Russell Brand’s Revolution [article introduction first draft]

Yes, the glittering party-boy turned kundalini yoga addict is still out there, plugging away for the revolution. Good on him! After all, “the world is fukt,” as no less than the staff at The Australian Financial Review agreed. [http://cdn0.mumbrella.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/fukt2.jpg]

Now seeing as this is the media (and not an accidentally printed draft either), I feel obliged to tell you that this revolution business is dangerous and misleading. Or perhaps I could smile and fondly remember that I too, in my youth, experienced such naïve ideals as Brand. Or I could inform you with genuine horror that Brand is actually making money of the book. What a hypocrite!

In all seriousness, The Guardian actually criticised Brand’s book on the basis that he went to a protest against abuse of asylum seekers in a chauffeur-driven limo. [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/24/britain-russell-brand-revolution-newsnight] You know you’re listening to middle-class fake-progressives when you hear indignation that someone is not only politically more radical than them, but richer too.

As Puerto Rican rapper-revolutionaries Calle 13 asked, “Who wrote this script? If I fight for education do I have to be illiterate?”

No, scratch all that! This is ImportantCool. I’m just going to tell you what’s in the book.

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“Kyoto is a McDonalds salad. Too little, too late.”

On America:

“Any country that puts the word “United” in its title has got something to hide, and I would suggest that it’s conflict.”

“In spite of creating this corporate kindergarten environment for their pals, if anyone else tries doing it, especially Arabs or Latinos, America will fuck them up. In El Salvador—along with Israel and Egypt, one of the countries that gets a lot of U.S. military aid and, in a common corollary, has one of the worst human-rights records—the United States trained a military unit at their facilities to wipe out half a dozen Latin American intellectuals, mostly Jesuit priests who were opposing the El Salvadoran government.”

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1 “Si lucho por los pobres, los económicamente de abajo, no puedo cobrar por mi trabajo ... ¿Cuál es el libreto? ¿Si lucho por los que no tienen educación, tengo que ser analfabeto?”
Cuba:
“They fuckin’ won a Revolution against America, which is to say, the big companies that America runs rackets for”

On the Illuminati and the Grays:
“I wish they were lizards; that would make more sense. Certainly they are manifesting a reality that comes from reptilian consciousness, in that selfishness and greed are short-sighted, survivalist impulses that are outmoded and must now be upgraded.”
“One website accused me of being illuminati—me, ol’ Russ! I was so flabbergasted, I squashed one of the eggs I was incubating.”

On Marketing:
“The same is true for Coke or Apple or any of them. If they sell you community, they are in fact individualistic; if they sell you youth, they’re steeped in decaying tradition and antiquated ideas like materialism”
“This drink. This drink will fuck you from your gums to your guts, but cold enough, the sugar and fizz will provide a blip, just long enough, to stop you opening a vein. Coke. Or Pepsi—doesn’t matter.”
“This phone will connect you to people everywhere, except for where you are, and sever you from God forever. Apple.”

Russell and Women:
“Like when your girlfriend wants to have a row because she’s got PMS but instead of saying that creates some bizarre reason to thump you, like, I dunno, nose-picking”
p. 143: Still only one woman quoted among his social critic heroes.

On corporations:
“We know we can’t trust there fuckers. Just look at the tobacco industry.”

On his personal history [there’s a lot of this]:

Going to Lakeside mall, then a school in the town. “and often have to wrench the pendulum of my extreme nature back to equanimity before I tell kids to riot.”

p. 40: “I don’t feel irresponsible for telling kids not to vote; I feel like I deserve a Blue Peter badge for not telling them to riot.”

From drug addict to ... “Well, on this I’m qualified to postulate. I may not have successfully overthrown a government or devised more productive, fairer, and more enjoyable social systems before, so there will be some conjecture in this book; what I have done, though, with considerable assistance, is navigated myself from one set of feelings where drinking and taking drugs were my only solution to a state where, one day at a time, I never drink or take drugs. What happened?.”

