



Abderrahmane Mira University – Bejaia

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Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption: Andy Dufresne as an Existential Hero

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Submitted by:

Miss Ines Grine

Supervised by: Mr. YOUSFI

Chairman: Mrs. Arab

Examiner: Mr. Meziani

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family, especially my beloved mother; whose encouragement has been extremely valuable, my sister Anissa who provided me with advice, my brothers Ishak, Islam, and Imad for their help in difficult times,

To all my teachers from the first steps of my study in the primary school until now; they enlightened my mind with knowledge and culture,

To all my friends and all those who shared with me happy and sad times at university during my years of study.

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Abstract

The present research intends to analyse *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*, one of the most famous stories by Stephen King. It was adapted into a film entitled *The Shawshank Redemption*, and translated into many languages. In the story, we come across some existential philosophy principles as it deals with the absurd living conditions of the inmates inside prison and the constant choices they make. The focus of the present study is on the main character Andy Dufresne who finds his life taking a serious detour after his wife and her lover are murdered and the crime is pinned on him. From the moment he enters prison, Andy encounters many existential crisis and works hard to stay sane and tries to give his life a meaning. He tries to give his life a meaning by choosing and acting and taking responsibility of what comes of it. This paper intends to exhibit the existential characteristics that make Andy Dufresne a true existential hero.

Key words: existential hero, absurd, existential crisis, life meaning, freedom of choice and action, responsibility.

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“Some birds are not meant to be caged, that's all. Their feathers are too bright, their songs too sweet and wild. So, you let them go, or when you open the cage to feed them they somehow fly out past you.” (King 123)

General Introduction

The appearance of heroes in literature mark a revolution in thought when writers and their readers turned their attention away from immortal gods to mortal men, who suffer pain and death, but despite all this they live fully, and create, through their own efforts, a moment of glory that survives in the memory of their descendants. They are the first human beings in literature, and the novelty of their experiences has a perennial freshness.

Writers worldwide have been creating personified heroes. The so-called protagonist of the story. A principle character around whom the story involves step by step. A person who faces any kind of danger using his intelligence, power or wit (The American Heritage 3413-3414). We readers know this kind of character as the hero.

Norman Mailer once said, “Ultimately a hero is a man who would argue with the gods, and so awakens devils to contest his vision” (cited in Ratcliffe 206). To him, heroes are those who go against the Gods’ will, thus wake the demons to challenge his vision. Heroes’ actions do not have to be great for them to be considered as such.

Saving a poor kitten in the street and bringing justice to helpless people are both heroic acts. The action need not be huge, and heroes need not have super powers. They, instead, can make us see the world in a different way.

As time passes literature changes and develops so does the so-called hero. We witnessed the hero moving from the Classical heroes¹ such as Ulysses -the principal character of Homer’s *Odyssey*- to the modern heroes² such as the Jay Gatsby- the protagonist of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s

¹ The Classical Hero is The hero in the strict sense exists only in a dramaturgy that represents the tragic actions of kings and princes, so that the spectator’s identification is directed toward a mythical or inaccessible being. His actions must appear to be exemplary and his destiny as freely chosen. He is, however, tragically caught between blind but inevitable divine law and unhappy but free consciousness (Pavis 169)

² Modern-day heroes are of a semi-different standard. People such as Martin Luther King, Joan Baez, and Mahatma Gandhi are today among those we refer to as “heroes.” Physical feats are not required to obtain this status any

famous story *The Great Gatsby* and with the emergence of the epic novel, epic heroes like Beowulf were born.

As far as existentialists are concerned, we can depict in their stories and plays the existential hero. Existentialism is a philosophical literary movement it was initiated in the renaissance around 18th century. Enlightenment philosophers thought that the advances of science and industry announced a new era of equality and progress.

During the Enlightenment era More goods were being produced for less money, people were traveling more, and the chances for the upwardly mobile to actually change their station in life were significantly improving.

However, the traditional social order underwent radical change in a very short time. During this period, People started to question their existence, as their disillusion and chaos were tremendous. All that they used to think defined their existence vanished. Life, to them, was pointless, absurd, and meaningless.

Existentialists were worried about the problem of meaning, something for which humans long. Food and oxygen are not the only things human beings need. People need at least a dose of existentialism in order to know how to lead their lives. Water and oxygen are vitals for humans in order to survive, however these are not enough as they must give their lives a meaning (purpose) in order to say that they are truly living life.

Authors like William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Albert Camus, and Samuel Beckett have uncovered existential components in their works wherein we have those main characters that

more. It is the difference and impact one makes in the world that puts one in this place. The search for fame takes away from the actual fact of what a person has done for it. This idea changes the whole meaning of a hero. A hero needs to be confident, yet modest as well. He or she must not undertake a task for the mere fame it will bring, but for the actual change it will result in.(Scully)

we see as existential heroes. The existential heroes face existential dilemmas and need to make choices in order to lead a normal life. Facing hardships, they acknowledge life as meaningless; they challenge it to redefine themselves again. According to Sajovitz, “an existential hero becomes a rebel against the absurd and himself gives meaning to his life” (Sajovitz 74).

The Shawshank Redemption, the novella we chose to study, has much to do with Sartre and Camus’s philosophy. It makes us experience hope, pain, determination, and struggle through Andy Dufresne, the main character.

The novella exposes what existentialism is about, that is to say the loss of identity, the acknowledgement of the absurd, the raise of the character, and the finding of meaning. Put in a difficult situation, the protagonist faces a crisis that is about to put an end to his life, but he chooses to change it.

1. Biography of the author

Stephen King was born on September 21, 1947, in Portland, Maine. He graduated from the University of Maine and later worked as a teacher then a writer. King's first horror novel, *Carrie*, was a huge success. King’s works were commercially successful but sometimes critically acclaimed. His books have sold more than 350 million copies worldwide and been adapted into numerous successful films.

King has received Bram Stoker Awards, World Fantasy Awards, and British Fantasy Society Awards. His novella *The Way Station* (1980) was a Nebula Award novelette nominee. In 2003, the National Book Foundation awarded him the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. His short story *The Man in the Black Suit* (1994) received the O. Henry Award. He has also received awards for his contribution to literature, such as the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement (2004), the Canadian Booksellers Association Lifetime

Achievement Award (2007), and the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America (2007).

2. Summary

Andy and Red, the two main characters, have both been convicted of killing their wives. Red is actually guilty; Andy is not.

Andy arrives in prison and soon makes a name for himself fighting the hostile rapist gang and asking Red—who knows how to get things—for a rock hammer and a giant poster of Rita Hayworth. He gets on one of the guards' good sides helping him secure some insurance money, does everyone's taxes for free, and sets up a library. Andy and Red become close friends.

