

embrace



illusions

Colophon

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EDITORIAL TEAM 2023-2024

Jonah Van Lotringen
Sofia Maior
Maya Barakova
Noa op 't Ende
Sakina Fütterer
Anushka Massand
Cassandra Pacheco
Alice Raffegau

GUEST WRITER

Rosa Hoogerdijk

DESIGN

Emilia Caprazli

SPECIAL THANKS

International Faculty Study Association
ACE

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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CONTACT

Room M7-50
Postbus 1738
E-mail: editor-in-chief@ifaace.nl
Website: www.ifaace.nl/embrace

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Dear reader,

Sunny days have been teasing the coming spring. The cold is slowly waning and it seems we are once again at that point where things are about to change. It feels weird how we go through this process again at every cycle with an optimism that makes it feel like this time summer will last forever, and we will never return to those days of darkness.

Let's cherish it while it lasts, and let's channel the energy that flows from our naïve delusions into making this moment memorable. This period where we are on top of the world and feel like everything that visits us in our sleep is possible. Will there come a day again when we can only think in limitations and finitudes?

Undoubtedly, but it is not today, nor tomorrow. In these times, when I think about all that's possible, I feel like there

is an arc of progress to all this. And in those times, where I feel wholly drained, I think there is no true change that happens over time. I guess then that only a sustained confidence in all that is hopeful will keep me happy throughout my life.

We can rationalize everything that happens to us, everything we find on our path, even our deepest feelings and fears. But it does not change the beliefs we hold, despite what we are told over and over again. We're at the sake of a change of winds to be steered to brighter ports. That is true desperation, the feeling of lacking control. That is what drives people to nihilism, alienation, and extremism. And even though I, ironically, always -when it does manage to reach me- find it coming extrinsically, it is that feeling of control that keeps me going. That conviction that if I want things to change, I can change them.

's Note

So what matters more, the reality of your life, or your perception of this reality? That is of course a trick question, the only things we hold are perceptions. And perceptions are deceptions. I hold the highest respect and admiration for those people who have embraced the illusion and are living their delusion.

When I still lived in the southern part of Rotterdam, I would cross the Erasmus bridge almost daily. Inevitably then, sometimes I would cross it at nighttime, which never failed to transform the entire scene. It was as if finding myself in a painting, seeing what had been the cold, wildly gushing Meuse River at daytime turn into a stream of playfully splashing brush strokes at night. Traffic was muted and all I would hear was the softly dancing water. It was a comforting feeling during a time that

played more static noise than vibrant music. And in that light, I wonder what stops me from further embracing the illusion.

Sometimes I consider wearing glasses to look smart. Sure, I would have to explain why I suddenly started wearing glasses, but you would believe me if I'd told you that my eyesight had been declining right? I have no reason to lie about something so trivial. It happens to people all the time, and suddenly you notice that they really do have some redeeming intelligence that you never spotted before...

I encourage you, my dear reader, to embrace your illusion. Maybe you are already embracing your illusion by looking at this magazine and pretending to be able to read. In any case, do not waste any further time on this editor's note and read the illusions spelled out by our wonderful writers in issue number two of this year's EmbrACE.

Demystifying Superstitions: A Curse or a Blessing?

Alice Raffegau



Last week, I opened my Buienradar app before leaving my house, only to see that the weather was the same as usual: windy and rainy. To avoid looking like a wet rat after 10 minutes outside, I decided to equip myself with the right gear. Therefore, I took my favorite umbrella, the only one that was solid enough to resist the storm. (Let's note that only someone living in the Netherlands can possess so many umbrellas that they end up having a favorite one). To check if it was not broken already, I opened it inside the living room. That's when it happened: my friend, who was sitting on the couch, looked at me as if I had murdered someone. "Are you crazy? Don't you know opening an umbrella inside is bad luck?". My friend was superstitious.

This made me think: why does opening an umbrella indoors lead to bad luck? And more importantly, why are we superstitious?

Let's tackle one issue at a time, and start with the umbrella superstition. According to some experts, it might find its roots all the way back in ancient Egypt, when umbrellas were not used as protection against the rain, but to protect oneself from the sun. Opening an umbrella indoors was then considered disrespectful toward the sun god, who would get upset at everyone in the house which had had the misfortune of hosting an open umbrella. Some other experts say that the umbrella superstition comes from the Victorian era, in the 1800s. Back then, umbrellas were made of hard metal spokes that would spring open at the command of stiff spring triggers. These umbrellas were not the weak little umbrellas we have today, that struggle to stay in one piece when facing the Dutch weather. They were fierce, ready to take an eye out if opened a bit too close to someone's face. At that time, it could be perilous to open an umbrella indoors, and maybe that's why people still think it's bad luck nowadays.



