
Eurydice

by: Sarah Ruhl

dramaturgical actor packet 2017



prepared by:
emma mathieu
emma.mathieu@uconn.edu

<https://www.pinterest.com/emathieu14/eurydice/>

sarah ruhl

Grew up in Wilmette, Illinois.

Her love and exposure to music, theater, and language was inspired by her family life.

Her father religiously taught her and her sister vocabulary words.

Her mother was a high school English teacher and actress.

Her childhood consisted of “pig nights”:

where her parents let her misbehave one night a week if she behaved the others.

Started off as a poetry major at Brown University.

Her father died from cancer in 1994

her sophomore year.

She was 20 - the same age as Eurydice.

She returned to Brown her junior year

and took a playwriting class taught by Paula Vogel.

who encouraged Ruhl to pursue a career in writing -

Of which:

Mixes sparseness and economy with rich poetic symbolism.

Minimalistic settings of her worlds draw focus to the language of the story.

Encourages audiences to embellish the world of the play with own imaginations.

Is like walking a narrow tightrope between joy and sadness.

Is the line between hilarious comedy and operatic-sized tragedy.

Fluctuations are like the behavior of a child.

Characters face life-changing events and do so with curiosity.

Reminds audiences to take pleasure in the mundane moments,

To face the curious nature of life with boldness,

To embrace the instinct to question,

To face things simply,

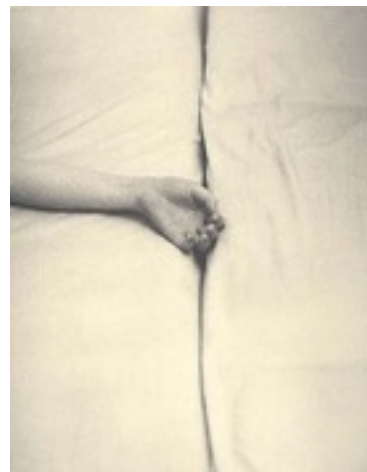
To be irrational.

development of the play

*"I'm interested in anyone who dies twice."
-Sarah Ruhl*

Eurydice is the first play Ruhl wrote in grad school and its first production is when her career kickstarted. What attracted Ruhl to the Orpheus myth is its unique feature of how art enters life as a means of dealing with death. In this way, Ruhl is almost an Orpheus figure, seeking to ease the pain of her father's death through the play. In fact, Ruhl essentially wrote Eurydice to have more conversations with her dad. She had dreams where he talked to her and in one particular dream he said "we have to go our separate ways". Ruhl began to question if death had to separate loved ones and if love could transcend death. She uses the myth as the architecture and frame for her adaptation, mainly playing with the recurring image of the "look back" - in classic versions the blame is placed on Orpheus, but she wanted to see what would happen if Eurydice was accountable. The usefulness of borrowing from classic stories is that the audience can find comfort in the familiar which can later soothe them in the largely unpredictable world she creates.

*"the architecture of myth — its structure, its bigness, its formal elegance — can frame stories that are smaller and more personal...I think that theatre can connect our personal mythologies to stories that are bigger than us — that connection between bigness and smallness brings me back to the theatre"
- Sarah Ruhl*



Ruhl was also heavily inspired by Beckett in the development of the chorus of stones, using silence mixed with vaudeville to create characters that complimented an abstract setting. She was also influenced by Lewis Carroll and the world he created in *Alice in Wonderland* claiming that, “it’s the world be live in turned upside down”. She didn’t want the underworld to feel like hell, and Carroll provided a model for that world. Carroll’s description of Alice also invites comparison to Eurydice:



“loving first, loving and gentle: loving as a dog (forgive the prosaic smile, but I know of no earthly love so pure and perfect) and gentle as a fawn: - and lastly, curious — wildly curious, and with the eager enjoyment of Life that comes only in the happy hours of childhood, when all is new and fair, and when sin and sorrow are but names — empty words, signifying nothing!”
- Lewis Carroll



ruhl on eurydice

Ruhl loves the words “fearless” and “transparency” for the play. In the world of the play “there are no pillars to hide behind”, allowing for the complete exposure and raw nature of the characters and environment. She doesn’t see stage directions as muscular blueprints - she sees them as a love letter to the audience. She sees subtext as horizontal to the text rather than below the surface. Subtext isn’t in contradiction to what a character is actually saying - she believes they’re sincerely saying what they’re feeling and subtext could be the design of how they’re saying it or what is happening onstage at the same time the text is spoken. She argues that character action can come spontaneously from emotion and believes in an “of the moment” method, claiming that humankind is too spontaneous to move on a predictable arc of objectives towards a single goal. She is a firm believer in “poor theater”: minimalistic in terms of set, lot of lights and sounds to convey, and nothing has to be real per se - it’s all about the metaphor. Ruhl believes that almost all plays deal with mortality, her plays just deal with it more directly.

