

## EXISTENTIAL FEELINGS: HOW CINEMA MAKES US FEEL ALIVE

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This paper explores the role of existential feelings<sup>1</sup> in films, and the impact of the connections between cinema and existential feelings for emotional life in general. The paper begins by explaining the notion of existential feelings<sup>2</sup> and illustrating them in films with *Black Swan* (2010) and *The Help* (2011). Then, the paper concludes that movies offer provide insights about our own existential feelings because films promote emotional awareness by the way they function as emotional laboratories. This will lead us to examine the presence and role of surprise for emotional awareness in general, and by seeing how it works within suspense movies with the illustration of *Rebecca* (1940). The analysis will show how the paradox of suspense is tied to the way we can be surprised by our own feelings, including our own existential feelings. The paper concludes that the cinema is capable of providing this privileged place for exploration because it maintains our ability to feel surprise and keep open to surprise.

Matthew Radcliffe introduced the term “existential feelings” identifying a dimension of emotional life that had not yet been identified by philosophers of emotion.<sup>3</sup> Existential feelings are feelings that capture the ways in which we find ourselves in the world.<sup>4</sup> Radcliffe points out that these existential feelings are often described in daily talk such as when “[p]eople talk of feeling conspicuous, alive, distant, dislodged, overwhelmed, cut off, lost, disconnected, out of sorts, out of touch with things, out of it, not quite with it, separate, detached, at one with the world, in harmony with things, and part of things.”<sup>5</sup> Radcliffe thinks existential

feelings are central to the structure of all human experience,<sup>6</sup> and that they are both feelings of the body and ways of finding oneself in a world.<sup>7</sup>

Existential feelings are distinct from emotions and moods, because they report to how one finds oneself in the world and they shape all experience, so they are prior to emotions and to moods. When people have emotions and moods, they are already felt within a world of feeling. For example, I can feel happy about a present (emotion) even though I woke up in a foul mood (mood) while I already feel something about how I am in the world, such as a sense of connectedness with reality as a sense of belonging to the world (existential feeling). Therefore, existential feelings are distinct from emotions and moods because “they are structures of relatedness between self and world, which comprise a changeable sense of ‘reality,’ ‘situatedness,’ ‘locatedness,’ ‘connectedness,’ ‘significance’.”<sup>8</sup> However, precisely because they are structures of our experience of the world, they are hard to capture and are best identified when there are changes in them, that is, “where the sense of reality is diminished, fragmented or otherwise changed.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, Radcliffe analysis focuses on psychiatric illnesses and literary works, which are two instances in which such changes are most easily identifiable.

Radcliffe uses the phenomenology of touch to illuminate how “existential feelings are both a bodily feeling and a way of experiencing the world.”<sup>10</sup> It is by exploring the details of such a bodily feeling that Radcliffe explains in more detail how existential feelings are way of experiencing the body. The phenomenology of touch works both as an analogy for a better understanding of existential feelings and as a constitutive part of existential feelings. As Radcliffe writes, “there is more than just an analogy between existential feeling and touch — the tactile background contributes to our sense of belonging to the world, structuring more localized tactile experience and our experiences more generally. Thus it is partly constitutive of existential feeling.”<sup>11</sup> Consequently, Radcliffe’s existential feelings are another way

to argue that our connection to the world is necessarily an embodied connection to the world. Radcliffe begins to unfold the insights of the phenomenology of touch by pointing how the term bodily feeling is equivocal because when we touch someone else in the shoulder with one of our hands, we are both feeling the shoulder with the hand, and how the shoulder feels in the hand.<sup>12</sup> Radcliffe reminds us that touch is a whole body phenomenon, and not limited to the experience of the hands: when we kick a ball we are touching it with our feet, when we hug someone we are touching them with our arms and torso. To illustrate the encompassing sense of touch, Radcliffe gives the example of how resting comfortable on a couch for a prolonged period of time makes us feel like we are not actually touching anything, because “there is a loss of boundaries, a gradual dissipation of any clear sense of where the body ends and the couch begins.”<sup>13</sup> The illustration calls our attention to the fact that the absence of direct tactile experience is also an important part of tactile experience. He writes,