One day, Tommy Williams, a fellow prisoner, says he once had a cellmate who worked at Andy's country club and bragged about killing Andy's wife and her lover. Andy goes see Norton, the prison warden, and asks for a new trial. Norton, corrupt, throws him in the hole and threatens to tear down the library if Andy pursues the matter.

Andy talks to Red about some fake IDs he has hidden in a deposit box in the outside world. The key for the box sits under a rock in a hayfield in Buxton, the safest place in the world to hide any kind of key, according to Andy. He says if he ever gets out, he is going to take the I.D.s and the money and open a hotel in Mexico.

Shortly after that, Andy breaks of prison, through a hole he had dug for over twenty years and somehow managed to keep hidden behind his posters. They never catch him.

Red breaks parole and takes a bus to Texas, hoping to cross the border and meet his friend in Mexico.

3. Objectives

We will use existentialism as a theoretical framework because it is foremost an attitude of revolt, freedom and self-making man. The main objective of this research is to provide an existential philosophy-based study of Andy Dufresne, the main protagonist of the story. The research question is: Is Andy Dufresne an existential hero?

4. Methodology

The work under study principally stands on existential analysis of Andy Dufresne, the protagonist of the story. Throughout the analysis, some extracts from the novella will be analysed with the intention to explore and depict the aspects and features of the existential heroes incarnated by the main character.

5. Dissertation Structure

The dissertation is divided into three chapters:

The first one will be devoted to the characteristics of a true existential hero in the eyes of some existentialists such as Albert Camus (we will be referring to accepting fate only) and Jean-Paul Sartre. Those characteristics include creating meaning, using freedom of choice and action, and taking responsibility. In the second chapter, we will apply those characteristics of a true existential hero on our protagonist with some examples from the novella to support our arguments. The third chapter will deal with the analysis of some symbols and motifs of the novella to back up our idea of Andy being an existential hero.

Chapter I: The Characteristics of the Existential Hero

Introduction

In this chapter, we are going to speak about the characteristics of existential heroes, that is to say creating meaning, embracing fate, freedom of choice and action, and responsibility.

For existentialists such as Sartre, we, as individuals, exist with no pre-determined purpose; it is up to us to make our lives meaningful through acting and choosing. Morrison stated in her essay *The Struggle for Existence: Essentialism or Existentialism* that “Existentialism proposes that a person’s actions and free will determine development and meaning to exist.” (2009). Our doings, actions and choices define our own existence. Life has no meaning and it is not going to change, unless we act and work in order to give it a meaning.

Facing the meaningless of life makes us question ourselves, questions like why should I go on living? We will go through different steps in order to find our true nature, our true selves. We would fall down, suffer and rise up again. This way we might recognize the absurdity of life and define ourselves through the choices we make.

According to Lisa M Given “Absurd is a theme in some existential literature and here the word absurd means without inherent or intrinsic meaning. We are thrown into the world, thrown into specific circumstances, but these have meanings only to the extent that they are created by individuals” (Given 319). We are leading an illogical and irrational existence, an existence without any meaning and it is our duty to give it one.

This point is well illustrated by Eliot J. Wilcox when he shows how the invisible man is similar to the existential hero saying that “[he], like other existential hero struggles to understand his

place until he recognizes the innate absurdity of existence and embraces the freedom that emerges from the angst³ of his realization" (Wilcox 5).

To Eliot J. Wilcox, people must overcome obstacles, use them in their advantage, and make something out of them. They have to create their own meaning in an absurd situation, to choose their own path (known to existentialists as the freedom of choice), and to take responsibilities of their own choices. They must accept the freedom that comes from their sudden fear and despair of acknowledging that life is meaningless. When we fall we must raise and work hard to define ourselves again because we know that we are the masters of our own destiny.

³ Angst: angst was to describe a man standing on the edge of a high cliff or building. Along with the fear of accidentally falling, the man feels an irrational impulse to deliberately fling himself over the edge (Rankin, Alan and Rachel Catherine Allen)

1. Creating Meaning

Existential philosophy states that life is meaningless and it is up to us to give it one. We can say that existentialism is the answer to our questions about: the fact of existing means defining yourself.

The existential heroes are those kind people who live in an absurd situation but who try to forge their own identity. For them, life is like a puzzle that they need to solve in order to find their true selves. Existentialist believe that creating meaning is an essential step for human beings in order to lead a normal life. A life that has a purpose, a life where we know who we are.

In his book *The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre*, Sartre states that “man must create his own essence” (Sartre 157). It is up to a person to create their own meaning in life, Sartre carries on saying that "it is in throwing himself into the world, suffering there, struggling there, that he gradually defines himself” (Sartre 157).

As we said meaning is very important for individuals in order to live a normal life, but before they could create their meaning, existential heroes go through three steps: First of all, they would go through an existential crisis; life’s hardships that make them question their existence (Individuals are not going to question life’s meaning, if these ones are living in peace and harmony with themselves and the world).

Second of all, they would embrace their fate and challenge it; take life as it comes, better or worse, then turn it into something good. Finally, they would forge for themselves an identity. We understand that existential heroes are doomed to face certain hardships, learn how to embrace and face fate as it comes and create meaning to themselves within this situation.

1.1. Facing an Existential Crisis

Why do I exist? What is my purpose? What is my true nature? How should I lead my life? What is the meaning of existing as a human being? These are some of the questions most existentialists ask themselves.

We, as individuals, do not go around asking these kind of questions, but there comes a time when our identity and beliefs are taken by a huge disaster such as the loss of the beloved ones (Shakespeare' Hamlet) "...in the graveyard scene, Hamlet literally sits vis-à-vis death. He is now aware that each individual must pass through the existential crisis" (Farahmandfar, Masoud 25). confronting death (this is the case of cancer patients when they realize that they cannot avoid dying), to be sentenced to endlessly push a rock up a mount (Camus' Sisyphus), and the loss of identity. Such tragedies push us to question life as a whole.

Some people define themselves as football players; being football players gives their life a meaning, but, at a certain point, they would grow old or are badly injured and could no longer practice sport. They will be devastated and depressed. Such crisis is called the existential crisis.

According to Richard K. James "[existential crisis] is a moment at which an individual questions the very foundations of life: whether life has any meaning, purpose or value" (Butênaitê 9). It is a moment when they start facing hardships, and difficult moments that lead them to feel that life is unfair towards them, lost and depressed. They then question the nature of life.

When the existential crisis is strong enough, it breaks people and ruins them. Life becomes an issue, and time a true enemy. This kind of situation reveals to them that life is meaningless and absurd, as stated by Butênaitê "... having achieved self-realisation as an individual, that person

is going through an existential crisis because his or her need of purpose and meaning in life is not satisfied” (Butênaitê 10).

Facing these problems, existentialists tend to look up for a meaning to these absurd situations and try to turn them into advantage. That is the case with existential heroes. “The supposed existential heroes are those who will, or make their importance in these foolish, bound scenarios” (Baziz 14).

