason a golem does not survive is because it gorges itself on life. Xanthippe constantly eats making her bigger and bigger everyday. Then her appetite turns from food to sex when she sleeps with her symbolic father, Morris Rappoport (Ozick, 1997, pp. 79-82). This act not only constitutes a form of incest, but since Xanthippe is an extension of Puttermesser, it is as if Puttermesser slept with Rappoport as well.

Puttermesser's paradise is destroyed when Xanthippe's insatiable sexual appetite wears out the male members of Puttermesser's administration, to the point where they resign. Xanthippe "will no longer obey. She cannot be contained" (Ozick, 1997, p. 86). Because of Xanthippe's neglect, New York City quickly sinks back into its old crime-ridden and high unemployment ways, and Puttermesser is destroyed and can never become mayor again.

Soon Puttermesser realizes that in order for her not to be destroyed utterly, she has to destroy Xanthippe. She gets Rappoport to help her get rid of her in a ritual that reverses her creation. Interestingly, Xanthippe speaks for the first time when she is being killed. They bury her in City Hall Park under some flowerbeds with a sign that reads "DO NOT TOUCH OR PICK" (Ozick, 1997, pp. 94-101). However, Xanthippe's body still creates magic: "(...) Whoever touches or picks those stems of blood-colored blossoms soon sickens with flu virus, or sore throat, or stuffed nose accompanied by nausea—or, sometimes, a particularly vicious attack of bursitis" (Ozick, 1997, p. 101). Hence, like the first recorded golem, her influence can be harmful and will never go away.

As an extension of Puttermesser, the golem is able to do what Puttermesser's nature will not allow her to do—to make concrete effective change. Puttermesser may be a butter knife, but Xanthippe is the sword. Also, like any sword, it can cut deeply and indiscriminately, even itself. Through her aggressive actions, Xanthippe lifts Puttermesser to the perfect earthly Eden of her dreams and then brutally cuts it away.

Getting Rappoport, Xanthippe's pseudo-father and lover, to help in her decreation has significance as well. With his dumping of Puttermesser, he helped create the situations that brought Xanthippe into this world. Furthermore, by having sex with Xanthippe, he helped bring down paradise. Assisting in killing his "daughter" is the least he can do. Additionally, since he and Puttermesser's sex life during their affair is limited, the over-exhausting relationship with Xanthippe balances it out. Xanthippe represents the gluttonous side of Puttermesser, the side she cannot be herself because of her nature.

In the magical indigenous cycle of life, however, paradise lost is found again. Toward the end of the novel, Puttermesser reads about the paradise that unknown to her she is about to join. She is stabbed to death and then raped (Ozick, 1997, p. 215). Ironically, a sharp knife kills her so she does not feel the rape. Typically, rape is a traumatic experience, because it takes away the victim's power and dignity; however, in Puttermesser's case, the penis in a twisted way symbolizes, in a Freudian way, the butter knife, because "[F]or her, the rape never happened at all" (Ozick, 1997, p. 220).

The Bitter Knife Afterlife

In Paradise, a finally happy Puttermesser creates her dream life with a husband and a child. The husband is a man she had a crush on when she was young. Unfortunately, her family gradually disappears. She discovers:

In Paradise, where sight and insight, inner and outer, sweet and salt, logic and illogic, are shuffled in the manner of a kaleidoscope, nothing is permanent. Nothing will stay. All is ephemeral. There is no long and no short; there is only immeasurable isness. Isness alone is forever; or name it essence, or soul. But the images within the soul shift, drift, wander. Paradise is a dream bearing the inscription on Solomon's seal: *This too shall pass...* The secret meaning of Paradise is that it too is hell. (Ozick, 1997, p. 234)

By living up to her last name, butter knife, Puttermesser's life of moderation, not being happy or sad, ironically was paradise, not her perfect Eden. She sings a song at the end of the novel:

At the point of a knife
I lost my life.
Butter, butter, butter,
butter knife.
If I were alive I wouldn't fault
Anything under the heavenly vault.
Better, better, better,
better life.
Better never to have loved than loved at all.
Better never to have risen than had a fall.
Oh bitter, bitter, bitter
butter
knife. (Ozick, 1997, p. 236)

Conclusions

By creating a female golem, Puttermesser takes control of her divinity. Trumping the somewhat male-dominated orientation of Judaism, she becomes a goddess who creates life out of the earth. Ironically, her useful not flashy butter knife-like style of living totally encapsulates what Paradise is really like. Living in moderation may be boring and unexciting, but it is the true path to living well. This realization causes the butter knife to become so bitter. Puttermesser so longed for a better life, and she tried to create it. However, what one creates must be destroyed, just like her golem and her version of Paradise.

In the magically real life and afterlife, Puttermesser thinks she has the control to change her life, but in effect she does not—such is life. The Wheel of Fortune or Circle of Life comes up and comes down. However, Puttermesser gains empowerment, even for a short while. That is more than many people ever achieve. The ultimate paradox is that she creates her own heaven and hell. Like her last name suggests, life and death never make a lasting impression. The cycle of life, death, and rebirth are only fated to continue.

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A Psychoanalytic Insight Into Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*—Psychic Strength From Defense Mechanism

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This paper attempts to analyze Blanche's psyche in relation to her employing defense mechanism to restore her mental health and herself in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) by the American playwright Tennessee Williams. It focuses on her replacing reality with fantastic embodiments or illusion. She has taken unacceptable impulses into acceptable forms by unconsciously blocking the impulses such as superego and thereby reducing agony for the earlier traumatic experiences left indelible marks on her mind, and anxiety for survival. Her anxiety becomes too overwhelming that her ego urgently employs defense mechanisms to protect her. With her new hopes and dreams she desires to replace the highly stressful loss. Under mental and social stress, her illusion and her falsification of reality nevertheless became unable to overcome recurring trauma-causing situation in reality and her healing process thereby leaving her on the verge of extinction.

Keywords: trauma, defense mechanism, illusion, denial, rationalization

Introduction

Humans, on both conscious and unconscious levels, in general, are in fact prone to alleviate internal stress and mental complications. So, they create and use defense mechanisms that serve as a mental cushion or protective shell to prevent stress lest they would lose their existence. Let the author first state briefly what defense mechanism is. It is an unconscious mechanism aimed at reducing anxiety. It was first discussed by Sigmund Freud as part of his psychoanalytic theory and further developed by his daughter, Anna Freud, who clarified and conceptualized the term. Freud described how the Ego uses a range of mechanisms to handle the conflict between the Id, the Ego, and the Superego, whereas Anna introduced the principle of inner mechanisms that defend the ego in her book *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (1936).

Defense Mechanism

In fact, all defense mechanisms share two common properties: They often appear unconsciously and tend to distort, transform, or otherwise, falsify reality. In distorting reality, there is a change in perception which allows for a lessening of anxiety, with a corresponding reduction in felt tension. Defense mechanisms work by distorting the id impulses into acceptable forms or by unconscious blockage of these impulses. Anna described 10 different defense mechanisms: denial, displacement, intellectualization, projection, rationalization, reaction formation,

regression, repression, sublimation, and suppression. Later, researchers have added some more defense mechanisms to the list: compensation (first described by Alfred Adler), dissociation, fantasy, identification, undoing, and withdrawal.

Defense Mechanism in Relation to Blanche

In proposing defense mechanism in relation to Blanche, the author will explore how it has arisen from three different scenarios such as when a great external threat is posed to her ego, next when her id impulses—which desire gratification—conflict with superego values and beliefs; and therefore when her id impulses are in conflict with each other thereof; as well as at what period Blanche had a traumatic experience that initiated her neurosis—according to Freud, it arises from inner conflicts and can lead to anxiety, anticipatory tension, or vague dread persisting in the absence of a specific threat—and later psychosis after her rape. Neuroses can be rooted in ego defense mechanisms. Her young husband Allan Grey's death directed her to troubled path so does the losing of Belle Reve, the ancestral mansion, by foreclosure; the death of her father before the outbreak of World War II, followed by mother's death, and several relatives. She had to deal with those post war and mental trauma alone, nay, she was fired from her high school job as an English teacher at Laurel in Mississippi, and evicted by the hotel. These are some great external threat posed to her ego. She wanted to repress her recurring thought of Allan, being overwhelmed with shame for the disclosure of his homosexuality to Blanche, shot himself. But she could not in fact as the memory haunted her. In so doing unconsciously, not only did she relive this early life sucking trauma which Freud termed as fixation to the trauma, but also she felt a measure of guilt or responsibility. Throughout the play, Blanche will hear Polka music corresponding with the different aspects of Blanche's mental anguish and her gradual increasing emotional deterioration leading to lose her grip from reality.