“I was in spiritual pain. I have come to believe that the reason I was using drugs was to treat a spiritual malady.”

p. 90: Acid rapping about the hollow gratification of celebrity

“My whole life, I have sought comfort in individualism. I escaped the banality of my background with the flamboyance of my haircut, the low expectations of my class with the grandiosity of my parlance, and the fear of being ordinary by becoming a professional weirdo. In a way, my success in show business represents little more than the harvesting of my psychosis.”

Kesey/Cassady acid-rapping:

“Here’s what I can tell you from the Establishment’s dark heart: They’re lost too. They’re as lost as me and you. Looking for love and redemption, waddling toddlers in their mum’s high-heeled shoes, trying to look like they know what to do. A lady went to the loo and left me and Andrew one on one, and we were both stumped; neither of us knew what to do.”

“The whole of human history is nothing new, the whole of your personal story is nothing true, you can do with it whatever you want to do—flick a switch, scratch the record off, look behind the veil. Anything you don’t want, discard; anything that hurts, let go. None of it’s real, you know—all that pain, all that regret, all that doubt, not thin enough, not a good enough mum, not a good enough son, not a good enough bum. You are enough; you’re enough; there’s nothing you can buy or try on that’s going to make you any better, because you couldn’t be any better than you are. Drag your past around if you like, an old dead decaying ox of what you think they might’ve thought or what might’ve been if you’d done what you ought. That which needs to burn, let it burn”

“Untangled from Spaghetti Junction and aspiring to spaghetti westerns, these loaded kids of Charlton Heston declaring their jihad.” (p. 158) ... acid-rap, free-associate

p. 110: more acid-rapping: “Is there an emptiness in you as you walk your land, uneasy feet on uneasy streets, uneasy in the bedroom, uneasy even in the mirror, an uneasy creep to uneasy sleep, pulling the bedsheets up close; checking your phone, checking your phone, checking
you’re not here all alone, to die alone? How long can you go on like this? Have you made a pact? Will you hang on and hope you endure like Methuselah?”

On the London Riots:
p. 36: David Cameron is a cunt

…”the crime of occupying an Apple Store and redistributing its contents is nothing, nothing, compared to the larceny* that took place to get those goods on the shelves. That torching a Nike Town is no crime at all compared to the incessant immolation of the rights of the workers that made the goods within, the burning of the codes that means those that profit from the store do not give back to the society in which they flourish.”

On the Revolution in your mind:

“The global treaties and economic infrastructure that has benefitted the eighty-five occupants of the bejeweled bus of privilege can be subverted for the benefit of us all. It’s easy: All we have to do is agree that that is our intention.”

“Do you know what you are? You are a manuscript of a divine letter. You are a mirror reflecting a noble face. This universe is not outside of you. Look inside yourself; everything that you want, you are already that.”

“Your conception of God is as limited as your cat’s conception of the Internet.”

On Football:
p. 49: “Can we march that pride out of the gates and into the streets? Can we harness it? Direct it? Use it for something less stymied by white lines and whistles, that could pour from the terraces and into the oak-and-leather chambers, the steel-and-glass towers?”

On social scientists:

“Now, I am not about to claim, as we approach the midpoint of this book, to be a social scientist; there is too much dependence on anecdotal evidence, too much faith in the mystical, and too much radicalism for that”

“Here’s some more terrifying jargon from Dave [DeGraw]. “In the last year, the Federal Reserve handed out another trillion dollars through their ‘Quantitative Easing’ (QE) program. Most all of that money, like the trillions during the bailout, went to the big six banks so they could dish out all-time record-breaking bonuses.”
“Debord, who was a clever old stick and as French as adultery, was a “situationist,” this was a
gang of avant-garde artists, political theorists, and smart-arses who thought that Marxism was
basically alright but a bit too strict—what with the gulags and murders and bullying”

On the Lord’s Prayer:

p. 88: Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven – “Yes, it was that, an incantation. Don’t
worry, God’s not on his way in a fiery chariot of judgmental rage. We can manifest God, this
divinity, this creative vibration, here in this dimension and make it correlate with its subtler
original frequency. We can download it. Really all that means is, stop fucking about with things
that don’t have meaning, like money, Dior boots, and blowjobs, because it’s stupid and
detached from original intention.”