Even when life has no meaning, existentialists try to give it one. Existential heroes do not give up; they would fight the absurdity of life, embrace their own fate and define themselves, and try to turn curses into blessings.

1.2. Embracing fate

It is hard to accept an absurd situation, but it is vital to face it in order to forge a new identity. According to Camus, it is necessary for a man to accept his fate in order to continue on living his own life. In his book *The Stranger*, the protagonist (Meursault) faces the challenge of being put on trial for committing a murder.

When Meursault is convicted of murder and is sitting in his cell, he says "At the time, I often thought that if I had had to live in the trunk of a dead tree, with nothing to do but look up at the sky flowering overhead, little by little I would have gotten used to it" (Camus 48). In this quote, Meursault is accepting his destiny. Saying he would have become used to it, he is giving a meaning to this absurd situation.

Camus views the existential heroes as those who, “like Sisyphus, grasped the absurd pointlessness of his task (existing) and chooses to embrace it anyway” (Existential Literature and Film). In other words, they acknowledge that life is meaningless, and accept it. Camus

believes that life is pointless, so existential heroes ought to acknowledge that first and then take life as it is given to them.

Like Sisyphus, the existential heroes must be aware of their condition, accept their fate and face it. Sajovitz states that “The existential hero becomes a rebel against the absurd and himself gives meaning to his life” (Sajotviz 74).

To existentialists like Camus, even though individuals accept their own burden in life, they should not stop their but they rather take control of their lives, impose and challenge their own destiny. Even if they are living in an absurd situation they have to make it less pointless to live normally.

1.3. Forging Identity

As living beings, existential heroes crave for meaning. They happen to take risks in order to define themselves. Existentialism rejects the idea that there is any created meaning of life. Sartre believes that “There is no sense in life a priori. Life is nothing until it is lived; but it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose” (Existentialism is Humanism). It is up to the individuals to give their lives a meaning.

Existential heroes know that they must create their own meaning in life; they do not go around pretending that they already have one. The existential heroes create themselves, struggle and find meaning to their life. They only exist and do not have any given essence, as Sartre stated in his essay *Existentialism is Humanism* "Existence precedes essence".

Meaning must be achieved it is not given. For example, the final form of a house must be imagined before it could be built. The essence of the house is the idea of how its shape and form will be. The idea exists first in the mind of the architect before it is built.

Fritz Dufour said that “Essence in this case refers to the ancient philosophical idea (most closely associated with Plato) that all things have a predefined, ideal set of characteristics” (Dufour 67). Essence is the fundamental idea of something. The characteristic of anything exist before, tat it to say that the abstract idea exists before the modelled shape of any creation.

Dufour supports his claim with an example saying, “the Essence of a chair is that it has four legs, a back, and people sit on it” (Dufour 67). We have the image of the chair in our mind is that a chair has four legs and a back and we can sit on it. Essence is the image of something abstract, which decides it qualities.

People do not fit in the same category; there are no laws to tell them what to be and who to be. People live their life and act upon it, that way they forge an identity for themselves. This is one of Sartre’s visions of existentialism as he states that “In life, a man commits himself, draws his own portrait and there is nothing but that portrait” (Existentialism is Humanism).Sartre also puts it in his: “Man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself” (Kreeft 20). At the beginning, we are nobody; but, after observing and acting on our own, we will define who we are.

In order for existential heroes to create their meaning they must undergo three steps: first they go through an existential crisis that makes them question life, then they embrace their face ; take life as it comes and try to make it worth living and in the end they forge an identity for themselves. However; this is just the first characteristic individuals must follow to be called existential heroes. The second characteristic existential heroes exhibit is freedom of choice and action.

2. Freedom of choice and action

According to the Oxford dictionary, freedom is “the state of not being held prisoner or controlled by somebody, the right to [do] use something without limitation”. In other words, freedom means no restraints, and no barriers.

In the existential philosophy, a great deal is put on the concept of freedom. It emphasises that men are free to choose and act on their own. As Flynn stated “Existentialism is the philosophy of freedom. Its basis is the fact that we can stand back from our lives and reflect on what we have been doing. In this sense, we are always “more” than ourselves, but we are as responsible as we are free” (Flynn 11). In other words, existentialism, as a philosophy, is about observing, thinking again about the situation, and then choosing whether to change or not.

Freedom in existentialism is closely choice-related. It says that someone is free to choose what they want to achieve, neither society nor God tell them what to do; it is up to them to act and choose their own way out. Someone antisocial could choose to change and start socialising with others or just stay as they are.

Freedom is all about choice. When being free, people cannot stop making choices, because the meaning of their lives depends on those choices. Sartre states, “I am absolutely free” (Sartre 509). Knowing that individuals have no human nature (i.e. nothing to define them as human beings), they will have to define their existence by making constant choices. Everything they choose defines who they will be.

For Winn “There is no choice without decision, no decision without desire, or desire without need, no need without existence” (cited in Tan 85). Desire awakens in people a certain need of something, like the need to know more about other cultures, languages, interests.

Curiosity and desire make individuals take a decision that will change their life completely. Once their decision is made, they act to fulfil their objective. There is no existence without choice; existing means choosing.

We can distinguish two types of freedom in the existential philosophy. First, we have what existentialists call freedom of choice, that is to say the liberty to decide upon two things or more. For example, to choose between facing your greatest fear or just live with it.

Secondly, we have the freedom of action, that is to say the liberty to do something in life. For instance, in Homer's Iliad, Achilles has the choice between life and glory, either to avenge his friend or go back to his beloved wife. Achilles chooses to fight and avenge his friend (Existential Literature and Film).

The freedom of choice as we said earlier is the liberty individuals have to make personal choices in given situations. It is to pick one thing from two things or more. Sartre, regarding this, states, "man is free" (Sartre 439), and "Things will be such as men decided they are to be" (Sartre 47). Individuals, to him, can do as they please.

To reinforce his statement, Sartre says, "Tomorrow, after my death, some men may decide to set up Fascism, and the others may be cowardly and muddled enough to let them do it" (Sartre 47). From Sartre's quotes, we understand that it is all a human decision; nobody is doomed to accept, do or like what others do. Instead of letting fate decide upon them, existential heroes must take control over their lives and make things move.

The way people live and define themselves is determined only by their choice. They need to identify themselves as living human beings that think, create, speak, and act, rather than live like animals that just grow old, and then die. Humans make choices, which differentiates them from other existing creatures.

According to Sowder, a person has “a choice of existing in stasis, dense like this tree, or of existing in as a human being: that is freely” (Sowder 115). From this quote we understand that as individuals we have the choice between existing as any other being (plants, animals) or existing as humans. Eating, sleeping and growing old or working, thinking and creating. Freedom of choice saves the individuals from the pointlessness of life. Using all the possibilities individuals have, they avoid leading a meaningless existence. This is one of the existential heroes’ qualities.