However, some superstitions don't have such historical explanations as this one. Or even when they do, why do we still believe them when the logical reasoning behind the belief isn't relevant anymore? Several factors tend to keep superstitions alive. The first explanation can be religion. For example, the number 13 being cursed comes from Jesus' last supper: the disciple who betrayed Jesus and led to his death was the 13th one to sit at the table that day, it was Judas.

Still, a lot of people are superstitious without being religious. The main cause behind this is cultural habits. If you have been told your whole life that opening an umbrella indoors will bring you bad luck, that you are in danger when sitting on row 13 of a plane, or that you shall be lucky in the future when you find a four-leaf clover, well, these superstitions are likely becoming part of you. It is not a conscious process, and even if you realize after a while that these ideas have no logical basis, it will probably be easier to follow them than fight the discomfort of ignoring these superstitions. Knocking on wood doesn't require tremendous effort, and will avoid the discomfort of thinking "Oh my god this might never go as planned because I didn't knock on wood".



I have only talked about superstitions that do not work. But what about the better exam grade you got when you brought your favorite pen? What about the job interview you nailed when you were wearing your favorite socks? Aren't these proofs of some power that superstitions have? Well yes and no. It is a bit of both. First, superstitions can function as a placebo effect: if you think you do better when you wear your badass pineapple socks, then maybe you will do better for real. Second, we tend to remember only the times when our beliefs proved themselves true. We remember doing great on the exam when we had the lucky pen, but nothing about the time we also did great without the lucky pen. So much pressure on that poor pen.

In short, it doesn't matter if superstitions are real or not: it's the illusion of their power that has a real impact on us. So go for it, and wear those badass pineapple socks!

Superstitiously,
Alice Raffegaue



Camera Obscura

Sofia Maior

Being as old as the hills and rooted in ancient China and Greece, this object of light and illusion played a crucial role in developing art and modern photography. The term “camera obscura” means a “dark chamber” in Latin and receives its name from its appearance. Until the 16th century, it typically took the form of a closed room, the windows shuttered, with a small hole in a blind or door.

The first written account of camera obscura dates back to Ancient China and was created by a Chinese philosopher Mo-tzu (also referred to as Mozi) in 400 BC. He observed that an object’s original picture altered when light from the illuminated object entered a dark room through a pinhole. A bit later in the 4th century, a well-known Greek philosopher Aristotle discovered that one could observe a partial eclipse by observing the area under a tree. He was able to observe it safely through the gaps between the leaves and the holes in the sieve, where the partially obscured sun projected its crescent shape onto the ground. Many other well-known scientists continue their experiments with camera obscura. The great painter

Leonardo da Vinci suggested that the camera obscura resembles the human eye and even went further, publishing the first clear description of its mechanism. “It is impossible to express the beauty [of the camera obscura image] in words. The art of painting is dead, for this is life itself: or something higher, if we could find a word for it,” wrote in his private letter in 1622 a well-known Dutch painter Vermeer, who highly appreciated the camera obscura and frequently used it for his own artworks. Playing with the light and creating magic within the possibility of the lens, the camera obscura played a vital role in photography. Camera obscura provides scientists and artists with a possibility for meticulously measuring the lengths and angles of a subject or scene. It enables them to project an actual image onto paper or another flat surface, creating a perfect perspective and making it easy to trace the lines and shapes from a protected image onto the canvas. Despite its long history, camera obscura hasn’t completely fallen out of fashion. Some contemporary photographers and artists continue to utilize this device as a visual aid.



Written in the Stars

Anushka Massand

Welcome to Indian Matchmaking. If you are like me or are well familiar with our beloved Seema aunty from Netflix, you might already know a few quirks of the Indian matchmaking system. Seema aunty for those who are not aware yet, is an Indian match maker with her own Netflix reality show called Indian Matchmaking. Aunty is a term of respect used for older women in parts of Asia. Arranged marriages in India are an intricate process. Ultimately even Seema aunty's efforts are meaningless if the stars are not aligned. If you think the alignment of stars means fate, it is not, it is much more than that.

