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How Science Fiction Literature Echoes American History, Illustrated at the Example of Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy*.

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Introduction

How can the future be possibly imagined?

It takes a certain mind to create something, a culture or society, *ex nihilo*, something that has never existed before. Only a few science fiction authors can do it – Vernor Vinge, Iain M. Banks, Stephan Baxter, and to a certain degree Ursula K. LeGuin are about the only ones known to this writer.

A great many authors approach the future through recourse to history. This is especially true of American science fiction writers, a great number of which have gleefully mined their culture's history in order to construct a future society. Usage of 'history', as we shall later see, makes the postulated future more familiar to readers, the resonance making it easier to relate to the imagined setting, the characters that populate it, and their society.

As this paper will show, Americans loved to use "the Frontier" as a guidepost to erect their futures, and sometimes still do so. Especially in the decades past, from about the 1920s up into the 1960s – covering the whole of the "Pulp Age" of the '30s, as well as the so-called "Golden Age of SF" of the '40s and '50s – a great many stories were new expressions of the old idea of America's "Manifest Destiny" and its much vaunted "pioneer spirit." It was easy to make the connection between the American's historical conquest of their continent and the future "conquest" of space.

With the failures in Vietnam the concept of manifest destiny suffered a heavy blow and disappeared from American discourse for a few decades. Science fiction literature also underwent a change – after an actual moon landing in 1969 the SF future seemed closer than ever and science fiction writing made a turn to the critical. The cultural upheavals of the '60s and early '70s influenced both American society and science fiction – the future became quite more differentiated. Authors looked at the (American) past and became doubtful of the future. This 'new wave' had a lasting influence, bringing social questions to the fore in sci-fi. Today, all kinds of science fiction exist side by side – the unapologetic space romp, ultimately harking back to the dime novels and the Pulp, as well as the critical examination of (possible) future societies, pioneered in the 1960s. These, and the whole spectrum between them, can be found in contemporary science fiction writing, standing side by side on the dedicated SF shelf in the bookstore.

Close to the upcoming millennium SF writers looked at the future with a kind of critical optimism. New developments in science, and findings about space, made a more detailed

sci-fi writing, one with a more solid scientific foundation, possible. Kim Stanley Robinson is a prime example of this ‘new’ kind of science fiction author, and his 1990s sci-fi trilogy about Mars will be the major concern of this paper.

This master thesis will consider the question how far American history influenced, and is mirrored in, (American) science fiction literature. The main work of reference for this endeavor will be the award-winning *Mars Trilogy* by the aforementioned, renowned science fiction author Kim Stanley Robinson.

Chapter one will deal specifically with the topic of how certain events of American history – especially the War of Independence, its origins and its aftermath – are more or less mirrored in the Mars novels, often with only minor changes (and adapted into a sci-fi setting, of course). The historic concepts of ‘the Frontier’ and ‘Manifest Destiny’ will find some minor mention here.

The second chapter of this paper will be exclusively about one of the early main characters of the trilogy, one with a lasting influence even though he dies early. The leading thesis will be that this ‘all-American hero’ is, more or less, a fusion of two major figures of early American history, specifically Captain John Smith and legendary ‘frontiersman’ Daniel Boone. The name of this character alone – **John Boone** – should serve easily as an indicator for the truth of this thesis.

The final chapter of this thesis then leaves the *Mars Trilogy* behind in order to look at the whole wide field of science fiction literature. Selected works will serve to illustrate the pervasive presence of American history in this genre. The concept of the ‘frontier’ will be of considerable importance to this endeavor, and will feature significantly in this section.

Concluding the paper will be a short overview of the paper’s major points and a few final thoughts will then round out this thesis and mark its end.

[According to the official rules of the administration, a summary, written in German, has been appended to the paper.]

Chapter 1 - The Mars Trilogy & American History

The early 1990s saw a surge in science fiction publications featuring Mars.¹ This new popularity of tales featuring the red planet derived from data which the Mars probes have sent back to earth.² This wealth of new information about our neighboring planet turned it, for the first time in history, into a ‘real’ place – an actual physical, non-imagined space to set stories in. The growing body of knowledge about Mars did not put an end to the ‘space opera mode’ of writing about it, but it generated new kinds of stories to tell with it, more realistic ones. The depth of Kim Stanley Robinson’s vision for Mars puts his almost 2,000 pages long epic a notch above the ruminations of his peers, it is also the focus of this paper’s considerations.

Kim Stanley Robinson himself lives in California and is thus intimately familiar with life in a modified landscape.³ His environment influenced and defined his interests, which might be the foremost explanation for his vested interest in terraforming, and the ecology in general. In many of his works he muses about the so-called *ecological utopia*, a kind of harmonious living *with* the environment rather than ‘*against*’ it.

This section of the paper will concern itself with the Robinson’s *magnum opus*, his lengthy trilogy of the 1990s dealing with the settlement, colonization and political and cultural development of Mars. In it are crystallized all the thoughts and concerns of Robinson he had already expressed in earlier works and would go on to further refine in future works. Let us now begin with an earlier work of his, which serves as a kind of prelude to the Mars Trilogy.

California Trilogy

From our present perspective Kim Stanley Robinson’s California trilogy – *The Wild Shore* (1984), *The Gold Coast* (1988), and *Pacific Edge* (1990) – must be seen as a thematic precursor to his later Mars trilogy. Many of the themes and topics Robinson used within

¹ e.g.: Terry Bisson’s *Voyage to the Red Planet* (1990), Robert L. Forward’s *Martian Rainbow* (1991), Ben Bova’s *Mars* (1992), Jack Williamson’s *Beachhead* (1992), Greg Bear’s *Moving Mars* (1993), Paul J. McAuley’s *Red Dust* (1993), and of course the eponymous Mars Trilogy by Kim Stanley Robinson, beginning with *Red Mars* (1992)

² Clute, *Illustrated ...*, p. 95;

The *Vikings* were the first truly successful Mars probes and transmitted a wealth of new data back to Earth; it seems to have taken a while for the new facts to reach the fertile minds of sci-fi authors.

(NASA’s Mars missions: <http://mars.nasa.gov/programmissions/missions/log/>; the Viking missions: <http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/viking.html>; both links retrieved: 3/18/15)

³ Abbot, p. 67

these novels can be found again, in a much more elaborate, better detailed manner, in the Mars books.

The Wild Shore depicts a post-apocalyptic world where neutron bombs devastated America in the 1980s. In the wake of this disaster society has regressed to more primitive state. People live in little villages, their main occupations being agriculture and fishing. Unlike in more prevalent stories of this kind, this new, primitive state of American society is enforced by outside factors. Other nations, possibly fearing a disastrous return to power of the American nation, keep it locked in an almost medieval state. What is important to the topic at hand is the, well, 'neo-Primitive' lifestyle Robinson imagined for this future. As we shall see below, this is a recurrent topic in the Mars trilogy, especially appearing in *Blue Mars*, as well as something that Robinson himself champions, which will also be featured in a detailed manner below.

The Gold Coast is then located on the other end of the spectrum. Imagining the worst excesses of the '80s into the future, California has turned into an ultra-capitalist dystopia, having become an undifferentiated urban sprawl where thrills are cheap and nothing means anything. But for the lack of advanced computer technology it is almost a cyberpunk setting.

The last book of this trilogy, and the one closest to the themes of the Mars trilogy, is *Pacific Edge*. In it Robinson has created an ecological utopia⁴, a realistic utopia that stands up to critical inspection. The novel serves as a kind of blueprint for the achievement of such a society.⁵ Robinson's imagined future is not erected on a historical blank slate; it is embedded in the actual past and present (of the '90s) of our world. With this novel he conveys to his readers the theories and methods of how to transform his present world into the future one shown in this story.⁶

As these summations have shown, the California trilogy has to be seen as a forerunner to the later Mars trilogy. In the California books Robinson experimented with themes, theories, and ways of life that would feature extensively in the Mars novels, where they have found their true, elaborate, and detailed expression. Having established the nature of the California trilogy as an ideological prelude to the Mars trilogy we shall now move on to the true topic at hand, i.e. how the history of the American nation has a pervading presence in Robinson's three Mars books.

⁴ Henceforth called 'eco-utopia.'

⁵ Something which will find mention again near the end of this chapter.

⁶ For those interested in further reading on this subject, the whole of chapter seven of Katerberg (p. 132-157) deals with Robinson's California trilogy; see also: Abbott, p. 121-124

American History

Mars is an inhospitable place, like America was from the early English settlers' perspective. The first colonists arrived in what they termed a "hideous and desolate wilderness."⁷ Like William Bradford related in his account, when they arrived on the shores of the new world there was nothing there, it was a "desolate wilderness" and a wide gulf separated them from the civilized old world.⁸

What an apt description for the experiences of the First Hundred on their arrival to Mars. Like their forebears in the *Mayflower* they had a long journey behind them, traveling the great distance from Earth to Mars through the wide, empty gulf of space. This is far from the only thing they shared in common with Bradford and his fellow settlers. The preliminary stay in Antarctica of all the candidates for the Mars mission,⁹ before the First Hundred were picked, echoes the experience of the Pilgrims' stay in Holland. Similar to how many of the Pilgrims did not accompany Bradford & co on their journey to the new world, choosing for various reasons to stay behind, so too did many candidates have to remain on Earth, i.e. they were not selected for the mission. Also, as it was in history so it was in the novel – one hundred settlers landed in Plymouth and one hundred colonists landed on Mars.

Unlike its historical precedent, though, half of the Martian colonists did not die within half a year.¹⁰ Mars was in no way a danger-free environment,¹¹ but the First Hundred were thoroughly prepared for the rigors of early settlement; in this aspect they did not take after the early settlers arriving in the American wilderness. Their first, rudimentary quarters were equally cramped and lacking privacy.¹² Both groups also shared other things in common. The American settlement had "arduous and difficult beginnings," suffering from severe weather and other ills.¹³ While not as severe as the historical American ones, the Martian settlement had problems of its own.¹⁴ At least the severe weather finds its reflection in the Martian experience; after all, they were living in an environment hostile to life, with a corresponding climate. On the topic of climate, a great storm had hit the Plymouth colony,¹⁵ an experience the Martians shared with the Pilgrims – the Great Storm of Mars lasted for

⁷ Tindall & Shi, p. 72

⁸ Bradford, p.43

⁹ Robinson, *Red Mars*, p. 26ff.; in the following abbreviated: *RM*

¹⁰ Bradford, p. 50; concomitantly, many of Plymouth's surviving colonists reached a great age for the time (Bradford, p. 209). With a little strain this can be compared to the longevity of the Martian colonists due to scientific advancement.

¹¹ e.g.: Robinson, *Green Mars*, p. 585; from here on abbreviated as: *GM*

¹² As can be seen in multiple instances here: *RM*, part three.

¹³ Bradford, p. 50

¹⁴ *RM*, p. 108ff.

¹⁵ Bradford, p. 179

more than three years¹⁶ and greatly impacted the whole colonial way of life. Things eventually got better for the Plymouth colony, the settlement slowly began to prosper and the available land was divided into private lots, i.e. private property.¹⁷ This never really manifested on Mars, their system was akin to ‘communal stewardship’ of the whole planet. What the two groups shared in common, though, was the lack of a unifying naming scheme – the names of Mars’ landscape features came from all over the place;¹⁸ much like had been the case in early America.

Unlike the Martians of course, the Pilgrims had encountered natives soon after their arrival.¹⁹ Maybe the later arrivals to Mars had a concomitant experience, with the First Hundred serving as ‘the natives’ in this case.

Just as the Pilgrims wanted to “remove themselves to a place of greater liberty,”²⁰ so too were the newly landed Martian settlers “[f]ree at last.”²¹ America had served from the start as a way out of the poverty and oppression in England; Mars would come to play a similar role, becoming a place of hope and refuge. The discussion about religion held aboard the colony ship arrived at a similar doctrine as America’s ‘freedom of faith.’²² Like had been the case in America, dissenters and the persecuted came to Mars in order to find religious freedom. These ‘refugees’ saw, like “the first colonists saw in America [,] an opportunity to regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and [...] their church.”²³

More colonists soon arrived and Martian civilization was no longer limited to just a single settlement.²⁴ The ‘community’ of the settlers had already fractured *before* their initial landing on Mars; many small groups with their own plans and ideas were formed.²⁵ Factionalism seems to be an unavoidable part of human nature. This comes explicitly to the fore in *Green Mars*. Martian society experiences a ‘balkanization’ of competing factions.²⁶ This lack of unity is reminiscent of the very early colonies in America, before they all eventually fell to Britain.

¹⁶ *RM*, p. 300-362

¹⁷ Bradford, p. 75f.

¹⁸ *GM*, p. 121

¹⁹ First encounter with natives: Bradford, p. 47

²⁰ Bradford, p. 12

²¹ *RM*, p. 32

²² *RM*, p. 50

²³ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 5

²⁴ *RM*, part five

²⁵ *RM*, part two

²⁶ *GM*, p. 155

Like their politics were divided, so too were their belief systems divided. Albeit mostly being only a background feature in the novels, there was significant religious tension in the trilogy²⁷ – circumstances calling to mind the American colonies and the various belief systems present in them. On the topic of religion, both Hiroko Ai and Ann Clayborne are in certain aspects reminiscent of Anne Hutchinson – Hiroko in her case of, albeit self-chosen, exile and Ann in her role as a dissenter to the majority opinion, i.e. her opposition to the terraforming of Mars.

Ann Clayborne also shows signs of the popular ‘trapper’ archetype – spending a lot of time alone in the ‘wilderness’ of Mars, living in harmony with the land, and ultimately preferring it to civilization. Hiroko’s group ‘going native’ also calls to mind the cases of various French trappers who decided they preferred life among the Indians, in the wilds of America.

Inevitably, Mars began to resemble Earth, at least in its institutions.²⁸ One could say that in some respects the ‘colony’ began to resemble the ‘motherland,’ an intentional or unintentional emulation made possible by their shared heritage and the cultural influence one had over the other. Compare this to the American experience and not much divergence will be found.

Even while civilizing processes were taking place, Mars, like America, served as a place of freedom and renewal. On Mars it was the same as it had been in America: coupled with the absence of other cultures, “the basic factors in the physical and psychological situation of the colonists were the wilderness of the land, its blending of unmitigated harshness and tremendous potential fertility.”²⁹ Whereas “the European stood amid the ruins of an established society and used its fragments to build a new house, the American felt himself to be the creator of something new and unprecedented.”³⁰ The ‘Martian’ felt pretty much the same thing in his regard of Earth.

Earth would not let him be, though, because it saw Mars as a ‘safety-valve’ for its social tensions, offering a release for the problems troubling Earth.³¹ More so than social reasons, economic considerations were driving Earth to Mars – like it had been in history, so it also came to pass in the Mars trilogy: eventually, the ‘motherland’ wanted to reap some

²⁷ Franko, p. 549f.

²⁸ Robinson, *Blue Mars*, part six; henceforth simply abbreviated to: *BM*

²⁹ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 18

³⁰ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 370

³¹ Abbott, p. 113

profit from their colony.³² The materials from the colonies invigorated the ‘home’ market,³³ just like American raw materials had enriched the British market.

Earth’s interests in the colonies were steadily increasing;³⁴ Mars was no longer only a scientific outpost, it was a commercial center. The space elevator is essentially Mars’ most prominent port³⁵ and is accordingly related to America’s harbor of Boston. The corporations’ greed for Mars’ resources can be put into relation to the Jamestown colonists’ greed for gold.³⁶ Like their forebears they got blinded by their greed to everything else, i.e. native society, culture, and politics. The Martian “clash between local autonomy and the domination of outside capital and corporations” had also been a “central issue in the development of the American West.”³⁷

The small-stead Martian ‘farmers’ cared nothing for Earth.³⁸ They had no reason they should, never having seen it in the flesh. This encapsulates an opinion that many an American farmer had probably shared in regard to their relationship to England or to Europe as a whole. The second-generation Martians had neither connection to, nor any relationship with Earth. They had *no* reason to care for man’s old home – Mars was *their* home. For them, Earth – as Europe had for America – “exemplifies all the social ills from which [they] had, with labor, attempted to free [themselves].”³⁹ A bridge was needed between the new natives and the old home. It is here that “[t]he mediating figure of the frontier hero was not only a psychological but a social and political necessity.”⁴⁰ ‘He’ served to moderate between the ‘old’ and ‘new.’ On Mars this role fell to the First Hundred; they were beings of both worlds and thus ideally placed to negotiate between the two worlds. This is why they became such prominent figures, authorities even, in Martian society and politics.

Many of the trilogy’s characters bring people from America’s revolutionary era to mind. Arkady Bogdanov, for example, could serve as a spiritual successor to Thomas Paine;⁴¹ his hidden colonies doing similar work as the old American Committees of Correspondence. Phyllis Boyle is more reminiscent of one of the British merchant princes – a crown-sponsored entrepreneur, maybe even a charter-holder – who could not see the

³² *RM*, p. 308

³³ *GM*, p. 183

³⁴ *RM*, p. 270ff.

³⁵ *RM*, part five; *RM*, p. 438

³⁶ Hoobler, p. 39

³⁷ Abbott, p. 114

³⁸ *GM*, p. 469f.; One of the settlements visited by Nirgal in his travels eerily looks like an early American farmstead. (*GM*, p. 467f.)

³⁹ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 450

⁴⁰ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 205

⁴¹ *RM*, part seven

writing on the wall; she was a loyalist looking out for her profit. William Fort, CEO of Praxis, can be likened to a kind of British representative, who *does* see the writing on the wall and tries to ‘come to terms’ with America as an independent nation-to-be.⁴²

While all the conflicts are happening and revolutionary theories are thrown around,⁴³ *all* of the concerned parties are eagerly engaged in terraforming the planet.⁴⁴ They too were following the biblical command to ‘subdue the Earth,’ which had driven the Americans to further colonize their continent, moving ever westward – no matter the conflicts they experienced elsewhere. Even as violent confrontations were taking place all over the planet, Martian “[d]aily life plodded on, barely perturbed by revolution.”⁴⁵ As in America so here too was only a minority percentage of the population actively involved in the revolution – the farmer’s work barely changed in these periods of war.

Within the novels themselves Mars has been likened to a new frontier, and has been called a “frontier outpost” of humanity.⁴⁶ It did not stay this way. Like historical America, the Mars colony was ‘booming,’ with more people arriving all the time.⁴⁷ Commerce was following in the steps of the people and industrial expansion with its “expectation of superabundant wealth” was to become the “symbolic equivalent of the old Frontier,” which had already vanished.⁴⁸ The plans of the transnational corporations for Mars are reminiscent of this. A “gold rush mentality” developed in Mars. Here is the concept of “manifest destiny” rearing its head, in this case meaning the exploitation of Mars’ resources for the profit of the corporations who felt they had a right to it, because they had financed much of the Mars endeavor in the first place.⁴⁹ In their exploitation of Mars they too were ostensibly following the old command ‘to subdue the earth,’ in the case of the corporations, given to them by the ‘god’ of commerce. God’s command had been put to an equal use in the subjugation of the American continent and its native inhabitants – more on this in the third chapter.

