



Finding Meaning Behind Bars: An Existential Analysis of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy in Stephen King's Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption

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Abstract

This research explores Stephen King's novella, Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption, through the perspective of Viktor Frankl's logotherapy. It focuses on the characters' search for meaning, freedom of choice, and self-transcendence within the oppressive environment of Shawshank Prison. By examining Andy Dufresne, Red Redding, and Brooks Hatlen, the study demonstrates how Frankl's concepts of the existential vacuum and the importance of finding purpose are illustrated in King's narrative. The analysis reveals how the characters' choices, their ability to find meaning, and their relationships contribute to their resilience. Ultimately, the research argues that Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption serves as a compelling literary exploration of logotherapeutic principles..

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البحث عن المعنى خلف القضبان: تحليل وجودي للعلاج بالمعنى لفكتور فرانكل في رواية "ريتا هايورث والخلص من شوشانك" لستيفن كينغ

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المستخلص:

يستكشف هذا البحث رواية ستيفن كينغ، "ريتا هايورث والخلص من شوشانك"، من خلال منظور العلاج بالمعنى لفكتور فرانكل، مع التركيز على بحث الشخصيات عن المعنى، وحرية الاختيار، والتسامي الذاتي داخل البيئة القمعية لسجن شوشانك. من خلال فحص تجارب أندي دوفرين وريد ريدينغ وبروكس هاتلين، تُظهر الدراسة كيف أن مفاهيم فرانكل حول الفراغ الوجودي وأهمية إيجاد الهدف، حتى في مواجهة المعاناة، تتضح بقوة في سرد كينغ. يكشف التحليل كيف تساهم اختيارات الشخصيات، وقدرتهم على إيجاد معنى في ظروفهم، وعلاقتهم مع بعضهم البعض في مرونتهم وانتصارهم النهائي على اليأس. في النهاية، يناقش هذا البحث بأن "ريتا هايورث والخلص من شوشانك" بمثابة استكشاف أدبي ممتع لمبادئ العلاج بالمعنى، وتسليط الضوء على قدرة الإنسان الدائمة على الأمل والحرية والتسامي الذاتي، حتى في أصعب الظروف.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: العلاج بالمعنى، معنى الحياة، الفراغ الوجودي، تجاوز الذات، الأمل، المرونة.

2. Introduction

Victor Frankl developed a type of psychological analysis called logotherapy. One of the main goals of this therapy is to help people find meaning in their life. This method of therapy, based on Frankl's experiences during the Holocaust, suggests that instead of being just a source of pain, suffering can transform into self-development as an individual will be able to overcome obstacles.

Viktor Frankl's logotherapy emphasizes the human need to discover meaning in life, even amidst suffering. As a Holocaust survivor, Frankl saw that those who found meaning had a higher likelihood of survival. His philosophy centres on the search for meaning, freedom of choice, suffering, the existential vacuum, self-transcendence, and responsibility (Bushkin et al. 233-34).

Central to logotherapy is the notion that the pursuit of meaning is the fundamental motivating drive in human existence. Frankl asserts that life becomes intolerable not by circumstances, but by a deficiency of meaning and purpose. He contends that even in the most severe circumstances, one may discover meaning, asserting, “suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning” (Frankl 117).

The freedom of choice is a fundamental principle of logotherapy. Frankl contends that while we may not always govern our surroundings, we maintain the capacity to choose our attitudes towards them. He asserts, “everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances” (Frankl 75).

Frankl's examination of pain is very profound. He does not suggest that suffering is inherently meaningful; rather, he emphasizes that meaning can be derived from how we confront it. He states, “if there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering... Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete” (Frankl 76).

The notion of the existential vacuum is another crucial element of Frankl's work. He notes that several individuals nowadays have a widespread feeling of emptiness, sometimes stemming from a deficiency of purpose in their life. According to Frankl, “the existential vacuum manifests itself mainly in a state of boredom” (Frankl 111).

Self-transcendence is a fundamental principle of logotherapy, arguing that genuine pleasure emerges not from egocentric endeavours but from engaging with others and contributing to a cause that surpasses individual interests. Frankl emphasizes that “self-actualization is possible only as a side effect of self-transcendence” (Frankl 115).

