



UNIVERSIDAD DE LA RIOJA

TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

Título
Hope, life and freedom in <i>The Shawshank redemption</i>
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Titulación
Grado en Estudios Ingleses
Departamento
Curso Académico
2013-2014



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Trabajo de Fin de Grado

**HOPE, LIFE AND FREEDOM IN
*THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION***

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Titulación:

Grado en Estudios Ingleses [601G]

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**UNIVERSIDAD
DE LA RIOJA**

AÑO ACADÉMICO: 2013/2014

Abstract:

The present dissertation intends to analyze one of the most important and better punctuated movies of the 21th century. Based on a novella by Stephen King (*Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*), Frank Darabont's cinematographic adaptation has been evaluated with a punctuation of 9.3 over 10 in IMDb¹. Through a text-based analysis of the study, this dissertation examines through the division or *découpage* of six main sequences the themes of hope, life and freedom that prevail in this movie over desperation, corruption, hypocrisy or bad luck.

Resumen:

La presente disertación pretende analizar una de las películas más importantes y mejor valoradas del siglo veintiuno. Basada en una novela de Stephen King (*Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*), la adaptación cinematográfica de Frank Darabont: *The Shawshank Redemption* está puntuada con una nota de 9,3 sobre 10 en IMDb. A través de un estudio basado en un análisis textual del film, el ensayo escudriña, a través de la partición o *découpage* de seis secuencias principales los temas de la esperanza, la vida y la libertad que prevalecen en esta película ante la desesperación, la corrupción, la hipocresía o la mala suerte.

¹ IMDb: Internet Movie Data base. The world's most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV and celebrity content in increasing importance for the (Pay-per-view) Cinema's world [extracted and paraphrased from < <http://www.imdb.com> > (accessed on 2 February 2014)].

HOPE, LIFE AND FREEDOM IN *THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	7
1.1. Introduction and justification.....	7
1.2. Stephen King. <i>Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption</i> (the novella)....	9
1.3. From King’s literature to Darabont’s cinema.....	13
1.4. Objectives of the analysis.....	14
1.5. Methodology used in the analysis.....	15
2. Analysis of the film.....	17
2.1. Andy Dufresne: sentenced to life imprisonment. The beginning of a harsh journey.....	17
2. 2. Welcome to Shawshank.....	20
2.2.1. Obstacles: First night, The Sisters, Warden Norton & Captain Hadley.....	20
2.2.3. Friendship: Red, Brooks.....	30
2.2.4. Art within Art: Rita Hayworth.....	36
2.3. Desperation vs Hope: “Brooks was here”.....	38
2.4. A temporal state of freedom. Music for everybody: “Duettino sull’aria” from “Le nozze di figaro”.....	42
2.5 Power and corruption. Tommy Williams knows too much.....	48
2.6 “I hope the pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. <i>I hope</i> ”.....	52
3. Conclusions.....	63
4. Bibliography.....	65

1. Introduction

1. Introduction and justification

When I chose *The Shawshank redemption* I did not know it had been considered one of the greatest and most essential movies ever. The surprise came to me later on.

I first saw this movie when I was fifteen or so. As to the majority of the people that have watched it, they would agree with me that it strikes you from the very beginning.

Why *The Shawshank redemption*? There are so many great movies in the classical panorama that it gets difficult for the analyzer to choose just one of them.

Perhaps what really made me lean to *The Shawshank Redemption* was its main theme: *Hope can set you free* can be read in the film's cover.

When you see the film for the first time it leaves you with a feeling of greatness, a feeling of hope. As the protagonist struggles and struggles you might fear that he is left life-imprisoned after all and that all his efforts and opportunities are simply put down. Notwithstanding, the enormous finale, to some extent conventional (it follows the Hollywood closed-ending pattern), makes you feel just as hopeful and free as Andy Dufresne is while he cleans his fish-boat in the little village of Zihuatanejo, next to the blue Pacific "whose name significantly means 'peace'" (Kermode 2003: 68).

Furthermore, the movie makes you feel as if justice can sometimes be achieved in this life. With a great capacity of endurance and a strong will, *hope can set you free* even if life is unfair to you.

As Nicole Rafter puts it in Sean O'Sullivan's article "Representations of Prison in Nineties Hollywood Cinema: From Con Air to The Shawshank Redemption", we are unavoidably moved by the emotion of *The Shawshank Redemption* because such films

purport to reveal the brutal realities of incarceration while actually offering viewers escape from the miseries of daily life through adventure and heroism. Presenting tales in which justice is miraculously restored after long periods of oppression, prison movies enable us to believe, if only briefly, in a world where long suffering virtue is rewarded (O'Sullivan 2001: 320).

In Tim Robbins's words:

In the end, it's a film about people being in jail and having hope to get out of that jail. Now, why is that universal? Not everybody had been in jail. But maybe on a deeper level, a metaphysical level, people feel enslaved by their environments, their jobs, their relationships, by whatever it is in the course of their lives that puts the wall or the bars around them. And the idea that you can survive for many, many years in this kind of enslavement, or prison of your own making, and that there's a Zihuatanejo somewhere in your future –I think that's something that really is important to people; the idea that Zihuatanejo can exist for all of us (Kermode 2003: 69).

Yet, if the theme is not enough to convince the spectator, the cast, the director and the novella writer might definitely persuade the viewer to give it a chance.

With Morgan Freeman (whose surname seems to honor the film itself) and Tim Robbins, whose real air of mysteriousness perfectly matches his character, one can really not resist the temptation of watching the movie. Besides, like many other classical films, it matches two of the classic-film most outstanding features: Firstly, this 1994 production was based on a novella by one of the most famous American writers of the 21st century: Stephen King, who, despite having sold thousands of novels, many of them, best-sellers; considers himself a humble writer that really does not do it so well.

As he confessed when interviewed by Miguel Mora for the journal *El País*:

Cuando estás dentro del negocio, sabes bien cuál es tu nivel de talento. Cuando lees a un escritor bueno, piensas: “Si yo pudiera escribir así” (...) Hay muchos muy buenos (Mora 2013).

King's low self-esteem is clearly unmasked when we take into account that another of the most famous film directors of our current era seems to be always ready to transfer King's writings to the big screen. *The Shawshank Redemption* was not an exception. In fact, when the film script arrived to Hollywood, Castle Rock producers, film critics, writers of all kind... perfectly sensed the potential of the film; and suddenly, every kind of film star became enthusiastic about appearing in the next Darabont's adaptation master-piece.

Secondly, it was not such a success when its release took place. On the contrary, it has acquired fame and prestige over the years. The proof is a recent survey carried out by *The Hollywood Reporter* that demonstrates so by placing Darabont's movie on the fourth post in a list of *Hollywood's 100 favorite films*²

Probably the justification of this film-choice might have over passed its allowed extension. Might the reader forgive me when I say that, all the same, it really seems that after watching *The Shawshank Redemption* one may write for ever about it. As critic Leonard Klady puts it: "A testament to the human spirit, the film is a rough diamond. Its languors are small quibbles in an otherwise estimable and haunting entertainment" (Klady 1994).

1.2. Stephen King: Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption (the novella)

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 2009: 524).

Stephen King's novella has undoubtedly trespassed any stereotyped notion we could have about this extraordinary author whose creativity has not been sold out yet since he keeps on writing novels.

If someone watched *The Shawshank Redemption* for the first time, without knowing who the brain of this magnificent plot is, they would probably attribute it to any other author but King. As Peter Travers points out, *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* together with *The Body* "are said to represent the gentler side of King, meaning the side that doesn't sell as well, though the torture, rape and killing in *Shawshank* qualify as horror in my book" (Travers 1994).

That is due to the fact that usually, King's novels are based on sorrow and horror, the mysteriousness and the magic of the dark side. Elements of fantasy and miracles are very often included in his compositions as well. However, though in *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* some of these elements could also be found, there results a very

² Information extracted from the on-line magazine *The Hollywood Reporter* <<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/list/100-greatest-films-all-time-713215>> (accessed on 26 June 2014).

down-to-earth short-story, and though the protagonist's escape is *a little bit of miracle*, it would not have been impossible yet.

Stephen King's book is really about everything. You can absolutely feel that the author touches a lot of grave themes in this novella: corruption, money, power, love, friendship, dignity, hope, freedom, struggle, time, life, death, cinema, literature... Everything goes into *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*.

Since Darabont's adaptation is very firm to King's novella, we will not deal with the themes here again. Contrarily, it resembles perhaps most adequate to perceive and study some of the most important differences between the movie and the book. As Darabont very properly points out: "Written fiction and film are two different languages, and sometimes things just don't translate" (Darabont 2013: 151).

Perhaps we should start by noticing this Hollywood directors' resolution to make everything as dramatic as possible. In this sense, Darabont does not get out of the road.

Firstly, as the movie emphasizes both sides of the coin —life and death— it seems quite obvious that in a Hollywood classical film-production everything has to be as clear as possible. That being said, whereas in King's novella there are no deaths, Darabont purposely kills three characters: Norton, Brooks, and Tony. The motifs also appear to be very clear indeed.

Hence, it seems clear that Norton has to be *the* baddie, the antagonist of the story. He is to be the awful person ever and has to contrast with Andy (the suffering hero), who makes his choice clear by *getting busy living*. In this sense, Norton's peaceful retirement from being the Shawshank prison Warden that happens in the novella does not seem to stress his evilness and cowardice enough. However, by getting himself suicide, Darabont makes him not only "the foulest hypocrite" (King 2009: 463) ever but also a very weak character in comparison with Andy's since he will not cope with the awaiting sentence for being a corrupted high authority.

For the same reason, and for most theatrical expectations, in the film, Norton gets Tony killed, whereas in the novella he offers the boy the opportunity to move to a minimum security prison, were:

the inmates pick a lot of potatoes (...) but they are paid a decent wage for their labor and they can attend classes at CVI (...) More important to Tommy, a fellow with a young wife and a child, Cashman had a furlough program... which meant a chance to live like a normal man, at least on the weekends. A chance to build a

model plane with his kid, have sex with his wife, maybe go on a picnic (King 2009: 482).

Then, the role that Brooks performs is minimal in the novella, yet crucial in the film. In Darabont's movie, he is the reverse of Andy. He is too old when he gets out of prison and the world has changed too much for him. Hopeless as he finds himself, he decides to commit suicide. Again, this character has to *get busy dying* so we can clearly differentiate the opposite paths the two convicts take. King does not dedicate more than a page to this old librarian, and though he also dies, the drama is not such and the circumstances of his death remain unspecified:

I heard he died in a home for indigent old folks up Freeport way in 1952, and at that he lasted about six months longer than I thought he would. Yeah, I guess the state got its own back on Brooksie, all right. They trained him to like it inside the shithouse and then they threw him out (King 2009: 452).