Defense Mechanism Giving Psychic Strength

Therefore, the profound effect of the wrenching experiences followed by the fixation to the trauma and the subsequent repression thereof commence her neurosis. It is her creative mind that makes her enable to perform its function in coordinating the neurological and mental responses that are necessary for everyday activity. She disguises the truth from herself and her sexual promiscuity from others in order to ease or avoid the discomfort she feels in certain situations (physical or emotional), and to prevent her sins from being discovered. In this way, defense mechanism operating within her psyche gives her psychic strength to go on. Here lies her reasoning to adopt some mechanisms in the forms of denial, repression, rationalization, fantasy, undoing, etc.. She has defended herself from the harsh reality by denying reality and truth and by rationalizing the false, that is to say, her falsification of the reality which she employs before her entrance in Elysian fields in her brutish brother-in-law Stanley's house and after her coming here to live with her sister Stella Kowalski. She said: "There was nowhere else I could go" (Williams, 1947, Scene 9).

Effort of Improving Emotional Health

At this juncture, the author would relate Blanche's long series of shallow love making affairs (both genital and sexual) in relation to her id impulses which are in conflict with superego values and beliefs. The idea is that she needs gratification for her seething soul but the social norms do not respond to that rather it prohibits and

threats her id or desire comes thereof. We know that the death of a loved one is one of life's most difficult experiences; so is to Blanche. She had to struggle with many intense and frightening emotions, including depression, her future life, agony due to desperate loneliness and mostly her self-realization of her loneliness, guilt for Allan's death, and anger as observed in her angrily smashing the mirror.

Since she felt isolated and alone in her grief in that case having someone to lean on could help her through the grieving process which she had to do in fact. In this way, she has tried to improve her emotional health. As she explains herself, her promiscuity in Laurel resulted in her desire to assuage her pain, to compensate and atone for her guilt for unconsciously driving her husband to death. With similar cause she was associated with soldiers of a nearby army post in Laurel and also having relations, the author should rather say supportive relationships, as a treatment and one of the key words in health education, with one of her students which reinforced her dismissal from the school. She sought and maintained such bond only to assuage her panic. Same was the flirtation with the young collector. She admits outright to Mitch:

I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan—intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with. ... I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection—here and there, in the most—unlikely places—even, at last, in a seventeen-year-old boy. (Williams, 1947, Scene 9)

Her pain was to lessen in intensity over time but the sadness, desperate alienation never completely went away. She is time and again haunted by that repressed memory making her existence intolerable. Sex became the substitute for shelter, protection, because sex was not exercised for its own sake but for the sake of getting marginal gratification by which she could temporarily forget the agonizing aspects of her life. She has run for protection not for sex from under one leaky roof to another leaky roof and was caught in the centre. She rationalizes to Stella and to herself: "People don't see you—men don't—don't even admit your existence unless they are making love to you. And you've got to have your existence admitted by someone, if you're going to have someone's protection" (Williams, 1947, Scene 5).

Rationalization as Defense Mechanism

Particularly what she wanted was her protection from the harrowing vision of Allan's suicide which always slips from her and thereby leaving her on the verge of moral depravity so to say. It marks the point of her rationalization of her promiscuity. Rationalization is such a mechanism by which one's self can be strengthened. It is definitely applicable to Blanche. In psychology, rationalization is the process of constructing a logical justification for a decision that was originally arrived at through a different mental process. This process can range from fully conscious to mostly subconscious. It creates a block against internal feelings of guilt. Simply put, rationalization is making excuses for one's mistakes, and by doing so one avoids self-condemnation or condemnation by others. As a societal being, she must respect the reality of the world and the superego representing the learned and internalized set of values and ethics, which gives the individual the sense of what is right and what is wrong to think, feel, and do. Her superego got deactivated here or she has violated social norms only to restore her mental health. Simultaneously, her Ego does not allow her to press her into extinction. So, she tries to survive by satisfying her id. Blanche has frequently acted out with substance or alcohol abuse. Her excessive drinking, smoking serve as substitutes for human relationships, and an endeavor to satisfy her id. To

psychologists, a neurotic frequently acts out with addictions as substitutes for human relationships. The substitution serves as her defense.

Denial as Defense Mechanism

Her existence in mental crisis demands violating superego principles to get peace. When her anxiety for survival becomes too overwhelming her ego as a task has employed defense mechanisms to protect her from extinction. In restoring herself, Blanche employs denial as shield to protect herself from the more unpleasant aspects of external reality. Denial, in fact, is an ego defense mechanism that operates unconsciously to resolve emotional conflict and to reduce anxiety by refusing to perceive the harsh reality. It is being utilized in a situation in which a person experiences a fact that is uncomfortable or painful to accept. For instance, she rejects that her beauty is fading instead insists that it is not true, despite an overwhelming evidence of fading of her physical charm due to her growing age. She is definitely aware of the fact but she denies outright only to feel better, to strengthen her mind lest she would extinct. She uses paper on lantern, goes on date with Mitch in the evening, and lies or hides her exact age to hide her fading beauty and reality. From psychoanalytic lens, the subject may deny the reality of the unpleasant fact altogether (simple denial), admit the fact but deny its seriousness (minimization), or admit both the fact and seriousness but deny responsibility (transference). The ability to deny or minimize is an essential part of what enables an addict to continue her/his behavior in the face of evidence that appears overwhelming to an outsider. Denial filters out data and content that contravenes their self-image, prejudices, and preconceived notions of others and of the world. Blanche's denial makes her conceive of her own image as true because reality and truthfulness become an antinatural tendency in her make-believe world that is essentially false. Nevertheless, such falsification has meaning to her as she believes herself to be truthful. Says Blanche to Mitch about her denial of truth, "I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth. I tell what ought to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it!" (Williams, 1947, Scene 10).

Fantasy as Defense Mechanism

In addition, her ego has employed fantasy as mechanism for her defense. Blanche's unacceptable desire to gratify herself to forget the earlier trauma was denied and felt threatened with punishment by the society dismissing her from the school. This anxiety leads to repression of the above desire for some time though did not last long for her desperate loneliness and excruciating stream of agony flashing across her mind incessantly. The threat of punishment related to this form of anxiety was not internalized in her psyche. Her superego did not intercede against the desires of the ego as a result. She employs fantasy, including day dreams, which is a way to escape real problems. When her reality is the opposite to that of happiness imagining that she is rich in spirit and beautiful in mind leads her to feelings of happiness though it is marginal. She said "Beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart—and I have all of those things" (Williams, 1947, Scene 11). It is beneficial to the restoration of her emotional health. She makes herself appear attractive to new male suitors. Blanche depends on male sexual admiration for her sense of self-esteem and self-help. Many self-help methods are based on fantasy: covert rehearsal, covert sensitization/desensitization, empathy, etc.. Blanche's lies give her the life she dreams of living. Blanche tells Stella that she wants to deceive Mitch into wanting her. She wants to affect someone else through a type of

deception which will make Blanche feel better about herself. She lies that Shep has sent her a telegram inviting her to join him on his yacht in the Caribbean. Stanley does not believe her. Blanche seems to believe her lie and story so much that it becomes her truth.