Responsibility is closely associated with Frankl's ideology. He asserts that people must assume responsibility for discovering purpose in their life and realizing their own potential. According to Frankl, “life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfil the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual” (Frankl 85). Viktor Frankl's logotherapy provides a solid basis for comprehending the human experience.

3. Logotherapy:

Viktor Frankl (1905-1997), a Holocaust survivor and Austrian psychiatrist, developed logotherapy, or therapy through meaning, after enduring imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps. This experience profoundly shaped his understanding of human resilience. Frankl observed that finding purpose was crucial for survival, even amidst unimaginable suffering (Corey 137).

Logotherapy emphasizes the "will to meaning" as the primary motivator in human behaviour, contrasting with Freud's "will to pleasure" and Adler's "will to power" (Corey 143). It posits that individuals thrive when they integrate body, mind, and spirit in pursuit of a fulfilling existence rooted in purpose. As Frankl explains in *Man's Search for Meaning* (2004), logotherapy focuses on the human search for meaning, viewing it as the primary motivational force (104).

Logotherapy isn't about moralizing; rather, it's akin to an eye doctor helping patients see the world's potential meanings (Frankl 114-115). It emphasizes individual accountability and the need to fulfil one's potential. Frankl's work highlights human capacity to find meaning in all circumstances, even when he/she is unable to change a situation, challenging individuals to change themselves (116). This concept is central to prison fiction, where characters must discover meaning and hope in the most desolate environments.

4. Stephen King's *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* as a therapeutic novella

4.1. Search for Meaning

In Stephen King's novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*, the quest for meaning is a predominant topic that influences the lives of the protagonists, especially Andy Dufresne and Ellis Red Redding. The story examines how individuals in the repressive atmosphere of Shawshank Prison find meaning in life, purpose, hope, and self-worth despite their bad conditions.

Andy Dufresne, a former vice president in a Portland Bank department, arrived in Shawshank in 1948 at thirty years old. He discovered that his wife, Linda Collins Dufresne, was cheating on him, leading to a bitter argument and Linda planning to divorce him. Andy refused to divorce her, and Linda and her lover, professional golfer Glenn Quentin, were found dead in bed. The District Attorney falsely accused Andy of murdering Linda and Glenn Quentin. Andy defended himself by relying on his memory, as he was drunk at the time. He said he had only investigated the truth about Linda and Quentin. When he learned the rumours of infidelity were true, he planned to commit suicide. But he cancelled the plan and then threw his gun into the river. In the next trial, the District Attorney tricked Andy with questions about robbery as the cause of murder, and he was found guilty. As an inmate in Shawshank, Andy faced numerous challenges to survive and regain his freedom. He struggled to fulfil his basic needs, such as freedom, justice, discipline, and challenge. Andy worked in a money laundering business with Warden Samuel Norton, polishing Norton's shoes and solving guards' financial problems. However, he prioritized his private space needs, working cheaply and living alone, avoiding scrutiny from other prisoners. His life in prison serves as a testament to the importance of fulfilling basic needs and overcoming obstacles for personal growth and fulfilment. (Vidyarini 32-37)

Both Viktor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning* and Stephen King's novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* prominently include the quest for meaning as a primary topic, highlighting the resilience of the human spirit under suffering. Frankl believes that meaning is crucial for survival, particularly under extreme situations, asserting, "we must never forget that we may also find meaning in

life even when confronted with a hopeless situation... When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves" (Frankl 116).

This feeling profoundly parallels with the story of Andy Dufresne in *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*, who, despite being wrongfully incarcerated for the murder of his wife, Linda Collins Dufresne, and her lover, Glenn Quentin, sustains hope and a sense of purpose. He says that "hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies" (King 179).

Dufresne's journey demonstrates Frankl's idea that love and hope can provide a sense of purpose. When Andy expresses his desire to go to Zihuatanejo, a place of warmth and freedom, he embodies his belief that an optimistic perspective can transcend even the most oppressive circumstances. He tells his friend Red, "I'm going to have a little hotel down there. Six cabanas along the beach, and six more set further back, for the highway trade" (King 120-21). This dream is considered a symbol of hope, and encourages him to resist the harsh reality of prison.

