

Existential Anxiety and Authentic Living in Puss in Boots: The Last Wish (2022) Film

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*"Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom."
Psalm 90:12 (NIV)*

ABSTRACT

This research examines the 2022 animated film *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* through the framework of existentialist understanding, focusing primarily on the concept of existential anxiety, bad faith, and authentic living as articulated by Jean-Paul Sartre (1946/2007) and Soren Kierkegaard (1844/1980). While previous scholarship on the film largely relies on Christopher Vogler's structural "Hero's Journey" framework to map out the protagonist's transformation, this research aims to fill a critical gap by providing a deeper analysis of the character's internal crisis. A qualitative descriptive method used to analyze the carefully selected scenes, dialogue, cinematography, and important timestamps from the film. The analysis focuses on how *Puss in Boots* responds to fear, mortality, responsibility, and identity throughout the narrative. As the result: **1)** The study shows that *Puss's* realization of his sudden mortality and having used eight of his nine lives, triggers a profound existential shift. Using specific narrative timestamps and visual cues from the film, **2)** *Puss's* initial avoidance of Death reflects Sartre's concept of "*Bad Faith*," specifically through his attempts to flee reality by retreating into isolation at Mama Luna's cat sanctuary and hiding behind a manufactured, fearless persona. The research then traces his transition away from self-deception as he confronts his vulnerability and ultimately exercises what Sartre terms "radical freedom." **3)** By choosing to stand his ground and fight for his final life alongside his companions, *Puss* demonstrates how meaning is personal responsibility. Additionally, the study includes Albert Bandura's social learning theory to discuss the significance of the film, illustrating how cinematic narratives serve as modern understandings of psychological models that can guide audiences through their own existential anxieties. Ultimately, engage with complex human struggles, showing that a single life lived with authenticity holds far more value than an eternity spent in reckless denial.

Keywords: *Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, Kierkegaard, Anxiety, Bad Faith*

INTRODUCTION

Literature has been a thing since ancient times, the earliest literature in the world is from ancient Mesopotamia which is *The Epic Of Gilgamesh* (*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. 2003). Literature reflects real human life, capturing emotions across generations. Through stories, books, poems, plays, and others we see people from different times and cultures manipulating our emotions.

According to Sachs (n.d.), Aristotle argues in Poetics that tragedy is structured to evoke emotions such as pity and fear in the audience, demonstrating how literature can intentionally shape readers emotional responses, a process he calls catharsis. This is why literature matters, it connects us to humanity beyond our own circumstances. It builds empathy and character, it sharpens the mind, and it allows us to explore complex ideas. According to Albert Bandura's research (1977), Children around the age of 3 - 7 was participating in an experiment, the children split up, some were exposed to a room of adults with aggressive models, and the rest another room, in both rooms there was toys and an inflatable bobo doll, aggressive models were to assault the doll, actions include punching, kicking, etc, the other room, adults were playing, ignoring the bobo doll (Bandura, 1977). Results show that children exposed to more aggressive behaviour are more likely to assault the bobo doll, this goes the same for literature. From when we were children, our eyes, and ears were exposed, fully naked to the outside world, influencing our behavior.

Puss in Boots: The Last Wish is an Adventure/Comedy animated movie produced by DreamWorks Animation and is considered to be for ages eight and above. Published on December 21, 2022 by Universal Pictures, Puss in Boots: The Last Wish received 8 awards and 57 nominations overall. Some of its most notable recognitions were nominations for Best Animated Feature at the Academy Awards, Best Animated Motion Picture at the Golden Globe Awards, Best Animated Film at the BAFTA Awards, and Best Animated Feature at the Critics' Choice Awards. The film also won two Annie Awards, including Outstanding Achievement in Storyboarding and Editorial for an Animated Feature.

