**Ariadne’s restrictions and the significance of her breakthrough in *Inception***

2017-18570 Sungchan Yi

In *Inception* (2010), Ariadne is a student studying architecture in Paris. She is a student of Professor Miles, and she was suggested by Miles when Cobb visited Miles to find a new architect for his Fischer inception mission. After a test performed by Cobb, she was hired as an architect by Cobb to join the inception job. As an architect, Ariadne successfully designs all 3 dream levels, but she also plays an important role during the mission, such as killing the projection of Mal down in limbo. She was the only person that followed Cobb down to limbo, and without her, they wouldn’t have succeeded due to the interference of Mal. Considering her importance in the narrative, it is natural to question how this was possible, which leads to the analysis of Ariadne’s character and personality. In *Inception*, she was first portrayed as a person with some restrictions on her mind, but she could play an important role in the mission by herself gradually breaking out of her restrictions.

The name ‘Ariadne’ comes from a story in Greek mythology. [1] In Greek myth, Ariadne is referred to as a goddess of the labyrinth. She was also the keeper of a labyrinth in Crete, where Minotaur lived in. When Theseus went to kill the monster living in the labyrinth, Ariadne helps him by giving him a thread so that Theseus could escape the labyrinth after killing Minotaur. After Theseus escapes the labyrinth, Theseus rescues Ariadne from Crete, and they both escape safely. On comparing this story with *Inception*, there are a lot of similarities in the character Ariadne. First, they both relate to a labyrinth. In *Inception*, Ariadne is also the designer and keeper of the 3 dream levels, which were designed like a maze. Second, the both play the role of a helper. Ariadne helps Cobb with the Fischer inception job. Lastly, in the picture *Ariadne in Naxos*, [2] Ariadne is drawn with red clothing, while in *Inception*, Ariadne is also wearing red clothes. Due to these similarities, the first restriction of Ariadne can be found: Her restriction to reality. Ariadne in the Greek myth was trapped in Crete Island, which works as a restriction for her. Meanwhile, Ariadne in *Inception* was originally trapped in reality, before Cobb offered the inception job. This was later overcome by the help of Cobb introducing Ariadne to the dream world, as Theseus rescued Ariadne from the island.

Ariadne’s second restriction can be found in her totem, which is a hollowed bishop. Since totems are special items unique to each protagonist, it must reflect its owner, which leads to the analysis of the role of bishops in chess. In chess, bishop is a piece that can move diagonally in any amount of square. Due to the unlimited distance in moving, bishops are usually considered as the third most valuable piece in chess. [3] In other words, bishops can be very powerful and crucial when used strategically. Comparing it to the rook piece, it is not useful for a straight breakthrough since bishops cannot move straight while rooks can. But upon using the diagonal movement, it allows bishops to pass through other chess pieces sideways. In *Inception*, this characteristic of bishop is well shown through Ariadne after Fischer is shot by Mal in the third dream level. Cobb thought he failed, but Ariadne was the person who suggested another way to succeed, by going down to limbo. This is where Ariadne proposed a sideway breakthrough, when a straight one wasn’t possible. Moreover, Ariadne plays a crucial rule in the Fischer inception mission since she was the one to kill Mal in limbo, which revived Fischer to complete the mission.

Another property of bishops is that bishops can only stay on the same colored square as it started. Since the chessboard is an alternating pattern of black and white squares, in whichever diagonal direction a bishop moves, the color of the square does not change. Considering the reflection of Ariadne’s character onto her totem, another restriction can be found. She is always on the same colored square, which can also be interpreted that she was originally limited to the reality. This restriction is also overcome with the help of Cobb, by introducing her the dream world.

Ariadne’s third restriction can be found in the scene where Cobb meets Ariadne for the first time and gives her a test. The objective of the test was to draw a maze in 2 minutes that takes 1 minute to solve. For the first two tries, she draws a rectangular maze, and this was another restriction that she had. She could not take her creativity to the next level. The first two mazes she drew were too easy for Cobb that he tells her to do better than that. At the third try, she thinks out of the box and devises a circular maze to outsmart Cobb.

This scene is the first moment where Ariadne breaks her restriction. She passes Cobb’s test, gets hired, and she takes her creativity to the next level. Now she can devise new forms of architecture, which is shown in the scene of Ariadne building and changing the dream world to whatever form she wants. In the dream, Ariadne even folds roads, creates bridges out of nothing, and after setting the two mirrors parallel, she instantly changes the other side of the mirror to the street she takes every day when going to college. From this scene, it can also deduced that she already had the potential creativity in her. If she didn’t have the potential, Miles wouldn’t have suggested her, and she wouldn’t have been able to change the dream world freely. Furthermore in the scene, she is in jolly mood and feels happy creating the architectures, also she tries building many different things in the dream. Through her facial expression and actions, Ariadne’s personality is portrayed as creative and curious. Overall, her creative potential and her personality is the key factor that enabled Ariadne to break out of her restrictions easily.

After she gets stabbed by Mal for altering the dream too much, she gets angry and leaves. Meanwhile, Cobb says, “She’ll be back. Reality is not gonna be enough for her now”. This is because she broke out of her restrictions of reality and creativity. For Ariadne, the dream world is a place where she can freely express her creativity and curiosity. After experiencing it, reality could never be enough for her. As Cobb predicted, she returned to the team and this is another scene showing the breakthrough of Ariadne’s restrictions.

Moreover, after breaking out of her restrictions, she takes her creativity to another level by designing paradoxical structures such as the Penrose stairs. There was a scene of Ariadne carefully measuring and studying to design a dream level, and Arthur also teaches Ariadne about the paradoxical structures. In the second dream level, when Arthur was fighting with the Fischer’s dream security guards, he used the paradoxical structure to eliminate the guard. This is also a device that Ariadne hid when she built the level. This effectively shows how she broke out of the restrictions of reality and successfully constructed the structure with her astounding creativity.

Ariadne had some restrictions to her mind. Specifically, it was the restriction to the reality and her creativity. Through the preparation for Fischer’s inception job, Ariadne learns about and experiences the dream world. With her creative, curious personality, she could break out of the restrictions she had, which directly lead to the success of the inception job. In connection to the theme of *Inception*, after Ariadne breaks out of her restriction, she also helps Cobb confront his restriction, which was the guilt he had for Mal. Ariadne persuaded Cobb and convinced him to confront his guilt by saying, “Your guilt defines her”. Considering the price of his hesitation to shoot Mal in the third level was going down another level and spending decades in limbo, Ariadne played a crucial role in *Inception.* Through her persuasion, Cobb was also able to break out of his restrictions and even in limbo, he decides to come back to reality, successfully completing the inception job. All of this was possible because Ariadne overcame her restrictions.

**References**

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[2] Ariadne in Naxos, by Evelyn De Morgan, 1877.

[3] Capablanca, Jose; de Firmian, Nick. “Chess Fundamentals (Completely Revised and Updated for the 21st century)”, Random House, 2010, ISBN 0-8129-3681-7