The Earth-led ‘government’ of Mars passed no laws to mitigate the flow of immigration and did nothing to prevent the exploitations by the corporations who treated their workers pretty much as slaves.⁵⁰ This recalls the slavery era of American history, with

⁴² *GM*, p. 385

⁴³ The revolution itself will be covered elsewhere.

⁴⁴ *GM*, part nine

⁴⁵ *BM*, p. 15

⁴⁶ *RM*, p. 171, 380, 425

⁴⁷ For America in this regard, see: Bradford, p. 195

⁴⁸ Slotkin, *Fatal ...*, p. 287

⁴⁹ both quotes: *GM*, p. 218

⁵⁰ *RM*, p. 424

the corporations standing in for the plantation owners and their employees for their slaves. Even an ‘underground railroad’ has come into existence on Mars, helping disenfranchised workers and citizens to flee from the oppression of the corporations.⁵¹ Also, the story of Coyote himself, the 101st of the First Hundred, having lived as a stowaway in the bowels of the colony ship for quite some time,⁵² brings the experiences of the slaves destined for the American ‘market’ to mind.

By the time of *Blue Mars* humanity has spread into the rest of the solar system, a burst of colonization into empty ‘land’ had taken place.⁵³ While the Martian government was decrying the old world powers for their colonialism, it was trying to influence, and maybe even dominate, other ‘solar nations’ itself.⁵⁴ Mars underwent a similar development as America had with its imperialism in the late 19th and early 20th century. A central discussion in American history has here found its way into the Mars trilogy – the question of isolationism vs. involvement in ‘global’ affairs.⁵⁵

This is also the period of time where tourism made its appearance. Travel through space is easy now and there are many people eager for a tour of the solar system.⁵⁶ Like Americans had done in the 19th century, so too are the Martians sightseeing on Earth – visiting its classic places of antiquity.

It was “the manifest destiny of Americans of the Western frontier [...] to transform the world, with America at the leading edge of human progress, an example for the Old World to follow.”⁵⁷ This “example” recalls the ‘city upon a hill’ rhetoric of John Winthrop; it also has a presence in the Mars trilogy, with Earth eventually imitating Mars in order to overcome old ‘evils’ like corporate capitalism and ecological devastation.

By the end of the story the First Hundred have become akin to ‘mythological’ founders of Mars. They are the ones who first tamed the inhospitable land, like the first traders, settlers, and adventurers had done with the American continent.⁵⁸

⁵¹ *RM*, p. 467f.

⁵² *GM*, p. 312f.

⁵³ *BM*, part eleven

⁵⁴ *BM*, p. 574

⁵⁵ *GM*, p. 383

⁵⁶ *BM*, p. 498

⁵⁷ Katerberg, p. 211

⁵⁸ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 4

In the end, Robinson's three novels bring three simple distinct historical phases of America to mind:

1. Settlement – external struggles – independence (up to 1780),
2. Internal struggles (1780-1880),
3. Rise to global prominence (1890-1960).⁵⁹

There is no perfect equivalence of course – in this scheme *Red Mars* would only cover about half of the first phase – but it serves as a convenient overview.

Culture & Society

The new world is seen as “a source of human progress”, a place where “human destiny” can play itself out.⁶⁰ In this new setting American society underwent, just like the Martian one would, a “divergence of colonial from homeland historical experience, and [gave] rise [to] new generations more acculturated or acclimated to the wilderness, less like the remembered grandparents in the fixed image of Europe.”⁶¹ This is not completely applicable to Mars, especially the part about the grandparents, but the experiences of America and Mars align closely enough to declare them similar.

Like fictional Mars, America has been a place of cultural experimentation – after all, “the environment [always] [...] works on the characters of its people.”⁶² There came to exist “sharp differences in education, experience, and attitude that separated the colonial from the Briton after a century and a half of American history.”⁶³ To arrive at an equally valid statement about Mars one has only to exchange ‘colonial’ with ‘Martian,’ and ‘Briton’ with ‘man from Earth.’

‘Anarchy’ as portrayed by David Porter⁶⁴ has a certain presence in the Mars trilogy. It is certainly present in the Red ‘ecoteurs’ committing environmental sabotage. The ideals of Coyote himself are an expression of ‘benevolent’ anarchy. Mars has many factions with scarcely any unifying ideals; independence was the only thing that united them, their only common goal. A ‘real’ public order was only forged in the Pavonis Mons Constitutional Congress. Before that, Mars could easily be described as having existed in a state of anarchy.

⁵⁹ Bear in mind that these dates are only a rough estimate.

⁶⁰ Katerberg, p. 1

⁶¹ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 18

⁶² Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 260f.

⁶³ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 225

⁶⁴ David Porter, “‘Anarchy’ in the American Revolution”, in: Sakolsky & Koehnline, p. 161-180

William Katerberg says that “[t]he frontier West is a place of rebirth, of shedding the constraints of the past and civilization, whether personal or social, and of proving one’s character and becoming American.”⁶⁵ In the trilogy’s case the settlers became ‘Martian.’ What the intrepid settlers found in their new world was “a frontier wilderness [which] force[d] migrants to give up their Old World ways and offer[ed] them the chance to become a new kind of people, individuals responsible for their own fate and fortune and free to define who they are.”⁶⁶ This myth of the frontier is easily applicable to Mars.

The frontier West of [this] myth is a place where people can leave the past behind and start life over, without the burdens of inherited traditions or the constraints of economic class. The frontier offers the freedom and material basis needed for people to reinvent themselves. The two streams of this myth are the conquest of the land, in building a civilization in an untamed wilderness, and the defense of it against “intruders” [...] who would deny people their rightful property or otherwise subvert American values.⁶⁷

All the things described here by William Katerberg are equally true for the Martians. They too had to tame a wilderness and build a civilization there, and they also had to defend it against intruders from Earth who wanted to deny them their rights as a free people.

What historically had happened to the American settlers had also happened to the Martian colonists:

new circumstances forced new perspectives, new self-concepts, and new world concepts on the colonists and made them see their cultural heritage from angles of vision that noncolonists would find peculiar.⁶⁸

All colonists *everywhere* underwent a process of ‘acculturation:’ “[the] adjusting [of] the mores and world view of one’s native culture to the requirements of life in an alien environment.”⁶⁹ This is just as true for the Martian settlers as it had been for the English settlers in America. It is through this process that “the diverse races of Europeans have

⁶⁵ Katerberg, p. 21

⁶⁶ Katerberg, p. 1

⁶⁷ Katerberg, p. 18

⁶⁸ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 15

⁶⁹ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 22

become unified into [the] single, international nationality” of the USA.⁷⁰ This process is also what forged the disparate Martian society into a coherent whole. This is where “a new egalitarianism” was born “in which everyone did his share of the heavy lifting” as this “was the only realistic path for success.”⁷¹

The American colonies were not a homogenous mass – heterogeneity was the rule of the day:

colonial society was fragmented into hostile cultural enclaves and rival governments, each speaking for separated and isolated fragments of that society. Even after the Revolution, sectional and local differences persisted and to some degree intensified.⁷²

This clearly inspired the different factions and parties of Martian society.

Various groups of American settlers had “in the process of adjusting their lives to the wilderness, [...] acquire[d] certain elements or qualities distinctively derived from and suited to [their distinct] environment.”⁷³ Like their ideological forebears the different groups on Mars had developed their own customs and culture, informed by their individual environment.

Sectional cultures came into being with “distinct and varying social and political concerns, prejudices, [and] ideas about the wilderness and man’s relation to it.”⁷⁴ Mars has a great many different kinds of colonies and settlements,⁷⁵ each with different social structures and varying ideologies. In other words it is a mish-mash without any unifying structure.

The old idea of the ‘melting pot’ comes up from time to time in the trilogy.⁷⁶ Thinking about it, the whole of the ‘First Hundred’ group is basically a ‘melting pot’ – is it composed of multiple nationalities and ethnicities, living side by side and working towards a common goal. The American middle colonies were a wild ethnical and religious mix.⁷⁷ Like the middle colonies were, so Mars is – “this extraordinary mosaic of ordinary, yet

⁷⁰ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 260f.

⁷¹ Thompson, p. 213

⁷² Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 23

⁷³ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 28

⁷⁴ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 226

⁷⁵ *GM*, p. 326

⁷⁶ *GM*, p. 336; *BM*, p. 150

⁷⁷ Tindall & Shi, p. 83

adventurous people created many of America's enduring institutions and values;”⁷⁸ when they arrived they “carried with them – and retained – sharply different cultural attitudes and customs from their home regions.”⁷⁹ The Martians like the “Americans thus constitute a mosaic rather than a homogenous mass, [sharing] a diverse social and cultural heritage.”⁸⁰ The culture of the new world created its own identity⁸¹ and it is neither Russian, nor American, nor French, nor Japanese, etc., but Martian.

It was Arkady Bogdanov who had the first plans for a new society on Mars, plans already formulated by the time of the colonists' arrival.⁸² He delivered a lengthy speech in favor of building that society, saying that Mars represents a new opportunity for them, an opportunity to change themselves to fit the environment rather the other way around, as has usually been the case in history.⁸³ Mars is a blank canvas on which to paint the future. The new Martian society should leave Earth's ‘defects’ and its history behind – the “New World is to be liberated from the dead hand of the past and become the scene of a new departure in human affairs.”⁸⁴ Arkady also advocates, and makes some good points for, the ‘construction’ of a utopia on Mars.⁸⁵ Historically, utopian communities have always had a presence in American history; experiments in new societies were an integral part of the American experience.⁸⁶ Following that model, such experiments should also become an integral part of Martian culture, acting as a space where new things could be tried out.

“[T]he utopian ideals of certain of the original colonists and of the revolutionary generation”⁸⁷ were shared by many in the first Martian settlements, the “revolutionary generation” in this case being the First Hundred and their fellow first-generation settlers. The failure of the utopian plans and ideas of the Pilgrims had its origin in plain, human failing;⁸⁸ they had failed while the efforts on Mars eventually succeeded. The colonists were confident they would “do things differently on Mars.”⁸⁹ They had the “freedom of action”⁹⁰ to make a better way of life for themselves. This became the Martian Myth, and its essence is akin to

⁷⁸ Tindall & Shi, p. 61

⁷⁹ Tindall & Shi, p. 62

⁸⁰ Tindall & Shi, p. 62

⁸¹ *RM*, p. 252f.

⁸² *RM*, p. 58ff.

⁸³ *RM*, p. 86-89

⁸⁴ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 3

⁸⁵ *RM*, p. 341ff.

⁸⁶ Tindall & Shi, p. 405-408

⁸⁷ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 3

⁸⁸ Bradford, p. XIII

⁸⁹ *RM*, p. 415

⁹⁰ *BM*, p. 3

the American Dream. The aim was to create something new, not just imitate the old world⁹¹ – just like the colonists in America were aiming to be American, rather than simply be British in a new setting. They strove for “equality without conformity.”⁹²

On this topic writes Carl Abbott: “Just as new Martians try out old Earth-based ideologies and religions in a new setting, Americans have long projected political and cultural hopes on the West;”⁹³ culturally experimentation has taken place in both settings. Coyote is one of the only characters to actually spell out his *dreams* of everything being “all new,”⁹⁴ his hopes and beliefs being a version of idealistic anarchism.

The Martian natives want no part of Earth; saying they are “born here,” Mars is the only home they know, they are “Martian through and through.”⁹⁵ Such statements are not too far removed from the American experience. The Martian settlers have created a new culture, and now they have to struggle with it; a clash of the old vs. the new was unavoidable.⁹⁶

Central to the new culture is the Martian concept of the ‘areophany,’ which bears remarkable similarity to the Indians’ belief in transmutation.⁹⁷ The Indians as a whole have likely served as an inspiration for the Martians. The old Indian ‘way of life,’ for example the eschewing of extensive private property in favor of communal holdings,⁹⁸ is similar to the new ‘way’ of Mars. Richard Slotkin writes of the importance of questioning “whether our national experience has “Americanized” or “Indianized” us, or whether we are simply an idiosyncratic offshoot of English civilization.”⁹⁹ The ‘Martian’ must be questioned in a similar manner – has the so-called ‘areoformation’ of the people by the Martian landscape made them into ‘new Martians’ or just ‘strange’ Earthlings? Unsatisfyingly, Kim Stanley Robinson has not been forthcoming with an answer, neither within the narrative, nor outside of it.

By the time the narrative reaches the second half of *Blue Mars* a new kind of indigenous subculture has come into being. The so-called ‘Ferals’¹⁰⁰ are living a nomadic life, freely roaming the Martian landscape. In many aspects they are emulating the Native Americans of old. Their existence is a clear sign for the still ongoing cultural

⁹¹ *GM*, p. 2

⁹² *GM*, p. 338

⁹³ Abbott, p. 118; Turner, p. 262f.

⁹⁴ *GM*, p. 50

⁹⁵ *GM*, p. 489f.

⁹⁶ *BM*, p. 426f.

⁹⁷ Faragher, p. 164

⁹⁸ Faragher, p. 23

⁹⁹ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 6

¹⁰⁰ e.g.: *BM*, p. 463f.

experimentation happening on Mars. Not only new cultures are coming into being on Mars, new religions too are appearing – the very first among these being the one pioneered by Hiroko Ai and her group of followers.¹⁰¹ The colonies came to evolve their own mythologies, in many cases resembling Native American mythology, with certain borrowings from American folklore. A kind of ‘native Martian’ mythology slowly evolved.¹⁰²

On a darker note, the old cultures from Earth found it difficult to deal with the Martian culture, resulting in immigrant ghettos or something akin.¹⁰³

Like the Americans before them the Martians eventually too did not desire any further immigration into ‘their country.’ They themselves were, more often than not, the immediate descendants of immigrants, but they did not want any newcomers to impede their chosen way of life.¹⁰⁴ The second generation settlers wanted to put a stop to new immigration, or at least a reduction and more controls over the quotas.¹⁰⁵ The new natives have become xenophobic to a degree and are dismissive of the old world.¹⁰⁶ This mirrors a prevalent discourse in the America of the previous century.

Politics

‘Independence’ is mentioned for the first time a little over an Earth year after Martian landfall.¹⁰⁷ The Martians mirrored the American experience, probably carrying sentiments similar to William Bradford’s “none had power to command them,”¹⁰⁸ a circumstance probably born from the great gulf lying between motherland and colony. But Earth wanted to keep control of the Martian colony, because “‘Mars is not a nation but a world resource’ [...]. [Earth is] saying that the tiny fraction of humanity that lives [t]here can’t be allowed to control the resources, when the human materiel base as a whole is so deeply stressed.”¹⁰⁹ A sentence like ‘America is not a nation but an English resource’ would not have felt out of place in England’s discourse of the time. Earth’s reasons for the mission to Mars¹¹⁰ were after all mostly similar to Britain’s reasons for establishing an overseas colony. Question of ‘home rule’ soon reared their head, with the MarsFirst party becoming its eventual

¹⁰¹ *RM*, p. 228ff.

¹⁰² *GM*, p. 274

¹⁰³ *BM*, p. 594, 620

¹⁰⁴ *BM*, p. 572

¹⁰⁵ *RM*, p. 325

¹⁰⁶ *BM*, p. 589

¹⁰⁷ *RM*, p. 172

¹⁰⁸ Bradford, p. 49

¹⁰⁹ *RM*, p. 516

¹¹⁰ *RM*, p. 353

champion.¹¹¹ Tension ran high between Earth and Mars; there were significant disagreements over policy. The arguments of Mars, boiled down, basically amount to variations of ‘Earthers can’t understand Martians’ and ‘they can never know what it was like.’¹¹² In this situation the First Hundred emerged as a kind of proto-Continental Congress;¹¹³ certain members basically formed a negotiating body for talking with the UN, just like the historical Congress had negotiated with England.

John Boone delivers a lengthy policy-formulating speech; some choice excerpts are offered here:

“different people have different reasons for being here [and] the people who sent us up had different reasons for sending us;” “the imperative to invent a new social order that is purely Martian”; “we have the DNA pieces of culture all made up and broken and mixed by history, and we can choose and cut and clip together from what’s best in that gene pool, knit it all together [...], a bit from here and there, whatever’s appropriate;” “the old parasitic greed of the kings and their henchmen, this system we call the transnational world order is just feudalism all over again, [...], it [...] enriches a floating international elite while impoverishing *everything* else”; “sucking the gifts of human work away from their rightful recipients [...] while increasing the repressive powers that keep them in place!”¹¹⁴

This speech could just as well have been written by one of America’s revolutionary activists.

Part six is the politicking part of *Red Mars*; tellingly, it is Frank Chalmers’ part. At first glance Chalmers appears to be a radical in the vein of Samuel Adams, i.e. not shy of using and promoting violence to realize his desires. Once John Boone was out of the picture he seems to become a more moderate figure in the novel, promoting dialogue and negotiation to solve problems instead of fighting.¹¹⁵ In this more moderate aspect of him one is reminded of John Adams. Chalmers, in a way, is both of them in one, transitioning between them over the course of the first novel in the trilogy. As he dies at the end of *Red Mars*, it remains unknown if a transition again in the other direction could have been possible.

¹¹¹ *RM*, part six

¹¹² *RM*, part one

¹¹³ *RM*, p. 498

¹¹⁴ *RM*, p. 378ff.

¹¹⁵ *RM*, p.450f.

An ambassador from the ‘motherland’ is eventually sent to Mars.¹¹⁶ Art Randolph is an envoy of Praxis, a corporation sympathetic to Martian independence. Considering the future alliance of Mars and Praxis, and transferred to a historical perspective, he can be seen as a French ambassador sounding out America and its potential for an alliance against England. An accord was reached and Praxis will support Mars in its bid for independence, just like France had supported America in hers.¹¹⁷ The contact with Praxis was initiated by Nirgal, one of the natives born on Mars. Like the USA was trying to find support, so too did the Martians try to find steady backing and a steadfast ally. Both of them succeeded. Not only did Mars have the support of Praxis, it also received support from some of Earth’s governmental bodies.¹¹⁸

Nirgal is one of the central political figures in the Mars novels. A moderate, he advocates maintaining a close political contact with Earth,¹¹⁹ making convincing points by saying that Mars is not a colony anymore, but that Earth is their ‘mother world’ and that they should not disconnect completely from it – by not closing their borders to Earth, a mutual benefit stands to be gained. When Mars sends a diplomatic mission to Earth,¹²⁰ Nirgal is one of the envoys. His arrival on Earth, which he has never seen before,¹²¹ makes him – in a way – a kind of Pocahontas figure; the only difference being that he did not die, even though he came pretty close at one point. After all the goals he has been working for have been achieved he does like George Washington did after the end of his term and ‘returns to his farming.’¹²²

In *Blue Mars* our neighboring planet has become the proverbial ‘city upon a hill’ championed by John Winthrop – born from it, Mars now serves as a model of what Earth, too, can become.¹²³

Concluding this section, it has to be mentioned that many people of the ‘motherland’ are actually indifferent to the Martian situation.¹²⁴ Just like the average Martian citizen cared nothing for Earth, so too did the average Earthman care nothing for Mars. It was just too far away from their own concerns – they care about things right in front of them, things they can

¹¹⁶ *GM*, part two

¹¹⁷ *GM*, part two

¹¹⁸ *GM*, p. 598

¹¹⁹ *GM*, p. 590

¹²⁰ *BM*, p. 20

¹²¹ *BM*, p. 169f.