Puss in Boots: The Last Wish follows the story of a cat, Puss in Boots, which is set in a fantasy-like world. In this movie, Puss being a cat quite literally has 9 lives. He is a hero known for being flashy and cool, his confidence coming from his lack of fear of danger or death. It is revealed early in the story that, Puss in Boots is actually in his ninth life, which means he cannot "escape" death anymore. His fear is stricken more to its core after he encounters Death, in the form of a wolf hunting him for his arrogance. The feline flees from Death and hides away from the outside world, leaving behind his "hero-ish" self. He finds out about the Mythical Wishing Star and how it can grant him one wish, so he wants all his nine lives back. His purpose for this wish is no other than to reclaim his once "Legendary Hero" title back, with his lives he could afford the life he once had. Throughout his journey he is accompanied by Perrito, an optimistic companion who stays positive all throughout, and also Kitty Softpaws, an ex of Puss whose goal is to also fulfill her wish through the star. Other villains aside from Death include Goldilocks and the Three Bears, as well as "Big" Jack, it is a race against everybody on who can get the star first and grant themselves their wish. In this

journey we see Puss slowly changing and acting upon what he ‘truly’ wants, based off of his decisions that were not self-centered and was slowly being more compassionate to his friends. At the end he does get the star but decides not to ask for more lives, finally giving an end to this chase of being the hero and actually starting to appreciate life for what he wants it to be .

This exact situation reflects many themes of existentialism such as freedom, responsibility, anxiety, etc . Jean-Paul Sartre emphasizes that humans have the freedom to make choices on their own, but this freedom often leads to anxiety. As noted by Steven Crowell, *“Existentialist literature portrays individuals confronting a world without inherent meaning and attempting to construct significance through choice and action.”* (Crowell, 2012, p. 15) In a world that may not have a clear meaning or purpose, one must face up to that uncertainty and make a choice in life. This is similar to what Puss is experiencing, being uncertain between the decision to keep running away or to face his fear. This reflects his existential conflict experienced by Puss, who now must make an important decision despite that.

Existentialism is a philosophical theory created by Jean-Paul Sartre, he lived in french and is popularly known as a philosopher, novelist, playwright, and public intellectual in the 20th century. According to Jean-Paul Sartre, who coined the term “existence precedes essence,” he makes it clear that human beings are not predetermined or stuck at one fixed thing, but rather it is the decisions and actions they make create meaning in their lives. Existentialism emphasizes that one must first exist and is then defined who they are by the actions they made (Sartre, 1946). Sartre continues to state *“Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.”* (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 29). Further clarifying that existentialism views life as a continuous process of self-creation. In addition, Sartre introduces the concept of *“bad faith”*. This occurs when individuals deny their freedom and responsibility by blaming circumstances, roles, or society (Sartre, 2007). It is seen in the film Puss in Boots: The Last Wish, where Puss runs away from death and refuses to confront his fear, reflecting an act of “bad faith”.

Another figure of existential thinking is Søren Kierkegaard who was not only known as a philosopher, but is widely famous as an author often being called the father of existentialism. He strongly believes that personal choices and self understanding are important. Kierkegaard emphasizes that experiencing anxiety especially when facing something like an important decision is normal to feel, and that this anxiety means becoming a true self and understanding yourself more (Kierkegaard, 1844). Existential theory is often used to analyze characters in film, characters who struggle with their identity and the fear that contrasts with their sense of responsibility. Using this theory, we can examine the choices that the characters make throughout the film and the meaning

they create in their lives. With that in mind, existentialism is often used in literary analysis especially to explore a character's struggle with identity, fear, and personal decisions in an uncertain world.

Previous studies on Puss in boots: The Last Wish used theories such as Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey theory, Focusing on the protagonist, Puss, and his transformation following the stages of the Hero's Journey. Aimee and Zamruddin (2025), in their study, titled "*Vogler's Hero's Journey Representation in Puss in Boots: The Last Wish Film (2022)*," focuses on stages of a hero's transformation throughout a story (Vogler, 2007), with themes such as character development, courage along with heroisms as Puss must face difficult situation with the enemy. Results in the end shows how Puss undergoes several stages of transformation – from an arrogant and prideful hero into a wise and accepting friend.

However, this study focuses more on the heroic transformation that Puss undergoes throughout the film. It does not explore it in a deeper philosophical meaning of the character's experience. Existential themes are presented throughout the journey the hero undergoes. Especially in Puss in Boots: The Last Wish, Puss experiences fear for the first time after realizing he only has one life left, leading him to reflect on the meaning of life, personal freedom, and the choices he makes. These themes align exactly with the themes that are in existential theory discussed by Jean-Paul Sartre. Therefore, while other research focuses on the Heroic transformation, it resulted in little discussion of the film from an existential perspective. This study aims to fill that gap by analysing the movie using existentialism and humanism Sartre, J.-P. (2007) by exploring certain themes such as freedom, fear of death, and the meaning of life are represented through the character of Puss.