[t]he touch of one’s clothes is not ordinarily at the forefront of awareness but its absence can be. If one takes off one’s clothes and walks around the room (even a warm room), the sense of not being touched can be quite pronounced, at least for a short time. There is a feeling of something being “missing.” Indeed I am not sure that there is ever a complete “absence” of touch.<sup>14</sup>

That is, when we touch something for a long period of time, the touching may become an absence of tactile experience, which is not the denial of such phenomenology but an important part of understanding the phenomenology of touch. Radcliffe points out that touching is always intimately connected with an activity. For example, touching a pillow will be different if we are in bed falling asleep from when we are using it in a pillow fight. And just like touch is connected

to the activities we undergo, existential feelings are intimately tied to the activities we do.<sup>15</sup> So similarly, an existential sense of disconnection will feel different when one is walking on the streets alone from when one is having dinner with one's family.

In his analysis of touch Radcliffe identifies several characteristics of the phenomenology of touch, such as 1) touching is a relation between body and world, 2) in touching both what is touched or what touches can be the focus of attention, 3) there is not necessarily a clear distinction between boundaries of self and world, 4) there does not need to be specific physical contact with the body.<sup>16</sup> Since the phenomenology of touch is both an analogy to better understand existential feelings and a constitutive part of them,<sup>17</sup> the enumerated characteristics of touch provide a good way to describe the existential feelings. Consequently, an existential sense of disconnection can be described by the lack of relation between body and world, (1) with a sense that nothing is the focus of attention (2) and that everything and everybody else also looks and feels disconnected (3) regardless of how one touches or is touched by things and people in the world (4). That is, to better grasp the existential feelings we can describe the bodily feelings that go with the same feelings through its phenomenology of touch.

Due to their "diachronic character,"<sup>18</sup> existential feelings are always present. When someone goes to see a film they experience it the way there are in the world, for example someone who feels disconnected will watch a film with that emotional background. The film itself will have different modes of presenting existential feelings: different characters will portray different existential feelings, and different aspects of mise-en-scène will amplify the characters' existential feelings or provide different ones. For example, in the *Black Swan* the spectator can both experience the young dancer's existential feelings of confusion from illusionary experiences, as well as the existential feeling of realism given by the general mise-en-scène.<sup>19</sup> The *Black*

*Swan* is about a young dancer, Nina (Natalie Portman), who competes for the new principal dancer of the opening season of the Swan Lake. Nina begins to experience strange things as she forces herself to practice for perfection after she gets the role. The director (Vincent Cassel) tells Nina that there is another dancer who will be able to take the role if Nina doesn't overcome the coldness of her flawless technique. The two young dancers gets complicated by Nina's hallucinations. Nina's mother (Barbara Hershey), a retired dancer with whom Nina lives becomes concerned with Nina and tries to prevent her daughter from dancing on the opening night unsuccessfully. The threat of another dancer taking up her leading role takes Nina to stab the other young dancer, Lily (Mila Kunis) and hide her body. At the end of the first act Nina realizes that her fight was imaginary and that she has stabbed herself. The film ends with the last scene of the Snow Lake performance, in which the White Swan of the ballet throws herself off a cliff, showing Nina falling to a hidden mattress and, as the theatre explodes into applause and the director and the rest of the cast come to congratulate Nina, she bleeds to death while she whispers "I felt it. Perfect. It was perfect." The film offers both Nina's disrupted sense of reality thus having a disconnected type of existential feeling, and a continuum sense of reality offered by the other characters and the general *mise-en-scène*. Given the assumed position of realism from the spectator's point of view, the contrast can be taken as an effort to portray and understand the special and difficult existential surroundings of someone who has the existential feeling of disconnectedness.

