



Consciously Created Cinema

Brent Marchant

The Movie
Lover's Guide
to the Law
of Attraction

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To Trevor

“Understanding the world before our eyes requires us to first understand the world behind them, how our thoughts, intents and beliefs function to create the reality we each experience. *How* we go about that is the subject of Brent Marchant’s inventive new book, *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lover’s Guide to the Law of Attraction*, which effectively illustrates the process at work through contemporary film. Whether you’re a movie lover looking for inspiring cinema, a truth seeker in search of enlightening examples to follow, or both, you’re sure to find a wealth of useful, perspective-changing ideas in this engaging new book.”

Betsy Chasse

Co-creator

“What the Bleep Do We Know?!”

Author

Tipping Sacred Cows

“If you love movies and have even an inkling of interest in self-awareness and the meaning of your life beyond just simple existence, like I do, then Brent Marchant’s book, *Consciously Created Cinema*, is an absolute must read and a great reference tool—not only to learn about, and from, movies that matter, but also to learn something deeper and more profound about yourself. Read this book, watch every film he discusses, and I promise you will emerge from the experience a deeper, brighter and better person.”

Austin Vickers

Writer and Producer

“People v. The State of Illusion”

“In this book, Brent Marchant provides a spiritual road map to fully embracing the movie experience and its relevance in modern-day life. In our breakneck-paced society, movie watching gets us to slow down for an hour or two, forget our troubles, spend time with friends and family, and, most importantly, *to use our imaginations and engage our consciousness.*

“In the larger sense, Brent’s film essays are about the intersection of the art form of the motion picture and process of how human beings are exploring the mystery of who we truly are and why we are here and alive. *Consciously Created Cinema* goes farther and deeper than his

first book, *Get the Picture*, in helping us to appreciate how movies have become the primary culturally shared practice showing us the dreams, visions, nightmares and longings that are the human experience.

“*Consciously Created Cinema* is an important and seminal work on motion pictures that I hope will be referred to for a long time to come by the movie lover, the movie writer and the spiritual explorer looking to expand their mind while being entertained.”

Randall Libero
Senior Executive Producer
VoiceAmerica/World Talk Radio Networks

“I’m thankful that someone like Brent is actually looking at what lies beneath the glittering flashes of light, as much more is communicated with the nuance of symbology, story, color and sound than what a viewer first recognizes. A feeling state precipitates all cognition, and a good filmmaker knows how to work this in their medium. We do not need another person telling us how to live our lives; we require personal realization that comes from authentic and honest depictions of new thought. I appreciate Brent pointing us to these films.”

Ri Stewart
Director, Bluedot Productions
“The Quantum Activist”
“Creativity: A new thought won’t kill you”
“What the Bleep: Now What?!”
“Capoeira: Fly Away Beetle”

“I’m very excited about *Consciously Created Cinema*. In this enlightening work, Brent Marchant takes us to the movies and, in the process, teaches us how to use the law of attraction to manifest our desires. If you love movies and if you would love to live the life of your dreams, you are going to love this book!”

James Goi Jr.
Author
How to Attract Money Using Mind Power

“In an age of instantly accessible movies, Brent Marchant offers a valuable, articulate and insightful guide to those connected with conscious creation. Marchant’s ability to give the reader a taste of the plot and

insight into the underlying reality creating principles makes for a fascinating read and resource. *If you want movie reviews that you can use for intelligent entertainment, get this book. Highly recommended.*”

Robert Waggoner

Author

Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self

Co-editor

Lucid Dreaming Experience magazine

“Brent Marchant has done it again. In *Consciously Created Cinema*, he shows with great clarity, detail and insight how the tenets of ‘conscious creation’ are one of the most important tools of post-modern storytelling reflected with increasing frequency and depth in contemporary cinema.”

Paul M. Helfrich, Ph.D.

Author

Seth: the Ultimate Guide

“Hooray! A critic who shares his joy and enthusiasm! Not only does Marchant love movies, he has a solid command of the principles of conscious creation. He’s highly skilled in writing about both with insight and humor, which adds up to a uniquely informative and entertaining guide. Check it out before you pop the popcorn!”

Irene O’Garden

Off-Broadway playwright

Author

Goodbye Fat Girl

Glad To Be Human

“Just as we have the opportunity on an individual level to recognize how the laws of creation are manifesting in our personal lives, Brent is able to brilliantly do so within the construct of the movies. *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lover’s Guide to the Law of Attraction* provides another tool to empower us in the quest of understanding how we create our reality. The movies and reality have a lot in common as they are both stories we tell ourselves.”

Gregory Zanfardino

President

Moniker Entertainment

“I overheard a grownup say once, ‘Well, it depends on how you look at it.’ Fascinated, I turned that over and over in my little boy mind and still couldn’t figure it out. What is *it*, anyway? Now Brent Marchant comes to my (and our) rescue. As I read his book (go slow, by the way), I realized that I was not only *seeing* movies I thought I had already seen a long time ago in a new light, I was being helped to see my life in a new light as well. It really does depend on how you look at it, and the *it* is the joy of feeling like a powerful creator or feeling like a victim.

“If you read Brent’s book, as he recommends, in order, you’ll get that he is taking you on a guided meditation, which will help you to internalize the principles of conscious creation, not just read about them. Of course, another joy of this book is that you will discover movies you had never *heard* of that you’re now desperate to put on your Netflix queue. So you can use this book to change your view of life, or just to read some provocative movie reviews. It all depends on you!”

Paul Giurlanda, Ph.D.

Author

Vistas: A Theologian in Past-Life Therapy

“In *Consciously Created Cinema*, author Brent Marchant eloquently illustrates how the art of contemporary cinema reflects the subtle concepts and forces (such as the much-touted ‘law of attraction’) that are embroiled in the momentous shift in human development that’s now occurring. By combining his love for the cinematic arts with his profound knowledge of the esoteric and metaphysical literature that describes our shifting mentality, he has produced a book that is both reassuring and motivational for the reader. Collectively, the films profiled in this book can be viewed (metaphorically and literally) as the current state of play in our game of ‘awakening’ to an altogether more altruistic approach to life.”

Christopher W.E. Johnson

Author

It’s About You! Know Your Self

“Film and law of attraction expert Brent Marchant deserves countless accolades for his new release, *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lover’s Guide to the Law of Attraction*. Marchant siphons the chaff from the wheat for film buffs who want not only good entertainment but

also relevant insight into how the law of attraction works. The book eloquently introduces the novice and connoisseur to movies of every genre, with in-depth research providing background details one normally wouldn't delve into. His integration of the storylines and the law of attraction inspires you to see the movies *and* practice the principles involved.

“The book is a pleasure to read. Marchant’s grasp of the written word is impeccable. He has honed his craft, making each movie review essential to how anyone can improve their life and contribute to creating a better world in which to thrive and reach the fulfillment we all desire.”

Mary Barton

Author

*Soul Sight: Projections of Consciousness and Out of
Body Epiphanies*

Everyday Telepathy, Clairvoyance and Precognition

Experience Tomorrow Today: Dreams that come True

“I can literally think of dozens of ways to use Brent Marchant’s creative gem of a book: As a guide for a monthly movie club discussion group; a personal tool for psycho-spiritual development; an ice breaker at parties—the list goes on and on. Build upon the principles step by step as you read through it, or just flip through the pages and let your finger choose tonight’s feature from the lines of probabilities; the opportunities for exploration are indeed endless!”

Kerstin Sjoquist

Creator

Bliss Trips guided meditation products

“Brent Marchant’s brilliant and innovative insight into movies invites readers to awaken inner wisdom, reach into the realm of all possibilities and ‘choose’ the kind of future that will arise from chaos of the present. To understand the power of conscious creation principles, buy the book, and move through change with most ease.”

Doreen Agostino, I.P.

Radio Show Host

Align Shine Prosper

“Brent Marchant bestows another gift on cinemaphiles with his 2014 release, *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lover’s Guide to the Law of Attraction*. As he did for films pre-2007 in *Get the Picture: Conscious Creation Goes to the Movies* (Moment Point Press, 2007), Marchant covers plot summaries, relevant conscious creation themes and full cinematographic details, including notations and major awards, on over 60 movies released 2006-2012. Each chapter opens with a thoughtful examination of a theme, ranging from ‘Faith and Beliefs’ to ‘Integrity’ and ‘Transformation.’ With a thoughtful approach to the many underlying tenets of conscious creation, *Consciously Created Cinema* provides readers with many insights on how they can learn from the films examined, and, with Marchant’s delightful writing and humor, every movie lover will find something new to ponder about their favorite, or perhaps previously undiscovered, films. Students in film studies will find this title and Marchant’s previous work to be extremely valuable in their research of contemporary films.”

Dodie Ownes
Editor
SLJTeen

“Having been in broadcasting for 35 years, I’ve seen a lot of changes, such as the rise of ‘on-demand’ *everything*. And, in light of that development, to have *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lovers Guide to the Law of Attraction* available as a resource is absolutely fantastic. To be able to call up any movie from the 13 categories in the book on any of the Internet on-demand services, and then watch something that can inspire, uplift and encourage, is one of the most incredible opportunities each one of us has as a spiritual being on this planet. I can watch what I want when I want and find the kinds of movies that will coincide with my life’s choices and purpose. And, ever since I discontinued cable and satellite services (making me subject to the whims of the networks), I have seen more movies and documentaries that I had never heard of before, films that really opened my eyes to even more ‘new paradigms for a new world.’ So, whether you get this book for yourself or for someone else, what an incredible *gift* it will be.”

Richard Dugan
Radio Show Host
Tell Me Your Story

“Brent Marchant has the brilliant and unique talent of being able to show how films are able to tap into experiences that set examples of what viewers can do to attract the life they desire. His new book, *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lover’s Guide to the Law of Attraction*, magically draws upon films to explain how probabilities, quantum physics, science and metaphysics are melded to create the reality their characters experience, even when they don’t realize it. His book reveals how it’s about time movies have begun exploring what is *really* going on in the lives of their characters, conditions that might also be found in the scientific and spiritual, physical and metaphysical realms of viewers. This book may help readers and moviegoers see beyond the cinematic experience and into the next realm, relating how to solve their problems through the use of the law of attraction and the power of imagination.”

Daya Devi-Doolin

Author

*The Only Way Out Is In: The Secrets of the 14 Realms
to Love, Happiness and Success!*

*If You can Breathe, You CAN Do Yoga: for Beginners
and the Young at Heart*

Grow Thin While You Sleep: Go Figure!

CEO, The Doolin Healing Sanctuary

“*Consciously Created Cinema* is a modern-day *Think and Grow Rich*, in which movie sage Brent Marchant introduces spiritual laws and teachings through the art of film, played out in stories. This book will not only become a treasured resource, but it will certainly transform your life.”

Katana Abbott

Founder

MidlifeMillionaires.com

Radio Show Host

Smart Women Talk

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about conscious creation in the movies in general and my writings on the subject in particular.

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I truly thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

FOREWORD

In the early days of my television career as a promo producer/editor for national and international broadcasters, I spent many hours viewing an endless number of fabulous (and, if I'm to be completely honest here, lots of dreadful) films. It was my task to put myself in the place of the average viewer, choose the juiciest parts of a given movie, then arrange those clips in a way that would draw the biggest TV audience. Several awards from the New York festivals suggest I was pretty good at my job, too!

My husband/business partner Paul L. Clark and I have since left the big city in favor of more fulfilling artistic pursuits. We love the cozy nest where we live and create, but here in our one-store town in rural Canada, the DVD selection has always been seriously lacking, and our irregular satellite Internet makes movie downloads next to impossible, so the only thing I truly miss about my crazy life in Toronto is having those movie reels delivered directly to my office.

Over time, I found the best way to keep up with the movies was by reading about them, and Brent Marchant's conscious creation online reviews became my regular movie connection. The bonus was that his expansive insights introduced me to a new side of big screen storytelling I'd never considered, which, in turn, opened me up to viewing films in a whole new way! I was truly inspired and became an enthusiastic fan.

In the months that followed us sidestepping mainstream media, Paul and I founded a variety of creative initiatives, including a heart-centered online magazine, and we were very excited when Brent found us and proposed writing original reviews for our site! Thus began a wonderful friendship with one of the most consciously aware individuals I have had the privilege of collaborating with, and I'm delighted to have been asked to write the foreword for this outstanding piece of work.

Brent's interpretations in *Consciously Created Cinema* allow us to recognize that movies can serve a larger purpose. This exceptional volume is filled with rational and fanciful cinematic examples of how life—real or imagined—could progress. Brent's insights point out instance after instance of relatable ways for us to put ourselves in a character's shoes while he describes in detail how behavior creates circumstance. He then explains what's been accomplished and how conscious creation will always influence the most satisfying outcome—all valuable, relevant examples for setting conscious creation in motion in our own lives.

With this *Movie Lover's Guide*, where each chapter builds one concept to the next as one moves through the book, Brent provides a clear picture of how the conscious creation process actually works: Probability (Chapter 1) first requires Belief (Chapter 2). Our Beliefs take shape because of our personal Perspective (Chapter 3), which then provides opportunity for us to make our own Choices (Chapter 4). Our Choices often require us to be Courageous (Chapter 5), which provides us with the opportunity for lessons in Integrity (Chapter 6) and ... well, you get the picture.

Inspiring and thought-provoking, this book is packed with suggestions that illustrate heart- and mind-engaging conscious creation/law of attraction principles. *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lover's Guide to the Law of Attraction* is perfect for movie lovers like me who (1) don't get to the theater as often as we'd like and (2) want a meaningful movie experience, whether we're viewing on the silver screen or in the comfort of our own homes.

I will use Brent's words from Chapter 2 to encourage you to devour his book from cover to cover: "... you'll be amazed at how much you can glean from it, information that will stand you in good stead when times get tough and help elevate you to unimagined heights of enlightenment"

Sage wisdom, Brent. Thank you!

From the Heart,
 Mary Giuffre
 Producer, Director, Editor, Writer
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INTRODUCTION

Most of us are no doubt familiar with the expression, “Life is what you make of it.” It’s an adage that offers comfort in the face of disappointment and inspiration when undertaking new endeavors. Yet, as readily as we embrace the good feelings this saying imparts, how many of us *truly* take it to heart? Do we seriously believe the sentiment expressed by these words? And is the essence of this idea even possible, or is it oh so much warm fuzzy New Age hype?

For my part, I believe it really *is* possible for life to become what you make of it, thanks to the practice of *conscious creation*. This highly empowering approach to living maintains that we each create our own reality in conjunction with All That Is (or God, Goddess, Source, the Universe or whatever other term best suits you). This is accomplished by combining the thoughts, beliefs and intents we each formulate for ourselves with the power of our divine collaborator, thereby creating the conditions for manifesting the physical world that surrounds us. It applies to all areas of life, too, from romance to vocation to spirituality and everything in between. And, when the process is applied skillfully, it results in the life we crave.