¹²² *BM*, p. 388

¹²³ *BM*, p. 172

¹²⁴ *BM*, p. 183f.

see and touch. The case should have been similar in England. What did the average peasant care for the happenings in a far-away continent?

Revolutions

The first two of the Martian revolutions are, at least partially, echoing the American Revolution. The whole *process* towards revolution bears more than superficial similarities to American history.

The second half of *Red Mars* can be seen as representing the twenty or so years before 1776; this is the time when Britain's policy toward the American colonies changed from benign neglect to wanting to profit from their possessions on the American continent – the Navigation Acts are now vigorously enforced, angering a large part of the *vocal* citizens of the colonies (by no means a majority). The seeds of revolution were sown, soon to be harvested.

The sabotage of colonization projects leads to Earth sending investigators to Mars. In history this corresponds to the dispatch of 'agents of the crown' for the regulation of America's affairs to the satisfaction of the English government.¹²⁵ The 'police' throwing their weight around is not appreciated by the colonists.¹²⁶ Earth agents are not the law on Mars, just as crown agents were not the law in America – the colonists have their own ideas about justice.

The 'motherland,' be it England or Earth, knows little of the actual situation in its colony.¹²⁷ The colony's circumstances and its prominent personages are only known from the news, just like America was only made known to England through a handful of 'dispatches.' Agitation for colonial freedom were not single isolated instances, there was "a little group in every town" that wanted freedom from Earth control.¹²⁸

The 'motherland' dispatches 'troops' to the colony.¹²⁹ The murder of Yashika Mui, probably by Earth troops,¹³⁰ raises the tension between Mars & Earth. Like England did with America, so too, does Earth ignore the political resolutions of the colonies.¹³¹ It will not take long before it will actively block and oppose them.

¹²⁵ *RM*, p. 330

¹²⁶ *RM*, p. 336f.

¹²⁷ *RM*, p. 331

¹²⁸ *RM*, p. 346

¹²⁹ *RM*, p. 354

¹³⁰ *RM*, p. 355-357

¹³¹ *RM*, p. 428

Members of a United Nations organization are expelled from a settlement. This is soon followed by a blockade of the selfsame settlement by UN troops.¹³² Does this not bring the historical situation of Boston to mind? The Martians were throwing out their occupiers like the Americans did with their, albeit British, occupiers. This expulsion is one of the significant events on the way to revolution.

Slum-building and ghettoization in the corporate towns is a powder keg waiting to explode.¹³³ Unrest is spreading through the colonies.¹³⁴ The UN oppresses and suppresses the colonists, further paving the road to revolution.¹³⁵ In the end it is Coyote who kicks off the revolution for real – through his sabotage of a whole city he lit the fuse.¹³⁶

The ‘war’ is now in full swing, with conflicts erupting all over the colonies.¹³⁷ The UN is soon in control of about half the planet,¹³⁸ occupying almost all towns and cities.¹³⁹ Earth ships are put into space around Mars, intended to serve as a police force.¹⁴⁰ This recalls the blockading of American harbors by British warships.

The revolutionaries prematurely declare their bringing down of the space elevator as their ‘independence day.’¹⁴¹ This highly symbolic act of sabotage seems a valid successor to the Boston Tea Party. Like the American revolutionaries had experienced before them, the Martian rebels received a lot of bad press in the ‘motherland.’¹⁴² Epithets like extremists, fanatics, or terrorists were applied to them. The Martian rebels eventually suffered defeat – Mars’ first grab for independence failed.¹⁴³

The remaining First Hundred are seen as ringleaders of the failed revolution;¹⁴⁴ they are ideal scapegoats. They are what Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Patrick Henry, Thomas Paine, and John Hancock have been in American history – the famous faces of the revolution; the speakers, writers, and agitators. In a way the First Hundred were like a very intimate Continental Congress, consisting only of the founding

¹³² *RM*, p. 449

¹³³ *RM*, p. 446

¹³⁴ *RM*, p. 455

¹³⁵ *RM*, p. 464

¹³⁶ *RM*, p. 470

¹³⁷ *RM*, p. 472ff.

¹³⁸ *RM*, p. 500

¹³⁹ *RM*, p. 490

¹⁴⁰ *RM*, p. 514

¹⁴¹ *RM*, p. 503

¹⁴² *RM*, p. 485

¹⁴³ *RM*, parts seven and eight

¹⁴⁴ *RM*, p. 527

fathers. This ‘leadership’ of the aborted revolution flees stealthily and in secret – the First Hundred go into hiding.¹⁴⁵

This first attempt at revolution was not a unified movement; there were many groups, many leaders, and many ideologies – it was like all the revolutions from history happening all at once.¹⁴⁶ Hopefully they would do better next time.

“[Sax] no longer understood Earth.”¹⁴⁷ He was one of the first colonists, and over the years became distanced from his old home – mentally, politically, as well as ideologically. If this was true for one of the Earth-born, then how must things stand for the Mars-born, those who have never known Earth? This experience can, without any problems, be transplanted to the American experience. What should a native-born ‘colonist’ feel for England, the cultural motherland he has never seen? How could he possibly relate to it? Like the ones in America, the new, native-born generation on Mars had, at best, only a threadbare connection to the old world; tales and stories, apart from books and history, were the only things from which they got information about Earth.¹⁴⁸ The old world is of no concern to their daily lives; they never knew Earth, and never will.

Maya Toitovna offers a rundown of the current situation with the natives:

Psychological changes had closed Earth to them forever, emigrants and native-born alike, but especially the natives. They were Martian now, no matter what. They needed to be an independent state [since they] had no real power over their own lives. Decisions were made for them a hundred million kilometers away.¹⁴⁹

The Martian natives are the inheritors of “the American myth [which] saw life and history as just beginning[, describing] the world as starting up again under fresh initiative, in a divinely granted second chance for the human race, after the first chance had been so disastrously fumbled in the darkening Old World.”¹⁵⁰ Large parts of the Martian population were wondering why “powers *on another planet* should control them in any way whatsoever.”¹⁵¹ They feared that the ‘mother planet’ would drag them down with it.¹⁵² And it is this

¹⁴⁵ *RM*, part eight

¹⁴⁶ *RM*, p. 512f.

¹⁴⁷ *GM*, p. 220

¹⁴⁸ *GM*, p. 6ff.

¹⁴⁹ *GM*, p. 482

¹⁵⁰ Lewis, p. 5

¹⁵¹ *GM*, p. 580

¹⁵² *GM*, p. 473f.

generation, the new Martians, the native-born, that is the ‘face’ of the revolution.¹⁵³ It is Maya again that sums up the feelings of this generation:

The [metanational corporations] are out of control. They’re screwing things up. They’re selfish, they only care about themselves. Metanationalism is a new kind of nationalism, but without any home feeling. It’s money patriotism, a kind of disease. People are suffering, not so much here, but on Earth. And if it doesn’t change it will happen here too. They will infect us.¹⁵⁴

She went to a great many meetings and has given a great number of speeches. It is through this activity as a speaker that she comes into contact with a great number of new natives and it is from this that she learns of their idealized ‘plans,’ dreams rather, and are through her made available to us:

They had themselves already dreamed Marses more radical than any she could believe in. Marses that were truly independent, egalitarian, just and joyous. And in some ways they had already enacted these dreams: [communitarianism, alternative economy, the areophany]. They felt they were going to live forever; they felt they lived in a world of sensuous beauty; their confinement in tents was normality, but a stage only, a confinement in warm womb mesocosms, which would be inevitably followed by their emergence onto a free living surface – by their birth, yes! They were embryo areurges, to use Michel’s term, young gods operating their world, people who knew they were meant to be free, and were confident they would get there, and soon.¹⁵⁵

A plan for action is, again, tantalizingly absent. This is ideology, philosophy, but nothing concrete to build their hopes on.

Long years after the failed first attempt, near to the middle of *Green Mars*, is the engine of revolution kicked into high gear again.¹⁵⁶ Again, there is internal trouble in the revolutionary

¹⁵³ *GM*, p. 482

¹⁵⁴ *GM*, p. 484

¹⁵⁵ *GM*, p. 514

¹⁵⁶ *GM*, p. 283ff.

movement,¹⁵⁷ with different factions moving at cross-purposes. A new plan is needed; a congress is called. Everything that had happened before the Dorsa Brevia congress were not ‘true’ revolutions, one could at best call them rebellions or uprisings; they had no unity and thus they failed.¹⁵⁸

Forces of the Earth-led Transitional Authority are in control of most everything on Mars.¹⁵⁹ Dissidents hide completely underground or live in the ‘demimonde,’ a half-legal life in the Martian half-world. It does not take long before the conflict between the Martians and this Earth authority erupts again.¹⁶⁰ The Martians, as a first move, are getting rid of things in their planetary orbit that might pose a danger to them.¹⁶¹ This recalls the sabotage of British ships anchored in American harbors or off the coast.

The Transitional Authority sends more troops to deal with the colonial unrest,¹⁶² possibly intended them to serve as an expeditionary force with the mission to root out the Martian dissidents and rebels. The more hot-headed types of revolutionaries argue, and are eager, for a violent response to this, but are stymied by more level-headed rebels. The Earth troops manage to capture many ‘leaders’ of the revolution,¹⁶³ a tactic possibly serving to provoke the revolutionaries into premature action.¹⁶⁴ No matter what strategy was meant to be followed with this, it was a heavy blow to the morale of the revolutionary movement.¹⁶⁵ The crackdowns by these ‘government troops’¹⁶⁶ are reminiscent of the Coercive Acts, a.k.a. the Intolerable Acts, enforced in Boston; and the colonial activists are not shy to use the mass protests in the Martian cities as a political tool of opposition.¹⁶⁷

It is in the last quarter of *Green Mars* that the revolution finally, actually happens.¹⁶⁸ The wracking of Earth by a natural disaster created the perfect opportunity for a revolution and the Martians did not hesitate to make their bid for independence¹⁶⁹ – it had been a bit more than a hundred years from the first settlement on Mars until independence.¹⁷⁰ Art Randolph

¹⁵⁷ *GM*, p. 315

¹⁵⁸ *GM*, part seven

¹⁵⁹ *GM*, part seven

¹⁶⁰ *GM*, p. 348

¹⁶¹ *GM*, p. 413ff.

¹⁶² *GM*, p. 431

¹⁶³ *GM*, p. 519

¹⁶⁴ *GM*, p. 522

¹⁶⁵ *GM*, p. 523

¹⁶⁶ *GM*, p. 525

¹⁶⁷ *GM*, p. 546

¹⁶⁸ *GM*, p. 556; part ten in general

¹⁶⁹ *GM*, p. 557

¹⁷⁰ *GM*, p. 559

described this not as a revolution, but the “perfectly natural next step” in the ‘evolution’ of Mars, simply a ‘phase change’ instead of a catastrophic break with continuity.¹⁷¹

This successful second Martian revolution was perceived as a model for others to follow,¹⁷² as a guideline for organized resistance against oppression, colonialism, and tyranny. In this it was just like how the American Revolution had served as a model, an inspiration for the revolutions in France (1789), Germany (1848), and others. The settlements in the other parts of the solar system are not accorded much space in Robinson’s writing, but one can imagine that the independence of Mars had quite an effect of them, perhaps inspiring them to make their own bid for it.

By the end of *Blue Mars* the rot has crept into the Martian institutions of government which the Martian ‘colonists’ had paid for with their blood and toil. The democratic processes of the Martian state were faltering, so the old revolutionaries took action again. Unlike the first two, the third Martian revolution happened quietly.¹⁷³ The Martian government got a vote of no confidence,¹⁷⁴ because the people realized that something new was needed to keep them ‘free.’ Mars was in need of a ‘true’ constitution, they had to get away from the ‘Articles of Confederation’-model, proven just as ineffective on Mars as it had been in America. This third revolution and the formation of a new government happens right in the last part of *Blue Mars* and Kim Stanley Robinson tantalizingly declined to tell his readers the details of the revolution and exactly what form this new government would take.

Government

Green Mars sees the proposal for the meeting of all underground/revolutionary groups.¹⁷⁵ This displays some similarity to the first American Continental Congress; it is even called a “congress” in the pages of the novel.¹⁷⁶ Characters within the novel likened it to the American Constitutional Congress,¹⁷⁷ but this is certainly not the case. One of the main arguments of this Mars congress was the use of force to achieve its goals or not.¹⁷⁸ This was a discussion unlikely to have happened in America after it had already won its independence. The seven ‘resolutions’ worked out in this Martian congress are closer in nature to the

¹⁷¹ *GM*, p. 579

¹⁷² *BM*, p. 174

¹⁷³ *BM*, p. 743; part fourteen in general

¹⁷⁴ *BM*, p. 745

¹⁷⁵ *GM*, p. 315f

¹⁷⁶ *GM*, p. 325

¹⁷⁷ *GM*, p. 375

¹⁷⁸ *GM*, part seven

Declaration of Independence than to the Constitution,¹⁷⁹ the document that is finally set down is even called “the Dorsa Brevia **Declaration**.”¹⁸⁰

The Martians have finally formed a compact, like William Bradford and his fellow Pilgrims did. For Bradford & co this was the “first foundation of [...] government”¹⁸¹ in the colonies. After negotiations with some of their fellow American colonies they even formed a ‘Confederation of Colonies,’ to protect themselves from the growing Indian threat.¹⁸² They laid down the rules and rights of their confederation in a document they termed their “Articles of Confederation.”¹⁸³ With the Dorsa Brevia document in hand the Martians soon moved into the second Martian revolution, which, after long struggles, finally succeeded.

Having finally achieved independence, the Martians are now confronted with the tedious rigors of creating a working government in *Blue Mars* – a true constitution has to be forged. They are now faced with questions of how to conciliate the old revolutionary methods with the new reality; they must determine how things are decided; a policy has to be formulated.¹⁸⁴ The factions of a more ‘militant fanatic’ bent are now a problem for the newborn system; there is a real danger of a civil war breaking out between the Red and Green factions.¹⁸⁵ A solution has to be found for this. Sax Russell, of all people, knowingly or unknowingly quotes Benjamin Franklin when he says that they must “[h]ang together or hang separately.”¹⁸⁶

The whole part three of *Blue Mars* is dedicated to the ‘forging’ of the Martian constitution.¹⁸⁷ Some allusions to Thomas Jefferson and his absence from the Constitutional Congress can be found in the text.¹⁸⁸ Modern technology makes a ‘fate’ like Jefferson’s unlikely, if not wholly impossible for those Martians who want to participate in the Congress. When it finally starts in Pavonis Mons there are about three hundred people taking part in this congress.¹⁸⁹ It is a chaotic time for all involved, with Nadia Cherneshevsky being the one serving as its lynchpin, keeping it all together.¹⁹⁰ Absolutely *everything* has to be

¹⁷⁹ *GM*, p. 389f.

¹⁸⁰ *GM*, p. 393 (my emphasis)

¹⁸¹ Bradford, p. 49

¹⁸² Bradford, p. 210

¹⁸³ Bradford, p. 210-213; this means the ones that governed the nation from 1781-1787 were not a new idea.

¹⁸⁴ *BM*, p. 13f.

¹⁸⁵ *BM*, p. 19

¹⁸⁶ *BM*, p. 35

¹⁸⁷ *BM* p. 114-158

¹⁸⁸ *BM*, p. 117

¹⁸⁹ *BM*, p. 119; for those interested in a full list of delegations/parties recognized by the Congress – more than 60 – and active in the constitution-making, see: *BM*, p. 120f.

¹⁹⁰ There was a Russian author by the name of N. G. Chernyshevsky who was a follower of the school of Nihilism. One of his protagonists is ‘the new feminist woman’ (*What Is To Be Done?*, published 1863) (GoGwilt, p. 45). Only a single letter differentiates his last name from that of Nadia, who is a central character

discussed because the Constitution needs a consensus of the majority.¹⁹¹ It is discussed how to forge a coherent Martian identity – “how were they to balance the local against the global, and past versus future – the many ancestral cultures against the one Martian culture?”¹⁹² A ‘bill of rights’ is mentioned,¹⁹³ and ‘checks and balances’ in the Madisonian manner are needed to keep the government under control.¹⁹⁴ The document they can finally all agree on is clearly reminiscent of the American Articles of Confederation, with its weak president and strong states’ rights, ‘faction rights’ in the case of Mars.

Coyote brings to attention that the real test only starts *after* the adoption of the constitution,¹⁹⁵ power corrupts after all. The whole constitutional congress was only “setting the foundation.”¹⁹⁶ The constitution is only a blueprint,¹⁹⁷ the real task is now is to build a working government from it. Now that they have a constitution, a government, comes the everyday life in this new system, to which part four of *Blue Mars* is devoted to. The historical American equivalent for this can be seen as the life under the Articles of Confederation. The ‘new order’ is not without its problems,¹⁹⁸ Mars’ political system is still evolving.¹⁹⁹ The Martians are now experiencing the ‘rigors’ of self-government with the concomitant investment of time in it to keep it working.²⁰⁰

It has to be said that Martian parties and politics do not recall American ones; Mars follows a more European model, with a few larger parties and many smaller ones.²⁰¹ As has been so often the case, in European as in American politics, the various political factions eventually began to intertwine – homogeneity was creeping in.²⁰² Because the Martians knew that “man’s history is one of decline from freedom to oppression, from purity to corruption of social relationships and institutions”²⁰³ they fought to prevent that. Ceaseless struggle to prevent a new hierarchy, to not to make ‘another Earth’ is “what it means to be Martian.”²⁰⁴ Just like Americans used to “belie[ve] in the need for periodic and radical

in the Mars trilogy. There might be something worth researching here, but this topic falls outside this paper’s scope.

¹⁹¹ e.g.: *BM*, p. 130ff.

¹⁹² *BM*, p. 128

¹⁹³ *BM*, p. 129

¹⁹⁴ *BM*, p. 139

¹⁹⁵ *BM*, p. 156

¹⁹⁶ *BM*, p. 294f.

¹⁹⁷ *BM*, p. 291

¹⁹⁸ *BM*, p. 300f.

¹⁹⁹ *BM*, p. 433f.

²⁰⁰ *BM*, p. 434; Thomas Paine is quoted on the same page: “Those who value freedom must make the effort necessary to defend it.”

²⁰¹ *BM*, p. 572

²⁰² *BM*, p. 652

²⁰³ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ... p. 276

²⁰⁴ *BM*, p. 3

change in the very structure of American society,”²⁰⁵ so too do the Martians believe in this. This was the impetus for the third Martian revolution – if something is not working then change it! Martian politics need ‘eternal vigilance’ to not repeat the past, to not make old mistakes again.

Concluding, it can be said that the Dorsa Brevia Congress was a kind of ‘independence committee’ with its document serving as the Martian Declaration of Independence; the Pavonis Mons Congress with its ‘Articles of Confederation’-style constitution is more a heir to the Continental Congress; the true American Constitutional Congress found its expression only after the third Martian revolution in Mangala, its story sadly untold by Kim Stanley Robinson.

