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个人主义

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摘要

《肖申克的救赎》一直被认为是最受欢迎的美国电影之一，它深刻地体现出了美国个人主义核心价值观。本篇论文旨在揭露电影《肖申克的救赎》中的个人主义从而让我们更深入的理解电影是如何体现个人主义的。该论文的论点是电影主要从三个方面：个人自由、个人独立和个人在名誉和财富方面的利益来体现个人主义价值观。

本论文共有五部分。介绍部分包含了对《肖申克的救赎》的介绍、文献综述、对个人主义的介绍和本文的意义和结构五个方面。第一章谈论了电影体现的个人身体上的自由和精神上的自由两个方面，从而说明《肖申克的救赎》深刻地反映了个人自由。第二章从思想和行动两个方面，分别讨论了主人公的独立思考和自力更生的能力，从而说明《肖申克的救赎》是一部高度颂扬独立自主精神的电影。第三章分析了电影中主要角色对个人名誉和财富的追求，从而说明在《肖申克的救赎》中，个人利益得到了充分地诠释。最后一部分在上述三章的基础上总结了电影中所反应的个人主义的三个方面，并得出电影《肖申克的救赎》主要通过个人自由、个人独立和个人在名誉和财富方面的利益来体现个人主义这一结论。

关键词：个人主义；个人自由；个人利益；个人独立；肖申克的救赎

Abstract

As one of the most famous American films, *The Shawshank Redemption* portrays American core value of Individualism most profoundly. This paper tries to explore the value of Individualism in *The Shawshank Redemption* so that we can have a deeper understanding of how Individualism is demonstrated in this film. It argues that the idea of individualism is embodied in the film mainly in three aspects: individual freedom, individual independence and individual interests in reputation and wealth.

This paper has five parts. The introduction part contains five parts: a brief introduction to *The Shawshank Redemption*, literature review on *The Shawshank Redemption*, a brief introduction to Individualism, the significance of this thesis and the structure of this thesis. The first chapter discusses the freedom of body and freedom of spirit in this film respectively to prove that individual freedom is most profoundly reflected in *The Shawshank Redemption*. The second chapter, from the perspectives of thought and action, discusses the independent thinking and self-reliance of the protagonist respectively to prove that *The Shawshank Redemption* is a film that highly promotes the spirit of independence. The third chapter analyzes the pursuit of individual interests in reputation and wealth by the main characters respectively to prove that individual interests is given full expression in *The Shawshank Redemption*. Based on the three chapters mentioned above, the last part summarizes the three aspects of individualism reflected in the film and concludes that individualism is embodied in *The Shawshank Redemption* mainly in individual freedom, individual independence and individual interests in reputation and wealth.

Key words: Individualism; individual freedom; individual interests; individual independence; *The Shawshank Redemption*

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Introduction

Over the years, film is considered to be a kind of cultural artifact which reflects everyday life, and in turn, affects it. In Cultural Studies, popular culture occupies an important position and in the studies of popular culture, film, of course, is the object to be analyzed most frequently. Nowadays, the movie business is the leading entertainment industry in the world and its impact is felt everywhere. In addition to be a source of popular entertainment, film is also an important art form and a powerful method for conveying ideas, values and beliefs. Without doubt, by showing attractive plot and curious scenes, American film plays the role of the purveyor of American values. Among American values, Individualism is definitely the core.

This thesis chooses the famous American contemporary popular film *The Shawshank Redemption* which is adapted from Stephen King's fiction *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption* as the object to be analyzed. This film was directed by the famous director Frank Darabont and released in 1994. It was nominated for seven Academy Awards in 1995, including Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Original Score and Best Sound Mixing. The protagonist Andy Dufresne is played by the famous actor Tim Robbins and Ellis Boyd "Red", Andy's best friend and the film's narrator, is played by Morgan Freeman. In 2000, *The Shawshank Redemption* is ranked No.8 in the greatest American films list by the committee of AMPAS (The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences). According to polls of IMDB (Internet Movie Database), *The Shawshank Redemption* is voted as the most popular American film by the audiences.

As one of the most famous and classic American films, *The Shawshank Redemption* portrays the core value of America---Individualism most profoundly. It takes Andy, the protagonist, as its central clue and the basis of its plot development, which stresses the personal function in the social historical process and the decisive influence on important events. The hero depicted and eulogized in this work is totally

the image of Individualism. In addition, the themes, scenes, lines and the characteristics of other roles of the film also reflect Individualism in some ways. Individualism is the subjective cultural spirit that ran through the whole work. Since film is a kind of cultural artifact which not only reflects everyday life but also conveys ideas and opinions, it is quite meaningful to analyze the embodiment of Individualism in the *The Shawshank Redemption* so that we can have a deeper understanding of how the value of Individualism is implied in this film. In the following part of this thesis, how Individualism is reflected in this film will be analyzed in detail.

A Brief Introduction to the film *The Shawshank Redemption*

The story of *The Shawshank Redemption* starts in 1947 when the protagonist, Andy Dufresen (acted by Tim Robbins) arrives at Shawshank prison. He is a soft-spoken banker convicted of murdering his wife and the man with whom she has an affair. He is serving two consecutive life sentences and is to be imprisoned for the rest of his life in Shawshank Maximum Security Prison, Maine.

Soon after Andy arrives at the prison, “The Sisters”, a gang of prison rapists led by Bogs Diamond, turn their attentions to Andy. The story is narrated by Red---Andy’s best friend. Red is well known for being able to get almost anything into Shawshank prison. Andy asks Red to get him a rock hammer with the excuse that he is a rock hound. Red is a little suspicious at first, thinking this may be a lethal object (which it is). However, after negotiation, they make the deal. After some time, Andy comes into the movie theatre and asks Red to get him a poster of Rita Hayworth, who appears on the movie screen that Red is watching (This is the only reference to Rita Hayworth in the story). Andy hangs the big poster on the wall of the prison cell. At the end of the story, both items turn out to be crucial parts of a scheme that the mild mannered banker prepared for a long time.

The prison agrees to provide chances for the prisoners to tar the roof of a building. Whilst on the roof, Hadley, the chief of the guard, is telling the other guards how he has been left an inheritance by his wealthy brother. However, Hadley complains about the tax he will have to pay on the inheritance. At this time, Andy approaches Hadley, who nearly throws him off the roof and continues to explain that there is a loophole which allows Hadley to keep his entire inheritance, without paying any taxes. Andy offers to complete the paperwork in exchange for some beers for his fellow prisoners.

As his life outside, Andy becomes a successful financial advisor inside the prison. The guards use Andy to complete their tax returns, loan applications and other similar financial tasks. In return, the guard protects Andy from the harassment of the “Sisters”. When Brooks, the librarian is paroled, Andy takes over the librarian role. Andy sends weekly letters to the State Senate asking for funds and books. The other inmates and guards think he is wasting his time until one day he does receive response. As the librarian, Andy also plays the role of teacher and helps several other inmates to get their high school diplomas.

The arrival of a young prisoner called Tommy ruins Andy’s peaceful life. By chance, Tommy tells Andy that he had a cellmate at a different prison who bragged about killing a rich golfer and some hot-shot banker’s wife, and the banker getting jailed for it. This is clearly the real killer of Andy’s wife. Andy sees the possibility of a new trial since this evidence would prove his innocence. After Andy puts forward the request to the Warden Norton, he is turned down and is placed in solitary confinement for two months alone. Because Norton wants to keep him in the prison to work for him, he kills the insider Tommy.

After he is set out from the confinement, Andy tells Red of his dream of moving to Mexico, and settling in the small town of Zihuatanejo on the Pacific coastline and asks Red to go to a specific tree when he gets out of Shawshank.

The next morning, Andy is discovered missing at roll call. An initial search does

not find Andy. A moment later, Norton finds a big hole behind the poster covering the wall, now Raquel Welch. It shows that Andy has spent his evenings, since getting his rock hammer, slowly digging through the prison walls. On the night of his escape, Andy breaks into a sewage pipe, crawls 500 yards and finally gets out of Shawshank prison.

A short time later, Red is paroled and begins to make a life for himself outside of the prison. He finds the tree that Andy has told him. Under the tree, Red finds a buried tin with a sum of money and a note which encourages Red to join him. Red violates his parole and catches a bus to Mexico, hoping to find his friend Andy.

At the end of the film, Red walks across a sun drenched beach in Mexico, toward Andy who is working on his boat. This is the whole story of *The Shawshank Redemption*.

Previous Studies on *The Shawshank Redemption*

As one of the most popular American films, *The Shawshank Redemption* arouses great attention amongst scholars. Many scholars have carried out studies on this film from different perspectives, such as theology, representation, Freud's notion of the uncanny and Bachelard's poetics of domestic space, gothic conflict and so on.