In this way the *Black Swan* takes up the stance of Radcliffe by focusing on a psychiatric illness to make our existential feelings more visible. Existential feelings are always in the background and not easily seen and, Radcliffe tells us, they "are most amiable to phenomenological reflection when they shift"<sup>20</sup> because they become more visible when we see that they are not there.<sup>21</sup> So one way to understand them is to look at the moments in which the "structure of world-

experience can change."<sup>22</sup> When we experience a film we change our world-experience by seeing a film because we enter the world of fiction. Fiction is a special place for emotional experience because it functions as a type of emotional laboratory,<sup>23</sup> where we try out how certain situations make us feel. The exploration of our feelings in fiction happens at the level of emotions (how we feel about situations certain characters live, how we feel about certain characters, how we feel about emotions of certain characters), and also at the meta-level (how we feel about what we feel about situations certain characters live, how we feel about how we feel about certain characters, how we feel about how we feel about emotions of certain characters). In addition, we are given the existential feelings of the film, and the ones of the characters.

In light of this, I want to suggest that the *Black Swan* provides insights to our existential feelings twice: first because it focuses on a specific change in existential feelings given by the contrast of disconnectedness and illusion versus realism; and second because watching a film is a way to deliberately change our sense of reality by moving from daily life to the fictional space.

The claim that by going to see a movie the spectator is already undergoing a change in existential feelings can be further explored with an illustration. Radcliffe explains that, "existential feelings constitute a sense of the *kinds of possibility* that the world offers."<sup>24</sup> Therefore, given that fiction can be taken as an experimental space for emotions and meta-emotions, the cinematic experience of existential feelings may be best illustrated in a film with a story about possibilities and changes in possibilities. *The Help* is specially suited to reflect on existential feelings in cinematic emotional laboratories because existential feelings are tied to senses of possibilities and this film clearly shows a shift of possibilities.

*The Help* is an adaptation of the novel *The Help* (2009) portraying the relationships between maids and their white employers during the Civil Rights in

the early 60s. "Skeeter" Phelan (Emma Stone), a young white woman who has recently moved back home to her family's plantation after graduation, decides to write a book, *The Help*, based on the lives of the maids who have spent their entire lives taking care of white children. The film begins with scenes of an interview to Aibileen Clark (Viola Davis). The excerpt of the interview at the beginning of the movie ends with the sad gaze of Aibileen as she tries to answer the question "How does it feel to raise a white child when your own child is being looked after by somebody else?" Aibileen starts to reply "It feels..." but she never puts words on her feelings. Illustrating how difficult it is to describe our existential feelings and how they feel. At this moment the story of the film begins to be narrated by Aibileen who introduces herself by saying "I've raised seventeen kids in my life. Looking after white babies that is what I do." At first the maids are reluctant to talk to Skeeter, because they are afraid that they will lose their jobs or worse. Aibileen is the first to share her stories, after she realizes that the children whom she has been raising are growing up to be just like their parents. Her friend, Minny (Octavia Spencer), who has just been fired for using the indoor bathroom during a thunderstorm, instead of going to use the separate outdoor toilet, is the next one to share her stories for the book. A first draft of the book is sent to Miss Stein, an editor for Harper & Row in New York, who requires more interviews quickly, as she thinks the Civil Right Movement is a passing event. As racial tensions become more and more tense in the town, the maids change their minds and Skeeter obtains numerous other interviews. The book is accepted for publication and is a success. Skeeter shares her royalties with the maids, and is offered a job with a publishing company in New York. Throughout the movie we hear Aibileen's voice narrating her feelings and thoughts about what is happening. At the end of the movie Aibileen is fired and the film ends with the image of her final sentence of her narration in which she says, "no one ever asked me how it felt to be me. Once I told that I felt

free. And I got to thinking about all the people I know and things I'd seen and done my boy always said we were going to have a writer in our family one day I guess it is going to be me."