Similarity to Historical Precedents & Robinson’s Denials

Even though Kim Stanley Robinson makes copious use of American history in the Mars trilogy, within the text he seems to deny this. See for example this:

You all have to get it through your heads that this whole revolution scenario is nothing but a fantasia on the American Revolution, you know, the great frontier, the hardy pioneer colonists exploited by the imperial power, the revolt to go from colony to sovereign state – it’s all just a false analogy!²⁰⁶

Or this:

You and all your friends are trying to live out a fantasy rebellion, some kind of sci-fi 1776, frontiersmen throwing off the yoke of tyranny, but it isn’t like that here! The analogies are all wrong, and deceptively wrong because they mask the reality[.]²⁰⁷

In these instances Robinson seems to vehemently deny the debt he owes to American history for supplying him with a model to follow in his science fiction trilogy. These denials can be safely ignored, because, as has been shown above, the events in his Mars novels follow the historical model pretty closely – even though Robinson says the Martian revolution is not the same as the one of 1776, structurally they resemble each other very closely.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Lewis, p. 15

²⁰⁶ *RM*, p. 348

²⁰⁷ *RM*, p. 465

²⁰⁸ *RM*, part seven

In other instances he seems fairly open about the historically-derivative character of the Martian revolution, though, because he also has written passages like this one:

Do you think they can just ignore the people who are living here? They may have continuous shuttles now, but we're still eighty million kilometers away from them, and we're here and they're not. It may not be North America in the 1760s, but we do have some of the same advantages: we're at a great distance, and we're in possession.²⁰⁹

Or this one:

We're not just cogs on the machine here, we're individual people, most of us ordinary, but there's some real characters too – we're going to see our Washingtons and Jeffersons and Paines, I guarantee you. Also the Andrew Jacksons and Forrest Mosebys, the brutal men who are good at getting what they want. [...] Well, it's more metaphor than analogy anyway. There are differences, but we intend to respond to those creatively.²¹⁰

In the last book of the trilogy, his reliance on American history is stated very obviously when he has characters say things like “Mars, which was a sort of America when all was said and done,”²¹¹ and “Mars is [...] the new America.”²¹²

Kim Stanley Robinson seems torn on the question of whether to deny or acknowledge the historical influences of the trilogy. His writing vacillates between the two extremes seen above. The critics all fall heavily on one side of this argument, agreeing with the thesis laid out in this paper. Carl Abbott writes that the Mars trilogy “transposes many of the problems of the American West to a new setting”²¹³ and that

Mars is an urban frontier of gateway cities and production cities from which miners and eventually agriculturalists spread outward: Sheffield stands in for a port city like

²⁰⁹ *RM*, p. 348 (my emphasis)

²¹⁰ *RM*, p. 465

²¹¹ *BM*, p. 235

²¹² *BM*, p. 348

²¹³ Abbott, p. 69

San Francisco, Burroughs for an industrial city like Denver, Serenzi Na [sic] for a mining town like Butte, Bradbury for small agricultural cities like Grand Junction.²¹⁴

William Katerberg agrees with Abbot when he write that “the terraforming and colonizing of Mars parallels the history of the Americas as a New World frontier”²¹⁵ and that “the trilogy replays familiar historical patterns,”²¹⁶ i.e. the settling of the American continent.

The Historicity of the Future

As William Katerberg has so aptly stated, the American frontier “promised the chance to start time anew,” offering “the freedom to leave the past behind.”²¹⁷ This meant America offered an ‘end to history’, i.e. a leaving behind of the baggage and failures of the old world. In this new, empty continent people had a chance of “escaping [the] crushing nightmare of history and creating a completely new society”²¹⁸

This is obviously untrue. Kim Stanley Robinson devotes considerable page space to showing his readers that an ‘end of history’ cannot possibly be achieved, that the past is always with us – without it we would lack the tools to even imagine the future. Robinson himself used familiar terms and phrases to make Mars familiar to his audience. The American West is familiar to him and he was not afraid to the classic Western imagery derived from it in order to describe people and places on Mars:

[he] likened Mars to the California desert, Monument Valley, and the Painted Desert in his [...] Mars trilogy. It is “a Utah of the imagination.” Characters look like “a weatherbeaten sodbuster” and a scientific outpost like “a desiccated café in the Mojave.”²¹⁹

Although there have always been “[p]rogressive-minded radicals” holding a belief “that the past must be left behind [in order] to build a new world,” Robinson proves them wrong. His characters are of a more complex bent, many of them sharing in their belief that “[e]lements of the past and traditions must be retrieved and adapted for utopian hopes to be dreamed, pursued, and enacted.” For them the past has to offer many things: “Ways of life from the

²¹⁴ Abbott, p. 70

²¹⁵ Katerberg, p. 151

²¹⁶ Katerberg, p. 152

²¹⁷ Katerberg, p. 5

²¹⁸ Stephanson, p. 22

²¹⁹ Abbott, p. 20f.

past can remind people of ideals, insights, hopes, and experiences that they had forgotten or patronizingly dismissed.” For them, as for Robinson, “[r]etrieving the past and adapting it to critique the present and envision a better future” are the essential means for the creation of a new, utopian society.²²⁰

Robinson places emphasis in his works “on the possibility of genuine change for the better, within the continuities of history, [which] reflects Robinson’s conviction that there is no “end of history”.”²²¹ He is depicting various “provisional “ends of history,” closures that can always be reopened, in the return of destructive aspects of the past that seemingly had been overcome, or in new ideals and movements that continue the process of change into the future.”²²² This explains what others mean when they describe Robinson as a ‘critical utopian.’ His utopias are never isolated, always changing, adapting to present needs, and not above to make recourse to the past if it suits the needs of society. William Katerberg devotes a lengthy paragraph to an analysis of Robinson’s California trilogy that is of equal importance to the Mars trilogy:

[The trilogy] turns both Western American myth and utopian theory upside down. In classic frontier mythology, places like California offer hope because you can leave your past behind and reinvent yourself. “New” worlds are based on the freedom to leave the “old” behind. If this were true, if it were ever anything more than a tall tale [...], it is no longer so in Orange County in the early twenty-first century. Just the opposite. The burdens of the past no longer can be avoided. More important, the past is a resource on which hope for a new world in the future depends. Stories about California in the old days, when there were oranges in Orange County, are nostalgia and myth. But they also contain glimmers of a genuine utopian horizon and provide a starting point for social criticism of the present, [...]. That future will not be a simple return to the past but a mix of old and new ways, [...]. [...] hope for the future begins with stories about the past, in all of their nostalgic, fantastic, and foreign elements. The past is both a burden and an inheritance.²²³

²²⁰ Katerberg, p. 155

²²¹ Katerberg, p. 134

²²² Katerberg, p. 134

²²³ Katerberg, p. 155 (my emphasis)

In a way this can be seen in the interactions, and later friendship, of Art Randolph and Nirgal – both acting as representatives of their respective world and getting along splendidly.²²⁴ They freely exchange ideas, talk, and continuously learn about and from each other. Through their companionship in *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars* they are creating a continuity of the future with the past, of Mars with Earth – a complete break with history is neither desired nor achieved.

Kim Stanley Robinson himself “explicitly defines science fiction as historical in character – as articulated narratives that can be seen as anchored at their origins in “real” times and circumstances.”²²⁵ This means that just as the Mars trilogy is “a story that is continuous with life on Earth”²²⁶ so too must science fiction in general be seen as a speculative continuation of history into the future.

Preservation of Nature

This favored topic of Kim Stanley Robinson also finds its reflection in history. In the latter half of the 19th century and around the turn of the century, i.e. at a fairly late point in American history, there sprouted in America an awareness of the inherent worth of pristine nature – people recognized that it had to be preserved before it was completely gone. It was the ongoing industrialization of the nation and the unceasing spread of people all over the continent that spurred this topic on in the public consciousness. This spike in awareness coincided with the closure of the frontier. There was no more new land to be found now, so the Americans seemed to recognize that ‘this was all they got, so they better protect it.’ It could be said that by keeping some part of the wilderness alive through the establishment of national parks they have erected a memorial to the American past, to enable future generations to come into contact with the ‘frontier wilderness’ that had played such a large part in the formation of the American character.

Within the Mars trilogy Ann Clayborne is the foremost conservationist. She wants to preserve the environment,²²⁷ to keep it in its pristine state – at all costs if necessary. What she will eventually get is reminiscent of the American national park arrangement – certain zones that are inviolate to industrial concerns. Her ideological ‘followers’ make up the Reds, a movement, or activist group, not shying away from getting their hands dirty if it furthers their agenda. In their more mellow incarnation as a political party they can be seen as an

²²⁴ This can be observed in: *GM*, part six.

²²⁵ Abbott, p. 4

²²⁶ Clute, *Illustrated ...*, p. 200

²²⁷ *RM*, p. 107

equivalent of the American Green Party, while in their more violent outings they are reminiscent of a militant wing of an organization like Greenpeace. The Red activists share the historical concerns of the Indians. The Reds want the planet ‘for themselves’ in order to preserve the natural state of the land – they believe in “the land ethic.”²²⁸ In a way they were followers of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau – they were convinced the *sublime* Martian landscape had to be saved from terraforming, i.e. destruction, in order to inspire future generations.

Ann’s ideological antagonist for most of the trilogy is scientist extraordinaire Sax Russell. Their respective positions find articulation in lengthy paragraphs throughout all three books.²²⁹ While Ann wants to conserve the natural state of Mars at all costs, Sax goes to the other extreme and wants to terraform it, to make the surface livable for human beings, at all costs. In order to really bring his point across, Kim Stanley Robinson used some prosaic naming with these two: Ann Clayborne’ last name splits into clay-born, bringing to mind the earth, the ground, lifeless rocks; Saxifrage Russell on the other hand is the representative of plant life, seeing how ‘saxifrage’ is a type of flower.

It was within the West of American myth that the “conflict between the ideals of technological progress and social improvement and pastoral ideals of returning to nature”²³⁰ were played out. And what is Robinson’s Mars if not a new incarnation of the old West, of the frontier? Within the novels the above positions are respectively embodied by Sax Russell and Ann Clayborne. As the story progressed, up into the last chapter of the trilogy, these two eventually reached an accommodation and then a synthesis: their getting together as a couple near the end of *Blue Mars* marks the fusion of the old Green-Red antitheses in the minds of the readers, just like on a wider scale the quiet third revolution on Mars finally marked a true synthesis of Earth and Mars – the old and the new.

Nomadism & the Future Primitive

Nomads have an undeniable presence on Mars, wandering, and working, throughout this new world. Those cultures with nomadic traditions continue them in the ‘deserts’ of Mars. Arab caravans show an early presence, soon followed by Sufis, and later by a great number of Bedouins.²³¹ Roving, nomadic ‘tribes’ early on establish a lasting presence on Mars,

²²⁸ *GM*, p. 128f., 145

²²⁹ The first instance: *RM*, p. 176-178.

²³⁰ Katerberg, p. 144

²³¹ *RM*, p. 256f., 276, 310f., 405

forming insular mini-societies that survive intact throughout the tumultuous years of the Martian future.

This brings not only the way of life of many Indian tribes to mind, but also an almost forgotten part of the American past. The Ben Ishmael tribe consisted of a wild mix of ethnicities and was tied to a large geographical area; but within this area they lived a nomadic life – within a specific area they were geographically mobile, reminiscent of a number of Native American tribes.²³² In their partially Islamic heritage they can be seen as having served as a model for the Martian Muslims and their roaming caravans. This nomadic influence was not restricted to one cultural group of Martians, though. Eventually the ‘Martian way of life’ as a whole began to resemble this specific type of nomadic life – by the end of the trilogy a significant percentage of the Martian populace lived a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle, a fitting contemporary term perhaps being ‘job nomads.’

Fitting into this nomadic concept was the image of the ‘wild man’ of American myth. A practitioner of ‘spiritual anarchy,’ he had a significant presence in the imagined America of the past.²³³ In the Mars trilogy this ideological heritage is partially manifest in the ‘Red Mars’ movement, especially the ‘anarchy’ part, but to a larger degree finds its inheritor in Hiroko Ai and her hidden colony. Not long after first landing, if not already on the journey out, she assumed the mantle of the shaman, living at the edge of the community – the greenhouse in her case.²³⁴ Already on the colony ship has she gathered a group of devoted followers around herself, developing a peculiar new philosophy for the life on Mars – what would later be called the ‘areophany.’ After her group’s split with the other colonists, she developed her philosophy in isolation, transmitting it to the children of the hidden colony. These children, natives born on Mars, in their innocent youths in the ‘wilderness’ of Mars exhibited fully the traits of the wild man – only after leaving the hidden settlement of Zygote (later Gamete) behind do they grow out of this phase and develop a less extreme, more widely acceptable way of life – still largely informed by Hiroko’s philosophy, of course. This way of life eventually informed large swathes of the *native* Martian populace, clashing a bit with the old Earth cultures. The ‘Feral’ subculture that has developed by the time of *Blue Mars* is one of the more extreme examples of this and clearly harks back to the old ‘wild man’ ideal. By the time the trilogy reaches its end Hiroko Ai has become mythic,

²³² Hugo P. Leaming, “The Ben Ishmael Tribe. A Fugitive “Nation” of the Old Northwest”, in: Sakolsky & Koehnline, p. 19-60

²³³ Peter Lamborn Wilson, “Caliban’s Masque. Spiritual Anarchy & The Wild Man in Colonial America”, in Sakolsky & Koehnline, p. 95-116

²³⁴ This development can be observed in *RM*, part three.

embodying the traveling ‘shaman,’ helping out where she is needed.²³⁵ As far as the reader knows this transformation has been effected fully in the public mind – it is actually unknown if she survived the, eventually successful, second bid for Martian independence in *Green Mars*. Hiroko has become an icon of the Martian subconscious – much like John Boone, as shall be seen in the second chapter of this paper.

Traditionally it has been suggested that “it is [primitive] frontier conditions that erase the problems of the past and make a better future possible.”²³⁶ This primitivism is also a leading concern of Kim Stanley Robinson. His ideal is some form of futurist primitivism, a kind of neo-Paleolithic lifestyle, with the traditional Indian way of life serving as one possible inspiration for Robinson. Writes Carol Franko:

Robinson urges SF to imagine futures radically different from the ubiquitous “great industrial city machines” [...] – new futures that “cobble together aspects of the postmodern and the Paleolithic” and where “sophisticated new technologies [are] combined with habits saved or reinvented from our deep past, with the notion that prehistoric cultures were critical in making us what we are, and knew things about our relationship to the world that we should not forget” [...].²³⁷

Kim Stanley Robinson does not stand alone with this theory. Aldous Huxley, who has, like Robinson, lived for many years in California, has said something similar. It was said of him:

He would – at least in public – speak of nothing but the need for the reintegration of what both science and life had divided too sharply: the restoration of human contact with non-human nature, the need for antidotes to the lopsided development of human beings [...] away from the harmonious development of the senses, of the “vegetative soul,” of that which man has in common with animals and plants.²³⁸

In these terms, considering the American past, this meant a ‘rediscovery’ of the vanished Indian lifestyle as it had been lived before their removal to the reservations. Seen from a socio-cultural perspective, Huxley’s words signify a demand for America coming to terms with, and approaching the marginalized Indian.

²³⁵ *BM*, p. 198ff.

²³⁶ Katerberg, p. 5

²³⁷ Franko, p. 548

²³⁸ Isaiah Berlin, quoted in: Aldiss, *Billion ...*, p. 195

Seen in a cultural way, this is certainly true of the Mars trilogy, featuring what can be read as a spiritual successor of the traditional Indian way of life. These three novels also placed emphasis on cultural experimentation, as elaborated above, and, in this manner, could be grouped under what Brian Aldiss terms “Life-Style Sf,” meaning “a fiction which places the emphasis on experimental modes of living.”²³⁹ Robinson thought much bigger than that, though. Rather than simply limiting himself to “experimental modes of living” he generated in his novels a blueprint for a possible, an achievable future society. This will be examined in the next topic.

Eco-Utopia & Robinson’s “Manifesto”

Like his earlier California trilogy, this Mars novels can be viewed as a blueprint, albeit a more detailed one than its predecessor, for the creation of a better world. As Carl Abbott says, “[Kim Stanley] Robinson is a cautious utopian.”²⁴⁰ Robinson’s vision for the future in the Mars trilogy is definitely utopian, but it has a more “critical, open-ended sensibility,”²⁴¹ it is shaped by dystopian impulses, as represented by Earth in these books, and by “critical utopian impulses”²⁴² which are manifest in lengthy parts of the novels where he describes the detailed construction of the new Martian society, its economy, and its government.

[Robinson’s] preferred society [...] manifests the “wise provincialism” that nineteenth-century philosopher Josiah Royce saw as the middle ground between radical individualism and corporate dominance.²⁴³

Provincialism in this case meaning “loyalty to places and communities” through “continued interactions of people and nature.”²⁴⁴ In light of the Mars trilogy it is this ‘community’ that is of special interest to Robinson, after all “[his] alternative for Mars is also the great alternative for understanding western America: frontier as community building.”²⁴⁵ Robinson made great effort to present to his audience the process of society- and government-building in painstaking detail. He also didactically pointed out that

²³⁹ Aldiss, *Billion ...*, p. 274

²⁴⁰ Abbott, p. 101

²⁴¹ Katerberg, p. 151

²⁴² Katerberg, p. 134

²⁴³ Abbott, p. 102

²⁴⁴ Abbott, p. 124f.

²⁴⁵ Abbott, p. 114

“[c]ommunity does not just happen, it has to be constructed, tended, and valued”²⁴⁶ – if the Martian ‘state’ is supposed to work as intended it needs constant maintenance and vigilance.

Previously, Robinson had set his utopian ruminations in the state of California, it being much closer to his personal experience and placed closer to the world his reader knew. But William Katerberg explains that

in-depth utopian modeling works better in a geographically, temporally, and technological distant setting such as Mars, which has no indigenous life or sentient history of its own. The distance gives the reader more freedom to move back and forth – imaginatively, critically, and hopefully – between his or her own time and place and that of the story.²⁴⁷

This might explain why his Mars trilogy has won much more critical and popular acclaim than his preceding trilogy – the distance to actual human experience fired the imaginations of his audience. If Robinson wants to reach as many people as possible with his message then this acclaim is of critical importance to him.

His message is a fairly simple one and concerns the environment and our future in it. Kim Stanley Robinson himself is very aware of environmental activism and analysis.²⁴⁸ The environment is one of Robinson’s main themes in all his stories and “[his] books about the settlement of Mars make the environmental costs of pioneering and settlement a central point of debate among his characters”²⁴⁹ – Sax Russell and Ann Clayborne being at the forefront of these. Robinson himself believes in the logic of developing towards a postindustrial, eco-utopian future society and it is in the Mars trilogy that he “details both the process of forming an eco-utopian society on Mars and its actual achievements.”²⁵⁰ William Katerberg again explains that

Robinson’s ecological sensibilities point to a common humanity. Implicit in the California trilogy and explicit in the drawn-out political conflicts and constitution-making in the Mars trilogy is a vision of “eco-economics.” As in nature, where plants

²⁴⁶ Abbott, p. 124f.