The article *Redemption Revisited: Doing Theology at Shawshank* written by Chris Deacy examines recent scholarly attempts to revisit the Christian theme of redemption by making various uses of *The Shawshank Redemption*. The writer believes that the appropriation of this film has generated much insightful theology, there has been an insufficient regard for the extent to which "redemption" is a diverse and heterogeneous term which is not intrinsically transferable beyond the specific contours of the Christian faith.

In the essay *Representations of Prison in Nineties Hollywood Cinema: From Con Air to The Shawshank Redemption*, the significance of representations of prison

in *The Shawshank Redemption* for social and cultural understanding of imprisonment is studied by Sean O'Sullivan. It is concluded that, with respect to film, the notion of challenging media misrepresentations of prisons and prisoners is problematic.

In the essay *Projecting the prison: The depiction of the uncanny in The Shawshank Redemption*, the author Michael Fiddler explores a dramatic representation of the prison (*The Shawshank Redemption*) through the lens of Freud's notion of uncanny and Bachelard's poetics of domestic space. It is concluded that the prison, as depicted on screen, is a simulacrum, a facsimile of an architectural idea that only ever existed as a façade--- a façade that occluded as much as it projected.

In the essay *Gothic Conflicts in The Shawshank Redemption*, Chinese author Wang Aijuan discusses the gothic conflicts between humanity and autocracy, freedom and imprisonment, hope and institutionalization in this film. With the gothic means, the novel arouses humanity from void and paralysis, and endows human beings with the hope to pursue freedom and dream, to fulfill the real redemption in life.

Although so many scholars have carried out various studies on the film *The Shawshank Redemption*, there is no scholar who has analyzed *The Shawshank Redemption* from the perspective of Individualism. Since film plays an important role in conveying the values and ideas to the public and Individualism is the core value of America, it is quite meaningful to analyze how the core value of Individualism is reflected in this film.

Individualism

The single most important cultural pattern in the United States is Individualism. It takes up the most important position in the American ideology, influencing all aspects of life ranging from political to social fields. (Samovar, Porter and Stefani 62) In the following part, the definitions of Individualism, the origin of Individualism,

the development of Individualism in American society and the core concepts of Individualism will be introduced briefly.

The Definitions of Individualism

The term “Individualism” has various explanations. Previous scholars have generally accepted the opinion that the term “Individualism” entered the English language from the French via the 1840 translation by H. Reeve of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, originally published in French in 1835. (Wang 190) In this book, Alexis de Tocqueville said that Individualism has three meanings:

“Firstly, Individualism, as an aim of values, emphasizes on oneself is the aim of one’s words and behaviors. “Self” has the most important value and the society is only the method to realize “self”. Secondly, as a thought of political democracy, Individualism opposes any intervention from authority, nation, collective or individuals. It puts high value on the slogan of “free government” which leads to the spread of anarchism. Thirdly, as a thought of economy and possession system, Individualism advocates sustaining private system of possessions.” (Tocqueville 198)

In British Encyclopedia, it is a moral, political, and social philosophy, emphasizing individual liberty, the primary importance of the individual and the “Personal Independence.” (Steward and Bennett 183)

In American Heritage Dictionary (942), it defined that Individualism as: (1) Belief in the primary importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence; (2) A doctrine of freedom from government regulation of personal economic or social goals; (3) The doctrine that the interests of the individual should take precedence over the interests of the group.

As for the Individualism, in seventeenth century, English philosopher John

Locke said that each individual is unique, special, completely different from all other individuals, and the “basic unit of nature.”(Samovar, Porter and Stefani 62)

It is defined in Catholic Encyclopedia that Individualism is not the opposite of socialism, except in a very general to be called a theory or a doctrine. It means that the individual conscience or the individual reason is not merely the decisive subject rule; rather it has no objective authority or standard which is bound to take into account. (Wang 193)

Other scholars may have other different definitions or explanations of Individualism. No matter how different these definitions and explanations are, in general, Individualism always takes the “self” as its center. Among these definitions, the Individualism given by the American Heritage Dictionary will be taken as the standard definition of Individualism in this thesis. In addition to the definition of Individualism, in order to have a clearly understanding of Individualism, it is quite necessary to know the origin of Individualism.

The Origin of Individualism

The direct source of Individualism can be traced back to the period of Renaissance. The God-centered world was challenged by the great progress in natural and social science. Enlightenment philosophers like Newton and Locke argued that the universe is arranged in an orderly system, and that by the application of reason and intellect, human beings are capable of apprehending that system. This philosophy represented a radical shift from earlier nations that the world is ordered by a stern, inscrutable God whose plans are beyond human understanding and whose will can only be known through religious revelation. People began to be more confident in themselves and show more interest in the world about them. By privileging human understanding and the capacity of the individual, these new ideas recorded the way people thought about government, society and rights. Many people challenged the authority of the Bible and willing to observe and test truths for themselves. The enlightenment lessened stress upon faith and religion and placed

greater emphasis upon Individualism. (Grabb, Baer and Curtis 511-533)

Another influential force was the Religious Reformation, a religious reform movement that started from Germany. In 1517, Martin Luther, a German professor of theology, put up “95 Theses” on the church door in protest against abuses and corruption in the church. He argued that the Pope had no right to sell “indulgences” for the remission of sins. He believed that sinful men could win salvation neither by good works nor through the church or the Pope, but only by faith in Jesus Christ and through a direct relationship to God. Luther’s arguments removed the absolute power from the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in general. There was also the removal of the power of buying one’s pardon (and with it salvation) from the Church. The focus shifted from buying pardons to spending that time and money for works of mercy and love. (Zhu 4)The effects of the Reformation were significant and far-reaching. It caused religious Individualism directly. Focusing on the rational capacity of each human being, Individualism inspires the individual to fully develop his/her intellectual capabilities thereby expressing individual strength and value.

As for the Individualism in America, the origin can be traced back to the beginning years of its history, when first American immigrants came to the North American continent looking for better life and shaking off the control of European feudal tradition and the oppression from all kinds of powerful classes. It seems that elements of anti-oppression and searching for freedom should be the American people’s character. This is the original explanation of American Individualism. Concerning this, what American people are always proud of is the Declaration of Independence: “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” The Declaration of Independence made the rights and potential of the individual the cornerstone of American Values. (Mei 103)

The Development of Individualism in American Society

The meaning of Individualism has changed a lot along with the American history. Prior to the 1960s, American Individualism focused mainly on the political domain--freedom to speak their minds, to pursue their own religious beliefs, to live where they choose to live. In the 1950s, American was nation of political individualists but social conformities. The 1960s ushered in a racial extension of Individualism, broadening it from the political domain to personal life styles. The 1960s could be considered as the dividing line of the development of American Individualism. Individualism developed to a new stage where restrains on individual intuitions and feeling were greatly reduced by the various rights resolutions such as the Civil Rights movement, the women's movement, the youth movement and the sexual resolution. (Zhu 367)In economics, Individualism holds that each individual should be allowed autonomy in making his or her own economic decisions as opposed to those decisions being made by the state, or the community, for him or her. Free Market System should be created in which participants rationally considering various options, and making decisions based on economic interests of an individual. In social life, examples of Individualism can be seen every where. Usually, most Americans are brave, fond of being the center of attention and enjoy taking risks. American individualists are apt to be financial and emotional independent from their parents as early as possible. They believe they should take care of themselves, solve their own problems, and "stand on their own two feet". In all, Individualism has changed a lot along with the development of America and it is a theory that influences almost every aspects of society.

The Core Concepts of Individualism

During the past decade, sociologists have got a general idea about American's concept of value, such as the right of private possessions, personal independence, equal opportunity, self-reliance, advocating reality, religious tolerance, etc.

In the 1960s, American famous sociologist Robin Williams and Arthur Albert

concluded a general concept which had been accepted widely by the public. In their opinions, there was something very important for people to keep their eyes on:

- (1) Freedom
- (2) Democracy
- (3) Equality, that is to say, American people believe that the social relationship in the United States is horizontal, not vertical.

- (4) They play high value on personality but not the common responsibility to the collective.

- (5) Individual independence.

- (6) Their aims of life are looking for success especially the success in wealth, money, or other materials.

- (7) They advocate efficiency and reality.

- (8) They are fond of the changeable lifestyle. (Duan Mu 52)

British scholar Steven Lukes concluded in his book *Individualism* that personal dignity, self-reliance, privacy and self-development should be included as the basic concepts of Individualism.

Chinese famous professor Qian Mansu (59) concludes that there are nine manifestation of Individualism.