Another fact to be discussed is the elimination of Andy's Indian cell mate in the film. Yet, that will be basically explained by the fact that it would have had required more time and explanation in a film than what it took in the book. The mixture of cultures and races as King's specialty is more than clear in his oeuvre. This could be related to the American myth of the melting pot, first coined by Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur who:

was the earliest European to develop a considered view of America and the new American character. The first to exploit the *melting pot* image of America, in a famous passage he asks: *What then is the American, this new man? He is either a European, or the descendant of a European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations....Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause changes in the world* (University of Groningen 2012).

In *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*, there is not only an Irish guy but an Indian cellmate that indeed does accompany Andy for some months. This literary

device slows down Andy's purpose of escaping, creating suspense. Furthermore, it also gives the reader another testimony of Andy's *cool room*, of Andy's story.

Yet, Darabont did not feel the necessity of the Indian's presence. For in fact, he does not tell us anything new and his voice and feelings can be perfectly replaced by Red's.

Two more essential details: Two scenes that King did not written *do* appear as filmed. The first one is to which section 2.4 is devoted: *A temporal state of freedom. Music for everybody: "Duettino sull'aria" from "Le nozze di figaro"*, for whose explanation Darabont says:

The answer is, I love music (...) I find that it informs and infuses the creative process, sends my imagination wandering places it wouldn't normally go, gives me ideas, makes me see things (...) I happened to be listening to *The Marriage of Figaro* while writing this script, and the duet between Susanna and the Contessa simply insisted on being in the movie. As applied in the film, music represents freedom of the soul in the same way that the books in Andy's library represent freedom of the mind (Darabont 2013: 147).

Finally, maybe one of the most controversial issues is the end of both pieces of work. King's sense of mysteriousness does at least remain in his novel, in which we are not really told if Andy and Red will finally meet again. The novella ends up with Red's account telling us that he will hope to shake his friend's hand and to verify if the "pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams" (King 2009: 533). Yet, this could not happen in such a classical Hollywood movie. The end *has* to be closed. Andy and Red *must* meet again. Their relationship clearly transcends friendship. Not to most visibly show that in the *finale* would be as to leave a romantic-movie couple without their final kiss.

Though Darabont was not precisely very sure of including this scene, the fact is that when they shot it "we all started falling in love with it" (Darabont 2013: 157), so actually they did include it in the editing. In this sense, the director says about this particular scene:

By ending with that final image, we've brought the viewer on a full journey that begins in tight claustrophobia defined by walls and concludes where the horizon is

limitless; the movie has traveled fully from darkness to light, from coldness to warmth, from colorlessness to a place where only color exists, from physical and spiritual imprisonment to total freedom (Darabont 2013: 158).

1.3. From King's literature to Darabont's cinema

Picture a little boy in short pants, already wearing glasses, sitting in the fifth row and staring gape-jawed at the giant cartoon images of *Bambi*. His hands are knotted in his crotch (...) because he badly needs to go to the bathroom but won't ask his mother to take him; he can't bear to be away from those images even for that long (King in Darabont 2013: IX).

As Darabont perfectly says, one of the most acclaimed of-all-time movies, would not be on the list if it was not for a genius that from a very young age went to the cinema and could not "bear to be away from those images even for that long" (King in Darabont 2013: ix). In Darabont's shooting script introduction, he bravely confirms:

To fairly and completely trace the evolution of this film, from written word to movie screen, you really should start by reading Stephen King's remarkable short novel, *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*. That's where it all started, and that's where it still lives (Darabont 2013: XVII).

Darabont calls King his "Patron Saint" (Darabont 2013: XV) because he knows that if it was not for his majestic talent, he could have not trespassed nor *The Woman in the Mirror* [1883] (from *The Sinning*), either *The Green Mile* (1999), nor *The Mist* (2007) (the later ones based on a King's novel entitled the same way), and of course, nor *The Shawshank Redemption* [1994] (from *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*).

Still, not any of these above-mentioned films have gained any position near to the one we will attempt to analyze here, nor has any close potential to do so.

Stephen King declares himself a total cinephile that loves movies. In the introduction of the preface he makes for Darabont's script book he confirms:

I love the movies. When people ask how come so many films have been made from my work (...) I say it's simple: I love the movies (...) The fact is, I have never written with the movies in mind, but I have *always* written with them in my eye. (...) Bill Thompson, my first editor, said: 'Steve has a projector in his head.' ...My books are the movies I see in my head, that's all. I write them down and some producer says, 'Hey! This'd make a pretty good movie!' because in a way it already *is* one (King in Darabont 2013: IX).

And Darabont did make *a pretty good movie* of King's story. The writer proudly confirms he loves the movie in large set of his collections that have ever gone into the big screen: *Stephen King goes into movies*. Here remains King's opinion about *The Shawshank Redemption*: "The story is hard when it has to be, full of sentiment without being sentimental. This is as good as films get on the subject of how men love each other, and how they survive" (King 2009: 402).

1.4. Objectives:

The main objective of this final year dissertation is to provide an exhaustive study of one of the greatest American films ever: *The Shawshank Redemption*. As stated in *Thinking about movies*: "Far from destroying our pleasure from movies, the process of analyzing films enhances our appreciation of the complexities of this popular influential art form" (Lehman, Luhr 2008: 7).

According to the IMDb, Frank Darabont's movie has a punctuation of 9.3 out of 10 which makes it the first of the top 250 movies of all time, followed by Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972).

In this way, the purpose of the present essay is to provide a text-based analysis of the movie that revolves around several great themes: hope and despair, death and life, freedom and corruption, intelligence and culture, luck and friendship. All of them will be analyzed through six main sequences: The imprisonment moment of Andy Dufresne, his staying at Shawshank, the "Brooks was here" photogram, the opera's fragment "Duetto sull'aria" from "Le nozze di Figaro" played from the Warden's office by Andy, the murder of Tommy Williams and the final scene of Andy and Ellis meeting at the sea.

1.5. Methodology used in the analysis

In the analysis of this film we have decided to go for the text-based analysis method.

This methodology was first used by one of the greatest analyzers of all times: Roland Barthes in his book *S/Z* of Balzac's short-story *Sarrasine*. As Jacques Aumont and Michel Marie state:

Más manifiesta aún es la importancia del trabajo de Barthes para el desarrollo del análisis textual de films (...) El principal instrumento de esta lectura analítica es la connotación, y lo que permitirá distinguir la verdadera connotación de la simple asociación de ideas es la sistematicidad de la lectura (Aumont, Marie 1990: 99-102)

However, this analytic procedure, however, does not only comprehend a mere study of the text itself. On the contrary, the examination is based on a narrative but also iconic level (based on visual and sound codes) and how the *montage* or juxtaposition of all these 'levels' or 'bases', produce a certain effect on the spectator.

Therefore, in order to carry out this analysis of Frank Darabont's film, we shall cut (make a *découpage*) of the film in *lexias* or big sequences. Thus, we have decided to divide the whole film in six big sequences that we consider the most representative moments of the movie. These ones will be linked by micro-sequences that will be analyzed in less detail.

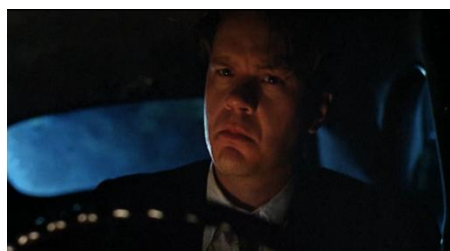
Based on a *novella* written by one of the most iconographic authors of the American panorama (Stephen King), we consider that the most accurate way to analyze *The Shawshank Redemption* is the text-based analysis. That is due to the fact that it resembles the perfect method of examination for a film that is based on a literary work, that is, the creative composition of a text. Nevertheless, since we are analyzing a movie, it remains essential to us the fact of complementing this text-based analysis with an exhaustive study of the image and sound of the film itself.

2. Analysis of the film

2.1. Andy Dufresne: sentenced to life imprisonment. The beginning of a harsh journey

The film opens with the famous melody of The Ink Spots *If I didn't care*. The full black shot is gradually lightened by the street lampposts. While the music is already introducing us Andy's mind by its subtle but meaningful significance, the camera, starting from a static position, moves backwards to catch the black 1946 Plymouth in which the drunk protagonist is looking completely out of it. The music, the shadows, the lights, the nocturnal atmosphere... make the first reference to the film-noir genre.

Suddenly, in a close-up shot, Andy's hand opens the glove box to get a wrapped weapon. Slowly and doubtfully, Andy resolves to unwrap the gun and the bullets start to spread all over the rag. In a little piece of gold, the watcher instantly recognizes a married man; and the following events seem to be predicted in the music lyrics: "If I didn't care, would I feel this way? If this isn't love then why do I thrill?" In the next eye-level shot (F001), Andy swallows with difficulty a sip of Rosewood liquor: "a look of anguished resolution on his face" (Kermode 2013: 13).



F001

And finally, matching this last shot, the first words arrive: "Mr. Dufresne." The surname associates the same character in a past and present moment by being said while Andy is being cross-examined in the court-room.

Following Hollywood-movies patterns, *The Shawshank Redemption* poses "a variety of narrative questions and then, answering them using delays and snares" (Lehman, Luhr 2008: 39).

In this sense, the question-answer structure seems to be explicitly confirmed since the movie starts with a cross-examination process.

In it, the District Attorney addresses Dufresne: “describe the confrontation you had with your wife the night he was murdered.” This connotative sentence also serves the watcher to tie up loose ends and realize that the past night with the drunken Andy and the present day with the sock and sober Dufresne are united by means of a clear cut unified by the Attorney’s voice.

Then, cutting back to the flashback, whose “structure (...) creates a plot with added suspense” (Lehman, Luhr 2008: 32), we perceive another uncertain background melody that creates suspense. Afterward, Andy looks down as he confesses to the Attorney in a still assimilating process: “She packed a bag to go and stay with... Mr. Quentin.”

Abruptly, we vanish towards the murdering night again, only that this time, Mr. Quentin and Andy’s wife are the protagonists of the sexual scene (F002) that is going to take place. The attorney’s voice describes the scene: “Gleen Quentin, Golf pro at the Snowdon Hills Country Club. The man you have recently discovered it was your wife’s lover.”