While some may not be familiar with the term “conscious creation,” the concept is anything but new. Students of the ancient esoteric practice of alchemy, for example, will readily recognize the underlying similarities between that discipline and this one. Likewise, followers of the law of attraction, the personal empowerment concept popularized through the immense success of the book and DVD “The Secret” (2006), will see conscious creation’s uncanny resemblance to that practice. And those with a scientific bent will

note the likeness between the principles of quantum physics and this metaphysical practice. But, no matter what one calls it or how one uses it, the process ultimately yields the same result, namely, that thoughts become things.

A number of important principles provide the foundation for this practice, and many excellent reference sources on them are available. They are perhaps best covered in the writings of author and consciousness pioneer Jane Roberts (1929-1984), who, together with her noncorporeal channeled entity, Seth, produced volume upon volume of material on the subject. But, as eloquently as these concepts are presented in prose, they are also brilliantly portrayed through an entirely different medium—the movies.

In many respects, movies are essentially the modern-day equivalent of storytelling, the time-honored practice that has long been used for instructing students in various philosophical, spiritual and metaphysical traditions. But, because motion pictures enhance their storylines with the high-tech wizardry of striking visuals and state-of-the-art sound, they bring their messages to life in ways that mere words often can't. Their messages carry enormous impact, evoking strongly felt responses among viewers and conveying their messages with palpable degrees of substance and meaning. This is particularly true when it comes to cinematic portrayals of conscious creation principles; they leap off the screen at us with the vigor of the great white star of "Jaws."

As a lifelong movie lover, I've found that films of all genres are capable of accomplishing this, too, including everything from comedies to dramas to science fiction and even documentaries. In fact, over time, I've come to discover that movies even can be organized into a sort of road map or outline for explaining the key concepts of conscious creation. Such an outline provides the basis for my previous book on the subject, *Get the Picture: Conscious Creation Goes to the Movies* (Moment Point Press, 2007, ISBN 978-1-930491-12-0). It's also the focus of my online movie reviews for *VividLife magazine* (www.VividLife.me) and my web site's ongoing blog (www.brentmarchant.com).

Many fundamental conscious creation concepts may seem like practical, commonsense guidance for everyday living, and that's true, to be sure. But, when the principles are viewed *collectively* (with the

concepts building upon one another and working synergistically) and applied with a heightened sense of awareness (a truly “conscious” outlook), they work together to provide a powerful means for approaching life. They generate a heightened sense of self-empowerment and self-awareness to help us shape our existence more to our liking. They enable us to address life’s opportunities, and to confront its challenges, more effectively and with a greater sense of fulfillment. Here’s a look at some of those key concepts and films that exemplify them:

1. **Becoming aware of how we formulate beliefs.** Since beliefs are the starting point in conscious creation, it’s important to know how they form in the first place. This involves becoming aware of the roles that our intellect and intuition play in this process. They provide the input that our consciousness evaluates and then uses to shape the beliefs we hold based on such assessments. Awareness of this overall process, as well as the individual beliefs we form through it, is crucial for one’s conscious creation proficiency; the better we are at this, the more effective we can be at making use of it. Movies that show this include the romantic comedy “Under the Tuscan Sun” (2003) and the ballet world drama “The Turning Point” (1977).
2. **Going beyond surface perceptions.** Because we tend to put more reliance on intellect than we do on intuition, we also tend to put a lot of stock into surface perceptions, those that we perceive with our five outer senses. But sometimes these impressions don’t tell the whole story. Looking *beneath* the surface provides a fuller picture, helping us to see that things aren’t always what they seem. It also helps us sharpen our intuitive sense, which, as noted above, is a key element in belief formation. These ideas are explored effectively in the family drama “Ordinary People” (1980), the French farce “King of Hearts” (1966), the riveting character study “A Beautiful Mind” (2001), the biting satire “Wag the Dog” (1997) and the heartfelt father-and-son fable “Big Fish” (2003).
3. **Understanding the relationship of science and spirit in our lives.** In many ways, the harmony between these two forces is a metaphor for the relationship between intellect and intuition. Grasping the one aids our comprehension of the other, and

a number of pictures illustrate that, including the aforementioned law of attraction DVD “The Secret” (2006), the eclectic conscious creation treatise “What the #*\$! Do We (K)now!?” (2004), the engaging sci-fi drama “Contact” (1997) and the metaphysical talkfest “Mindwalk” (1991).

4. **Drawing upon the power of choice and free will.** If we each create our own reality, then it would stand to reason that we also must be the ones making the decisions about how that reality materializes. This is where the power of choice and free will comes into play. Surprisingly, however, it’s a power we often lose sight of. Maintaining an acute awareness of it is critical to formulating the beliefs that allow us to create the existence we want, no matter how outlandish or unusual those choices may seem. Examples of pictures that illustrate this are the gut-wrenching drama “Sophie’s Choice” (1982), the edgy dark comedy “After Hours” (1985), the unconventional family drama “Housekeeping” (1987) and the futurist yarn “Brave New World” (1998).
5. **Making changes when needed.** When our beliefs don’t pan out as we’d like them to, it’s time to choose new ones. Being willing to evaluate our choices and to make changes to them (by rewriting the beliefs that underlie them) is essential to helping us achieve results more to our liking. Of course, we have to follow through on those changes in our choices to see them bear fruit; otherwise, we’re likely to remain locked in place, unsatisfied with our creations. Films that address such questions include the offbeat comedy-drama “The Truman Show” (1998), the gender-bending comedies “All of Me” (1984) and “Switch” (1991), the romantic fantasy “Peggy Sue Got Married” (1986), the quirky Woody Allen comedies “Zelig” (1983) and “The Purple Rose of Cairo” (1985), and the never-ending saga of “Groundhog Day” (1993).
6. **Facing fears and living heroically.** This is precisely what’s called for when making changes in our beliefs and in our lives. Without the courage to do this, we really *will* stay stuck in place. Many movies delve into this subject beautifully, but some of my favorites are the soul-searching sci-fi drama “Signs” (2002), the

courageous leap of faith character study “An Unmarried Woman” (1978), the Alfred Hitchcock classic “Vertigo” (1958), the otherworldly romantic comedy “Defending Your Life” (1991), and a trio of contemporary heroic tales (all from 2005) “The Constant Gardener,” “Syriana” and “Good Night, and Good Luck.”

7. **Assessing the evolution of our beliefs.** Looking at how our beliefs change over time gives us a sense of how far we’ve come with regard to achieving a particular goal. By taking stock of our beliefs in this way, we can see where further changes may be needed. Films in the road trip genre are especially effective at illustrating this principle, and some great examples include the cinematic classic “The Wizard of Oz” (1939), the screwball comedy “Flirting with Disaster” (1996), the action adventure “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade” (1989) and the Frank Capra fantasy “Lost Horizon” (1937).
8. **Appreciating the connectedness of all things.** If we each truly create our own reality, then we indeed create the *totality* of that reality, including all its component parts. When we consider how intricately all of the various elements of our existence are interwoven with one another, it becomes clear just how careful we must be when making choices, formulating beliefs and effecting changes to them, for the implications can be far-reaching and unexpected. A number of movies explore this idea well, including the ironically titled “Six Degrees of Separation” (1993), the dysfunctional character study “American Beauty” (1999), the engaging gay drama “Hard Pill” (2005), the angst-ridden L.A. sagas “Grand Canyon” (1991) and “Crash” (2005), and the heartwarming charitable tale “Pay It Forward” (2000).
9. **Exceeding our personal limitations.** A chief aim of conscious creation is to create the reality we desire, something frequently achieved through spurts in our personal growth. Such advances can be realized by thinking the unthinkable, envisioning possibilities never before dreamed of, and imbuing ourselves with skills we never knew we had or thought possible. Also, it can involve allowing ourselves to wander the uncharted territories of alternate states of consciousness, such as those experienced in dreams, meditation and other unconventional states of mind.

Imagine what's possible with outlooks like that! Sci-fi and fantasy films are especially good at helping us see such possibilities, because they inherently push limits as part of their storylines. Some great examples are "What Dreams May Come" (1998), "Phenomenon" (1996), "Resurrection" (theatrical version, 1980; made-for-TV version, 1999), "K-PAX" (2001), "The Lathe of Heaven" (1980), "Brainstorm" (1983), "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" (2004) and "Pleasantville" (1998).

10. Experiencing the joy and power of creation. As self-evident as this may seem, becoming more conscious of this state of being is tremendously uplifting. It allows us to experience being our own best, truest selves, living up to our potential for the betterment of our own lives and those of others around us, a notion sometimes known in conscious creation circles as *value fulfillment*. It's a state of being that begs the question, "Who wouldn't want to live a life like that?" We can see such sublime joy and tremendous power made manifest through such pictures as the gentle comedy "Being There" (1979), the Christmas classic "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946), the inspiring, high-flying historical adventure "The Right Stuff" (1983) and the dreamy fantasy world of "Wings of Desire" (1987).

Consider what's possible when all of these steps are put together, not only for achieving the existence we want to lead for ourselves, but also for the greater world in which we dwell. The satisfaction and rewards of such a life are truly worth experiencing. And to think it can all stem from the inspiration that movies provide us.

Now that's quite a creation, if I do say so myself.



As noted earlier, I explored the foregoing principles in considerable detail when I wrote *Get the Picture*, so I won't belabor them here. My purposes in writing this book are to reiterate the significance of some of the most important notions (like the roles of beliefs, choice, fear, courage, connection and change) and to introduce a number of new ones, concepts that complement those outlined above (such as the importance of probabilities, faith, integrity, power, redemption, transformation and transcendence). And, in the course of

addressing all of these ideas, I also elaborate on some specific conscious creation precepts that I covered in passing in *Get the Picture*, including the following:

- * The notion that we're all in a *constant state of becoming*, a reflection of the evolutionary idea noted above. This is crucial to our personal growth and to the development of our greater, spiritual selves of which we, as individual physical beings, are part.
- * The principle that we're innately *multidimensional beings*. This applies both to the many aspects of our individual character, as well to the multiple selves that comprise our greater being, both in the reality we experience firsthand and in the many other dimensional planes in which other parts (or "fragments") of our selves dwell.
- * The idea that we live in a *Safe Universe*, one that has the best interests of our growth and development at heart. Under such conditions, our divine conscious creation collaborator provides us with the circumstances most conducive to that aim, no matter how seemingly unlikely (or even "undermining") they may appear at the time of their manifestation. Such conditions nearly always lead us to fortuitous connections and synchronicities that make the realization of our goals possible.
- * The concept that, for better or worse, we've all chosen to incarnate to learn specific *life lessons*. This notion helps to explain a lot about why things happen as they do, for all of our incarnations are intended to provide us with exposure to and experience in all aspects of the human condition and physical existence. We'd serve ourselves well by doing whatever we can to make ourselves as aware of this as possible.
- * The principle that the manifestation process involves acts of *co-creation*, those that we engage in with our divine collaborator, as well as those that we materialize with our fellow terrestrial beings. Those that we produce collectively with our peers are referred to as *mass events*, happenings that are generally made up of countless individual events occurring under common umbrellas but that likely wouldn't have materialized were it not for the mutually manifested conditions under which they arose.

- * The principle that *the point of power is in the present moment*, the only one over which we have direct control. To achieve optimum results, we'd be wise to recognize this concept, for the past is behind us and the future has yet to occur. "Now" is what we have to work with, and we'd serve ourselves best by doing so.
- * The idea that the manifestation process requires us to be *conscious* of what we're doing, as the philosophy's very name suggests. To do otherwise is to engage either in *creation by default* or *un-conscious creation* (where we manifest our reality without regard for the *responsibility* involved or the *consequences* that can arise) or in *semi-conscious creation* (where our focus on the *form* of an outcome often blinds us to recognizing the *spirit* of an intention when it materializes). The pitfalls of these practices can be considerable, to say the least.
- * The notion that acts of creation are intended to promote our experience of *value fulfillment*, as discussed earlier. To do less is to shortchange ourselves, but to sincerely and consciously aspire to this aim is to truly fulfill our destiny.

All of these principles, when applied collectively, provide us with a powerful set of tools to create a meaningful existence. And movies provide us with powerful examples of how to make use of them. That is what this book is all about.



In many ways, I have employed the same general approach in this book that I used in *Get the Picture*. Each Chapter opens with a brief introduction to a basic conscious creation concept, providing an overview of its essence and its pertinence to the overall process. That's followed by five movie listings that illustrate the concept at work. Each listing includes a plot summary and discussion of the relevant conscious creation themes, as well as credits information on principal cast members, directors, writers, year of U.S. domestic release and notations on major awards (Oscars,¹ Golden Globes,² the Cannes Film Festival, and, in one case, Emmys³). However, unlike my previous book, which profiled films across the entire span of cinematic history, this work specifically looks at movies released since I wrote *Get the Picture*, from 2006 through the end of the 2012 awards season.

There's a logic to the order of the Chapters that will become apparent as readers go through the book. The concepts build upon one another, sometimes within a Chapter and sometimes from one Chapter to the next, showing how the different conscious creation principles fit together like the pieces of a puzzle. Due to the nature of this format, then, it probably wouldn't be practical to treat this book like a catalog to peruse for a movie to watch; the book's outline and contents don't readily lend themselves to that. Instead, the book functions more like a cinematic syllabus, taking readers through a course on conscious creation as depicted through recent film releases. So I'd strongly suggest reading it in order rather than jumping around at random.

The pictures I've selected for each Chapter are what I consider to be some of the best recent examples of films that portray the conscious creation concepts in question. Some selections could easily have fit into more than one Chapter, and good arguments could be made for organizing them differently, but I slotted them where I felt they best exemplified the ideas at hand. Some of these pictures may not have been purposely made with conscious creation or law of attraction principles in mind, but the ideas are present in them nevertheless. This isn't meant to give them revisionist treatment; rather, it's to show how good they are at portraying these particular notions, whether or not their creators intended them to do so.

With all that said, I'd like to add a few other comments about this book's nature and its contents:

- * This is not an almanac of all of my personal favorite films of the past several years; that's not the intent of this book. Besides, some of my favorites wouldn't necessarily meet the criteria required to qualify for inclusion in this book.
- * This is not an encyclopedia of all the pictures with metaphysical themes that have been made in recent years. Again, that's not what I'm striving for here, given the book's stated purpose.
- * I have endeavored to avoid playing spoiler as much as possible. Although there may be hints at how the stories turn out (generally through the use of textual cliffhangers), I have done my level best to keep from blatantly divulging any endings. The only exceptions are entries involving biographies and pictures

based on historical events, storylines in which the outcomes are already known and in the public record. Otherwise, though, I'm not telling; you'll just have to see the pictures for yourself!