- (1) Personal privacy
- (2) Self-reliance
- (3) Self-expression
- (4) Independent thinking
- (5) Personal freedom
- (6) Independent determination
- (7) Personal equality
- (8) Free competition
- (9) Personal lifestyle

As for the concepts of Individualism, different people may have different

understandings. However, it's easy to find out that all these concepts of Individualism are based on the definition of Individualism and take the "individual" as the center.

In general, Individualism is the single most important cultural pattern in the United States. There are lots of definitions on Individualism and the core concepts of Individualism are quite abroad. Examples of Individualism can be seen every where in current American society. However, in this paper, only three aspects of Individualism will be chosen and discussed in detail with the combination of the film *The Shawshank Redemption*. They are individual freedom, individual independence and individual interests in reputation and wealth. In the following part, these three aspects of Individualism reflected in this film will be analyzed respectively.

The Significance of This Thesis

As the cultural artifact which reflects and affects everyday life, film is a good means to convey ideas, values and beliefs to the public. Since American film or Hollywood film *The Shawshank Redemption* portrays American core value of Individualism most profoundly, *The Shawshank Redemption*, as the representative of American film, opens a window for us to learn the values promoted by the Americans and know more about the American culture. In addition, by analyzing the themes, scenes, characters and lines that show the core concepts of Individualism, we can have a better understanding on the ways in which American values are conveyed to the public.

The Structure of This Thesis

The thesis is developed into five parts. Part one Introduction includes a brief

introduction to *The Shawshank Redemption*, literature review on this film and a brief introduction to Individualism. Chapters 1 to Chapter 3 have given a detailed analysis of the film *The Shawshank Redemption* under the instruction of the theories of American Individualism.

Chapter 1 discusses the freedom of body and freedom of spirit in this film to prove that individual freedom is most profoundly reflected in *The Shawshank Redemption*.

Following the first chapter, Chapter 2, from the perspectives of thought and action, discusses the independent thinking and self-reliance of the protagonist respectively to prove that *The Shawshank Redemption* is a film that highly promotes the spirit of independence.

Chapter 3 analyzes the pursuit of individual interests in reputation and wealth respectively to prove that individual interests are given full expression in *The Shawshank Redemption*.

Conclusion supplies the summing-up drawn from the analysis in the previous chapters. In this part, it is concluded after reviewing the major analytical process and the respective results in the thesis that the whole film is closely related to core value of America---Individualism, and the belief of Individualism is embodied in the film mainly in three aspects: individual freedom, individual independence and individual interests in reputation and wealth.

Chapter One Individual Freedom

In American's social values, freedom of an individual has the tightest link with Individualism. It is the basic foundation for every member of the society to achieve his or her self-fulfillment. Without freedom, Individualism will be an unrealistic thought. In fact, freedom can be divided into freedom of body and freedom of spirit. You can have physical freedom (freedom of body) where you can promenade the world without any physical restraint. Imagine that you could travel anywhere you wish. This means that you are physically free to move around and experience our physical world if not the universe. With the same token, you can have spiritual freedom (freedom of mind) in which you can meander your mind into any intellectual concept of existence without any mental restraint. (Lukes 232)

In the film *The Shawshank Redemption*, the pursuit of freedom is the theme presented most incisively. Freedom of an individual is the central theme around the film *The Shawshank Redemption*. The word “Redemption” refers to the salvation of individual from prison and the resumption of freedom. Just as the freedom which can be divided into freedom of body and freedom of spirit, there are also two kinds of “prisons” in the film. One is the actual prison made of stone and the other is spiritual shackle that is invisible. In *The Shawshank Redemption*, both the freedom of body and freedom of spirit are well demonstrated. The leading characters and most of the scenes all have close relationship with freedom. In the following parts, the pursuit of freedom of body and freedom of spirit expressed by this film will be analyzed respectively.

1.1 Freedom of Body in the Film

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, the pursuit of freedom of body is profoundly

demonstrated by two characters Andy and Red. To some extent, it can be said that the whole story of this film is just Andy's prison-breaking and achieving freedom of body. In order to get out of the prison, Andy makes tremendous efforts. In addition, the freedom of body of Red, Andy's best friend, is also thought-provoking. In front of the choice to escape or not, Red finally makes up his mind to join Andy. By showing the great efforts made by Andy to get out of the prison and Red's decision in front of being free, this film shows that the freedom of body is something quite important for an individual and something that can never be given up.

In the following part, the pursuit of freedom of body by Andy and Red in *The Shawshank Redemption* will be discussed respectively.

1.1.1 Andy

In the film, the story of Andy is the best demonstration of the pursuing of freedom of body. By showing the great efforts made by Andy and the scene after he gets out of the prison, this film stresses the importance of freedom of body most profoundly.

Andy is convicted and put in Shawshank to serve two life sentences by a perversion of justice. The word Shawshank, meaning the big shark, is the place to lock felons who are sentenced to spend the rest of their lives. The opening aerial shots of the prison are a total eye-opener. This is an amazing piece of architecture, strong and Gothic in design. The tall stone walls stretch above every shot. It implies that this is a place one can not escape easily and the only way to get out of this place is through legal and proper ways. In fact, to almost all the inmates, the definition of "redemption" is decided by Warden Norton, who stark-nakedly and peremptorily claims that all prisoners give the faith to God and the bodies to him. What he means is not difficult to understand for all the prisoners: in Shawshank, freedom is something that abandons you and you must do all the things required; and hope or wish or any impractical fantasy in that way is totally useless here, which is only possessed by God, while Shawshank is hell, in nature. To most inmates, Warden

Norton's words have actually become their Bible. They come gradually used to the life without freedom, without hope and without human's dignity in Shawshank, because they accept the sins or crimes that are put on them and they have come to believe that the only way to get the would-be redemption in the afterlife is through the suffering and repentance in Shawshank. All of this implies that the chance for Andy to get out of the prison through rehabilitation is very slim. The only way for Andy to get out of the prison is prison-breaking.

At the beginning of the film, Andy asks Red to get him a small chisel in the excuse that he is an amateur rock collector. Later, he buys a huge Rita Hayworth poster from Red, which he always put on the wall of his cellblock. In addition, he always keeps a book of Bible in his jail cell. All these small things seem to be quite normal, and while watching, we don't know what does the director wants to express to us. Until one morning in 1975, Andy Dufresne disappears from the Shawshank. Everything seems to be the same, except Andy Dufresne's disappearance from his jail cell. A moment later, Warden Norton finally finds the reason. Behind the huge Rita Hayworth poster, there is a huge hole. At this time, all the small things mentioned above have a good explanation. For nearly 20 years, Andy digs a tunnel to get out of the prison with a small hammer. Twenty years' dig is a big project which only a few people can accomplish. Behind this big project, it is the desire for freedom. For nearly 20 years, the desire for freedom always encourages him to dig the channel until he gets his freedom at last.

This kind of narration tactic gives people a great impression. The importance of getting out of the prison and being free is enlarged immediately after the exposedness of the hole. There is a big surprise at the end of the story. The reveal of the big hole may give people a big shock, a shock about the great efforts he made---digging the tunnel for nearly 20 years with a small hammer. In this way, the reason behind this ---to get out of the prison and regain freedom is enhanced immediately. The importance of freedom of body of an individual is also enhanced.

The scene that Andy escapes from Shawshank at a stormy night also gives us a profound impression. After he breaks into the shit-smelling pipe and crawls 500 yards, he finally gets out of Shawshank. He wades upstream, ripping his clothes from his body. He gets his shirt off, spins it through the air over his head, and flings the shirt away. He raises his arms to the sky, turning slowly, feeling the rain washing him clean. This scene lasts for a moment and the joy of Andy is shown most incisively. That's the feeling of rebirth and freedom. By showing his hugging of freedom, this film reflected the importance of pursuit of freedom of body most vividly.

In general, by showing the great efforts made by Andy and the scene after he gets out of the prison, *The Shawshank Redemption* gives prominence to the pursuit of freedom of body.

1.1.2 Red

In the film, the process for Red to escape after the parole is quite thought-provoking. By showing Red's decision in front of being free, once again, this film illustrates the meaningfulness of the freedom of body.

More accurately speaking, if we say the word "redemption" is for Andy himself, the story is quite prosaic. However, if we say the word "redemption" is for Red, the story is quite thought-provoking. Since Red is quite hesitated and can not make up his mind to make a decision in front of freedom, by showing Red's choice at the end of the story, this film shows us that freedom of body is something we can not give up.

At the beginning of the film, Red (the narrator of the film) is introduced to us as "the guy who can get things for you." In the film, Red is a very important man, not only because he is the best friend of Andy and sells the things which help Andy escape from the prison, but also because his belief about freedom of body has gone through tremendous changes. After living a long time in the prison, Red has the ability to get things for people and this has given him a special status among the prisoners. He is quite used to his lifestyle within the walls of the prison. Once, Red

explains to Andy: “These walls are funny. First you hate them, then you get used to them, until it gets to you depend on them.” Red is quite proud of the role he plays inside the prison. He knows the prison very well and he can do something for others. He believes this is the meaning of his life. If he is set out of the prison, he would be unsure of his role in society. He would no longer be the guy who can get things and his life would have no meaning. At this time, the pursuit of freedom of body is something abandoned by Red.