The existential heroes are aware that their choices affect others. Achilles (he is the protagonist of Homer’s epic, the *Iliad* who participated in the Trojan War), who chose to fight, knew that his choice would not only determine his fate, but the war as well. Nevertheless, “like Hamlet, he chooses a bit late, reminding us that we are all condemned to choose, now. And so, he learns, as we all do, that his choices also effect those he loves most” (Existential Literature and Film).

In the existential philosophy, to lead a meaningful life means not to stop choosing. A choice is an idea, and abstract individuals cannot define themselves with something that does not exist. To be able to change their fate and define themselves their own way, they must act. Sartre also claims that “man is nothing else but what he makes of himself.” (qtd. in Sowder 115).

Freedom of choice goes hand in hand with freedom of action. A choice is turned into an action and an action is at first a choice; if we do not act, we surely lose. Sartre claims that “Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfils himself; he is therefore nothing else but then the ensemble of his act” (Sartre 47).

Existential heroes do not wait for things to happen to them; they would rather move and act in order to fulfil their aim. As put by Earl Driscoll “An existential hero does not sit idly by waiting for circumstances to have an effect on their existence. Rather an existential hero will take matters into their own hands and by way of action have an effect on what occurs” (Jean-Paul Sartre and Existentialism).

For Sartre, we are our own actions since we are the ones who create our own essence. “The coward is defined on the basis of the acts he performs” (Sartre 49). If soldiers flee the battlefield, they are defined as cowards. Their actions make them who they are.

Creating meaning and having the freedom of choice and action are not the only characteristics existential heroes have. As individuals, people must take responsibility of who they are and what they chose and do in their lives , so that is to say that the third and last characteristics existential heroes must have is the sense of responsibility.

3. Responsibility

One of the most important topics in the existentialist philosophy is responsibility. It is the “consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object” (Sartre 63). For someone to be responsible, they should have the exact knowledge of the things they choose and do. According to the oxford dictionary responsibility is “a duty to deal with or take care of someone or something, so that it is your fault if something goes wrong”.

Being responsible in the existential philosophy means that the circumstances are not to blame for what happens to us. In other words, when we take choices we must assume them. Sartre states that we “must assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it.” (Sartre 554). People must take full responsibility of what happens to them because they know that they are the masters of their own actions.

Sartre carries on saying that “It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, or what we are” (Sartre 554). They are aware of their choices and actions so they must accept what comes from these two. A good illustration for this concept is Sisyphus, who without any complains, accepts the tasks directed to him, and assumes them.

For the rest, he knows himself to be the master of his days. At that subtle moment when man glances backward over his life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, in that slight pivoting he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which become his fate, created by him, combined under his memory's eye and soon sealed by his death. (Camus 13).

Sisyphus embraces his fate and chooses to carry on lifting that rock up and down the hill. His own choice makes him who he is. He does not put the blame on others nor does he blame things around him. He accepts his situation along with responsibility that comes with it.

Choice is nothing without action; if the individuals assume their choice, they must take full responsibility for the consequences. This concept applies to the existential heroes. Responsibility corresponds to the situation where one must complete a task created by himself, or another person, and the way they assume the aftermaths of one's actions

To Sartre, “the existence precedes essence.” As human beings, we have no predetermined essence, which means that what comes first is existence; we invent and attribute the meaning within it. In other words, people make and create their own essence, through their choices and actions. Thus, it logical for someone to take full responsibility for all the outcomes of one's actions.

Sartre gives the example of a soldier who, if he decides to stay at the battlefield, it is his own choice. Choosing to remain there and fight comes from his own free will. Sartre says, “For it depends on me that for me and by me this war should not exist, and I have decided that it does exist” (Sartre 65). Staying in the battlefield and fighting, the soldiers make the choice for the existence of a war or not, being of course responsible for the outcomes.

With freedom comes responsibility. Sartre claims that “It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, or what we are” (554). Putting the blame on anything but oneself is not an existentialist quality, as stated by Sartre “I am absolutely free and absolutely responsible for my situation” (511).

Existentialists believe that essence is the one thing that gives our life some meaning. For, Sartre defining ourselves is our duty. Sartre insists on this, saying that “Man is responsible for what he is” (Existentialism is Humanism).

Conclusion

To sum up, before defining one's self, one must undergo several steps. According to the existential philosophy, heroes must accept their fate and face it in order to give themselves a new meaning in life, a new purpose to live, and a new plan to follow. For that to happen they must act and choose as they please, not to be just like everyone else. They are the authors of what happens. They have to assume what they do and decide and not blame anyone for it.

Chapter II : Existential Hero and Andy

Dufresne

Introduction

The analysis of Stephen King's work *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* is based on the study of existential heroism and its concepts through the protagonist Andy Dufresne, who triumphed over his own struggles inside prison and won himself freedom with nobody's aid.

This chapter attempts to apply the characteristics of the existential heroes on our protagonist, how he faces an existential crisis (his wife's betrayal, death, and his imprisonment for a crime he did not commit), his acceptance of his own fate, the re-creating of his own meaning in prison, as well as the acts and choices that helped define himself again, and for which he took full responsibility.

Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption is a novella by Stephen King, from his 1982 collection *Different Seasons*, subtitled *Hope Springs Eternal*. This story shows us that "the creator of such studies of the criminal mind as *The Shining* and *The Dead Zone* can effectively treat innocence as well as guilt" (Cheuse). It is somehow a break for King from the horror genre, since he writes only about scary things.

Crime, despair, hope, life, and corruption are the main subjects the story is devoted to. In addition to other themes such as absurdity of people's living conditions, the quest for meaning, freedom, and the constant choices they have to make.

Such themes are related to the existential philosophy that human beings are destined to live in absurdity, and that existence precedes essence. This philosophy has a lot in common with the subjects of *The Shawshank Redemption*.

In the previous chapter, we spoke about what makes true existential heroes according mainly to Sartre and Camus (about embracing fate). In this chapter, we are going to apply what we

discussed before on our protagonist, since he himself shows the qualities important for an existential hero.

Like any existential hero, Andy Dufrense goes through an existential crisis, accepts his own fate, then he struggles to find for himself a meaning in life, makes countless choices and acts freely, and takes responsibility for each and every action and choice he does and makes. In this chapter, we are going to speak about the hardships he faces, the choices he makes and how he takes responsibility for his own decisions.

1. Creating Meaning

Andy succeeds in creating meaning to himself either inside or outside prison. However, it was not all a nice journey for our protagonist, in order to redefine himself Andy Dufresne as any other existential hero had to go through the three major steps of creating meaning.