“it feels to me like an odd casualty of modern life, the way death has been professionalized — other people handle it for us, and we’re cut off from the whole notion of it, the whole experience of it. It sometimes feels as though we’re no longer looking at the whole life cycle. Death is viewed as an odd aberration that happens to the unlucky, rather than something we ought to set our sights on in terms of how we live our daily lives”

- Sarah Ruhl



structure

The structure of the play can be described as a postmodern tragedy - it raises questions rather than attempting to supply answers. Ruhl's narrative structure is more like Ovid than Aristotle in that one thing transforms into another. Rather than following a strict linear plot, there are poetic revelations in the moment and that's where emotions transform. Though the characters evoke pity and fear, the audience doesn't reach catharsis because character's actions don't reinstate order or peace. The audience is left with a feeling of chaos because in the world of the play, the characters are everyday people, and errors can't always be corrected. Nothing is bound to psychological realism and there are no logical confinements of time, place, or climate - it's all constructed in a disjointed way and unfolds episodically. It doesn't conclude with a typical denouement - moments continue to occur. Though the "look back" partially brings the play to a structural climax, the events that follow say that life goes on, and we have a choice to experience or forget moments. The "look back" itself is more than just one moment, it's a series of repeated images (often common in postmodern structure) that show that it isn't the single "look back" that brings Eurydice to her fate, it's numerous temptations to look back in life instead of moving forward. Ruhl dilutes climactic moments by clashing them with lightness - the distillation of things into a quick, tense, almost innocent directness which allows for the ability to address issues that may otherwise come across as heavy or pretentious. Memory is the central thematic concern of the play. The audience is left with thoughts such as the need to remember in order to avoid becoming stone-like, the warning that holding on to memories can keep a person from moving forward, and the thought that, then again, part of moving forward includes looking back.



the myth

The Orpheus & Eurydice myth dates back centuries - there is no such thing as an original, just multiple adaptations of the tale. There is much variation and debate regarding the story, (including the argument of if Orpheus was real or not) however, there are a few basic points.

Orpheus was born in the generation before the Trojan War. His father was either Apollo or the Thracian river god, Oeagros and his mother was the muse, Calliope. Orpheus' known journeys include his traveling with Jason to recover the golden fleece, and his ability to play the lyre that could soften the violence of nature. Eurydice was either an oak nymph or the daughter of Apollo, and she is mostly known in association with her lover and husband, Orpheus.



Eurydice's death was caused by a snake bite. She either was pursued by Aristaeus and in her efforts to escape him she stepped on the snake, or she was dancing with the naiads on her wedding day and stepped on it.

Orpheus was troubled by her death and his music persuaded the king and queen of the underworld to release her. In other versions, he played his lyre and put Cerberus (the 3-headed dog that guarded the underworld) to sleep or gained access to the underworld from the three furies who resided close to Hades.

The one condition of Eurydice's return was that Orpheus mustn't look back at her until they reach the world of the living. There are discrepancies as to what exactly happened - if the power of love was too strong for him or if he thought Hades had deceived him, but nonetheless, Orpheus turned around and lost Eurydice again.



Following the second death of his wife, Orpheus retreated into Thrace where he abjured women and lamented. He then met his death by Maenads/Bacchantes (the female followers



of Dionysus), who scorned him either for his neglect of Dionysus, his neglect of women, or his attachment to Apollo. Orpheus was then torn by the Maenads limb from limb, his head and lyre floating down the river Hebrus and carried across the Aegean sea to the island Lesbos. It was there that his head was buried and his lyre dedicated to Apollo.

The story of Eurydice may be a later addition to the Orpheus myths because it closely resembles the tale of Persephone. It also could have been derived from a legend where Orpheus travels to Tartarus and charms the goddess

Hecate. Nonetheless, there are three outstanding views of Orpheus:

1. He was most widely known as a musician/poet who has the ability to tame beasts
2. He's a religious figure
(shaman-like in that he can raise the dead and founder of the cult of orphism),
3. He is the great lover and mourner of Eurydice.