There are several moments we can observe existential feelings and their impact in *The Help*. First, when Aibileen explicitly talks about them, as when she says "I lost my boy four years ago. After that I just didn't want to live any more," or when she further describes "After my boy died a bitter seed was placed inside me." Also, we see experiential feelings when we observe the character's existential feeling in images. For example, at the beginning Aibileen is asked how did she feel about raising a child when she knew her child was home with someone else. She turns to the window and merely says "... It feels..." Instead it is the following sequence of shots that provides us with the emotional tonality of her existential feelings: first she thinks about it, her eyes move up as when we search thinking hard for something, then her eyes look at something, then we are told what she is looking at with a shot of her diseased young boy, then we see her face again completely taken by the sadness and then finally she looks out the window gazing as when someone is taken by such an indescribable pain that the only thing possible to do is to continue one's chores and look at the window in a pain that no one else seems to understand. Later in the film we are reminded of this existential state with the repetition of the question and the repetition of her gaze out of the window.

In addition, we also see how the characters' existential feelings are variable. For example, the sense of despair and pointless sense of life described by Aibileen also shifts to give place to an existential feeling of shared humour when she jokes and laughs with her friend Minny. Radcliffe describes that the way we find ourselves in the world is quite variable even though we also have a normal, consistent way of belonging to the world, which mostly we take for granted.<sup>25</sup> In the fictional space it is easier to identify the variability of existential feelings within the regular way of

belonging to the world because it is possible to compress months (sometimes years within two hours). Therefore, we are capable of seeing how existential feelings of characters change as time goes by and the way events change the characters' relation to how they are in the world. For example, at the beginning of the film we are told that Aibileen sees through her son's statement that there is the possibility that someone in her family could become a writer. But her son's death shattered all her sense of possibilities. Yet, the turn of events grants a new possibility, namely that she is the one who will be the writer of her family. In this shift of possibilities we acknowledge how the character of Aibileen changes existential feelings. Aibileen is no longer looking out the window as she was in the beginning of the film. Now she is walking forward. The image of the road ahead of Aibileen looks sunny and bright and her walking on it steady and secure amplifies the sense of new possibility of her last sentence. Thus, the film is a testimony of how "existential feelings vary in all sorts of subtle ways from person to person and from time to time. And the existential feelings of some people no doubt fluctuate more than those of others."<sup>26</sup> The illustration from *The Help* identifies several ways in which we can see existential feelings and their modifications.

Watching a film provides examples of existential feelings, as well as examples of interesting shifts in existential feelings. More importantly, cinema also provides insights into our own existential feelings. The experience of watching a film takes us out of the world in such a way that when the film ends we slowly return to the world and slowly remember the bills that must be paid, the overdue essays, the parents meetings at the school, etc., and we slowly return to feeling how we feel in the world. Our sense of belonging to the world is not like a connection of a solid rock to the ground. As Radcliffe explains, there are many different daily situations in which we notice feelings of being detached and removed from our world, such as when is suffering from a jetlag, or a bad hangover. These moments in which the

world becomes strange in a very difficult way to describe “draw attention to the fragility of our sense of belonging to the world.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, activities that place us in a suspended mode allow for awareness of existential feelings because “it is when practical dealings get disrupted that our background understanding of the world comes briefly into focus.”<sup>28</sup> Watching a film offers such momentary suspension of life.

It is in these moments where our connection to the world becomes a point of focus that we are more capable of changing our existential feelings. Because the focusing on existential feelings may produce reflection, which may ultimately reshape such existential feelings for, Radcliffe explains, “a conceptual appreciation of a situation, which is itself embedded in existential feeling, can serve to reshape the existential feeling in which it is embedded. Existential feeling is not impervious to the influence of experiences and thoughts.”<sup>29</sup> In addition, the type of experience provided by a movie may produce feelings that penetrate and change existential feelings. For example, one can imagine someone feeling quite disconnected from their friends and regaining a sense of connection after seeing *The Help* by feeling the different types of friendships shown in the film. To explain in more detail how such an example could be possible it is necessary to examine how the experience of cinema can take us by surprise.