Let's start from the basics. In Indian culture there are two broad types of marriages, one is arranged and the other is called love marriage. For both the marriages, before the wedding is decided, parents of the bride and groom meet each other. When they meet, they get a priest to match the bride and groom's Kundali also known as Janampatri aka horoscopes. The Kundali is matched using this

technique of Guna Milan which basically assigns points based on compatibility of various factors such as the planet placement at the time of birth, position of the moon, their moon signs and other astrological combinations. Essentially kundali are used to predict the future compatibility of the couple (although culturally people are confident about it being a surety) and if they will live a long happily married life. Each Kundali has 8 categories called Kootas and 36 Goons (points) that need to match between the bride and groom to have a happy marriage. The process of matching Kundalis is based on a vedic astrology system called Ashta Koota Milan.

There are superstitions that when Kundalis do not match yet the couple decide to get married some of them include arguments in the marriage, couples might face problems in their physical relationship including issues in conceiving children even if the couple are healthy. They might even have troubles in their career growth. The kundali mismatch often leads to end in relationships because it is not considered worth the risk. Apart from mismatch some people's horoscopes are considered to

have defects in them which are caused by unfavorable planetary positions, these defects are called Doshas. There are a variety of Doshas that are said to cause various types of instability in a marriage. At the top of the list is the Manglik Dosh, which is based on the alignment of the planet Mars in the Kootas. People with the Manglik Dosh face difficulty getting married because of it being prominent in their Kundalis and Indians rather not risk it. Although if they do want to risk it and

they actually can in certain loopholes to this situation where Mangalik, a person who has the Mangalik Dosh would marry a person who is Mangalik as well. It is strongly believed that marrying a Mangalik person to a non-Manglik person could lead to loss of life of the non-manglik partner. It said that in certain cases, the Dosh can be removed by marrying a Mangalik person to a tree, pot or an animal first in the process called Kumbh Vivah. Sadly, the tree, pot or animal is then destroyed to break the curse and to neutralize the Dosha.

Personal Opinion:

Religious practices like these are fueled by fear. Humans are scared of the “What if?” and this is just one of the thousands of regressive practices that are still prevalent in the world. I do not see it going away anytime soon. While I have personally been strongly against it, my parents who come from a well educated background have still shown my kundali to the astrologer without my consent or knowledge and apparently it’s the right time for me to find a husband. We will see if it is truly written in the stars.



The Mysticism in Knowing Yourself

Maya Barakova

Personality feels like a box of chocolates except in this box you know exactly what you are going to get. You are a spread of wonderful marzipans, enriching white chocolates and heavenly hazelnut flavours. Surrounded by hundreds of different walking and talking chocolate boxes. But there's a limit to the flavours and combinations of chocolate nuances out there. Astrology says there are 12 unique personalities, according to MBTI personality typology there are 16 unique cases, and there are only 4 in Japanese blood type personality theory. Why not? Do we really believe that our uniqueness could never be found in another human being? An inkling of hopefulness for answers spreads because knowing yourself and being able to understand others allows for a sense of realization, self-actualization and control in some cases. For others it can be as simple as being a source of entertainment.

So, what if your date asked you what your astrological sign or MBTI is? You might as well lean into it and ask back which Hogwarts house they are in. We know that there are some innate

traits that make us sway more towards some choices than others. The illusionary power of the stars creates patterns of personas so vague yet so intriguing. When it comes to astrology everyone catches the Barnum effect like the common flu. People tend to assume a certain personality trait applies to them, yet the descriptions are abstract enough that it applies to everyone. Strike it as a hoax then! Let its influence catch fire – but what rises like a phoenix from the ashes is its more scientific-looking sister: the MBTI personality typology. Suddenly, deciding between thinking vs feeling, introversion vs extraversion is what is bound to define us. Your thoughts and actions are suddenly shaped based on the extend of qualities like extraversion and spontaneity. To some extent it can be traced back to Carl Jung and the concept of archetypes which focuses on certain themes and patterns presented in our collective unconsciousness. Through archetypes we are able to tell a story of our life and follow the narrative of its characters. Perhaps I can archetype you the same way we analyse fictional characters.