hades' underworld

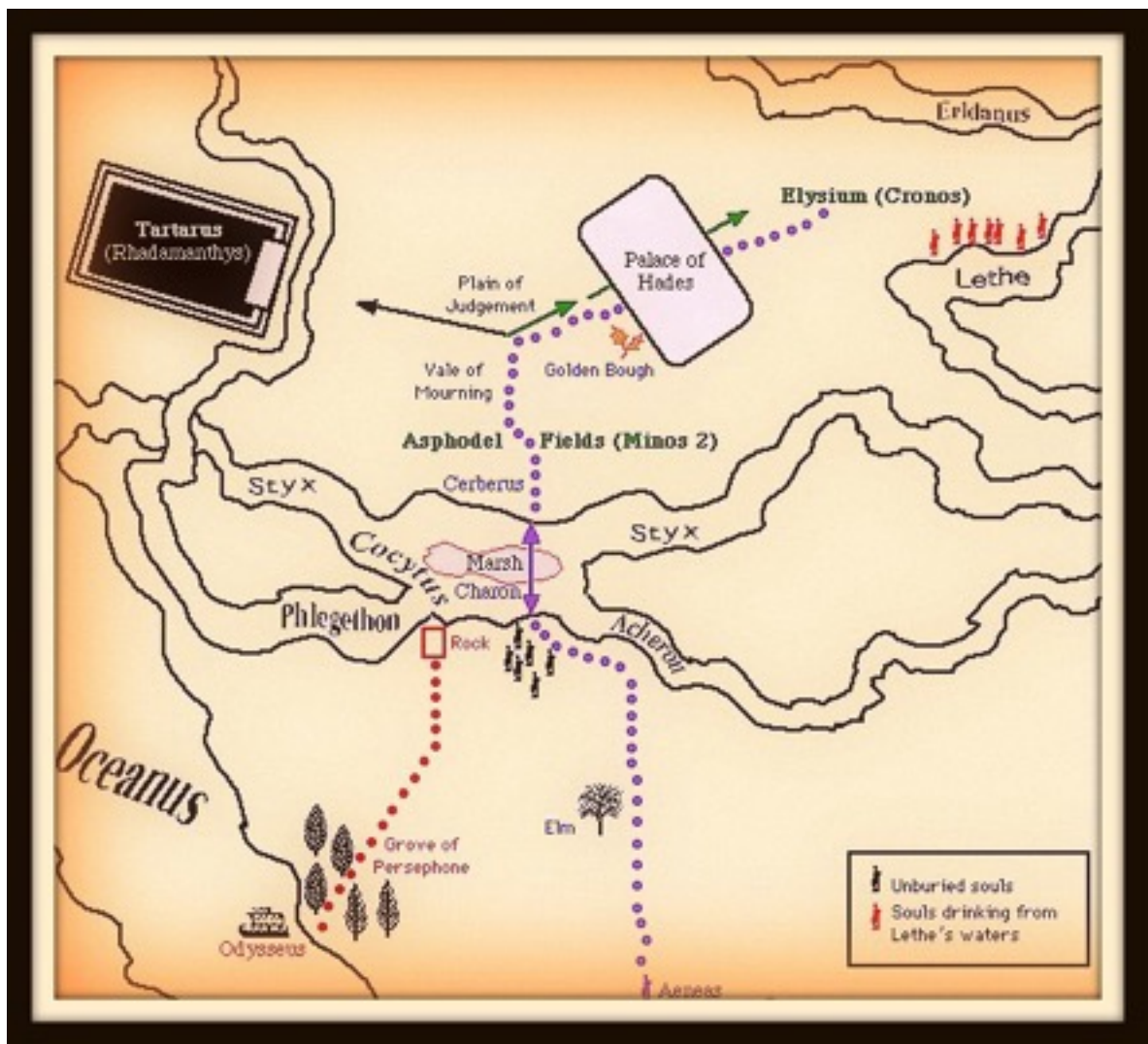
When Kronos' kingdom was divided, his son, Hades, received the underworld - presiding over the land where the dead dwelled and everything that lay just beneath earth's surface (including agriculture and minerals). Because of this association, he's often associated with wealth. Hades' reluctance to ascend from the underworld points to the permanence of death and his ability to remain unseen shows that one never sees death approaching. When Hades was seen in the overworld, he was carrying keys - an indication that there's no way out of his kingdom. In comparison to other gods, there are no temples built for Hades, however, black animals (usually black bulls) were sacrificed to him. Cypress trees, narcissi, the maidenhair fern, and the number two are sacred to him as well. His appearance was so grim and his residence so dismal that he couldn't get anyone to marry him, so he abducted Persephone to be his queen. In the underworld, his "court" consisted of the three Furies and the guard, Cerberus, who was often depicted as a 3-headed dog that allowed everyone to enter the underworld, but permitted no one to leave. Life in the underworld can't be compared to the Christian hell that's often seen as a place of torture, instead, the underworld is typically seen as just a desolate place of nothingness.