Surprise results from the occurrence of the unexpected (either an event or a thought or feeling, of an action, etc.), and movies often provide such unexpected occurrences. Surprise does not always have the same intensity or form and a movie may offer different types of surprises. For example, moments in a film may startle us, or shock us, or we may be surprised by the turn of events of a story, by the type of music that accompanies a specific sequence of scenes, or we may be left in a state of awe after seeing a film, or a specific scene may leave us in a state of wonder about a specific question. Finally, after experiencing a film we may be surprised by

something it reveals about ourselves, or astonished by how we connect to a certain character, or perplexed by how scared we stay after seeing an outcome we had already guessed, or by being indifferent to a story we consider touching. In sum, there is no end to the possibilities of surprise in cinema. In addition, because of the indefinable and elusive immediacy of films, which allows the films to go beyond the abilities of other art forms,<sup>30</sup> the instances of surprise in cinema are unique in their strength and speed.<sup>31</sup>

Surprise directs our attention to whatever surprised us and we are more capable of being caught by new possibilities, new information, and new awareness. Surprise has interesting bodily effects, which make it almost impossible to miss that we are in a state of surprise. Darwin's description of surprise provides a good description of how the body responds to the unexpected in *The Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals* when he writes that

when we start at any sudden sound or sight, almost all the muscles of the body are involuntarily and momentarily thrown into strong action, for the sake of guarding ourselves against or jumping away from the danger, which we habitually associate with anything unexpected.<sup>32</sup>

Emotions, however, do not appear in isolation and the emotion that more immediately appears connected with surprise is the emotion of fear (or related degrees of fear) for if something we did not predict or that we do not know surprises us, it means that there is the possibility of danger. Darwin also identifies admiration as connected to surprise writing that it "consists of surprise associated with pleasure and a sense of approval."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, in the case in which the unexpected thing gives pleasure (for example, when it makes us laugh) other emotions besides fear can occur such as admiration, love, enjoyment, etc. In a way

one could imagine many other emotions following surprise. For instance, you may become angry if you find your friend has lied to you about something you consider important, or feel grateful when you see a friend you thought might be dead, or feel jealous and angry if you find your lover has lied to you about an affair, or really happy if you find out you surprisingly pass an exam you assumed you had failed, or feel bored if you are reading a book with excessive surprising plot.<sup>34</sup>

More importantly, surprise occurs differently when we are open to surprise (a type of existential feeling). When we are open to surprise we will be surprised more often. The claim may sound too obvious but it is especially relevant to show how cinema may have a transformative effect of existential feelings. Imagine two friends travelling alone to the same country separately. They are both good organizers of time thus managing to visit all the relevant places, and they both talk to people and provide a good summary of their trip upon their return. Yet, one of them lived it as “an experience” while the other carried a jaded attitude throughout the journey.<sup>35</sup> That is, the experience of watching a film will have a different experiential impact depending on the existing type of openness to surprise. If we are the kind of person who immediately feels fear in face of unexpected events and immediately creates control mechanisms of protection, you will be less open to be surprised, and consequently less open to be taken by the film as to promote the window of opportunity to focus on your existential feelings.

A way to better understand the impact of surprise in cinema is to look at the genre of films which are deliberately made to cause suspense and mystery. *Rebecca* is a good example to further investigate surprise and cinema’s role in promoting insight of existential feelings because, just like in *The Help*, the character changes her sense of possibilities after the sequence of events of the film thus shifting her existential feelings. In addition, Hitchcock was a master of surprise and suspense and, as Lütticken explains, “it is the dialectic of suspense and surprise that is

fundamental to his filmmaking. Hitchcock's status as 'master of suspense' derives largely from his expert manipulation of this dialectic."<sup>36</sup>