If I read a book about you, would I be able to understand the inner motivations of your choices? Would I be able to

envision the struggles and the temptations that command your attention? Wouldn't you like to know how you are perceived? Because you care, don't you – you have this hungry allure to define even the smallest piece of yourself to a recognizable pattern. Maybe there's a reason we are corruptively attracted to morally grey characters – it presents us with the closest resemblance to our own persona. Main protagonists inherit an unshakable moral compass that makes selflessness look easy. While villains portray a stain of humanity that is appalling to even consider relating to. By the same logic if one of these personality readings exposes your laziness, greediness, or arrogance it would strike a certain uncomfortableness compared to the satisfaction of knowing your glorious qualities. If we assume actions mirror the self, we can start categorizing people and their personalities. For example, if your actions are driven by love, by justice or by sheer narcissism then it should tell me

something about your personality. And if these features can be grouped, people grouped, and personalities analysed wouldn't that be a psychologists' dream come true.

Still, we are social creatures – what good would it do to have all this knowledge for ourselves. Because I want to know who you are and where you stand in comparison to myself. Would you throw away everything for love? Will you not stop until you achieve glory and power? Looking to understand what kind of people we are through personality types and readings is not inherently a bad approach. Still, when we got so enwrapped in co-creating at some kind of societal compass that points to good and bad personalities, we forgot that most of the times things are not just black or white. Defining the complexities, motivations, and intricacies of our selves through the positions of the stars feels like trying to extinguish a fire with a small water gun.



The Use of Illusion to Seek Closure in All of Us Strangers

Rosa Hoogerdijk

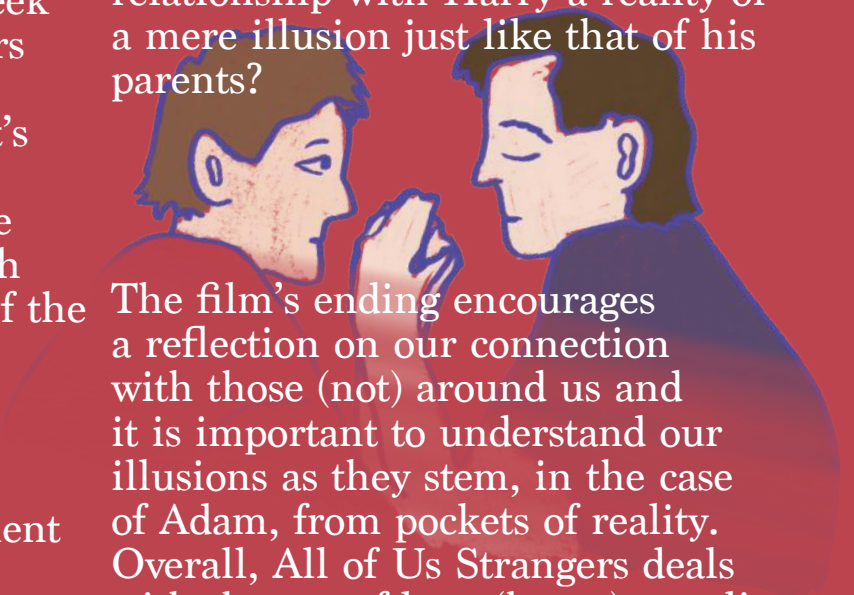
What do you get when you put a hot priest and a sexy daddy in a nearly abandoned London flat building? An explosion of pain, loneliness, and grief. Andrew Scott (Adam) and Paul Mescal (Harry) deliver an emotionally wrenching performance and capture the hearts of the audience in *All of Us Strangers*.

All of Us Strangers follows Adam who is a struggling writer and for a new piece, delves into his past and reconnects with his parents. The only thing is, they passed away after a car crash 30 years ago. He may not be able to rewrite his parent's deaths but now, as a grown-up, we are offered a cinematographic peek into the use of illusion that offers Adam closure and clarification on childhood trauma, his parent's death, his homosexuality, and induced loneliness. All the while he is exploring a connection with Harry, another lonely resident of the flat building.

As Adam revisits his parents as an adult, he relives through imagination the warm environment of his familial home while also being able to point out moments of childhood trauma as a result of his homosexuality. His parents, portrayed by Claire Foy and Jamie Bell, depict the unanticipated

emotions of seeing their 'darling boy' again and being confronted to deal with the repressed truth of their son's sexuality. Adam is offered closure through conversations with his parents that focus on sharing negative memories on which his parents share their perspective. Hearing their point of view, Adam is now able to grasp and challenge their intentions while sharing the lingering effect it has had on his life.