²⁴⁷ Katerberg, p. 152

²⁴⁸ Abbott, p. 97

²⁴⁹ Abbott, p. 27

²⁵⁰ Katerberg, p. 152

and animals cannot live apart from the whole ecosystem, so do individuals and communities necessarily exist in a larger web of human relations.²⁵¹

Plans for a new economy are already present in the first half of *Red Mars*²⁵² and it soon after begins to work as an alternate economy to the traditional capitalistic one championed, and brought to Mars, by Earth. The principles of this new, Martian economy are constantly being worked on. In *Green Mars* it has reached a kind of halfway point, having evolved into a gift economy.²⁵³ Even then work on it was not finished and the principle economic theorists kept working on their baby – these eco-economics. It is doubtful, if people keep hold of their utopian intentions, that it will ever reach an ‘end stage’ in its development and cease to evolve.

All the points mentioned above taken together make it clear how close Robinson’s Mars trilogy “comes close to being a manifesto.”²⁵⁴ In these three novels he “creates a vision of our neighboring planet that not only makes one wish to live there, but also shows us how to go out there and do it.”²⁵⁵ And Robinson has used the history of the American nation to reach that point, as this chapter hopefully has made clear.

²⁵¹ Katerberg, p. 153f.

²⁵² *RM*, p. 297f.

²⁵³ *GM*, p. 293f.

²⁵⁴ Clute, *Illustrated ...*, p. 95

²⁵⁵ Clute, *Illustrated ...*, p. 83

Chapter 2 - John Boone: The Composite American Hero

John Boone.

It is a name that bears history within itself – a name which calls two classic figures of American history to mind – explorer John Smith and pioneer Daniel Boone.

These two historic figures feature most significantly in the composition of ‘John Boone,’ but are not the only sources of inspiration for this character.

This section, the middle chapter of the paper, will deal with the eponymous ‘quintessential American hero’ John Boone, his traits, character, and – to the largest part – specifics about the suggested composite parts of this fictional creation.

The American Hero & John Boone’s Character

The whole of part five of *Red Mars* is written from John Boone’s perspective, his point of view leading us around the planet and showing us the developing Martian culture and the growing political issues. It is also the single longest part of the novel, and thus must be credited with some importance. John Boone is a pivotal character in Robinson’s trilogy, even though he does not survive into the last third of the first book. It is then of interest to look a bit closer at this fictional person who claims such a large chunk of the narrative for itself.

John Boone is described as “genial American.”²⁵⁶ He was born in Minnesota,²⁵⁷ his ancestors were probably farmers for generations, and this ‘farm boy’ heritage can still be felt from him today.²⁵⁸ He was a white middle-class, mid-western man – a type much idealized by the popular media – with “dreams of space,”²⁵⁹ dreams he eventually got to fulfill.

Russian cosmonaut Maya Toitovna, in the second part of *Red Mars*, devotes a paragraph to a description of John Boone as she sees him:

He was [Maya] thought, a typical American: simple, open, straightforward, relaxed. And yet this particular specimen was one of the most famous people in history. It was an unavoidable, heavy fact, but Boone seemed to slip out from under it, to leave it around his feet on the floor. Intent on the taste of a roll, or some news on the table screen, he never referred to his previous expedition, and if someone brought the

²⁵⁶ Franko, p. 547

²⁵⁷ *RM*, p. 62

²⁵⁸ *RM*, p. 431f.

²⁵⁹ *RM*, p. 432

subject up he spoke as if it were no different from any of the flights the rest of them had taken. But it wasn't so, and only his ease made it seem that way: at the same table each morning, laughing at Nadia's lame engineering jokes, making his portion of the talk. After a while it took an effort to see the aura around him.²⁶⁰

In a later sequence she praises "John's easygoing stability," saying that "you could count on him."²⁶¹ This is not to say that there were only positive aspects to his character. Sax Russell, who was his boss for a few years, describes John Boone in a more differentiated manner. According to him John was

happy, cheerful, confident – trustworthy loyal helpful friendly courteous kind obedient cheerful thrifty brave clean and reverent [sic] – no, no, not exactly – he had also been abrupt, impatient, arrogant, lazy, slipshod, drug dependent, proud.²⁶²

Like his inspiration Daniel Boone, John Boone can be described as "a hero, but a hero of a new, democratic type, a man who did not tower above the people but rather exemplified their longings and, yes, their limitations."²⁶³ Kim Stanley Robinson has written John Boone not as a cardboard cut-out, he is a complicated character whose personality was made up of contradictions – just like a real person in other words.

It is also his Minnesota farmer heritage that links John Boone to his more obvious namesake – Daniel Boone was the "son of a yeoman farmer,"²⁶⁴ a profession John Boone's ancestors had certainly been intimately familiar with. It is not only this shared heritage they have in common, though, they also possess some overlapping character traits. Richard Slotkin says that "[e]ssential to [Daniel Boone's] character, and later to his legend, is a paradoxical blend of ambition and self-denial, self-indulgence and equanimity in the face of deprivation."²⁶⁵ This was certainly true of John Boone too, seeing as he was willing to make the long trip to Mars twice, first in the probably cramped conditions of the first human Mars landing and second with the intention to create a human settlement in the quite empty wastelands of Mars. This character makeup is not exclusive to John Boone, the rest of the First Hundred shared in it too. Like him they were also willing to leave civilized Earth

²⁶⁰ *RM*, p. 37

²⁶¹ *RM*, p. 209f.

²⁶² *BM*, p. 678

²⁶³ Faragher, p. XVI

²⁶⁴ Faragher, p. 2

²⁶⁵ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 66

behind to create what was basically a frontier settlement in conditions reminiscent of the early 17th century, only with better technology.

It has been said of Daniel Boone that he was “the foremost pioneer of our history.”²⁶⁶ In the universe of the Mars Trilogy this title must now be transferred to John Boone, he was the first man to land on another planet after all. In this fictional universe John has become “the archetypical hero”²⁶⁷ who ‘pioneered the land’ and, in his travels all over the planet, meeting and talking with a great many people, has “made the wilderness safe for democracy,”²⁶⁸ – two descriptions formerly applied to Daniel Boone.

By the time of his death John Boone bore more similarity to Daniel Boone than anyone else, even though he started off as a John Smith-like figure at the chronological beginning of *Red Mars*.

John Smith, Charisma, and Leadership

It has been said of John Smith that he was “a swashbuckling soldier of fortune with rare powers of leadership and self-promotion,”²⁶⁹ terms perfectly applicable to John Boone, with the exception of the “soldier of fortune” part. It is already in the very first part of *Red Mars* that his charismatic nature and natural leadership shine through and it does not take long until the term “natural authority” is applied to him.²⁷⁰ It is obviously from John Smith as an inspirational source that Boone has inherited the charisma and adventurous spirit, as well as the handling, and usage, of his fame.²⁷¹

Smith is mostly remembered “because he had the gumption to go out and do something big, bold, and original.”²⁷² A pioneer spirit was clearly manifest in him, a phrase that could easily applied to all the First Hundred, but especially to John Boone who pioneered Mars twice – first alone as the first human on Mars, then as unofficial, popular leader of the colonization project. Smith “knew the countryside,”²⁷³ he had explored vast swathes of Chesapeake Bay; it was because of this that “the settlers began looking to him as an authoritative leader whose strength and experience could help them succeed.”²⁷⁴ This is of course reminiscent of John Boone’s experience as the first man on Mars. Like the knowledge

²⁶⁶ Faragher, p.11

²⁶⁷ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 268

²⁶⁸ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 269

²⁶⁹ Trindall & Shi, p. 30

²⁷⁰ *RM*, p. 39

²⁷¹ The fame aspect will be featured below.

²⁷² Thompson, p. 214

²⁷³ Thompson, p. 30

²⁷⁴ Thompson, p. 30

John Smith gained by his exploration of America, so too did his experience make John Boone a leader among the settlers, as he was the only one who had actual prior knowledge of Mars.²⁷⁵

Like his fictional successor “Smith saw his responsibility as first to the colony and secondarily to the orders from [home].”²⁷⁶ Following this model, Boone gained approval in the Martian colonies while earning enmity from the earthbound supervisors of the colonizing effort. This is of course true of almost all the First Hundred and many of the colonists that arrived only shortly after them. Great distance and delayed communication led to an estrangement with ‘mission control’ on Earth, situations and critical events on Mars had to be confronted immediately and without recourse to a time-delayed consultation with the supervisors back on Earth. The self-determinant habits of the First Hundred developed because of this and eventually made them leaders on Mars; this is of course the major reason they were such priority targets of the UN during the failed revolution – as has been seen in chapter one of this paper.

John Boone followed Smith’s historical precedent and “led by example.”²⁷⁷ Smith did have egalitarian views and had dreamt of a new society with opportunities for all comers.²⁷⁸

He “had risen from humble origins, made something noble of himself through dint of will and personality, and gone on to symbolize the kind of swaggering self-reliant character that would become the American ideal.”²⁷⁹ He had pioneered “what was to be part of the American ideal: that [in the new world] men were equal in status and each one was required to make his own way”²⁸⁰ to the best of his ability. The Mars Trilogy echoes this development of course. It was already on the journey out that the First Hundred had begun discussing plans for a new, more egalitarian society, to be pioneered on Mars. As this topic has already been featured extensively in the previous chapter, nothing more shall be said on it here.

John Boone is not the only character in the Mars Trilogy that has ‘inherited’ some aspects of John Smith – it is in the person of Coyote that one of Smith’s more unenviable traits coalesced. It is unclear if many of Smith’s ‘heroic acts’ actually happened, if they are exaggerations of real events or just plain lies.²⁸¹ So too it is the case with Coyote – there are

²⁷⁵ For an example of this preferential treatment of him, see: *RM*, p. 56

²⁷⁶ Thompson, p. 90

²⁷⁷ Hoobler, p. 113

²⁷⁸ Hoobler, p. 247ff.

²⁷⁹ Thompson, p. 213

²⁸⁰ Hoobler, p. 199

²⁸¹ Hoobler, p. 3

so many actions and tales ascribed to him that it is basically impossible for him to have done everything that is said of him.

Daniel Boone, Exploration, and the Wilderness

It was Carl Abbott who pointedly ascertained that “[m]uch of [America’s] history is animated by exploration, travel, and migration across the continent.”²⁸² These travelers, these explorers were people like Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and, closer to this topic, John Smith and Daniel Boone. According to Richard Slotkin “[t]he most distinctive trait of [Daniel] Boone’s character was his love for the wild land. He reveled in the pleasure of discovering new trails through the wilderness.”²⁸³ This is of course also true of the other Boone. John Boone was in favor of modifying the environment, but he also loved the rough Martian landscapes he encountered on his travels.²⁸⁴ The ‘undiscovered’ land “Kentucky [had] pulled [Daniel] Boone”²⁸⁵ like Mars had pulled John Boone with an inescapable attraction. Naturally, the two Boones were not the only ones who found pleasure in the discovery of new things. John Smith, too, has been assigned an unquenchable wanderlust and it has been said that he was “at heart an explorer, and whatever was out there, he wanted to discover it,”²⁸⁶ in other words he too was a pioneer in the manner ascribed to Daniel Boone.²⁸⁷

The American hero in the vein of the pioneer “takes his start outside the world, remote or on the verges.”²⁸⁸ He was

an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources.²⁸⁹

Seen from this perspective, all of the First Hundred can be fitted into the pioneer mold as well. They left Earth, its society, its culture, and its history behind in order to erect something completely new in a ‘land’ without a (human) history. John Faragher’s statement

²⁸² Abbott, p. 178

²⁸³ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 298

²⁸⁴ He recorded his joy about the Martian landscape on his ‘computer.’ For an example, see: *BM*, p. 372f.

²⁸⁵ Faragher, p. 72

²⁸⁶ Thompson, p. 62

²⁸⁷ Hoobler, p. 245

²⁸⁸ Lewis, p. 128

²⁸⁹ Lewis, p. 5

that “[Daniel] Boone’s happiness was the life of the frontier[;] the prospect of a new start in a fresh land, his family and friends gathered about him, lifted his spirits”²⁹⁰ can be applied to all the early settlers of Mars, the First Hundred and those that came soon after them, and especially the 1st and 2nd generation natives – there is a little bit of Daniel Boone in all of them.

It was Daniel Boone who “prophesie[d] the creation of a new race and a new nation through a more profound penetration by the Americans into their wilderness continent.”²⁹¹ If one replaces ‘Americans’ with ‘settlers’ and ‘wilderness continent’ with ‘Mars’ one has the perfect statement describing the various developments taking place in the Mars trilogy. The (Martian) pioneers were brought into “close acquaintance with [...] the wilderness”²⁹² and as they were transforming it, they were also transformed by it – a process in the novels called ‘areoformation’ or ‘the areophany.’ This was a process that had happened historically just as it had happened in the novels. Through contact with America’s wild nature a new character was formed in the pioneers, they became new people – one could term it acculturation.²⁹³

Most of the Martians we encounter in the course of the novels are geographically mobile, just like Daniel Boone was,²⁹⁴ and John Boone is no exception. As we can see in part five of *Red Mars*, Boone is always on the move, spends a long time alone ‘on the road’ in the “wilderness” of Mars, also just like his historical namesake. Daniel Boone was drawn ever farther westward, he too was always ‘on the move.’ His reasons for doing so, though, were certainly unlike those of his fictional successor. Whenever Daniel Boone was disappointed by society, or civilization in general, he would retire to the wilderness to live the simple life of the hunter and trapper.²⁹⁵ In the course of his life Boone ‘fled’ ever farther westward, away from encroaching civilization. Boone had turned

his back on a civilization which [...] [was] a veritable Golden Age of agricultural plenty and abundant wealth. His values [were] not those of his [...] forbears; they [were] unique. He love[d] the wilderness for its wildness, the danger for the joy of overcoming it.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁰ Faragher, p. 277

²⁹¹ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 305

²⁹² Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 274

²⁹³ This was also already featured in chapter one.

²⁹⁴ Faragher, p. 22

²⁹⁵ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 66; “He might spend several weeks hunting and trapping with no companions” (Faragher, p. 55)

²⁹⁶ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 407

In a certain way this is true for all the First Hundred, to varying degrees individually of course, who had all volunteered to go to Mars and leave Earth's highly developed civilization behind. They looked forward to overcoming the dangers of lifeless Mars to create something never seen before in history.

Driving Force: Curiosity

John Filson began Boone's part of his book²⁹⁷ with these words: "Curiosity is natural to the soul of man."²⁹⁸ Daniel Boone's curiosity was one "that he fulfilled by striking out in new directions."²⁹⁹ Similar to Daniel Boone, John Smith was also a man driven by curiosity. In his younger years in England he had "dreams of the world outside the classroom"³⁰⁰ In his adult years he could finally fulfill these yearnings and travel the globe. As Mr. and Mrs. Hoobler declare: "[Smith] traveled out of curiosity [-] to see and to understand places and cultures that were different from those he knew."³⁰¹

There is no endeavor of mankind that has not, to at least a tiny part, been motivated by curiosity. The landing on other celestial bodies than our own must be considered among these. Tellingly, the recent Mars rover bears the name 'Curiosity.' So as it is in real life, so too it must be in fiction. The grand undertaking of landing a human on Mars has to a certain part be motivated by 'going out and getting there.' At this point in time 'remote viewing' of our planetary neighbor through technological means serve science well enough – as it is right now, a human presence on Mars would serve no useful purpose other than to satisfy the basic human urge to (personally) explore. As long as there have been humans there have been those who, when the opportunity and the means had been available, struck out into the unknown – to go and see what's there. The mission to bring a human to Mars cannot easily be seen in any other light, i.e. as an endeavor to satisfy our curiosity.

John Boone's Activities

John Boone is a leading figure in the cultural discourse of Mars. He has been one of the first supporters of plans for a new, Martian culture and has throughout his travels actively sought a way to help create it.³⁰² He traveled the planet, seeking out groups sympathetic to the creation of a 'new Mars' which "synthesizes the best of the old" into something new and

²⁹⁷ *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* (1784)

²⁹⁸ Faragher, p. 9

²⁹⁹ Faragher, p. 9

³⁰⁰ Hoobler, p. 14f.

³⁰¹ Hoobler, p. 43

³⁰² e.g.: *RM*, p. 259f.

functional.³⁰³ It was his name that has been given to this method of syncretism: ‘Boonean’ meaning the incorporation of “anything and everything that will help make a free Mars.”³⁰⁴

Like Daniel Boone before him had “bridged many of the differences between Indian and European,”³⁰⁵ so too did John Boone serve as a bridge between two different cultures – between Earth, the old home, and the new natives of Mars. John Boone did not really have any plans of his own; rather, he took all the ideas of others and tried to forge them into a coherent whole. He has been described as a sponge, who then became a mirror – meaning that he pretty much absorbed other’s arguments and then took on their position, thus forcing them to think their own plans through.³⁰⁶ John’s ‘plan’ fundamentally describes the method of cultural synthesis for the formation of a single new culture.³⁰⁷

John Boone’s plans for Mars were not only of a cultural nature. He also occupies a key position in the political struggles of Mars, becoming a mediating figure in the conflict with Earth. His solution was “to build civil society through conversation” not strife, to create “utopia through dialogue.”³⁰⁸ His stance informed the agenda of the MarsFirst movement (later party), which had used John’s ideals as founding principles. Just as “[b]ecause of [Smith], Virginians could claim for their state the distinction of being the place where the United States had begun,”³⁰⁹ ‘Booneans’ could claim themselves to be inheritors of the ideals and the will of the ‘father of Mars’ – John Boone.

After Boone’s death there have been two characters that have been described as being his (legitimate) spiritual successors within the fiction itself. The first of these is Earthman Art Randolph who had come to Mars to serve as ambassador for his company. In the course of the second novel he becomes a kind of ‘middle man,’ someone all political factions of Mars can talk to without conflicting interests, who can make his opinion heard, and who uses his influence to the betterment of Mars.³¹⁰ The second successor is Nirgal, who for the longest time acted much like John did in part five of the first novel. He had traveled the world to talk *with* and talk *to* the various people he met – he was a kind of traveling grassroots politician, agitating for a free Mars.³¹¹ The final novel names him the successor of Boone’s will.³¹² As

³⁰³ Franko, p. 548

³⁰⁴ *GM*, p. 130; ‘Boonean’ is mentioned again on: *GM*, p. 325

³⁰⁵ Faragher, p. 20

³⁰⁶ *GM*, p. 55

³⁰⁷ *RM*, p. 314

³⁰⁸ Both: Abbott p. 116

³⁰⁹ Hoobler, p. 131

³¹⁰ *GM*, p. 328

³¹¹ *GM*, p. 473f.

³¹² *BM*, p. 372

one can see, no matter his demise, John Boone has become a figure of lasting influence on Mars, even, or especially, after his death.