Andy moved from facing several existential crises; crisis that broke him inside; to using his own freedom; the liberty to choose and act; and finally taking responsibility of his own doings and choices. The first characteristic Andy encounters is the: existential crisis

1.1. Facing the Existential Crisis

The existential crisis may be the result of being isolated from the world, being aware of one's freedom, and the death of a loved one. Many things result from this kind of crisis as Kierkegaard writes "a person is touched by despair manifestations: fragmentation, dispersal, loss of balance and unity" (qtd. in Buténaitè 27). People facing such a crisis are more fragile and vulnerable, they may do unreasonable things to their entourage or themselves.

Like any other existential hero, Andy Dufresne is no exception. He encounters difficult moments that make him question his own life. After finding out that his wife was cheating on him, Andy loses both his life and its values to the point that he thinks of suicide. To the defence he says "I was in great distress" (King 33).

"You told the jury that between August twenty-fourth and September tenth you were feeling suicidal."

"Yes, sir."

"Suicidal enough to buy a revolver."

"Yes." (King 35).

He thinks that it is his entire fault and even believes that he is the one who drove her away, that is why he deserves a punishment for what he did. This crisis challenges the meaning of his existence.

Betrayal is the beginning of Andy's crisis. Andy is the only suspect as he was foolish enough to go near the house drunk the night of the murder. According to Fonseca, "during an existential crisis, people experience emotional vulnerability, a wide range of emotions and a loss of feeling control" (qtd. in Butėnaitė, Joana and Jolanta Sondaitė, Antanas Mockus 13). Facing an existential crisis people are seen as not stable, they may commit any foolish action such as suicide.

A person in such a situation feels weakness, rage, fear, and revenge, which can lead any man to commit foolish action. Our protagonist, filled with despair, rage, and guilt, is emotionally, and ends up paying the price of a murder he did not commit. Andy Dufrense is found guilty of both murders and sentenced to two life terms. According to Red "As simple as that. And he was condemned to spend the rest of his life in Shawshank - or the part of it that mattered" (King 34).

During his trial, Andy is calm, he does not scream or shout about him being innocent. Red tells us that "...according to the papers, Andy displayed one of the few slight emotional reactions he allowed himself during the entire six-week period of the trial. A slight, bitter smile crossed his face" (King 37). As existential crisis may leave individuals in a great shock, that these people will lose all sense of their own emotions. The mix of emotions will push people to show just one feeling and in Andy's case is not caring.

When in the Shawshank prison, Andy encounters worse than the death of his beloved wife, and faces multiple challenges, causing him mental and physical pain. According to Red "You are told when to eat, when you can write letters, when you can smoke" (King 119). Routines and

hardships of prison change people. Prisoners become puppets, they move when they are told to, eat when they are told to and speak when they are allowed to. This is not the only challenge Andy faces in prison.

On his first day, Andy is bullied by Bogs and the Sisters, a merciless rapist gang. As Red puts it, they are “to prison society what the rapist is to the society outside the walls” (King 47). They bully the weak inmates, especially Andy who is now their favourite target.

In prison, people lose their faith for a better future and become slaves doomed to do what others tell them to. Viktor E. Frankl (1992), describing the loss of faith in prison, says that “The prisoner who had lost his faith in the future – his future – was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay” (Frankl 82).

Because they lose hope and faith in a brighter future, most inmates get used to their prison life. They lose their purpose in life, and imprisonment turns them into different people. They believe that, being isolated, they are incompetent in the outside world. They get psychologically broken and lose self-confidence and self-esteem.

Andy Dufresne has a little journey in solitary confinement after he was badly beaten by the sisters, Red says that “What the three of them did was to beat Andy within an inch of his life, and all four of them ended up doing a jolt in solitary. Andy and Rooster MacBride went by way of the infirmary” (30).

Red also, says that “Andy spent a lot of that time in solitary” (26). As if one journey in solitary is not enough Andy gets another one for standing up to the warden. Andy tells the warden about Elwood Blatch (his wife’s murderer); the warden informs him that Blatch got out on a

provisional parole and that even if he is acquainted with the warden in the prison where Blatch was, he would not help him.

Andy starts threatening the warden saying that he would stop every illegal activity he is doing for him, so the warden tells him that

You're going back into solitary for that. Thirty days. Bread and water... if anything, that's been going on should stop, the library goes...I will make your life . . . very hard. Very difficult. You'll do the hardest time it possible to do...You will . . . lose everything. (King 72).

According to Red, solitary destroyed him from the inside, that Red himself thought that Andy would commit suicide.

1.2. Embracing Fate

As we have discussed earlier in the first chapter, existentialists must know that life has no meaning and that they should accept it as it is; however, they must act in order to change the things to give their existence a meaning. According to Viktor Frankl “When a man finds that it is his destiny to suffer, he will have to accept this suffering as his task” (69). A man must accept the situation and challenge it.

Andy does not show any sign of fear or sadness during his trial; he is quiet, smiling, and cold as if he accepts what he goes through, believing inside that he will be convicted. ‘Andy Dufresne takes the stand in his own defence and tells his story calmly, coolly, and dispassionately’ (King 31). His case shows us that there is no super power except his own. No one is going to get him out of his miserable situation but himself.

Andy, like any other existential hero, accepts the fact that he is the only one who drove his wife away. He did not assassinate his wife, but he believes that he made her go with a lover. To him, he killed herself.

All the evidence points at him, he has the motive, a gun and no alibi. Andy Dufresne takes the stand in his own defence and tells his story calmly, coolly, and dispassionately (King 31). Andy replies to the DA's questions as if he is answering a simple quiz on which his life does not depend

Andy Dufresne challenges himself and works hard to create himself a meaning in prison via little things like polishing rocks, an old hobby of his. Andy proves to us that we can give our life a meaning even in a doomed situation like his.

Embracing fate is not enough, it is just a step that Andy takes in order to understand the situation he is in. When he does so he moves directly to the next step which is forging a new identity for himself.

1.3. Forge his identity

As human beings, we all crave for meaning to make our life worth living. According to the existential philosophy, meaning is not given but it must be achieved. We are born as, Sartre stated, without human nature i.e. we need to work and forge our own identity.

When imprisoned, we lose our freedom, our rights, ourselves, our essence, and our purpose in life. We just exist. In Andy's case prison is a nightmare in which we are bodies without souls (or purpose in life).

We do not have an essence, but we have our choices and actions. Sartre believes that a man exists before he can be anything else in this world. Time makes us what we are. That is the existential heroes' case.

Andy Dufresne acknowledges that prison gives him the chance to be alive but not to really exist. Andy knows that changing his situation depends only on his actions and choices. As stated by Blackham, the existential hero's "existence comes first; he now is in the process of determining his essence" (qtd. in Akhter 89).