- * With the specific exception of one Chapter's film listings, I *like* all of the pictures in this book. Since I'm not fulfilling the role of a traditional movie critic here, and considering my objective of providing readers with good examples of films that capably illustrate conscious creation principles, it seems counterproductive to devote a lot of space to pictures I don't like or wouldn't recommend. I *do* include criticisms of specific movie elements where warranted, but this is not one of my priorities in writing this book.
- * One entry was originally made for cable television. I have always believed that relevant small-screen productions deserve recognition where pertinent and have never hesitated to write about them when relevant. I do so here again.
- * As was the case in *Get the Picture*, certain movie genres are lacking almost entirely here, mainly out of personal preference. Some may think me cantankerous or prejudicial for saying that, and I'd respond that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion—including me. Consequently, you'll find no westerns (their testosterone-driven storylines rank about on par with professional wrestling), no horror flicks (their gratuitous, gore-dripping gimmickry makes me wish I'd skipped the concession stand on my way into the theater) and no musicals (most make me wish I'd been born heterosexual).

Conscious creation is truly a fascinating and empowering practice, and movies are great teachers of its key concepts (not to mention being a lot of fun, too). So sit back, pop some popcorn, fire up the DVD player and enjoy the show!

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³ Emmy(s)[®] is a registered trademark of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences and the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

1

PROBABILITIES

It's often been said that "anything's possible." And, to those who actively employ the conscious creation process in their lives, this notion is practically a mantra.

At any given moment, thanks to the law of attraction, we're each capable of using our beliefs to materialize virtually any line of *probability* (*i.e.*, any expression of existence) we can imagine. When the power of our intents joins forces with the energy of our divine collaborator, we can bring forth into being almost any manifestation conceivable. That puts a tremendous palette of creativity at our disposal at any time, and we can work wonders with it, our imagination being the only limitation. It can be used for everything from solving problems to producing stunning works of art to manifesting a parking space in a crowded neighborhood. Indeed, no matter how the process is used, conscious creation is capable of making even the improbable possible.

Interestingly enough, those well-versed in quantum physics will no doubt recognize the similarities between that scientific discipline and the conscious creation process. In fact, they're often considered to be two sides of the same coin. So even those who possess a scientific, rather than a metaphysical, background are likely to understand how this practice fundamentally works.

The films profiled in this Chapter examine the notion of probabilities from a variety of perspectives. One of them explores probabilities in terms of the aforementioned scientific and metaphysical similarities. Another looks at the basic need of understanding how

we employ probabilities as a means for getting through everyday life (and what can happen when we fail to grasp or employ the concept). And others examine the process of exploring probability options for choosing which one ultimately best serves our needs.

All too often, we look upon our circumstances convinced that we don't have any choice in what happens. But, as the infinite range of available probabilities makes clear, we truly have countless options open to us at any given time, more than most of us can probably imagine. All we need do is take a look at the probabilities and pick one that suits us. And, if that one doesn't work, there's plenty more where that one came from, all of which are capable of being birthed into being thanks to conscious creation.

In Pursuit of a New Science

“The Quantum Activist”

Year of Release: 2009

Cast: Amit Goswami

Directors: Renee Slade and Ri Stewart

Screenplay: Ted Golder

Every cause needs its activists. Be they political, social, artistic or philosophical, movements don't materialize without advocates to move them forward. One such initiative that's currently attracting ever-increasing ranks of proponents is the exploration of the relationship between science and spirituality. It's a bold undertaking with wide-ranging implications, one that's prompting us to take a new look at who we are and the place we occupy in the Universe. And, with our fundamental view of reality at stake, it's crucial that we seek out sources of wisdom and enlightenment to help guide us along the path of this brave new territory. That's why films like “The Quantum Activist” are so important.

This engaging documentary explores our evolving knowledge of the relationship between science and spirituality and how that understanding, in turn, affects our take on the nature of existence. It does so through the teachings of Indian-born quantum physicist Amit Goswami, a longtime professor of theoretical physics at the University of Oregon, Eugene, and the author of numerous books

on the subject. Those outside the scientific and educational communities may best know him as one of the featured commentators in the conscious creation primer “What the #*! Do We (K)now!?” (2004).

Having been born into a traditional Hindu upbringing, Goswami looked beyond the limitations of what conventional religion had to say about the nature of reality by taking up the study of quantum physics, a subject in which he would eventually become an expert. Ironically, however, the further Goswami explored this subject, the more he began to see uncannily clear parallels between its theories and the lessons taught in established spiritual practices, including those of his own religious background. Over time, Goswami (and a select group of peers, such as Fritjof Capra) began coming to the conclusion that many time-honored spiritual and religious writings were, in actuality, metaphorical texts for illustrating the principles of quantum physics. Granted, the language in those ancient writings may be more flowery or esoteric than what one typically finds in contemporary scientific literature, but the underlying principles are, in many respects, the same.

As Goswami became more convinced of this connection, he also became an active proponent for the advancement of a new science, one committed to exploring the links between the two long-separated disciplines of traditional science and conventional spirituality. His willingness to embrace this view was a bold move, too, since professing such ideas often meant professional suicide for many of Goswami’s predecessors and peers. However, because he was unable to ignore the compelling body of evidence in support of his ideas, Goswami and like-minded colleagues forged ahead, steadily drawing bands of followers, including many fellow scientists.

“The Quantum Activist” chronicles the path Goswami took to reach this point and details his teachings in clips from interviews and filmed lectures. Through this narrative, Goswami covers a wide range of topics, including how spiritual teachings can be seen as illustrations of the principles of quantum mechanics (and vice versa) and how consciousness and beliefs are thought to affect the unfolding of the quantum process. But, perhaps most importantly, Goswami explores how the quantum process makes all conceivable probabilities possible (regardless of whether or not we experience

their manifestation firsthand) and the implications of this in areas as diverse as human biology, the materialization of our physical world and the inherent connectedness (quantum entanglement) of everything in the Universe. These concepts are inventively illustrated using clips from vintage movies, glossy graphics, and innovative fusions of film and animation, all accompanied by Goswami's articulate voice-over narration. Topics that potentially could be thought of as painfully tedious are made engaging by this effective combination of cinematic techniques and Goswami's warm, gentle humor.

This film is a must-see for conscious creation practitioners, because it shows how quantum physics principles drive this process on an underlying "mechanical" level. Since these concepts are inherently at work in all probabilities (most obviously those through which we manifest our respective realities), it's essential that we be aware of them in order to become ever more proficient in this practice (and, one would hope, to produce results more to our liking). Knowledge of this subject truly opens up the infinite range of options available to each of us and enables us to achieve a deeper understanding of what Goswami so eloquently calls "the physics of possibility."

Albert Einstein once observed that "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind." Today's growing legions of quantum activists, like Amit Goswami, are building upon Einstein's insight to show us the veracity of that wisdom in the hope that ultimately we may create better lives—and a better world—for us all.

Figuring Out What Matters

"Greenberg"

Year of Release: 2010

*Cast: Ben Stiller, Greta Gerwig, Rhys Ifans, Mark Duplass,
Jennifer Jason Leigh, Merritt Wever, Chris Messina, Susan Traylor,
Brie Larson, Juno Temple, Dave Franco, Zach Chassler, Mina Badie*

Director: Noah Baumbach

Screenplay: Noah Baumbach

Story: Jennifer Jason Leigh and Noah Baumbach

As we wend our way through life, many of us face numerous challenges for managing our daily existence. Each of the tests we

encounter can be difficult enough in themselves, but imagine what it would be like if we were fundamentally incapable of getting a handle on what's truly vital in life or how to materialize those essentials. Such is the lot of the title character in the disquieting comedy-drama, "Greenberg."

Roger Greenberg (Ben Stiller) is a seriously lost soul. The former musician-turned-carpenter has trouble with everyday existence. He spends much of it adrift in life's minutiae, an obsession that regularly launches him into incoherent stream of consciousness ramblings or angry rants, either verbally or in letter form. It's a pattern of behavior that probably helped land him in the mental institution from which he recently emerged. But now that Roger's back in mainstream society, his challenge is to figure out what's next, a daunting prospect for a 40-year-old who feels that life and its infinite probabilities are pointlessly passing him by.

As a start, Roger agrees to leave his New York home and travel to Los Angeles to house-sit for his brother Phillip (Chris Messina), who's embarking on a lengthy trip abroad with his family. While in L.A., Roger's told he can call upon Phillip's capable but somewhat spacey twenty-something personal assistant, Florence Marr (Greta Gerwig), if he needs anything, an offer that quickly spawns an often-awkward rollercoaster romance. Roger's visit also allows him to reconnect with his former band mates, Ivan (Rhys Ifans) and Beller (Mark Duplass), as well as an old flame, Beth (Jennifer Jason Leigh), all of whom have moved on with their lives while Roger has stayed emotionally and psychologically stuck in place, a realization that reinforces (and sometimes even empowers) his sense of isolation and inability to progress. Nothing seems to give Roger the inspiration he needs to get on with his life, but, given his scattered and perpetually discontented state of mind, there's no guarantee he'd even be able to recognize said spark if it were to appear. So what's someone to do as the years pile up and life marches ever forward? That's Roger's burden as he grapples with the life he wasn't expecting (nor wanted).

Taken at face value, "Greenberg" might seem like a frustrating film to watch, mainly because it comes across as an unfocused story about a self-absorbed misfit. But, if viewers go beyond its surface qualities, they'll find a very different—and very engaging—picture, one that's effective at conveying an important (and potentially

unsettling) message: If merely *seeing* a character engaging in a life of apparent futility makes one squirm, then imagine what it must be like *to be* someone who lives out such an existence. That might be an especially uneasy prospect if it hits close to home, particularly given the degree of authenticity with which it's depicted here.

The movie thereby illustrates just how crucial it is to have an understanding of conscious creation principles for managing the basic functioning of day-to-day existence. If we were to lack such an innate awareness about the workings of life, we'd likely wander through it just as aimlessly and embittered as Roger does. And, since he seems unable to grasp even the rudiments of the process, he's consequently unable to assemble the most basic belief platform necessary for creating the foundation of a meaningful existence. Choosing a suitable line of probability becomes a virtually impossible task. Instead, he defaults to his inability to work the law of attraction process (a viable, if frustrating, line of probability in itself), which only brings him more of what he's already accustomed to, as well as peers (like Florence) who seem to be just as intrinsically clueless as he is. What's worse, these circumstances even lead him to frequently proclaim that he's *intentionally* seeking to create nothing out of his life, a defensive reaction to this fundamental failing. It's almost as if he's creating a *Seinfeld*-esque existence, only without the laugh track. It's all so very sad.

Viewers who grasp these notions should be able to see the debilitating difficulty involved in a condition like this, and that, in turn, should help increase awareness of the need for compassion for those so affected. Recall what I noted previously about trying to imagine what it might be like if the shoe were on the other foot: If you were to find yourself in the thick of such circumstances, wouldn't you want compassionate souls in your life to help show you the way out of your dilemma rather than to simply label you as demented, mal-adjusted or pathologically narcissistic? (I sure would.)

"Greenberg" is definitely *not* everyone's cinematic cup of tea. Those who prefer pictures that are plot-driven, rather than character-driven (as is the case here), are likely to be disappointed. What's more, those expecting a Ben Stiller comedy (as the film's somewhat misleading trailer would seem to imply) will likely be disappointed as well, for there are few genuine laughs in this picture.

With all that said, however, there's a lot here for moviegoers who enjoy the unconventional. Director/screenwriter Noah Baumbach shows us, rather than merely tells us, what he's trying to say, a rich, nuanced approach to filmmaking seldom seen in many of today's neat, tidy, formulaic productions. The overall style reminds me of the works of Robert Altman, many of whose pictures focused more on developing characters rather than playing out storylines, often with the same degree of quirkiness found here. Also, it's nice to see Stiller play a role where he isn't a walking punch line as has often been the case in many of his other movies. He turns in a capable performance in a rare dramatic turn, something I hope he attempts more of in the future.

"Greenberg" is the kind of movie that should help well-adjusted viewers be grateful for what they have. Seeing the greenery from the other side of the fence might be just what it takes to care for one's own lawn in the first place—and to be happy with the grass that's already growing there.

Finding Our Way

"Away We Go"

Year of Release: 2009

*Cast: John Krasinski, Maya Rudolph, Catherine O'Hara,
Jeff Daniels, Allison Janney, Jim Gaffigan, Carmen Ejogo,
Maggie Gyllenhaal, Josh Hamilton, Chris Messina,
Melanie Lynskey, Paul Schneider*

Director: Sam Mendes

Screenplay: Dave Eggers and Vendela Vida

Journeys of self-discovery have long been staples of the movie industry, but they've nearly always been depicted through adolescent coming-of-age stories. Rarely has the notion been explored through the eyes of those who are a little older and, at least theoretically, a little wiser. Where are the tales of the twenty- and thirty-somethings who wonder whether or not they've missed the boat of life and are floundering about trying to find their way? Thankfully, there's a film for young adults who've experienced the uneasiness of feeling untethered and directionless, the comedy-drama "Away We Go."

Burt (John Krasinski) and Verona (Maya Rudolph) are a young unmarried couple expecting their first child. They live in what appears to be a pieced-together shack, yet they seem to be doing fairly well for themselves financially (Burt works in insurance futures, Verona's a medical illustrator). They live near Burt's parents, Gloria (Catherine O'Hara) and Jerry (Jeff Daniels), and they look forward to sharing the joy of their new arrival with them—that is, until the free-spirited grandparents-to-be announce that they're fulfilling their long-held dream of picking up and relocating to Belgium, a move scheduled to occur a month before the baby is born.

Needless to say, Burt and Verona are thrown for a loop; one of the few reasons underlying their current living arrangements is now gone. Gloria and Jerry's revelation thus prompts the young couple to wonder whether they've screwed up their lives and to question if there isn't something better for them out there somewhere else. And so they embark on a road trip to investigate other opportunities, a journey that's as much literal as it is metaphorical.

Burt and Verona's trip takes them to a variety of locations. Along the way, they have a chance to witness examples of how others live and whether they wish to emulate what they see. Specifically, their journey takes them:

- * to Phoenix, where the couple meets Verona's former boss Lily (Allison Janney) and husband Lowell (Jim Gaffigan), an example of the American dream gone sadly awry in the tackiest of ways;
- * then to Tucson, to visit Verona's younger sister Grace (Carmen Ejogo), whose successful but lonely life evokes sorrow and draws attention to issues of the past that her big sister is reluctant to discuss;
- * then to Madison, Wisconsin, where Burt interviews for a new job and reconnects with an old friend, LN (Maggie Gyllenhaal), a flaky professor steeped in every New Age lifestyle cliché with her oh-so-sensitive squeeze Roderick (Josh Hamilton), a house-husband so in touch with his feminine side that he'd make Alan Alda look like a chauvinist;
- * then to Montreal, to visit Verona's old college friends, Tom (Chris Messina) and Munch (Melanie Lynskey), the proud

parents of a houseful of adopted children but whose seeming happiness is overshadowed by a painful secret;

- * and then, quite unexpectedly, to Miami, where Burt attempts to comfort his brother Courtney (Paul Schneider), whose wife has just abandoned him and their young daughter.