The Hero as Symbol

As seen above, John Boone became a figure of lasting influence among the Martians, this influence transcending the need of his physical presence and surviving long after his death – it is this posthumous power that has to be seen as the most significant indicator of his symbolic power. John Boone – even while alive – had become an icon, a symbol so poignant that the people of Earth were incapable of believing the news of his death.³¹³ His symbolic status was already made obvious in the very first part of *Red Mars*, which chronologically fits between parts five and six of the novel – it is made clear that he has become the symbol of Mars, its public ‘face.’ Just like John Boone became the symbolic figure of Mars, so Daniel Boone has been labeled as the representative “myth hero of the early republic”³¹⁴ and, in a similar vein, as “the myth hero of the American frontier.”³¹⁵ He has often been used as a model for future ‘frontier heroes,’ standing between civilization and the savages of wild nature.³¹⁶

The hero of the Daniel Boone variety was seen as a ‘new type,’ a fusion of wilderness and civilization, hopefully able to serve as a model for a new society.³¹⁷ Significant hopes were placed into him, willing him to create a synthesis of old and new, Europe and America.³¹⁸ It is here that Daniel Boone himself played an important role. He was seen as a figure of “mixed [character], blending traits of both white and Indian – Christian reason and restraint, and Indian passion.”³¹⁹ He was perceived as “the representative westerner, the initiator of a virtually new species of man.”³²⁰

Fact and fiction eventually began to mesh and it came to pass that “[Daniel] Boone was as much a figurehead, as much a personification of the westward movement as he was an actual man on the ground.”³²¹ Tales about him came to signify about as much truth as actual reports, or even more so – “[f]olklore and fabrication [...] contributed more to the popular image of Boone than did historical research.”³²² His role eventually became that of

³¹³ *BM*, p. 182; one is reminded of the iconic power of Elvis Presley.

³¹⁴ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 21

³¹⁵ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 233

³¹⁶ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 16; Natty Bumppo quickly comes to mind.

³¹⁷ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 276

³¹⁸ Or, in light of our topic, of Earth and Mars.

³¹⁹ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 377

³²⁰ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 421

³²¹ Faragher, p. 351

³²² Faragher, p. 342

the “heroic symbol of the American imagination;”³²³ the terms affiliated with his character – pioneer, frontiersman, family man, natural man, wanderlust – came to stand for “some of the things that Americans feel are most important about themselves.”³²⁴ It was inevitable that Daniel Boone became a type³²⁵ – he now represents “that part of the American character unafraid of new territory to explore, new connections to make.”³²⁶

The Persona & Power of the Hero

John Boone’s fame is unquestionable.³²⁷ He shared this trait with the two forebears of concern to this chapter. John Smith knew how to sell himself, he also knew how to sell other things, and became the “salesman for America,”³²⁸ writing what amounted to propaganda for an extension of England’s colonizing effort in America. This is not too far away from John Boone’s “First Man on Mars” shtick – he used his fame to become the figurehead, the public face of Mars colonization. This is how John Boone characterized the power he possessed:

His power was considerable, although perhaps only he could see the full extent of it, as it consisted of an endless succession of face-to-face meetings, of the influence he had over what people chose to do. Power wasn’t a matter of job titles, after all. Power was a matter of vision, persuasiveness, freedom of movement, fame, influence. The figurehead stands at the front, after all, pointing the way.³²⁹

Like Daniel Boone had been a “respected leader of frontier society,”³³⁰ so too did John Boone occupy a selfsame position among *his* ‘frontier’ society on Mars – just as John Smith had become governor-elect of his small settlement on the embryonic American frontier.

Both Daniel Boone and John Smith knew to use their fame, or their position, to their advantage. Once returned to England, John Smith finagled his fame, derived from his writings, into status and enough wealth to live comfortably. And while Daniel Boone “believed in public service [and] never hesitated to claim the honor of office, [he] was not shy about using the perquisites of position.”³³¹ It is in this ‘fame aspect’ that John Boone is a

³²³ Faragher, p. 347

³²⁴ Faragher, p. 351

³²⁵ Faragher, p. 338

³²⁶ Faragher, p. 340

³²⁷ *RM*, p. 239

³²⁸ Hoobler, p. 154

³²⁹ *RM*, p. 242

³³⁰ Faragher, p. 206

³³¹ Faragher, p. 268

true fusion of the two historical characters that inspired him; like both John Smith and Daniel Boone he was not averse to using his fame to his advantage. This fame did not come without a price though, just like the ‘real’ Daniel Boone is lost amidst the many stories written and told about him,³³² so too is the true character of John Boone obscured by the body of folklore that has grown up around his person.

John F. Kennedy (and Others)

Decades after the death of Daniel Boone the ‘frontiersman archetype’ made a return to public consciousness during the Texas crises in the 1840s.³³³ This new version was closely identified with Davy Crockett, typifying a more violent strain than Boone’s frontiersman.³³⁴ At the end of the 19th century it was Buffalo Bill that had claimed the title of frontiersman for himself. His Wild West show cemented his image as an incarnation of the frontier hero in the public mind, this ‘type’ of hero being familiar to the selfsame public through the untold number of dime novels published in the second half of the 19th century.³³⁵ These two are the most familiar, the most obvious successors of Daniel Boone, and it is just as likely that Kim Stanley Robinson had taken some traits from them in his construction of the character ‘John Boone’ as he did from John Smith and Daniel Boone.

A certain reading of the text opens up another possible source of inspiration for ‘John Boone,’ a source closer to our own time than the other two. John Boone can also be read as an counterpart of John F. Kennedy. Like Kennedy, Boone was a heroic leader spearheading the move into a bold ‘New Frontier.’³³⁶ They also suffered the same fate – assassination.³³⁷ Like Kennedy, Boone was not a man without his problems – Kennedy’s failing being women, while Boone took quite a lot of feel-good drugs.³³⁸ Neither of them was perfect as a person, but both were charismatic, good speakers, and personally likeable. There is hardly any doubt that John Boone would have been elected as first president of Mars had he survived until election.

³³² Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 410ff.; chapter twelve in general

³³³ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 162

³³⁴ Slotkin, *Regeneration* ..., p. 5, 414ff.

³³⁵ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 75

³³⁶ The ‘New Frontier’ was Kennedy’s 1960 campaign slogan. The polemics he used in this campaign touched the Americans’ ‘myth-soul’ and won him the election. The terminology he used was something most everyone was familiar with and could relate to, using terms and tropes familiar from frontier stories as had been numerous depicted in ‘Western’ literature and films. (Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 489)

³³⁷ Boone dies in the very first part of the first novel in the trilogy, a part set chronologically between part five and part six of *RM*.

³³⁸ Can be seen throughout *RM*, part five.

Concluding Thoughts

As hopefully has been made obvious, 'John Boone' is a fictional character made up of multiple components. Kim Stanley Robinson has looked to classic figures of American history to create the 'ideological lead character' of his trilogy set on Mars. The brand-new frontier of the future needed character types well-versed in actual frontier experience. Robinson turned to the manifestation of John Smith as the dashing gentleman-adventurer, driven by curiosity to see new places, as well as towards Daniel Boone in his incarnation as the rugged, pragmatic frontiersman, who was just as comfortable alone as among friends and family. These are the primary influences of John Boone's character makeup. Considering certain aspects of his personality and how he met his end, it is likely that Robinson utilized 'a touch' of John F. Kennedy in Boone's creation in order to round out his personality and so, sadly, decreeing his ultimate fate. Like Kennedy, Boone is made out to be a skilled polemicist with certain human failings; they shared personality traits and their lives ended in a common way, too – through assassination.

Chapter 3 - Beyond Robinson: The Frontier in Space

The Frontier is an intrinsic feature of the previous two parts. The Mars trilogy essentially conveys to its readers the story of the development of a ‘frontier outpost’ into a civilized, urbanized society, i.e. the evolution of *Frontier* into *Metropolis* – a cycle that has repeated itself historically until the frontier was closed.³³⁹ John Smith was a leader among the people of one of America’s earliest frontier settlements. Daniel Boone was a *frontiersman* through and through, a pioneer ever following the westward movement of the frontier.

This *Frontier* will now be the major focus of this third and final section – from its historical reality up to the second life it has found in fiction; *science fiction*, in this paper’s case.

Frontier: An Overview

The frontier was “a reservoir of cheap, unappropriated, and abundant natural resources, especially in the form of land.”³⁴⁰ In its function as a reservoir it guaranteed that each citizen who wanted it could be provided with a subsistence level of land.³⁴¹ The Frontier Hypothesis of Frederick Jackson Turner, America’s premier frontier theorist, held that

the prosperity and high growth rates of the American economy had been made possible by the continual expansion of the Frontier into regions richly endowed with natural resources.³⁴²

According to William Katerberg,

the frontier experience – of escaping the past and adapting to a new, unfamiliar land – transformed Old World peoples into Americans, new men and women defined by individualism, freedom, and abundance³⁴³

and was thus essential to the establishment of the American nation. America’s conception of itself as a “wide-open land of unlimited opportunity for the strong, ambitious, self-reliant individual”³⁴⁴ was crucial to the formation of its national character.

³³⁹ Slotkin, *Fatal ...*, p. 41; Turner, p. 205

³⁴⁰ Slotkin, *Fatal ...*, p. 36

³⁴¹ Slotkin, *Fatal ...*, p. 120

³⁴² Slotkin, *Gunfighter ...*, p. 645f.

³⁴³ Katerberg, p. 211

³⁴⁴ Slotkin, *Regeneration ...*, p. 5

America's frontier was "a "promised land" of opportunity where people [could] escape civilized society and the constraints of the past, start life afresh, and reinvent themselves."³⁴⁵ It offered freedom from the over-civilized, decadent old world with its tremendous burden of history. Katerberg ascertains this 'frontier mythology' as "a core element in American culture and the nation's self-identity,"³⁴⁶ playing a legitimizing role for its conquests, assimilations, and exploitations in "the classic quest of the [R]epublic [...] to bring light, law, liberty, Christianity, and commerce to the savage places of the earth."³⁴⁷ It was this incarnation of the frontier myth that coalesced into the 'manifest destiny' ideology of later American history.

The frontier was present in America almost from the very beginning. As early as the time of the first settlement in Jamestown governor John Smith proclaimed the new continents' "frontiers [to be] full of riches," declaring America "a big continent brimming with possibilities."³⁴⁸ And through their 'discovery' of them, these frontiers belonged by right to the colonists.³⁴⁹ Indian lands were conceived as 'empty wastes' with the Americans having every right to cultivate them, since they were actually putting the land to 'good use.'³⁵⁰ The Indians had no concept of landownership, no 'agriculture' as Europeans conceived of it, and they did not 'improve the soil.' Because the Americans had all these things, their claim to the land was obviously superior to that of the Indians.³⁵¹

American history has to the largest degree been the "history of the colonization of the Great West"³⁵² in the manner described above. The American West was a garden of infinite resources, a possible El Dorado achievable for anyone willing to make the effort.³⁵³ The steady "advance of the frontier" across the continent has also been "a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence."³⁵⁴ The colonists' experiences on the old Indian frontier were serving as a "consolidating agent in [American] history"³⁵⁵ – it fostered unity in policy and action through the existence of a common enemy.

³⁴⁵ Katerberg, p. 1

³⁴⁶ Katerberg, p. 9

³⁴⁷ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 8

³⁴⁸ Thompson, p. 213

³⁴⁹ Miller, p. 9

³⁵⁰ Stephanson, p. 25

³⁵¹ Weinberg, p. 74f.; Manifest destiny superseded all other claims (a.k.a. legal titles). The US had a 'greater right' to the land than anyone else because it was its 'obvious destiny' to possess it. Any law but the divine or natural law "was not truly binding." (Weinberg, p. 131f.)

³⁵² Turner, p. 1

³⁵³ GoGwilt, p. 43

³⁵⁴ Turner, p. 4

³⁵⁵ Turner, p. 13

The frontier was thus a crucible in which the disparate people of America were forged into a new race and fused into a united whole.³⁵⁶ The rise of American democracy was basically the outcome of the Americans' experiences of dealing with the frontier.³⁵⁷

Manifest destiny describes the “relentless, predestined, and divinely inspired advance across the continent”³⁵⁸ by the American people. The Manifest Destiny myth developed its concrete form in the 19th century and was certainly not a new idea.³⁵⁹ As mentioned above it was essentially an outgrowth of the Frontier, having given a new name to “the very old idea of American continental expansion.”³⁶⁰

Robert Miller has neatly and to-the-point summarized the aspects of manifest destiny as: the assumption “that the United States had some unique moral virtues that other countries did not possess,” the assertion “that the United States had a mission to redeem the world by spreading republican government and the American way of life around the globe,” and the possession of “a messianic dimension because it assumed a faith in America’s divinely ordained destiny.”³⁶¹

Manifest destiny was mostly a legitimizing tool of America’s imperialist ambitions at the end of the 19th century and was used to create “a sense of national place and direction”³⁶² in the general populace.

By the year 1890 the actual, physical frontier had ceased to exist – America had reached the end of its continent, no further westward expansion was possible.³⁶³ This was the year then “when “Frontier” became primarily a term of ideological rather than geographical reference,”³⁶⁴ but the mythologization of the Frontier had begun long before this.

It had been inevitable that “ideas and doctrines [were] developed, and stories told [which] would explain the meaning of the Frontier”³⁶⁵ to the populations of the American cities which had no personal experience of it. It had been just as inevitable that these “ideas and stories would take on conventional patterns [and] become ideologies and myths.”³⁶⁶ The

³⁵⁶ Turner, p. 23

³⁵⁷ Turner, p. 266

³⁵⁸ Miller, p. 2

³⁵⁹ GoGwilt, p. 43

³⁶⁰ Miller, p. 173

³⁶¹ Miller, p. 3, 120

³⁶² Stephanson, p. XIV

³⁶³ Stephanson, p. 74

³⁶⁴ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 4

³⁶⁵ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 15

³⁶⁶ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 15

frontier had already in the time of its physical reality become a “space defined less by maps and surveys than by myths and illusions, projective fantasies, wild anticipations, [and] extravagant expectations.”³⁶⁷ Richard Slotkin lengthily elaborates on the uses of such a mythological space:

The primary function of any mythological system is to provide a people with meaningful emotional and intellectual links to its own past. Although western pioneering was always (after 1800) a minority experience, the Frontier was able to symbolize a national past because its major themes – emigration in the quest for new and better things – had close cognates in the experiences of mobility and displacement that belonged both to foreign immigrants and to internal migrants in an industrializing and urbanizing nation.³⁶⁸

The Frontier served to unite the American people by creating a shared mythological space from which they could derive a shared identity.

As mentioned above, the frontier mythology “outlived the material reality that produced it.”³⁶⁹ It now took root in peoples’ psyche and in the national subconscious – the frontier moved from physical reality into pure ‘mindspace.’ The mythic frontier was becoming independent of the “historical reality that [had] produced it.”³⁷⁰

It did not take very long for the mythic, fictive frontier to displace historical reality as a factor in “shaping the on-going discourse of cultural history”³⁷¹ After the ‘closure’ of the frontier ‘the West’ became for most Americans “a landscape known through, and completely identified with, the fictions created about it.”³⁷²

With the disappearance of the geographical frontier, one had to look to the realm of ideals to perceive the influence of the ‘Western’ experience on the nation.³⁷³ In the minds of the voters, for example, John F. Kennedy’s use of his ‘New Frontier’ rhetoric during the campaign of 1960³⁷⁴ implicitly carried the weight of these ideals within it. Kennedy presented his plans in a language peppered with frontier terms, terms most everyone was familiar with and could relate to and it won him the election. It is as Richard Slotkin has

³⁶⁷ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 11

³⁶⁸ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 638

³⁶⁹ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 15

³⁷⁰ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 87

³⁷¹ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 61f.

³⁷² Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 61

³⁷³ Turner, p. 261

³⁷⁴ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 17; Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 2; Katerberg, p. 33; Abbott, p. 23

written: “the terminology of the Myth of the Frontier has become part of our common language, and we do not require an explanatory program to make it comprehensible,”³⁷⁵ calling it the frontier myth the arguably “longest-lived of American myths, with origins in the colonial period and a powerful continuing presence in contemporary culture.”³⁷⁶

The Science Fiction Frontier

William Katerberg brings science fiction’s importance to the frontier concept to the fore when he writes that “[e]scaping the planet is [now] the only way to find new frontiers,” and that “[if] the dream of New World frontiers lives on, it is in outer space.”³⁷⁷ It is now Earth that has become the ‘old world,’ with space taking America’s place as the ‘new world.’ By the late 19th century there were no uncharted places remaining on Earth.³⁷⁸ The classic “adventure tales in exotic places” could not “be set in unexplored and unknown regions of Earth anymore,” so they had to be set “in other parts of the universe instead”³⁷⁹

Like America’s old myth of continental expansion, so too does science fiction deal with “the outward spread of Earth-based peoples and cultures” into space.³⁸⁰ In these stories, human expansion into the solar system and the galaxy is often imagined as being a reenactment of that myth.³⁸¹ This myth has such ideological strength that it has “influenced nearly every genre of adventure story in the lexicon of mass-culture production [and] particularly science fiction.”³⁸²

The genre’s “great dream” could be read in its treatment of “the Solar System as another frontier to be explored and conquered.”³⁸³ Certain types of science fiction, usually in the pulp tradition, celebrate “the Destiny of Man in the new frontier of outer space.”³⁸⁴ If the American could lay claim to the whole continent “by virtue of his Manifest Destiny, then all of outer space belong[ed] to him as well.”³⁸⁵ The science fiction genre often celebrates the much vaunted American pioneer spirit, having encoded within it the heritage of the historical

³⁷⁵ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 18

³⁷⁶ Slotkin, *Fatal* ..., p. 15

³⁷⁷ Katerberg, p. 3

³⁷⁸ Katerberg, p. 213

³⁷⁹ Pamela Sargent, quoted in: Abbott, p. 11

³⁸⁰ Abbott, p. 14

³⁸¹ Abbott, p. 181

³⁸² Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 25

³⁸³ Clute, *Illustrated* ..., p. 26

³⁸⁴ Disch, p. 116 (my emphasis); “It is no accident that frontier stories set in outer space are such a popular genre and so readily comprehensible to Americans. Space stations, the moon, Mars, and distant planets allow the frontier-style challenges that once defined America to be replayed.” (Katerberg, p. 23)

³⁸⁵ Disch, p. 194

conquest of the west.³⁸⁶ Science fiction futures often receive validation through such a link to the actual history of the American frontier.”³⁸⁷

Carl Abbott describes three ways the American past can feature in science fiction: metaphorically, through imitation, or as a rewriting into the future.³⁸⁸ That this past is influencing America’s science fiction literature is undeniable. Uncountable is the number of alien species deriving their existence from the various depictions of the Indians. America’s very own clash of alien cultures, between the Europeans and the Indians, is such an ingrained part of the American subconscious that it is likely it will never disappear from it – a continuous presence informing a great many of the nation’s cultural products.³⁸⁹

Going to the other end of the spectrum, the whole range of western America – historical frontier country – has been used for the creation of future settings. The experiences of the “cowboys, miners, homesteaders, engineers, [...], community builders” have served many writers to imagine the frontiers of the future.³⁹⁰ The pioneer has not been sold short of course – any story about the settlement of a new planet features his experience in one way or another.³⁹¹

As one can see, more likely than not, any topic a scholar of American history might show interest in has possibly been adapted into a science fiction story already.³⁹²

The American West looms large in the depictions of future Americas. What is necessary for stories of this kind is a deep “understanding of the national and regional past”³⁹³ in order to build a plausible future. Many science fiction writers instead have simply recycled “older themes and narratives”³⁹⁴ to create their future societies without devoting any time to sound historical research. Others on the other hand have found in the “exploration and development of the American West [...] a fertile source of ideas and models for future centuries.”³⁹⁵

³⁸⁶ Clute & Nicholls, p. 245

³⁸⁷ Abbott, p. 184

³⁸⁸ Abbott, p. 19

³⁸⁹ Disch, p. 192-194

³⁹⁰ Abbott, p. 18

³⁹¹ Abbott, p. 89 (my emphasis)

³⁹² Abbott, p. 15

³⁹³ Abbott, p. 28

³⁹⁴ Abbott, p. 185

³⁹⁵ Abbott, p. 2 (my emphasis)

No matter the execution, what is undeniable is that authors of speculative fiction have constantly mined the western American past for ideas and details to help them construct the futures they have envisioned.³⁹⁶

Arthur C. Clarke believes that “[t]he Space Frontier is infinite, beyond all possibility of exhaustion.”³⁹⁷ This shows the utopian hopes of a culture that has reached its zenith and is at the point where everything seems possible; it is a culture dreaming of a technologically achievable utopia. Like Clarke, Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein too believed in “high frontier space exploration and its power to redeem or rescue a troubled and threatened world.”³⁹⁸

With the true begin of the space age after the Apollo 11 landing, though, many science fiction writers became more doubtful of the future and began to voice their fears, cautioning against a repeat of American history,³⁹⁹ likely fearing that any aliens that may be discovered might suffer the same fate as the Indians.

