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Devon Tinius

Professor Miskec

English 381

6 December 2017

Creativity Studies within Young Adult Literature

“What is creativity? Creativity involves the ability to produce original ideas, to perceive new and unsuspected relationships, or to establish a unique and improved order among seemingly unrelated factors. Nearly everyone has a creative spark, and some have outstanding creative talent.” (Razick 160). Author Taher Razick states this in his journal article, *Recent Findings and Developments in Creativity Studies,* which delves into the concept of creativity and studies creativity within an individual’s characteristics, work or products, and cognitive processes. *The* *Fashion Committee* and *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau Banks* are two young adult novels that occupy a similar categorical space of creativity studies. Through this particular space, it is made apparent that the main characters of these novels develop agency and maturity from their creativity which reflects their intelligence, and also takes on a certain *Künstlerroman* or journey of the artist aspect, ultimately helping create a certain tone, sense of humor, style, and rhetorical structure to the novels, and in turn adding nuance to other books of its same critical space.

Most scholars studying and researching creativity can agree on one thing- “Creativity is originality, but it is more than that. It is bringing something into the world that is relatively new and possibly revolutionary in its wide circle of effects. Whether it be directly or indirectly, a great deal has been written about creativity, but no one theory is presently completely accepted” (Dimock 3). There are many creativity theories that are researched and practiced, and every

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scholar is bound to have different ideas and concepts of what creativity is and the effects it has on an individual. Some may say that intelligence has no direct correlation to creativity, while others say that there is a definite and positive relationship between the two. In the book *The Creative Imperative*, editors Jami Biles Jones and Lori J. Flint quote two scholars, Getzels and Jackson, in the following “Early exploration into the relationship between creativity and intelligence found an association between the two, suggesting that creativity could not be separated from the cognitive facilities” (Jones & Flint 6). Jones and Flint also quote two other scholars, Wallach and Kogan, who counteract the previous quote, stating “However, subsequent studies have found that the types of tasks and environmental conditions for creativity differ from that of intelligence” (Jones & Flint 6). All of these scholars have differing views on the controversial relationship between creativity and intelligence, which is why there is no universal theory about creativity that is ultimately accepted. There are also debates on if creativity involves problem solving or the need for self-expression, and there is discussion on the different behavioral and developmental perspectives within creativity. Lastly, there is controversy if personality and motivation are related to creativity in any way, and what the climate and organizational impacts on the creative individual entail. Through extensive research, one can discover that creativity can be regularly studied and analyzed in many different ways, hence why creativity studies continues to grab the attention and curiosity of scholars alike.

A *Künstlerroman*, meaning "artist's novel" in English, is a narrative about an artist's growth to maturity. Usually in a novel form, it tends to depict the conflicts of a sensitive youth against the values of a middle and upper class society of his or her time. Both novels I am analyzing occupy a similar *Künstlerroman* space, but while *The Fashion Committee* is a very

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typical artist’s journey, *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau Banks* is a different, non-conventional way of looking at creative studies within Young Adult Literature. Both characters grow as artists, albeit different types, but their growth is similar in that it is a reflection of their intelligent and creatively artistic minds. Charlie Dean is your standard artist, as she is a fashion designer who enters into a contest where she must design an outfit in the chances of winning a one-year scholarship to Green Pastures Fashion Program. Frankie Landau Banks, on the other hand, uses her creative ingenuity to take down a secret all boys society in her private school, Alabaster Preparatory Academy. While both characters use their creative intelligence in different ways, they have one thing in common: they are passionate about what they are doing. Paul Torrance quotes Theresa Amabile in his journal article *Insights About Creativity: Questioned, Rejected, Ridiculed, Ignored* in the statement “Extraordinary talent, personality, and cognitive ability do not seem to be enough—it's the 'labor of love' aspect that determines creativity” (Torrance 314). It’s true that both characters have an unwavering love and passion for their art or creative project, and with their intelligent and creative mind set, it is very likely that the outcome of their projects will be successful, and in turn mold them into more mature, enlightened artists.