But, even after all this travel and travail, Burt and Verona still don't find the model on which to base their new lives. They have plenty of examples of what *not* to do, but that still doesn't give them the template they need to create a happy existence for themselves. Maybe *their own* model would be the wisest line of probability to pursue, but what would that be? Coming up with such a prototype is the challenge for the questioning couple and, by doing so, maybe they'll find what they need (and discover some new things about themselves in the process). But, even more importantly, based on what they've seen in their journey, maybe they'll also find they're not as screwed up as they once thought they were.

This film aptly illustrates how we can sample probabilities for existence that have already manifested in physical form. But, since Burt and Verona are merely window-shopping at this point, they need not buy into any of them definitively. They're free to vicariously explore possibilities without the consequences that come with commitment. They very capably attract an array of options to consider on their way to making a decision.

This picture is also a prime example of showing how our beliefs evolve over time, and it does so fittingly through the road trip story model, one of the most effective means for examining this concept. The evolution of our beliefs often plays a major role in which probabilities we select for ourselves, and that idea is on full display as Burt and Verona sort out their options. In doing so, the picture also addresses the notion of *creation by default* (or *un-conscious creation*), the practice wherein we let life happen to us rather than assertively take the reins to figure out which probabilities serve us best. These unsuitable examples, ironically enough, enable Burt and Verona to rule out certain options, leading them to the inspiration they need to go out and create the tailor-made reality that's most appropriate for them.

One occasional criticism of the film has been that the character development is at times weak and/or inconsistent, that Burt

and Verona are little more than undefined tour guides for carrying the story. However, I would contend that's what most journey of discovery films are all about—the emergence of self-awareness of one's beliefs and the creations that go with them. (After all, how can there be full development when that development is itself clearly in process?) In fact, I found it interesting that the protagonists actually seem to know themselves better than they often give themselves credit for; their self-awareness and their insights about what they want are often remarkably clear and incredibly specific, qualities that one could point to as healthy examples of character development (and in both on- and off-screen applications, too). Through this, Burt and Verona ultimately find that their lives may need mere tweaking than complete overhauls (we should all have it so good!).

“Away We Go” is an endearing story from start to finish, with excellent performances by the entire cast (props in particular to Janney, Gaffigan, Gyllenhaal and Hamilton). Sam Mendes's directorial efforts got back on track with this film, too, perhaps not up to the same level of achievement he attained in “American Beauty” (1999) but certainly a strong recovery from the disappointing “Revolutionary Road” (2008).

Find your way to this film. After seeing it, you just may uncover some enlightening revelations about your own way and the promise it holds for the future, leading you to probabilities that offer ever-greater degrees of personal happiness and fulfillment. And that's always worth the trip.

Quantum Physics Goes Mainstream

“Source Code”

Year of Release: 2011

*Cast: Jake Gyllenhaal, Michelle Monaghan, Vera Farmiga,
Jeffrey Wright, Michael Arden, Cas Anvar, Russell Peters,
Brent Skagford, Kyle Gatehouse, Craig Thomas,
Gordon Masten, Frédérick De Grandpré, Scott Bakula (voice)*

Director: Duncan Jones

Screenplay: Ben Ripley

The gap that has long existed between the worlds of science and spirit has begun narrowing in recent years through the rise of scientific

disciplines like quantum physics and metaphysical philosophies like conscious creation. The popularity of those subjects has benefited tremendously from the release of cinematic offerings like “The Quantum Activist” (2009) (profiled earlier in this Chapter), as well as “The Secret” (2006), “What the #\$*! Do We (K)now!?” (2004) and “Mindwalk” (1991). As enlightening as those films are, however, they’re primarily documentary in nature. So it’s a real breath of fresh air to see pictures that effectively take a different approach and tackle this material from a fictional standpoint. One such film is the engaging thriller, “Source Code.”

Pilot Colter Stevens (Jake Gyllenhaal) flies sorties for the U.S. military in Afghanistan. Or at least that’s what he thinks he does. So it goes without saying that he’s stunned when he inexplicably finds himself in civilian garb aboard a suburban commuter train headed for downtown Chicago one spring morning. Colter’s flummoxed by his circumstances and by the comments of his apparent travelling companion, Christina (Michelle Monaghan), who’s equally perplexed by the odd behavior of her fellow commuter (whom she calls Sean and with whom she’s evidently been making the daily train trip for some time). But that astonishment is nothing compared to what Colter experiences when the train blows up.

After the explosion’s fireball dissipates, Colter finds himself confined inside some kind of capsule surrounded by stacks of scientific equipment. On a nearby video screen, he sees a uniformed military officer named Goodwin (Vera Farmiga) who asks him cryptic questions about his experience on the train, all the while skillfully dodging his many inquiries about what’s going on. Colter’s initially frustrated by Goodwin’s evasiveness, but he eventually settles down enough to answer her questions, at which point he’s gradually given the answers he seeks.

Colter, it seems, is part of a test run for a top-level military project known as Source Code, the brainchild of quantum physicist Dr. Rutledge (Jeffrey Wright). Through this “time reassignment” experiment, the test subject’s consciousness (in this case, Colter’s) is infused with that of another person (in this case, the train passenger known as Sean (Frédéric De Grandpré)), a portion of which lingers energetically in the environment in the wake of the other individual’s demise, like a sort of psychic echo or apparitional

imprint. Goodwin and Rutledge explain that the purpose behind linking Colter's consciousness with the remnants of Sean's is so that he can find out who planted the bomb that blew up the train. He's told that discovering the identity of the bomber is not intended to prevent the train's destruction—that event has already happened—but to locate the suspect before more damage is done. The stakes are high, too; according to Goodwin and Rutledge, intelligence sources have uncovered evidence that the train incident was intended as just the first in a series of attacks leading up to the detonation of a dirty bomb in downtown Chicago.

So, with that knowledge in hand, and being the good soldier that he is, Colter allows his consciousness to be sent in search of the bomber. In true quantum physics/conscious creation fashion, Colter's consciousness can be launched multiple times, allowing him to explore different lines of probability with each transfer. There's just one catch—he only has eight minutes to work with in each iteration (that's as long as the imprint connection lasts). If he fails on one attempt, he needs to go back and begin again. And he has to work fast, for, while he may have multiple attempts to discover the bomber's identity in the “timeless” world of consciousness, the time frame to prevent a catastrophe in the physical world, where linear time prevails, is rapidly shrinking. Faced with the prospect of a nuclear explosion in a major urban area, Colter has no time to lose.

“Source Code” does a great job of illustrating how quantum physics and its metaphysical cousin, conscious creation, work. With unlimited lines of probability at his disposal in the world of consciousness, Colter is free to explore *any* of them on his way to completing his task. And, despite the belief limitations we often place upon ourselves about this, it's a capability we *all* possess as well—that is, as long as we're willing to believe in it and draw upon it accordingly when needed. At their heart, that's what quantum physics and the law of attraction are all about.

The film also reinforces the notion that our outer world creations originate from within, the realm of consciousness, ideas and beliefs. In doing so, it shows us how utterly magical the process ultimately is, a practice capable of spawning materializations that mesmerize and startle even the most ardent practitioners. And, as

Colter and his colleagues (and viewers) find out, its power is so great that it can exceed even the most inflated expectations (provided, of course, we allow it).

It's encouraging to see that films exploring subjects like this have become more "accessible." As noted above, overt explorations of such material, long limited to the ranks of little-seen independent pictures and documentaries, are now being supplemented with movies like "The Adjustment Bureau" (2011) (see Chapter 13), "Limitless" (2011), "Inception" (2010) (see Chapter 10) and "Déjà Vu" (2006), proving that there's a viable market for major studio releases that address these topics. While not all of these films have been carried off with the same level of skill, and while it certainly would be nice to see fictional movies about metaphysics that employ storylines other than thrillers, it's encouraging that pictures examining such subjects are increasingly not just for the art houses any more.

"Source Code" is a smart picture from top to bottom, well written and capably performed (despite Wright's occasional overacting tendencies). Its special effects, editing and cinematography are fine, too, beautifully showcasing Chicago in springtime (though, as a Windy City resident, I must admit to being somewhat partial on this). It makes for a rollicking Saturday afternoon at the show, an old-fashioned thrill ride with a New Age twist.

As we become increasingly aware of the idea that we create our own reality with all its myriad probabilities, it helps to have movies like "Source Code" available to remind us of that. It effectively illustrates our range of options and the means by which we go about accessing the possibilities. And, in the end, the results we get from that process might surprise us in ways we can't even imagine.

City of Enlightenment

“Midnight in Paris”

Year of Release: 2011

*Cast: Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams, Michael Sheen,
Marion Cotillard, Kathy Bates, Adrien Brody, Carla Bruni,
Kurt Fuller, Mimi Kennedy, Nina Arianda, Léa Seydoux,
Corey Stoll, Tom Hiddleston, Alison Pill, Yves Heck,
Marcial Di Fonzo Bo, Adrien De Van, Serge Bagdassarian,
Gad Elmaleh, Sonia Rolland, Daniel Lundh, David Lowe,
Yves-Antoine Spoto, Vincent Menjou Cortes, Olivier Roubourdin,
François Rostain
Director: Woody Allen
Screenplay: Woody Allen*

The City of Lights has long stirred the creative juices of artists of all kinds. Its magical energy has helped birth the works of writers, painters and performers, giving rise to all manner of creative brilliance. But what is it about this inspiring locale that makes this possible? The mystique underlying this phenomenon is at last revealed in the delightful Woody Allen comedy, “Midnight in Paris.”

Gil Pender (Owen Wilson) is lost and disillusioned. As a self-acknowledged Hollywood hack, he longs to escape his shackles and write serious literature in the same vein as his idols, most of whom came to prominence through the thriving literary scene of 1920s Paris. So, without hesitation, he jumps at the chance to visit the fabled city when he and his fiancée (Rachel McAdams) are invited to accompany her parents (Kurt Fuller, Mimi Kennedy) on an extended vacation to the iconic French metropolis.

Once in Paris, Gil is captivated by the city. He’s in his element and wants to immerse himself in it to the fullest. But, while he finds himself increasingly in synch with the Parisian milieu, he also discovers he’s becoming ever more *out* of synch with his fiancée, her family and her self-important friends (Michael Sheen, Nina Arianda). They behave like stereotypical Americans, treating their Parisian experience like they’re visiting an overgrown theme park, seeing all the requisite tourist sights and purchasing overpriced souvenirs, rather than engrossing themselves in the city’s rich, sophisticated ambiance. So it’s not long before Gil abandons his traveling

companions to go exploring on his own. What ensues is an urban adventure that leads him down an unexpected and enchanting path, a journey that begins with a simple midnight walk.

While returning to his hotel, Gil encounters a group of partygoers dressed in 1920s garb. He joins them for what he thinks is an invitation to a costume party, but he soon discovers that the festivities have an authenticity that's a little too realistic to be the creation of an overzealous party planner. It's then that he realizes he has somehow been whisked across time to the era he so adores.

As improbable as his circumstances might seem at first, Gil quickly embraces them, especially when he meets such luminaries as F. Scott Fitzgerald (Tom Hiddleston), Ernest Hemingway (Corey Stoll), Gertrude Stein (Kathy Bates), Pablo Picasso (Marcial Di Fonzo Bo), Salvador Dali (Adrien Brody), T.S. Eliot (David Lowe) and Cole Porter (Yves Heck), among others. He's quite taken by this new reality, particularly when he sees the favorable impact it has on his writing and his overall outlook on life. He also becomes smitten with the fair Adriana (Marion Cotillard), an aspiring fashion designer and intermittent mistress of Picasso, who becomes a sort of muse for the would-be novelist. Before long, Gil truly believes he's found the life he's meant to live. He plans to ditch his 21st Century existence for the Jazz Age—that is, until he learns Adriana also pines for an era different from the one into which she was born, the *Belle Époque* of 1890s Paris, a time she covets as much as the one that Gil has so long craved. A new temporal disconnect thus arises, prompting Gil to seriously ponder what he should do next.

Anyone who has ever been creatively blocked can certainly appreciate Gil's circumstances. The frustration that comes from being unable to express oneself, despite strong but undefined urges to the contrary, can lead to a desperate search for inspiration and enlightenment. And that's why the energizing effects that come from finding it—or even the *belief* that one has found it—seem so thoroughly satisfying.

Reaching that point may seem like an impossible task when we feel blocked, but it need not be. As long as we remain open to the idea that it's a probability attainable by shifting the beliefs we employ in creating the reality we experience, we just might find the inspiration we're looking for. Gil realizes his goal once he drops the

limitations that hold him back, and the results are astounding; if it's possible to dissolve barriers seemingly as impenetrable as those associated with time, imagine what results are achievable when the walls impeding creative expression are felled. Through the example set by Gil's temporal shifts, it's apparent that the reality we create and experience need not be the fixed, rigid phenomenon we often expect it to be; instead, it's more fluid, malleable to our liking, depending on whatever beliefs we put into its materialization.

One can only begin to imagine what's possible once that happens. All sorts of probable new creative expressions are conceivable, including everything from the works of art we produce to the very conditions of our daily existence. Through our awareness and implementation of the law of attraction, we're also likely to find that we come into greater alignment with our lives, especially in crucial areas like *value fulfillment*, the concept concerned with each of us striving to be our best selves for our own and others' betterment. And, in that regard, the sky truly is the limit, depending upon how daring we're willing to be and what we'll allow ourselves to experience.

Of course, the realizations we come to while living out such experiences may surprise us as well, which can tell us much about the beliefs we *didn't* know we held. For instance, just when we think we've manifested our ideal expression of reality, we might find that it's not the be-all-and-end-all that we thought it would be. We may discover that a particular attainment is just one of *many* destinations along a continuous path of achievements, a stopover on the journey of reality creation. This circumstance thus aptly reflects the notion that *we're all in a constant state of becoming*, a key conscious creation concept with which its practitioners are so eminently familiar.

We might also find that a particular line of probability is disillusioning or even unsatisfying. This can be especially true for those who envision themselves living in other eras or alternate realities. In doing so, we may view such existences from overly romanticized perspectives, and these fantasies can come crashing down hard around us if they don't live up to what we hope for. Such realizations, however, can also open new doors. For example, paying a visit to an alternate reality may provide a measure of inspiration and enlightenment when it's lacking, but staying there is an entirely different matter. Visiting the past, for instance, is not the same

as *living* there. Knowing how to draw from the inspiration such experiences provide, and then letting them go, rather than becoming trapped by them, is the key for making the most of them. Conscious creators are well aware of this, acutely cognizant that *the true point of power is in the present moment*. Those who have experiences where this realization becomes apparent—even if in a back-handed way—may ultimately discover a whole new sense of personal empowerment that they hadn’t previously thought possible. (Now *that’s* a creation.)