However, being influenced by Andy Dufresne, Red’s belief changes gradually. Andy tries hard to bring hope to his fellows through small events like improving the prison library and helping some inmates get the high school diploma and so on. This also affects Red and lets he believe in the power of hope for freedom. At last, Red is released from prison on parole. People may think that Red achieves his freedom of body at this time because he is on parole. In fact, this is not the real freedom of body. After he is released, he works in a supermarket under the supervision of police and the public. He still asks for permission before going to the toilet. He is not free.

At the beginning, Red fears that his destiny will be the same as that of Brooks. Brooks is the old librarian who is set out the prison in his old age. Been confined in prison for such a long time that he can not accept the world outside and killed himself in a hotel. This fear continues until one day Red finds the box left by Andy. It is this box that gives Red money and hope that encourages him to flee to join Andy in Mexico. In that place, they can both be free from the shackles of society. In that little town in Mexico bordering on the Pacific, they both realize the freedom of body.

Exactly speaking, the word “Redemption” is more appropriate for Red. Even though, before Red been redeemed, there are lots of doubts and fears, while at last, he overcomes all these inward hardships and realizes redemption. The last scene of the film is Red walking across a sun drenched beach toward Andy. At this time, Red’s pursuit of freedom is achieved. They hug with each other for a long time. This might be the most beautiful scene of the film since both of them are free now. This is

also the best end that the audiences expect. From this scene, Red's pursuit of freedom of body is well demonstrated.

In all, the pursuit of freedom of body is best reflected through Andy and Red. Although their attitudes toward freedom are different and their ways of handling freedom are also different, anyway, in this film, it is implied that freedom of body of an individual is something we should never give up.

1.2 Freedom of Spirit

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, the pursuit of freedom of spirit is the theme profoundly demonstrated. As for the freedom of spirit in *The Shawshank Redemption*, we can not avoid mentioning three scenes: drinking beer on the roof, rebuilding the library and enjoying *The Marriage of Figaro*. Through these three scenes, *The Shawshank Redemption* can be considered as a film that highly promotes the freedom of spirit.

1.2.1 Drinking Beer on the Roof

The scene drinking beer on the roof of a factory reflects the freedom of spirit because prison is a place without beer, drinking beer lets the prisoners feel like free men.

Once some of the prisoners are tarring the roof of the license plate factory, Andy proposes to solve the guard's financial problem by the exchange of some icy beer for his fellow members. Here is a scene in the movie that the group of prisoners found themselves drinking icy cold beer on the roof, which is extremely unlikely to happen. This is a truly precious moment for them. Here Red, Andy's inmate, tells how he feels about the special moment of drinking beer on the roof.

“We sat and drank with the sun on our shoulders, and felt like free men. We could have been tarring the roof of one of our own houses. We were the Lords of all

Creation. You could argue he'd done it to curry favor with the guards. Or maybe make a few friends among us cons. Me, I think he did it just to feel normal again...if only for a short while." (King 53)

For the ordinary people, it is hard to understand why Red feels this way. But for those prisoners serving life sentences, drinking icy beer in the sun on a roof is quite a luxury. Since in prison, normal life no longer belongs to them and they want it badly and try everything to relive this kind of life, even though it only lasts for a moment. According to the narration of Red, the desire for freedom of spirit is revealed completely. As for Andy, Red says: "he spent that break hunkered in the shade, a strange little smile on his face, watching us drink his beer." In the film, this is the first time Andy smiles after spending a long time in Shawshank. Behind the smile, it is the real joy of being free in the spirit, even though it only lasts for a moment. By analyzing the narration of Red and the smile of Andy, this scene shows the importance of being free spiritually and the preciousness of enjoying mental freedom most profoundly.

1.2.2 Expanding the Library

The scene expanding the library suggests the importance of freedom of spirit for an individual because library is a place where the prisoners can get more knowledge and know more about the outside world.

While in prison, Andy has the desire to make knowledge freely available to the inmates, so he chooses to expand the library and secure educational materials for the prisoners. In order to get the funding or donation, Andy writes a letter every week to the state senate for six years to request the necessary funds. Finally, he ends up getting his wish with two hundred dollars and some books. This is an epoch-making victory, and it brings a far-reaching effects. The prisoners could read books, learn something from the library. They could enjoy freedom in the library the same as the outside people. They can know more about the outside world. Andy redefines

Shawshank as a place where people can grow, develop and reach their potential. This library also provides some positions for the prisoner, which helps them to find their own role just the same as that in the outside world. They don't barely sit still or held a though only in their mind. They have work to do just like a free man.

It takes Andy about 6 years to write letters to the state senate until he finally gets response for the funding. Six years is not a short time. Behind the persistence for six years is to get more books. More books means more chances to get in touch with the outside world. After getting the money, he makes deals with book clubs and charity groups. At last, he transforms a broom closet smelling of turpentine into the best prison library in New England. More than six years' hard work changes back the books, records, and other materials that help the inmates to improve themselves and know more about the outside world. This is the incessant freedom of inner world and spirit.

In the film, the scene showing the rebuilding of the library is bright and brisk. This is totally different from the previous dim scenes. For a moment, the audiences may forget that it is in the prison. All the prisoners are busy in rebuilding the library. In the library, they walk and talk freely, read and sing without regulation. It seems that they are no different from the people outside the prison. This is the power of knowledge and this is the power of freedom of spirit.

1.2.3 Enjoying *The Marriage of Figaro*

The scene enjoying *The Marriage of Figaro* reflects the freedom of spirit because prison is a place without music and enjoying music lets the prisoners feel free.

Music is an important instrument used in this movie to express the freedom of spirit. When Andy is sorting out the various records that were donated to the prison's new library, he comes across the opera "Le nozze di Figaro" by Mozart. By chance, he is left alone in warden's office. Instead of moving the boxes of books and records out of the warden's office, Andy takes the Mozart record out and sets it up on the

record player. He locks the door, starts the record, and suddenly we hear the opening of the duet number “Che soave zeffiretto.” As the beautiful music blasts from the intercom speakers, all of the prisoners outside stop whatever they are doing and just look up. All the people heard this beautiful voice was all shocked, as if time stopped. Indeed, this is a place without music. For the prisoners, the song brings back memories and takes them to a place outside of the prison. The entire prison shares a moment of freedom and the music makes the prison walls dissolve. It feels like a kind of baptism of the soul. As for Andy, smile with a sense of victory broadened across Andy’s face. Making use of his own value and the trust of inmate guards, he once again brings feeling of freedom to his friends. This feeling is deepened by Red’s narration.

“I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about. Truth is, I don't want to know. Some things are better left unsaid. I'd like to think they were singing about something so beautiful, it can't be expressed in words, and it makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you: those voices soared higher and farther than anybody in a grey place dares to dream. It was as if some beautiful bird had flapped into our drab little cage and made these walls dissolve away, and for the briefest of moments, every last man in Shawshank felt free.” (King 159)

According to the narration of Red, this may be the most beautiful song in the world because it is song played in a place without music. *The Marriage of Figaro* dissolves away the invisible walls that exists in the hearts of the prisoners and makes their mind fly out of the prison. For a moment, the pursuit of freedom of spirit is aroused. Music, as an instrument to bring freedom of spirit, plays a crucial role in this film. Through showing Red’s narration and other inmates’ response when enjoying *The Marriage of Figaro*, this film gives a fully expression to the importance of freedom of spirit.

In all, drinking beer on the roof, rebuilding new library and enjoying *The Marriage of Figaro* are three scenes that show the freedom of mind of the prisoners. Through showing these beautiful scenes, the invisible prison of mind is broken and the freedom of spirit is achieved.

In general, through analyzing the freedom of body and freedom of spirit embodied in this film respectively, this thesis tries to reveal that the freedom of an individual is the most important theme promoted by *The Shawshank Redemption*. As for the freedom of body, the prison-breaking of Andy and the decision of Red are discussed. As for the freedom of spirit, three scenes: drinking beer on the roof, expanding the library and enjoying the *The Marriage of Figaro* are discussed. All of these scenes and characters depicted in this film is the reflection of being free. Since individual freedom is the foundation of Individualism, the physical and spiritual freedom demonstrated in this film is also the indication of Individualism. Through showing a series of behaviors and events related to freedom, this film *The Shawshank Redemption* successfully structures the American value of Individualism.