Moreover, Andy's insistence on creating a meaningful life within Shawshank Prison parallels Frankl's assertion that suffering can lead to personal growth. Frankl assumes that "suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning" (Frankl 117). Andy changes his time in prison by contributing to the library, helping fellow inmates earn their high school equivalency diplomas, and maintaining his dignity against the predatory "sisters." His library work becomes a source of meaning.

The contrast between Andy's internal world and the brutal reality of prison life further illustrates the search for meaning. While many inmates succumb to despair, Andy's resilience shines through. This belief sustains him through years of hardship, echoing Frankl's idea that having a "why" to live for is crucial in overcoming life's challenges.

Ultimately, both Frankl's and King's narratives emphasize that the search for meaning is a powerful motivator that can lead individuals to rise above their circumstances. As Andy escapes Shawshank and heads toward a new life, he embodies Frankl's essence of human freedom: "everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." (Frankl 75).

4.2. Freedom of Choice

Viktor Frankl emphasized the importance of freedom of choice in human life, stating that individuals can make decisions about their attitudes and reactions, even in the face of suffering, shaping their destiny and understanding the meaning of any situation.

In Stephen King's novella *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption*, the concept of freedom of choice is intricately woven into the narrative, reflecting deep philosophical ideas similar to those illustrated by Viktor Frankl. Frankl's assertion, that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way (Frankl 75), resonates throughout the lives of the characters within the confines of Shawshank prison. The story compellingly demonstrates that human soul can keep its freedom, even among misery.

The character of Ellis Red Redding serves as a reflective lens for the narrative, offering profound insights into the psychological struggles of prison. Red begins the story by acknowledging his past and the choices

that led him to Shawshank: “I came to Shawshank when I was just twenty, and I am one of the few people in our happy little family willing to own up to what they did” (King 7). This moment reveals not only Red's acceptance of responsibility for his actions, but also his realization that he still has control over his inner world.

Andy Dufresne, the novella's protagonist, embodies a profound sense of inner freedom, even as he faces the harsh reality of prison. When he tells Red, “I think it’s a politician’s word... that is the future” (King 8), Andy expresses awareness of his circumstances, while emphasizing that the future is still subject to change. His perspective reflects Frankl's assertion that individuals are capable of choosing their own situations, regardless of external constraints.

Moreover, the novella reveals the significance of maintaining hope within the bleakness of their environment. Red’s declaration, “hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane” (King 94), poignantly captures the complex nature of hope. It illustrates the dual-edged sword that hope represents: it can inspire action and resilience, yet it also poses the risk of despair if unmet expectations lead to profound disappointment. This duality resonates with Frankl's ideas, where hope anchored in a meaningful purpose is essential for survival and psychological well-being (Darshan and Kausalya).

Throughout the story, Andy distinguishes himself by his unwavering commitment to his inner freedom. One of the most significant ways Andy exercises his freedom of choice is through his pursuit of education and the expansion of the prison library. His insistence on the importance of knowledge and literacy is evident when he states his intention to help fellow inmates earn their high school diplomas: thus, creating an oasis of knowledge and dignity within the prison walls.

The turning point in the novel—the crucial moment when Andy escapes from Shawshank—embodies the culmination of his conscious choices. Andy, reflecting his freedom, shares with Red: “but there’s really no question. It always comes down to just two choices. Get busy living or get busy dying” (King 180). This famous line reveals the essence of choice, highlighting that life is primarily determined by the decisions a person makes, especially in adverse circumstances. This philosophy is embodied in Frankl's view that even in the face of suffering and confinement, individuals can choose to live in a meaningful way.

Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption compellingly echoes Viktor Frankl’s assertion that while one may be physically confined, the freedom to choose one's attitude and response remains unshackled. Through the compelling characters of Andy Dufresne and Red Redding, King illustrates the essence of freedom as it is intricately tied to personal choice and inner resilience. The boundaries of leather and steel may hold the body captive, but the human spirit can remain free through the decisions one makes and the hope one nurtures.