“Midnight in Paris” is easily one of the best films Woody Allen has made in years. It’s charming, thoughtful and inspiring, going beyond the fluffy romantic comedy label that so many casually slapped on it. It’s a well-crafted period piece, with fine production values and wonderful performances. It also shows off Paris beautifully, with its gorgeous cinematography doing for this French treasure what many of the director’s pictures have long done for his native New York. Granted, like many of Allen’s movies, the script of this film is a tad talky at times, but that’s easily overlooked given everything else it has to offer.

The film was richly rewarded in awards programs, having won an Academy Award for best original screenplay, as well as three additional Oscar nominations, including best picture and best director. The picture matched those accomplishments in the Golden Globe Awards competition, winning top honors for best screenplay and earning nominations as best comedy picture, best director and best comedy actor for Owen Wilson.

All of us have our “Paris” moments, to be sure, and we should allow ourselves to experience them without reservation, for we’ll never know what they’ll yield until we plunge ourselves into them. This movie provides a superb example of what’s possible if we follow that path, a probability that can lead us to our own shining City of Enlightenment.

2

FAITH AND BELIEFS

What we believe is what we create. In conscious creation terms, this is the core principle that explains how the process operates. And, as Chapter 1 illustrated, the range of *beliefs* open to us, like the range of probabilities they're capable of manifesting, is limitless.

Beliefs are immensely powerful forces for bringing our reality into being. That power is clearly observable in the results they produce, too. Look, for example, at how materializations like social networking, which were once mere intangible ideas in the minds of their creators, have subsequently grown into tangible, formidable manifestations. That principle is applicable across the board of creation as well, encompassing everything from physical constructions like buildings and mass transit systems to political and social movements like democracy and equality. And, in all cases, they get their starts as beliefs.

But what makes beliefs work? In essence, this is where the concept of *faith* comes in, the passion that fuels these notions and gets us behind them in heartfelt ways. The certainty of, and confidence in, our beliefs that faith engenders is what makes them work. In fact, faith is so crucial to their operation that, without it, beliefs would be little more than theoretical constructs, possibilities that are just as capable of becoming full-fledged materializations as they are of remaining dormant abstractions.

It should be noted that "faith" does not automatically equate to religion or some other formalized belief system (though it certainly can take that form if one chooses to go that route). More precisely,

faith is something that arises within each of us *personally*, emerging with varying degrees of fervor and applied in many diverse ways, depending on what particular beliefs and what level of faith we each hold. That is essentially how we manifest our individual realities, existences that are tailor-made to whatever we each conceive of.

This Chapter's movies look at how our beliefs work to bring our reality into being in individualized ways. In several cases, the films feature characters who share mutual experiences but who go through them in their own unique ways, each developing their own particular take on them (based on their beliefs), despite the presence of common elements. In other cases, the pictures show us how the nature of our faith and beliefs contributes to shaping our overall worldview, as well as all of its various components. And, in nearly every case, this Chapter's entries illustrate how the power of our beliefs and faith can help us realize tremendous accomplishments—some that are even seemingly beyond belief.

It's been said that the pen is mightier than the sword, and that's no doubt true. But the beliefs that spring forth through that pen are even more potent than the writing implement that brings them into being, especially when delivered by a zealous scribe. Indeed, for an idea whose time has come, there's virtually nothing that can hold it back when it's fueled by the power of beliefs, and backed by the support of faith, that makes it possible.

In Search of an Elusive Truth

“Doubt”

Year of Release: 2008

Cast: Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman,

Amy Adams, Viola Davis, Joseph Foster II,

Mike Roukis, Jack O'Connell

Director: John Patrick Shanley

Screenplay: John Patrick Shanley

Play: John Patrick Shanley, Doubt

We can trust everything we see, right? Our perceptions wouldn't deceive us, because they're accurate reflections of the beliefs we use to create the manifestations we experience. So how is it, then, that

we may come to question what we witness? Is it due to faulty interpretations of events, or is it because they've been intentionally created with ambiguity as part of the mix? And how truly steadfast are we in our convictions? Are we thoroughly convinced of what we perceive, or is that alleged certainty based on beliefs involving what we think we're *supposed* to believe? Those are just some of the thorny philosophical and metaphysical questions addressed in the gripping religious school drama, "Doubt."

An ill wind blows through the Roman Catholic parish of St. Nicholas in the fall of 1964, and the troubles brewing there have to do with more than just the inclement November weather. The church, located in a working class section of the Bronx, is tended to by Father Brendan Flynn (Philip Seymour Hoffman), an outwardly kind, demonstrably compassionate pastor who cares deeply for his flock. In striking contrast, the adjoining parish school is administered by its hard-nosed, imperious principal, Sister Aloysius Beauvier (Meryl Streep), who carries out her duties with a ruthless efficiency and a cruel demeanor, an attitude destined to one day put the students she oversees into counseling for years.

So what's the source of the trouble? That's hard to say. In fact, it's not readily apparent that a problem even exists. In the end, figuring out what's wrong comes down to who one asks—and what they believe.

Sister Aloysius suspects that things aren't right with the priest to whom she reports. Based on passing observations and conversations with one of her teachers, Sister James (Amy Adams), she believes that Father Flynn may have engaged in an inappropriate relationship with one of the students, Donald Miller (Joseph Foster II). But did he?

Sister James, a young idealist who prefers to see only the good in others, is torn. She has considerable difficulty reconciling Father Flynn's overt displays of compassion with her fleeting glimpses of possibly questionable actions, particularly when he's in Donald's company. Are those suspect gestures what they really seem to be, or are they innocent acts that have been grossly misconstrued?

Father Flynn openly admits to taking an interest in Donald's well-being because he's the only African-American pupil in an otherwise all-Caucasian student body. He fears that Donald, a sensitive,

thoughtful child, will be taunted, perhaps even victimized, by those less open-minded. He also encourages Donald's dream to one day become a priest himself. But Father Flynn isn't revealing everything he knows, and, when he's pressed for answers by Sister Aloysius, he recoils, asking his inquisitor to leave matters alone, which only raises her suspicions even further.

Needless to say, Sister Aloysius can't help but wonder what Father Flynn is hiding. Unsatisfied with his evasive answers, she turns to Donald's mother (Viola Davis) to find out if she can shed more light on things. Mrs. Miller's "disquieting" admissions fuel the Sister's speculation even more. Although nothing conclusively "damning" is revealed, Sister Aloysius is convinced she needs to act. But does she have enough evidence to bring a credible accusation? Or is there too much doubt to proceed? In true conscious creation fashion, how events play out will depend, of course, on what one believes.

In assessing the various characters' interpretations of events, one might be tempted to ask, "So who's 'right' about what *really* happened?" The short answer would be "Everybody," because the realities the characters each experience are *bona fide* representations of the beliefs they each hold. Since there's no faking how each of them ultimately sees things, it's impossible for their realities to be anything but faithful expressions of their metaphysical underpinnings. Even if their views of circumstances seemingly conflict with—or even blatantly contradict—one other, each resulting creation is intrinsically and undeniably "true" for each individual in question.

Many factors drive the formation of our beliefs, including our individual perceptions, personal experience and overall perspective (for more on Perspective, see Chapter 3). We draw upon each of these elements, as well as the input of our intellect and intuition, to fashion the beliefs that arise within each of us. This combination of influences not only leads to the particular beliefs we employ in the materialization process, but it also creates a customized "filter" through which all belief candidates are passed, a mechanism that assesses and shades their character to conform them to the configuration of the "instrument" through which they're evaluated.

In the context of this film's narrative, four distinct perspectives—and four distinguishable realities—emerge as a result of these

foregoing principles. Sister Aloysius, for instance, has led a difficult life. Before becoming a nun, she was a married housewife. But, after losing her husband during World War II, the young widow adopted an embittered view of existence, one characterized by difficulty, tragedy and evil. She drew upon her religious beliefs to sustain her through her personal challenges, but her subsequent interpretation of those beliefs, as well as her approach to serving the institution they're associated with, were both likely shaped by her worldly experiences and prevailing secular outlook. And this development, in turn, continues to color the nature of her beliefs and her resulting reality.

Father Flynn, by contrast, maintains a far different view of life, and this is reflected through his beliefs and actions. He firmly believes in qualities like love, kindness and compassion, and he's convinced the Church must do all it can to embody them. To that end, he believes that the institution must become more approachable to retain parishioners and that those who minister to the masses must respond accordingly. Sister James and Mrs. Miller hold comparable views, believing in the inherent goodness of others and the need for establishing a world built on peace, compassion and understanding. And, naturally, the particular beliefs each of them holds contribute to the specific realities they subsequently experience.

However, no matter what Father Flynn, Sister James or Mrs. Miller may believe, their outlooks directly conflict with the worldview of Sister Aloysius, and her resolve only becomes *strengthened* when any of them behaves in ways that lend credence to her core convictions. For example, Father Flynn's reluctance to reveal everything he knows about Donald convinces Sister Aloysius that he *must* be harboring some sort of vile secret, a natural conclusion given her worldview. But is his hesitancy driven by guilt or by a sincere desire to preserve confidentiality? Father Flynn would naturally insist on the latter contention, while Sister Aloysius would zealously adhere to the former interpretation, and each, in their own mind, would be convinced as to the veracity of their viewpoints. And, in that regard, each of them could genuinely take comfort in the notion that they're "right" about their assessments of their circumstances.

The degree of support underlying our beliefs determines the extent of their power, and, when we provide them with a rock-solid

foundation (as the protagonists each do here), we have the essence of *faith*. The relevance of this concept in the film's narrative applies, fittingly enough, both to the choice of its setting, as well as to the picture's exploration of it as a metaphysical principle. As the story unfolds, it becomes apparent that the characters each cling to their beliefs with a virtually unshakable fervor, providing them with the faith they need to create their tailor-made realities. Their experiences are each borne out of beliefs securely rooted in a foundation of faith, a condition that helps define the strength, persistence and viability of their respective manifestations.

So, in light of the foregoing, one might legitimately wonder why the film is titled "Doubt." Very simply, as alluded to above, it's because "doubt" is a quality that figures significantly into the picture's storyline, and, like all other aspects of existence, its presence also arises out of beliefs.

Interestingly, doubt (along with fear and contradiction) occupies a special place in conscious creation philosophy, because, even though its origins are belief-based, it generally serves to *undercut*, rather than validate, our intended manifestations. Doubt prevents outcomes from materializing, either at all or as hoped for, by seemingly "corrupting" our intentions. Since doubt arises through our beliefs, when intents behind this notion are paired with those aimed at manifesting particular outcomes, the result is confusion, because our divine conscious creation collaborator has difficulty accurately interpreting what we're trying to accomplish. In an attempt to reconcile matters, our divine collaborator either does nothing or does its level best to accommodate all of the competing beliefs, yielding results that often perplex or disappoint everyone involved.

Given the different (and conflicting) realities at play in this film, doubt factors into the plot frequently, especially since "conclusive" proof of suspected actions remains elusive. It's at such junctures in the story that either faith takes over or doubt creeps in, thereby affecting the functioning of the law of attraction process. The resulting manifestations arise, as always, from the beliefs (or, more precisely in this case, from the convoluted *combinations* of beliefs) in question. And, when the role of doubt becomes apparent in this mix, the revelation can be devastating, and the resulting impact can be considerable, for all involved, *especially* the intent's originator.

Despite the widespread acclaim and many accolades this film received, I sincerely believe it's one of the most underrated pictures of recent years. Its powerful writing examines a timely, highly controversial subject, but it does so sensitively and thoughtfully, without ever becoming sensationalist or exploitative. And the film's philosophical and metaphysical content is deftly handled, presenting its material in a practical, approachable manner that never becomes tedious, dogmatic or esoteric. What's more, the stellar portrayals of the four protagonists are some of the best performances to have graced the screen in quite some time, both individually and as an ensemble. For its efforts, "Doubt" garnered five Oscar and five Golden Globe nominations for its four principals and for its adapted screenplay, but, regrettably, it received no awards.

Doubt is a powerful force that can exonerate the innocent or enable the guilty to escape unscathed. But, no matter what outcome arises, the result will always depend on the beliefs that drive it. In that regard, then, it could be said that it's actually the *beliefs* behind doubt, as well as one's *faith* in those beliefs, that make it such a force to be reckoned with, as this film so aptly illustrates. So, in the search for an elusive truth, we must thus know *precisely* where to begin our inquiry—and be truly honest with ourselves in doing so—if we're ever to get the answers we seek.

Something To Believe In

"The X-Files: I Want to Believe"

Year of Release: 2008

Cast: David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Amanda Peet,

Billy Connolly, Xzibit, Mitch Pileggi,

Callum Keith Rennie, Adam Godley, Fagin Woodcock

Director: Chris Carter

Screenplay: Frank Spotnitz and Chris Carter

TV Series Source Material: Chris Carter, The X-Files

No matter what aspect of life we concern ourselves with, beliefs always factor in as the driving element. That's especially significant when we consider the big picture issues of life, such as our spiritual and metaphysical worldviews, because the core convictions we hold

in these matters underlie the beliefs that support and create everything else. Coming to terms with those beliefs can be a seriously challenging task, particularly if we experience difficulty in defining them or even identifying their existence. One film that's exceptionally adept at this is "The X-Files: I Want to Believe."

This picture may seem an unlikely candidate in this context, given the franchise's reputation (first as a TV show, later as a movie) as a vehicle for tales of science fiction and horror. Yet the franchise has long had a metaphysical component associated with it, and its second big screen outing is so concerned with it that the notion of belief is even part of the title.

In a nutshell, former FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) are coaxed out of hiding and retirement, respectively, to help solve a particularly troubling case involving several missing persons and a clairvoyant former priest (Billy Connolly) who was defrocked for being a pedophile. And, as far as the plotline is concerned, that's all one really needs to know, for that part of the story is largely unimportant, a mere pretext to what the film is really all about—the protagonists' search for meaning in their new lives and how to bring it into being.

After years of chasing monsters in the dark, a time when their purpose in life at least *seemed* fairly clear, Mulder and Scully are each left to wrestle with the question of what their mission is now. Mulder, who always had been an ardent believer in the magic of the paranormal and the extraordinary, suddenly sees himself in quite a pedestrian existence, wondering whether he can recapture the spark of his past beliefs and use them as a guiding principle for his new life. Scully, a scientist and fence-post Catholic who long toiled to find balance between the rational and the miraculous, finds herself still ensconced in this challenge, still struggling to determine whether reason or spirituality should guide her new existence (an internal conflict expressed metaphorically through her new calling in life—as a physician in a Catholic hospital). These core belief dilemmas, in turn, further affect the characters' search for answers in other areas of their lives, such as their relationship with one another, the future of their vocations and coming to terms with their morbid fascination with "the dark side."