On the other hand, this research analyzed the movie Puss in Boots: The Last Wish using ideas from existentialist philosophy, especially from Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard. Jean-Paul Sartre asserts that human beings are born without a predefined purpose or essence. Instead, people slowly become who they are through the choices and actions they make. Sartre explains this with the "*existence precedes essence*," which means people exist first, then define themselves through their actions and decisions (Sartre, 1946/2007). In addition, Kierkegaard (1844) explains that anxiety often appears when someone faces uncertainty or has to make an important decision. Running away from fear, portraying "*bad faith*," refers to how an individual hides their true identity in a false identity (Sartre, 1946/2007). In addition this idea also connects to social learning theory from Albert Bandura. Bandura says that people can learn behavior or values by watching others, including characters in movies or stories (Bandura, 1961-1963). The film functions as not only entertainment but helps audiences examine how fear, anxiety, and responsibility can influence personal growth and self understanding.

Previous studies on Puss in Boots: The Last Wish (2022) mainly analyze the film using Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey framework, focusing on the stages of the protagonist's adventure and transformation. However, there has been little research using existentialist philosophy, particularly with themes such as mortality, anxiety and authentic living. This research aims to fill this gap by examining how the film's cinematography, symbolism, dialogue and character development reflect existentialist ideas. Meanwhile, this research has examined Puss in Boots: The Last Wish through the lens of existentialist philosophy, revealing how the film embodies core themes articulated by Jean Paul Sartre and Soren Kierkegaard. Through the protagonist's journey from arrogant immortality to meaningful mortality, the narrative demonstrates Sartre's principle that "*existence precedes essence*." Puss is not defined by his reputation as a fearless hero, but by the choices he makes when confronted with his own finitude. (Sartre, 1946/2007)

By choosing to stop running and face his fear, Sartre called this as radical freedom, and accepting full responsibility for existence (Sartre, 1946; Crowell, 2012). His transformation illustrates that meaning is not given but created through action and commitment. This process of learning through the observation of narrative models that aligns with Albert Bandura social learning theory, demonstrating how cinematic "models" can shape behavior and identity (Bandura, 1961-1963).

This research is aiming to analyze the film Puss in Boots: The Last Wish using existential themes such as freedom, anxiety, responsibility, bad faith, and authenticity through the development of the main character, Puss in Boots. Based on the above issue, the paper examines how the character of Puss in Boots in Puss in Boots: The Last Wish demonstrates existential anxiety through his fear of death and his decision to run away from his identity as a hero; How Puss in Boots' avoidance of Death reflects "bad faith" in Jean-Paul Sartre's existential theory, and how he eventually moves toward accepting responsibility; How Puss in Boots' journey from escaping responsibility to confronting his fears illustrates the relationship between freedom, anxiety, and authentic living. Besides, examining how Puss faces his fear of death, avoidance of responsibility, before eventually accepting mortality is part of the discussion, by applying Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist theory. The significance of the study is to demonstrate how animated film portrays complex philosophical ideas, this includes existentialism; it is done in a way so that it appeals more to modern audiences. In addition, this research is examined through an existentialist perspective. It is not solely through narrative frameworks. Examples of these frameworks include the Hero's Journey.

Freedom	Responsibility
Puss acts without thinking, often taking risks easily without a plan. As said by Jean-Paul Sartre “<i>condemned to be free</i>,” meaning an individual is free to make any choice in life but at the same time take responsibility for it (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 29) . Just like how Puss makes reckless decisions but not think about the outcome. This behaviour is directly related to his belief that he has lived many lives. <i>“I laugh at death!”</i> He feels free seeing himself as an invincible legend therefore making carefree and reckless choices without paying attention to the outcome because he thinks that death doesn't matter.	After losing all but 1 of his 9 lives, Puss acts more cautiously. He is aware about the decisions he makes and accepts the consequences of his action <i>“I know I can never defeat you, Lobo... but I will never stop fighting for this life.”</i> He takes responsibility for the situation and made a choice to not run away from his problem. This relates to Sartre's statement that “<i>Man is responsible for everything he does</i>” (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 29). People cannot run away from their responsibility forever just because of the circumstances or fear they experienced. Puss standing up to Death reflects his choice in facing his problems rather than continue escaping from them.