Undoing as Defense Mechanism

Moreover, the defense mechanism undoing is at work in Blanche's psyche. It is based on the notion that it is possible to make amends and to correct mistakes made. In essence, it involves feeling guilty and trying to do something to undo the harm that have been inflicted. It aims at reversing a feeling by acting in some opposite or compensatory manner. Blanche's interminable baths, which she calls hydrotherapy, function as a metaphor for her make-believe purification to cleanse herself of her sordid past and reputation. Blanche thought that it was her failure that she could not help Allan. She says: "All I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way" (Williams, 1947, Scene 6). She thought that she might be able to satisfy one of her sexual partners in a way she was never able to satisfy her boyish husband. It also marks the point of her rationalization of her promiscuity. By marrying Mitch, a cleft in the rock of the world that she could hide in, Blanche hopes to escape poverty and the bad reputation that haunts her. Though he was her last chance of salvation from ruin Stanley's relentless persecution of Blanche and his disclosing her past promiscuity foils her pursuit to marry Mitch, by implication, her attempt to shield herself from the harsh truth of her situation. Blanche's horror intensifies due to Stanley's violent behavior and her protection, so, she begins to find a way out of the situation. In such a unendurable situation, her old suitor named Shep Huntleigh would be able to provide the money she and Stella need to escape. Blanche begins to compose a telegram to Shep. When Stella laughs at her for being ridiculous, Blanche reveals that she is in fact completely broken. Blanche, alone in the apartment once more, drowns herself in alcohol and dreams of an impossible rescue. In this way, she, unaware of reality, hopes the chivalric Southern gentleman savior and caretaker (represented by Shep Huntleigh) will rescue her. But it is also extinct. Blanche is left with no realistic possibility of fulfilling her illusion of future happiness as a result. In addition, the identity Blanche has constructed for herself begins to disintegrate. She begins to lose ground in her battle. Thus, here also her mechanism of undoing and illusion are shattered.

Falling of Blanche's Make-Believe World

Blanche, on the eve of her rape by Stanley, goes to the phone and desperately tries to make a call to Shep Huntleigh for help, though she does not know his number or his address. It certainly proves the intensity of the necessity of her defense. Stanley terrorizes Blanche by shattering her self-delusions. The back of Blanche's make-believe world falls away. She finally retreats into hysteria and madness which we surely term as psychosis as reality is now beyond her touch. She started to live in the world of fantasy she had created, instead of facing the real world and real challenges to feel well as earlier in the play. After her rape with the termination of her illusion she does not terminate her reverie rather she has continued it as in her lapsing into a reverie about her upcoming vacation, imagining that she is going to travel with Shep and she will die at sea from eating a dirty grape with a handsome young ship's doctor at her side. Therefore, it has become pathological. She is taken to the mental asylum in consequence.

Conclusions

Having discussed defense mechanism in relation to Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, it can be said that she has defended herself over a long period of time in spite of the neurotic and psychotic conditions but the harsh reality has got upper hand and uprooted her world of dreams and illusion. She has not promoted moral-centered approach to life as she feels and rationalizes it as useless in soothing her seething soul, in restoring her mental health. It leads her to cope with the agony of her deceased husband and to deal with post-trauma and bounce back from adversity thereof. Her family (sister and her overpowering brother-in-law) remains unable to understand her bereavement process specially the latter. He did not support her through agony and anxiety for protection as well as survival for a healthy life to help her wedlock with Mitch. Instead, he completely shatters her future hope and dream thereby hastening her mental extinction.

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The Role of Design Education as the Champion of Human Values

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Bruce Nussbaum, past assistant managing editor of *Business Week* magazine, talks about a grand and broad definition of design with a capital “D” and the failure of design education to keep up with the expansion of this broader definition. The application of the design mindset over a broader scope of disciplines such as business and technology results in creative people from overlapping disciplines who are flexible, curious, and imaginative; have a tolerance for ambiguity and provide meaningful frameworks for difficult situations. The design process becomes a secondary skill-set that compliments another primary knowledge/skill base. With this model, business disciplines could apply design thinking to the understanding of fundamental economic drivers and technology/engineering/manufacturing disciplines could apply design thinking over deep process expertise in implementation. What about the work of the traditional design disciplines? Following the model described above for business and technology, design disciplines should apply “design thinking” on top of some foundational skill set that comes from the area of human values. What is this primary skill-set? This paper will attempt to explore and create a simple map of the area defined as “Human Values”, to locate current design education within that area, to propose directions for design education to move within that area, and to propose similar educational areas within the fields Business and Technology.

Keywords: design thinking, design, human values, culture creation

Background

Design Education has been under fire recently for not being able to keep up with the expanding and evolving concept of design. This expansion is essentially the application of the creative thinking side of traditional design disciplines to other non-visual arts fields, particularly business and increasingly engineering (in both practice and education).

One of the champions of this expanding application of design has been Bruce Nussbaum, assistant managing editor of *Business Week* magazine. In his July 2009 Business Week blog, he talked about design with a capital “D” and the failure of design education to keep up with this broader definition and application of design principles. In it, he said:

So where does this reality of Design fit into the discussion of Design within academia? Not well. There is a big gap between Design practitioners (at least at the top consultancies) and Design educators. ... When design consultancies are asked to set up their own “universities” to teach design to *corporate managers* [and] *public leaders* as IDEO and ZIBA have done, then we must ask why design schools aren’t playing that role. (Nussbaum, emphasis added)

“We must ask why design schools aren’t playing that role” is the basic question that serves as the impetus for this paper.

In an attempt to “play that role”, design schools have stretched and enlarged their curriculum to retain ownership of the word “design” as it has expanded to other fields of interest. Expanding it to the point where it is difficult for traditional design programs to teach a robust collection of lasting proficiencies. They have become a mile wide and an inch deep. In order to create additional capacity to stretch, they have eliminated (or hollowed out) their primary skill-set—i.e., a strong participation in the creation of culture and an understanding of the Human Condition.

The Expansion of Design

A convenient description of Design with a capital “D” is the activity that happens “at the intersection of Business, Technology, and Human Values” (Stanford Entrepreneurial Design for Extreme Affordability, 2010). This intersection describes a zone that includes creative people from multiple overlapping disciplines (not just the design arts) who are flexible, curious, and imaginative, have a tolerance for ambiguity and can provide meaningful frameworks for difficult situations (see Figure 1).

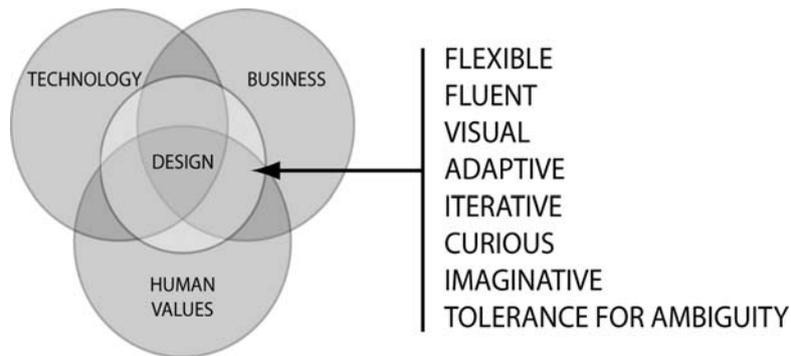


Figure 1. Interdisciplinary design space.

The effort to teach design thinking and the design process to capable/creative individuals in different fields is young. Design, as a thinking process rather than an end, becomes an important secondary skill-set meant to compliment another primary skill-set (such as business, technology, or expertise in human values). Design, without a particular label, is becoming discipline independent.

Separation of the Designer Mind-Set

This new wave of design practice, focusing on design with a capital “D”, is born out of the recent recognition that how designers think (the mind-set) can be separated from what they traditionally do (skill-set) and then re-applied over a broader scope of disciplines such as business and technology.

Within the traditional design-art disciplines, this separation of mind-set from skill-set has been going on for years as design disciplines have separated themselves by titles—i.e., interior designer, graphics designer, and industrial designer. All of these job titles describe a unique primary area of focus (interior, communications, etc.) added to a shared approach to problem solving or mind-set (design).

The personality traits listed in Figure 1 are not exclusive to visual designers. Although designers like to claim these traits as part of their exclusive toolkit, these creative personality traits also exist in people from

other disciplines. However, these other disciplines have not characteristically valued the creative toolkit to the point of nurturing, encouraging, and filtering for it in students and employees.

There are benefits in nurturing these traits in people working in other disciplines. As world problems become more tangled and complex, creative and flexible thinking becomes a recognized and highly prized skill. That is why people such as Bruce Nussbaum are increasingly fascinated with Design Thinking and the potential of Design with a capital “D”.