Getting a handle on this is crucial for Mulder and Scully, not only for a sense of personal well-being and inner peace, but also for very *practical* purposes: If beliefs are the basis of conscious creation and the reality we manifest for ourselves, we had better grasp what it is we believe and the implications that accompany such thoughts, for they quite tangibly materialize what we ultimately experience. This may be easier said than done, especially if we *don't* know what to believe, as is acutely exemplified by some of the protagonists' experiences. But that task must be approached and addressed lest we spend our days wandering the metaphysical wastelands of our consciousness.

Circumstances like these can also be exacerbated by a tepid level of support for our beliefs, which could well be the case here. Mulder, for example, says he *wants* to believe in the veracity of the phenomena he investigates (a notion even reflected in the film's subtitle). But his repeated use of the word "want" implies that something is inherently lacking, and the more we believe in the want of something, the more we fuel intents perpetuating that innate lack, bringing us no closer to the fulfillment of what we say we're attempting to manifest. Getting clear about what we *truly* wish to materialize and then backing it with impassioned belief support is thus essential if we hope to see our objective realized. This even includes the wording we use to formulate the beliefs underlying those goals. Mulder, for instance, would serve himself well by replacing the expression "I want to believe" with "I *do* believe," an affirming example we'd all be wise to follow.

This picture, unfortunately, wasn't well-received by viewers, critics or many fans of the franchise, but that may be due to some preconceived notions, coupled with misleading marketing. The film was plugged as a thriller in the tradition of the franchise; however, it's clearly anything but. It's principally a character study, cerebral and introspective, rarely if ever suspenseful except for how Mulder and Scully each respond to and resolve their respective belief challenges. Those seeking to be scared will likely be disappointed (and rightfully so), but those looking for something more profound than a simple horror story will be rewarded beyond their expectations.

"I Want to Believe" is a picture that demands close viewing, requiring audiences to delve beneath its surface qualities to see what's

really going on. The spiritual and metaphysical symbolism is subtle but often clever and quite witty, served up through images that embody law of attraction principles in their most basic, yet most eloquent and poetic expression.

Some have speculated about the prospects of additional films in this franchise, and, as much as I'd love to see the further exploits of this divine duo, I'd prefer that the producers forgo them. In many ways, this picture provides a satisfying end point for the series, one that needs no further elaboration. Some mythologies are best left undisturbed once they've run their course, and I would certainly argue that such should be the case here.

At a time when so many films are long on style and short on substance, it's refreshing to see releases like this amidst the throngs of high-gloss extravaganzas. Of course, to fully appreciate what this film has to say, one must open one's eyes—and heart—just as Mulder and Scully must do, to figure out what's transpiring, not only outwardly but also inwardly in the world of beliefs. In the end, viewers, like the protagonists, must realize that the responsibility for the development of our life paths, both spiritually and otherwise, rests with *us* (after all, why do you think this film is subtitled “I Want to Believe”?). The inspiration and courage offered by Mulder and Scully, as illustrated through their individual quests, provides ample fuel for the spiritual flames in all of us. And that's truly something to believe in.

Putting Faith to the Test

“Higher Ground”

Year of Release: 2011

*Cast: Vera Farmiga, Joshua Leonard, Dagmara Dominczyk,
Michael Chernus, Norbert Leo Butz, Donna Murphy,
John Hawkes, Nina Arianda, Sean Mahon, Bill Irwin,
Taissa Farmiga, Boyd Holbrook, Kaitlyn Rae King,
McKenzie Turner, Taylor Schwencke*

Director: Vera Farmiga

Screenplay: Carolyn S. Briggs and Tim Metcalfe

Book: Carolyn S. Briggs, This Dark World

Often in life we're asked to take things on faith, a practice for which we're given no handbook at birth, leaving us to find our own way. That frequently makes for an intriguing journey, one that tests us on many fronts, especially when it comes to understanding and embracing the core issue of faith. But, no matter what path we choose, it always helps to have inspiration to draw from, and one particularly thoughtful example of this is offered up in the spiritual drama, "Higher Ground."

Corinne Miller (Vera Farmiga) is a woman on a mission to find herself. Unfortunately, she spends much of her decades-long journey seemingly lost in a fog, often sincerely believing that she's found the answers she seeks only to discover later—and repeatedly—that "truth" can be a rather elusive commodity.

Corinne's odyssey is a largely spiritual quest. Having grown up in a household without much of a religious compass (her parents, Kathleen (Donna Murphy) and CW (John Hawkes), show little interest in the subject, especially after her mother suffers a heartbreaking stillbirth), Corinne is left to fend for herself spiritually. She grapples with church-related issues, first as a child (McKenzie Turner) and later as a teen (Taissa Farmiga), hoping that they'll somehow magically fill the void in her life. She looks to the teachings of an affable local minister, Pastor Bud (Bill Irwin), for inspiration, but her enthusiasm is often lukewarm at best, as if she's just going through the motions and not really grasping what she's supposed to get out of the experience. Her efforts are further sidetracked by a healthy curiosity of worldly matters, such as interests in rock 'n roll, "questionable" literature and boys, particularly her teenage beau, Ethan (Boyd Holbrook), who eventually becomes her husband (Joshua Leonard).

Corinne's journey takes a dramatic turn, however, when a potentially disastrous personal tragedy produces an unexpectedly miraculous outcome, prompting her and Ethan to commit themselves wholeheartedly to a life of devotion, a vow that culminates in their initiation into a fundamentalist Christian community. Through this sacred indoctrination, it appears Corinne has finally found true happiness and contentment in her life. Or has she?

Sometimes Corinne seems genuinely filled with the spirit of Jesus and the Divine Creator, but, at other times, she appears utterly

perplexed, as if she's missing out on something she believes she's supposed to be experiencing. This is especially true when spending time with her friend Annika (Dagmara Dominczyk), who frequently lapses into tongues, a spontaneous personal prayer language that fills her with bliss. Needless to say, Corinne feels left out, longing for the same elation her friend so thoroughly enjoys.

But things don't stop there. Over time, Corinne increasingly becomes filled with doubt about her faith. She recalls past tragedies, like her mother's stillbirth, and then lives through new ones of her own, such as witnessing the anguish of a dear friend who suffers a debilitating brain tumor. She can't help but wonder where God is when such dire circumstances arise, especially since He was there for her when she suffered her own misfortune. Reconciling this glaring contradiction causes her much confusion and heartache. Just what is she supposed to believe?

Learning how to balance secular issues and spiritual considerations in her daily life becomes a growing challenge, too. While glimpses of this arise during her adolescence, they grow more pervasive with age. What's more, her attempts at addressing these matters come under heightened scrutiny by other members of the community, sometimes involving things as trivial as her clothing choices. But the fellowship's scrutiny doesn't stop with Corinne's worldly acts; it carries over into her spiritual practices as well. She becomes puzzled, for example, when she's criticized for freely expressing her own religious fervor, an act viewed by the congregation as sermonizing, something reserved exclusively for the men of the community. She wonders why she's not allowed to openly share her joy and epiphanies with others; after all, would a truly loving God really instruct followers to restrict such acts on the basis of something as limiting, arbitrary and ultimately inconsequential as gender?

While the film overtly deals with religious and spiritual considerations in a Christian context, many of its underlying themes are applicable to other sacred and metaphysical traditions as well. Chief among them is the issue of faith, that steadfast trust we each place in our relationship with God/Goddess/All That Is (or whatever other term best suits you). It's a subject that raises a host of questions, such as how committed must we be to it? Can we implicitly trust the deity in whose hands we pledge our devotion? What are we to

make of situations in which our prayers seemingly go unanswered or manifest in “distorted” ways? And what are we to do if disillusionment sets in?

These questions are not exclusive to Christianity. Practitioners of other belief systems often grapple with these issues in their own particular spiritual or philosophical milieus. It’s not unheard of, for example, for conscious creators to find their intents going awry, either materializing in unexpected forms or not at all, making them wonder what their divine collaborator is up to. These incidents are not unlike what Corinne experiences, and such episodes sometimes are enough to evoke questions about the nature of one’s beliefs and the strength of one’s faith, no matter what tradition that devotion is based upon.

In these instances, if we have concerns about the path we find ourselves on, it’s a sign that we must examine the beliefs we’re putting out, for they drive what we experience. To that end, are we being clear with the Universe about what we really want? Are we allowing secondary considerations, like doubt or fear, to undercut the manifestation process by sending mixed signals to our divine collaborator? Or, perhaps most importantly, are we inherently mistrustful of our collaborator, believing that it’s behaving capriciously or not in our best interests? The presence of thoughts like this will invariably affect the character of the outcomes we experience and the satisfaction we get from them.

Those who *truly* understand this divine relationship, be it in a conscious creation, Christian or other context, ultimately *know* that we dwell in a *Safe Universe*, one that operates with our best interests at heart, even if we don’t always readily recognize that as such. This is where the issue of faith really comes into play, something that frequently requires considerable effort to fully grasp and embrace. In fact, getting to this point is often a *process*, something that we grow into over time as our trust and understanding deepen, making it ever easier to recognize, acknowledge and accept the character of this intimately collaborative relationship. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 1, it’s often said that we’re each in a constant state of becoming, a notion that aptly sums up the progressive nature of this revelatory journey. Corinne experiences this for herself firsthand in the film, personifying a process that many of us will likely go through during

our lifetimes, no matter what religious, spiritual or metaphysical tradition we're engaged in.

Corinne's saving grace in this is that she's cognizant enough to know when to raise questions about her faith and not to follow it blindly, especially when being cajoled by others who insist that her thoughts and practices must follow prescribed forms. Anyone who *genuinely* understands the nature of faith realizes that the Universe provides us with the means to fulfill our intents in the ways *It* deems most expedient, even if we don't always comprehend Its methods or if Its manifestations don't match our preconceived notions. Yet those who zealously subscribe to established religious traditions often demand strict, unquestioning adherence to their dogmas, liturgies and even costuming, insisting that their way is the only "right" way, a conviction that, ironically enough, flies squarely in the face of how All That Is fundamentally operates.

For her part, Corinne isn't afraid to raise questions about her community's spiritual and secular requirements and even her own personal faith. She seeks the truth, with her ultimate goal being an understanding of her relationship with God, not those who claim to speak for Him. In fact, it's through such questioning that her own understanding deepens, showing her that spirituality is something more than just what happens in church or a closed-off community; it's about how one chooses to live one's life *in the world*, the one that she and All That Is have co-created in both its secular and spiritual aspects, and not about adherence to the arbitrary preferences of a group that believes its answers to life are the only ones anybody needs. In this sense, then, Corinne comes to discover that secular and spiritual questions are not mutually exclusive, as many would contend, but instead are intrinsically intertwined, a realization that comes from true faith and not from rigorous obedience to subjectively adopted theological trappings. Any notion of separation between the two is an illusion (and a manmade one at that).

It would have been easy for the characters in this film to be portrayed as caricatures, but, thankfully, that temptation was effectively resisted. Credit the writing and, especially, the skillful direction of first-time filmmaker Vera Farmiga for that. The movie depicts its characters as individuals, not stereotypes, allowing their layered, complicated natures to shine through. This balanced approach

makes the story and its players engaging to watch, in both moments of drama and humor, drawing viewers into the characters' spiritual sojourns and warmly welcoming them to come along for the ride (and what a ride it is).

Faith is something we're all tested on at some point, and "Higher Ground" provides an effective guide to help prepare us for such occasions. Watch closely; you'll be amazed at how much you can glean from it, information that will stand you in good stead when times get tough and help elevate you to unimagined heights of enlightenment, no matter what your spiritual or philosophical leanings.

Believing the Dream

"The Other Dream Team"

Year of Release: 2012

Cast: Arvydas Sabonis,

Šarūnas Marčiulionis, Rimas Kurtinaitis,

Jonas Valančiūnas, Vytautas Landsbergis, Jim Lampley,

Alexander Wolff, David Remnick, Bill Walton, David Stern,

Chris Mullin, Donnie Nelson, Mickey Hart, Greg Speirs

Director: Marius Markevicius

Screenplay: Marius Markevicius and Jon Weinbach

Movies with sports themes are often some of the corniest, most predictable and yet also most inspiring films that find their way into release. Their outcomes seldom surprise us, but we watch them all the way through, if for no other reason than the ample good feelings they fill us with. Pictures that recognize the efforts of underdogs, like "Hoosiers" (1986), "Cool Runnings" (1993), "Breaking Away" (1979) and "Secretariat" (2010), easily get our attention. But those that celebrate unlikely champions competing under extraordinary extenuating circumstances, such as "Glory Road" (2006), "The Express" (2008) (see Chapter 6), "A League of Their Own" (1992), "Miracle" (2004) and "The Blind Side" (2009) (see Chapter 12), captivate us. Such is the case with the entertaining and informative sports documentary, "The Other Dream Team."

The world was a rapidly changing place in 1992. The Cold War had recently ended, the Berlin Wall had just fallen and the U.S.S.R.

was in the process of breaking up. Several once-occupied nations, such as the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, had declared their independence and emerged from Soviet domination. Indeed, the global geopolitical stage was shifting in ways no one would have thought conceivable just a few years before.

The implications of these changes were seen in many aspects of life. One of the most visible areas was in the world of sports. This became most apparent at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, where a number of new nations competed for the first time or after protracted absences. Among the new entrants were the aforementioned Baltic states, countries that, although small geographically, were formidable as competitors. This was particularly true for Lithuania in the sport of basketball.

Lithuanians have long loved basketball, and the tiny nation had been a powerhouse in the sport in European tournaments as far back as the 1930s. However, when Lithuania was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1944 and vanished as a sovereign state, so did much of the world's awareness of the country, its culture and its traditions, including in the world of sport. What's more, because of this loss of independence, Lithuanian athletes were prohibited from competing internationally under their own flag; they now had to do so under the Soviet banner.

Lithuanians contributed significantly to Soviet sports accomplishments in the five decades that they competed for the U.S.S.R. This was perhaps most obvious in the basketball tournament at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, when the Soviets beat the heavily favored U.S. team on their way to winning the Gold Medal, and they did so by fielding a team on which four of the five starters were Lithuanians. However, despite such success, Lithuanian competitors resented having to represent themselves as "Soviets" rather than as "Lithuanians." They grew especially irate when erroneously referred to as "Russians," particularly since only two members of the 1988 medal-winning team actually fit that cultural label.

When Lithuania gained its autonomy, its athletes were anxious to compete under their own flag at the Barcelona Olympics. They wanted to show the world what they could do. They were also anxious to settle scores with representatives of their former occupiers

on a leveled playing field. But getting to the Olympics took money, something the bankrupt fledgling state seriously lacked. Raising funds to pursue this goal thus became a priority.

After achieving only meager results in its initial fundraising efforts, the team got a big boost from a very unlikely source, the American rock band, the Grateful Dead. The band members were big fans of both basketball and underdogs, so, when they heard about the team's struggles, they wrote a huge check to support its efforts. They also supplied the players with tie-dyed tee shirts featuring the band's infamous skeleton logo and printed in the colors of the Lithuanian flag. Grateful for the Dead's support, the team enthusiastically embraced the band's assistance, ubiquitously sporting their donated gear both before and during the Olympics.