METHOD

This analysis used a qualitative method approach, with help of Jean Paul Sartre theory of existentialism, to analyze the characters in the film Puss in boots : The Last Wish. (2022) The issues in the film then observed and analyzed where conflict such as freedom, responsibility, fear of death, and the search for meaning found. In addition, actions of the characters, such as body language, emotions, and also decisions the characters made which reflect existential themes were also the highlights. This analysis draws on many of the ideas discussed by Jean-Paul Sartre, such as the concepts of 'existence preceding essence', freedom and responsibility, anxiety, bad faith and authenticity (Sartre, 1946/2007). Also incorporating Kierkegaard's theory of anxiety to examine the protagonist's past struggle (Kierkegaard, 1844/1980). In addition, uses Steven Crowell's theory to support the discussion of authenticity and self-creation (Crowell, 2012). The data were collected from selecting the film's dialogues, cinematography, and noting important timestamps throughout the film. Each carefully selected scene was examined thoroughly to understand the main character,

DISCUSSION

The film begins with Puss in boots behind curtains and crowds screaming “Puss in Boots!” The curtains open and the spotlight shines against Puss, lights color the room of blue and purple, the disco ball shines spots of light in the crowd, indicating that it's a party or a celebration of Puss (02.26.00).



Sartre's quote “*Existence precedes essence.*” (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 22) Relating to this scene, in it,

Puss acts like he is the fearless hero, that it's his permanent identity, though this changes throughout the movie where his decisions continue to shape his identity. The party erupts into chaos as the governor comes back to peasants partying about a wanted outlaw, the governor sends his soldiers to kill Puss, with many of them coming at Puss at once, he lights fireworks, yellow sparks flitting off indicates how he is having fun doing this, as the fireworks escape outside it, causing the sleeping giant of Del Mar to wake up (05:00.00) Sartre's quote related to the scene is "*Man is condemned to be free...*" (Sartre, 1946/2007,



p. 29). His choice about lighting up the fireworks shows him being free, but the choice he makes comes with a cost, putting everyone in further danger as they scream "*You woke the sleeping giant for Delmar*". The giant interrupts the fight, capturing the peasants, the governor, and his men. Eventually, Puss in boots manages to save them, delivering a blow with a bell, this bell falls on top of him, crushing him, where he then wakes up in a vet. The walls and objects are blue, the atmosphere feels quiet and vulnerable, the doctor tells him that he has died, to which Puss replies with "*I am a cat, I have 9 lives*" Puss recalls all the deaths and reveals that he has already died 8 times, leaving him on his last life (12.37.00). Sartre's quote, "*Bad faith... is lying to oneself about one's own freedom.*" (Sartre, 2007) describes Puss, as Puss keeps trying to deny that he is dying, trying to keep himself as the fearless hero, bad faith means to reduce yourself to a specific role and not be free.



After consulting with the doctor Puss goes to a bar to recall how ridiculous it is that he's supposed to live his life carefully as a lap cat, a remark from the doctor, with Puss saying, "*Ha! I am Puss in Boots, I am no one's lap cat, that doctor is a quack and a crazy man! He should stick to cutting hair.*" (12.41.00-12.51.00) This hints to one of Kierkegaard quotes, "*Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom.*" (Kierkegaard, 1844/1980, p. 61). Puss feels anxious that he now has to choose between two paths, be reckless or be safe. It shows us how his whole life he follows a narrative, his essence preceded his existence, and how the change is something unfamiliar to him. As he drinks alone, Death suddenly appears. Death introduces himself as a fan, praising Puss's story as a legend and complimenting him, until he revealed to Puss his wanted poster asking for an autograph

on the “Dead” part in the bottom “Dead or Alive.” Puss, with his persona, only thinks of Death as another bounty hunter he will easily defeat, with his line, “Fear me if you dare!” (14.35.00). But as they fight, Puss actually performs poorly, he lacks the skill to land a single blow on his opponent. Of