Give us this day our daily bread: “So we do need food. I mean, we have bodies, so some bread
would be nice, or pasta or veg —anything, really, I’m not fussy, but I will need some grub at
some point. Interesting that it is “us,” all of us. We are a community of people, and we would
like some bread. It’s not “give me some bread and fuck the immigrants.” We ask on behalf of
everyone.”

On government corruption:

“Loads of British firms made tons from it, including security firms like Aegis, run by a fella who
was a high-ranking army officer. In a way all this top-level corruption is just a manifestation of
a particular aspect of understandable and ordinary human behavior. Like when I need
plumbing done, I might get my mate Mick’s cousin to do it; that, I suppose, is a form of
cronyism. It would, I suppose, become more problematic if I lied and said next door were using
their bathroom to make weapons, then went round and smashed it up, then gave Mick’s
cousin the job of repairing it, and blamed my neighbors for the damage and made them liable.
Especially if, before the whole fiasco had taken place, a million people had protested outside
my house saying it was a blag.”

p. 97: He sounds like A Clockwork Orange:
“What a lovely metaphor, easily envisaged and if necessary enacted. I might pop down the
beach and plunge my dumb digit into the briny and inform the concerned onlookers I’m
probing the unknown.”

On Daniel Pinchbeck and Dreams for Universal Awakening:

““We can accomplish this Revolution through a collective movement of civil society that
supersedes the current structure of nation-state governments and the corporate military–
industrial complex. The transition is from a paradigm of competition and domination to one of
symbiosis and cooperation, from greed to altruism. It begins with the realization of our shared
responsibility for the future of the earth, and our inherent unity with each other and with all of life.”

...How can you justify a revolution where everyone has to think the same way? It is an impossible excursion away from liberal freedoms and the concept of the public domain as distinct from the private domain.

And again:
“Daniel, the mushroom-guzzling space cowboy, shows his true psychedelic colors here: “We are already learning that science and mysticism are not opposites but can be integrated. The study and exploration of the infinite dimensions of consciousness and mind–body states can be part of a post-materialist society. A new spiritual and religious impetus that embraces science and technology can become a unifying force.”

“Visionaries like Daniel, inspired by mentors like Buckminster Fuller and Terence McKenna, can pull down new possibilities—conveniently, in Daniel’s case, by loafing around the jungle, chomping up drugs. Human cultures have always had on their peripheries thinkers like these; the challenge for the rest of us is the realization of these visions.”

On Gay Rights:
“I said that with civil-rights issues it’s true that the establishment will ultimately concede, because these changes pose no fundamental threat to the economic power and wealth of the establishment, and Tatchell agreed. He pointed out, though, that the concessions are still not easily granted.
I suppose that’s because the different groups that are campaigning for equality are often favored targets for an Establishment keen to keep the majority of people divided and distracted. Gays, immigrants, disabled folk, different-colored people, all crop up as accessible scapegoats when public tension reaches potentially threatening levels.”

The bursts of spiritual transcendence:

“The Marines is a pretty extreme example. When I came up with the idea to do it—or agreed to do it—I just had an image of myself as Rambo, with a dressing-gown belt round my head, doing something irresponsible and impressive with a knife. That’s it, a mental photograph of a moment. Reality doesn’t behave like that. Although sequential time as experienced by humans is likely an illusion contrived by our animalistic experience of an expiring anatomy, it don’t feel like that when you’re on an obstacle course getting coated off by a drill sergeant.”

On the military:
“Mostly they were working-class boys who were always destined to end up in a violent gang of some description and had sensibly joined a very well-funded one.”

On humourless politics:

“With the abolition of these limitations, a company that was created to spend four years building a bridge was no longer euthanized but allowed to live forever—and to pursue any kind of moneymaking venture that it fancied, like Donald Trump with a trolley full of spare kidneys and livers. Note I didn’t put spare hearts, as I was thinking about doing a joke like “He doesn’t even have a heart to begin with,” then I thought, “Nah, fuck it, Russ, you’re a professional comedian and don’t need to flounder around with that kind of ‘earnest’ joke, which has stymied the left since the sixties.”

Krishna:

“Krishna is an all-loving deity, supremely powerful, who plays all reality into being with his flute. That could be a way of saying he is the divine source of original vibration, which is the same as saying, “In the beginning was the word,” or from “nothingness” came a big bang or a powerful creative sound.”