Chapter Two Individual Independence

The Oxford Unabridged Dictionary (755) offers many definitions of independence, including “not depending on the authority of others” and “not depending on others for forming an opinion.” Different people may have different opinions on independence. However, generally speaking, in the eyes of individualists, independence means the exercise of one’s goal and desires, while opposing most external interference upon one’s choices, whether by society, or any other group or institution. As is the case with most cultural patterns, the origin of independence has had a long history. Two hundred years before Christ, the Latin poet Quintus Ennius offered the following advice that clearly spelled out the independent nature of the individual: “Do not expect stranger to do for you what you can do for yourself”. Centuries later, Benjamin Franklin reminded us of much the same thing when he wrote that “God helps those who help themselves”. Independence manifests itself in individual initiative (“Pull yourself up by your own boot straps”) and independence (“Do your own thing”). Whether it is in social or ethical matters, the self for Americans holds the pivotal position. (Samovar, Porter and Stefani 62) In the definition of Individualism given by American Heritage Dictionary, it is indicated that Individualism is the belief in the primary importance of the individual and in the virtue of personal independence. That is to say Individualism is a kind of theory that stresses independence.

The Shawshank Redemption is voted as the most inspirational movie of all time by British film fans in 2006. In the film, the behavior of the protagonist Andy is the typical representative of Independence. The spirit of self-salvation of the film encourages people to depend on themselves to change their own destinies. The story of the film shows a man with a strong will to commit on the things he decides to do without any interference or help of others. As to the spirit of independence in *The*

Shawshank Redemption, I want to discuss it from the perspectives of thought and action. In *The Shawshank Redemption*, the spirit of independence is mainly demonstrated by the protagonist. In the following part, the independent spirit of *The Shawshank Redemption* will be divided into independent thinking and self-reliance. These two aspects of independence will be analyzed in detail respectively.

2.1 Independent Thinking

According to the Oxford Unabridged Dictionary (756), independent thinking is a process of being able to think on your own, without someone else guiding you. It means the sense of the world based on your own observations and experiences rather than just depending on the word of others. It means trusting your own ability to make judgments, even if they contradict what others say.

In the film *The Shawshank Redemption*, the protagonist Andy is a person with independent ideas and opinions which are quite different from those of others. He thinks in his own way and his thought is never influenced by others. In the following parts, forming different opinion independently and making decisions independently by Andy will be discussed in detail to further analyze the independent thinking of Andy.

2.1.1 Forming Opinions Independently

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, through showing Andy's ability in forming opinions independently, especially the opinion on hope, the independent thinking is well demonstrated. In this part, the formation of a different opinion or idea on hope of Andy will be discussed in detail.

At the beginning of *The Shawshank Redemption*, the protagonist Andy gives us an impression which is quite different from that of others. He doesn't talk too much and his behavior seems unsuitable in the prison. Red describes him as that "A talk and a walk just are not normal around the prison. He strolls in the playground just

like a man in a part without a care or worry or like he had on an invisible coat that would shield him from the prison.” In the whole film, it can be found out that sparing in speech is always Andy’s characteristic. Nobody really understands him and knows what in his mind.

One thing can be sure of is that his attitude towards “hope” is quite different from that of others. In Shawshank, “hope” is a dangerous thing. According to other prisoners, hope means punishments and even death. Being afraid of be punished, most of the prisoners live in the Shawshank without hope. In prison, they are bound by strict rules and strict times for doing everything, and everything is based on the routine. After long time enough, “hope” disappears and all prisoners do is to live with routines. What’s worse is that after spending years there, the prisoners may get used to that kind of life, a life without getting to know who to be. This is the case for most of the prisoners. The following sentences are what Red said to his fellow members after the attempted killing of Brooks.

“Believe what you want. These walls are funny. First you hate them, then you get used to them. After long enough, you get so you depend on them. That’s institutionalized.” (King 112)

This is the truth in the prison. To Red and most of other prisoners, hope is the origin of sin and it is dangerous. However, as for Andy, his thought is quite different. After Andy joining the big family of Shawshank, his best friend Red warns him several times that hope is dangerous. But to Andy, it is not. What Andy believes is that hope is a good thing, maybe the best of all things. He is always full of hope and lives with the hope of freedom. With hope, he succeeds in establishing a new and well-arranged library for his fellow friends in Shawshank by writing letters to the government every week for 6 years. With hope, he plays the classical music through the loudspeaker in the prison at the cost of two weeks in the “dark room”. With hope,

he spends 19 years digging a hole in his room with a small hammer and finally breaks out of the prison for freedom. With hope, he shatters the conspiracy of the warden and the guard with careful planning.

After his escape from the prison, Andy tries to persuade his best friend Red to join him in Mexico. At first, Red is quite afraid of doing that. It is Andy with his faith and friendship that lights the hope in his heart. In the letter Andy leaves to Red, it is said that “Hope is a good, maybe the best thing in the world and no good thing will die.” (King 225) After that, Red takes a bus to join Andy and feels that “I am so excited I can barely sit still or hold a thought in my head. I think it is the excitement only a free man can feel a freeman at the start of a long journey whose conclusion is uncertain. I hope I can make it across the border. I hope I can see my friend and shake his hand. I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams.”

In all, Andy’s attitude toward hope is quite different from that of other prisoners. Even though, in such a dark and brutal environment in which all the behaviors should be based on the orders of the wardens, his thought and belief about hope are not changed. Friends’ warning that hope is dangerous thing will not disturb him to think in his own way. In addition, his belief on hope is not influenced by the words of the wardens and other fellow inmates. He sticks to what he believes right. Through showing Andy’s ability in forming opinions independently, this film highly promotes the ability of independent thinking.

2.1.2 Making Decisions Independently

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, the protagonist Andy is also a person with strong ability of making decision independently. He determines his own fate or course of action without the interference of others. The following two events: deciding to break prison independently and deciding to write to the State Senates independently are the examples showing Andy’s ability of making decision independently.

Firstly, the prison-breaking plan made by Andy will be discussed. It is until the morning that Andy does not come out from his cell, his fellow members find out that

he is missing. Nobody knows what happened to him until people find out the tunnel leading out of the prison after twenty years of chipping away little by little at the prison wall. The small foreshadows like the chisel, the Rita Hayworth poster, the Bible etc. indicate that Andy prepares his escaping way from the beginning of his jail days. However, for almost twenty years, nobody knows his plan and it is at the end of the story that people realize the functions of the hammer, poster and Bible. In the whole process, Andy talks to nobody and nobody gives him advices. It is Andy alone who decides what to do from the beginning to the end.

The second event that can illustrate his ability to make decision independently is to write letters to the State Senates. When Andy comes up the idea to ask the warden for funds to expand the library, nobody in favor of his idea and stand by him. When he talks about his idea during the lunch time, almost everybody laughs at him. Brooks tells him that: "Son, I've had six wardens through here during my tenure, and I have learned one great immutable truth of the universe: not one of them been born whose asshole don't pucker up tight as a snare drum when you ask for funds." Later, he talks to Warden Samuel Norton his idea. Norton says that his budget's stretched thin as it is. When Andy proposes to write to the State Senate and request funds directly from them, Norton's answer is that: "Far as them Republican boys in Augusta are concerned, there's only three ways to spend the taxpayer's hard-earned when it come to prisons. More walls. More bars. More guard." That is to say the according to Brooks, Warden Norton and other members in the prison, state senate will definitely do not give funds to him to expand the library. However, Andy still would like to try. He decides to send weekly letters to the state senate and he believes that they can't ignore him forever.

This is Andy who always sticks to what he believes and tries his best to accomplish what he believes true. As long as he decides to do something, the word of others can not influence him to change his idea. Through these two events, it can draw the conclusion that the protagonist Andy is a person who always decides his

own affairs.

In general, in *The Shawshank Redemption*, through showing Andy's thought on hope, his ability of forming opinions independently is reflected and through showing the prison-breaking plan and writing to the States Senates, his ability of making decisions independently is reflected. The protagonist Andy's ability of independent thinking is well demonstrated through forming opinions independently and making decisions independently.

2.2 Self-reliance

The self-reliance theory is an indispensable part and the organic component of Individualism. It is the capacity to manage one's own affairs without the help of others. Alexis de Tocqueville observed the American's belief in self-reliance near 300 years ago.

“They own nothing to any man, they expect nothing from any man; they acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hand”. (Tocqueville 273)

This strong belief in self-reliance continues today as a traditional basic American value. For example, people in America achieve both financial and emotional independence from their parents as early as possible. They should take care of themselves, solve their own problems, and “stand on their own two feet”.

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, the spirit of self-reliance is demonstrated profoundly. A lot of things carried out by the protagonist are the examples of self-reliance. In this part, two events: fighting against the “Sisters” alone and breaking the prison alone will be discussed in detail to prove the spirit of self-reliance of the protagonist and further to prove that self-reliance is highly

promoted in *The Shawshank Redemption*.