At first, Andy does not socialise with the other inmates; he decides to be alone and never speak to none. As Red puts it, Andy "had a reputation of being snob and a cold fish" (King 42). He tries to understand the situation, to cope with it, and then give it a meaning.

To give himself an identity, Andy revives one of his hobbies to keep him busy. In his previous life, he uses to sculpt rocks. He said to Red "I was a rockhound. In my old life..." (King 43) He gives his life meaning by defining himself as a rockhound again.

Later, Andy is sent to work in the library with Brooksie, an old prisoner. Andy succeeds Brooksie who is released, after spending twenty-three years as the prison librarian. There he finds a meaning to his new life.

He is able to find his inner meaning first by expanding the literary, as stated by Red who says Andy "turned on small room lined with Reader's Digest Condensed Books and National Geographic's into the best prison library in New England" (king 66-67). Since Andy was an intellectual, the library was a refuge and a way to live to dream and share his knowledge with others.

Books help both Andy and the other inmates get over the hard times, and he writes to State Senate requesting funds for the library, which were turned down until 1960 when he received

two hundred dollars check for the cause. Andy is a persistent person who never gives up. He acts on his own and gets what he wants. Thanks to the library, Andy helps Tommy Williams, a young inmate, to get his high school diplomas.

As a financial expert, Andy helps Byron Hadley the prison guard keep the full amount of money he inherited from his brother (When the prisoners are working in an outside job, Hadley starts complaining about the inheritance he got from his brother and how taxes are going to take half of it. At that moment Andy steps in and offers him a deal on how to keep all the money with free taxes and that by giving them to his wife. After that Hadley returned the favour to Andy by keeping him protected). Andy with time helps the warden as well with money laundering because he misses his old job as a banker and tries to renew with it once again.

As an existential hero Andy takes things into control and defines himself, which later in the novella, helps him escape. Creating meaning cannot be achieved by only facing an existential crisis, embracing fate and forging an identity. Existential heroes must use their freedom to make define their selves once again.

2. Freedom of Choice and Action

The existential philosophy puts a great deal on the concept of freedom. It states that we as human beings need to exercise our freedom of choice and action in order to lead a meaningful life. Our constant choices define us. According to Sartre “I am free to get up or to sit down, to enter or to go out, to flee or to face danger” (qtd. in Akhter 102). We are free to act and choose as we please.

Existential heroes acknowledge that their decision belongs to them. Andy perfectly believes that his new life depends on choosing between “get busy living or get busy dying” (King 132). To him, it is a matter of choice, nothing else.

When Andy decides to interfere in Hadley and Mert Entwhistle's (two prison guards) conversation, he knows it is risky, but his act helps him a lot. A short time later, the leader of the Sisters rapist gang is badly beaten. Red says that "after the beating-the three broken ribs, the haemorrhaged eye, the sprained back, and the dislocated hip-Bogs Diamond left Andy alone" (King 49). Hadley, the tough guard, has repaid Andy's service.

Andy accepts the fact of being put in the hole because it was his own decision to stand up to the warden that brought him there. Andy tries to talk some sense to the warden to help him get a fair trial, but the warden not only does he not care but throws him in solitary as well.

Through their choices, existential heroes help themselves take control of their lives. Andy does not expect others to help him escape; he does it himself. He refuses external help. He grabs the first opportunity to escape without the aid of any other inmate. He is the master of his own choices and actions.

Andy believes that he is the only one to make choices and actions. He is brave enough to stand against the Sisters, the wardens and the tough guards of the Shawshank prison. Andy chooses not to keep himself silent like the other inmates. He makes his voice heard.

Like Achilles (Existential Literature and Film), Andy knows his actions and choices will affect the others, so he decides not to tell them everything he does. It is at the end that Red discovers that his friend escaped. No guard, no inmate knew about Andy's plan. Andy thought it would be better to keep everything a secret lest to harm them.

Existentialists such as Sartre believe that through constant choosing and acting we give ourselves meaning. Sartre writes, "I am absolutely free" (509). We are free, there is nothing holding us back from achieving our aim, and since we are free, we must always choose and act

to define ourselves. We are totally free so we must choose to make ourselves who we want to be.

Through the story, Andy Dufersne makes choices and actions. When choosing to do some works inside prison, Andy moves from being just a number (because prisoners are not called by their names but by a number that is given to them) to a rockhound, polishing rocks as an old hobby. Then from a librarian, taking Brooksie's job, to a teacher, tutoring inmates like Tommy. After that from a teacher to a financial help, doing the guards' taxes and laundering money for the warden. Finally, from all these to the one who escapes prison.

As using one's own freedom is not enough, Andy has to take responsibility of his own choices and actions. One of the characteristics existential heroes must have.

3. Responsibility

Responsibility is one of the most important topics in the existential philosophy, much related to the concept of choice. We are free to choose; we must take responsibility regardless of the situation. No matter who we are and where we are there is always room for choice and action. It also means to take responsibility of creating our meaning in life.

As it is put by Sartre "I cannot put the responsibility for making-myself be off onto anyone but myself" (Sartre 382). Andy never puts the responsibility of defining himself on others. He assumes his actions believing that only his choices and actions brought him to Shawshank. When he is sent to solitary, Andy assumes his responsibility; he takes things as they come because to him it is his own creation

Some examples that show Andy as a responsible person are: when he chooses to work as a librarian, he assumes it perfectly. He takes his job very seriously and try to do his best to succeed in it. As put by Red "Andy succeeded to Brooksie's job...He used the same force of will I'd

seen him use on Byron Hadley to get what he wanted for the library, and I saw him gradually turn one small room ... into the best prison library in New England” (King 66-67).

Also, at the library Andy takes responsibility of tutoring other inmates. When Tommy started going to the library. Andy takes responsibility of guiding and teaching him with his schooling. “For Andy, this was an old routine by then. He saw that Tommy got a series of high school equivalency tests... Andy also saw that he was enrolled in a number of correspondence courses covering the subjects he had failed in school or just missed by dropping out” (Red 46).

Andy decides also to help the guards with their taxes, and the warden with money laundering. He takes full responsibility of this choice and act because according to Red “In the late spring and the summer of 1950, Andy set up two trust funds for guards who wanted to assure a college education for their kids, he advised a couple of others who wanted to take small fliers in common stock” (King 54).

Red carries on saying that “... by April of 1951, Andy was doing the tax returns for half ... Shawshank, and by 1952, he was doing almost all of them” (King 54). Dealing with the guards’ taxes became a serious job for Andy and as we know when working we have to be responsible. Andy accepts the burden that result from his own doings. Even If he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, Andy does not put the blame of him being in prison on anyone else but himself. He does not transfer his obligations and duties to others but he rather assumes them.

Conclusion

To sum up, we applied all the characteristics of an existential hero on our protagonist Andy Dufresne. We gave some examples from the book and analysed them. At the end, we saw that the term fits the character perfectly. He first faces an existential crisis (the betrayal and death of his wife), accepts that he is the one who killed his wife by choosing his job over her.