F002

In an intercut back to the court, the shot-reverse-shot continues and after Andy confesses that he went to his house to “confront them” but “they weren’t home”, the movie cuts again to the murdering night. This time, Andy’s filling the gun with the bullets so the watcher can finish associating the assassination night with the present cross-examination. Only that the hands are not Tim Robbins’s but Darabont’s: “the hands that load the gun belong not to Tim Robbins but to me.” (Darabont 2013: 136)

After having a last sip of liquor, we get back to the court where Andy does not remember the last discussion that he had with his wife.

The fact that Andy does not remember telling her he would have preferred “to see her in Hell than in Reno” to grant her the divorce, may seem trivial but as Mark Kermode points out:

The lack of memory (...) in fact raises an issue which will become profoundly significant for the prisoner -the transience of memory as an allegory for forgiveness-. Years later, revealing his dream of escaping to Zihuatanejo, the incarcerated Andy will tell Red of his longing for ‘a warm place that has no memory’, a vision of paradise manifested in the form of a coastal resort flanking the Pacific Ocean (Kermode 2003:14).

Anyway, the Attorney’s reply is implacable: “When they arrived, you went up to the house and murdered them.” Too much cold, Andy defends himself: “No, I was sobering it up (...) I drove home to sleep it off. Along the way, I stopped, and I threw my gun into the Royal River. I feel I’ve been very clear on this point.”

Despite Tim Robbins’ childish face no one in the court believes him: “Well, where I get hazy is where the cleaning woman shows up the following morning and finds your wife in bed with her lover, riddled with 38 caliber bullets.”

Stubbornly, insisting on proving his innocence, Andy is any yes-man: “Since I’m innocent of this crime, Sir, I find it decidedly inconvenient that the gun was never found.” This pride and dignity will characterize Andy as an American self-made man.

As Richard Armstrong points out: “Andy Dufresne shares qualities of resilience, resourcefulness and intelligence that we find in these traditional American heroes” (Armstrong 2004: 80).

Back to the murdering night, Andy gets out of the car, the bottle crashes into pieces on the leaf-covered surface and a 50’s typical male shoe is shot in a close up. Later, a nocturnal gothic shot, full of blue, black and white tonalities (just the same as when he’ll get out of prison in the “baptismal rain”) shows Andy approaching the house in which his wife is committing adultery. The fact discredits again his real innocence. After that, the Attorney concludes: “We have a beautiful young woman and her lover lying dead in each other’s arms. They had sinned. But was their crime so great as to merit a death sentence?”

After an eye level shot of Andy’s wife making love to Mr. Quentin (F003), the movie again flashes forward to the court where the judge makes his ultimate decision: “By the power vested in me by the state of Maine, I hereby order you to serve two life sentences, back to back. One for each of your victims. So be it” (F004).

Hence, “the judge gavel comes down and the screen fades to black” (Kermode 2013: 13).



F003



F004

Despite Andy’s face of shock, the Attorney has convinced the jury, the judge and the movie viewer; so when Andy is life-imprisoned we do not consider him to be as innocent as he later is discovered to be.

2.2. “Welcome to Shawshank”

2.2.1. *Obstacles: Shawshank, First night, The Sisters, Warden Norton and Captain Hadley*

During break time, as Red recalls Andy’s getting in, the camera paradoxically gets out of the prison to shoot “what Darabont describes as ‘everybody’s favorite shot in the movie’” (Kermode 2003: 18). The aerial shot convinces the audience of the gothic magnitude of the Shawshank prison-castle (F005). As Kermode points out the prison is another character in itself (F006): “Designed by architect Levi T. Scofield (...) the building is correctly described by tour guide and guardian angel Jan Demyan as ‘an odd mixture of architectural styles: it’s Richardsonian Romanesque, chateau-esque, and also gothic in the overtones of the interior’” (Kermode 2003: 23).



F005

“Andy came to Shawshank prison in early 1947 for murdering his wife and fella she was bangin’.”



F006

“So when Andy Dufresne came to me in 1949 and asked me to smuggle Rita Hayworth into the prison for him, I told him, ‘no problem’.”

According to Demyan, “the building is specifically designed to dry you eyes skyway” (Abbott 2001), “This combination of architectural elements would also make Mansfield Reformatory the perfect setting for a tale of spiritual redemption spun by two masters of the macabre (King and Darabont)” (Kermode 2003: 20). Armstrong contributes to the general opinion adding that with “the Gothic towers and high walls of the prison (...) **few films capture the specific horror of incarceration quite like this one**” (Armstrong 2004: 82). Here, Thomas Newman’s first classical melody sounds as Red tell us about Andy’s past as a vice-president of a large Portland bank which firstly hints his witty mathematical mind that will save him from Captain Hadley and from Warden Norton.

As the van with the new inmates enters Shawshank the camera swings upwards and around the vigilance towers where two armed guards point the new prisoners with their fusils. This upper-scene foresees the corrupted murder of Tommy, who will be shot from one of these towers too. When finally the first inmate comes out of the van, Byron Hadley (Clancy Brown) gives the new arrivers a non-very warm welcome. This first particular speech is not coincidental. In Hollywood movies the audience is always invited to immediately recognize the goodies and the baddies. Given these first words, there is no need of any further explanation as to what group Capitan Hadley belongs. A second later, as the Shawshank convicts repeatedly beat the metal fences and call the new inmates “fresh fish” in a very achieved attempt at intimidation, Red and his comrades start betting about who is the one that is going to cry first tonight (F007, F008).



F007



F008³

The animalization of the new inmates degrades their human condition twice: As they are being called “fresh fish”, Red tackles the bets by denominating them “horses.”

As Kermode perfectly indicates: “Red (...) puts his money on the ‘tall drink of water with a silver spoon up his ass’, the first oblique reference to the rape and sexual torment which Andy (...) will suffer in Shawshank” (Kermode 2003: 21).

Some seconds later, with Andy’s upwards look to the highness of the Shawshank reformatory (F009), we can retake here Demyan’s words: “the building is specifically designed to dry your eyes skyway” (Abbott 2001).



F009



F010

When Andy passes the shadowed threshold of the majestic building, we come to one of the most representative moments of the movie: As we can appreciate in F010, we have a foot shot in which the new inmates drag the chains as they move forward through the yellow line. This points out, firstly, the reiteration that we are in prison: the convicts are doubled framed by a prison frame (the building) and by the chains frame.

Secondly: the prisoners are at the other side of the line which clearly divides the goodies and the baddies. However, turning upside down our preconceptions of the prison figures, the *bad* and the *mean* are Andy’s arch-enemies, Mr. Hadley (the captain)

³ Red and his gang check out the new fish. From left to right are David Proval, Brian Libby, Joe Ragno, Morgan Freeman, Larry Brandenburg, William Sadler and Neil Giuntoli (Darabont 2013: 125).

and Mr. Norton (the prison director) whereas Andy, the hero of the story, turns out to be in the wrong side of the line, for he is the prisoner, but also, the *good* and the *holy*.

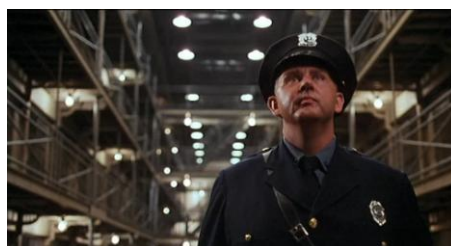
Afterwards, Mr. Norton delivers his first words confirming that he believes in two things: “Discipline and the Bible. Here you will receive both. Put your trust in the Lord, your ass belongs to me.” The first *thing* is already proved when one of the prisoners innocently asks for the eating time: “You eat when we say you eat! You piss when we say you piss! You shit when we say you shit! You sleep when we say you sleep! You got that you maggot dick-motherfucker?” tries to respond him Mr. Hadley with a brutal nightstick strike in his stomach.

In this same sense, Luis Gómez Romero, recalling Michel Foucault, very well confirms the notion of discipline that Norton will apply in his prison when he states that:

Schools, prisons and factories serve mainly as training institutions for the self-regulation of individuals required by such disciplinary society. Discipline traces a consistent sphere of normalcy. Three control procedures are put into practice for attaining this goal: hierarchical observation (...), normalizing judgment (...) and examination (Gómez Romero 2010: 283).

With the warning that in Shawshank, Norton “will not have the Lord’s name taken in vain” the prisoners take their first prison shower. After some shots of Andy “being violently hosed, deloused and frog-marched unclothed through the cell-block corridors” (Kermode 2003: 23), “Like dead men awakening in purgatory, the naked inmates discover their ‘old life blown away in the blink of an eye, nothing left but all the time in the world to think about it...’” (Kermode 2003: 23).

Seconds later, a guardian shouts: “Lights out” (F011).



F011

This figure is “played by John Summers, a real-life guard who works at the new prison just up the road from the old one. (He worked at the old prison too, the one you see in the film until its deactivation in 1990)” (Darabont 2013: 140).

Again, hope seems to fade away and a violent but real despair invades the atmosphere. The first victim of desperation turns out to be a *new fish* called Fat Ass.

In this sense, Kermode makes an interest point about his cries: “When his quarry cracks screaming ‘God I don’t belong here!’, we are reminded again of the parallels between Shawshank and purgatory, a place where the prayers of the damned go unheeded” (Kermode 2003: 23).

Fat Ass, superficially unimportant as this character might seem, plays a brief major role in *The Shawshank Redemption* since he turns out to be the first convict deadly consumed by desperation. A pattern that, although in a completely different background of circumstances, will be later repeated in Brooks.

Hence, after the guards find out about the noise the prisoners are causing, Hadley approaches Fat Ass, whose name and identity will remain unknown to the audience even if Andy asks for them the next morning. While Hadley brutally hits him (F012), the jeering gradually comes down and a black shadow sifts over the prisoners’ cells. In intercuts we perceive a reflexive Red that fools around with a baseball ball. That first night, he admits “Andy cost me two packs of cigarettes. He never made a sound.”



F012

After a fade we are awoken into Andy’s first routine day. The inmates get out of their cells and Red looks at Andy for the first time in a shot-reverse-shot. Individual cells doors close and masses cells doors open.

During lunch, one of the sisters (Bogs) “the most villainous of The Sisters” (Kermode 2003: 25) follows him with a lascivious look that will be repeated some moments afterwards. Andy does not notice and takes a seat. Suddenly, he spots “a nice and ripe” maggot in his meal (F013).