course Puss is surprised, he has only thought of himself as the one who is unstoppable, the one who “laughs at the face of death.” In the fight scene he is shown to lack basic swordsmanship skills and relies on flashy maneuvers, using his surroundings to make his next move more grand than the last. But that doesn’t allow him to win, he struggles and is dominated by Death. Death, as if taunting, lands a blow that barely scratches Puss, enough to make him bleed. In that moment, Puss realizes that this is real, and this is his final life, and he can’t defeat Death, this is his end. His pupils dilate and his hair stands as the blood stains his paws. Death toys with him with the lines “I just love.. the smell of FEAR!” What’s the



matter, lives flashing before your eyes?” Puss then runs away from Death, by going down a sewer drain. Before Puss leaves, he looks back at the town, hinting at the concept of bad faith, “Bad faith... consists in fleeing what one is.” (Sartre, 2007) He goes to Mama Luna’s Cat Rescue, a place in the outskirts that holds a huge amount of felines. It is there that Puss goes on to bury his clothes, his outfit, his past self, with him saying, “I am no longer Puss in Boots.” Puss finally decides to take control, even if out of fear, “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself.” (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 22) This shows us how Puss’s journey in his existential anxiety finally has led him to decide to define himself,



he creates meaning in life, finally being authentic to himself. He chooses a path, he starts to not ignore his options and faces them. Sartre explains that when a character realizes that their choices are their responsibility, they will experience anxiety. Through the anxiety of choices there are two coherent options that follow, bad faith or authenticity. Puss takes the choice to acknowledge freedom and consciously create meaning in life as seen by the funeral of his past self, he chose authenticity.

Before experiencing a direct confrontation with his mortality, Puss lives under the illusion that his identity as a legendary hero is an unchanging essence. In the existential framework of Sartre, assuming a fixed label to avoid the fluid reality of making authentic choices is a baseline form of self

deception. Puss operates under the assumption that his heroic status shields him from finality, famously declaring, *"I laugh at death!"* This mindset allows him



to make reckless decisions without considering the consequences, because he treats his existence as an absolute concept rather than a series of continuous choices. At scene 28.00.00, Puss discovers the existence of the wishing star and makes the immediate decision to leave his optimistic companion,

Perrito. He justifies this choice by stating that he works alone. In this scene where its vibrant setting contrasts with his internal state, Puss treats the upcoming quest for the star as another typical adventure to reclaim his legendary status. By focusing entirely on a magical solution to regain his lost lives, he avoids the immediate responsibility of living authentically within the boundaries of his final life. When an individual realizes the vulnerability of existence but chooses to retreat into a manufactured role to escape that anxiety, they enter a deep state of self deception. Sartre defines this as bad faith *"Bad faith... consist in fleeing what one is"* (Sartre, 2007). Puss attempts to flee his reality by retreating to a cat sanctuary and abandoning his identity entirely.

At scene 28.55.00, Puss physically cuts ties with his past and explicitly states to his companion, *"Sorry perro, Puss in Boots walks alone!"* This scene uses vibrant color and the framing of a



sanctuary gateway to symbolize the transition into isolation. By entering this space, Puss attempts to strip away his agency. He trades his heroic clothes for a normal feeding bowl and adopts the role of a household pet named *"Pickles."* According to Sartre *"Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself"* (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 22) Here, Puss is actively constructing a false meaning. He uses isolation to hide from his fear of Death, and falsely convinces himself that he has no choice but to remain hidden to stay safe.

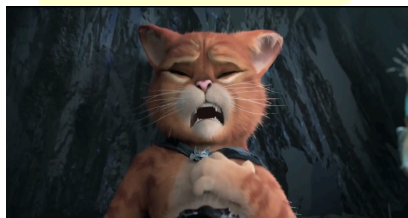
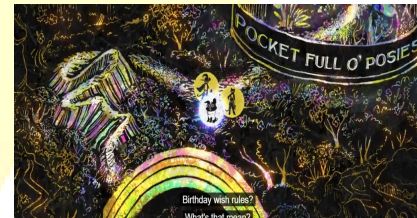
Bad faith does not only manifest as hiding in isolation, it also manifests as putting on a performative mask to trick oneself and others into believing nothing has changed. Sartre explains that *"Bad faith... denies one's own freedom"* (Sartre, 2007) by forcing an individual to mimic a role instead of acting with genuine honesty. At the scene 36.00.00, Puss is shown on a cart alongside Kitty Softpaws. In this specific scene, Puss pretends to be the hero and exclaims *"I'm the legendary Puss in boots"*. The