All of Us Strangers takes a journey to and from the past to tell a tale about grief and memory as sometimes time does not heal all wounds. Through illusion, Adam can find closure for a time of his life that has held him back. By giving the past space to play out and affronting the reality of what happened, Adam seeks to understand his grief and loss. This also aids in pursuing a relationship with Harry. However, considering Adam's strong imagination, is his relationship with Harry a reality or a mere illusion just like that of his parents?



The film's ending encourages a reflection on our connection with those (not) around us and it is important to understand our illusions as they stem, in the case of Adam, from pockets of reality. Overall, *All of Us Strangers* deals with themes of loss, (homo)sexuality and love in a way that makes walking away from this film having not been touched by the story of Adam a phenomenal achievement.

The Journey of Tarot Cards

Sakina Fütterer

“The Fool is your invitation to relax, play, and have fun.

Treat life like one big experiment and feel yourself in the flow of whatever comes your way. This card asks you to embrace your beautiful, carefree spirit, allowing yourself to connect to the energy that surrounds you and flows through you.” Sounds familiar? This is a tarot card and who doesn’t know them nowadays? The fortune teller has a ‘supernatural gift’ and uses the tarot cards to predict your life, your journey of life. But did you know that tarot cards were originally a game and did not have any connection with fortune-telling at all? The cards originated in the 15th century in Italy and were used as a fun card game called tarocchi. Tarot cards are also called trionfi, or triumph cards and feature four suits and trump cards of certain themes. These cards were designed by painters in Europe and were mostly designed for wealthy families. The families would ask the painters to create a deck of cards which featured family members and friends on the triumph cards. Some of these decks still exist today, for example tarot cards that were created for the Visconti family in Milan, which included dukes and barons. Of course, not everyone could hire a painter to create a deck of those cards, so for centuries only the privileged could afford this. Back then, the tarot cards were only used

for entertainment purposes, but that changed in the 18th century. In the 18th century in France, the association of tarot cards with fortune-telling arose. Antoine Court de Gébelin, an oculist, said that the tarot cards had a deeper meaning and that they could interpret dreams and predict the future. He said that the symbolism of the cards originated from the esoteric secrets of the Egyptian priests. Although there is no evidence for the statement of Antoine, tarot cards transformed from being a fun card game to a deck of cards that predict your future. The French connection to the tarot cards led to a wide distribution all over Western Europe and is now a permanent part of the present. And that is the journey of life... wait, I mean the journey of tarot cards.



The Literary Crystal Ball: How Fantasy and Fiction can predict Future Scenarios

Cassandra Pacheco

In the realm of literature, fantasy novels and stories have long served as captivating portals to imaginary worlds. Yet, beneath the surface of fantastical tales lie intriguing connections to our own reality. This article delves into the fascinating intersection of literature and foresight, exploring how the limitless realm of imagination may hold clues to predicting future scenarios.

Fantasy novels, while seemingly disconnected from the real world, often draw inspiration from the complexities of human nature, societal dynamics, and technological advancements. These elements serve as the foundation for fantastical worlds, suggesting that our imagination is inherently tethered to the tangible realities of our existence.

Countless instances in literature have not only captivated readers with imaginative tales but

have also eerily foreshadowed real-world developments. Jules Verne's visionary depiction of submarines in "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" anticipates modern naval technology, showcasing the predictive power of fiction. Similarly, George Orwell's portrayal of dystopian surveillance in "1984" has proven to be a chilling reflection of contemporary concerns about privacy and government intrusion. The influence of fiction extends even to unexpected sources, as the long-running comedy show, The Simpsons, has ironically depicted specific future scenarios with surprising accuracy. Instances such as the portrayal of smartwatches, touchscreen technology, and even the outcome of certain sporting events have left audiences questioning the line between fiction and reality. These literary parallels raise the question: can fiction act as a precursor to reality?

An intriguing case involves the Chinese government's utilization of idea farming, where popular science fiction and fantasy literature was used to identify emerging themes and technologies. It's worth noting that China,

with its booming science fiction industry, demonstrates a unique commitment to exploring speculative futures through literature. In China, the popularity of reading, particularly science fiction, surpasses that of gaming. This cultural emphasis on literary exploration adds another layer to the significance of the Chinese government's engagement with science fiction for insights into potential technological and societal developments.