In the journal article *Toward a Theory of Organizational Creativity,* the authors state that:

The creative behavior of a person is influenced by events of the past as well as aspects of the current situation. Within the person, both cognitive (knowledge and cognitive skills) and non-cognitive (e.g., personality) aspects of the mind are related to creative behavior. Individual creativity is a function of antecedent conditions (e.g., past reinforcement history, biographical variables), cognitive style and ability (e.g., divergent thinking,

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ideational fluency), personality factors (e.g., self-esteem, locus of control), relevant knowledge, motivation, social influences, and con textual influences (e.g., physical environment, task and time constraints). (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin 294-296)

Charlie Dean and Frankie Landau Banks possess these qualities as creative individuals, and use these to their advantage to gain power and agency throughout the novels. The authors also state that creative individuals have certain personality factors that contribute to their inspirations, such as “high valuation of esthetic qualities in experience, broad interests, attraction to complexity, high energy, independence of judgment, autonomy, intuition, self-confidence, ability to resolve antinomies or to accommodate apparently opposite or conflicting traits in one's self-concept, and a firm sense of self as creative” along with persistence, curiosity, energy, and intellectual honesty, which are also important for creativity purposes (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin 298). Having these characteristics are all positive attributes that can be used in different types of creative projects throughout their life.

Charlie Dean and Frankie Landau-Banks accurately display many of these characteristics throughout their journey as an artist and as an adolescent in their creative endeavors. Both characters are smart and witty in their creative projects, with an attraction to complexity, and a refusal to back down from a challenge. Charlie Dean is confident in herself and her creativity, when she states “I don’t mean to brag, but I’m talented enough to be in the fashion program, even though it’s so far beyond competitive...” displaying her confidence, high energy, creativity and agency as a young artist (Juby 8). Frankie Landau Banks is also a complex, independent character, with a creative, sharp-witted sense of humor, autonomy and a mind of her own. The

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letter that she writes to the headmaster is a perfect display of her creative brilliance, which is displayed in the quote “I, Frankie Landau-Banks, herby confess that I was the sole mastermind behind the mal doings of the Loyal Order of the Basset Hounds. I take full responsibility for the disruptions caused by the Order…” (Lockhart 1). Frankie Landau Banks is not ashamed of herself but rather proud of her misdoings, as she outsmarted a whole secret society of men and gained a sense of power and agency through her secret project.

Creativity can be associated with intelligence, and can have a direct correlation with one another and the individual’s performance in certain tasks. Most creative people are divergent thinkers, which means they move away from facts or knowledge already possessed. Razick states that “Experimental tests to measure creativity in research studies emphasize divergent thinking-originality, fluency of ideas, flexibility, sensitivity to defects and missing elements, and the ability to elaborate and redefine” (Razick 162). Charlie Dean and Frankie Landau Banks both display themselves as divergent thinkers full of original and creative ideas, as Charlie fixes a ruined dress the night before the fashion show and Frankie secretly orders the Basset Hounds around to follow ridiculous duties through a private email, so it is clear that these two female characters show a strong sense of creative and intelligent self. Although creativity is not a function of intelligence as measured by IQ tests, these authors do state that there is a positive correlative relationship (although somewhat loose) between creativity and intelligence in the quote “The true relationship between intelligence and creativity, as operationally defined by Cave, may be somewhere between the proposition that creativity is independent of intelligence, and that creativity is basically part of abstract intelligence” (Richard Kazelskis, Jimmie D. Jenkins, & Ronald K. Lingle 58). Both Charlie Dean and Frankie Landau Banks possess qualities

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of creative intelligence, which is what separates them from other individuals of similar age/maturity, and gives them the ability to succeed in their creative projects. Although their intelligences slightly differ between each other, Charlie Dean is more artistically inclined in fashion and art, whereas Frankie is more intelligent in standard school subjects, (specifically languages, with writing being her strong suit), both girls possess a strong sense of creative intelligence as a whole. Viktor Lowenfeld states in his journal article, *Creative Intelligence,* that “Intelligence as well as creativity are essential to human growth. In the same way as we can differentiate between potential and functional intelligence, we can distinguish between potential and functional creativity” which applies to these two characters in their journey and growth as not only an artist but as a character as well (Lowenfeld 23).