4.3. The Existential Vacuum:

Victor Frankl's concept of existential vacuum refers to the feeling of meaninglessness in life, often resulting from a lack of personal attachment to a purpose or value. This can lead to boredom, depression, and anxiety. Frankl believed that a society that values materialism and external success may lead to this emptiness. To combat this, he advocated for meaning in work, relationships, and personal development. Frankl believed that psychological health and meaning in life require filling the existential vacuum.

In Stephen King's novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*, Victor Frankl's concept of existential vacuum is a pervasive theme that underlies the narrative. The existential vacuum, Frankl says, is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century (Frankl 111). Frankl introduced the idea of the existential vacuum in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, where he described it as "a feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness" (Frankl 143), that arises when individuals lack a sense of purpose and meaning in life. According to Frankl, "the existential vacuum manifests itself mainly in a state of boredom" (Frankl 111).

For Shawshank Prison, the existential vacuum is a real thing that touches the lives of the prisoners. The prison's oppressive environment together with the hard realities confronting the prisoners tend to bring out hopelessness and despair that endanger the prisoners. Stephen King's *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* is beside being a story of imprisonment and escape; it is a deep dive into the ways people fight against meaninglessness in oppressive environments.

The existential vacuum has profound implications, especially within prison narratives. In Stephen King's novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*, Brooks Hatlin's character embodies the dangers of this condition through his struggle to reintegrate into society after years of incarceration. Brooks's inability to adapt to life outside prison ultimately leads to his death, highlighting the critical importance of finding meaning and purpose even in the face of overwhelming change. The burden of post-incarceration life presents many challenges—profound restrictions and the relentless effort to prove one's rehabilitation can lead to significant psychological strain on former inmates (Williams & Rumpf).

4.3.1. The Tragic Journey of Brooks Hatlen: Confronting the Existential Vacuum:

Brooks Hatlen, a complex character who embodies the tragic consequences of a life spent in the prison. Having earned his position as the library's caretaker due to his rare college education. Brooks finds himself released from Shawshank after decades of incarceration. His backstory reveals a troubled past marked by violence and a losing streak at poker, ultimately leading to the murder of his wife and daughter. Now, at sixty-eight and frail, Brooks emerges into a world that feels foreign and frightening, crying as he steps beyond the prison gates that had been his home (King 71-72).

Brooks Hatlen's story relates closely with Victor Frankl's concept of the "existential vacuum," embodying the deep sense of meaninglessness that can emerge when individuals lose their purpose and sense of belonging. In Shawshank, Brooks held a position of respect as "the librarian, an educated man," (Frankl 72) which gave him a sense of identity and value inside prison. However, his release thrust him into a disorienting reality. Brooks's emotional response upon leaving highlights his struggle with the existential vacuum.

4.3.1. Resilience in the Face of the Existential Vacuum:

Another important character who resists the existential vacuum is Andy Dufresne. He is the protagonist of Stephen King's *Rita Hayworth and The Shawshank Redemption*. He has been convicted to imprisonment for the murder of his wife, Linda Dufresne, and her lover, professional golfer Glenn Quentin. He is reportedly wrongfully accused of murder and unable to defend himself due to the conspiracy of the District Attorney (DA) against him. Consequently, he endured existence under an environment referred to as a 'pressure cooker' (King 50). His distinct background from other inmates endows him with notable qualities

(Vidyariini 24). Andy's experience within Shawshank prison is closely connected to the concept of existential vacuum. As he confronts the harsh reality of unjust incarceration, he embodies the struggle against this vacuum, seeking purpose amidst despair and frustration.

Andy faced the terrible reality of his circumstances when he arrives in Shawshank. "I committed murder" (Frankl 7). This admission is not only a reflection of his past but serves as a motivation for his internal conflict. Wrongfully accused of murdering his wife and her lover, he struggles with the weight of his circumstances and is sentenced to life imprisonment without hope (Brooks & Greenberg).