This practice is not unprecedented, as governments have historically turned to the world of fiction for insights into future scenarios. Perhaps most famously, authors Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle heavily influenced Ronald Reagan's decision to found the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983, commonly known as the "Star Wars" missile defense program. Additionally, in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US military sought ideas from Hollywood screenwriters to enhance their preparedness and ensure they were prepared for all scenarios. In 2019, the French army took a similar approach

by assembling a "Red Team" of science fiction writers to anticipate how countries and terrorists might exploit future technologies.

Furthermore, academia recognizes this potential of literature in predicting future trends. Scholars note that while astronomical predictions and weather forecasting may be relatively reliable, foreseeing the intricacies of human behavior remains a far more elusive endeavor. As we navigate the imaginative landscapes crafted by these literary minds, it becomes crucial to recognize the inherent challenges in foreseeing technological change and societal evolution.



This complexity arises from the intricate interplay between human behavior, societal structures, and the unpredictable cross-impacts and secondary effects that accompany technological advancements.

When skeptics engage in discussions about the impact of future studies, the discourse often teeters on the edge of a philosophical conundrum akin to the age-old “chicken or egg” argument. Skeptics may grapple with the question of whether our anticipation of the future shapes the events that unfold or if our predictions merely reflect the course that was inevitably set. However, scholars tend to navigate beyond the speculative quandaries, focusing on unraveling the causal relationships between present actions, anticipated futures, and the tangible consequences that ensue. They argue that imaginative works can serve as a cultural barometer, reflecting societal fears, aspirations, and trajectories. By studying these literary indicators, researchers gain insights into potential developments that may shape our future.

In exploring current literature, we find authors envisioning

diverse futures. From climate change to artificial intelligence, novels offer speculative glimpses into potential scenarios. These literary works serve not only as entertainment but also as fuel for discourse on the trajectory of our civilization. The connection between imagination and reality underscores the interconnectedness of human creativity. When fiction frequently becomes reality, the boundaries between fiction and prophecy may be more robust than we acknowledge.

In the complexity of human creativity, fantasy literature emerges as an unexpected oracle, providing glimpses into futures both wondrous and cautionary. As we turn the pages of literary fantasies, we might find ourselves peering into a mirror reflecting not only our present but also the mysterious landscapes of what lies ahead.

Anticipating the Oscars

Noa op 't Ende

A double strike hitting Hollywood, major shifts in the strategies of streaming platforms due to loss of subscribers (e.g., Disney+), and Barbenheimer blowing up the box office: 2023 was another year of cinematic history-making. With the Oscars right around the corner, it is time to reflect on the nominees - also the less prominent ones. Here are some promising movies to spark your imagination through their illusory elements.



Barbie

Arguably the most influential movie to society in 2023: Barbie. Whether you saw it or didn't, whether you liked it or hated it. We can't deny it was a big topic of conversation on our social media feeds. And perhaps even over family, friend, or roommate dinner. Barbie is about the Barbie-doll created by Mattel, living in a utopian, pink Barbie-land with other Barbies and Kens. But when she comes out of

Barbie-land into the real world and encounters all the struggles it brings (especially for women), her illusion of the world breaks and takes a different shape. But more importantly, the movie breaks down the illusion of the 'perfect' woman Barbie is, also for you as the audience. A movie with lots of varying critiques, a promising Oscar outcome, and a guarantee to strike a nerve in you (good or bad). Worth a watch for everyone.



Spider-Man: Across the Spider Verse

When you think of illusion, classic superhero Spider-Man is a master in creating it. With a bunch of versions on the spider hero story already out there, this Spider-Man movie is the second animated movie in the 10 movies led by the character. In this version, Spider-Man hero Miles Morales is catapulted across the multiverse of spider people to save all the universes from a new enemy - during which he has to redefine what it means to be a hero. Whilst the cinematically beautiful multiverse created for this Spider-Man movie is

an illusion sparking a colorful imagination in itself, the story of how Miles balances out his hero-life with keeping up the illusion of being a 'normal boy' to his parents is just as noteworthy. It has some strong Oscar competitors as an animated film (which we will get into later), but definitely deserves a highlight for the refreshing approach to a classic hero.



The Zone of Interest

A more disturbing, but highly relevant case of illusion is embedded in A24's *The Zone of Interest*. Set in a home and garden next to Auschwitz in 1943 (yes, you read that right), it tells the shocking story of a nazi-officer and his wife who construct a 'perfect' life in an idyllic home for their family next to one of the most gruesome places in world history. Even though this movie does not portray illusion upon first glance, this story certainly narrates internalized illusion (or delusion) in the characters. It shows how the characters in this story can construct and live in their illusion to justify what they contribute to, and what takes place right next to them.