F013

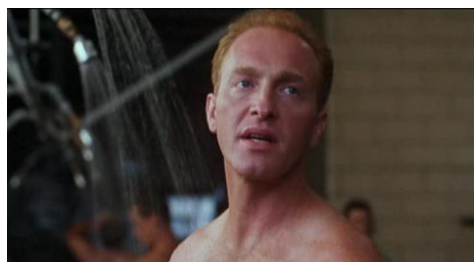


F014

Here, Brooks is first introduced as an old disgusting convict as takes Andy's maggot (F014). Yet, in a greatly touching gesture he gives it to Jake, a little bird "who fell out of his nest over by the plate shop." In a curious anecdote, Darabont explains that the maggot Andy takes and the one with which Brooks feeds the bird are not the same: "The ASPCA⁴ lady (...) decreed that no live worm be fed to the bird. Only a dead one would do (...) Thank God we found a dead waxworm in the batch, or we might still be there" (Darabont 2013: 140).

Afterwards, the proudly walking Hadley comes in to collect the cigarettes of his winning-bet when he discovers the prize of his reeling: Fat Ass is dead.

Notwithstanding, the cruelty has just started in Shawshank. The next scene of the movie starts to explicitly revolt around the sexual theme that is going to be present in Andy's prison daily life. Bogs approaches him in the shower and tells him: "Anybody come to you yet? ... Anybody get to you yet? Hey, we all need friends here. I could be a friend to you" (F015). Andy coldly looks him back, listening with a distrustful, full of revulsion look and walks away from the spot as Bogs says: "Hard to get. I like that."



F015

This dramatic subplot of Andy's sexual life that he will be forced to have, remains in contrast to the beginning of the movie when he desired a sexual life with his wife that she denied from him by having an affair with another man. It resembles compulsory to

⁴

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

state, nevertheless, that although harsh sexual scenes are implicitly shown on display, Darabont's subtlety lets the audience's imagination to complete what really happens but is not shown. In this way, in a later-forced sexual attack that will take place in another mechanical room (the laundry this time), Darabont handles it with an insinuated degree of visual tact accompanied by Freeman's voice-over, which intones, "I wish I could tell you that Andy fought the good fight and The Sisters let him be... but prison is no fairy tale-world."

The rapes continue through a montage sequence in which scenes of a bruised and battered Andy silently walking the snowy exercise yard are intercut with yet more footage of The Sisters setting upon their prey. 'Sometimes he was able to fight them off,' says Red. 'Sometimes not...' (Kermode 2003: 25).

Roger Ebert confirms in this sense that "the movie avoids lingering on Andy's suffering; after beatings, he's seen in medium and long shot, tactfully. The camera doesn't focus on Andy's wounds or bruises, but, like his fellow prisoners, gives him his space" (Ebert 1999). Darabont's hinting instead of showing reminds us that "We can often learn a great deal not only from what we see in a film but also from what we do not see" (Lehman, Luhr 2008: 2).

This can be amplified to the symbolic sexuality: There is no proper sexual act in the whole movie but we know that it does presumably happen. Apart from Red's voice-over and The Sisters' brutal attack to Andy (F016), there is still another factor that symbolically confirms the happening of sex.



F016

As the state-of-art Marcel Duchamp was very well aware, sex is like a machine in constant movement. His piece of art *The wheel-bicycle* very well confirms this point.

In this sense, the sexual scenes that are displayed in Darabont's film always occur in an environment that is, if not explicitly designed for machines to work, at least,

surrounded by them. This always-there Hollywood symbolism does not escape Darabont's mind. So, if the implication of the rape was not hinted enough by Red's statement, the in-the-spot machines symbolical presence definitely contributes to confirm the sexual violation.

It seems irremediably compulsory to confirm as well, the power of water and the sound it produces. If, normally, rain will be the motor of a sexual relationship to start, in this particular prison movie we have the water of the showers that clearly substitutes it in an obvious macabre turn, very proper of King's imagination.

This whole ghastly spectacle of sexual harassment very visibly serves to emphasize the idea of how harsh and cruel the obstacles that Andy has to overcome and how difficult it is for anyone to keep our magical *hope-coat* while facing such barbaric situations.

Another fact is that whereas in Darabont's movie Red confirms: "Andy kept pretty much to himself, at first. I guess he had a lot in his mind, trying to adapt himself to life in the inside," in King's story we are explicitly told about Andy facing The Sisters constant aggressions and how he humbly suffers his pain in silence:

Andy went through that alone, the way he went through everything alone in those days. He must have come to the conclusion that others before him had come to, namely, that there are only two ways to deal with the sisters: fight them and get taken, or just get taken. He decided to fight (King 2009: 430).

If Andy had not overcome this first barrier of The Sisters, he would have probably sunk into desperation. Yet, Andy's wittiness will demonstrate that faith and intelligence have still a lot to do against brutal force.

Another example will be when he is assaulted after *Gidla's* projection. In here, they do not sexually attack him since Andy is clever enough to escape Bogs's lascivious attempts. Yet this causes him to be beaten "within an inch of his life."

Nevertheless, though Andy "spent a month on the infirmary", the position he has acquired thanks to the brave confrontation he had with Hadley on the roof, allows him to get some justice for the first time. Still, as it could not be any other way in a prison, the justice is brutal: "in a simple side-angle view" (Darabont 2013: 144), Hadley strikes Bogs such a beating that "he never walked again. They transferred him to a minimum-

security hospital upstate. He lived out the rest of his days drinking his food through a straw.” And so, “The Sisters never laid a finger on Andy again.”

Before that happens, with a happily country-toned melody, Red voice-over takes us to the spring of 1949. Here it comes a zooming-out close-up shot of Warden Norton who announces that “the roof of the license-plate factory needs resurfacing” (F017).



F017



F018

In a full shot of “more than a hundred men who volunteered for the job”, hundreds of hands deposit their fold papers to try some luck. Yet, it would only cost Red’s comrades “six packs of cigarettes” to get the job (F018).

Afterwards, in a high-angle shot, a bucket of tar is elevated to the license-plate factory roof. Next, another over-angle shot focus on Byron Hadley who is grumbling about his problems to his colleagues.

Subsequently, the camera shows the audience that, effectively, Red and his comrades have successfully bribed the guardian to be working in the roof. Andy is shown in contrast to his comrades overhearing Hadley’s problem more than focusing into his work which causes him the advisable words of Red: “Andy, re’ you nuts? Keep your eyes on your mops, eh!”

This moment remind us of two things: Firstly that Andy is different from the rest. He does not care about the risk he is taking. Again, **he seems to be aware of his self-protective coat of hope**. Then, that from the moment Red gatecrashes him into the job and warns him not to get distracted from his work, the audience gets aware that he and Andy have, in some moment, become friends, and that Red cares for Andy. As Freeman makes explicit in one of the interviews that are included in Abbott’s documentary *The Shawshank Redemption: The Redeeming feature*, this will be the first sign of a friendship that unquestionably develops into something more: “I think there was a kind of love relationship between Red and Andy. It was... Well, it did go deeper than just friendship. You develop this kind of relationships in life and death situations”

(Abbott 2001). Hence, this last sentence is very telling, since the following shot will again put Andy in a deadly situation. In intercuts between the worker convicts and Captain Hadley bitching sourly to his fellow guards, the camera follows Andy who is stubbornly neglecting his fellow convicts' pieces of advice and frowning deeper each time we have a catch of him as if a brilliant idea was starting to root in his brain.

The next uncertain instants of the movie are full-tension and suspense charged, extremely well-played by Clancy Brown and Tim Robbins. The fact is that Andy's banker skills serve him to resolve Hadley's problem of not fully being paid his dead brother's inheritance. Yet, in order to create suspense, Andy starts to explain to Hadley how to be fully paid in a very intricate way. In a full-speed shot of Hadley grabbing Andy by the T-shirt, he furiously carries him to the border of the roof while he says: "That's it! Step aside, Mert. This fucker's having' himself an accident."

As the camera follows Andy and Captain Hadley, a high-angle shot shows the height of the building and two extras that curiously attend the scene from the yard below (F019). While Andy's thread of life is literary suspended and sustained only by Hadley's hands, the audience receives a sense of anguish mixed with fear that puts us into Hadley's hands as well, in an undoubtedly well-achieved attempt at making us sympathize with the protagonist.



F019



F020

It is noticeable here that, though in a completely different context, and motivated by totally dissimilar circumstances, the scene clearly recalls the famous Alfred Hitchcock movie *Vertigo* (1958), whose protagonist John "Scottie" Ferguson (interpreted by the majestic James Stewart) is many times seen in situations of vertigo for which the audience feels sympathy too (F020).

According to Darabont's notes, both Robbins and Brown had to be held by safety cables in order to perform this scene (F021).



F021

Yet, the witty resolution of Hadley’s problem will not only guarantee his fellows “three beers apiece” but it will also turn out to be the first of Andy’s ascendant steps in the hierarchical order of the prison. After this, Andy starts to feel more “normal” as Red states, and therefore, more *man* in the sense of more *human being*. This way, the character that had been dehumanized and symbolically naked from his *old life*, starts to hopefully rebuild himself by getting over this almost-suicidal obstacle. In this sense, the hope that Andy has in events to turn up in the right manner for him is admirably shown on display as our hero steps further in his struggling journey for freedom.

Afterwards, the same sequence seems to restart with the bucket symbol that is hauled up again, only this time, in a relieving turn, it proves out to be a cooler of beer and ice. The next few images are the first ones in the movie that show the prisoners feeling *free* (F022, F023). Yet, this will not be the only time that Andy frees them, in a very clear allegorical “Christ-like pose” (Kermode 2003: 32).



F022



F023

2.2.3. Friendship: Red, Brooks

All the same, the prison filming starts with Red, the other protagonist of the story, the person who will be most changed by Andy’s arrival.

After Andy's imprisonment, the movie cuts to the interior of Shawshank, where two doors are opened for the camera that enters the prison.

The first sliding metal door conducts us to a brief and narrow corridor in which we can already see *the light at the end of the tunnel*. This tunnel symbolism is important since both protagonists of the movie will achieve their respective escapes in a room double framed by doors and window(s) where the light goes in.

The prison-escape spot will be Andy's cell for Andy and the parole-board hearings room for Red. The difference resides in the fact that Andy will have to create a tunnel to get out of his cell, whereas in Red's case, it will be the tunnel -the corridor that he has re-crossed so many times-, the one that would lead him to his own salvation (F024, F025).



F024



F025

As Sean O'Sullivan accurately appoints: "Rather than being shown as being beyond redemption, the prisoners [in *The Shawshank Redemption*] organize their own rehabilitation" (O'Sullivan 2001: 325).

