Book Review: Russell Brand's *Revolution of Love*

Shelby Payne

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Russell Brand’s latest book *Revolution* is dedicated, quite endearingly, as follows: “Beneath the fear, doubt, and conditioning, you know we can create a better world, don’t you? This book is dedicated to you.” To anyone who picks up this book, I can personally confirm that it is indeed dedicated to us—to the people of a twisted and stale society in need of major transformations. Brand’s language is, as would be expected, straightforward in nature and laced with a humor that is all his own, which makes for an entertaining read on a subject that might otherwise not be so exciting for the majority of our society. Let’s face it, a man’s spiritual awakening and his view on the world’s governments wouldn’t normally be a topic today’s materialistic-minded people find intriguing. Take the time to read one page, though, and I guarantee you’ll be hooked.

Each chapter of this quirky novel takes the reader through an enlightening snap shot of Brand’s life—lessons, epiphanies, experiences, and so on. I found myself riding a roller coaster of emotions as I flipped through the pages of his troubled childhood, emotionally and spiritually painful adolescence, the hell of addiction and adulthood, and the healing light of consciousness and awakening. Through all of this, however, he never ceased to make me laugh—uncontrollably at times, to the point I had to read whatever had caused the outburst to whoever might be sitting next to me. He proficiently entwines the hilarity of his comical character with the insight of an awakening individual capable of feeling the pain most of us imagine only lives inside the walls of our own sad, enslaved minds. What I found most enlightening about *Revolution*, however, is the fact that Brand’s personal awakening is tied directly to his realization that the world’s systems are the reason our people are riddled with misery and discontentment on a global scale.
Brand introduces us to this theory in the first chapter of his book. As a kid growing up in small-town England, he “was aware of an emptiness, a sadness, a nameless sense of disconnection” (Brand 5). When word began circulating around town that a shopping mall was being constructed, however, he was sure that the cure had been found. This “cure”, as he explains and elaborates on throughout the entirety of this book, is precisely the problem. *Revolution* stands as an eye-opener into the truth of an illusion that the world has embraced as reality. “What we’ve got,” he explains, “is one (socio-economic system) that is systematically inflating the wealth of the elite, rapidly suffocating everybody else, and it’s destroying the planet that we all live on” (Brand 9). Our lives are spent looking for contentment in material form. We have been trained to rely on a system that is, in all actuality, numbing us to the true state of being and making us hate ourselves. The misery that comes as a result of this backwards system is the reason so many of us, himself included, become addicted to everything from food, drugs and shopping to hate, religion and money. And this is exactly what the elite he refers to wants from us: to continuously feel the need to buy more things so that their “bejeweled fun bus of privilege” (an imaginary bus filled with the eighty-five most wealthy people on the planet) can continue on existing (Brand 26).

With all of this in mind, Brand then goes on to explain what the world needs: a revolution of consciousness—contentment in oneself so that the system is no longer able to stay afloat. Consumerism is not the path to happiness; inner-peace is. To reach this inner-peace, he explains, is to realize that everything—our entire society, way of life, and belief systems, is imaginary. All that we know to be “reality” is based on intangible ideas. These ideas become our lives; go to school, get a job, have a religion, get married, etc. So, then, our lives are spent pursuing what? Ideas? “We have been told that freedom is the ability to pursue our petty, trivial
desires when true freedom is freedom from these petty, trivial desires” (Brand 25).

The system relies on us. Without our willing cooperation, the “reality” that we live in and for would fail. Brand poses questions such as, what would happen if no one went to work? How would the world change if the elite were stripped of security? We have been brain-washed on a global scale to believe that we rely on the system when in truth the system relies on us. So how do we begin to change? He answers this question through the numerous life lessons and experiences he has had. Trial and error if you will. Since the revolution begins with the self, he explains his journey to inner-peace and what steps he took to get there. Meditation and yoga being central themes in this journey; but things like LSD and multiple arrests are just as crucial to his awakening.

Since there is no true timeline to Revolution, just randomly bundled topics and tales, I find it difficult to give a linear outline of Brand’s plan for justice and peace. The majority of the book addresses numerous global discrepancies, injustices and corrupt systems in an attempt (I assume) to simply educate his readers on what is actually going on in the world while their heads are trapped in their iPhones and pointless jobs. I suppose his plan of action can be summed up to a collective, responsible and humane transformation of the current mental, economic, and governmental systems—connectivity on both an individual and global scale. We serve one another just as much as we serve ourselves because, in truth, we are all interconnected; all we need is to drop the façade of this individualist and materialist-based society.

He takes us along as he travels back to where it all began, the shopping mall in his hometown. “I ask one or two people why they’re there, and no one seems to know” (Brand 291). As he explains his visit, the scene is illuminated with a new sense of understanding. The veil of this so-called “reality” has become translucent, and we watch the
experience through newly informed eyes. Brand goes on to wrap up the book with one last experience with a man named Eckhart Tolle (whom I personally found inspiration in over the past few years). Tolle explains to Brand who in turn explains to us that “the self is a construction,” a temporary construction at that (Brand 294). If we were to look beyond this self, beyond the sensations of pain, fear, misery, and whatever else we might be feeling; we would find an awareness that exists in all things. We would find an energy that compels all life; we would find love. And love is the answer.

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