Geographically, the underworld was surrounded by five rivers that conjoined at the center: Acheron (river of woe), Cocytus (river of lamentation), Phlegethon (river of fire), Styx (river of unbreakable oath by which the god took vows), and the Lethe (river of forgetfulness). Upon death, a soul was led by Hermes, where the ferry awaited to carry it across the Acheron. The ferry was run by Charon, and only those

who could pay the fare (coins placed in the corpse's mouth when they were buried) were granted passage, the rest remained trapped between the two worlds.



adaptations

Virgil - Georgics: Book IV (29 BC)

By the time Virgil wrote his version of Orpheus and Eurydice, the myth was already in forms of art, poetry, and plays such as Euripides' *Alcestis* and Aeschylus' *Bassarids* (a lost play). In earlier versions, Orpheus is a religion figure and musician and Eurydice isn't often mentioned, and if she is, Orpheus is successful in retrieving her from the underworld. It is believed that Virgil added the conditions of the "look back" and is one of the first known writers to give Eurydice a voice

Ovid - Metamorphosis: Book X (8 AD)

Ovid takes a more tragic take on story, giving less attention to Eurydice's perspective and giving an account of Orpheus' death.

Overall, artists changed the focus of the story depending on the concern of their era — —

Middle Ages: Orpheus was viewed as a christ-like figure.



Spain's Golden Age: El Divino Orfeo (Divine Orpheus), an auto sacramentale, focused on how Orpheus carried a lyre in the shape of a cross and battled against the Prince of Darkness to save Eurydice's soul (who was a character named Human Nature). It was an allegory of Christ's battle with death.

Renaissance: The Orpheus myth appeals to humanists with Orpheus as a symbol of the cooperation of arts, sciences, and religion. At the time, opera was created as an art in Italy and since Orpheus was seen as the embodiment of music, many of the first operas focused on this.

Operas

Jacopo Peri - Euridice (1600)

Giulio Caccini - Euridice (1600)

Claudio Monteverdi - Orfeo (1607)

The best known opera depicting the story. It was the first opera to focus on the love story between Orpheus and Eurydice and opted for a happier ending with Eurydice's rescue.

Christoph Willibald Gluck - Orphée et Euridyce (1762)

Returned the plot to a tragic ending and continued to focus on their love story.

Franz Joseph Haydn - Orfeo ed Euridice (1791)

Maintained the tragic plot and continued to focus on their love story.



Gluck's *Orpheus & Eurydice* - 2015

Poetry & Ballet

Igor Stravinsky - Orpheus (1947)

The ballet maintained the tragic plot and continued to focus on their love story.

John Milton - L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Lycidas (17th Century)

Saw Orpheus as an artist who finds solace in his work.

Other modern writers such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Robert Browning, H.D, Edith Sitwell, and Muriel Rukeyser worked more specifically to give the often-silenced Eurydice a voice.



Stravinsky's *Orpheus* - 1954

Plays

Jean Cocteau - Orphee (1926)

Captured the couple in a lighthearted way touching on themes of art, love, sacrifice, trust, and distraction. The play acts a bit like a surrealist adventure:

The couple bickers and Orpheus tries to write poems that are tapped out by a horse's hoof that lives in their house. Orpheus is out entering a poetry contest when Eurydice is poisoned by jealous Bacchantes (Maenads) and she's carried away by death (who is played by a beautiful woman). Orpheus is encouraged by a friend to follow Eurydice through a mirror in their house. Orpheus retrieves her, bargains with death, and argues to never look at her again, however, Orpheus looks back at her during an argument and she dies again. Orpheus is then decapitated by Bacchantes and reunited with Eurydice in death along with the friend who originally encouraged him to follow Eurydice (of whom Orpheus accuses Eurydice having an affair with). They finally reach a mutual understanding and enjoy dinner in a place in the underworld that looks and seems like a different version of their old home.

Jean Anouilh - Eurydice (1941)

The plot of the play focuses on the trust in their relationship:

Orpheus is a street singer that travels with his father - when waiting at a train station he meets Eurydice, an actress in a theater troupe and it's love at first sight. They marry and run away together, but when Orpheus discovers her promiscuous past, Eurydice flees out of fear and shame and is killed in a bus accident. Orpheus is given the chance to bring her back from death by meeting her again at the train station. He was supposed to keep turned away from her until sunrise, but Orpheus is doubtful of her love, and in his distrust he turns towards her causing her to die again.