As colorful as the Lithuanians' odyssey had been, however, the overarching story of the Barcelona tournament was the U.S. team. The 1992 Olympics marked the first time that professional players were allowed to compete, and so the Americans assembled a team featuring such NBA all-stars as Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Charles Barkley and David Robinson, a lineup that became better known as "the Dream Team." It was a team that lived up to every bit of its billing, too, handily defeating all of its opponents (*including* the Lithuanians in a semifinal game) on its way to nabbing the Gold Medal.

But the Lithuanians were not to be denied their moment of glory. Despite their loss to the Americans (which honestly came as no surprise), the Lithuanians, as one of the tournament's final four teams, qualified to compete in the Bronze Medal game against the Unified Team, a squad made up of players from the remaining Soviet republics at the time. The Lithuanians would thus get an opportunity to redeem themselves against representatives of their nation's former occupiers, an event whose ramifications clearly went beyond just sports.

The story of the Lithuanian basketball team was one of more than just its proficiency on the court. It was a tale of personal and national pride, the significance of which becomes apparent in the film's back story about life in Lithuania under 50 years of Soviet domination. The picture presents detailed documentation on the harshness of everyday life, as well as the rigidly regimented routines

imposed on Lithuanian members of the Soviet national team, during that period. It's easy to see how such pervasive oppression took its toll—and how anxious Lithuanians, from all walks of life, were to pursue the dream of freedom when the opportunity finally presented itself.

Viewers are thus treated to a moving tale of courage, character, justice and inspiration, as well as the inherent power of beliefs. We witness the resolve of a team—and a nation—that *knows* what each is truly capable of manifesting for itself, a hallmark of conscious creation expertise. The film also documents the lasting legacy of such valor on contemporary Lithuanians, as told through the experience of NBA center Jonas Valančiūnas, who, at the time of the picture's filming, was an aspiring professional prospect. Valančiūnas, born in 1992, grew up with the legend of his national team's Olympic success, and its accomplishments inspired the young player (and many of his basketball-playing peers) to pursue a career in the big leagues.

"The Other Dream Team" is a thoroughly engaging documentary, conveying its material with heartfelt emotion and uplifting vision in both its political and sports-related narratives. It successfully avoids the pitfalls of getting too technical or resorting to empty platitudes. It incorporates a wealth of archival footage and a wide variety of recent interviews, including team members Arvydas Sabonis, Šarūnas Marčiulionis and Rimas Kurtinaitis, as well as sports journalists Jim Lampley and Alexander Wolff, basketball analyst Bill Walton, Dream Team member Chris Mullin, NBA commissioner David Stern, former Lithuanian head of state Vytautas Landsbergis, Grateful Dead band member Mickey Hart, and tee shirt designer Greg Speirs.

On the surface, a documentary about a basketball team from a little-known European nation might not sound like an especially noteworthy topic for a feature-length movie, but "The Other Dream Team" defies such thinking. It shows us how one need not be famous to be a superstar, that greatness is something we're each capable of achieving—as long as we believe we can and have sufficient faith in our abilities to see things through.

A Temporal Leap of Faith

“Safety Not Guaranteed”

Year of Release: 2012

Cast: Aubrey Plaza, Mark Duplass, Jake Johnson,
Karan Soni, Mary Lynn Rajskub, William Hall Jr.,
Tony Doupe, Xola Malik, Jenica Bergere, Kristen Bell
Director: Colin Trevorrow
Screenplay: Derek Connolly

Time travel is a notion that has intrigued readers and writers for ages, and its depiction on the big screen has offered viewers a host of interpretations over the years. But temporal excursions can have both advantages and drawbacks, some of which carry loaded consequences, implications explored in the quirky indie comedy, “Safety Not Guaranteed.”

This film was inspired by a cryptic classified ad that read as follows: “WANTED: Someone to go back in time with me. This is not a joke. You’ll get paid after we get back. Must bring your own weapons. I have only done this once before. SAFETY NOT GUARANTEED”. The ad first appeared in the survivalist magazine *Backwoods Home* in the mid ’90s. It later garnered widespread attention when featured in a “Headlines” segment on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and on the Internet, eventually becoming a viral sensation. It’s not clear if the original ad was placed merely as an enigmatic prank or if there was something more significant behind it. In any event, regardless of the intent, the ad provided intriguing fodder for the cinematic tale it inspired.

“Safety Not Guaranteed” follows the adventures of a reporter and two interns from an alternative Seattle-based magazine who are assigned to get the story behind the ad. The trio of investigators includes Jeff (Jake Johnson), a hard-partying veteran reporter who delegates most of the work while taking most of the credit for the results unearthed by his two industrious associates, Darius (Aubrey Plaza), a detached, live-at-home recent college grad searching for herself, and Arnau (Karan Soni), a bookish biology major seeking to diversify his background through his internship. In conducting their inquiry, the investigators have only one clue to go on—a post

office box number in the tiny resort town of Ocean View, Washington. And so, armed with this single scrap of information, they set off in search of the mysterious would-be time traveler.

While staking out the local post office, Darius spies her target, the ad's box holder, when he comes to collect his mail. She tails him when he drives off, following him around town, eventually ending up at his job. As it turns out, the prospective temporal tourist is a mild-mannered but brainy clerk at a local supermarket named Kenneth (Mark Duplass), whose impassioned ramblings about the potential of quantum physics lead most of his co-workers to believe that he's delusional. But, despite the mystery man's quirky demeanor, Darius is intrigued by Kenneth and proceeds to present herself as a candidate to become his time-traveling companion.

Kenneth is initially a bit skeptical, concerned that Darius might be an operative of the government agents that he believes have been clandestinely pursuing him. But he quickly relents and begins indoctrinating Darius into the training program that he's developed to prepare himself and his companion for their journey across time.

As things progress, Darius becomes ever more involved in Kenneth's plans, slowly losing sight of her original intent—to get the story behind the ad. She's pressured by Jeff and the magazine's no-nonsense publisher, Bridget (Mary Lynn Rajskub), for progress reports, but she becomes so wrapped up *in* the story that she begins to lose sight of her pursuit of it as a journalist. Disillusionment begins to set in as well, especially when she uncovers evidence indicating that Kenneth's co-workers might have been correct, that he really is seriously delusional. But then that revelation is offset when she discovers that Kenneth's claims of being followed by government agents are correct, too, especially when she meets them (Tony Doupé, Xola Malik) in person. All of these developments leave Darius's head spinning as she tries to figure out what to believe about what's really going on—and how it will all eventually play out.

Most of us have undoubtedly given thought to reliving a pleasant time from our past, perhaps even going so far as wishing we could return to it—literally. That's something all the characters in this film wish for, too. We witness this most notably through Kenneth, who is so preoccupied with the idea of revisiting his past that

he actually wants to bring that possibility into being (and, based on his knowledge of quantum physics, the scientific explanation for how conscious creation essentially works, he genuinely believes it's feasible, too). Meanwhile, after listening to Kenneth's theories at length, Darius also finds the notion desirable, if a bit far-fetched, to bring about a return to a more pleasant time in her own life. And, in a storyline parallel to the picture's main narrative, Jeff seeks to do the same when he looks to reconnect with Liz (Jenica Bergere), an old flame with whom he spent his youthful summers while vacationing in Ocean View with his family.

As conscious creators are well aware, rescripting the past can produce worthwhile results, a notion explored in films like the sci-fi comedy "Men in Black III" (2012). But is *retreating* into the past the best idea, even if it's possible? That's something with which Kenneth, Darius and Jeff must all come to terms, each in their own ways, especially when they find that it's a process often full of pitfalls. Attempting to jump back into that prior period will likely yield skewed results, for the mere presence of our "current" selves in that "prior" timeline would automatically place us in a fundamentally different line of quantum probability from the one that we recalled having been in. The beliefs we held about our past before escaping into it thus might not line up with the reality we experience once we find ourselves in the midst of it, if for no other reason than we would no longer be the same person in that past as we had been when we were there once before. While that rediscovered past might seem substantially *similar* to the one we recall, it wouldn't be *identical*, and that disparity may ultimately be just different enough to keep us from realizing the hoped-for outcome. What's more, even if it *were* essentially the same, who's to say that the beliefs creating such familiar circumstances ultimately wouldn't play out roughly the same way *again*? That could leave us, for all practical purposes, right back where we started from, as if we were caught in a sort of temporal loop.

Perhaps an even bigger question, though, is why would anyone want to escape into his or her past in this way? The protagonists are each under the impression that returning to their past will take them to a more pleasant (*i.e.*, "safer") time in their lives, one free of the hardships they seek to flee. But, as the film's title and narrative

suggest, “safety’s not guaranteed,” not only in terms of time travel, but also of life in general, something about which Kenneth, Darius and Jeff are perplexed, if not naïve. Indeed, our lifetimes are often replete with challenges in which “safety” (*i.e.*, the alleged freedom from difficulty) seems noticeably lacking, but such situations usually amount to nothing we can’t handle, even if appearances suggest otherwise. Such instances, in fact, are often beneficial, if not integral, to our personal growth, even if we believe them to be “unsafe” at the time we encounter them.

Ironically, and at the risk of appearing to contradict the foregoing, conscious creation maintains that we all live in a Safe Universe (as discussed earlier in this Chapter), one that lovingly and whole-heartedly supports us in our personal evolution and development. However, this doesn’t mean we’ll never escape challenges to be surmounted, that we’ll never be free from the *seeming* lack of safety described above. Guarantees to the contrary don’t exist in the lines of probability most of us draw to ourselves through the law of attraction, and the sooner we understand this, the less likely we’ll engage in the kind of delusional avoidance tactics that this film’s protagonists seek to pursue.

As an alternative, we would be wise to follow the conscious creation principle that maintains the true point of power is in the *present*. Ultimately, this is the only moment over which we have any direct, meaningful control, and we should focus our beliefs and consciousness in it, not in some past that has come and gone or in some future that is full of variables and is as yet to transpire. Who knows what we might manifest for ourselves by doing so! And, through the proper focus of their beliefs, the protagonists just might come to discover the same for themselves, attracting outcomes far preferable to those that they might have originally envisioned.

The foregoing qualifications notwithstanding, one still can’t help but admire Kenneth’s sheer gumption for what he’s attempting to undertake. Only by placing unwavering faith in new ideas can any of them ever be brought about. Think of the many inventions that never would have seen the light of day had it not been for advocates who passionately believed in the possibility of their successful manifestation. Time travel technology might seem like an unrealistic concept for many of us, but I’m sure the same was once said

of the brainchildren of Thomas Edison, the Wright Brothers and Steve Jobs. Nothing materializes without adequate belief support, and, regardless of the motivations that inspire such conceptions, the faith placed in the manifestation of these ideas is something to be admired, no matter how outrageous they might seem.

While the film plays largely as a quirky quasi-romantic comedy, “Safety Not Guaranteed” has a lot to say metaphysically, but it does so without ever getting heavy-handed or overly serious. Its leads are exceptionally well cast, and they fit their roles perfectly. The writing is generally solid, though the main narrative is clearly handled better than its parallel story track, which, at times, becomes a bit tedious. Overall, it’s a fun piece of indie filmmaking, an ideal selection for when you’re in the mood for something a little out of the ordinary.

Visiting the past, and looking to relocate there, are two very distinct options, and the wise would-be temporal traveler is the one who knows the difference. “Safety Not Guaranteed” helps to shed light on that distinction—and takes us on a fun-filled ride in getting there.

3

PERSPECTIVE

What distinguishes the beliefs of one individual from another? When you come down to it, it's largely a matter of *perspective*.

Perspective plays an enormous role in how our beliefs take shape. To a great degree, it serves as a sort of template, made up of core elements that color *all* of our beliefs across the board, no matter which aspect of life it's applied to. But, just like beliefs, we're each capable of adopting a wide variety of perspectives, an ability that allows us to view a particular set of circumstances from an array of vantage points, each highly personalized.

Perspective is thus what makes it possible for two or more individuals to perceive the "same" circumstances in different ways. For instance, is a room with a particular illumination level lit too brightly, too dimly or just right? Ask different people, and you're likely to get a range of responses, even though logic would dictate that the answers seemingly "should" be the same. No one's response is intrinsically "right" or "wrong," either, since our individual perspectives and perceptions account for the differences, and each of them is equally valid in its own right.

Variances in perspective apply not only to different individuals; sometimes we're each capable of viewing situations in multiple, or even myriad, ways ourselves. The ability to see circumstances from different vantage points better enables us to assess how we respond to the prevailing conditions. The beliefs we form in response thus determine how our reality subsequently unfolds. We have multiple options for belief formation available to us under such circumstances,

but our perspective helps to determine which *specific* beliefs we select and, ultimately, what transpires from them as a result.

To illustrate how all of this works, this Chapter's entries profile films in which various situations are capable of being viewed from different perspectives, depending on the outlook of the individual doing the perceiving. These pictures also examine instances where one individual is capable of viewing his or her circumstances in a variety of ways, enabling multiple options for response. In all of these cases, though, how things play out rests with how the characters choose to view their circumstances.

Perspective, like beliefs, makes a wide range of options possible. Which one we end up with depends on us.

The Perception Paradox

"World's Greatest Dad"

Year of Release: 2009

Cast: Robin Williams, Daryl Sabara, Alexie Gilmore,

Henry Simmons, Geoff Pierson, Evan Martin,

Jermaine Williams, Lorraine Nicholson, Tony V.,

Deborah Horne, Toby Huss, Mitzi McCall, Bruce Hornsby

Director: Bobcat Goldthwait

Screenplay: Bobcat Goldthwait

Ever form an opinion about someone that you later come to find out is far different—perhaps even the exact opposite—of what others have of the same person? Seems paradoxical, doesn't it? But what's even more puzzling is, what if *both* perspectives are accurate? Such is the metaphysical conundrum posed in the dark comedy, "World's Greatest Dad."

This little-known (and much-overlooked) gem is definitely worth a peek for many reasons, both for its entertainment value and its conscious creation themes. But don't let the title mislead you; it's not a warm fuzzy family flick. Rather, it's one of those wickedly cynical comedies where you frequently find yourself laughing at things you probably think you shouldn't be chuckling about. Of course, such questionable humor is what makes so much of this film so effective.

Poetry teacher and would-be author Lance Clayton (Robin Williams) desperately needs a life makeover. As a writer who's never published any of his works and a private school instructor whose dwindling class enrollment endangers its future (and his tenure), Lance is depressed about the bleak prospects he faces. But, if that weren't enough, he's also a single father, dutifully attempting to raise (or, more precisely, "manage") his teenage son Kyle (Daryl Sabara), an unappreciative, insolent, foul-mouthed brat who has a smart answer for everything. He attends the same school where Lance teaches, routinely making life difficult for his old man when not busy offending his classmates or irritating dad's colleagues. Lance clearly needs for things to change if he's ever to find any enjoyment—or peace of mind—in his life.