One of the most striking aspects of Andy's struggle for survival is his relentless effort to maintain his humanity amid the harshness of prison life. Despite the constant threat of violence and humiliation, Andy remains steadfast in his dedication to integrity and dignity. He uses his skills as a banker to help both fellow inmates and corrupt prison officials, demonstrating that even within the confines of Shawshank, he can exert influence and create change. His efforts to establish a library are not just about acquiring books; they represent a defiance against the existential vacuum. As he tells Red, "hope is a good thing... maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies" (King 179). This hope becomes a lifeline for Andy and his peers, a beacon illuminating the darkness of their existence. However, the existential vacuum weighs heavily on Andy, especially as he endures the relentless harassment from the "sisters"—the predatory inmates who target the vulnerable. Despite these challenges, he remains steadfast in his resolve, choosing to fight back rather than submit.

Ultimately, Andy's escape represents a profound act of defiance against the existential vacuum he has faced for decades. Hope springs eternal, and for Andy, that hope culminates in a successful breakout after years of meticulous planning. He crawls through the filth of the prison's sewer system, emerging into freedom, a testament to his resilience and determination (Parse 150).

4.3.2. Red's Institutionalization and the Existential Vacuum:

Red has served his entire life in Shawshank Prison. Through the eyes of the narrator Red, this story presents his experience as an inmate. Red established the closest bond with Andy at Shawshank Prison turning into the guide who showed him the way in the institution (Alvina & Saragih). Red's nearly four decades in Shawshank Prison exemplify the psychological erosion that occurs when individuals are stripped of autonomy and purpose—a state Viktor Frankl termed the existential vacuum. As the prison's black-market supplier, Red survives by making himself indispensable, yet his transactional existence masks a deeper surrender to institutionalization. His resigned declaration— "before meeting Andy, Red thought he would stay in prison forever" (Lei and Xu 1157)—reflects Frankl's observation that without meaning, humans succumb to despair.

Red's institutionalization is evident in his fear of the outside world. Like Frankl's patients, Red states, "they give you life, and that's what they take—all of it that counts" (King 28). The prison's paradox—offering survival at the cost of psychological death—leaves him adrift post-parole, struggling to reconcile his identity with a society he no longer recognizes. His paralysis outside Shawshank illustrates the existential vacuum's grip: without the prison's oppressive structure, he faces the daunting freedom to redefine himself (Jena 141). Yet, Red's journey contrasts with Frankl's vacuum through his relationship with Andy Dufresne, whose hope embodies the "defiant power of the human spirit" (Frankl 147). Andy's acts of rebellion, such as securing beer for his fellow inmates, model meaning-making amid absurdity.

Red's decision to seek Andy in Zihuatanejo signifies his rejection of the vacuum and his reclamation of agency, as emphasized in his closing words, "I hope" (King 181). This reflects Frankl's idea: "when we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves" (Frankl 116).

Andy enters Shawshank like a stone in stagnant water, creating ripples of hope (Jena 140). His music and small acts of defiance provide glimpses of freedom. For instance, when Andy plays Mozart, Red observes, "for the briefest of moments, every last man at Shawshank felt free" (King 129). These moments illustrate that inner freedom can persist even in oppressive conditions. Their friendship reshapes Red's worldview. The rock carvings Andy gives Red symbolize that beauty can be created in dire circumstances. Moreover, Andy's rooftop beer moment restores dignity to the inmates, highlighting his ability to forge humanity within dehumanizing structures (King 69). As Jena notes, Andy's hope becomes a survival tool against Shawshank's evils (140). Perhaps Andy's most subversive act is his twenty-year escape plan. He considers the Rita Hayworth poster a symbol of hope because it covers his escape route, representing his hidden path to freedom, and her beauty and attraction motivate him to persist through the challenges of his long and risky journey (Vidyarini 43-44). When Andy escapes, Red realizes the depth of his friend's rebellion: "Andy Dufresne... crawled through a river of shit and came out clean on the other side" (King 150-51). This escape mirrors Andy's psychological liberation.