“The fuming amphibian ensnares Krishna and coils about him, squeezing the god as if prey. The onlooking villagers gasp with fear and presumably guilt, as it was them that put him in this quandary, whilst the serpent’s wives cheer him on like molls or Essex girlfriends in a car-park row: “Go on, Dean, kick his head in.”

Straight revolutionary fervour:

P. 118: A solid dose of workers appropriating the corporations

“Are you not more incensed by ATM charges than by oil spills and deforestation? When it comes to the crunch, aren’t you more wound up by Apple mendaciously changing their chargers every fucking time they bring out a new device than by apartheid? I mean, how much money do they want? Do they have to wring us out like a vagrant vampire with a tampon in his fangs? When will it be enough? Aren’t you deep down more pissed off about unnecessary and financially motivated parking fines than about child sweatshop labor? I am. I know I’m meant to care about children in Palestine, and if you sit me down and explain it to me I get annoyed, I might even squeeze out a furious tear, but when I can’t use my phone abroad because of some intricate admin around roaming, I’m ready to pick up a gun. What’s terrifying is that our petty frustrations and these awful global transgressions are intimately connected by the same dominant profiteering system. These miserable inconveniences somehow prevail. That’s why
the Daily Mail and Fox News are so effective, because they reach right through our liberal bullshit and into our dark, animalistic, selfish, well-nourished core. And as Solzhenitsyn and the Native American wolf allegory demonstrate, we all have that capacity for darkness within us. The devil has all the best tunes, and Fox News has access to the most responsive buttons. This is why spirituality is not some florid garnish, some incense fragrance, wafted across our senses but part of the double-helix DNA of Revolution.”

Decapitating Will and Kate’s baby with a “Fisher-Price guillotine.”

On the Spanish Civil War:

“I’d never heard of this Revolution. The reason for this is, of course, that it’s so fucking inspiring. The Revolutions that we’re taught about are ones that wind neatly back to repression of one flavor or another and convey the bleak, despairing narrative that makes the forms of impoverishment we live with now, whether financial or spiritual, seem preferable.”

“Where is the sacred text that says they are allowed to glean such profits from our land and farm our labor and our minds so that Tesco can take one pound in seven and the Walmart kids can have as much wealth as half of America? Show me where that’s written down and I will tear it up. It’s not serving us, it’s not serving the planet, it’s not even serving them. It’s time to wake up and take back authority.”

“We are like a swarm of battered spouses, unable to believe that a better world is out there”

On Homelessness:

ON HOMELESSNESS:

“It isn’t difficult to envisage a species like us, only slightly more evolved, being universally appalled by our acceptance of homelessness. “What? You had sufficient housing, it cost less money to house them, and you just ignored the problem?” They’d be as astonished by our indifference as we are by the disconnected cruelty of Anwar. Maybe as they talked us through the suffering our indifference caused, we’d gag too.”

Russell and leaderless revolutionary utopias:

“Now I know that nobody should ever be in that position, that the structures that elevate, rarefy, or in any way concentrate power have to themselves be eradicated.” Anyone who wants to be a political leader should be ineligible. But Brand’s statement here is the part of the book that will make the 1% happiest of all.

We’ve got a smooshed version of anarcho-syndicalism: “If another autonomous collective wants to live as an orgiastic, homoerotic, polygamous cult, cool. As long as it doesn’t contravene the autonomy or self-governance of any other collective or the planet and the
members all voted for it. It’s no one’s business but theirs. Same for the bankers’ collective. Or the Zapatista collective, or even the secular, mixed, ecologically responsible, electronically democratic collectives that I secretly hope will be most prominent.”

I won’t sign up for the collectivise-Dior-boots collective.

“According to Chomsky, the hijacked ghostwriter of the last chapter, Revolutions that concentrate power in the hands of a new elite are pointless; Revolutions that spread power across society succeed.”

First steps to revolution:

“Wow. That means that corporations that make huge profits, with a modest amendment, could be making life-saving contributions to the society they profit from within. That seems so reasonable, fair, apposite, and just.”