2.2.1 Fighting Against the “Sisters” Alone

In the film, one of the hardships that Andy has to face is fighting against the “Sisters”. Through showing Andy’s fighting against the “Sisters” alone, this film highly advocates the spirit of self-reliance.

There are men who can’t stand to be without sex of some kind and turn to another man to keep from going crazy. In Shawshank prison, they are the “Sisters”. They are to prison society what the rapist is to the society outside the walls. Their prey is the young, the weak, and the inexperienced person, or as in the case of Andy Dufresne with a weak looking. Because of his fair good looks or special nature or other reasons, the sisters are after Andy from the day he walked in.

The first time Bogs, the head of the sisters, tantalizes Andy is in the shower less than three days after Andy joins in this big family. Andy shows his dislike towards Bogs at the beginning and at that time, the sisters promised to get him – and Bogs did. The second time is behind the washers in the laundry. It is a dusty and narrow space with bags of washing and bleaching compound. When the four sisters try to attack Andy and carry out sexual assault and violence on him, Andy holds a handful of Hexlite, threatening to throw it in their eyes if they come any closer. In face of their physical aggression, Andy isn’t resigned to their behaviors but shows great courage and power to resist. However, Andy alone can not resist three of them. They are on him at last. We get this from the following narration make by Red.

“I wish I could tell you that Andy fought a good fight and the sisters let him be. I wish I could tell you that, but prison is no fairy-tale world. He never said who did it, but we all knew. Things went on like that for a while. Prison life consists of routine and then more routine. Every so often, Andy would show up with fresh bruises. The Sisters kept at him. Sometimes he was able to fight them off... sometimes not. He always fought, that’s what I remember. He fought because he knew if he didn’t fight,

it would make it that much easier not to fight the next time. And that's how it went for Andy. That was his routine. I do believe those first two years were the worst for him. And I also believe if things had gone on that way, this place would have got the best off him.” (King 53)

Through these scenes, we can see that Andy always fights alone. He never talks to anybody. He never wants to get the help from someone. The fact is everybody knew it, but they, including his best friend Red, can't do anything to help him. The guards also know about it and just let it be. Andy goes through this alone, the way he goes through everything alone in those days. He must have come to the conclusion that there are only two ways to deal with the Sisters: fight them and get taken. This entire situation should be handled by him self alone. In this way, the spirit of self-reliance is reflected deeply.

2.2.2 Digging the Tunnel Alone

Another event that reflects the spirit of self-reliance profoundly is the digging the tunnel alone. Through showing Andy's reliance on himself in digging the tunnel for nearly 20 years, this film presents the idea that only by relying on oneself, can one succeed in doing things. In this way, once again, the spirit of self-reliance is demonstrated.

The world in prison is no Eden, which can be best implied by the name of the prison: Shawshank, meaning the big shark, is the place to lock felons who are sentenced to spend the rest of their lives. Since the first day Andy is put in Shawshank, he gets to know that he can never get out of the prison through legal process or by relying on others. Andy chooses to get his freedom through jailbreak, which turns out to be long prepared since his initial days in Shawshank.

On a morning in 1975, Andy disappears from the Shawshank. Everything seems the same with any other morning in the prison, except that Andy's cellblock is empty with everything else in but Andy's disappearance. Nobody knows what happened.

His best friend Red also feels as surprised as the others. A few seconds later, Warden Norton's surprised and bewildered face at the big hole behind the huge Rita Hayworth poster that has been on Andy's cellblock wall for more than 10 years pushes the story to its climax.

By relying on himself, Andy spends 19 years to dig the way to freedom and he successfully escapes from the prison at last. According to Red, that should take a man 600 years to tunnel through the wall with a little hammer. Andy did it in 19 years. Nineteen years' digging is such a big project that no body can believe that Andy finished this big project alone in 19 years. However, that's the truth. The strong belief in hope and freedom drive him to persist on prison breaking. What surprises us is not only his persistence in achieving his target but also his maintenance in keeping that a secret for 19 years. He tells nobody about his plan even his best friend Red. Nobody gives him a hand in finishing such a big project. All is accomplished by him alone. By overcoming lots of difficulties alone, the hero of the film interprets the spirit of self-reliance most vividly and comprehensively. The protagonist holds the spirit of self-reliance and achieves his dream step by step. This is also the reason why *The Shawshank Redemption* is one of the best inspirational films for all the time.

In all, the spirit of independence is best presented in *The Shawshank Redemption* by showing the protagonist Andy's ability of independently thinking and spirit of self-reliance. As for the independent thinking ability, forming opinions independently and making decisions independently are discussed. As for the spirit of self-reliance, fighting against the "Sisters" alone and digging the tunnel alone are discussed. Through these events and scenes, it is proved that the protagonist Andy is the most typical representative of the man with the spirit of independence. Since independence is the mainstay of Individualism, it can be said that through showing the independence, *The Shawshank Redemption* successfully structures the American value of Individualism.

Chapter Three Individual Interests in Reputation and Wealth

The word “interest” has various meanings. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the definition of interest includes a state of curiosity or concern about or attention to something; regard for one’s own benefit or advantage; a charge for a loan, usually a percentage of the amount loaned; involvement with or participation in something and so on. However, in this thesis, regard for one’s own benefit or advantage is taken as the definition of interest. Therefore, individual interests refer to the benefits or advantages of an individual.

In Individualism, the interests of the individual should always take precedence over the interests of the group. Different from collectivism which advocates subordination of the individual to the will of the society or community, Individualism believe that the pursuit of personal interests is of paramount importance and should be protected by law. For Americans, individual interests as a life goal increased greatly, on the contrary, public interests concerns diminished modestly.

In addition, it is necessary to clearly tell the difference between “Individualism” and “Egoism”. Egoism is the doctrine that holds that individuals ought to do what is in their self-interest and individual are always motivated by self-interest. Under the guidance of egoism, one is always thinking about oneself and what is best for oneself and his or her action are always caused by a wish to benefit him or herself. Simply speaking, it is an extreme Individualism which always pursues one’s own welfare, and usually accompanied by an inflated sense of self-importance. On the other hand, Individualism focuses on the satisfaction of one’s own desire and interests mainly through one’s own abilities and efforts. (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swilder and Tipton 89)

The content of individual interests or personal interests is quite broad. Any thing or any events that is good for an individual can be considered as his or her personal interests. In the film *The Shawshank Redemption*, there are many scenes that describe the pursuit of personal interests. However, in this part, only individual interests in reputation and wealth are chosen to be discussed with the combination of the scenes of this film to show that the pursuit of individual interests is well reflected in this film. In *The Shawshank Redemption*, instead of putting the protagonist Andy to endure all the injustice, ill-treat and oppression before his final regaining of freedom like most third-class popular films do to get audiences' sympathy and tears, it is indicated in the film that actually after the initial agony and troubles, the protagonist Andy acquires how to get benefits and good in the prison and how to make himself live with leisure and comfort despite the narrowness and finiteness of the "leisure" and "comfort" called here. In the following part, the individual interests in reputation and wealth reflected in this film will be discussed respectively.

3.1 Individual Interests in Reputation

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, much deal of the story shows that Andy lives well in the prison with a good reputation and praises. His individual interests in reputation are achieved mainly through his own efforts. In order to analyze the pursuit of individual interests in reputation of the protagonist, winning the respect of the guards and gaining a high status among prisoners will be analyzed in detail.

3.1.1 Gaining Guard's Respect

The pursuit of individual interests in reputation can be well illustrated through the event that he helps the guards solve the tax issue to get the respect of the guards.

The turning point of Andy's life begins with the event that he provokes Hadley (the captain of the guard) and proposes his method to help Hadley in tax evasion. In

the film, Hadley is a merciless and brutal man who treats the life of the prisoners like dirt. For the new prisoners, the first night is the toughest. One new guy who is unable to hold his fears and tears at the first night is beaten to death by Hadley. Nobody dares to catch his attention and provoke him to anger since he can kill anybody if he wants.

It is a morning when Andy and other prisoners are tarring the roof of a building. By a chance, Hadley is talking with his colleagues that his brother has died and leaves him thirty-five thousand. This is supposed to be a lucky thing but Hadley does not think so. He is complaining that the government will take most of his money as tax. At that time, Andy walks toward to Hadley to propose his way to solve Hadley's problem. At first, Hadley gets him by the throat and pushes him to the edge of the roof. With courage, Andy explains to Hadley that he can give the money to his wife since IRS allows a one-time-only gift to your spouse for up to \$60,000 with free tax. At the beginning, Hadley doesn't believe in him since he is a banker who killed his wife. However, Andy continues to explain to him and says that he would like to prepare the paper for him nearly free of charge. At last, Andy successfully wins this chance and handles this affair for Hadley.