There are many different characteristics of creative individuals that can positively impact them in various parts of their life and in their creative attempts. “The creative person shows originality in a variety of ways” (Razick 163). Many creative adults are intuitive and are able to see beyond the facts to what might be, and they have a particular view of their self and the universe that might be different than others. “He/ She is a distinct individual and exhibits a constructive nonconformity” (Razick 163). Both Charlie and Frankie exhibit these qualities of originality and optimism, as Charlie never stays within the norm of typical fashion and always thinks outside the box when designing clothing, which is displayed in the quote “The applique seams I used on the bodice and the sequined mesh section meant to conjure the effect of broken windows was trés, trés complex!” (Juby 195). Frankie uses her intuitions to spy on the Basset Hounds and eventually figures out where the Basset Hounds Disreputable History journal is hidden before anyone else finds it, which is shown in the quote “She ran her hands up and down

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the underside methodically, and there, underneath the tiny raised dome of the library, stuck to the bronze with duct tape, was a small package. Wrapped in three layers of paper bags was a small leather bound notebook” (Lockhart 216). They are also both independent of judgement and would rather do things their way then to listen to others and conform to society’s norms, especially those of authority. They aren’t afraid to break the rules a little to succeed in their creative task and ultimately get what they want.

Having a sense of a humor is always a positive character trait to have, hence it is surprisingly related to creativity. “A sense of humor is another characteristic of the creative person” Razick states in his journal article (Razick 164). The research shows that “When comparing the personal aspirations of creative children with high-IQ children, the creative children rated a sense of humor, along with a wide range of interests and emotional stability, much higher than the members of the high IQ group” (Razick 164). Sense of humor was an outstanding difference between the two groups, and set the creative groups apart from the rest of the groups studied. William Hauck and John Thomas state in their journal article, *The Relationship of Humor to Intelligence, Creativity, and Intentional and Incidental Learning* that “The same mental process involved in creative association is involved in incidental learning. Thus, the literature indicates that humor is independent of intelligence but characteristic of creativity” (Hauck & Thomas 52). Although humor is not directly correlated with intelligence, both have a positive relationship to creativity in children and adults. Charlie and Frankie both possess these qualities of sense of humor, creativity and intelligence throughout the novels. Charlie repeatedly throws in French words when writing her journal entries, (some words make sense while others do not) which adds a quirky and witty tone to the novel and creates an

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interesting rhetorical structure and style overall. “Then I noticed the envelope peeking out of the pile. It bore the Green Pastures logo. C’est trés interessant!” (Juby 7). Frankie also has her own sense of humor when she makes up neglected positive words, and calls them “falsies.” “*Gruntled* is a falsie, though Frankie didn’t know until Matthew explained it to her (though not in those terms, of course)” (Lockhart 112). Frankie is perturbed by Matthew being so literal when she states “That makes no sense, because if gruntled mean grumbly, then disgruntled should mean un-grumbly” (Lockhart 113). Frankie feels annoyed with Matthew that he didn’t understand her sense of humor and cleverness with *gruntled* and dismissed her for being foolish rather than witty, hence overall doubting her intelligence.