Post-prison correspondence further solidifies Andy's impact. In his letter to Red, he expresses that hope is a good thing, possibly the best of things, which ignites Red's courage to break free from his psychological chains (King 179). Red's journey illustrates Frankl's notion of the will to meaning, as he transforms from an institutionalized man to a seeker of freedom. For decades, Red occupies the mentor role, masking his spiritual imprisonment. His survival instincts shape his identity, but Andy challenges this detachment. Red's turning point exemplifies Frankl's existential vacuum; upon parole, he feels hollow, believing he has no purpose beyond prison (King 171). His supermarket job becomes a metaphor for his psychological imprisonment, while his temptation to commit robbery reflects the despair that drives self-destructive behaviour.

Yet, Andy's letter serves as an existential lifeline, replacing Red's emptiness with meaning. Red's choice to seek Andy transforms him from passive prisoner to active seeker, marking his liberation from the vacuum through "the will to meaning" (Frankl 106). This arc exemplifies Frankl's notion that suffering persists only when devoid of purpose. In *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*, King explores the human struggle for meaning against the backdrop of existential vacuum, emphasizing the will to meaning as a fundamental human drive.

4.4. Self-transcendence

Stephen King's *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* explores Victor Frankl's concept of self-transcendence, highlighting how people can overcome misfortune by finding purpose in bleak conditions, and through Andy Dufresne's journey, a multi-layered case study of meaning forged from suffering. Frankl's logotherapy, born from his concentration camp experiences, posits that "life holds potential meaning under any conditions, even the most miserable ones" (Frankl 12). From his first days in Shawshank, where institutionalization seeks to strip prisoners of their identities, Andy demonstrates what Parse describes as "structuring meaning multidimensionally in cocreating rhythmical patterns of relating, while cotranscending with the possibles" (148), establishing small but potent rituals of resistance like his rock carving.

The depth of Andy's self-transcendence becomes apparent through three interlocking dimensions of meaning-making that align perfectly with Frankl's triad of meaning sources: creative, experiential, and attitudinal values. His creative endeavours - the geological specimens he polishes into chess pieces, the library he builds through relentless letter-writing campaigns, the financial services he provides to guards - all exemplify what Parse notes as "hope-filled endeavor[s]" that allow him to "preserv[e] his humanity among the dehumanizing conditions of the institution" (Parse 150). His famous opera broadcast scene, where Mozart's music makes "every last man at Shawshank feel free" (Parse 151), demonstrates Frankl's experiential values, those moments of beauty and connection that affirm life's meaning regardless of circumstances.

Most crucially, Andy embodies Frankl's attitudinal values - the ability to choose one's stance toward suffering. His quiet declaration about hope articulates what Darshan and Kausalya term "the indomitable nature of the human spirit" (26), a conscious orientation toward possibility that sustains him through decades of injustice.

Andy's transformative influence on Red completes the novella's exploration of self-transcendence, showing how meaning multiplies through human connection. Their friendship evolves into what Parse terms "hope-no-hope as a universal lived experience" (151), a dialectic that gradually awakens Red to new possibilities. As the "mentor archetype" (Alvina and Saragih 124) who helps Andy navigate prison life, Red initially embodies institutionalized cynicism, dismissing hope as dangerous. Yet through Andy's example, he undergoes what Darshan and Kausalya call "a stirring analysis of the potential of humans to persevere in the face of tragedy" (26), ultimately achieving his own self-transcendence.

The novella's conclusion powerfully synthesizes these themes through the image of the Pacific Ocean, what Lei and Xu might call "the Messianic Redemption" (1156) that Andy achieves and Red moves toward. This final vision affirms Frankl's most radical claim - that meaning exists not despite suffering, but often through it.

5. Conclusion:

Based on the analysis presented, this study concludes that Stephen King's *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* provides a powerful literary illustration of Viktor Frankl's logotherapy. Through the characters of Andy Dufresne, Red Redding, and Brooks Hatlen, the novella explores human search for meaning, the importance of freedom of choice, and the potential for self-transcendence, even within the confines of an oppressive environment like Shawshank Prison. The research demonstrates how these characters, faced with the existential vacuum and the challenges of incarceration, find resilience through their choices, relationships, and the ability to discover purpose in their circumstances. Ultimately, this analysis affirms that King's novella serves as a compelling exploration of logotherapeutic principles, highlighting the enduring human capacity for hope, freedom, and self-discovery, even in the face of profound adversity.

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