Brian Stableford finds “[p]olitical issues [to be] at the heart of [a] recurrent colonization theme, which deals with the relationship between colonies and the mother world. Here history provides – at least for US writers – [...] attractive parallels, and the War of Independence has frequently been refought.”⁴⁰⁰ This is a recurring theme in science fiction featuring Mars, the goal of Martian societies often being independence from Earth.⁴⁰¹ One example of this, other than Robinson’s Mars trilogy, is William Forstchen’s *Star Voyager Academy* (1994). This story “concerns the beginning of a new Revolutionary War as the stalwart space colonists of Mars take on the oppressive forces of the U.N.”⁴⁰² This novel was published shortly after Robinson’s *Red Mars*, and its plot seems eerily similar. It is unknown if Forstchen copied his theme from Robinson or if it was merely a popular topic of the time.

NOVELS

For those interested in more than the meager list of titles to follow, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* by John Clute and Peter Nicholls features an exhaustive number of titles

³⁹⁶ Abbott, p. VII

³⁹⁷ Disch, p. 73; “the limitless freedom of the space frontier” (Abbott, p. 51)

³⁹⁸ Abbott, p. 82

³⁹⁹ Aldiss, Billion ..., p. 286

⁴⁰⁰ Clute & Nicholls, p. 244

⁴⁰¹ Franko, p. 547

⁴⁰² Disch, p. 181 (my emphasis)

under the header ‘Colonization of Other Worlds,’ no doubt many of them being of at least some interest to the topic at hand.⁴⁰³

Pulp Stories & “Classic” Novels

Kim Stanley Robinson’s character Sax Russell of the Mars trilogy is a scientist hero, reminiscent of the heroes of a now almost forgotten genre – the *Edisonade*. The Edisonade came into being in the 1890s around the turn of the century – they were “written at a time when the USA’s literal frontiers were only just snapping shut.”⁴⁰⁴ The frontier always had a presence in these stories,⁴⁰⁵ possibly serving as a form of escapism – in them the frontier lived on. As a genre it echoed many concerns in contemporary American society, imperialism for example: In Garrett P. Serviss’ *Edison’s Conquest of Mars* (1898, newspaper release) “[Edison] heads to Mars, where he commits triumphant genocide before granting the survivors colonial status.”⁴⁰⁶ Not only is this reminiscent of the Indians’ fate in American history, it also reflected the Spanish-American War. The war had taken place in the same year as the story’s publication, and America emerged victorious, having earned its new status as an imperial power on the way.

The Pulps came to prominence much later. Brian Aldiss describes it thusly: “with the slumps and the strikes and the depression [in the 1930s], it was a tough time both for literature and for people. The reading public of America seemed to want only wonder and escapism [and] [t]hat was what they got.”⁴⁰⁷ Many science fiction tales of that period are a variation of the ‘expansionist romance,’ which had “a penchant for isolated protagonists [and] stress on the power of the individual mind and will,” similar to versions of the Western – both having inherited their traditions from the dime novels of the 19th century.⁴⁰⁸ Richard Slotkin says that “pulp fiction [adapted] the traditional concept of democratic heroism, based on the Myth of the Frontier, to a post-Frontier America,” that “[t]he new mythic space of pulp fiction [...] became an imaginative equivalent to the old mythic space called “the Frontier.””⁴⁰⁹

John Clute sums this whole process up nicely when he writes:

⁴⁰³ Clute & Nicholls, p. 244-246; only current as of 1993, though.

⁴⁰⁴ Clute & Nicholls, p. 369

⁴⁰⁵ “the presence of the US frontier as a barrier to be penetrated is nearly always evident” (Clute & Nicholls, p. 369)

⁴⁰⁶ Clute & Nicholls, p. 369

⁴⁰⁷ Aldiss, *Billion ...*, p. 215

⁴⁰⁸ Abbott, p. 15

⁴⁰⁹ Slotkin, *Gunfighter ...*, p. 194f.

The [Pulp magazines] inherited from the dime novels [...] a striking “mythologized” version of the USA’s recent past in the Western genre, which glorified the “frontier spirit.” This myth [...] was transferred to sf, where it became the animating force of countless stories about the exploration of the Solar System and the [colonization of other worlds]. The reflection of this mythological version of US history has maintained a tenacious hold over the images of the future contained in [genre SF], and has been elaborated in various ways, sometimes painfully naïve and sometimes quite extraordinary. (The phenomenon is not, of course, restricted to fiction; the idea of space as a “high frontier” requiring conquest by bold pioneers informs much actual political rhetoric, and may be regarded as NASA’s guiding myth.)⁴¹⁰

As one can see, the Pulps and its ‘neo-frontier’ stories had a lasting influence on the American imagination.

Let us now look at an example of the fiction of that type. Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Princess of Mars* was a precursor to the pulps; it was first published in magazine form in 1911 and as a novel in 1917. Burroughs clearly borrowed from Western fiction to construct his science fiction narrative. The few Indians that appear early on in the novel are described as “vicious marauders.”⁴¹¹ Protagonist John Carter is portrayed as a ‘man who knows Indians,’ a hyper-competent, idealized frontier hero.⁴¹² Burroughs’ Green Martians fit the Indian stereotype very closely⁴¹³ and it is John Carter himself who associates the two.⁴¹⁴ Carter’s early stay among the Green Martians shows characteristics of an Indian Captivity Narrative,⁴¹⁵ the type that was popular in America in the early years of colonization. The prejudice aimed at the Green Martians is the same as the one traditionally aimed at the Indians: the ‘Greens’ had a “hatred for manual labor,”⁴¹⁶ which supposedly kept them in a barbaric stage, and their women were doing all the ‘menial’ work.⁴¹⁷ Richard Slotkin describes Burroughs’ theme as being that “of the White man’s adventure in the wilderness and his struggle to master savage nature and savage men;” in this it is clearly borrowing from “the theme of the Myth of the

⁴¹⁰ Clute & Nicholls, p. 566

⁴¹¹ Burroughs, p. 14

⁴¹² Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 203

⁴¹³ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 204

⁴¹⁴ Burroughs, p. 42

⁴¹⁵ e.g.: Burroughs, chapters four, five, and six

⁴¹⁶ Burroughs, p. 63

⁴¹⁷ Burroughs, p. 100f.

Frontier.”⁴¹⁸ Carl Abbot calls Burroughs “the first of many science fiction writers to appropriate the settings and tropes of western fiction.”⁴¹⁹ It is undeniable that his *Barsoom* stories were Wild West tales transposed onto Mars, i.e. into space – “[if] Earth has lost its regenerative barbarian wilderness, then Burroughs’ heroes find new ones in outer space.”⁴²⁰

‘Golden Age’ Books

Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* is one of the premier novels of the golden age of science fiction. In various vignettes and short stories he tells the story of the colonization of Mars. The Martian natives encountered in the early chapters eventually die out, possibly caused by diseases explorers from Earth have brought with them. In this, Bradbury is referencing the decimation of the Indian population by European diseases. Settlers are coming eventually and the story of Mars becomes a tale of the colonization of a now empty land.⁴²¹ Mars, like America had, becomes a place of hope and refuge – in this case for America’s black population who flees Earth in droves to escape their terrible conditions of life there, hoping to find liberty and freedom on Mars.⁴²² The *Chronicles* also feature some terraforming,⁴²³ but is not nearly as scientifically rigorous as Kim Stanley Robinson’s depiction in his Mars trilogy – it could be said it is not scientific at all. Generally speaking, Ray Bradbury has less scientific knowledge than Robinson and his tales feature significantly less scientific detail.

Robert Heinlein’s *Starship Troopers* hits some of the same tones as the later *Ender’s Game* featured below, but is much more uncritical. His novel is more patriotic and more unapologetic. The aliens have attacked first, so humanity has justification for their war against them. The aliens are not as technologically advanced as Earth, which makes them ‘savages’ in the eyes of mankind, and are generally inferior to humans – they are ‘soft,’ their technology falls more into the biotech spectrum, thus not having much ‘hardness.’ They are clearly evoking images historically ascribed to the Indians.

Gateway, by Frederik Pohl, revels in the ‘gold rush’ mentality that is prevalent on the station where the story is taking place. Like in history, there are many dangers in ‘prospecting’ – every trip outward starts uncertain, with death always an option. The prospectors are opportunists to the core, willing to risk their lives for the *one big score*. The

⁴¹⁸ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 198

⁴¹⁹ Abbott, p. 20

⁴²⁰ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 202

⁴²¹ Bradbury, p. 119

⁴²² Bradbury, p. 178ff.

⁴²³ Bradbury, p. 120ff.

asteroid station is clearly a kind of ‘Wild West’ city, referring the type of settlement that could have been found anywhere on the American west coast in the period of the California Gold Rush.

Frank Herbert’s *Dune* is one of the few novels that do not feature ‘America’ in any way; the USA has no presence as any kind of entity. Yes, it features a revolution, but everything on this planet is modeled more on the Arabian/Persian world rather than on the Western world – the one who dethroned the old emperor becomes the new emperor. Arrakis is a desert world, much like the early Mars in Kim Stanley Robinson’s Mars trilogy; the nomadic tribes of the three Mars novels could have been inspired by the Fremen, the ‘Bedouins’ of *Dune*. This novel only finds mention here because of the possible influence it had on Robinson in his creation of the semi-nomadic Martian culture.

Brian Aldiss’ *Non-Stop*, unlike many of the stories mentioned here, tells the tale of a failed colonization attempt and shows the readers its aftermath. The environment of the target planet, a small part of it, proved hostile to humanity – making settlement on it impossible. The ship’s crew and passengers return to Earth much changed, *very* much changed, by their experiences – the alien planet has ‘infected’ them and even the interior of the ship itself is transformed. Such a long journey was bound to leave its mark on the people, but the sheer dimension of the changes was unprecedented. With its focus on cultural and social aspects of the new shipboard society *Non-Stop* is almost a ‘new wave’ book.

Carl Abbot says that

Heinlein and Bradbury imagined their future wagon trains in an era when many Americans were seeking literal and metaphorical replacements for the frontier that had presumably vanished with the advent of civilization and spread of modern machinery.⁴²⁴

Gene Roddenberry seemed to have a similar idea in his creation of *Star Trek* which he had imagined as a kind of ‘wagon train to the stars.’

Thomas Disch agrees with Abbott when writes that

⁴²⁴ Abbott, p. 23

[i]n Bradbury's rhetoric and in Heinlein's early stories, outer space figures as the Next Frontier, somewhere to head once the westward course of empire has reached its limit at the Pacific coast, somewhere beyond the preying eye of Big Brother and the other constraints of an over-civilized, over-regimented, over-taxed existence.⁴²⁵

This is emblematic of the 'Golden Age' of science fiction in general and much of its fiction. Golden age sci-fi was the successor of the Pulp, describing stories that appeared in the late 1940s, the '50s, and the early '60s. It was a time of post-war optimism, a booming industry, and the rise of American culture to global prominence. The Golden age coincided with the rise and zenith of the Western genre, which had extensively romanticized and glorified the Wild West. Golden age sci-fi had developed hand-in-hand with this and they shared many tropes in common.

All of the above was taking place before the true turmoil of post-colonialism and decolonization happened – a development that was largely of no concern to America anyway, as it was mostly a British phenomenon. America experienced other troubles in the 1960s: disillusionment, the Vietnam War, and the Counterculture. The appearance of these spelled the doom of the 'Golden Age' and gave rise to the 'New Wave' of 'soft,' social science fiction.

'New Wave' Sci-Fi

Lord of Light is one of Roger Zelazny's more well-known works and, roughly, deals with the colonization of another planet – which had happened in the novel's past – and its aftermath. The first settlers have become the 'gods' of the current age, their 'godhood' derived from technology. One is reminded of Kim Stanley Robinson's Martians with their longevity and memory treatments, but they never called themselves 'gods.' The novel's artificial gods have become trapped in their own legend and are constantly re-enacting Hindu mythology. The story is definitely a colonial narrative, just not an American, but a British one – its constant reference to Indian culture, the one not of the Native American variety, makes this clear.

Philip K. Dick's *Martian Time-Slip* is possibly the only novel among the ones featured here that is referenced in a direct manner in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy – Mars has its half-hour time-slip every night to balance out the different length of the Martian day with the 24-hour clock. The novel itself does not offer much new for this paper's topic: Mars is colonized, it is an old, exhausted planet, it has native inhabitants, and some terraforming is

⁴²⁵ Disch, p. 73

taking place, but not much – the depiction of the native Martians utilizing the old tried-and-true stereotypes of the Indian. Mars is a marginal world, with marginal prospects for the future – the only real business being land speculation, which might be a subtle critique of similar practices in the frontiers of American history.

Ursula LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* is a seminal work of science fiction. The anarchic society featured in the story recalls a type of colony that may have been tried out in the early years of American colonization, Thomas Morton's Merry Mount settlement being a possible example of this. That sort of colony could only exist in the earliest years of American history, when the land was still 'empty' and there was a great distance between the settlements; when there was no peer pressure to conform to 'standards.' This anarchic 'type' of colony became impossible after a specific kind of culture became widespread in the colonies and was accepted as the 'true American culture' – with anarchy definitely not being among its features.

Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* barely qualifies as science fiction, but it features at least one significant statement of importance to the topic at hand. The novel itself concerns the protagonist's journey to the surreal island of San Lorenzo and his experience there of the end of the world. The alternative religion featured in the novel – Bokononism – has an "easygoing doctrine of predestination,"⁴²⁶ with its adherents believing they are following "God's will" with their actions – the protagonist counts himself among its believers.⁴²⁷ Looking at these two statements, Bokononism can be described as a mellow derivative of manifest destiny and the pioneer spirit. The West itself features in the novel in a minor way: an early location visited in the novel is Ilium, a town that used to be an old "jumping-off place" for "the Western migration."⁴²⁸ In way of explanation for America's hectic activities all over the world, Vonnegut has one of his characters say: "Americans [...] are forever searching for love in forms it never takes, in places it can never be. It must have something to do with the vanished frontier."⁴²⁹ America is thus driven by its loss of the frontier to find new things in which it can find fulfillment.

The Crisis of the Frontier & Cyberpunk

The 1970s witnessed the "breakdown of public myth."⁴³⁰ Richard Slotkin writes:

⁴²⁶ Vonnegut, p. XI

⁴²⁷ Vonnegut, p. 2

⁴²⁸ Vonnegut, p. 20f.

⁴²⁹ Vonnegut, p. 69

⁴³⁰ Slotkin, *Gunfighter ...*, p. 643

Americans in the 1970s were asked to accommodate themselves to the limitations of “spaceship earth,” a world of exhausted frontiers whose rising and hungry population must draw on limited natural resources – a planetary ecology reduced to a “zero sum game” in which every gain entails a concomitant loss.⁴³¹

There were no more frontiers, and humanity was suffering because of it. Circumstances like these gave further impetus to sci-fi escapism and the numerous new ‘frontiers’ depicted in it. In the realm of actual physics, as a solution to these problems, serious proposals for the colonization of space were made. It was these “[p]roposals for extraterrestrial colonization (on space stations or in lunar or planetary settlement) [that] transformed “outer space” into The High Frontier.”⁴³²

Physicist Gerard O’Neill was the foremost champion of this. Space colonization was his favored topic and he was convinced that it would solve many, if not all of Earth’s problems. He was a glowing advocate for space habitats, those ‘cities in space’ that would serve as a man-made frontier. He published his thoughts on the matter in his book *The High Frontier* (1977), consciously appealing to frontier imagery to bring his point across.⁴³³ In a publication of the same period O’Neill’s colleague Freeman Dyson equates space colonization with the settlement of America, specifically referencing William Bradford and the Pilgrims.⁴³⁴ The ‘high frontier,’ then, was intended as the new Frontier. Reasons for emigration into space were explicitly the same as for settling in the old, western frontier: “better land, better living conditions, better job opportunities and greater freedom of choice and opportunity”⁴³⁵

O’Neill’s *The High Frontier* and similar contemporary publications were steeped in the fears of the 1970s. Looming over the head of the American public were economic depression, the high oil price, a fear of overpopulation, and a growing dread of food shortages leading to widespread starvation. Space colonization was seen by him and his compatriots as the only possible solution for these problems. But things turned out differently as they expected: the economy recovered, the oil price stabilized, and no food

⁴³¹ Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 625

⁴³² Slotkin, *Gunfighter* ..., p. 646

⁴³³ His title for chapter eleven of his book – “Homesteading the Asteroids” – is a clear indicator of this. (Gerard K. O’Neill, *The High Frontier. Human Colonies in Space* (Bantam edition), Bantam Books, New York 1978, p223)

⁴³⁴ Freeman J. Dyson, “Pilgrim Fathers, Mormon Pioneers, and Space Colonists: An Economic Comparison”, in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 122, No. 2, April 1978, p. 63-68

⁴³⁵ Gerard O’Neill, “The High Frontier” (<http://settlement.arc.nasa.gov/CoEvolutionBook/HIGHF.html>, link retrieved: 3/28/15); this is a transcript of a speech given by him at the World Future Society convocation in 1975

shortage ever came to pass. Earth seemingly did not need to move into space to solve its problems, and the proposals for the colonization of space soon ceased.