Andy later accepts to serve someone else's time for the crime he never committed. We see that Andy acknowledges that he is the only master of his life, that he must choose and act to define himself. He also knows that his actions and choices affect his entourage. Like other existential heroes, he does not deny his responsibilities, but he rather accepts them because they are the fruit of his doings.

Chapter III : Symbols and Motifs and the Existential Hero

Introduction

Symbolism has been frequently used throughout literature for centuries. “A literary symbol is something that means more than what it is; an object, person, situation, or action that in addition to its literal meaning suggests other meanings as well” (Burroughs). Symbols have been used in literary works for many years as they hold so much meaning into them than a sentence can give.

A symbol or a motif is a word with deep messages that must be analysed and understood. This chapter analyses the symbols and motifs of the story, to see whether our protagonist has the characteristics of an existential hero. We will look at three important symbols in the story (the posters, money laundering, and Andy’s nonchalance), and three motifs (solitary confinement and confronting the warden, the library, and rock sculptures).

1. Symbols

1.1. The Pin Posters

One of the main symbols in the novella is the posters. Throughout the story, we understand that Andy changes the posters several times moving from Rita Hayworth, Marilyn Monroe, Jayne Mansfield, to Linda Ronstadt.

These posters represent Andy Dufresne's freedom. He once says to Red that "You may look at those pretty women and feel like you could almost, not quite, but almost slip right through and, beside them, be free." (King 60). The posters in Andy's eyes represent the outside world, the desire to escape and live a normal life. They are connected to society, since these women are famous actors and singers. The posters are his own doors to a normal life.

The pin-posters play a huge part in Andy's prison life. They remind him of his past and aim to get out of prison. Looking at them makes him feel that he is free for a while. Posters keep him from losing himself to despair and help him escape twenty-five years later. The pin posters represent Andy's strong commitment regarding the long journey as he is uncovering himself from underneath Shawshank in a baby step style (one day at a time) even if it takes him 20 years to dig and escape.

The posters also represent Andy's struggles inside prison. Rita Hayworth's poster serves to hide the hole Andy made with the rock hammer. It was an emergency for him to hide it because he knows well that he would be thrown in solitary or put in another cell if any guard sees it.

The time Andy was bullied by the sisters he had the poster of Rita till 1955. He replaced it with Marilyn Monroe's poster at that time has the right to parole hearing according to Red "the parole board vote was 7-0 against Andy Dufresne through 1957, 6-1 in '58, 7-0 again in '59, and 5-2 in '60" (King 18). They give him some hope to get out and then take it away.

In 1963, Andy knows the identity of the one who murdered his wife and her lover; however, the warden does not give him the chance to get a fair trial. From all these examples, we can say that each crisis (that may lead Andy question life) are occur when the posters are changed. As we know the bigger the whole is the longer and larger the poster is.

As we are done with the first symbol, we are going to move to the second more important symbol is the story which is: Money Laundering

1.2. Money Laundering

The Shawshank prison is like any other one, a place where illegal acts take place daily Money laundering is one. In the story, this illegal practice is a good symbol that represents Andy's eagerness to give himself a meaning in prison. When Andy decides to practice it, he seeks protection and definition for himself.

At first, he offers his services as a banker in exchange for "Three beers a piece for [his] co-workers" (King 47). This act shows us how Andy wants others to feel human (normal) and well even in their miserable state.

When imprisoned individuals lose everything, they used to have; life, freedom, rights and meaning. in prison people become like robots, they do what they are told to do and nothing more. Giving his fellow friends a chance to drink a beer is for him a way to remind them of who they are. He says that "I think a man feels more like a man when he's working out of doors in the springtime if he can have a bottle of suds. That's only my opinion." (King 47).

Through money laundering, Andy expresses his internal desperation for a sense of his old life as a banker. He tells Red that "...What I'm doing here isn't at all that different from what I was doing outside" (King 56). Through these activities, Andy redefines himself, just like any other

existential hero. Redefining himself as a banker gives him confidence as well as hope, which later will help him escape.

Andy is now having importance, protection, trust and a new identity. He is finally having a meaning inside prison. To him, being a financial counsellor is better than being nobody; dealing with money helps him renew with his past profession and gives him a new life.

Even if money laundering is illegal, it gives Andy a sense of life, a certain meaning in prison; as if doing the same thing he used to do outside of prison makes him feel alive again and free in a weird way.

Now that we've seen the pin posters and money laundering we move to an other symbol which is Andy's nonchalance.

1.3. Andy's nonchalance⁴

Andy Dufresne accepts his situation even though he is innocent of murdering his wife and her lover. During the trial, he stays calm and replies normally. Red says that "Andy Dufresne took the stand in his own defence and told his story calmly, coolly, and dispassionately" (10).

Normally when someone takes the stand guilty or not, they would be frightened, worried and concerned about what is going to happen. However, Andy is there acting all calm, cool and unemotional.

Like any other existential heroes, Andy accepts his situation. He gets a bad trial because of the incompetence of the justice (his lawyer and the police investigating the murder) but he does not care. Red tells us that Andy "...spoke in the same calm, remote voice in which he delivered

⁴ behaving in a calm and relaxed way; giving the impression that you are not feeling any anxiety (oxford dictionary)

almost all of his testimony” (King 10). Andy’s tone does not change throughout the trial. He stays calm and cool, as if he does not care about what will happen to him.

When questioned, Andy replies in an unemotional way as if his life does not depend on it. Still according to Red “[Andy] told his story like a recording machine, seeming to say to the jury: This is it. Take it or leave it. They left it “(King 11). He tells his version of the story without adding or omitting anything repeatedly.

Andy’s nonchalance of how badly he is treated by the justice helps him quickly accept his situation. He knows that no matter what he does or says it will not save him. The court insisted that the evidence are pointing at him as the murder. Seeing how the court persists on persecuting him, he lets it go.

It is the same thing in prison; Andy acts sometimes as if he does not care about what is happening to him. When he interferes in Hadley conversation about the inheritance and is almost thrown from the edge of the roof Andy “... just looked at him, very calm and still. His eyes were like ice. It was as if he hadn't heard” (Red 43). In this kind of situation any individual will panic or like Red and the others who give “The crash course is you never let on that you hear the guards talking, you never try to horn in on their conversation unless you're asked” (Red 43)

When he is thrown inside the hole, Red says, “He got along with himself” (King 32). Andy does not let despair take over him; he already accepted his situation and also the pointlessness of the prison system.

These Symbols show us that we can consider Andy Dufersne as an existential hero. First existential heroes undergo existential crisis and that is well shown by the posters. Then existentialists emphasis on the fact that a person must create his meaning and these symbols show how Andy does that. Next existentialists stress also that a person must be responsible and

the symbol of money laundering shows that perfectly. Finally, Andy's nonchalance shows how he embraces his fate as it is something emphasised by Albert Camus.