If we apply the word “design” to other disciplines (where “design” implies a particular approach to problem solving), do the new “non-visual” disciplines make sense? These new disciplines could include: (1) network designer, (2) process designer, (3) work flow designer, (4) service designer, (5) market designer, and (6) financial derivatives designer.

These people can now be thought of as creative and flexible people who become drivers of change across multiple disciplines. Business disciplines can apply design thinking to a deep understanding of fundamental economic drivers and technology/engineering/manufacturing disciplines can apply design thinking to deep process expertise in implementation. That is powerful.

Design With a Small “D”

With this new and broader definition of design with a capital “D” in place, it would be worth our while to revisit the visual arts model of design, and apply the new definition of a designer (being someone who has the requisite mind-set (creative, flexible, visual, etc.) applied on top of some primary, expert-level skill-set). In the case of the traditional design disciplines, the author believes that this primary skill-set lies in the realm of “Human Values”.

This “Human Values” circle (Figure 1) is broad, and covers the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. This is the area of expertise that represents the collective study of human culture—the shared attitudes, values, behaviors, goals, and practices of a given group.

Looking at a non-exhaustive list of possible fields of study, the “Human Values” circle can be divided up into three simple areas: People and Systems, Tools and Artifacts, and Creations and Performances. Somewhere along this continuum, there is a break between those that study culture and those that create culture.

The traditional design disciplines fall under Visual Art, which is part of Creations and Performances. The sub-divisions of Interior, Industrial, Communications, etc., could further fragment the “Design” circle (see Figure 2). This shows that the design disciplines really only make up a small portion of the “Human Values” circle. How well does a specialty education in the traditional design disciplines really provide a primary expertise in the area of Human Values?

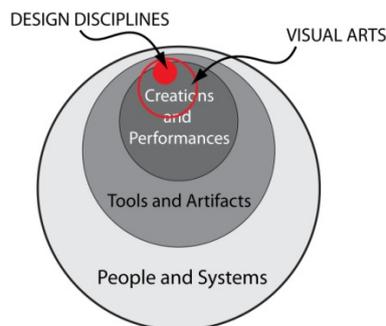


Figure 2. “Human Values” circle.

Expansion of Design Education

As design has expanded from a subset of visual arts to a more interdisciplinary strategic tool for change, design schools have expanded their curriculum to include business and management studies, manufacturing expertise, computer-aided design/illustration software, anthropologic research techniques, story-telling ability, user-experience training, team building, etc.

But the container size (four-year university program—120 hours average) has not changed. At some point, the analogy of a five-pound bag and 10 pounds of flour starts to be very applicable. In many university settings, this expansion has also served to put the “home” of design in question. Does it belong in a College of Fine Arts? Should it be in Business? Should Communications design be part of language and literature as it deals more and more with the interpretation of information?

As design education programs have expanded into the other areas of Technology and Business, the author’s assertion is that it has left behind some core principles from the Human Values area. So much, in fact, that design education is currently at a crossroads that would allow it to migrate to any one of the three areas of Technology, Business, and Human Values successfully.

One example of design education migrating to business is the fact that Richard Buchanan, former Head of the school of Design at Carnegie Mellon University, is now a professor at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case-Western University.

An example of design education migrating to technology is the industrial design program at Brigham Young University where it has moved from the College of Fine Arts and Communications to the School of Technology (in the College of Engineering). In addition to teaching traditional Industrial Design students, it is working to teach creativity and problem finding skills to Manufacturing, Information Technology, and Technology and Engineering Education students.

An example of technology moving into design education is that John Maeda, with degrees in Computer and Electrical Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology is now the president of the Rhode Island School of Design.

Is Bruce Nussbaum right in thinking that current design education is not re-defining itself fast enough to keep up with the quickly evolving application of design beyond the traditional design arts? The answer to this question is yes. But rather than limiting design education to one simple entity housed in the Visual Arts, the author thinks the answer lies in the creation of three separate but related fields of design education—Business centered design, Technology centered design, and Human Value/Culture centered design.

Design Education for Business and Technology

The new model for design education that the author is proposing is basically the idea that the design mind-set can (and should) be applied on top of some primary knowledge or skill-set outside of the idea of creative thinking. For Manufacturing, this means that a creative/divergent/user-centered mind-set would be taught along side topics such as Supply Chain Management, Materials and Processes, etc.. For Business, it means that a creative/divergent/user-centered mind-set would be taught along side topics such as Accounting, Finance, Entrepreneurship, etc.

Similar to design schools today, where certain talents and aptitudes are filtered for in limited enrollment programs (not everyone gets to be a *designer*), these manufacturing and business focused “design” schools would

filter their student populations, looking for those students who have creative, flexible, and divergent aptitudes.

Splitting out these other areas of interest within design education allows current design education programs to re-identify and strengthen a primary core expertise that may have been left behind in the expansion to cover other fields that were clamoring for design thinking.

Design Education Focusing on Human Value

Following the model described above for business and technology, Design disciplines should apply “design thinking” on top of some foundational skill set that comes from the area of Human Values. What is this primary skill-set? This needs to be articulated and communicated.

Based on the simple division of the human values circle discussed earlier there are at least three primary areas of expertise that can be chosen as a foundation for a re-invigorated human values-based design education program: People and Systems, Tools and Artifacts, and Creations and Performances.

Creation and performance is the easiest category to use as a basis for design education. This is the Art realm. This amounts to technical excellence in the area of Artistic performance. But it also amounts to an excellent understanding of the nature and value of artistic activity, and the role that creation and performance plays in the creation of culture. Have the design disciplines separated themselves too far from their artistic core?

Tools and artifacts is the area that represents the transition between the “study of” and the “performance of”. This represents history and criticism and would provide a designer with the ability to articulate and communicate value within a broader context of human achievement.

People and systems push us back into the realm of psychology, sociology, and anthropology with the purpose of “sense making”. With this direction as their primary skill-set, designers become experts in understanding the idea of users vs. customers vs. consumers. Designers in this area help us make sense of people and their behaviors.

Each of these three flavors provides a way for a designer (mind-set) to have a valid primary skill-set that is valued within the larger bubble of design with a capital “D”.

One of the positive results of having expanded design education programs into a more interdisciplinary space is that designers now have a better understanding of what is valuable to the rest of the world. With this in mind, perhaps the “Creations and Performances” model is not the best “primary” skill-set for everyone that wants to be a designer.

Conclusions

Back to Bruce Nussbaum and his question as to why design schools are not playing the role of champion of Design with a capital “D”.

Design schools are not playing this role primarily, because this type of “design” (Design with a capital “D”) is the collective influence of creative people in a variety of disciplines. Therefore, it should be taught in a variety of places. Traditional design schools are dealing with the application of creative thinking as it applies to Human Values. There are other applications of design related to business and technology, but design programs should be developed to address their specific needs.

The “top consultancies” that he mentions are multi-disciplinary creative think tanks that employ “creative” people from a variety of disciplines. They are all “designers” in the sense that they are creative individuals who share some common traits such as being flexible, user centered, and iterative, and have a high tolerance for

ambiguity. But, in addition to these traits, they each have wildly differing expert skill-sets that contribute to a more dynamic and synergistic whole. They are successful precisely, because they do not come from the same place or school.

Release traditional design schools from the burden of having to own creative education. A better question would be, “How can we develop appropriate Design schools within other traditions?”

Freed from this burden and traditional design, schools can become even better as they reach deeper into their tradition and find some old things that have been lost, and some new things that might be beneficial.

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Can University Be a Transformative Environment? Fostering Critical Reflection Through Art in Higher Education*

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The uncertainty of postmodern world is a common belief. This uncertainty influences citizens in all aspects of their lives (personal, professional, social, etc.). The question arises intensively: How can people be prepared for this continuous changing? One of the suggestions presented in current literature is the development of critical reflection. Educational environment can play a major role in this domain. The need for the development of critical reflection is especially noted in the higher education framework. Universities can become a “holding” environment for transformation. This study underlines the importance of preparing young students as future professionals and citizens, by developing their critical reflection. A practical method is discussed and concerns the use and benefits of the aesthetic experience in a transformative learning procedure. The research presented here is based on the application of this method and aims to the reinforcement of specific dimensions of adulthood in a university environment. The application was carried out on students of the department of educational studies at a Greek regional university. One of the topics analyzed through art was the notion of “useful knowledge” and was part of a wider range of applications that concern the process of learning.