Tennessee Williams - Orpheus Descending (1955)

This play is less directly influenced by the myth and doesn't directly reference any name in the tale except for in the title. It does follow Orpheus' love for music and is the first play to see Eurydice as the protagonist. (There is a 1959 film adaptation of the play called "The Fugitive Kind" which follows a similar plot).

Valentine (Orpheus) has the power to charm people, especially women, with his guitar. Val rescues Lady (Eurydice) from her living hell of a marriage to a dying man who also happened to be the cause of her father's death. The events take place in Lady's shop where Val takes a job. Lady is later shot and killed by her jealous husband and Val tries to escape, but is attacked and ripped to shreds by a pack of dogs.

ORPHEUS DESCENDING **ACT TWO**

gently, pushes collar of her trench coat back from her bare throat and shoulders. Runs a finger along her neck tracing a vein.] Little girl, you're transparent, I can see the veins in you. A man's weight on you would break you like a bundle of sticks. . . .

[Music fades out.]

CAROL *[gazes at him, startled by his perception]*: Isn't it funny! You've hit on the truth about me. The act of love-making is almost unbearably painful, and yet, of course, I do bear it, because to be not alone, even for a few moments, is worth the pain and the danger. It's dangerous for me because I'm not built for childbearing.

VAL: Well, then, fly away, little bird, fly away before you—get broke. *[He turns back to his guitar.]*

CAROL: Why do you dislike me?

VAL *[turning back]*: I never dislike nobody till they interfere with me.

Anais Mitchell - Hadestown (2010)

Musical based on folk rock concert album that focuses on Orpheus as a starving artist and Hades as a wealthy man who doesn't share.

Film

Cocteau's Orphic Trilogy: *The Blood of the Poet* (1930), *Orpheus* (1950), and *The Testament of Orpheus* (1960).

The trilogy is less concerned with adapting the myth, not following the line of the 1926 play. Instead it focuses on the journey of an Orphic-like poet and demonstrates a fascination with an artist who has power over life and death. Instead of focusing on the love story, it highlights Orpheus' fascination with death.



Cocteau's *The Testament of Orpheus*

Marcel Camus' *Black Orpheus* (1959)

Draws parallels to myth, but also focuses on issues of class and culture.



There was a demonstrated popularity of the Orpheus myth in the mid-20th century:

after WWI and WWII: There was an interest in ancient mythology because it offered common ground to bring the world back together. It also helped to reveal responses to societal stresses and political disorder. This particular myth also questions the finality of death and allowed for reflection in a century of despair. An ancient myth is a way for artists to consider their own concerns.

It is the myth of art's total engagement with love, beauty, and the order and harmony of nature—all under the sign of death. It is the myth of the artist's magic, of his courage for the dark, desperate plunge into the depths of the heart and of the world, and of the hope and need to return to tell the rest of us of his journey.

- Charles Segal



directions from eurydice's father

Destination is in Davenport, Iowa.

All the directions he lists are accurate.

The brick house isn't exactly identifiable -

but there are a few in the area that could be potentials -
if it does in fact exist.

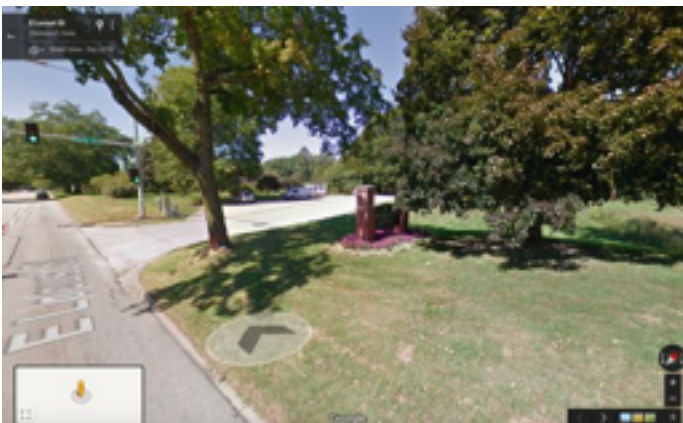
Interstate 294, Illinois Tri-State Tollway to Route 88 West



Route 80, Exit 301 (For Middle Road)



Duck Creek Park, On the Right (E. Locust St)