...this he then calls “a piece of pipsqueak reformism”

Participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, for those who haven’t read Boaventura de Sousa Santos but are preoccupied with Jurgen Habermas

“Given that we’re all meant to be deeply apathetic, our refusal to vote regarded as slovenliness rather than an unwillingness to participate in a system that knowingly harbors and protects political pedophiles, the concern would be that no one would bother to take part in this new, empowering system. Well, 31,300 people took part in the process in Porto Alegre in 2002, up from 1,300 in 1989.”

“• In London, twenty-five elected members of the GLA and the Mayor of London decide how to spend a budget of £14.6 billion.

Sounds like there’s a bit of wiggle room there. When this new type of democracy was implemented in Brazil—let’s call it actual democracy —the majority of participants were women and “poor people.” Isn’t that what we need in all democracy? Underrepresented groups to come to the forefront? I think our communities would greatly improve if more women and blokes that hadn’t all gone to the same school got stuck into running them. What happened when they got involved in Porto Alegre?

• Spending on health and education rose from 13 percent to 40 percent; • 98 percent of houses were connected to water mains and the sewage system; • the number of schools increased by four times”

“What if in London we used the existing democratic structure to return power to the population of London? Every major decision within the current jurisdiction of the mayorality could be voted on directly by the people, like in Porto Alegre.”

“One of the things the mayor could do—and the one London has now would never do—is only grant development contracts to ethical businesses that behave themselves. My feeling is that
even with the above stipulations, like paying people properly, empowering your workforce, and responsible reinvestment, these exciting new enterprises could give snidey outfits like Boots, Starbucks, and Vodafone a run for their money.* We as a community might prefer to get our stuff from outlets that aren’t ripping us off and not contributing. I’d vote for it.”

...Exactly as the Ecuadorian government does regarding media companies that register subsidiary companies in countries like the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas.

Democratic media, housing the homeless, legalising drugs, abolishing stop-and-search, free internet for all residents

“If someone said that we should give 64 percent of British land to 0.28 percent of the population, we would not vote for it. If trade agreements were proposed that meant local businesses were shackled so that transnational corporations could create a farcical tyrannical economy where produce was needlessly transported around the world for their gain and to the detriment of everyone else, it would be forbidden. If energy companies said they wanted to be run for huge profit, without regulation, whilst harming the environment, we wouldn’t allow it. If pharmaceutical and food companies could run their own governing bodies, flood the world with inferior and harmful products that damage, and even kill the people that use them, we would not tolerate it.”

“The world is changing and we are awakening. These statistics give us a numerical glimpse at the visceral dissatisfaction that most of us feel. Now is the time to express it. These corrupt structures cannot be maintained without our compliance. You could vote against them, if there was anything to vote for, but there isn’t,”

These thoughts of mine regarding one particular review of Brand’s book became way too lengthy for the final publication on ImportantCool.com

The extraordinarily petty review from The Daily Beast’s Michael Moynihan, who slams Brand for supposedly mistaking which Nazi was primarily responsible for the Gestapo, then bitterly laments that Brand has made the best-seller instead of him. The point was actually a quote from “the founder of the Gestapo,” by the way, which illuminates the precise strategy of the US government since 9/11:

“The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.”

But hey, Brand compared our leaders to the Nazis, so he must be hysterical, right? And he once rode in a Mercedes! He’s practically a Nazi himself!
On that note, the lack of appreciation for irony is spell-binding. Brand is called out for a reference to “dear, beautiful, morally unimpeachable Che Guevara,” which Moynihan takes completely seriously. The line is not just an amusing reference to the fact that every lesson to be taken out of the Cuban Revolution seems to be instantly submerged by conservatively-minded individuals in a torrent of condemnation of revolutionary violence. It’s also a prelude to a Guevara quote – “Those who do not dream will never see their dreams come true” – and in framing it this way, Brand shows that he foresaw just how childish the reactionary chorus against his incitation to revolution would be. Then once the point is made, we get another laugh with the image of Guevara “shoot[ing] them with a Kalashnikov without knocking the ash off his cigar.”

“...a remarkable success in many respects,” is the controversial quote from Russell. If Cuba is a socialist failure, what does Haiti tell us about capitalism?