Keywords: critical reflection, art, higher education, transformative learning

Introduction

The postmodern world is characterized by uncertainty. This uncertainty influences citizens in all aspects of their lives (personal, professional, social, etc.). According to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007, p. 259), nothing can be interpreted in an absolute way; there is no single theoretical framework for examining social and political issues. In this frame, the self is not considered as unified and authentic but multiple and ever changing, under a continuous construction and reconstruction. Therefore, postmodernism can be seen either as a pessimistic and negative assessment of fragmentation or as a hopeful, tentative, and non-ideological one (Merriam et al., 2007, pp. 259-260).

The question arises intensively: How can people be prepared for this continuous changing? One of the suggestions presented in current literature is the development of critical reflection. As Merriam et al. (2007) observed, in postmodern societies “to fight the hegemony of the system, citizens must engage in rational

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discourse about sources of power, knowledge, and oppression in the hope of redressing the current imbalance between the powers of the lifeworld versus the system” (p. 250).

Educational environment can play a major role in this domain. The need for the development of critical reflection is noted in the higher education framework, where the reconsideration of traditional educational methods seems imperative. The questions seek for an answer: How do we learn? What do we learn? What is important for us to learn? It is important at this level of education to evaluate knowledge before endorsing it, as the students are tomorrow’s citizens, who will be undertaking essential roles in society.

The Evolution of Consciousness and the Role of University as a Transformative Environment

While we grow up we construct our experiences in a mental organization. According to Kegan, there are five orders of consciousness, from the simpler and more atomistic (in young ages) to the most complicated, composite and critically reflected. To understand this, first we must think how we construct knowledge. “Definition” is a minimum way of categorizing knowledge, because it takes the concrete example as an instance or an element of a bigger principle of knowing that includes all the concrete examples. So, examples are an element not the principle itself. Therefore, reflective thinking requires a mental “place” to stand apart from, or outside of a durably created idea and “bend back” our attention to focus on our own products (Kegan, 1994, pp. 26-27).

Mental organization has an inner logic, an “epistemologic”. The root of any principle of mental organization is the subject-object relationship. Kegan claims that “subject” refers to those elements of our knowing that we are identified with, tied to, fused with, or embedded in. We cannot control or reflect upon what is subject. On the other hand, “object” refers to those elements of our knowing that we can reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for, relate to each other, take control of, internalize, assimilate, or operate upon. All these expressions suggest that the element of knowing is not the whole of us, but it is distinct enough from us that we can do something with it. We *have* object but we *are* subject. Subject is absolute, but object is relative. Subject is immediate but object is mediate. Only if the adolescent reaches an upper order of consciousness can move from being the *subject* to being the *object* of one’s experiencing (Kegan, 1994, p. 32).

Therefore, this transmutation from subject to object is not an easy procedure. In fact, there is a necessity for provision of an effective support. Such support constitutes a holding environment that provides both welcoming acknowledgment to exactly who the person is right now as he/she is, and fosters the person’s developmental transformation or the process by which the whole (“how I am”) becomes gradually a part (“how I was”) of a new whole (“how I am now”) (Kegan, 1994, p. 43).

Universities could and should be such a holding environment. They should because, according to research, almost no one of the undergraduate students reaches the upper order of consciousness (Kegan, 1994, p. 292). Therefore, the necessity of fostering critical thinking arises intensively, if we consider the challenges students have to face right after completing their studies. But how university could become a transformative environment?

The Necessity of Critical Thinking in Higher Education

Focusing on higher education, it is mentioned that when educating students, it is important to emphasize not

only on the content of the lesson, but on the learning process as well (Halx, 2010). As Kegan (1994) stated, "... The expectations upon us... demand something more than mere behavior, the acquisition of specific skills or the mastery of particular knowledge. They make demands on our minds, on how we know, on the complexity of our consciousness" (p. 5). Besides, one of the main goals in higher education is the evaluation of knowledge from students before "consuming" it (Tsui, 2003, p. 328). This means that is useful for students to learn to think critically and evaluate the knowledge that is offered to them, before evolving in society, playing functional and leadership roles.

This effort, however, comes across some obstacles within the formal educational system, where in some cases and especially in Greece, the adhesion to traditional education is evident. Students are used to conventional and traditional ways of education, beginning from their early schooldays on through to the University, with some differentiations, but without any significant deviations. Therefore, they are not familiar with non-formal forms of education which promote critical thinking, such as the educational activity suggested herein.

Another obstacle is the level of maturity of the students. This issue (Jarvis, 2004, pp. 51-54, 82-90), pertains to the fact that students may be adults at age; they are however going through the period of early adulthood, which means that there is a possibility that they share several characteristics of minors (lack of autonomy, formulation of personal and social identity, etc.). According to Knowles (1998, pp. 61-62), even though the knowledge provided at universities, which belong to the field of formal education, is addressed to adults, it is not considered adult education, as students are treated not as adults.

But how do we define adulthood? The word *adolescence* and *adult* both come from the same Latin verb, *adolescere*, which means "to grow up". By looking what a culture asks its youth to "grow up to", we can discover that culture's definition of adulthood, the implication being that the culmination of adolescence constitutes adulthood (Kegan, 1994, p. 20). But Kegan questions if this is true today and mainly, asks how we want an adolescent's mind to change.

Transformative Learning Through Aesthetic Experience

In this study, we examine the efficiency of an innovative method named *transformative learning through aesthetic experience*. Deriving from the field of adult education, the method that has been introduced by Kokkos (2010) is based on the theoretical approach of transformative learning. According to this approach, the way we interpret reality is determined by our habits of mind (Lintzeris, 2007, pp. 48-49). The main goal of adult learning is to help learners reevaluate the foundations of their dysfunctional perceptions and question the validity of those that are problematic, in order to develop a more viable image of the world and their position in it (Kokkos, 2005, pp. 75-76). The means to achieve that is reflection, the process of re-examining perceptions and values, which form the way we understand reality and act (Mezirow, 1998).

A very efficient way in fostering critical thinking is art. Studies have shown that art can be a useful tool for the reinforcement of the transformative process (Cranton, 2006). Works of art can facilitate thinking through the critical observation needed for their interpretation. As Dewey (1934) suggested, art functions as a means in order to express meanings that are embodied in the work of art. At the same time, the work of art consists of broader and deeper meanings compared to the usual experiences of everyday life, so we need to use our imagination in order to interpret it. As he (1934) quoted: "Imagination is the only gateway through which these

meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather... the conscious adjustment of the new and the old is imagination” (p. 283).

Imagination is a means for compassion, to step into another individuals’ position and see alternative realities, thus the realities of others, leaving data and definitions behind (Greene, 2000, p. 94). Searching through art helps to discover cultural differences and new prospective for the world we live in. Things we take for granted are often revealed in unexpected ways though a work of art (Greene, 2000, pp. 101-104, 128-133).

The method suggested here is based on the theoretical frame of Freire on approaching ideas holistically, through the aesthetic experience. One of the basic techniques for gradually deepening in the piece of art is Perkins’ (1994) “Intelligent Eye”, a technique for the systematic observation of works of art. This method uses the aesthetic experience without replacing other techniques for the development of critical thinking. This means that art observation can be combined with several techniques, such as brainstorming, role play, case study, etc.

The stages of the teaching method are six. The first stage refers to the identification of educational needs. At this stage, an effort is made in order to determine the existing needs on critical inquiry of the participant’s stereotypical assumptions on a specific subject, while an interest on the subject is also encouraged. At the second stage, an inquiry on the participants’ assumptions takes place. The participants express their assumptions on the subject, individually and as a group. After that, the formulation of subthemes and questions revealed follows (this is the third stage). The educator examines the answers and indentifies the subthemes that should be addressed holistically and critically, in order to reevaluate the opinions stated. At the fourth stage, the educator selects several works of art to serve as a stimulus for the elaboration of the subthemes. The works of art can be paintings, sculptures, photographs, literature, poetry, theatre, music, etc., while their meanings should be connected to the subthemes. Then the educator presents the works of art to the participants. By gradually going deeper and analyzing the works of art, the participants are able to approach the various subthemes from different perspectives. After completing the procedure, the opportunity is given to the participants to re-evaluate their initial assumptions and observe any changes.