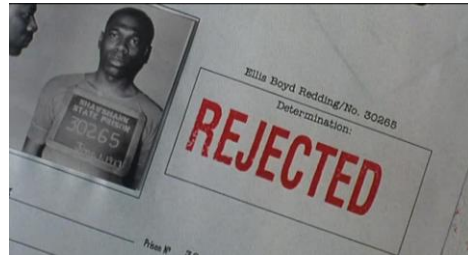
As the second door opens we see a Morgan Freeman in the shape of a denim-dressed prisoner who takes his cap off and faces the "every day the same shit" tribunal that will reject his prepared speech once again⁵ (F026). After a 'REJECTED' stamp "on his parole document (which incidentally bears a photograph of Freeman's son Alonso (F027), and names the prisoner as 'Ellis Boyd Redding')" (Kermode 2003: 16), the

⁵ Frank Darabont says in an interview for one of the extras of the movie (*The Shawshank Redemption: The Redeeming Feature*): "The character that had been written in the story of Stephen King was a white Irish guy, so ...I know the story for years and well, Red was a white Irish guy in my head. When we were casting about, somebody suggested Morgan Freeman, and once I got over my preconception of what the character was, which was drawn from Stephen King, it became such a good choice." Yet, critics such as Sean O'Sullivan, have pointed out that "through the casting of Morgan Freeman as co-lead, the film is given an appearance of racial equality which it in fact does not live up to" (O'Sullivan 2001: 326).

twenty years live-sentenced Red goes out to hear the first siren that will change him forever: the announcement of Andy's arrival.



F026



F027

Yet, before this happens, Red is presented in a similar way he is depicted in King's novella. With a "captivating voice-over which will define this as *his* story (...) Freeman's deliciously luxurious voice addresses the audience" (Kermode 2003: 18): He is "the guy who can get it for you", the "Sears and Roebuck" distributor of the prison.

Latterly, in a full-shot sequence, Red is sufficiently entertained playing baseball with Heywood in the recreation yard.

Nonetheless, Red does notice that Andy is approaching him. In a clear reference to Western movies, the hero of this *town* (Andy) crosses the full-of-dust yard to approach Red (F028). In a non-coincidental affirmation, Darabont says:

There is a mythic role of the hero, who rides into town, a stranger rides out of the desert, and cleans out the town and rides away. Sets things right. That's what Andy does in Stephen King's story. He does not just change the environment but also, fundamentally, changes his friend, Red, by their friendship (Abbott 2001).



F028

Kermode would also confirm this: "Clearly, there are comparisons between Dufresne and the 'pale rider' of Western lore, an iconic figure frequently characterized as ghostly, the whiff of the undead following in his wake" (Kermode 2003: 29).

And so, Red finally alleges “Yeah. I think it would be fair to say I liked Andy from the start” (F029). Henceforward, Red will overcome his first own preconceptions of Andy as a “real cold fish (...) *whose* shit smells sweeter than most.” In this sense, we can appreciate hear that Red’s “voice-over serves to establish beyond doubt that Andy was/is someone special” (O’Sullivan 2001: 325).



F029

Notwithstanding, apart from Western cinema references we can also perceive a clear reference to film-noir movies since this first introduction between Red and Andy consists in a shot reverse shot in which two male characters are having their business.

Andy needs a hammer, and Red, “a man who knows how to get things” seems to agree on it. Yet, he is the first one in hinting Andy’s method of escaping: “Tunnel under the wall, maybe” (F030).

Andy strikes him back laughing: “You’ll understand when you see the rock-hammer.” Thus, when the device arrives, Red laughs at his first suppositions and still, those ones will ironically become true: “Andy was right. I finally got the joke. It would take a man about 600 years to tunnel under the wall with one of these” (F031). Yet, as Peter Lehman and William Luhr rightly confirm: “Part of the art of story-telling is to build anticipation by delaying the outcome” (2008: 29).



F030



F031

Another important theme is introduced in this very first scene: the hilarious fact that everyone in Shawshank is innocent. As Armstrong states: “It is the society that is wrong, and the prison is the corrupt instrument of its hypocrisy” (Armstrong 2004: 80).

Hence, Red seems to be the only one in admitting that he *is* guilty. In fact, the first words that Red dedicates to Andy are: “The wife-killing banker. Why did you do it?” In a sarcastically response to Andy’s “I did not do it, since you asked” Red replies him he is really going to fit in Shawshank for everyone seems to be innocent in there, which Heywood confirms with a “My lawyer fucked me up.”

Being said that, Andy’s “possible innocence is laughed off as nothing more than a joke” (Kermode 2003: 28). This *innocence question* is very important in the story structure since the audience does not really know the truth until Tommy Williams reveals it. However, this revelation will not happen until very much later since Darabont’s movie follows the classical narrative structure which “operates upon the assumption that there is a truth to every story and that revealing that truth is the goal of story-telling” (Lehman, Luhr 2008: 40). Yet, “the answer to this big question is usually delayed for ninety minutes or more” (Lehman, Luhr 2008: 39). In this sense, it is also important to state that “Once the major question is established, everything in the movie contributes directly to its resolution” (Lehman, Luhr 2008: 42).

After businesses are done, Red explicitly observes for the first time, the *coat of hope* that Andy seems to have: “He had a quiet way about him. A walk and a talk that just wasn’t normal around here. He strolled like a man in a park without a care or worry in the world. Like he had on an invisible coat that would shield him from this place.” As Berardinelli accurately points out: “Andy’s ire is internal; he doesn’t rant about his situation or the corruptness of the system that has imprisoned him” (Berardinelli 1994: 2004).

Later on, when Red and Andy are already friends, a little bit after the roof incident, they appear alone in what is an unquestionably much graver shot-reverse-shot, emphasized by (F032) the blue-grayed atmosphere that contrasts sharply with the sunny day on the roof, and with their first meeting day.



F032

In what seems a trivial conversation about Andy trying to get some rocks from Red who “hates cheese,” the face-to-face little chat derives into a more severe theme, and we discover that Red had also been accused from murder.

Now, the cheese game is not casual. Andy is good at cheese, in an allegorical gesture since cheese turns out to be a game in which the insignificant little pawn can knock down the king and regain his power if he has witty enough to carry out the mission. That is a clear metaphor for Andy as the *pawn* and Norton as *king* of the prison. In this same way, it does not resemble random either that Andy asks for rocks which will allegorically be his fighting weapon. In contrast, Red does not like cheese because he is still a pawn that does not know how to knock over the king.

What it is more, the rocks would become one of the X symbols of the movie, since Norton will precisely get aware of his defeat (and consequently, of Andy’s winning) when he throws one of them to the Raquel Welch poster to suddenly discover Andy’s tunnel behind it.

Furthermore, the rocks will also play a part, when, in a close up, Andy scrawls his name with the little hammer. This scene will be completed at the very end of the movie in which we are shown that Andy discovers the fragility of the walls cement when, in scrawling the *n*, a serious part falls to his feet. From a very clear point of view, Andy did not think of escaping when he ordered it, but he clearly thought it over when that first *rock* of wall fell over his feet (F033, F034).



F033



F034

The delivery of this hammer will be in charge of *Brooksie* who, oppositely to what he was first introduced as, he is now seen as an old librarian (F035). Next, the special express that he has for Dufresne serves to introduce the first handing of books between these two characters (F036) and the beginning of a special friend relationship from which Andy will take enormous benefits. This motif of the hammer and the book together will not be repeated until the very end of the movie when Norton discovers the secret place in which Andy hid the rock-hammer: the Bible. “Dear warden. You were right, salvation lay within.”



F035



F036

2.2.4. Art within art: Rita Hayworth

The sequence that gives title to the novella and that clearly plays a main role in the movie is the projection of Charles Vidor’s *Gilda* (1946) featuring Rita Hayworth.

In his notes, Darabont recognizes that he had in mind the projection of Billy Wilder’s *The lost Weekend* (1945). However, the producer, Niki Marvin, after acknowledging that “Paramount wanted a lot more money than we had budgeted (...), suggested to check out Columbia Pictures’ film library instead” (Darabont 2013: 144). Hence, she came with the perfect idea: “Hey! There’s a bunch of Rita Hayworth movies in this list! Let’s use *Gilda*, for God’s sake!” (Darabont 2013: 144). *Gilda*’s projection, therefore, represents a free motif of Rita Hayworth here (since the story could have also been told with the initial idea of projecting *The Lost Weekend*), which seems, however, contrary to the rest of the film where Rita is used as an obvious bound motif without which the story could not have been told.

So, Charles Vidor’s *Gilda* (1946) is projected on the-screen-within-the-screen the “third time this month” while Andy nervously approaches Red, who is impatiently waiting for Rita to “do that shit with her hair” (F037, F038).



F037



F038

After a first incredible appearance of Rita who seems to be very “decent” for Shawshank’s audience, Andy asks his friend for Rita’s poster and Red gives him a few weeks.

Kermode makes a very interesting approach in this sense when he says:

This sequence is crucial (perhaps even central) to the strange allure of *The Shawshank Redemption*, because it combines a nostalgia for the classic Hollywood film-making of which Darabont is so enamored (*Gilda* was directed by Charles Vidor in the same year that Frank Capra was making *It’s a Wonderful Life*) with an atmosphere of other-worldly transcendence. The ‘message’ of this sequence, later mirrored in the operatic broadcast which Andy mischievously relays throughout the prison, is that art can transform the nature of one’s surroundings, taking us out of the here and now and transporting us to the Elysian fields of the imagination, making us again free men. Such freedom is literal in the case of Andy, who we later learn is looking for a poster of movie pin-up Rita Hayworth in order to cover his tracks as he tunnels his way out of his cell (Kermode 2003: 36).

After the projection and Andy is surprisingly attacked by The Sisters. Yet in a majestic turn, when Andy is forced to “swallow what I give you to swallow”, he calmly explains Bogs that “sticking a knife in his ear will simply cause him to bite down hard through reflex action” (Kermode 2003: 41). Here, Darabont will “take the opportunity to acknowledge the power of literature alongside the mystery of cinema, allowing Andy to taint Bogs with the fact that he has *read* about the bite-reflex, and asking: ‘You know how to *read*, you ignorant fuck?’ (Kermode 2003: 42).

2.3. *Desperation vs Hope: “Brooks was here”*

Henceforward, the tone of the movie changes: things will get better for Andy as they start to go wrong for Brooks who represents the other face of the coin: If Andy is heads, Brooks is tails. Following to the notions of dead and life that Brooks and Andy represent, the ancient convict has to make room for Andy. Thus, the natural cycle of life is also very emphasized by their opposition.

In the movie, after Andy gets back from the infirmary, Red gives him a “nice welcome” by getting him some rocks and by delivering Rita’s poster to his cell, free of charge. Afterwards, Norton offers him “something more befitting a man of your education” (F039). And so, this is the way Andy starts working at the library with Brooks (F040).