*Rebecca* is a romantic suspense movie in which a young woman marries a wealthy widower, Mr. Maxim de Winter (Laurence Olivier), who takes her back to his family mansion Manderley. The film begins with the narration of a woman (Joan Fontaine) saying that she dreamt she went back to Manderley though she knows she can never return. This young woman is an orphan who works as a paid companion to a wealthy lady and who marries the widower who will take her to Manderley. The young woman's happiness of love turns into a nightmare when she becomes haunted by the memory of the first husband's wife, Rebecca, who died in a boat accident. Though Rebecca never appears in the film, she is a constant ghostly presence in Manderley. Meanwhile the young woman begins to doubt her husband's feelings and tries hard to please him trying to act as the perfect wife thus suggesting that they host a costume party as it was done by Rebecca. The night of the party Rebecca's ship is found on the coast with Rebecca's body in it. The tone of the film turns when the discovery of Rebecca's body makes Maxim confess his hate for his first wife and the accident that led to her death. At this moment the young woman loses her innocence and grows up thus changing her attitude and posture in the film helping her husband to deal with the police. At this point of the film it is clear that young woman's existential feelings have shifted from fearful way of being in the world to a sense of feeling safe and belonging to the world. After the process of investigation and the verdict of suicide, Mr. de Winter returns home to find the mansion on fire and his wife safe.

Just like the character Abeilleen in *The Help*, the character of the young woman in *Rebecca* changes such that it gives it a sense of time. The necessity of showing the passage of time is necessary to grasp the change in existential feelings for existential feelings have a temporal structure, which shape all dispositions and activities,<sup>37</sup> and

are also “*processes* that unfold over time.”<sup>38</sup> Cinema’s manipulation of time through editing is unique because, as di Franco writes, “the indefinable and elusive immediacy of film (which prevents all but the most disciplined viewers from leaving a bad movie) allows the film artist to go far beyond the boundaries of the written word.”<sup>39</sup>

Existential feelings in cinema provide a novel and different explanation for the paradox of suspense because the opacity of existential feelings, and the ability of fictions to bring our emotional world to the surface, explains why seeing a film more than once may continue to be appealing and keep its suspense. We are in suspense because we do not know how the sequence of events is going to feel to us. It is not that we misidentify our suspense by our fears and anxieties or that we temporarily forget what was going to happen, or that we pretend to ourselves that we do not know what is going to happen. We are in suspense because we cannot be completely sure about our existential feelings since existential feelings only become visible in certain circumstances. Consequently, suspense is intimately tied to the way we are, or not, surprised by ourselves, and our feelings. If we are not surprised by our emotional reaction in face of the same sequence of shots, then we are predictable in a flat manner. If we find ourselves being surprised by our emotional reaction (even though we knew the outcome) we know that even when we have guessed life, events will continue to surprise us and no matter how well the nice surprise is predicted it will still feel good to have it.

Thus making suspense, and cinema in general, a great tool to become aware of our own existential feelings. It is possible to explore existential feelings in the cinema because existential feelings are tied to the activities we undergo. As an emotional laboratory, cinema provides a space for existential feelings in different because it presents existential feelings from the different perspectives of the several characters, and also because it presents existential feelings of the same character at

different moments of the story. Further, we are also part of the items of laboratory for the activity of experiencing a movie is capable of making us more aware of our own existential feelings. Radcliffe writes,

existential feelings are similarly bound up with our activities. For example, it is often in walking around and interacting with the world that the strangeness of things is most pronounced, perhaps when they do not solicit bodily responses in the usual on going, structured fashion. It is the whole context of practical relatedness that has changed, rather than either bodily experience or experience of objects and events outside of the body. Central to this change is an altered sense of the possibilities that a situation offers.<sup>40</sup>

And the activity of going to experience a movie works just like going for a walk because the movie does not solicit bodily responses in the usual daily way and provides a privileged place for altering our sense of possibilities, just like it happened to the characters of both *The Help* and *Rebecca*. Interestingly, both in *The Help* and *Rebecca* it is the shift in existential feelings, which enables the characters to tell their stories illustrating how “[e]xistential feelings constrain not just the content but the form of the narratives one is able to adopt.”<sup>41</sup>