An Application Example

This method was applied to student of a regional Greek University (Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras). Our aim was to make them think about learning process in universities and their preparation as tomorrow citizens and professionals. What do they learn? What is useful for them to know? How should they perceive knowledge in higher education? The themes that were addressed to them were part of a wider cycle of applications concerning the learning process. We must note that the research is still in progress and here we present only some of the first results.

The first meeting began with an introductory discussion on the subject of learning. This is the *first stage* of the teaching method, whose goal is to investigate the educational needs of the participants as well as to encourage their interest on the subject. During the discussion, an effort was made to emphasize on the assumptions the students had formed from their experiences in the field of education. Through the exchange of ideas, it seemed evident that their thoughts were confused. Some opinions needed to be clarified, others to be

reassessed and others to be reinforced. The points that called for an intervention were highlighted and the subthemes that would be worked on were defined.

After the first discussion, the *second stage* followed, where the learners were asked to formulate their assumptions on the subject, in a more systematic way, individually, and in writing. After that, they expressed their views and shared them with the group. The analytical elaboration of the student's answers lead to the identification of assumptions, which the author felt needed further elaboration (this phase was the *third stage* of the procedure). Some of these issues were the concept of useful knowledge, the behavioral modification, and the transmission of values according to society's norms. These issues are connected with the professional development of students and their future integration as functional members in society.

After that, works of art were chosen that had the potential to be used as an incentive for our subjects. The elaboration of the artworks (*fifth stage*) was done through a series of workshops. During this procedure, the topics of interest were analyzed through the observation of artworks while the observation technique of the artworks was mostly based on Perkins' (1994) method. For instance, one of the subthemes was the definition of useful knowledge. The artworks chosen for this topic were some excerpts ("A Bird in the Schoolyard" (Kazantzakis, 1961) (famous Greek writer) and "Days of Reading" (Proust, 1909)), a poem ("Every Year in September" (Brecht, 1937)) and a painting ("School of Athens" (Raffaello, 1511)). After the elaboration of the artworks, the participants were given the questionnaire they had answered at the first meeting. They were asked to review the answers they had given and to answer again, in order to notice any changes that may have occurred on their initial assumptions after the series of interventions that took place.

From the participant's answers to the final questionnaire as well as from the discussions that took place during the application of this teaching method, it was evident that in many cases, there was a shift from the initial assumptions as stated in the beginning. These differences could be considered as transitions to more elaborated opinions that went through a reflective procedure.

Examining some representative opinions that were expressed on definition of useful knowledge, we conclude that initially they considered useful knowledge what would help the student progress to a next level (to obtain good marks, to move up to the next grade, to move to the level of higher education, etc.).

Georgia: "The goal of learning is to 'transmit' knowledge to the children that will help them in their future course in school".

Athina: "The goal of education is to provide children with all the necessary skills they will need in their lives ... These skills pertain to progressing in the educational levels they will follow".

Maria: "The objective of every student is a good mark at the end of the year". (personal communication, 2010)

However, during the last phase, the knowledge that was considered "useful" was based on motives, the personal needs and skills of the learner. The objective of this type of knowledge is the holistic development of the individual, rather than good marks.

Georgia: "The aim is for the student to evolve as a person, to reach a better self".

Athina: "I think I should be more conscious when reflecting on the teacher's role and the type of knowledge offered in a learning experience. ... In any case, the students and the development of their potentials must be in the centre of it".

Maria: "The good mark is not the objective but the reward and perhaps the motive. The important is the knowledge that remains after the good mark and the degree that this knowledge is helpful for the personal development of the student". (personal communication, 2010)

Conclusions

From the answers given by learners participating in the application of this teaching method, as well as from the different subjects that were discussed during the process, we noted several alterations in their initial assumptions. Through the process of analyzing artworks, in combination with their own relevant experiences that were withdrawn from their memories, participants felt like they were actually “living” the situations under question. The procedure had a strong impact on their assumptions.

Although this research is still in progress, it is possible at this point to acknowledge a shift of thought among the participants, from an instrumental to a more emancipatory conceptualization of learning. According to Cranton (2006):

Emancipatory knowledge is fostered through a variety of reformist educator roles. Critical questioning, the presentation of diverse points of view, the examination of existing social norms and the exploration of alternative and radical perspectives helps students become more open in their views and free from the constraints of unquestioned assumptions. (p. 116)

In conclusion, the evaluation of the method applied showed that it does facilitate the achievement of educational goals and the role of art is approved of vital importance. Therefore, we can assume that universities could become transformative environments. If one of the main objectives of the education is for students to shift from being subject to being object, then this research offers some examples how to do it. Enriching the variety of pedagogical practices, introducing active learning, fostering critical thinking of students, cultivating freedom of speech, fantasy and thought, and being open to multiple interpretations are some efficient ways of turning university to a “holding” environment that could support future citizens’ developmental transformation.

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Drama and Theatre as Vehicle for Youth Empowerment and Reorientation: A Proposition for National Development and Integration

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Apart from serving the functions of enlightenment and entertainment, the theatre is also useful in several other ways. For instance, it is a source of employment, cultural preservation, presentation, and projection. It also serves therapeutic functions and as social control mechanism in a society. It is a mirror of life, reflecting and highlighting the moral codes and the ills of society and castigating social evil and its doers. Beyond all of these, the theatre could also serve as an agent of civilization, community mobilisation, and youth development and emancipation. This paper discusses how the potentials of the youth in a country such as Nigeria, could be harnessed and deployed for the purposes of national orientation, development, and integration, using culture, drama, and theatre as the defining tools for this involvement.

Keywords: youth empowerment, national orientation, development, drama and theatre

Introduction

The *Websters New World Dictionary* (Guralink, 2004) described youth as “the state or quality of being young, especially of being vigorous and lively” (p. 1650). It also described youth as “a period of life coming between Childhood and maturity”. It is sometimes also regarded as the period when someone is a teenager, but we will all agree that the society’s concept of youth transcends this confinement to teenage years. A youth could therefore be a young adult or even someone who has matured in age, but feels young at heart. By this concept, it becomes difficult to place an age limit on the youth. At least, we are very familiar with the slogans “Life begins at forty” and “A fool at forty is a fool forever”. Firstly, if someone were to “begin” life at age 40, at what age would the person be deemed to be old or not to be youthful? Secondly, age 40 seems to be the age that society expects everyone to have attained full maturity and therefore act with total responsibility and infallible judgment.

In spite of the foregoing argument, however, we find that, in every human situation and society, three basic categories of age groups could be delineated. These are: (1) those who have matured in age, usually between 50 and 70 and above. These could be described as *Elders*; (2) those who are between the ages of 25 and 45. These could be described as *Young Adults*; and (3) those who are between the ages of 15 and 25. These could be described as *Young and Youthful*.

The “Youth” phase is one that is characterized by physical, emotional, intellectual, mental, and social change and development. These changes are also accompanied by feelings of growing up, with all the assumptions of growing up. There are notions of or desire for individuality and freedom. The youth, at this stage, want to establish their identities and personalities. They want to, or think they should, break away from various constraints and restrictions—from parents and the society at large. As a result of physiological development, youth are generally more energetic and active—full of life, as it were. They usually think they can, and want to, do many things which they may not have been able to do before. They are also more adventurous—wanting to try out new things and ideas. These attributes of youth have implications for their attitude and behavior—whether positive or negative. Another characteristic of youth, which could have positive or negative consequences is their innocent—“youthful innocence”. The youth can be seen as vulnerable in this regard: vulnerable to abuse, misdirection, and exploitation.