“The creative person shows great curiosity for many things” (Razick 164). He/She is continually seeking to find new meanings and how things work. They have a vivid imagination and especially responds to activities requiring new approaches or ideas. Charlie and Frankie both have a vivid and original imagination, which Charlie uses to create extravagant and ingenious fashion pieces and Frankie uses to become the mastermind behind the ridiculous pranks that the Basset Hounds must complete, such as the “Doggies in the Window” and the “Abduction of the Guppy.” “The creative person also shows an unusual sensitivity to problems, situations, and qualities of their own experience” (Razick 164). Creative individuals have an open, searching behavior, along with a growing trust in their own perceptions and an unwillingness to accept authority without critical examination. Frankie Landau-Banks was well aware that she could possibly get in trouble for her misdoings and her ludicrous pranks, but continued in doing so with a sense of determination and free will. She trusted in herself more than others and knew she was more than capable of pulling off a stunt so big, which displays her creative ability and

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agency. It also states that creative students are unwilling to adapt their ideas to the demand of a group and have the courage to befriend unaccepted or odd classmates, even if it brings unpopularity. Charlie Dean didn’t care if she hung out in the art room with all the other weird, art students, but rather found it peaceful and exciting that she finally found where she belonged, even if it wasn’t with the super popular, rich kids. Both Charlie and Frankie also have a sense of autonomy, or a need for freedom and variety. They are more self-sufficient than others, and like to work and be responsible for their own projects. These positive characteristics of creativity also display the agency in their life and their ability to take care of themselves without help from others.

Lastly, the creative person has a purpose and a goal, along with the capacity to concentrate completely on task, but they also show a flexibility and spontaneity in their disposition, and a willingness to take calculated risks. High energy plus vast output through disciplined work habits is usually apparent, and it seems creative people have a certain drive and determination that less creative people don’t seem to possess. Author Razick states in his journal article, *Recent Findings and Developments in Creativity Studies,* that:

Some researchers have suggested that although the creative person is willing to take a greater risk than others, they do not want to deal with a "gamble" situation but rather will take a risk only when their own efforts may make a difference in the odds. They also shows flexibility in their tolerance of ambiguity, and have an ability to try another approach if one doesn't work, along with an acceptance of the irrational in themselves,

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and the ability to accept conflict and tension, with an understanding of their own complex temperament. (Razick 164-164)

Charlie and Frankie display the qualities of hardworking and determined girls that want to succeed in their creative projects, and put all their time and energy into their work. But they are both able to be flexible in situations that may have hindered their projects. Charlie must fix the ruined dress after Mischa’s ex-boyfriend ruins it. “Charlie Dean rallied. She pulled herself up by the bias tapes and went to work! She did not go to school on Friday because she needed every second to salvage the dress” (Juby 231). She takes the risk to alter the dress because there is time to start over, and her flexibility and fast thinking pays off in the end, which is shown in the quote “The dress was, if anything, more beautiful and fascinating than it had been” (Juby 233). Frankie must decide if risking her boyfriend, her friendships, and her schooling is worth it by taking down the Basset Hounds and revealing who they really are, all while proving to the others that she is just as capable and intelligent as they are. “I wanted to- prove myself. I wanted to make things happen, wanted to show that I’m as smart as any of you, or smarter even, when all you ever think is that I’m adorable” (Lockhart 315). She is flexible in her decisions and won’t stop until she meets her desired goal, even if it ends in disaster and expulsion, when she states “She hoped, she hoped, he would understand. That he would appreciate her the way he appreciated Alpha. Admire her cleverness, her ambition, her vision. That he would admit her as his equal, or even his superior, and love her for what she was capable of” (Lockhart 316).

Overall, both Charlie Dean and Frankie Landau Banks possess qualities of a creative and intelligent individual, which gives them agency and power throughout the novels. Garfield,

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Cohen and Roth state that “A composite description of the creative individual is independent, original, inner-directed, tolerant of uncertainty, intelligent, clever, imaginative, socially effective, dominant, individualistic, self-accepting, achieving, socially independent, and emotionally stable” and I don’t think anything could describe these two individuals any better (Garfield, Cohen & Roth 147).

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