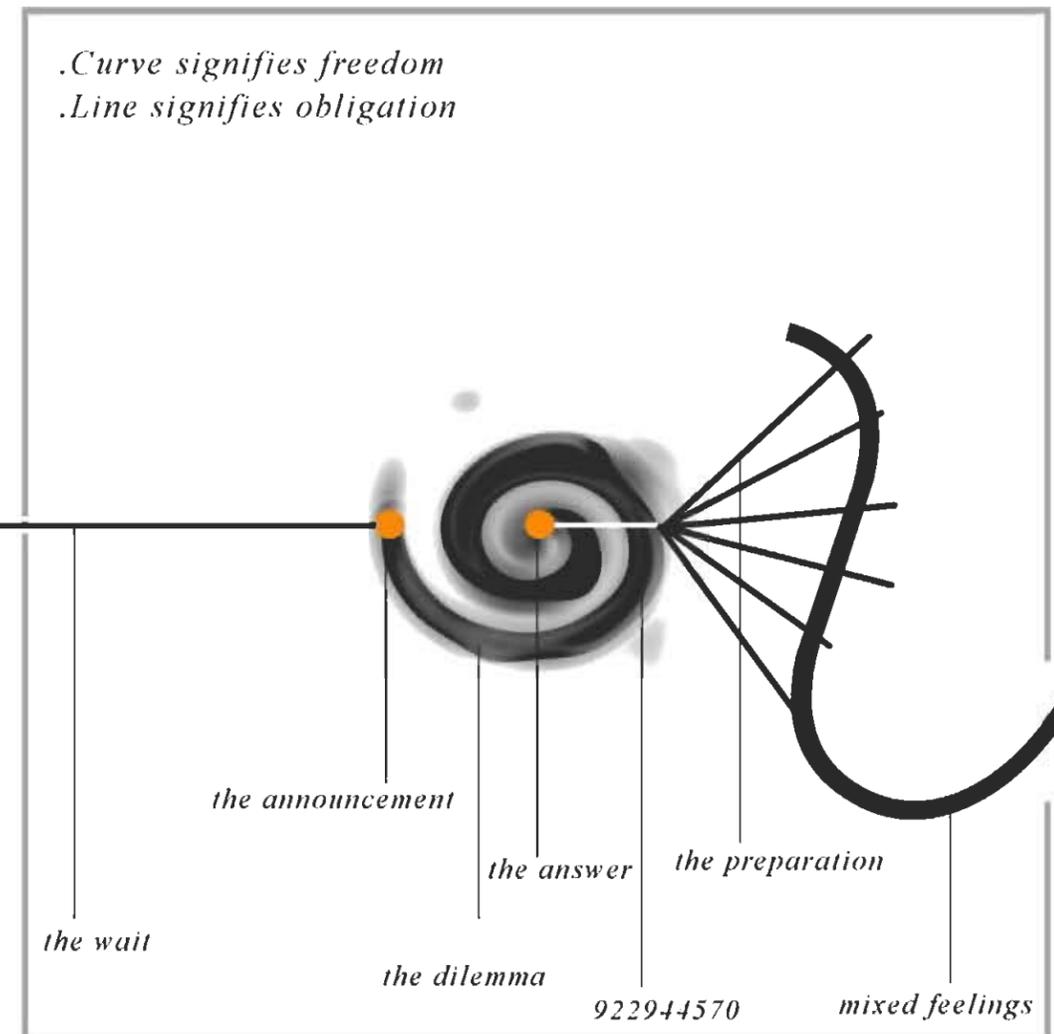


by Marianthi Liapi

COLLECTION OF INFORMATION

**Points of reference [facts]:**

- + March 24, 2003  
"Congratulations!  
Your application to the SMArchS program  
in the Department of Architecture at MIT has been approved."
- + "Please let us have your reply by April 14, 2003."
- + "YES! I will attend MIT, entering September 2003!"
- + "Your official MIT ID number is 922944570"
- + Preparation:
  - scholarships
  - housing
  - VISA
  - tickets
  - tuition
  - information
- + August 24, 2003 Departure



VISUAL NARRATION

**My points of view [emotions]:**

SPRING 2004



Assignment 01

Exercise 2

*by Marianthi Liapi*

MOVIE: *Shrek* [2001]

Directed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson

READING: *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure  
for Storytellers and Screenwriters* [1992]

Written by Christopher Vogler



*"Shrek" is a story about society, relationships and self-esteem. It is a classic tale; a genuine myth, involving fantastic creatures in epic quests. But regardless of any visual representation, the true meaning of the movie is that all personalities are repressed and restricted in their actions by fear, insecurity and social pressure, facts that indubitably lead to unhappy, oppressed lives. Freedom can be unleashed only from the inner-self in order to flow into the journey of life.*

The plot takes place into a fantastic realm where humans, animals, ogres and other beings co-exist, all bearing human-like attributes [ability to speak, ability to feel]. The story begins with a description of the hero's [Shrek] natural habitat and his everyday activities. Shrek is a strong, capable, smart and decisive ogre, with many skills. Despite that, he is presented insecure because of his personal appearance. This fact stands as a comment on the superficiality that renders the society unable to look deep into one's soul. Shrek feels rejected and thus he is led to establish a living environment in isolation. Moreover, he is presented to have anti-heroic feelings which are signified as he is shown to ridicule and laugh at the heroic stories of humans.