scene uses a low angle shot with dark medieval themes and a heroic pose to symbolize his bold action. While the low angle perspective visually frames him as a powerful figure, the narrative

context reveals that this boldness is just entirely a performance. On the outside, he mimics his old fearless persona to impress Kitty Softpaws and hides his vulnerability. On the inside, he remains deeply terrified of his mortality and insecure about his single remaining life. He acts out the role of an invincible hero because he is too afraid to honestly accept his mortal condition and shows his true emotional state to his companions.

The internal psychological tension of holding onto bad faith eventually warps how an individual interacts with the surrounding world. When choices are dictated entirely by refusal to face reality, existential anxiety takes over. At the scene 43:30:00, the narrative introduces a magical map that changes dynamically based on the inner fears and emotional states of the characters, the scene shows a visual landscape of the map representing his deepest inner fears. *“Individuals... construct meaning through choice and action.”* (Crowell, 2012, p. 15) The transformation of the once colorful landscape turns into a dark, distorted, and constantly changing environment serves as a visual metaphor for his psychological state. Puss is completely overwhelmed by the realization that the outcome and survival of his own rests entirely on his own choices, a state of a mind that Kierkegaard describes as the destabilizing nature of dread. The shifting environment into the external reality, distorting the path ahead.



Puss composure finally starts to crack at 56:00:00. The camera starts shaking as he desperately attempts to run away from Death into a dark and scary forest where the atmosphere shifts into a muted and dark color palette creating a heavier and unsettling atmosphere that visually represents his emotional turmoil. Earlier in the film, Puss repeatedly encounters Death but he manages to avoid him while maintaining his confident attitude. However, these continuous encounters cause his fear to build up over time until it finally overwhelms him. He realizes that he can no longer escape so in a rush of adrenaline, Puss stumbles over a tree where he collapses down. He clutches his hand tightly pressed against his chest suggests difficulty breathing, unable to focus on anything except fear and physical distress of seeing death coming after him. This idea connects to Soren Kierkegaard's statement that *“Anxiety... reveals the possibility of freedom”* (Kierkegaard, 1844/1980, pp. 61–63). Kierkegaard suggests that anxiety is similar to an “alarm system”, it reminds us and makes us aware of our freedom, uncertainty, and responsibility in life. This same alarm also warns individuals of potential danger, for example, the future is uncertain, they must make important

choices, and those choices will shape who they become. Kiergaard deeply believes that anxiety arises when an individual realizes they have free will to choose their own path in life, but this creates fear and discomfort due to the unknown outcome through their decision. In this scene, Puss's alarm system is triggered after encountering Death. His anxiety forces him to realize that he is not a fearless hero because life has meaning and can end one day. Now, Puss must decide how he wants to live his final life authentically.

In a daze, Puss tries to catch his breath, Perrito eventually finds him collapsed on the base of a tree and helps ground him (57:00.00). The atmosphere still remains dark and gloomy, highlighting the sadness and vulnerability that Puss is experiencing. His head faces away from Perrito suggesting his inability to confront his fear. The camera uses a low, ground-level perspective that captures both characters within the frame and gives a full view of the situation; Puss seems smaller being at his lowest, in contrast to Perrito's calm presence as he lies on his stomach and listens to his confession. This scene is connected to Jean-Paul Sartre's statement, "*Man... defines himself afterwards.*" (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 22) He explains that humans are not born with a fixed identity or purpose, but it's the decisions and choices that create who they are. A person isn't born brave or heroic but it's the choice in life that makes them who they are. Throughout the film, both the public and Puss himself view him as a fearless legend. This is proven when he tiredly says "*I'm supposed to be a fearless hero*". The shifting environment symbolizes Puss's internal conflict and uncertainty about who he truly is. The map visually reflects his psychological state and shows that his identity is not fixed. However, in this scene it shows a different side of his identity as he honestly admits "*I am afraid*". Puss begins to leave behind that false image he created for himself and confronts his true emotions marking an important step to start redefining who he is as a person