At this time, we may wonder that why Andy risks his life to help and give advises to this brutal and ruthless warder. Does he really just want to help Hadley from the bottom of the heart? Of course, the answer is definitely "no" since almost everybody in the prison believes that he is a devilish person. So, what's the reason behind this? What drives Andy to do such a risky thing? The film does not give us the answer directly. In spite of that, from the following consequences, we can draw the conclusion that it is personal interests in reputation that drives Andy to risk his own life to help Hadley in tax affairs.

After that, Andy's status and reputation raise a lot in the prison. One consequence is that a lot of warders come to Andy for consultation on financial affairs. They ask him to help to complete their tax returns, loan applications and

other similar financial tasks. He becomes a successful financial advisor inside the prison. At one time, a guard comes to Andy for help to make an application for his son to go to a university. The guard shook hands with Andy just like Andy works as a real consultant but not a prisoner. During the lunch hour, Brooks, the old librarian tells his fellow members the following.

“God is my witness. And Dekins, he just blinks for a second, then laughs his ass off. Afterward, he actually shook Andy’s hand. Shook his fucking hand. Just about shit myself. All Andy needed was a suit and a tie, a jiggly little hula girl on his desk, he would have been Mister Dufresne, if you please.” (King 78)

From Brooks’ words, it is easy to find out that Andy wins a high respect of the guards by helping them in handling financial affairs. In tax seasons, the police officers even form a long queue to wait for Andy. Prisoner as he was, Andy did more than a civilian. With the help of his professional knowledge of finance and taxation, he is hired by Warden Samuel Norton as his own personal “banker” of sorts, to help the man launder money due to his “inside out” program. In the whole process, knowledge on finance plays an important role in changing Andy’s life in prison. Therefore, some of his special behaviors are permitted, such as working and walking freely in the office of the Warden, pasting posters of some famous actress on the wall or carving chessmen with his little hammer at night. With the help of knowledge of finance, Andy wins respect of the guard by helping them in solving financial affairs.

Another consequence is that from then on Andy gets the protection from the head of the guards. One time, after the “Sisters” performing sexual harassment on Andy, Hadley, the head of the guard, takes the revenge for Andy and almost beats Bogs, the head of the “Sisters” to death. According to the narration of Red, two things never happen again after that: the “Sisters” never laid a finger on Andy again and Bogs never walked again. From this scene, Andy’s influential role can be sensed.

Since Andy is only one of the prisoners in Shawshank, the reason why the guards of the prison want to help and protect him is that his function in dealing with financial affairs wins him guards' respect.

In all, according to the above analysis, the conclusion that what Andy does for the guards in the prison is, in fact, for his own benefits and advantages can be drawn. Through helping the guards in financial affairs, Andy is highly respected by the guards. Since the protagonist would like to run his life to help the guards in solving the financial affairs, it is not difficult to know the importance of pursuit of reputation for an individual. In this way, the importance and meaningfulness of pursuit of reputation of an individual is highly promoted in this film.

3.1.2 Enjoying a High Status among the Prisoners

The pursuit of individual interests in reputation can also be well illustrated through the events that he does a lot of things that benefit other prisoners to gain a high status.

In most part of *The Shawshank Redemption*, Andy lives a comfortable life with high status in Shawshank. In the prison, Andy tries to do a lot of things that benefit the inmates, such as wining two bottles of beer for each of the prisoners who tar the roof, expanding the library, helping them in getting high school diploma and so on. Through these behaviors, Andy gets praises from the other prisoners and his status among the prisoners is improved greatly. Gradually, he takes the place of Red and becomes the centre of the prison.

After Andy solves the financial affair of Hadley and wins two bottles of beer for his fellow members, he becomes the topic of other prisoners. His heroic image is enlarged rapidly and other prisoners need to look at him with new eyes. In order to give Andy a nice welcome back after he is released from the confinement, some of his fellow prisoners decide to collect some rocks for Andy when doing the work outside since they know he likes chess and wants to carve chess with the rocks. From this small event, it is easy to get to know that Andy occupies an important position

among the fellow prisoners.

Besides, Andy also gains the reputation among the inmates through giving them practical help. As the librarian of Shawshank, Andy writes to the State Senate for six years to get funds. At last, the State Senate has allocated two hundred dollars for the library project. In addition, the Library District has generously responded with a charitable donation of used books and sundries. The library is expanded and more and more prisoners can find a position in managing the library. The prisoners could read books, learn something from the library. They could enjoy the freedom in the library the same as the outside people. The library even becomes a place for people to perform the role of students and teachers. All of this is contributed to Andy. Without Andy's efforts, this is just an unrealistic dream. Through rebuilding the library, Andy gives other prisoners practical help. From this event, Andy gains respect and praises, and enjoys a high status among the prisoners.

In addition, Andy also plays the role of teacher and takes time to teach and empower others. He receives great fulfillment in seeing one of his students get his GED from prison. Serving others and being a part of their growth is one of the greatest forms of fulfillment that one can experience. This is deepened by the story of Tommy. Tommy is a young man in and out of prison his whole life. He enlists Andy's help in learning how to read and write to get a High School Diploma which Tommy hopes it can help him to support his family after his release. He is completely illiterate and doesn't believe in himself at the beginning. However, Andy does give up him and decides to teach him from ABC. Through the help of Andy, he finally gets what he wants even though at last he is killed by the Warden. By helping them in getting high school diploma, once again, Andy's heroic image is enlarged. He is the most talked about person by other prisoners and enjoys a high status in the prison.

In general, the pursuit of reputation is an important part in the pursuit of individual interests. By helping the guards in handling financial affairs and doing a

lot of things that benefit other prisoners, Andy wins high respect of the guards and enjoys a high status among the prisoners. Through showing the scenes and events that closely related to the pursuit of reputation, the pursuit of individual interests is well reflected in *The Shawshank Redemption*.

3.2 Individual Interests in Wealth

As for the individual interests, the interests in wealth can be considered as the most important part. According to the Individualism, the pursuit of individual interests, especially the success in wealth, is an important goal for Americans. In *The Shawshank Redemption*, almost all the leading roles show their ways to get personal wealth in some ways. It can be said that *The Shawshank Redemption* is a film that reflects the pursuit of personal wealth. In order to analyze the pursuit of individual interests in the film, the events of two characters Andy and Red that are closely related to the pursuit of personal wealth will be analyzed in detail in the following part.

3.2.1 Pursuing Personal Wealth by Andy

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, much deal of the story shows Andy's selflessness and greatness in helping others. However, the pursuit of personal wealth by Andy can also be found at the end of the story. In order to analyze the pursuit of personal wealth of the protagonist, his behavior of taking money off will be analyzed in detail.

After Andy escapes from the prison, the next morning, a man nobody ever laid eyes on before strolls into the Casco Bank of Portland. This man is Andy. He comes to the bank with the name of Peter Stevens to close out some accounts. He is a man created by Andy and only exists in papers. Mr. Stevens visits nearly a dozen banks in the Portland area that morning. All told, he blew town with better than 370 thousand dollars.

It is easy to find out that taking this big sum of money is Andy's plan soon after he works for Warden Norton. In the film, Andy tells Red that his dream is to live in the place right on the Pacific with a little hotel and a boat right on the beach. At that time, Red thinks Andy is talking about a dream that can never be realized. In fact, it can be realized and it is. With the help of knowledge on finance, Andy creates a virtual person Peter Stevens, and opens an account in the name of Mr. Stevens when working for Norton. He knows that one day he can get out of the prison and make this sum of money his property. It is an important part of his prison-breaking plan. Only with this big sum of money, he can realize his dream of living a comfortable life in Mexico without restraint. Since Andy is convicted guilty when he does not commit the crime and endures imprisonment for almost 20 years, it is quite justified for him to take this big sum of money as repayment.

In all, in *The Shawshank Redemption*, besides doing things that benefit others, Andy also plans to get benefits for himself, especially the benefit in wealth. Since the beginning of his work for Warden Norton, he plans to take his money as the repayment. The protagonist Andy, the hero praised by the audiences, also shows his pursuit and desire for money. Through showing the Andy's pursuit of personal wealth, the importance of personal wealth for an individual is well demonstrated.

3.2.2 Pursuing Personal Wealth by Red

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, the pursuit of personal wealth can also be well illustrated by showing Red's business in the prison.

Generally speaking, prison should be a place with no businesses. In prison, the prisoners are bound by strict rules and strict times for doing things to achieve corrections and rehabilitation. However, at the beginning of the film, Red is introduced to us as a guy who can get things. The following is his narration about himself at the beginning of the film.