The reflective aspect of cinema in terms of existential feelings makes this change capable of more impact than the change provided by going for a walk. Radcliffe explains that existential feelings are hard to see for the reasons explained earlier in the paper, and also because “different interpretations have the potential to feed back into and reshape the relevant feelings.”<sup>42</sup> Consequently, our way to reflect and interpret ourselves may disguise the nature of our existential feelings. However, cinema provides a special way to reflect upon existential feelings: an emotional reflection. While we experience a movie we are drawn to its images and its plot. The

surprise elements offered by a film capture our attention and provide an experimentation of the emotional world, which also works as an emotional reflection upon our existential feelings. As we go through the motions of the movie we have feelings but the action that follows such emotional motions is already determined for us: we just have to sit down and see, hear and feel. In this way, the cinema may be our way of reflecting on our existential feelings without interpreting, that is, by working through our own existential feelings through the experience of the film we may be able to examine our existential feelings without having gone through the pitfalls of our minds.

How much we have experienced movies, and how much we have experienced life transforms our ability to be surprised and our ability to cultivate and evaluate our capacity to be surprised. A seven year old may be surprised and distracted by a leaf falling but it is hard to imagine that an adult be equally surprised by the movements of the falling leaf. Yet, part of what we aim to retain, despite the increase of age and experience, is the ability for surprise without the delusions of innocence. That is, we want to retain a sense of joy and surprise but we do not want to make mistakes or be fooled by events and circumstances, thus remaining able to be surprise in a never-ending challenge of life. If we are able to check and review how we experience surprise then we will be capable of checking if we remain open to surprise. In addition, the way we experience surprise reveals our existential feelings because it shows how we are connected to the world. This makes cinema a way to see what type of surprise we can still live and by doing that cinema also reveals what type of existential feelings underlie our connection to the world.

In conclusion, cinema enables us to experience and explore existential feelings with strength and intensity, offerings a space of awareness and reflection about our own existential feelings. This makes movies a tool for freedom for it greatly contributes to overcome thinking of our emotions as inevitable and “we are also

more likely to view them as open to modification, and to enlist them as instruments of freedom rather than tools of self-oppression.”<sup>43</sup> Cinema is capable of providing this privileged place for exploration because it shows how we feel surprise and in what way we are keeping ourselves open to surprise without succumbing to the claws of fear.<sup>44</sup>

## NOTES

1. Matthew Radcliffe, “The Feeling of Being,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 12:8–10 (2005): 43–60. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

2. Underlying Radcliffe’s work are crucial philosophical connections (Heideggerian approaches to film, Husserl notion of time applied to time in movies, Sartre’s conception of emotions as “magical transformations of the world”) that are left unexplored here.

3. Since then others have adopted it — Jan Slaby and Achim Stephan, “Affective Intentionality and Self-Consciousness,” *Consciousness and Cognition* 17 (2008): 506–51; Brian P. McLaughlin, “Monothematic Delusions and Existential Feelings,” in *Delusion and Self-deception: Affective and Motivational Influences on Belief Formation*, ed. Tim Bayne and Jordi Fernández (New York: Psychology Press, 2009); 139–64 — though not always precisely the way Radcliffe does.

4. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 41.

5. Radcliffe, “Existential Feeling and Psychopathology,” *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology* 16:2 (2009): 181.

6. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 2.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Radcliffe, “Existential Feeling and Psychopathology,” 179.

9. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 3.

10. Radcliffe, “Existential Feeling and Psychopathology,” 178.

11. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 93.

12. Radcliffe, “Existential Feeling and Psychopathology,” 185.

13. *Ibid.*, 186.

14. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 82.

15. *Ibid.*, 84.

16. Radcliffe, “Existential Feeling and Psychopathology,” 186.

17. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 93.

18. *Ibid.*, 82.

19. Thanks to anonymous referee for pointing out the importance of mise-en-scène for identification of existential feelings.

20. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 40.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. Dina Mendonça, “Absolutely Positively Feeling that Way and More: Paradox of Fiction and Alexander’s Stories,” in *Philosophy and Children’s Literature*, ed. Peter Costello (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 48.

24. Radcliffe, “Phenomenology of Existential Feelings,” in *Feeling of Being Alive*, ed. Joerg Fingerhut and Sabineand Marienberg (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 33.

25. Radcliffe, “Existential Feeling and Psychopathology,” 181.

26. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 7.

27. *Ibid.*, 182.

28. *Ibid.*, 46.

29. *Ibid.*, 115.

30. Philip di Franco, “Past, Present, Future in Cinema,” in *Cinema Journal* 8:1 (1968): 42.

31. Thanks to anonymous referee for pointing out the need for differentiation of cinema from other art forms.

32. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Londres: John Murray, 1872), 262.
33. *Ibid.*, 267.
34. Thanks to Klaus Gärtner for giving me an example where boredom follows surprise.
35. Thanks to Shaun Gallagher for suggesting this adjective to better describe this second type of person.
36. Sven Lütticken, "Suspense and... Surprise," *New Left Review* 40 (2006): 96.
37. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 121.
38. *Ibid.*, 211.
39. Di Franco, "Past, Present, Future in Cinema," 42.
40. Radcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 121.
41. Radcliffe, "Phenomenology of Existential Feelings," 48.
42. *Ibid.*, 50.
43. Ronald De Sousa, "Truth, Authenticity, and Rationality," *Dialectica* 61:3 (2007): 445.
44. This paper would not have been possible without the post-doctoral fellowship (SFRH/BPD/14175/2007) granted by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, and it is part of the research project "Film and Philosophy – Mapping an Encounter" (PTDC/FIL-FIL/098143/2008) of Instituto de Filosofia da Linguagem. Thanks to helpful comments from anonymous reviewers of the Journal and also thanks to the Philosophy of Language Institute (Instituto de Filosofia da Linguagem) for hosting my research providing me with the necessary backup.

to the activities we undergo, existential feelings are intimately tied to the activities we do.<sup>15</sup> So similarly, an existential sense of disconnection will feel different when one is walking on the streets alone from when one is having dinner with one's family. In his analysis of touch Radcliffe identifies several characteristics of the phenomenology of touch, such as 1) touching is a relation between body and world, 2) in touching both what is touched or what touches can be the focus of attention, 3) there is not necessarily a clear distinction between boundaries of self and world, 4) there do... Existence precedes Essence. Existential Film Analysis. Zaina Abubeker and Erika Gonzalez. Comp Gov/English 12. He never made his own choices and constantly made sure everyone was happy. He was also played with at parties and had his innocence stolen away. He never took in mind his own feelings, and doesn't live his own life. Charlie believes that we know what we know through how things are portrayed to us, through our memories. It can be seen this way because he remembers his aunt being nice at first, but then later in the movie links her with other memories that taunt him into believing her death was his fault. The way Charlie remembers and perceives a situation causes him to be confused, have blackouts, and feel/see things that aren't completely true. How can we feel more alive? A full external life won't always create internal fullness. Here are seven ways to fill your inner well. What the culture fails to teach is that the road to aliveness is the other way around: when you're filled up internally you will naturally create a full external life. Just like meditation teaches that authentic and inspired doing arises from a still place of being, so the picture we paint on the canvas of life will feel alive when it's an expression of the fullness within. There are many ways to fill your inner well. The following seven are just a few In real life we are told how we should feel. Rob: But when watching a film, at the cinema for example, we can let our emotions loose. But there is something else in a film that effects our emotions and gives us goose bumps or a feeling that makes our hair stand on end and we get little bumps on our skin. Feifei: Yes, Dr Leimon says there are visual and auditory clues that provoke our feelings so that's the style of the pictures and the music or sound effects that are used. Rob: (Mimics theme to Jaws) Like the music in the Jaws movie, although that's not really a tearjerker.