F039



F040

As usual in King’s stories, the author usually makes his characters share some of his features. In this case, Andy shares the passion for the books that King himself has. In this respect, Andy resembles the proper young writer when he was an student and

su madre solo podía darle, y no siempre, cinco dólares semanales. Por eso, mientras estudiaba la carrera, comenzó a trabajar en la biblioteca de la universidad, mediante una beca que recibió para costearse los estudios a cambio de trabajos para la institución universitaria. Conocía la biblioteca como la palma de su mano (Esteban 2009: 95)

As Andy gets in the library, the importance of Brooks diminishes and Andy’s augments. Some days later after accepting the job, Andy will start to do “tax returns for half the guards at Shawshank.”

Contrarily to Norton, who has hypocritically lost his faith, one of the characteristics which makes Andy so skilful is that he is perseverant and that he has an

inextricable faith. If the first proof of it was his confrontation with Hadley, the second will be his pursuance in writing letters to the State Senate and in requesting funds from them to build up a library (F041).

Still, his determination will not only gain funds for his library, but also provide it with a set of used books from the Library District deposit. As Jaime Centelles Pastor points out:

La película nos habla también de la perseverancia, encarnada en la figura del personaje principal y simbolizado por su lucha constante en conseguir una buena biblioteca para los reclusos (...) La biblioteca representa la libertad, una libertad mental distinta de la prisión física de sus cuerpos (Pastor 2013: 92)

After the news, Andy, ironically thankful, says: “Wow, it only took six years. From now on I’ll write *two* letters a week, instead of one” (F042).



F041



F042

In this sense, Andy’s attitude contrasts sharply with Brooks’s who will sink into desperation when his parole comes through. Here again, the ideas of the law of the strongest and the cycle of life seem to be imposed.

Brooks realizes he has nothing to do in the outside world, and as Red tenderly defends him:

He has been institutionalized. I’m telling you, these walls are funny. First you hate ‘em, then you get used to ‘em. Enough time passes, you get so you depend on ‘em. That’s institutionalized (...) They send you here from life... That’s exactly what they take. The part that counts anyway.

Brooks's will hesitate to murder Heywood so he can stay longer in the inside of Shawshank (F043). Finally he only bursts into tears (F044).



F043



F044

After acknowledging the situation, Brooks decides to allegorically set his bird free: “I can take care of you no more, Jake (...) You are free” (F045, F046).

This very symbolic gesture confirms that, in a way, Jake is Brooks and Brooks is Jake. As his bird, he has practically lived his entire life in prison. Now, the fact that Jake is a raven reminds again to a psychological suspense Hitchcock film: *The Birds*. In it, ravens, following Edgar Allan Poe's American symbolism tradition, represent dead (F047).



F045



F046



F047

In this sense, Brooks's bird will probably die as well in the outside world. In fact, in the original screenplay, he dies in prison where the inmates prepare a beautiful funeral in his honor and Red addresses the bird as if it was Brooks, in a clear animalization of the old convict. The bird was also “institutionalized” (Darabont 2013:

58). Still, as filmed, if we were to take Darabont proper interpretations “Jake *can* survive, but Brooks can’t. In a symbolic sense, Jake now represents Andy and Brooks represents Red. It’s a subtle but meaningful shift” (Darabont 2013: 146).

As Brooks abandons Shawshank (a scene that will be later repeated featuring Red this time) (F048, F049), he tries to get used to the new world, that is for him “in a big damn hurry.”



F048



F049

In a last attempt to regain any hope, any meaning to his life; Brooks goes to the park to give food to the birds and “hopes” Jake reappears sometime “but he doesn’t” (F050). Again, Hitchcock’s symbolism *attacks*: The birds symbolize the losing of hope for Brooks, foreseeing, therefore, his immediate dead.



F050

In a last harsh-to-acknowledge scene, Brooks voice-over intonates his last words: “I guess I’m too old for that sort of non-sense anymore. I don’t like it here (..) I’ve decided not to stay.”

As Kermode points out: “A more purgatorial existence one cannot imagine; trapped between the unsatisfying vague comforts of the free man’s material world and the terrifying real horrors of a life without purpose or direction” (Kermode 2003: 53).

Briefly afterwards, the camera follows Brooks’s who, “tired of being afraid all the time,” commits suicide.

The brutality of the scene is slightly reduced by the fact that we cannot appreciate Brook’s face. Instead the camera shoots him from behind.

Then, in the zoom-out we perceive Brooks last institutionalized attempt: a razor scrawl that says: “Brooks was here” (F051, F052).



F051



F052

The fact that Brooks commits suicide is important to emphasize the motto of the film: “Hope can set you free.” As above-mentioned, Brooks represents desperation, insecurity, weakness, in opposition to Andy, who most surely represents determination, faith, hope and perseverance. This is at-first-sight visible in the movie.

Thus and paradoxically, Brooks, who has been set free, loses his hope; being therefore, not really free. On the other hand, Andy, who is still imprisoned, maintains his hope until the end, which not only provides him a temporal state of freedom but which will definitely set him free at the very end. In this sense, in a transcendental look on life, Darabont’s movie trespasses fiction to state a very truth of reality: that every and each man decides in which manner he wants to cope with life, being Shawshank in this sense a pure metaphor of life itself. As Kempley accurately confirms: “[Shawshank] reminds us of that we all hold the keys to our own prisons” (Kempley 1994).

2.4. A temporal state of freedom. Music for everybody: “Duetto sull’aria” from “Le nozze di figaro” (“Duetto sull’aria” from “The marriage of figaro”)

When the library donations appear, a guard orders Andy to tidy up while he takes a breather. We then see the guard ‘pinch a loaf’ with a comic in the toilet cubicle! For a brief spell a man who is used to rigid discipline can be himself (Armstrong 2004: 81).

Moments after the close-up shot of the policeman’s comic (F053), Andy (F054) “pulls [a vinyl of Mozart] from the stack, gazing upon it as a man transfixed. It is a thing of beauty. It is the Gail” (Darabont 2013: 60). The solemnity of the moment is confirmed firmly by the silence that precedes the opera.



F053



F054

As Andy rebelliously locks himself in the Warden's office's (F055), he seems to be possessed by a sudden withdrawal symptom of freedom and turns on the loudspeakers (F056). In this sense, Professor Liang Kwan Chua makes an interesting approach when he says that:

the film suggests that the source of the Romantic song of freedom is not Mozart, but the aria's reproduction as a recorded sound (...) The (...) camera [work] (..) by tracing the amplification of sound from the pin-point of a needle to the vast sound stage created by the speakers, parallels the spatial existence of Andy, who has locked himself within the confines of the prison office and yet is sonically extended throughout the entire Shawshank complex (Chua 2011: 351).



F055



F056

Suddenly, we jump to the rest spaces of Shawshank. Andy, as the messenger, has connected the untouchable highest point of the prison social-pyramid with every convict's soul.

The reaction is the same everywhere (F057, F058, F059): everyone is completely astonished, paying attention to the "Susanna and the Contessa" (Darabont 2013: 60).

They hear their song, and the suspension of motion that coincides with their hearing forms a visual representation of an internal suspension of time in which they experience the originary point of freedom (...) The prisoners in the yard at

Shawshank are stunned into a hushed moment of musical stillness by the thought of freedom (Chua 2011: 349)



F057



F058



F059

In the same sense, Gómez Romero remembers that Jean Jacques Rousseau “contends that music affects us more than any other art because ‘it makes each man closer to other men, and always gives us some idea of those who are as we are’” (Gómez Romero 2010: 279).

The Mozart’s Italian aria that Andy decides to play belongs to *Marriage of figaro*. Yet, Red says that despite “having no idea”:

what those two Italian ladies were singing about... I like to think they were singing about something so beautiful it can’t be expressed in words, and makes your heart ache because of it... It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made those walls dissolve away. And for the briefest of moments every last man in Shawshank felt free (F060).



F060

Darabont's use of art is, therefore, triple: first *Gilda*, then Mozart, ultimately it will be a library; first cinema, then music, then literature. These entertainments serve the inmates to feel in a brief but magic temporal state of freedom in which the walls of Shawshank seem to fade away for a minute. Andy's "personal freedom becomes human freedom; domestic bliss becomes universal happiness" (K. L. Chua 2011: 347).

As K. L. Chua suggests, this scene can be compared with Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* (1814), in which "Freedom is suspended in the song, not in the scene. And in order to suspend time through the temporality of music, Beethoven has miraculously turned sound into a virtual space that can be accessed only by our ears" (K. L. Chua 2011: 346).

As for Andy, with the same naughty "weird" smile as when he gained the beers for his co-fellows, he literally puts his feet up and listens to the beauty of the melody (F061).



F061

As the music starts spreading all over the prison, the Norton screams frenetically (F062): "Open the door! Open it up! Dufresne, open this door! (...) Turn that off! I am warning you Dufresne, turn that off!" In a shot-reverse-shot, Andy slowly moves down from his position, lowering his arms as if the Warden's shouting had bothered and distracted him from his focused listening. Seconds afterwards, in an ambiguous gesture were most surely the situation is suspended (the same as the aria), Andy sluggishly turns the volume louder (F063).



F062



F063

That is the straw that breaks the camel's back for the director's patience and he lets Hadley to violently manage the situation. Thus, Hadley gloats over Andy: "Dufresne... You're mine now (F064).

Still, Dufresne will confirm that the adventure was worth it because in the hole he had "Mr. Mozart to keep me company."



F064

Furthermore, with a tender pointing to his head and his brain, Andy will explain the power of music with an anaphoric poem: "It was in here... and in here." As Chua accurately points out

Through 'Mr. Mozart,' Andy, the local hero, speaks globally; he shares his iPodic interior by converting the entire prison into a universal iPod: 'we are all born free,' the music proclaims, 'and even if everywhere we are in chains, hope keeps us alive.' In Andy's iPodic being we hear the indomitable spirit of humanity (Chua 2011: 351).

Later, Red and Andy's most representative dialogue takes place: Andy defends himself as a fervent punter of the spiritual side, unlike Red, who remains skeptic:

Andy: That's the beauty of music. They can't get that from you. Haven't you ever felt that way about music?

Red: Well, I played a mean harmonica, as a younger man. Lost interest in it, though. Didn't make much sense in here.

As Chua points out "Once inside, the music is indestructible, because its beauty articulates the timeless dimension of the self, which is our ineradicable identity" (Chua 2011: 348). The dialogue keeps on as Andy continues to defend the spiritual sense:

Andy: Here's where it makes the most sense. You need it, so you don't forget.

Red: Forget?