Even though it's officially a war/crime movie, it is packed with metaphors and messages that we as an audience cannot ignore - holding up a confrontational mirror to history and humanity and what illusions some can create in this world (and to what extent). It's certainly not a movie for everyone, and will leave a bitter aftertaste. Still, as expected from A24 as a fan-favorite production house, it is worth mentioning because of the story's relevance - which makes sense for a 'Best Picture' nominee. Maybe less visible next to the blockbuster nominees, but very much deserving of its place.



American Fiction

One of the main things that lives through a previously established illusion is stereotypes, which is central to (maybe less prominent) best-picture nominee 'American Fiction'. It tells the story of Monk, a writer who is fed up with the establishment profiting from the use of black stereotypes. In response, he writes a story based around all black stereotypes he can think of, publishing it under a fake name and persona. Within

this story, Monk creates a satiric illusion of black person that is fully based on stereotypes, to his own disdain. Maybe it is no cinematic treat to the eye (like Spider-Man or Oppenheimer), but it is still Oscar-nominated for a reason. With a good plot, strong acting and promise to trigger your funny bone, this movie is about creating false illusions - and what it does to us humans in turn. In short: surely going to keep you thinking and talking for days. Which us students love and do anyways, right?



Elemental

If you're looking for a movie to transport you back to your childhood, look no further. Pixar has created many of our all-time favorite animated movies like Up, The Incredibles or Ratatouille, and they have never failed to make us laugh or even cry (admit it). Pixar has mastered completely capturing us in their multiverse of illusory stories, and they have done the same with Elemental. It is a movie about characters who make up the four elements of nature, who live alongside each other in their city. These elements are not meant to merge, which

is challenged when fire-resident Ember and water-resident Wade meet. As we are used to, Pixar does not only deliver beautiful visuals with Elemental that are required to be watched on the big screen (if you really want to be taken into the imaginary world). But more importantly, it teaches the audience life lessons through metaphors in a parallel, fantastical world that still feels weirdly recognizable to ours. It is a movie that you can watch with your family over the holiday, or with friends over a drink. Totally feel-good, with the familiar Pixar character. Maybe not the most intellectual movie with complicated implications, but sometimes the simplest works are the most worth watching.



Perhaps you heard of these movies before, perhaps you didn't. But the moral of the story here is that there is something worth watching encapsulated in almost every movie. And especially in this time of AI technologies where we have to 'extra-appreciate' human art, give cinema the chance it deserves - also the less prominent movies that can still take us on a rollercoaster of illusions through which we can escape from reality.

The Bunny Girl

Sofia Maior



Once upon a time,



a girl named Feather lived in a bustling circus filled with laughter and wonder. She was raised amidst the colourful tenants and magical performances. From a young age, the girl was mesmerised by the beauty of the magical arousal within circus life. Her parents were skilled gymnasts who dazzled the audience with their graceful moves, travelling all around the world and showing it to their daughter. But Feather was different. Despite being surrounded by the magic of the circus, she seemed to be followed by a trail of mishaps and misfortune. The girl was unlucky and clumsy to such an extent that even a legendary rumour was spread about the girl being cursed by some unnatural forces.



Feather's clumsiness was legendary within the circus community, from dropping props during rehearsals to tripping over her feet during shows. Yet, despite her numerous blunders, there was something about the circus life that sparked within her. She was enchanted by the daring acts of the acrobats, the elegant dances of the aerialists, and the sheer excitement of the performances under the big top.



Even with her parents being highly concerned about her clumsiness, Feather was determined to become a circus artist. Always driven and guided by an unseen hand, dreaming of becoming a famous circus artist. She spent hours practising her moves, hoping to one day shine in the spotlight just like her parents. But try as she might, her lack of coordination always seemed to hold her back.