Puss eventually faces Kitty again. He holds the wish, but explains that he does not want to use it. Puss finally admits the reason why he has been distancing himself and running away is because he is afraid (1:19:00). Kitty is positioned above Puss while looking down at him. The camera uses a high angle pointing at Kitty giving her a sense of authority and control as she yells "*You're still the same old Puss in boots.*" In contrast, Puss looks up at her, making him seem more vulnerable than usual. The lighting in the scene from a distance adds emotional intensity and highlights the seriousness of their confrontation. Puss corrects her, saying "*But I'm not! I am not*

Puss in Boots.” This reflects the fact that Puss’s is finally ready to confront his identity and responsibility. Humans are fully responsible for their actions and choices, Sartre states that “*Man is responsible for everything he does.*” (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 29). Existentialism argues that people cannot avoid responsibility by blaming fear. When Kitty confronts him about his past behavior and his tendency to run away from others. Puss responds, “*But I’m not! I am not Puss in Boots,*” showing his inner conflict and desire to change. At this moment, Puss begins to realize that he must take responsibility for his actions and redefine himself through his choices rather than continue hiding behind his old identity.

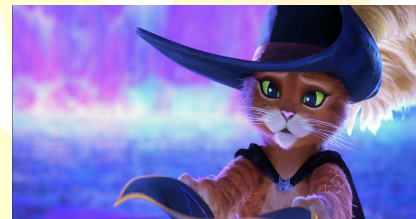
In the end, Kitty accepts Puss’s apology by sympathizing with his internalized fear and even is willing to help. The dark and gloomy colours finally start to lighten up. Not long afterwards, a fiery red starts to envelop them as Death approaches Puss. This highlights the severity of the situation as Death challenges Puss for a rematch (1:24:49). However, rather than running away, Puss is shown with his foot firmly planted on the ground, reflecting his stability in contrast to his earlier panic attack. As the camera focuses on him picking up his sword, it’s clear that he’s no longer afraid to confront his fear. The intense atmosphere created by the flames enveloping them shows the true danger of the situation, and ultimately demonstrates Puss's courage in this situation, as he asserted “*I’m done running*”. Just like Puss, people cannot always control what happens to them. but they can control how they respond to those situations. As once said by Sartre “*Freedom is what you do with what’s been done to you.*” (Sartre, 2007). Sartre argues that although people cannot always control the situations they face, true freedom is shown through the choices made when facing difficulties or fear. Puss, who earlier is afraid of death, is now confronting him. This moment answers the research question by illustrating the relationship between freedom, anxiety, and authentic living. Puss’s anxiety over Death gives him the motivation he needs to grow as a person, while his decision to stop running demonstrates authentic living, as he fully accepts both his fear and responsibility for his life.



As Puss stands his ground and accepts the rematch of the Death Offer at the Wishing Star (1:27:00). Before entering the circle of fire, Puss is still trying to reach the wish and believes that the wishing star can restore his lost lives and remove his fear of death. However, during the battle and the chaos around him, he slowly realizes that constantly running from death and chasing more lives will never solve his fear. He chooses to face Death directly instead of running, because he knew that continuing to run

would not get rid of his fear. “ *Just one. I'm done running*” Death becomes frustrated because the fearless and arrogant Puss he had been hunting is no longer there, “*I don't see him anymore*”. As they fight, the scene becomes more intense when both of them enter a circle of fire created during the chaos of the battle. Inside the flames, Puss and Death continue fighting with their swords while the fire surrounds them, making the situation feel tense and more dangerous. Unlike before, Puss no longer fights in panic or desperation. He stays calm, focused, and finally accepts the reality that he cannot escape death forever. In the end Death stops after realizing Puss isn't running away like usual, As his face fills most of the screen and focuses directly on his expression. Most noticeable is his glowing red eyes, which are much brighter than usual. The intense red color shows his anger and the danger he represents. But Puss isn't afraid anymore. Connecting to Crowell's statement “*To be authentic is to fully accept one's freedom.*” (Crowell, 2012) A person becomes authentic when they finally realize that they are free to make their own choices and have to take responsibility for those choices. Authenticity requires accepting reality rather than avoiding it, even when that reality is frightening or difficult. This shows when Puss stops running from Death and accepts that he cannot escape forever. Puss who is usually hiding behind his old identity, finally chooses to face his fears and make the choice to live more honestly. Showing that Puss has taken responsibility for the way rather than running away. His transformation shows that authenticity comes from accepting both limitations and their ability to choose how to respond to them, and this is something that is evident in his actions.