Our reference of the word “Youth” will be captured within the last two categories. These two groups are essentially, the leaders of tomorrow, the workforce of the state, and the wealth of the future. To be all these and more, the youth, who are basically the human resources of the future, must have their potentials harnessed and developed to maximum advantage for the benefit of their society and its development.

What Is Development?

Generally speaking, development is the process of gradually becoming bigger, better, stronger, or more advanced. Development has remained an elusive concept especially in the context of African nations. Even when defined in its most simplified form as the increase in Gross National Product, most African economies have been unable to make significant impact in that direction. And this is because, far beyond the economic index, many African nations are characterized by declining per capita incomes, diminishing healthcare services, sliding literacy rates, and rising impoverishment of large populations and skyrocketing unemployment. In addition, they also suffer from massive deficits, inflation, capital flight, crumbling infrastructure, and severe brain drain—all of which are antithetical to development.

Therefore, in view of the controversies surrounding “development” as a concept, Hettne (2008, p. 8) informed us that there is a need to reconsider purpose, content, agency, and context in the reconstituted field of development studies. The relevant theoretical schools, since the 1940s, include *Modernisation*, *Structuralism*, and *Dependency*. But according to Hettne (2008), “The reconstruction of War-torn Europe provided the model for state-directed modernisation of the ‘new nations’” (p. 8). In this model, development was largely sociological, economic, and political in nature, and underdevelopment was defined in terms of differences between rich and poor nations. Development, therefore, implied the bridging of the gap by means of an imitative process, in which the less developed countries gradually assumed the qualities of the developed.

Development, according to Potter (2008, p. 67), involves three things—*theories*, *strategies*, and *ideologies*. Development Theories refer to logical propositions which aim to explain how development has occurred in the past and or how it should occur in the future. Development strategies can be described as the practical paths to development in effort to stimulate change within particular nations, regions, or continents and *ideologies* are contained in the different development agendas which reflect the different goals and objectives such as social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, moral, and even religious influences. For instance, Potter (2008) said that both in theory and practice... “early perspectives on development were almost exclusively concerned with

promoting economic growth. Subsequently, however, the predominate ideology with the academic literature changed to emphasize political, social, ethical, cultural, ecological and other dimensions of the wider process of development and change” (p. 68).

This paper shall concentrate on the dimensions of Culture and the Arts, within the context of the Youth, Theatre Arts, and National development. In other words, what is the relationship between Youth development and creative arts? How can the Youths be culturally aware and artistically engaged such that it will impact not only on their personal development but also on the development of the Nation?

Youth empowerment by definition is a process in which the youths are engaged in activities and programmes that seek to meet their basic personal, social, and economic needs in a way they will feel cared for, feel valued, useful, and be spiritually grounded. Also the process helps to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute to society. The challenge is to develop capacities, promote values, and plan quality experiences with young people. This process, quoting Pitman from <http://www.cyd.aed.org>, involves all the people around a youth; family and community such as teachers, youth workers, employers, health providers, and peers.

Young person will not be able to build essential skills and competencies unless their families and communities provide them with the support and opportunities they need along the way. Support can be motivational and it can be strategic. It can take many different forms, but it must be affirming, respectful, and ongoing. Opportunities are chances that provided for young people to learn how to act in the world around them in order to explore, express, belong, and influence. Opportunities give young people chance to test ideas and experiment with different roles. Pitman (2000) submitted that, “Youths who are properly guided and motivated, exhibit certain characteristics sometimes defined as ‘outcomes’ or ‘assets’ of youth and development” (p. 2).

These include but not restricted to: (1) high self-worth and self-esteem; (2) sense of belonging and membership; (3) perception of responsibility and autonomy; (4) constructive use of time; (5) commitment to learning; (6) positive identity and values; (7) feeling of mastery and future; (8) civic and social involvement; (9) employability; (10) mental, physical, and intellectual health; and (11) a sense of self awareness and spirituality, etc.

Drama and Theatre in Education

At this juncture, we would like to examine the connection or relationship of all the foregoing to the theatre. In other words, what role can the theatre play in youth education and development? Or what roles do the youth have to play with the development of the theatre?

Drama and the theatre by their very nature, purpose, and functions are development-oriented. By nature, drama is a group activity. Self (1975, p. 12) in his book, *A Practical Guide to Drama in the Secondary School*, informed us that dramatic activity allows the individual involved in it to come to terms with his experience and to explore his environment, mind, and imagination. Affirming that drama is primarily a group activity, he stated that the aim is: “... to develop confidence and self assurance, to explore and come to terms with emotions and experiences which the child has discovered in himself and observed in others”.

It is pertinent to mention that one of the potent tools of engaging in creative dramatics is “improvisation”, which Hodgson and Ernest (1974, p. 4) also described as a vital means of exploring the dramatic and human

situation or a way of group activity. Also, looking at the use of drama and theatre in education for young people, which is referred to as Drama in Education, Hodgson and Richards (1974) informed us that:

In teaching young people, there is need for some practical means of exploring reality, a need to co-ordinate specialist skills and investigations, a point of focus where the individual and the group can find expression and can experience the relationship between the various activities throughout the timetable. (p. 5)

Unfortunately, some educationists still see drama as merely “extra-curricular activity”. Whereas, it is more than that, a subject that can be used to teach other subjects, a discipline which is now being studied in tertiary institutions up to Doctorate level, and a course that creates professionals who are employable and can employ others can surely not just be described as extra-curricular.

Examining the connection between education and drama, Umukoro (2002, p. 10) wrote that every youth is endowed with certain natural gifts, lying latent, and inactive awaiting the magic touch of education, like the stigma of a flower waiting to receive the pollen from the pollinating bee. Umukoro (2002) regretted that:

All too often we are quick to write off a particular child who displays absolute lack of competence in a specific discipline when he or she is a genius waiting to be discovered in another. The process of exploration which is best carried out through Drama and Theatre must always continue unabated to discover all such hidden talents and nurture them to the fullest extent possible. (p. 10)

Apart from functioning as a means of developing skills and competences, the theatre can also be a source of employment for our youth. Okoh (2005) quoting Lord Goodman, claimed thus: “Young people lack values, lack certainties, lack guidance and they need something to turn to, and need it more desperately” (p. 414).

In her view, if young people are captured for the arts, they are redeemed from many of the dangers which occupy their attention in a completely unprofitable and destructive fashion.

In his essay titled “Theatre in the Academe and the Question of National Development”, Osofisan (2001, p. 110) reflected on the benefits and skills that theatre students acquire as they undergo training in drama schools. He (2001) noted, “Essentially, drama students are prepared for full citizenship, and raised to be responsible, thinking adults in the community” (p. 110).

Continuing, he explained that theatre students are taught to have a deep sense of community which does not at the same time obviate their sense of selfhood; they are taught to develop capacity for compassion, candour, and integrity; they are taught how the world is around them, with all its contradictions, its cracks, felicities, and pathos; they are taught how the world can change, perhaps just a little bit, if we refuse to shut our eyes to evil and do not allow ourselves to be cowed either by pain or intimidation or discouraged by treachery and calumny; they are taught that individuals matter and that all our actions, however small, matter in the struggle against evil and the conquest of happiness. All these “humanizing ideals of pedagogy”, Osofisan averred, make those in theatre arts contribute their best to the nation’s process of becoming.

In his words:

One of the problems of our nation today is the acute mistrust that prevails between people of differing ethnic groups or religious or other affiliations. This mistrust is often the great obstacle to the forging of a national identity and the source of the frequent frustration of National goals. But one of the very first principles in our work in Theatre Arts is that of collaboration. (2001, p. 111)

Drama and Theatre as Social Development Tool

Many Nigerian artistes who have excelled in their acts over the years have been invited and honoured with awards in the United States and all over Europe. The video film industry christened “Nollywood”, has been a major image builder for Nigeria (though it has its problems). In the same vein, the music industry and the stand-up comedy sectors have also provided gainful employments not only for the main acts themselves, but for several support staff such as the technical personnel, managers, promoters, and personal aids in their thousands. It is necessary to note that all these efforts are in spite of the negligible support from the government.