Andy: Forget that... there are places... in the world that aren't made out of stone... that there's a... there's something... inside that they can't get to... that they can't touch. It's yours.

Red: What're you talking about?

Andy: Hope.

Red: Hope? Let me tell you something my friend. Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane. It's got no use on the inside. You'd better get used to that idea.

Andy: Like Brooks did?

This dialogue becomes important for two reasons mainly: to reinforce the idea that Andy is this spiritual hero that Shawshank needed and that he will be the living proof that yes, "hope is a dangerous thing" but it also "can set you free." Secondly, to make a clear contrast between Red and Andy, the hopeful believer that will prove his friend wrong. In this same sense, with the mention to Brooks, Andy tries to explain to Red that "getting used to that idea" is not at all a viable procedure for him.

Thus, the free motif of the harmonica will demonstrate that Red is still afraid, when Andy awards him with a new example of the instrument and asks him to play it but Red says: "Not now" (F065).



F065

Notwithstanding, something will change in Red when he gently plays the first note that same night. He will symbolically be giving his first step towards freedom (F066), though he seems "almost embarrassed" (Darabont 2013: 65).



F066

Kermode confirms: “Later, a brief shot of Red in his cell tentatively breathing into the harmonica (...) suggests perhaps a dawning awareness of hope, the possibility at least of music in a world deafened by the clanging of prison bars” (Kermode 2003: 57).

2.5. Power and corruption. Tommy Williams knows too much

Andy’s perseverance in writing those “two letters a week” makes the District finally donate an annual amount of 500 dollars with which the convicts rebuild the library that eventually becomes “the best prison library in New England complete with a fine selection of Hank Williams” (F067).



F067



F068

The moment matches the year in which Norton starts to be visibly corrupt to the audience. He “instituted his famous inside-out program” which consists in basically exploiting his inmates, “properly supervised” of course (F068), so he can “underpin any contractor in town.”

One of the contractors names it “pool of slave-labor you’ve got” as he sees himself forced to bribe Norton (F069, F070).



F069



F070

From the moment Norton accepts “the fine pipe”, we become aware that he is not only the villainous prison director that we knew but that he is also a corrupted authority.

Later, Andy reveals Red that he has “channel, filter and funnel” all the corrupted money, by conjuring “a person out of nothing”, “a phantom, and apparition” so if it ever “leads to somebody (...) that’s not going to be him, and certainly not the Warden” (F071).



F071

Randall Stevens is a “paper person” “so if they ever trace some of those accounts they’re going to wind up chasing a figment of *Andy’s* imagination.” In this respect, Kermode properly points out that “Andy appears to have become some sort of god, the writer/director of his own movie, the creator of a fictional character whom we shall eventually meet on screen, and who will eventually whisk him over the border to Mexico” (Kermode 2003: 61).

Paradoxically, Andy points out to the inconsistencies of the prison, which reflect, a lot of times, the inconsistencies of our real world: Corrupted authorities, honest convicts, and inmates that “had to come to prison to be a crook.” This is a clear non-coincidental theme. In Stephen King’s work, corruption as a matter of fact, has proved to be an-always there issue. In this sense, *The Shawshank Redemption* proves that not all that glitters is gold and that some things might appear to be what they are actually not.

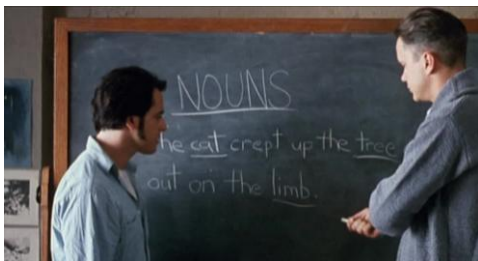
Later, with another siren wall, and Johnny Otis's melody *Willy and The hand Jive*, the camera repeats the same shot of Andy arriving to Shawshank, to show the person that will change Andy's life, as Andy's changed Red when he first arrived (F072).



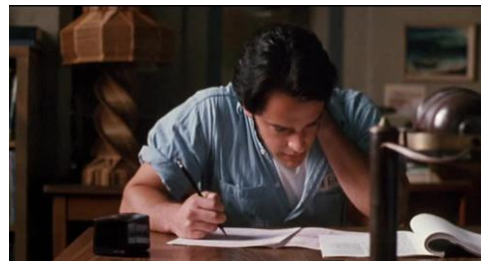
F072

Red's voice-over takes control again of the situation for introducing now Tommy Williams into scene.

Tommy proves to be a very proud medium thief that Andy will try to change with the powerful tool of education. The result is that "Andy really liked the kid" and Tommy "found brains he never knew he had" (F073, F074). Tommy will eventually pass his high-school equivalence test for Andy's bliss.



F073



F074

Of course the introduction of Tommy as a main character is just an excuse to prove Andy's innocence real.

In a shot-reverse-shot in which Red confesses Tommy why Andy is in Shawshank, Tommy, showing a frowned-upon worried look, starts to recount the story that will confirm Andy's innocence (F074, F075).

Suddenly the camera flashes backwards to Tommy's staying in Thomaston and the terrific music introduces us the real murderer of Andy's wife, a psychotic deranged neurotic that happily confesses to have murdered the two lovers and to know that Andy has been wrongly self-imprisoned for that (F076).



F074



F075



F076

Here, the first climax of the movie has arrived. Now that the initial question that was proposed (is Andy really innocent?), has been resolved, another will be put on display: How will Andy prove his innocence?

Henceforth, Andy starts another journey in which he will have to deal with Norton, who is not willing to let him escape.

Hence, for being sure that Andy has no opportunities left, Norton makes sure Tommy gets killed in what it is undoubtedly, the very proof he is not only the most corrupted authority, but, paradoxically against his own Christian faith, the *devil* in person. Recalling the famous scandalous 37th president of the United States, Kermode accurately compares Norton with President Richard Milhous Nixon by stating that “Norton’s response to the possible ‘proof’ of Andy’s innocence is one of spectacular guilt, his patronizingly Nixonian tones quashing the suggestion of conspiracy in infamously familiar fashion” (Kermode 2003: 64).

After getting sure that Tommy will be willing to defend Andy facing a jury if necessary, Captain Hadley “guns Tommy down, leaving him lying face down in the dirt, his corpse illuminated by a prison light; Lucifer’s radiance shrouded in darkness” (Kermode 2003: 60). Thus, Tommy signs his dead sentence by saying the truth (F077, F078). The whole dark sequence (illuminated by one lamppost) and the shot-reverse-shot conversation between Norton and Tommy while Hadley is hidden in the dark of the tower, makes allusion again to the film-noir genre.



F077



F078

2. 6. “I hope the pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. I hope”

Here, the movie has reached the second climax: Andy’s innocence has been proved. And the second question remains: What is Andy going to do to prove it? Is he going to do something at all? Or will he succumb to desperation as Brooks and become an institutionalized man?

The audience is now in a point in which suspense plays a major role. Like in what in the crime genre would be called as a *fake clue*, Andy’s comrades (Red mostly) put themselves in the worst.

After Andy tells Red about his dream of setting a hotel in Zihuatanejo, “in a place with no memory,” Red urges him to get his feet on the ground: “I don’t think you ought to be doing this to yourself Andy. These are just shitty pipe dreams. I mean, Mexico is way the hell down there and you’re in here.” (F079, F080).



F079



F080

Kermode makes an interesting approach about this transcendental dialogue when he states that:

For Nietzsche, forgetting was a typically a-Christian virtue, representing the obliteration (rather than the forgiveness) of ‘sin’. In such an interpretation, absolute amnesia may ironically represent the absence (rather than the presence of divinity

(Nietzsche's God is dead), thus making it possible to read Andy's longing for 'a place that has no memory' as entirely secular and atheistic. Rather than being a Christ-figure, Andy may be read more as a Zarathustra-like prophet, offering (unlike the sanctimonious Norton) a radical model of escape (or self-overcoming) through education and the experience of freedom, while Red finds himself still tied to the traditional model of crime and punishment (Kermode 2003: 68).

Furthermore, though Red has no hope at all to get out of prison since he considers himself already "an institutionalized man" Andy knows that he "underestimates himself" and makes Red promise him that if he ever gets out of Shawshank, he will go to the oak under which he asked his wife to marry him and he will unbury something that is hidden in there. Red accepts but, misinterpreting Andy's words, thinks that something dark crosses Andy's mind.

The straw arrives when Heywood confesses that he has lent Andy some meters of rope. With the rope as a clear bound motif, the audience immediately recalls Brooks's suicide and gets impatient.

Still, after finishing Norton's "own safe" (Kermode 2003: 59), and shining his shoes "so they look like mirrors" Andy gets back to his cell. Kermode makes an interest appreciation here when he says that: "It is significant too that while Norton hides his own safe behind a picture (...), he fails to imagine that Andy may be doing the same" (Kermode 2003: 59).

When lights go out for the third time in the movie, the camera zooms in a thoughtful Dufresne that is looking at his fixedly-stuck poster of Raquel Welch as he grabs the rope (F081). "Although the emotional signposts seem to point toward suicide, the narrative arc is clearly leading us to the foot of an altogether more miraculous rainbow" (Kermode 2003: 67).

In an intercut we jump to a desperate Red whose voice-over states: "That was the longest night of my life" (F082).



F081



F082

As the screen fades, the process of answering the above-proposed questions starts. In a repeated shot of the first day, the guards count the inmates (F083). The shot that in the beginning of the movie showed a skeptic Red that looked down Andy from head to foot, now shows him worried enough that his suppositions might have become true (F084).



F083



F084

The guard, infuriately shouting, approaches Andy's cell from which no man has come out.

But the look of wonder and bewilderment which fills the guard's face as he peers into cell 245 indicates something far more mysterious (this is a tale by Stephen King after all), an apparently supernatural eventuality encapsulated by his awed exclamation: 'Oh, my holy God!' (Kermode 2003: 70).

The next high-angle shot, however, starts to make things clearer: As Norton blends himself down to pick up what he expects are going to be his spotlessly cleaned shoes, he turns out to find not his shoes but Andy's (F085).



F085



F086

As the siren walls (in this sense, Dufresne gets officially out of the prison in the same way he came in) sound, Norton approaches Andy's cell and starts to look for guilty people of this miraculous event. Haig, the guard in duty of the revision, tries to explain him that "He just was not here" (F086). In an obviously non-coincidental

burlesque tone, as we can appreciate in F086; Andy, represented in the form of Albert Einstein, sticks out his tongue to the guards and the Warden who cannot believe the situation: “Oh lord, it’s a miracle!”