Symbols are not the only things that prove that Andy Dufersne is an existential hero. We also have some motifs that back up our statement.

2. Motifs

1.3. The solitary confinement and confrontation with the warden

The first motif we have in the story is the solitary confinement and confrontation with the warden. It represents Andy's willingness to choose the hard way. In other words, it reflects his self-determination. When facing any hardship, he always takes the most difficult way and fights for what he believes in.

When Andy provides the warden with evidence of his innocence, the warden rejects it and refuses to give Andy the opportunity for a fair trial. Because Andy knows about his dirty work in prison, he does not let it go.

Andy's proposition about appealing to the court for a fair trial and making Tommy testify of what happened to his wife and her lover were vain, but he burst out "Well it's a chance, isn't it" (King 75). When the warden refuses to listen to Andy, the latter calls him "Obtuse" (King 75), someone stupid and slow to understand, or unwilling to try to understand (Oxford English Dictionary).

Instead of giving up, Andy shows a great deal of perseverance and willingness to take the hard way, continuing to plead his right for a fair trial through a verbal fight with the warden. Andy keeps fighting for what he believes in.

The solitary confinement and the confrontation with the warden is not the only motif that shows that Andy is an existential hero we also have the motif of the library.

1.4. Library

The second important motif in the story is the library. It represents normality. Andy is longing to renew with the outside world. He makes use of his own freedom, chooses to work as a librarian, an educator and a financial counsellor.

Andy's choices help him stay out of the guards' sight. His actions play an important role in keeping him out of the suspect list, the one of prisoners that do illegal things in order to get out. As we know "Andy never had a cellmate, except for a big, silent Indian named Normaden (like all Indians in The Shank, he was called Chief), and Normaden didn't last long" (Red 58).

It shows that Andy is self-determined to escape Shawshank. According to Yalom "Drawn from the European philosophy of existentialism, self-determination emphasises the freedom individuals have in exercising choice to manage their circumstances in spite of external forces that challenge this capability".

In other words, we use our own freedom to choose and change things despite the circumstances. We are the masters of our own lives, and we are the ones who should give it a shape, just like Andy who is constantly striving to give himself a meaning in prison.

Andy strives to recover meaning in his life. He takes things into control no matter the circumstances. He tries to make something good come out. According to Red "He used the same force of will I'd seen him use on Byron Hadley to get what he wanted for the library"

Andy's self-determination is best seen when he sends a letter to the State Senate every day in order to provide funds for the library. "Andy's requests for library funds were routinely turned down, until 1960, when he received a check for two hundred US dollars." (Red 53).

For Andy, the library needs to be a place where people could enrich their brains, feel free and act normal. His engagement does not go in vain. Perseverance gets him to raise enough commitments and money for the cause.

While working in the library, Andy creates for himself a new identity, which helps him believe he is a normal person with a normal job in a normal place. In addition to the library we have another motif which is related to creating meaning which is rock sculptures.

1.5. Rock Sculptures

Red tells us a bit about Andy Dufresne's extreme love for carving chess pieces out of stones. This could, first, be seen as a good way for Andy to pass time in his cell, where he gives them a shape and a function. Looking at this hobby of Andy's from an existential perspective, we may easily deduce that those rocks he carves tell many things about his prison life.

In the start, a rock has no meaning, no purpose at all, and in which nobody is interested. Just like this rock, Andy, in his early months in prison, is nobody but a number. Andy is a simple inmate that, like others, wanders around in the prison yard, seen by people like Hardley as a "smart wife-killing banker" (King 46) paying for a murder he is accused of.

Prisoners never choose what to do as a job inside prison; everything is imposed on them and lead a life that consumes them. However, Andy chooses to challenge this status of being a nobody searching his own freedom.

Carving and polishing rocks, Andy gives them a purpose in life, like decorating his own cell. Through this artistic job, Andy here is defining himself and giving his prison life a meaning. The rocks need someone to design them, and, like them, Andy needs his choices and actions to define himself.

Beautifully shaped and designed, the rocks at the end of the process gain a function that makes them unique, useful and worth keeping. When Red receives some of Andy's rocks, he says, "I didn't even dare touch them, they were so pretty" (37).

Red says that the Andy's polished rocks make him aware of what "separates us from the animals" (38). Having a meaning in life differentiates us from animals. Andy's sculptures incarnate his determination and longing for meaning inside prison, which, at the end, turns him valuable and useful.

Andy goes from being an ordinary prisoner like the others to one who escaped Shawshank, and the rocks go from being mere ordinary rocks to beautiful masterpieces that Red keeps in his cell.

Craving rocks gives Andy a sense of normality and allows him to take control over his life. To Red he once says, "...I was a rockhound. In my old life. I'd like to be one again, on a limited scale"(22). Here Andy is trying to renew with his old life.

Like any existential hero, Andy seeks to find some normality in his life and does his best to redefine himself. Sculpting stones helps him do so.

Conclusion

Symbols and motifs play a very important role in defining Andy as an existential hero. Through their development, we now know that Andy has the characteristics of an existential hero. These qualities are a constant within his character and truly set him apart from the other inmates.

These symbols and motifs show us how Andy uses his freedom of choice to create a meaning to himself in prison. It also demonstrates his self-determination, two very important characteristics of an existential hero.

General Conclusion

Literature is a collection of ideas and a structure of an author's imagination, put in a form of writing that contains a message for the readers. It is something that will live for centuries thanks to its universal value.

King's story *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank of Redemption* is one of his greatest and well-known stories. It contains many ideas and lessons about life. It delivers the message of hope, choice, freedom, and human existence. Man, by nature, has the ability to survive any task and that is what the story shows us. A man can be destroyed but cannot be defeated.

This story was turned into a successful movie directed by Frank Darabont. Stephen King commented on the movie saying that "When I first saw it, I realized he'd made not just one of the best movies ever done from my work, but a potential movie classic. That turned out to be the case, but he continued working almost up to the moment the film was released".

Throughout this analytical study, we concluded that Andy struggled a lot in the story. He is a hero who undergoes many hardships, accepts and challenges his destiny, and defines himself again through acting and constantly choosing.

To sum up Andy Dufresne is undoubtedly an existential hero because he exhibits the true qualities of the existential heroes. His acts, chooses, thinks and proves that, with determination, perseverance and the use of existential beliefs, you can turn your life around and find happiness within yourself in the event of conflict. Andy believes that all men should define themselves, which gives him the title of a hero. He also acts and chooses in accordance to himself, he is rarely touched by others' decisions and actions.

We hope that our study contributes to enriching our library, and its findings will be of great help to English Section Department students interested in American Literature.

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