“There's a con like me in every prison in America, I guess. I'm the guy who can get

it for you. Cigarettes, a bag of reefer if you're partial, a bottle of brandy to celebrate your kid's high school graduation. Damn near anything, within reason.”(King 23)

In the prison, Red has a friend working as a porter to carry things from the outside. Taking advantage of this work, his friend can get things from the outside world and then give them to Red to sell out in the prison with a higher price. Generally speaking, for a person who is sentenced to spend the rest of his life in the prison, the pursuit of wealth should have no great meaning. However, in order to pursue personal wealth, Red still tries every means to make deals in such a dark environment.

In the film, Red's pursuit of personal wealth can be well illustrated by the scene in which he does business with Andy. The first conversation between Andy and Red is the talking of business. Andy asks Red to get him a rock-hammer. At first, Red intends to refuse Andy's request since it is a lethal sort of object and it may bring him trouble to get that. After the negotiation with Andy, Red agrees to do business with Andy since Andy will give him a higher price. Just as Red says that risk goes up, price goes up. In fact, Red knows the risk behind doing business in prison. The warden Hadley is brutal and heartless. Once he finds out the business, both Red and Andy will come to no good end. However, driven by the personal wealth, Red is willing to run this risk. Red's role as a businessman in the prison runs through almost all the film and this is also the reason why he is the center of the film at the beginning of the film.

In all, the pursuit of wealth is the most important part in the pursuit of individual interests. In *The Shawshank Redemption*, Red runs a high risk in doing business in the prison in order to get personal wealth. Through showing the scene in which he does business with Andy, this film reflects the importance of personal wealth for an individual.

In general, in Individualism, the interests of an individual should take

precedence over the interests of the group. The pursuit of individual interests is an important goal for Americans. The content of individual interests is quite abroad. In this part, only individual interests in reputation and wealth are discussed with the combination of *The Shawshank Redemption*. As for the pursuit of reputation, the winning of respects of guards and gaining a high status among prisoners by Andy are analyzed. As for the pursuit of personal wealth, two characters Andy and Red is involved. Through showing their pursuits of reputation and personal wealth in the film, this film well reflects individual interests. Since in Individualism, individual interests takes an important position, through showing the pursuit of individual interests, the film *The Shawshank Redemption* gives fully expression to the Individualism.

Conclusion

American film *The Shawshank Redemption* is a highly engrossing and inspiring film directed by Frank Darabont based on Stephen King's novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*. This film has been appreciated worldwide and nominated for 7 Oscars, 2 Golden globe awards and series of other awards. According to the polls of IMDB, it is voted as the most popular American film by the audiences. As one of the most famous films of America, *The Shawshank Redemption* portrays the core value of Individualism most profoundly. Individualism is the subjective cultural spirit that ran through the whole work.

The film portrays the story of Andy Dufresne, played by Tim Robbins, a banker who spends nearly two decades in Shawshank State Prison for the murder of his wife and her lover despite his claims of being innocent. The film shows the horrendous life of prisoners in Shawshank prison. At the beginning of the film, Andy is subjected to extreme pain and abuse in the prison. However, with his worldly knowledge, nonchalant attitude and great inner strength, Andy endures the barbaric behavior of prison guards and the prisoners. By helping the guards in handling financial affairs and helping his fellow prisoners in obtaining some rights, Andy enjoys a high reputation and status and receives a lot of praise among the prisoners. He lives a relatively comfortable life in the prison. After spending almost 20 years in the Shawshank, one morning, Andy disappears from his cell. At last, it is found out that he escapes through the tunnel that he has dug for nearly 19 years. He escapes through prison walls, breaks into a sewage pipe and crawls 500 yards and finally gets out of the prison.

In addition to Andy, this film also tells us the story of Red, Andy's best friend. At the beginning of the film, Red plays an important role in the prison because he finds gainful use of his entrepreneurial spirit within the drab walls of Shawshank by selling commodities with a higher price in the prison. He knows the prison very well and is

quite used to his lifestyle within the walls of the prison. As time goes by, Andy's demeanor and undeniable sense of hope causes Red to take a deeper look at himself, and the world around him. Being influenced by Andy, Red's thought and belief on hope change greatly. At last, when Red is on parole, he takes heart of grace to join Andy in Mexico.

The theoretical guideline of the thesis is Individualism, which is regarded as the core value of America. There are many definitions on Individualism. Generally speaking, it is a belief in the primary importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence, a doctrine of freedom from government regulation of personal economic or social goals and a doctrine that the interests of the individual should take precedence over the interests of the group. The core concepts of Individualism are quite abroad, including personal privacy, self-reliance, self-expression, independent thinking, personal freedom, Independent determination, personal equality, free competition, personal lifestyle and so on. As for the concepts of Individualism, other scholars may draw a different conclusion. Nevertheless, the substance of Individualism is the same.

Based on the different concepts of Individualism, the analysis of *The Shawshank Redemption* is developed in three steps at three different angles: individual freedom, individual independence and individual interests in reputation and wealth. The first Chapter is the discussion on the foundation of Individualism --- individual freedom. Since freedom can be divided into freedom of body and spirit, the following part is the discussion of the embodiment of freedom of body and spirit in the film respectively. As for the freedom of body, two characters Andy and Red and their attitude towards being free physically are discussed. Although their attitudes toward freedom are different and their ways of handling freedom are also different, anyway, in this film, it is implied that freedom of body of an individual is something we should never give up. As for the freedom of spirit, three scenes: drinking beer on the roof, rebuilding the library and enjoying the *Marriage of Figaro* are discussed. From

these scenes, it's not difficult to understand that the freedom of spirit is something very important and promoted by *The Shawshank Redemption*. Since individual freedom is the foundation of Individualism, the physical and spiritual freedom demonstrated in this film is also the indication of Individualism. Through showing a series of behaviors and events related to freedom, this film *The Shawshank Redemption* successfully structures the American value of Individualism.

The second chapter is the discussion on the individual independence---mainstay of Individualism. In the eyes of individualists, independence means the exercise of one's goal and desires, while opposing most external interference upon one's choices, whether by society, or any other group or institution. *The Shawshank Redemption* is a film shows a man with a strong will to commit on the things he decides to do without any interference or help of others. The behavior of the protagonist Andy is the typical representative of Independence. In this part, individual independence is divided into independent thinking and self-reliance. As for the independent thinking of Andy, forming opinions independently and making decisions independently are discussed in detail. It is proved that protagonist Andy is a person whose independent thinking is portrayed vividly in this film. As for the self-reliance, two events are discussed. They are fighting against the "Sisters" alone and breaking the prison alone. The protagonist holds the spirit of self-reliance and achieves his dream step by step. By overcoming lots of difficulties alone, the hero of the film interprets the spirit of self-reliance most vividly and comprehensively. It can be concluded that through showing the events closely related to the spirit of independence, this film *The Shawshank Redemption* also successfully structures the American value of Individualism.

The third chapter is the discussion on individual interests in reputation and wealth. Individual interests is an important component of Individualism. According to the theory of Individualism, the interests of the individual should always take precedence over the interests of others and the state. In this part, the pursuit of

individual interests in reputation and wealth are discussed respectively. As for the pursuit of reputation by the protagonist, gaining guards' respect and enjoying a high status among the prisoner are discussed. By helping the guards in handling financial affairs, Andy gains respects from the guards. By doing things that benefits the prisoners, such as expanding the library and helping them getting high school diploma, Andy enjoys a high status among the prisoners. As for the pursuit of personal wealth, the events about Andy and Red that are closely related to personal wealth are discussed. By showing the pursuit of personal wealth by Andy and Red, this film stresses the importance of personal wealth for an individual. Therefore, it can be concluded that in *The Shawshank Redemption*, the pursuit of individual interests is exposed profoundly. Since individual interests takes up an important position in Individualism, through showing the pursuit of individual interests, *The Shawshank Redemption* gives fully expression to the Individualism.

From the brief introduction, analysis and discussion above, it can be seen that American popular film *The Shawshank Redemption* is a film that totally and deeply related to American core value of Individualism. Behind all these adventurous, thrilling and stirring plots, it is Individualism that lies behind. As is analyzed in the previous chapters, the characters, scenes, theme and plot all the factors are involved in presenting the American Individualism. In all, American value of Individualism is demonstrated in this film mainly through three aspects: individual freedom, individual independence and individual interests.

I hope that this thesis can provide some useful information for the people who will carry out relevant studies in the future. In order to accomplish this thesis, I read a lot of books and papers on Individualism and *The Shawshank Redemption* before writing. Because of the limitation of my knowledge on this topic and weakness of ability in writing, this thesis might still contain some defects and mistakes. A great deal of work should be carried out to improve this thesis. As for the defects and mistakes, I bear the whole responsibility.

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