Society regards Shrek as a misfit, a danger, a mistake and there is a mass-mobilization to eliminate him. This hostile predisposition that is revealed at the beginning of the story implies recurrence over periods of time. Furthermore, it manifests the fear of common people towards the different and the unknown. Shrek, though, always wins his adversaries and thus making the chasm bigger.

This xenophobic society is governed by a ruthless, perfectionist and ambitious monarch [Farquaad], who is also ascribed with the characteristic of insecurity due to physical appearance [short height]. The impact of insecurity in this case is aggressive behavior. He forces away from his land all the magic

creatures [special people that make society feel uncomfortable] leading them to Shrek's habitat. The dipole identified here is the fact that Shrek deals with his insecurity by defending, while Farquaad by attacking.

All the aspects around the invasion of the banished creatures into Shrek's world constitute his call to adventure. The arrival of the exiles is of a cataclysmic impact into his life. The solitary comfort of his world is disturbed. All efforts to intimidate them fail. He must react. Even though he usually prefers to ignore events in his everyday life, his harmonious living is now disrupted by events/actions that are above him.

A prelude of what is about to come is the meeting with the future friend/mentor Donkey. Shrek by being isolated and on guard does not recognize the signs and he disregards the friendship attack of the Donkey. He considers the Donkey as a nuisance [despite the fact that he is showing emotional intelligence]. The Donkey is neither wise nor impressive. It is an unorthodox mentor. It is trying to bring down Shrek's defenses that drive his life. It is trying to open Shrek's heart to the issues of love and understanding, to unveil his "layers". Its motto is simple yet precious: everybody must be accepted as he/she is; the real beauty is within. The only creature, though, that is offering magnanimously its help is not initially welcomed by Shrek.

With the acceptance of the Donkey as a companion, later on, and the formation of an adventuring party, the story crosses a clear first threshold. The party is unaware of the plans that Farquaad has while entering the plots of the devious ruler who seeks only social success [thus acceptance]. Shrek is about to confront a test. He will enter it unwillingly but he will get it through while entering the road to his supreme ordeal.

The rising tension will end with an agreement between Shrek and Farquaad that suits them both. [At this moment they will both do anything to complete their plan: Shrek wants his privacy back at any



cost, while Farquaad's plan is to ascend to kingship by marrying a Princess. The only Princess "available" is Princess Fiona, who is under a state of captivity in a castle guarded by a dragon. Farquaad's plan to achieve greatness through others, through threat and manipulation, is working perfectly well and Shrek becomes his unwilling pawn. Shrek's strong emotions lead him to an adventure of great challenge and great peril - to rescue Princess Fiona from a dragon's lair and escort her back to Farquaad.

This is the moment where he is confronting his true rival; he has passed the test of the enemy and move forth to the most exhausting test of his allies. The slow invasion of the Donkey in his psyche is more difficult than the physical test of battle. He is neither willing to open his heart to his mentor nor to himself. The feeling of incompleteness though is making him less defensive and the Donkey seems to unlock many sides of Shrek's inner self.

Regardless of the event that Shrek seems to be annoyed by the Donkey, it is obvious that they have hardened their relationship and friendship. This is evident when they approach and see for the first time the dragon's lair. The Donkey, who shows its emotions openly, is horrified. It overcomes its fear though with the help of Shrek. Inside the castle the echoes of the approaching supreme ordeal become evident.

There is an accelerating action that leads to a climactic tension, pausing only at moments of importance to add emphasis; the dragon's appearance, Shrek's entrance to Fiona's room, the Donkey facing perils in front of the Dragon. It's the moment at the half of the battle when thrill is intense. Shrek found the Princess but they are not safe yet and the Donkey is captured by the Dragon. In these great moments all the skills and abilities must be used in order to stay alive and complete the task. Shrek is employing his combat and intelligence skills to elude and escape an overwhelming enemy. The Donkey is using its wit and its open heart to approach the feelings of a dreadful enemy. Although the Donkey's act works as a

background, it reveals an essential story of incomplete love and suppressed feelings between two incompatible elements.