Left on Fernwood Ave



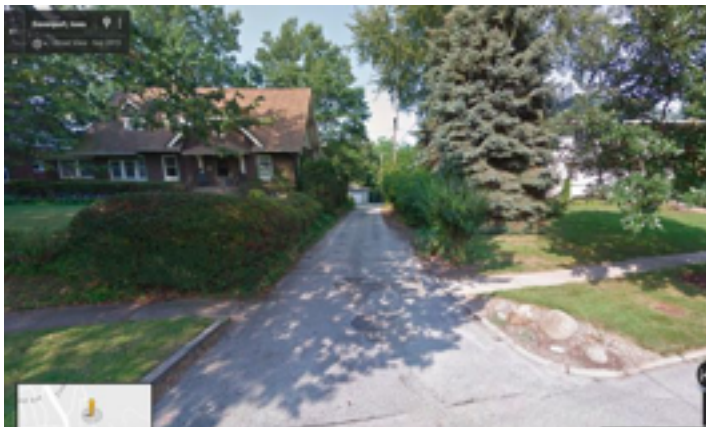
Fernwood Ave Curving to the Right



Left on Forest Road



Second Entrance, After 2 Blocks on Forest Rd



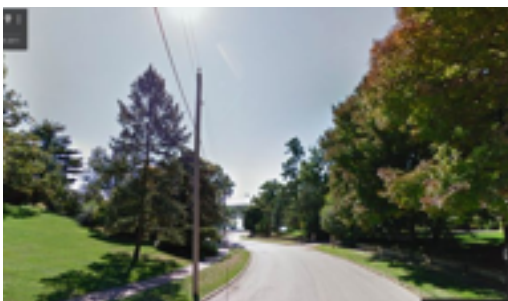
Red Brick House on the Right



Hill, and Good Tree for Climbing



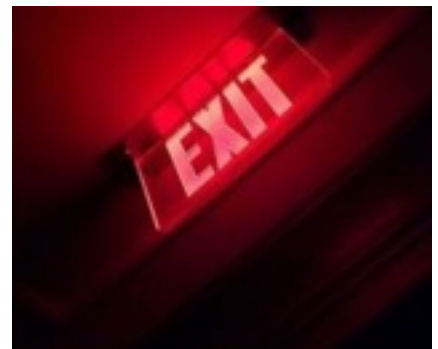
Train Tracks and Mississippi River



red

Definition:

1. Designating the color of blood, a ruby, a ripe tomato, etc.
 - a.) appearing in various shades at the longer-wavelength end of the visual spectrum; next to orange, opposite of violet
 - b.) designating a fire, flame, lightning
 - c.) designating the sky or the sun (esp. at dawn or dusk)
 - d.) designating the earth, clay, sand
 - e.) of the cheeks, complexion, or lips
 - f.) designating hair or beard
 - g.) designating rage or anger
2. Designating blood
 - a.) implication of being superior; “whose blood is reddest”
3. Of gold: pure, becoming red when heated
 - a.) a coin or an item of jewelry made of gold
4. Of fabric: an item of clothing dyed with red
5. Of a person: having red hair or nickname associated with
 - a.) of an animal: having red hair
 - b.) of a person: having red skin color
 - c.) relating to North American Indians (offensive)
 - d.) caribbean; a black person having light skin or mixed race (offensive)
6. Of the eyes: bloodshot, inflamed (esp. from weeping)
 - a.) of the skin: inflamed, blistered, sunburnt; a rash or wound
7. Wine
8. Stained with blood
 - a.) consisting of blood
 - b.) of meat/flesh; raw, filled with blood
9. Involving bloodshed, burning, violence
10. Heated to the point of glowing; red hot



11. Of the face: temporarily filled with blood

a.) result or with some sudden feeling or emotion; blushing (esp. embarrassment)

12. Wearing red armor

13. In the names of diseases or conditions

a.) characterized by bloody or red discharge, lesions, discoloration

14. Cards; designated suits: hearts and diamonds

15. Indicating danger or emergency

16. Political; originally: revolutionary, republican, anarchist. Later: communist, socialist, of or relating to Soviet Union