One day, after another disappointing performance, bursting out in tears, she rushed into the attic of the circus wagon. She had just fallen from the rope, and despite the protective net being pulled under the rope, the girl's knees and palms burned with fire and shame. While exploring the attic of the

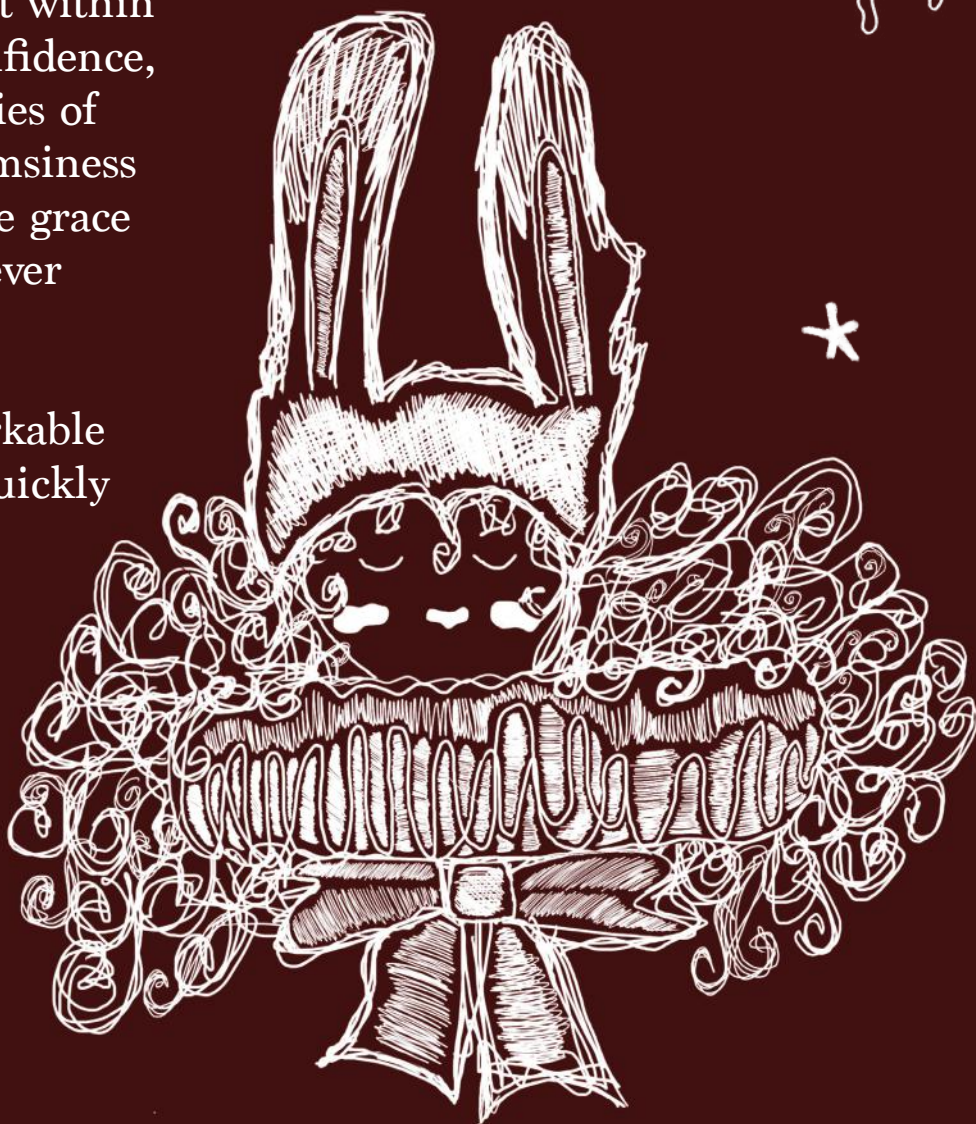
circus wagon, Feather stumbled upon an old, dusty hat tucked away in a forgotten corner. It was a whimsical bunny hat with long, floppy ears. Intrigued, Lily carefully brushed off the dust and placed the hat atop her head.

To her astonishment, as soon as she wore the hat, she felt a strange surge of energy coursing through her veins; the burning pain left her body, leaving a sense of relief and calmness. Suddenly, her movements became fluid and graceful, as if the hat had unlocked a hidden talent within her. With newfound confidence, Feather performed a series of flips and twirls, her clumsiness replaced by a remarkable grace and elegance she had never experienced before.

Word of Feather's remarkable transformation spread quickly throughout the circus, and soon she became known as "Bunny Girl" - a name that perfectly captured her newfound talent and the fast and charming nature of her moves. With the support of her circus family, Feather honed her skills even further,

mastering daring acrobatic feats and captivating audiences with her enchanting performances.

As she soared through the air with elegance and precision, Feather realised that sometimes, it takes a touch of magic to overcome life's obstacles and fulfil our dreams. And with the old bunny hat as her constant companion, she knew she was destined for greatness under the dazzling lights of the circus.





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