Puss finally defeats Death. Puss begins to realize that constantly chasing more lives will not make him happy or remove his fear of death. When the fight ends, Perrito immediately runs toward Puss and hugs him, relieved that he is safe. (1:28:00). Puss stands calmly while handing the map to Kitty, it shows that he is willing to let go of the wish. His eyes look soft and his slight smile shows that he is sure of his decision. The bright, soft lightning creates a warm and peaceful atmosphere, a big contrast to the tension filled scenes from the previous scenes. Puss hands the map to Kitty and



says, “*I don't need a wish,*” because he has finally accepted the value of the life he already has. Kitty then replies, “*I don't need it,*” she doesn't actually need a magical wish to be happy, because she already has what matters- people who she can trust and care about. At that moment, both of them understand that they no longer need the wishing to fix their lives. This scene connects to Sartre's statement, “*Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself*” (Sartre, 1946/2007, p. 22)). Identity is not fixed, but is shaped through the choices people make. Rather than being fixed at one thing,

identity is actually shaped by the choices an individual makes. People define themselves through their actions rather than their past or the labels that others give them. When Puss says, 'I don't need a wish.' He is choosing to let go of his desire for more lives and accept the value of the life he already has. This decision demonstrates that Puss is no longer controlled by his fear of death. Instead, he has created a new version of himself; someone who appreciates the present and understands what truly matters. Through this moment, the film shows that people become who they are through the choices and decisions they make.

CONCLUSION

This research examines how the character of Puss in Boots in *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* (2022) demonstrates existential anxiety through his fear of death when he realizes he is at his last life, it also demonstrates his avoidance of responsibility, and his journey toward authentic living. By using the existential theory of Jean-Paul Sartre (1946/2007), Søren Kierkegaard (1844/1980), and Steven Crowell (2012). This research reveals how Puss starts to question his identity and how people usually see him as a fearless hero after having an encounter with Death. Throughout the entire film, Puss is shown to be living in “bad faith” meaning that he is running away and denying his mortality by hiding behind a heroic persona that he made in order to avoid confronting his fear and vulnerability. This leads to Puss wanting to achieve the last wish to save himself from eventually dying. As Puss journeys to find the wish, He continues to repeatedly encounter death along the way, gradually intensifying his existential anxiety, and it further leads him to isolate himself from the people that care for him. The turning point is when Puss experiences a panic attack and confesses to Perrito, this shows his growing awareness that his identity is not fixed. Through everything that had happened, Puss finally starts to realize that freedom also comes with lots of responsibility that cannot be avoided, because he learns that fear only prevents him from living authentically.

The film ends with Puss choosing to finally stand up to his fear and not run away from death, accepting the reality of his final life. Puss no longer wants to wish for more lives and learns to value the one he already has. The hero, who lived all his life as someone who was reckless and arrogant, finally learns to stop running away from his fear, transforming him into someone who is responsible and able to be honest of his own feelings. Puss is now able to show his vulnerability and responsibility no longer living in bad faith. This reflects how existentialist ideas come from authentic living and from accepting both freedom and mortality. The film proves that having fame, a popular reputation, or immortality does not guarantee a meaningful life. This film shows that a fulfilling life

is the result of the choices individuals make when they decide to confront the things they are afraid or uncertain of by taking responsibility. This study shows how an animated film like Puss in Boots: The Last Wish can have deep emotional ideas yet be easy to understand for audiences of all ages. Such as, portrayed throughout Puss's journey showing how having anxiety can lead to personal growth, authenticity and having a better self understanding of yourself. For future research, researchers may use other approaches like psychological approaches, such as psychoanalysis, trauma theory, or the Hero's Journey framework, to explore more other aspects of the character's development. By analyzing Puss in Boots: The Last Wish (2022) using different literature, future studies will be able to compare existential themes in other animated films aiming to achieve understanding on how philosophy is presented to different audiences. In the future, further studies can examine how animated films can influence viewers emotionally and psychologically, especially towards younger audiences.

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