a.) representing British territory on a map

b.) votes for Republican party; politically conservative

17. Menstrual bleeding; “the reds”

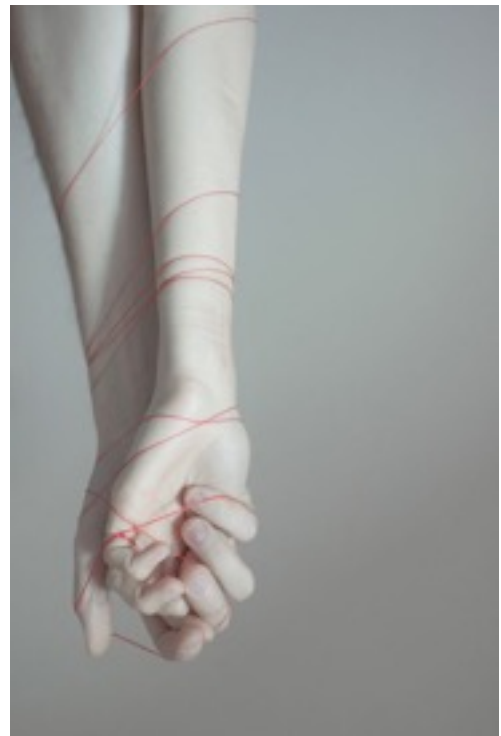
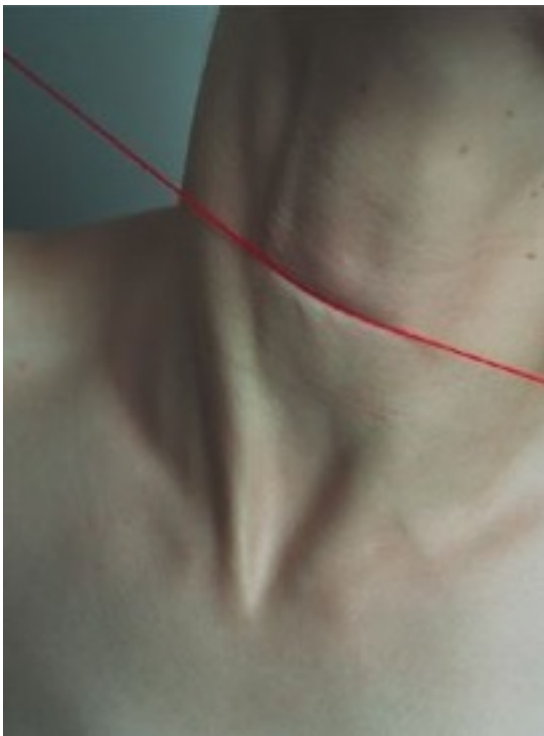
18. A red variety of a crop

19. A red ball in billiards

20. A cent

21. Debt, overdraft; “in the red”

22. A sedative drug



Phrases:

Comparisons : red as blood, red as a cherry, red as fire, red as a rose

To be as red (in the gills) as a (turkey-) cock : to have bright red cheeks

To shoot/sport the red : when a turkey develops red coloration on their head

Red in tooth and claw : savage violence and merciless competition

Red, White, and Blue : U.S flag, patriotism in U.S, Union flag, British patriotism

Paint the town red: to be wildly extravagant

To see red : become angry

Reds under the bed : fear of communists



History & Red:

Red is the oldest pigment

It's found in red ochre/cave art.

Red and blood often are the same word or have the same root word in

In Portuguese, the latin root of red means “little worm”

The antichrist is said to be a red monster

Rode by a woman in red, also referred to as “Whore of Babylon”

Red is linked to power

In some countries, ordinary citizens were forbidden to wear red because it was associated with high status

Red textiles were also expensive

The dye was made from a bug in a Mexican cactus called “cochineal”

In the 1800s synthetic dyes were invented, so the color lost its expensive allure because anyone could have red garments.

Red is associated with palaces and Versailles

Louis XIV for example,

Was known for his nice legs, and he wore red heels to show them off, from there, nobles started to wear heels and paired them with red for extravagance

Elizabeth I

Also like to wear bright reds. She was known for her red lipstick which she believed had healing powers and could ward off death.

In World War II

Working women wore red lipstick as affirmation of femininity.



Red & Associations:

Negative and danger-bearing emotions

Power

Evolved biological signal of attractiveness

People wearing red clothes are seen as more desirable

Victory

Most manipulative color

Aggression

Sex, Adultery, Prostitution, Desire

Seduction

Sin

Love

Pain

Fear

Anger, Color of Wrath (7 Deadly Sins)

Cupid

Devil

Hate

Shame (Scarlet Letter)

Luck (China)

Mourning (Africa)

Beauty (Russia)

Embarrassment

Bullfighting/ Taunting of bulls with red cape

Communism

Error

Life/Blood

Death/Blood, Murder (“red-handed”)

Fear

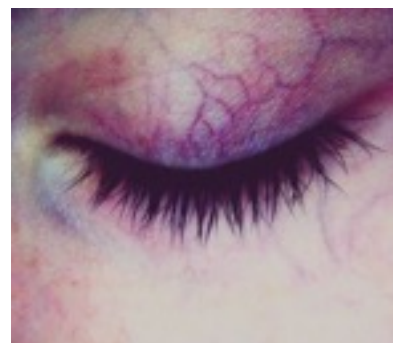
Anxiety

Confidence

Roman Catholic Church

Divinity

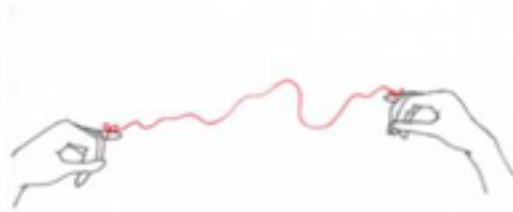
Murder (“red-handed”)