In this moment, a particular question that was proposed when Andy called the Warden “obtuse” having this one denied him the possibility of proving his innocence; gets its answer: When Norton rhetorically asks his guards if they consider him a blind man, Andy has proved him that indeed he *is* a blind man. Again, Andy’s wittiness victoriously wins over violence.

Incapable of believing, the Warden asks the poster of Raquel Welch: “What say there, Fuzzy Britches? Feel like talking? Ah... I guess not. Why should you be different?”

Next, as Norton throws the last stone to the poster, this one breaks and the stone clatters. Cautiously, the Warden approaches the poster and fingers it (F087) for, seconds later, furiously retiring the cartel and discovering the tunnel. Everyone in the cell stares incredibly amazed at its length while the imperial music of victory starts to sound (F088).



F087



F088

Henceforward, only Red’s voice-over is heard: “In 1966 Andy Dufresne escaped from Shawshank Prison (...) all they found of him was a muddy set of prison clothes, a bar of soap and an old rock hammer” (F088, F089).



F089



F090

Red's voice-over repeats some of his previous statements as we flashback from the moment Dufresne first intended to escape (the scrawling in his cell already explained) to the moment he actually did it, showing in between, the "meticulous" procedures he took for it: "Oh Andy loved geology. The study of pressure and time (...) That's all it takes really, pressure and time. That and a big goddamn poster" (F091, F092, F093). As L.K. Chua would say "They are all forms of Lady Liberty, beckoning the individual into the land of the free" (Chua 2011: 352).



F091

Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (1946)



F092

Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch* (1955)



F093

Raquel Welch in *One Million Years BC* (1966)

Hence, the mysteries are solved (F094): when "Andy is seen in montage depositing rock debris in the exercise yard, in the manner of the industrious tunnellers from the classic John Sturges's POW movie *The Great Escape*" (Kermode 2003: 73).



F094

The other mystery is also solved when we see how Andy changed Norton's Bible and accounts papers for his own. Besides, he did clean the shoes, but instead of keeping

them in Norton's box he put them in. Nor the guard in charge, neither Red noticed, because "really, how often do you look at a man's shoes?" (F095)



F095



F096

In a very, again, full-of-Gothicism sequence (F096), Andy manages to get through his tunnel and escapes under a very symbolical thunder light, which clearly represents his own salvation. The Gothic sequence is again confirmed by Kermode's comparison with *Frankenstein*:

Evoking another film fantasy classic Darabont nods his head toward the iconography of James Whale's *Frankenstein* (and also, I suspect, toward Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein*) with lightning crashing about Andy's head, a look of wild-eyed madness on his face which seems to cry 'It's alive!' as he uses the storm to help him secretly break out of Shawshank (Kermode 2003: 74).

Again, King's macabre mind is most obviously display here: "Andy crawled to freedom through 500 yards of shit-smelling foulness I can't even imagine" (F097, F098).



F097



F098

In here, Chua makes a comparison between this sequence and Andy's rebellious attempt of reproducing Mozart's Duetтино:

The parallel with the opera scene is obvious. The Mozart we hear moving through the cables and wires in the act of sound reproduction assumes visual form when we

see Andy crawl through the tunnel and sewage pipes to squeeze his way –or more precisely to be excreted- out of bondage (...) So the mucky action in the film in which Andy is excreted into freedom is shaped by the inaction of a pure music (Chua 2011: 351-352).

In what is, unquestionably, the most hopeful high-angle shot of the whole movie; Andy laughs out loud as he lets the real rain purify him (F099). As Kermode observes “Andy now commits the most extraordinary act of escapology, literally bursting out of Shawshank’s rectum to be reborn again in the cleansing waters of a new world” (Kermode 2003: 75). Chua compares this aerial shot with the opera’s one and states that “This bird’s-eye view puts us in the position of the two Italian ladies floating invisibly our of the loudspeakers, whose ‘voices soared... like some beautiful bird, higher and farther than anybody in a gray place dares to dream’” (Chua 2011: 353).



F099



F100

Next, another Andy’s foot shot (F100) shows Andy in the Maine National Bank: “Mr. Stevens visited nearly a dozen banks in the Portland area that morning. All told, he blew town with better than 370,000 dollars of Warden Norton’s money” (F101, F102).



F101



F102

Hence, In intercuts between Norton discovering Andy’s *biblical* secret place for hiding the hammer, Captain Hadley having himself arrested, and the press and the police arriving in order to arrest Norton, this last one gets himself killed. “In some senses, both Norton and Andy *have* died, gone to meet their respective makers –the

latter, to the heaven of Zihuatanejo, the former, to the hell of ignominious self-destruction” (Kermode 2003: 78).

Afterwards, Red receives a postcard (F103) from Texas: “that’s where Andy crossed (...) Every time I recall it, it makes me laugh”. But not only does make him laugh as he states, it also gives him the necessary strength to estimate himself in the way Andy did. Ebert points out in this respect that “the last act, in which Andy helps Red accept his freedom, is deeply moving - all the more so because Andy again operates at a distance, with letters and postcards, and is seen through Red's mind.” (Ebert 1999)



F103

The next significant ultimate shot of Shawshank prison matches with the same shot it started with. The Hollywood closed-structure pattern strikes again and we see Red re-crossing the same corridor that will know lead him to his final salvation.

This time, however, Red will fight with strength; something he did not know he had until that moment:

No sir, Rehabilitated? Well, now, let me see. You know, I don't have any idea what that means (...) What do you really want to know? Am I sorry for what I did? (...) There's not a day goes by I don't feel regret. (...) I look back to the way I was then. A young stupid kid who committed that terrible crime (...) I wanna try and talk some sense to him (...) But I can't. That kid's long gone. This old man is all that's left. I gotta live with that. Rehabilitated? It's just a bullshit word.

I must personally agree with Kermode's point of view when he says: “The result is, in my opinion, Freeman's best scene in the film, the point around which the drama truly pivots, the real moment of ‘redemption’ promised in the title” (Kermode 2003: 80). As Roger Ebert points out: “Red's the one we identify with, and the redemption, when it comes, is Red's.” (Ebert 1999)

After Red's own personal redemption, he is released. Yet, in the outside world, he gets afraid just as Brooks did. He is also an institutionalized man. The same as Brooks, he thinks of committing some kind of offence so "they send me back" (F104 F105).



F104



F105

As Kermode points out: "His inability to deal with freedom reminds us again of the institutionalization which ultimately killed Hatlen" (Kermode 2003: 82).

For this shot in which Red is looking into a window-glass that shows guns and compasses Darabont admits: "I thought 'guns versus compass' might reflect Red's torn state of mind as he teeters between despair and hope (...) When we see him in his hotel room with the compass in his hand, we know he's leaning (...) toward hope" (Darabont 2013: 155).

With "a promise I made to Andy," Red determinately goes to the imposing oak near Buxton, in an astonishing Maine landscape, and unburies some money and a letter (F106, F107).



F106



F107

The fact that Red finally shares Andy's opinion about hope and life is explicitly confirmed by an iconic symbol: a tree. In real life, "the tree has become a landmark for fans who visit locations that appear in the film" (Child 2011); though it was "semi-destroyed by a storm, according to local newspaper the Mansfield News Journal" (Child 2011). Asking for the help of a man to "help me get my projects on wheels," Andy ends his letter with the most sacred and meaningful words of the movie and, undoubtedly, the

most remembered ones: “Hope is a good thing. And no good thing ever dies”. This letter encourages Red “to go extra mile, to make a leap of faith, to overcome his fear of freedom and follow him to the shores of Zihuatanejo” (Kermode 2003: 83).

“Feeling the kind of excitement only a free man can feel”, Red’s eyes, usually “basset-sad eyes [are now] alive every minute, seizing on rays of hope” (Stack 1995) as he embarks himself in his last adventure while he says: “I hope I can make it across the border. I hope to see my friend and shake his hand. I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. I hope.” In undoubtedly the most popularly beloved scene of the movie (F108, F109) Red and Andy reunite again in a “glossy ‘Hollywood Ending’” (Kermode 2003: 85) whose encounter is justified by Darabont who explicates:

I shot this little ending on the beach, where we actually do see them getting together again. And I thought that after the two hours and twenty minutes of the sort of hell they’ve been through –this huge emotional experience that we’ve taken the audience on –we may owe them the catharsis of seeing these men rejoined (Abbott 2001).



F108



F109

I must also agree when Frank Darabont when he states that: “By ending with that final image, we’ve brought the viewer on a full of journey (...) Bottom line is, I think it’s a magical and uplifting place for our characters to arrive at the end of their long saga...” (Darabont 2013: 158).

3. Conclusions:

To sum up, this dissertation has been intended to examine one of the most representative movies of the 21st Century, Frank Darabont's *The Shawshank Redemption*, through its main living hero: Andy Dufresne (interpreted by Tim Robbins).

Darabont's movie's main themes (hope, life and freedom) have proved to have a lot to say still against the injustices of life. In a classical Hollywood-movie pattern, in which a main question is established and resolved, Andy Dufresne is unjustly life-imprisoned for a crime that he has not committed. Notwithstanding, the magical *coat of hope* that he always carries within him together with his perseverance, intelligence and determination have proved the most outrageous lesson of this life: that fighting for freedom is worth it, and that "hope is a good thing" that no man should be afraid of.

Furthermore, being based on a novella by Stephen King, one of the most acclaimed writers of the American literary panorama, *The Shawshank Redemption* is also the cinematographic proof that **art is a medium to escape and an essential tool with which to fight for the injustices that life might plunge us to.** In a clearly divided structure of *goodies* and *baddies*, *The Shawshank Redemption* transcends this typical arrangement by showing its audience that in life not everything turns out to be what it seems to be and **that people are capable of error but also capable of redemption.**

Frank Darabont's debut as a director has proved his noted capacity to make an illustrious movie out of a not so rewarded novel. The chemical bonds between King and Darabont have been demonstrated several times, though it is with this grand piece of art that they have confirmed to be authentic tellers of the human condition. With the majestic performance of Tim Robbins, this actor comes to greatly demonstrate once again, that acting is *his* thing, though three years later he will prove out to be a tolerable director as well. His debutant movie, *Dead walking man* (1995), starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn, retakes *The Shawshank Redemption* prison genre. Nevertheless, this time Robbins will extrapolate the redemption theme to a killer on a death row that receives spiritual help from a nun who tries to understand, both the murderer and the victims' families. **In a clear posture that pleads for everyone's right to a second chance; both movies make the audience believe again in the human condition and in our ability to forgive and be forgiven, hope and determination being the perfect tools for it. As Ian Nathan says: "If you don't love Shawshank, chances are you're beyond redemption"** (Nathan 1998).

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