Under the pressure of the threat of physical life and death there is a definite clarification of properties. Fiona's need for romance, developed over the ages of imprisonment, is decapitated. Battle action and the instinct for survival take the premium role. Romance though, a form of struggle between the inner worlds of the characters, is the leading element of the movie. It appears as action scenes are degrading through humorous events.

The importance of the inner struggle is emphasized through the events at the supreme ordeal. Even if there was a constant threat of death in action, there is a prevailing feeling that an obvious threat can be easily dealt with when one is able to control fear and be decisive and clever. The accomplishment of such a task - the successful ending of the supreme ordeal and the acquirement of the reward [the rescue of Fiona] - is followed by relief, enjoyment and the revelation of the true problem. Intense feelings from Fiona's shattered dreams and feelings of insecurity for Shrek's true identity are about to evolve and finally clash on the road back to the ordinary world.

After the initial shock, the road back is full of events and interaction between the two main characters that signifies the benefits of opening up, revealing feelings/emotions and looking beyond appearances; breakfast by Fiona, the battle with Robin Hood gang, the joyful day in the country with the ballooning of a toad and a snake are the step by step procedures of a fruitful flirt. It is evident that in a closed situation [without external/social elements] with good "vibes", everything seems to move to the right direction.

This is the true "battle" - to win a girl's heart and at the same time be released from one's own haunting demons. The tension rises during the night before the task is called to an end. The confrontation with the hero's feelings seems greater than the battle with ten



dragons. To add to this tension, hidden truths and strong fears stand as huge obstacles. The interference of the mentor is for the purpose of overcoming them; instead it leads to climactic misunderstandings and eventually to the worst possible end - the "death" of feelings. Everything gained until this moment is lost in a turmoil of fears while defenses come up and walls arise fast and tall. Farquaad and his plans remained absent and forgotten during the past period of the supreme ordeal and the road back. It was a time of freedom from external influences, such as social pressure and time, for them to calm their souls. The arrival near these influences is one major factor of tension.

The tranquility after the storm and the apparent fatal clash between Shrek-Fiona and Shrek-Donkey is the time period for reflection of the past events. The emotionally-dead Shrek returns to his empty habitat realizing suddenly the horror of loneliness. Fiona faces the fear of a bad decision and a lost life. The Donkey is unhappy considering that some bridges can not be made possible. This period is the prelude to resurrection. All the key characters, being richer from the experience gained from their adventure, are beginning to see inner truths. They have matured. Shrek is susceptible to its furious mentor's teachings and the intense moment of resurrection comes. The key to overcome this situation is Donkey's paradox flirt with the dragon. The brave move done firstly by the mentor/donkey is signifying that visual differences are not a reason of keeping distance and avoid following your heart. This knowledge is passed on to the hero with the ferocity of a fight.

The re-established unity of Shrek-Donkey [hero-mentor] is the apocalyptic event of truth bright like the sun. Selfishness, pride, ego and fear are surpassed with self-awareness and risen self-esteem leading to personal freedom. The need for companionship is now obvious and "hungry". To maintain the avalanche of this event, a race against time begins, caused by the actions of a "foul" self. The real battle and the real prize are ahead. The elixir is the completed love between Shrek and Fiona. It is the love that would

transform/release a person to its true form [self]. All the joined forces from the adventure [including the dragon] are to fight for this great cause.

The tension remains high while a verbal "battle" begins. The end of it finds Farquaad defeated. Farquaad remains as he was, since he did not enter an adventure and a life-death process that upgraded the key characters to a higher level. The peak of the whole adventure comes with the transformation of Fiona to a female Ogre - a true form revealed by a true love's kiss. The apocalypse of Fiona's true identity is showing that everybody should see each other with the eyes of the heart and therefore all creatures all equal. There are no differences in the heart. Difference exists only into minds. The strong sentiment of love and the fall of a monarch that created a xenophobic society fueling the insecurities of people, lead to a cheering crowd that is freed from prejudice.

The feeling of love that knows no boundaries and frees people is the elixir that Shrek and Fiona gained through their adventure. This elixir is distributed to everyone because the final confrontation took place in front of a large audience and the two characters invite everybody to celebrate with them. It is the emergence/transformation of their lands to a happy and free place where everyone is equal to enjoy life. The closure of the movie makes this point evident and clear. Everyone is opened up and sings and dance songs that are revealing his psyche in a big scale celebration.

The message of this movie is a lesson to society to be honest and caring. To let love and feelings identify characters in depth, where the eyes can not see. Choices are not to made based only on the commands of the retina. This strong message is cleverly transmitted through a "classic" heroic tale with the vividness and the color of an animation movie.