Red String of Fate Myth:

The red string of fate is a Japanese myth that claims that human relationships are predestined. The Gods tie a red string to two people's pinky fingers when they are created and they are connected by this thread. This indicates that they will have an important story regardless of time, place, or circumstances. Another version of the story is that an old man who lives in the moon comes out every night to search for soulmates (defined as people who have something to learn from each other) to reunite them on earth. When he finds them, he ties a red string on them so they can find their paths to each other. This string can get tangled and stretched, but it can never break. In the human body, the ulnar artery of the heart (a thin vein that's similar looking to a piece of thread) connects to the pinky finger - the red string is an extension of this vein.

string as a connector, but also as something that reunites



Red & Art:

*“a certain blue penetrates your soul,
a certain red affects your blood pressure.”*

- Matisse



*“I sought to express with red and green,
the terrible human passions.”*

- Van Gogh



*“color is only an instrument;
my interest is expressing human emotions
tragedy, ecstasy, doom.”*

- Mark Rothko

KEN. Sunrise is red and red is sunrise. (Ken keeps cleaning up.) Red is heartbeat. Red is passion. Red wine. Red roses. Red lipstick. Beets. Tulips. Peppers.
ROTHKO. Arterial blood.
KEN. That too. (Rothko thinks about it.)
ROTHKO. Rust on the bike on the lawn.
KEN. And apples ... And tomatoes.
ROTHKO. Dresden firestorm at night. The sun in Rousseau, the flag in Delacroix, the robe in El Greco.
KEN. A rabbit's nose. An albino's eyes. A parakeet.
ROTHKO. Florentine marble. Atomic flash. Nick yourself shaving, blood in the Barbasol.
KEN. The ruby slippers. Technicolor. That phone to the Kremlin on the president's desk.
ROTHKO. Russian flag, Nazi flag, Chinese flag.
KEN. Persimmons. Pomegranates. Redlight district. Red tape. Rouge.
ROTHKO. Lava. Lobsters. Scorpions.
KEN. Stop sign. Sports car. A blush.
ROTHKO. Viscera. Flame. Dead Fauvists.
KEN. Traffic lights. Titian hair.
ROTHKO. Slash your wrists. Blood in the sink.
KEN. Santa Claus.
ROTHKO. Satan. (Beat.) So ... red.

red is bodily

Red & Social Signaling:

Early ancestors evolved a cell in retina that allows to pick out red fruit

Red skin: blood pumping near surface of skin

It's a sign of dominance/aggression

Wearing red makes us feel more dominant and can intimidate others

There are variations in beliefs as to whether red shifts emotions negatively or positively, but

Red signals *the presence of a significant stimulus* meaning,

attention shifts towards the color

Red is emotionally arousing,

not calm or neutral

Red is the most widespread signaling color

In the natural world: red is visible in the sky and foliage

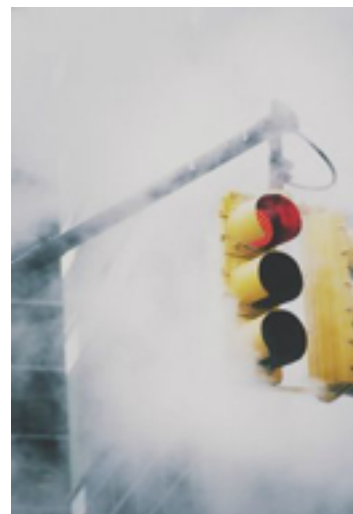
In the urban world: red is visible as signals for traffic, etc.

Red gives cue that a certain image is important so that we shift our attention to it

red regularly sways behavior

red recognized as a stimulant

red has more personal associations than any other color



Red & Psychology:

Red influences psychological functioning via the *color-in-context theory* meaning it has either:

Negative connotation: blood, fire, danger, stop

Positive connotation: sex, food

* There is no neutral connotation

Red facilitates an approach or avoidance process, guiding us towards or away from something.

As a whole, color connotations come from pairing colors with experiences, objects, and messages. People assign emotional meanings to hues, which is where preferences for color come.

Viewing red immediately before doing something or while doing something **INCREASES** the responder's strength and velocity in doing it (from elicitation of fear).

Viewing red a while before doing something **IMPAIRS** the responder's doing of the action (from elicitation of anxiety rather than fear)