Since the artist is a student of society, it is a fact that literary writers and performing artistes across climes have always used their works to contribute to their countries’ process of development by making social comments and articulating issues needing urgent political attention before they degenerate into national crisis. In Nigeria, Musicians such as Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Sunny Ade, late Sunny Okosun, late Christy Essien Igbokwe and lately, Tuface Idiba, D Banj, Darey Art-Alade, Sunny Nneji, etc., have used their songs to mobilize the citizenry towards social reawakening at different times. For instance, veteran singer, Onyeka Onwenu once preached *unity* with her song “One Love” (1993). In the same vein, King Sunny Ade brought together over 20 artistes in a collaboration to advocate for the *patriotic spirit* from every citizen, to lift Nigeria up and keep it one, in the popular song “Nigeria yi ti gbogbo wa ni” (“Nigeria Belongs to Us All”, 2003).

In the theatrical arena, dramatists like Ogunde, Soyinka, Clark, Rotimi, etc., have also used their plays to react to different societal inconsistencies within the polity, in a bid to re-direct the course of the nation. Soyinka’s *A Dance of the Forest* (1963) and *Madman and Specialists* (1972) and J. P. Clark’s *The Raft* (1974) exemplify this claim.

In addition, younger generations of writers who later emerged and embraced the Marxist theory of revolutionary approach as the solution to the political and economic rape of the people in the country, have also lent their voices to this struggle. According to Obafemi (2001, p. 168), these set of ideologically committed writers such as Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Kole Omotoso, late Bode Osanyin, Tess Onwueme, etc., use their works to discuss contemporary social problems with the aim of raising mass awareness of a positive revolutionary alternative to the prevailing decadence in the country. In order words, these dramatists simply employ the potential of the theatrical medium as a weapon for generating social change in the country. As Obafemi (2001) put it: “They create art that is not just sheer propaganda, but art that is both politically correct and artistically powerful” (p. 168).

Generally, the theatre gives new experiences, helps to develop awareness and teaches awareness of others. Drama helps the participants, both the artist and the audience to appreciate and evaluate new situations and come to terms with the social environment. For the participant, drama helps to develop self-expression, skill, and evaluation; it helps to increase confidence and self assurance. It gives the participant an understanding of his/her emotions and fears and so on. If we look at these values critically, we come to realize that they are similar to the “outcomes” and “assets” of youth development earlier discussed. What this means is that dramatic or theatrical activities, have the potentials in bringing out these values in the youth.

We cannot afford to pay lip service to these urgent needs anymore. As anyone knows, it is the arts that cause changes in attitudes, customs, and beliefs all over the world. It is the arts that improve spirituality. Indeed, as Amuka (2005) argued:

To retard the development of the arts (and theatre) is to retard the development of the nation and of science and technology. It is to delay the re-humanization of the (African) polity, whose bestiality, in the form of corruption, injustice, ethnic and religious intolerance, now devours with relish, all indices of development within its reach. (p. 273)

He admonished that we must turn to the history of Egypt, Benin, Ife, Greece, Rome, Germany, Japan, Britain, Russia, France, and the United States of America to learn, that all past and present great civilizations and world powers paid great attention to their arts, almost, a pre-requisite to national development. All the nations of Africa must take a cue from this and believe that developing the theatre, means developing the youths which translates to developing the nation.

Theatre for Development (TfD)

A more direct engagement and connectedness of drama and theatre to the community is a programme called “Theatre for Development” (TfD). The methodology involves youths or student artists going to rural or sub-urban communities to tackle specific problems. They live with the people in the community for a while, interact with them through interrogation and observation and in the process discover the communities’ most pressing problems. And using the medium of the theatre, they dramatise these problems, alongside the people in the community. The aim of this programme is to create awareness and possibly a paradigm change. Osofisan (2001) confirmed: “... The TfD always, proves to be a most splendid means of building, and enhancing, not only community relations’, but also, national cohesion” (p. 114).

The TfD is variously referred to as “community theatre”, “popular theatre”, “alternative theatre”, “campaign theatre”, or “Liberation theatre”. Odhiambo (2008, p. 19) reported that TfD was actually, coined as a phrase in Botswana in 1973, to describe an approach to reconcile Freirian concepts to a development project that used theatre as a stimulus. It emerged with the distinctive purpose of using the theatre as a vehicle and a code of raising consciousness. In the words of Odhiambo (2008):

... Theatre for Development is characterized by active participation of the community in which it is taking place, during which they identify their problems, reflect on how and why the problems affect them and, with the insights gained through an engagement with theatre performance, explore possible solutions... The goal of Theatre for Development is to stimulate community consciousness and reflection towards social transformation. (p. 19)

Examples of successful TfD projects in Nigeria are *Wasan Manoma* (plays for farmers) (1977); and *Wasan Maska* (dealing with themes of Hygiene) (1979) organised by ABU Collective, Department of English and Drama, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Also, at the Department of Theatre Arts and Music, Lagos State University, TfD projects have been successfully mounted at Ganyingbo in Badagry, Eredo in Epe, and in Ikorodu local government areas where problems such as ethnic suspicion, infrastructural negligence, and water pollution have been addressed. One experience of the Theatre Arts Unit, Lagos State University that is worthy of brief mention is that of Eredo Local Government Area of Lagos State.

The TfD project was embarked upon as a result of the face-off between the government of the then Governor of Lagos State, Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the federal government headed by Olusegun Obasanjo. It would be recalled that the Lagos State government had created additional local government areas in “contravention” of the constitution of the country. The parties had sought legal interpretations of the constitution to support their positions. The impasse had led to the federal government withholding allocation meant for the state pending when it would revert to the status quo. However, the state government had

maintained its position. The financial hardship encountered by the state and which had direct effect on the masses was pivotal to the theme of the workshop titled “Federal-State Relations and Resource Control: Impact on Local Government Administration in Lagos State”.

The workshop which held from 29th April to 8th May, 2005 addressed various issues pertaining to funding, resource control, and the role of the local people on who governs them. The workshop attracted people in government both at the state and local government levels, traditional leaders, civil society groups, members of the community, and the media. Through various sketches derived from the data collected by the participants, pointed ways out of the quagmire. The impact of these sketches remained in the consciousness of the people, long after the participants and their facilitators had gone. This is one out of the many roles of the theatre in social engineering. We must note that two lecturers—who were themselves youths—worked with the students on this project using other youths to discuss issues that are germane to their existence as a collective in order to bring change.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we believe that a lot more can be achieved through the activities of TfD to tackle some of the socio-political problems in the country, such as the Niger Delta militancy, the Boko Haram, and other forms of terrorism and social evils like kidnapping, Ritual killing, internet scam, corruption, and even religious conflicts. To achieve maximum benefits of national orientation through these creative arts programmes, government might need to play a major role. For instance, there might be an urgent need to re-visit the issue of public funding for the arts in Nigeria.

The NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) should be established and well funded to provide financial assistance to artistes and groups. It is noteworthy and perhaps, praiseworthy that President Goodluck Jonathan during a dinner organized in his honour with players in the entertainment industry in attendance on Friday 25th February, 2011, announced on STV (Silverbird Television), the approval of a special fund to the tune of 200 million Naira to support the growth of the cultural and entertainment industry. A few months later, it was reported that the money had been deposited in CBN (Central Bank of Nigeria) through the BOI (Bank of Industry). Many months after, even as at the time of writing this paper, nothing has been heard of the money and if care is not taken, the purpose of its award may eventually be defeated and never met.

Most often, even when government has good intentions, it is either ill-advised or misguided towards wrong implementation of policies. Using the American, and most European Countries’ model, as example, monies allocated to the arts are managed through endowment agencies, arts Councils or regional boards and not banks.

In addition to legislating the establishment of the endowment fund for the arts, government should also encourage the establishment of community theatres and performing centres in all local government and council headquarters to serve the purpose of youth activities and development-oriented programmes especially in the arts. Also, theatre, music, and cultural festivals should be held regularly for the preservation and promotion of our heritage, apart from engaging the participants gainfully. Cinemas and film infrastructures should be built throughout the Country to further enable and encourage the growth of the Video Film Industries. And finally, apart from formal school training in the arts, occasional workshops, seminars, and capacity building programmes in drama and theatre should be organized regularly to discover talents, develop skills, and empower more youths for sustainable national orientation and development.

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