The Cyberpunk genre, as pioneered by William Gibson in his novel *Neuromancer*, made the exhausted world so vividly imagined in the 1970s its topic. Gibson's whole *Sprawl* and *Bridge* trilogies fell into that category. Essentially, cyberpunk depicts the death of the American Dream. There is no more 'west,' no more frontier – only the virtual one remains. Further west lies only Asia, especially Japan, which kind of dominates American culture in these kinds of novels.⁴³⁶ Cyberpunk as a genre is explicitly post-frontier with its focus on 'inner space' and the bleeding edge technological frontier.

Cyberpunk expanded the American Frontier past the limits of the American continent, over the Pacific, and into Asia.⁴³⁷ But the 'locus of power' was in danger of moving from the United States to (East) Asia.⁴³⁸ Instead of westward expansion by the USA, Asia might undertake a project of 'eastward expansion,' enacting a kind of 'colonization in reverse.'

This genre features "cowboys of cyberspace."⁴³⁹ The cowboy is now an urban being; stories featuring him are still in the manner of the "cowboy on the range,"⁴⁴⁰ but the 'range' has become the urban sprawl. The frontier is now an urban phenomenon, telling stories of survival on the tough streets of the modern Moloch.

Contemporary Fiction (from the 1980s up to the Present)

Mike Resnick's *Santiago* does not feature one frontier, but two – the inner and the outer one. The Inner Frontier is located towards the center of the galaxy while the Outer Frontier describes the whole of the galactic rim. Both frontiers are limited as they cannot advance any further than now. Resnick's frontiers are permeated by a tangible Wild West atmosphere. The eponymous Santiago is a legendary figure, having already entered into the ranks of myth. He is an idealized frontier hero, here presented as an outlaw, i.e. as the classic anti-hero of the Western genre – doing the right thing regardless of the law. As a whole *Santiago* is a mythic Wild West tale set in the far future, featuring legendary 'gunslingers' and aliens imitating Native American culture.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁶ For a visual of this, check out the *Johnny Mnemonic* movie (1995); also: *Shadowrun* (<http://www.shadowrun.com/>, link retrieved: 3/28/15), which is pretty much a combination of William Gibson and the urban fantasy genre, in this case derivative of JRR Tolkien.

⁴³⁷ Abbott, p. 158ff.; Gibson is used as an example.

⁴³⁸ Abbott, p. 164

⁴³⁹ Clute, *Illustrated* ..., p. 89

⁴⁴⁰ Clute, *Illustrated* ..., p. 88

⁴⁴¹ "the Great Sioux Nation" (Resnick, *Santiago*, p. 128)

Mike Resnick has, intentionally or unintentionally, created a fictional universe shared by many of his novels. In *Birthright: The Book of Man* he gives a sweeping overview of this universe, covering millennia. It details the rise and fall of human hegemony in the galaxy. In a way the book echoes *The Course of Empire*, that classic five-part series of paintings by Thomas Cole in its depiction of the rise and fall of (human) civilization. *Birthright* includes stories about pioneers ‘trailblazing’ a path into the galaxy and about explorers mapping out ‘the territory.’ The exploitation of natural resources, reminiscent of America’s Industrial Revolution, is also dealt with. Eventually the Human realm becomes an empire all but in name. And then even in name. Entropy takes its inevitable toll and the book ends with the extinction of man.

Resnick’s *The Outpost* is also set in the Birthright universe, i.e. in the same universe as *Santiago* and many of his other novels. The narrative framework of the novel is set in a frontier bar – somewhere on the inner frontier – filled with tough, frontier-type people. *The Outpost* is a short story collection in a way, because it consists mostly of legends and tall tales by the bar’s patrons tell each other. It also features the ‘Space Indians’ that had already appeared in *Santiago*, i.e. the ‘Great Sioux Nation.’

Mike Resnick’s oeuvre as a whole features quite a few tales permeated by a ‘Wild West’ atmosphere. Other than his two *Santiago* novels his *Tales of the Galactic Midway* sequence comes especially to mind.⁴⁴² He was also unafraid to tackle the topic of African colonialism in some critically acclaimed novels – *Paradise: A Chronicle of a Distant World* (1989) and *Kirinyaga* (1992) come to mind in this regard.

C. J. Cherryh’s *Downbelow Station* features two distinct cultural blocs. One is conservative and centered on Earth, i.e. the motherland, while the other one is progressive, strewn throughout space, and distant from Earth, i.e. the colonies. As is usually the case in stories featuring a setup like this, the colonies eventually agitate for independence from the ‘motherland.’ It is another case of the American Revolution replayed in space. The novel itself deals mainly with the exploration and settlement of an alien planet and an examination of its intelligent alien species and how it is influenced by its contact with humanity. The conflict between Earth and its colonies only later comes to the foreground in the novel.

Iain M. Banks’ *Culture* society made its first appearance in *Consider Phlebas*. The Culture is a post-scarcity utopia where everything is available and nothing is lacking; it is controlled by gigantic AI minds. The Culture is in need of an *Other* to define itself,

⁴⁴² *Sideshow* (1982), *The Three-Legged Hootch Dancer* (1983), *The Wild Alien Tamer* (1983), and *The Best Rootin’ Tootin’ Shootin’ Gunslinger in the Whole Damned Galaxy* (1983))

something to say of that this is what we are not. This is why it has not further expanded its borders. The border of Culture space is a frontier, with the alien races located beyond the frontier serving as ‘savages’ in a manner familiar from American history. The Culture treasures these ‘savages’ – if the Culture would enclose them they would become akin to reservations – because without something to demarcate themselves from, the Culture would have no identity at all.

The world of Orson Scott Card’s *Ender’s Game* is no utopia at all. It features a right-wing militarism that is reminiscent of *Starship Troopers*. But while in Heinlein’s novel the war with the alien continues after the novel’s end, in Card’s novel the aliens are eradicated. He shows us the genocide of an alien culture. Card himself is a Mormon, and the Mormons are historically ‘friendly’ to the Indians, seeing them as a lost tribe of Israel. What is portrayed in *Ender’s Game* then is the bloodguilt of the American nation in regard to the near-extinction of the Native American peoples. Card’s novel is a blazing indictment of the way the tragic fate of America’s native population is glossed over in the public sphere.

Jack McDevitt’s *Alex Benedict* novels go into a completely different direction. In these books McDevitt depicts a kind of post-colonial utopia. His future civilization has left all of the ‘bad’ history behind it and has achieved a peaceful equilibrium. Racism is pretty much dead because humanity has become fairly homogenous, a condition that was forced upon it by the cramped conditions of the early years of space travel and colonization – hybridization has taken place. There is a single alien race, but the wars with it are a thing of the past – it is all in the field of diplomacy now. Humanity in these novels is a post-frontier civilization – the only interesting discoveries that are made now are in the fields of science and archaeology – and it has come to terms with this, accepted it, and moved on into the future.

The main political body in David Weber’s *Honor Harrington* novels is essentially what amounts to the British Empire in space – the Kingdom of Manticore. It so remote from the center of human civilization, though, that it can be counted as a frontier society without any problems. The Kingdom of Manticore itself consists of three planets, all habitable and located in the same system – Gryphon, Sphinx, and the eponymous Manticore. Among the three, Manticore represents civilization – it is highly urbanized and the seat of government; Sphinx evokes the pastoral ideal, with its tamed nature it gives off a feeling similar to that of a national park; Gryphon, then, is a rugged frontier country, home to a hardy people. These descriptions are of interest to our topic, because they call to mind familiar American landscapes. Weber obviously made use of them to make these three planets relatable to his

readers. The novels themselves are mostly a retelling of the Napoleonic wars, transposed into a science fiction setting and not really of interest to this paper's topic.

Digressing from pure literature in this last instance, we shall take a look at *Warhammer 40K*, a multimedia franchise that found its start as a tabletop wargame.⁴⁴³ Its setting is steeped in medievalism, xenophobia runs rampant, and there are conflicts in every corner of the universe. It is an extreme dystopia, depicting the evils of 'empire' at their worst, with the Human Empire having become an unwieldy behemoth, a bureaucratic nightmare basically uncontrollable on a large scale. The 'Indian' has found its way into the setting too, incarnated as the 'savage beast' in the *Orcs*, and, on the other end of the spectrum, as the 'noble savage' in the *Eldar*. If one looks beneath the surface of gleeful militarism one can see that it is a kind of cautionary tale, a warning that this is what could happen if we do not pay attention – a tyrant taking over, abolishing democracy on the way, and starting an everlasting autocratic nightmare.

Concluding Thoughts

Seen from a certain perspective, "American science fiction writers have certainly repeated history."⁴⁴⁴ This is the case because the "stories of the western American past and future have come to work together, with science fiction incorporating tropes and stories from the western past and dressing them in spacesuits."⁴⁴⁵ The 'frontier' has become such an ingrained part of the American psyche, that it is easy for authors to fall back on the old frontier stories to tell their tales as practically everyone in the United States is aware of the relevant tropes. Writes William Katerberg: "frontier stories of the traditional sort typically hold sway, even when set in outer space;" this being the case because "people cannot easily imagine radically new societies evolving progressively out of their own existing one."⁴⁴⁶ The recourse to familiar stories thus makes it easier for readers to relate to the depicted future. Carl Abbot agrees with Katerberg: "The forbidding and frightening future may become more comprehensible with familiar guideposts from a valued past," with there being many who "enjoy the familiarity of frontier stories replayed."⁴⁴⁷

The frontier and its stories have been with us for centuries now and show no sign of disappearing from the literary discourse. Even the old frontier myth, in a manner of speaking,

⁴⁴³ <http://www.games-workshop.com/en-US/Warhammer-40-000>; for more info, see: http://wh40k.lexicanum.com/wiki/Warhammer_40,000; both links retrieved: 3/28/15

⁴⁴⁴ Abbott, p. 177

⁴⁴⁵ Abbott, p. 177

⁴⁴⁶ Katerberg, p. 5

⁴⁴⁷ Abbott, p. 186

is still present in the modern world, albeit changed from its initial form as being located at the edge of civilization, in the wilderness. With the help of Richard Slotkin, its modern presence can be summed up thusly: The “industrial and imperial version of the Frontier Myth” still informs today’s political processes and influences America’s thinking and its rhetoric. America’s discourse is still one of “pioneering progress, world mission, and eternal strife with the forces of darkness and barbarism.”⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁸ Slotkin, *Fatal ...*, p. 12

Conclusion

In this paper we have found out that the Mars trilogy is obviously influenced by American history. It has been shown that every major event in Kim Stanley Robinson's story has its counterpart in American history. Many topics have been explored, among them the Martian revolutions, the formation of a distinct Martian society, the creation of a government for independent Mars, and the presence of American history in general. Through these, the contiguity of the Mars novels to America's past has been made clear to see.

Robinson's novel is not only a rehash of historical American experiences, though. There exists another layer. Robinson also uses these novels as a platform to convey his ideas for a better future to his audience. He has been shown to champion environmental awareness, to give impulses to think about a better way of life, to favor the possibility of an ecological-utopian future, and to hope to instill some fervor in his readers for this quite possible future.

John Boone has been demonstrated to be a character whose conception has been influenced by multiple historical personages. He is literally an all-American hero, since he is made-up of actual American heroes of the past. These famous people from America's history who featured in the construction of Boone have been shown to be mostly John Smith and Daniel Boone. Others have been used by Robinson in Boone's creation, but these two stand out. Traits these two (and others) share with Boone have been elaborated on and Boone's activities and influence in the novels have been portrayed. Like his forebears he has been shown to not be above using his fame and power to his advantage, to achieve his personal goals and those he champions for Mars in general.

It has been established that the Frontier is a significant feature of America's cultural subconscious – that it resonates with a people who have been nursed on frontier imagery since their youth. Regarding the frontier concept, it has been made obvious that it has undergone a number of transformations, away from the physical reality and into the realm of fiction and myth. It is in this 'mythic' role that it has been shown to pervade the science fiction genre, which had often made use of the tropes associated with the frontier to tell its stories. Finally, its presence in many of the featured science fiction novels has been made known.

Much of the science fiction genre is influenced by History. The trappings of the past inform the depiction of the future. Dreams of the future are bound by history. The development of a society is a web of interdependent events – this means that without continuity from history to

the future there can be no future at all. The future needs history to exist, if one needs a term to describe this one could choose to call it ‘the historicity of the future.’

For science fiction this means that it too is influenced by history. In most cases this history is the one of the American West – with the Frontier as the defining feature of this. After the frontier had lost its physical existence in the actual West it flawlessly moved on into an ideological existence. It found representation in fiction of all kinds and it was just a matter of time before the ‘Frontier in the West’ became the ‘Frontier in Space.’ It was without difficulty that this took place – the same type of stories could easily be told in both ‘locations,’ the Indian of the west quickly turned into the alien of outer space. Edgar Rice Burroughs has to be counted as the pioneer of these kinds of stories, frontier tales in space. Even if he did not originate this transference of frontier stories into space, with his Barsoom tales he certainly made them popular.

The Pulp writers of the 1920s and ‘30s, many a hack among them, were still close to the dime novel traditions of the previous century. The Western and Sci-Fi pulps ‘developed’ side by side and many of the paid-by-the-word writers wrote titles in both, and more, genres – a certain overlapping of tropes has to be expected. It is through this overlap that the old frontier stories came to be adapted into the science fiction genre.

As these things happen, in time other kinds of Science fiction superseded the tales written in the old mode – the Golden Age had to end eventually. The 1960s and ‘70s focused on other issues, many of them of a cultural or social nature. Authors like Ursula LeGuin, Octavia Butler, Thomas Disch, James Brunner, and Alice Sheldon/James Tiptree, Jr. appeared and the ‘New Wave’ genre was born. Cyberpunk followed in the wake of that development, offering a critical vision of the future. Science fiction diversified, ultimately leading us into the stratified field that it has become today.

Even though other foci appeared in science fiction it is not as if the frontier has ever fully left the genre. It is still with us today and features in stories. Not a small number of authors choose to write sci-fi in the old, familiar manner of the frontier tale, expecting and finding a ready audience waiting for their output.

Returning the focus to Kim Stanley Robinson, it can be said that by writing about the future, Science Fiction authors are actually ‘talking’⁴⁴⁹ about the present. Robinson did this with his California trilogy, his Mars trilogy, and later works – all of them featuring the environment

⁴⁴⁹ Looking at, critiquing, and directing attention at certain developments in the present.

to a significant degree. The environment has been a growing concern in the 1990s and maintained a presence as a political issue ever since.

In choosing to write about terraforming and colonization, as well as the global ‘collapse’ on Earth, Robinson directs attention towards contemporary environmental issues on Earth, sadly still current today. At the same time he offers a potential solution to Earth’s problems through a fairly radical cultural change one *could* term a ‘revolution,’ by bringing the concept of the ‘eco-utopia’ to the attention of his reader. Through his Mars trilogy Robinson shows his audience that this new kind of society is not easy to achieve, but it is certainly possible – even if it requires constant work in order to not fall back into old, destructive habits, it is certainly a desirable goal for humanity to aspire to.

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Appendix A:

Summary in German | Zusammenfassung (in deutscher Sprache)

Die vorliegende Arbeit geht der Frage nach inwieweit die amerikanische Geschichte Einfluss auf die (amerikanische) Science Fiction Literatur hat und sich auch darin widerspiegelt. Das Hauptwerk, welches für dieses Unterfangen zu Rate gezogen wurde, ist die preisgekrönte Mars Trilogie des renommierten Science Fiction Autors Kim Stanley Robinson.

Kapitel eins behandelt umfassend und ausschließlich das Thema inwiefern sich Ereignisse der amerikanischen Geschichte, besonders der Amerikanische Unabhängigkeitskrieg, sowie seine Ursachen und Nachwirkungen, sich in den drei Mars Büchern, oft nur mit wenigen Modifikationen und natürlich in ein Science Fiction Setting adaptiert, wiederfinden.

Es wurde erst ein kurzer Blick auf den thematischen Vorläufer der Mars Trilogie, Robinsons Kalifornien Trilogie, geworfen und kurz deren Verbindung zu den Mars-Romanen erläutert. Unter verschiedenen Leitthemen, wie z.B. Politik, Revolution, oder Regierung, wurden dann die Gemeinsamkeiten der Mars Trilogie mit den Begebenheiten der amerikanischen Geschichte verglichen und detailliert abgeglichen. Große Gemeinsamkeiten konnten hier festgestellt werden. Es ist unbestreitbar, dass sich Kim Stanley Robinson für die Konstruktion seiner Zukunftsvision großzügig bei der amerikanischen Geschichte bedient hat.

Außerdem wurden hier noch einige von Robinsons favorisierten Themenfeldern zur Sprache gebracht und näher beleuchtet. Dies sind Themenkomplexe die ihm am Herzen liegen und für die er sich einsetzt. Hierbei handelt es sich um Themen wie Umweltschutz, die Geschichtlichkeit der Zukunft, Neo-Primitivismus und das ökologische Utopia.

Das zweite Kapitel dieser Arbeit beschäftigt sich ausschließlich mit John Boone, einem der frühen Hauptcharaktere der Mars Trilogie, der einen bleibenden Einfluss auf die Entwicklung der Mars-Gesellschaft hat obwohl er schon relativ früh verstirbt. Die Leitthese für diesen Abschnitt ist, dass dieser durch und durch 'amerikanische Held' eine Kombination zweier klassischer Personen der amerikanischen Geschichte, nämlich Kapitän John Smith und dem legendären Pionier Daniel Boone, darstellt.

Unter den diversen Abschnitten dieses Kapitels wird unter anderem behandelt: der Charakter von John Boone selbst, die beiden historischen Figuren John Smith und Daniel Boone und

was sie John Boone vermacht haben, die Neugier als Antriebskraft, John Boones Aktivitäten, sowie die Macht und die Symbolhaftigkeit des Helden.

Das dritte und letzte Kapitel dieser Magisterarbeit lässt die Mars Trilogie schließlich hinter sich um sich einem erweiterten Feld von Science Fiction Literatur zuzuwenden.

Ausgewählte Titel werden herbeigezogen um deutlich zu machen wie sehr die Präsenz der amerikanischen Geschichte das gesamte Science Fiction Genre durchdringt. In diesem Kapitel kommen auch die Konzepte der 'Frontier' und von 'Manifest Destiny' zum Tragen, mit Schwerpunkt auf der 'Frontier'.

Es wurde hier eine detaillierte Übersicht über den Frontierbegriff geboten bevor sich der Blick die umfassende Präsenz der Frontier in der Science Fiction Literatur richtete. Dem nachfolgend und die Arbeit beendend ist der intendierte Fokus dieses Kapitels, die Betrachtung diverser Science Fiction Titel und die etwaige Präsenz von Frontiermythen darin.

Diese Arbeit abschließend ist dann noch ein kurzer Überblick über die erarbeiteten Hauptpunkte dieser Magisterarbeit und ein paar abschließende Gedanken die diese Magisterarbeit dann zu ihrem Ende bringen.

Appendix B: Curriculum Vitae | Lebenslauf

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Appendix C: Statement on Plagiarism | Plagiatserklärung

Mit diesem Schreiben erkläre ich, dass die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt sowie die Stellen der Arbeit, die anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen sind, durch Angabe der Quellen kenntlich gemacht wurden.

Egelsbach, den 30. März 2015

Michael Vollhardt