Sadly, though, things go from bad to worse one evening when Lance discovers his son dead at home, the victim of a tragic accidental death (but one with potentially embarrassing connotations if the truth were ever to get out). Lance is devastated, of course, but, even in the midst of his sorrow, he remains composed enough to "clean up" the death scene, a final gesture designed to give Kyle some dignity and to protect his son's reputation (as well as his own). Lance makes Kyle's death look like a suicide, attending to all the associated details, right down to writing an eloquent suicide note. He composes an articulate message (he's a writer after all), using prose that allows Kyle to come across as an expressive but tortured, misunderstood soul. Even under such terribly trying circumstances, Lance is, without a doubt, an unquestionably devoted dad.

Ironically, when the contents of Kyle's note become public, his one-time detractors begin seeing him in a new light. The "we-never-knew" reactions flow freely, and Kyle is viewed with a newfound sense of sympathy, all thanks to "his" parting words. In fact, the public reaction is so overwhelming that Lance is asked if Kyle left behind any other writings chronicling his teenage angst. When faced with this request, Lance sees an opportunity to resuscitate his writing career, and so he jumps at the chance to give his dead son's audience what they want while simultaneously fulfilling his own need to create. He then sets about writing an alleged antemortem personal journal under Kyle's name, a treatise that quickly becomes a national sensation.

Lance relishes the attention initially, but, as time passes and the phenomenon grows ever larger, he begins to question his actions: In managing Kyle's legacy, is he doing right by him by manufacturing a trumped-up reputation, or is he being a genuinely protective parent who's acting out of love? Is he doing a public service by spotlighting the anguish associated with teen suicide, even if the "suicide" prompting such altruism is a total fabrication? But, most importantly, is Lance's primary motivation in all this protecting his son's memory, or is he simply cashing in on Kyle's demise to benefit himself (especially now that publishers are interested in Lance penning his own works, too)? Or are *all* of these motivations legitimate to some degree or another? Can *all* of these perspectives be true simultaneously? Those are some profound questions for Lance—and viewers—to address.

All of this takes us back to the aforementioned perception paradox. If viewing Lance from a single perspective, one might see only one dimension of his character, a genuine liability when relying on this criterion alone as the basis for belief formation and assessment. On a more detailed viewing, however, Lance might well be seen as the *multidimensional being* that he truly is. Like all of us, there are many aspects that go into the makeup of Lance's persona, some of which are very different from one another. But, despite these "discrepancies," they're all part of who he is as a consequence of the intentions that he puts forth to create them. The question for us in this situation (and in any others like it for that matter, both on and off screen) is, will we take the steps to see Lance for his intrinsic multidimensionality, or will we fall prey to the potentially illusory imprecision of the perception paradox? This film gives us much to ponder in that regard.

So why does Lance display such seemingly disparate dimensions of himself in this film? I believe it's because they're *all* part of who he really is, all facets of his true being and all related to different aspects of the value fulfillment he is attempting to live out. And, in that sense, he really *is* the "world's greatest dad" in *all* of the ways that designation can be applied in line with the themes explored in this film.

For example, by attempting to protect his son's sullied reputation and by imparting cautionary information about the perils of

teen suicide, Lance is virtuous in his deeds, allowing him to live up to the supreme paternal honor in its most positive light. At the same time, by seizing upon the unexpected opportunity to help his own career, he could easily be labeled self-serving, justifiably earning him the aforementioned title in its most cynical of iterations. However, by jumping on this opportunity to provide for himself materially, he also makes it possible to support himself while engaging in the altruistic endeavors noted above, a practical approach to capturing the title that carries no especially laudable or derisive implications with it. Of course, juggling all this is a challenge for the protagonist, and he must decide to what degree he can live with any or all of these different aspects of himself (and the fallout that comes with each). Effectively managing our multidimensionality can be tricky business indeed. But then that's all part of the joy—and the challenge—in creating our own reality.

In the end, the sum total of our beliefs affects the overall perspectives we hold of ourselves, others and the circumstances surrounding us (which, in turn, contributes to the ongoing formation of beliefs that manifest all subsequent expressions of our reality). This is what makes Lance's inherent multidimensionality possible, for instance, because, to varying degrees, his fellow characters (and we, as viewers) collectively hold all of the diverse beliefs that give rise to his different attributes. Indeed, as distinct (and even dissimilar) as those qualities are, they're all still intrinsic parts of Lance, because there's underlying support for their materialization and existence.

The same can be said about Kyle, particularly after his demise, when "information" (no matter how intentionally fabricated it may be) comes to light that feeds into the formation of beliefs that others hold about him. As "erroneous" as those perspectives might seem, however, they're nevertheless legitimate, because they arose *sincerely* through the belief formation process, regardless of how questionable the input was that birthed them.

We should all bear the foregoing in mind if we attempt to beat ourselves up in the wake of finding out we've been deceived. If we genuinely trusted the content that fostered our beliefs, we shouldn't fault ourselves for our actions; instead, we should learn from the experience and draw upon the wisdom we glean from it for future reference should we ever be faced with comparable circumstances

down the road. Situations like this, as difficult as they sometimes can be, are often invaluable *life lessons*, those that we incarnated to experience for our personal growth and spiritual development, teachings that go a long way to help us in the formation of our beliefs and perspectives, especially going forward.

“World’s Greatest Dad” is a real sleeper of a film. It’s progressively more captivating with each passing frame, smartly written and directed by Bobcat Goldthwait. Robin Williams turns in one of the best performances he’s given in years, and he’s backed by an excellent ensemble of supporting players, most notably Darryl Sabara, Alexie Gilmore, Henry Simmons, Evan Martin and Geoff Pierson.

“World’s Greatest Dad” is an excellent option for alternative viewing. The title might not sound beckoning, but don’t let that superficial consideration deter you; the movie’s as multifaceted as its protagonist, and his character allows us to view him from the range of perspectives with which we’d all be wise to view ourselves. And there’s nothing paradoxical about that.

Lessons in Perspective

“A Serious Man”

Year of Release: 2009

*Cast: Michael Stuhlbarg, Sari Lennick, Aaron Wolff,
Jessica McManus, Richard Kind, Fred Melamed,
Peter Breitmayer, Amy Landecker, David Kang,
Simon Helberg, George Wyner, Alan Mandell,
Adam Arkin, Ari Hoptman, Allen Lewis Rickman,
Yelena Shmulenson, Fyvush Finkel, Michael Lerner*

Directors: Ethan Coen and Joel Coen

Screenplay: Joel Coen and Ethan Coen

Pick a proverb: We must all endure a little rain to appreciate the sunshine; when life hands you lemons, make lemonade; a rolling stone crushes everything in its path (especially when big enough). Clichéd though at least some of the foregoing might be, these words of wisdom all provide us with opportunities for lessons in perspective, a core theme of the quirky Coen Brothers comedy, “A Serious Man.”

Larry Gopnik (Michael Stuhlberg) is a man beset by many problems. He's a hardworking Jewish everyman living in the Minneapolis suburbs in the late 1960s who diligently strives to support his family, do a capable job as a physics professor, and be a good friend and neighbor. But, no matter what Larry does, life always seems to dump on him. Whether it's due to the incessant whining of his ungrateful kids (Aaron Wolff, Jessica McManus), the free-loading of his ne'er-do-well brother (Richard Kind), the less-than-subtle bigotry of his next-door neighbor (Peter Breitmayer) or the unreasonable demands of his shrewish wife (Sari Lennick) (who unapologetically plans to ditch him for one of his best friends (Fred Melamed)), Larry ends up the butt of everyone's indignities. He gets stuck paying legal bills, funeral costs and bail bonds for things seemingly not of his making. And, when he consults three rabbis (Simon Helberg, George Wyner, Alan Mandell) for guidance on the meaning of these seemingly unjust acts, he's met with cluelessness, irrelevance or indifference.

However, as unfair as these circumstances may appear, there are compensating factors that help to tilt the balance back in Larry's favor, such as the unsolicited acts of "kindness" offered by his neighbor, Mrs. Samsky (Amy Landecker), a sort of Mrs. Robinson-in-training. What's more, not all those who would perpetrate untoward acts against Larry wind up succeeding. (Things *can* get better, it would seem.) But, even when all is apparently going well, that doesn't mean the other shoe still can't drop, reversing circumstances yet again—and in far more devastating ways.

Or, then again, perhaps not.

So, in light of all this, what is Larry to think about life? Most of the time, he feels justifiably put upon; others, meanwhile, somehow feel he owes them. So who's right? And what's Larry to do about it to make things "right"? Ultimately, it's a matter of perspective.

Anyone who employs conscious creation practices knows that we each co-create our own reality through our beliefs and intents with the assistance of our divine collaborator. That includes both the positive and negative manifestations we experience. How we *respond* to these outcomes, however, is what matters most, for those reactions form our subsequent beliefs and shape our overall perspective,

which, of course, contribute to the formation of future beliefs and color the nature of our reality going forward.

But, even knowing that, one still can't help but wonder, if we supposedly have a choice in the reality we create, why would anyone purposely use the law of attraction to manifest anything negative? (Larry would certainly appreciate a clear answer to that question.) In part, it has to do with how the materialization process plays out.

In achieving the results we seek, we can't always predict how we'll reach them, even when we've stated our intents clearly and honestly. Sometimes the Universe needs to take us down an unlikely path, perhaps to arrange for an unforeseen but highly fortuitous synchronicity. Similarly, sometimes we need to experience a supposed "setback" to rid ourselves of a hindrance that's preventing forward movement, because it no longer serves us, no matter how attached we may have become to it.

Both of the foregoing explanations call to mind the proverbial silver lining in the cloud metaphor. But then, just because we successfully see such a silver lining materialize doesn't mean that we can't experience further challenges subsequently, often of an even greater magnitude (just ask Larry). Of course, such circumstances also raise the possibility of even greater rewards for surviving these later tests. (Think of this as metaphysically upping the ante, enabling the attainment of fulfillment beyond our expectations.)

As noted above, how we get through such transitions depends greatly on how we respond to them. When things go "wrong," we can allow our perspective to become tainted, thereby giving ourselves license to wallow in self-pity. Or we can approach such situations by realizing that everything that happens is all part of the plan, that our divine collaborator is guiding us in the direction we need to go to get the results we seek, even if the means and methods don't seem beneficial, sound or plausible. That requires faith and trust on our part, lessons that can sometimes be very hard to come by (something Larry can certainly attest to eloquently). But, if we're ever to keep ourselves from becoming permanently stuck, this is a lesson in perspective that's positively essential to our forward progress.

Letting go of our preoccupation with "how" we believe circumstances should unfold is crucial. Holding on to such preconceptions can deter us in shifting our beliefs, perspectives and outcomes.

Overcoming this tendency is understandably difficult for many of us, but it can be especially challenging for an analytical type like Larry, a physics professor who believes everything—even the essence of reality—can ultimately be understood from a purely mechanistic standpoint. Nevertheless, if we close ourselves off from embracing a more open-minded perspective about how the Universe works, we potentially saddle ourselves with the prospect of unfulfilled or less-than-satisfying results.

Indeed, our perspective often makes all the difference in interpreting prevailing conditions, especially the meanings behind unenvisioned occurrences. This, again, comes down to a matter of the beliefs associated with it, particularly those that relate to matters of perception, choice and openness to change.

Consider, for example, the film's opening segment, a fable sequence (unrelated to the main story) that sets the tone for the film's central narrative. A husband and wife (Allen Lewis Rickman, Yelena Shmulenson) living in an Old World *shtetl* are visited by a mysterious stranger (Fyvush Finkel). The husband sees the stranger as a Samaritan for having helped him out of a jam on his way home, while the wife believes the stranger is a *dybbuk* (a malicious possessory spirit) and unhesitatingly stabs him. Because of his wife's actions, the husband is convinced the family's life and reputation have been ruined; the wife, on the other hand, believes her actions have protected the family against a walking evil. So who's right? Similarly, in the main story, Larry continuously feels justifiably put upon; others, however, somehow feel he owes them. Once more, who's right? In either instance, it ultimately depends on one's perspective—and how one accepts and applies it to the circumstances at hand.

Despite the picture's critical acclaim, "A Serious Man" didn't fare as well with the viewing public. But the lack of popular appeal was compensated for by two Oscar nominations, one each for best picture and best original screenplay, and a Golden Globe nod for Stuhlbarg for best actor in a comedy. Personally, I can't speak highly enough about this movie. It was my favorite film of 2009, and I've thoroughly enjoyed it each time I've screened it. It's striking in every respect, and it's a movie that could be examined from a multitude of perspectives far beyond what I've discussed here. So my advice regarding this movie is simple—*see it*.

Lessons in perspective can sometimes be compared to the act of attempting to swallow the proverbial hard pill. Yet such acts, difficult though they may be, also often reveal the disguised blessings we're so anxious to embrace once they become apparent. "A Serious Man" effectively pays homage to these notions and does so in a lighthearted, humorous way.

So, the next time you're tempted to exclaim "*Oy vey!*" in response to one of life's foibles, think about what that foible might be leading you to. By holding fast to a perspective of being willing to accept circumstances for what they are, you just might find that silver lining quicker—and more lustrous—than you thought possible.

Defining One's Life

"Another Year"

Year of Release: 2010

*Cast: Jim Broadbent, Ruth Sheen, Lesley Manville,
Oliver Maltman, Peter Wight, David Bradley, Martin Savage,
Karina Fernandez, Michele Austin, Imelda Staunton*

Director: Mike Leigh

Screenplay: Mike Leigh

For better or worse, we all have our limits in various areas of our lives. We might not always like to admit that we have them, either, perhaps seeing them as selfish or uncharitable. But boundaries *do* have their place, for they help to define how we handle the assorted elements that make up our lives. Maintaining a healthy perspective on such matters is crucial for our personal happiness and stability, as evidenced in the gentle drama, "Another Year."

Tom (Jim Broadbent) and Gerri (Ruth Sheen) live a happy, fulfilling life. As an aging middle class London couple, they've managed to forge rewarding careers (he as a geologist, she as a counselor), raise a bright, successful son, Joe (Oliver Maltman), and, above all, stay madly in love with one another after many years of marriage. They approach life with an optimistic but practical outlook that affords them much happiness and active engagement with the lives they've made for themselves, both individually and collectively. One could say they're contentment personified.

In fact, Tom and Gerri have been so successful in creating such fulfillment that they freely share their abundant blessings with others who have been less fortunate at creating the same in their lives, such as Tom's brother Ronnie (David Bradley) and their longtime friend Ken (Peter Wight). But the person who receives the lion's share of their attention is Gerri's friend and co-worker Mary (Lesley Manville), an often-spacey, somewhat boozy, middle-aged clerical who spends much of her time lost. Mary desperately looks for happiness in all the wrong places and invariably seeks to shift blame elsewhere when things don't pan out as hoped for, a perspective that makes her increasingly embittered, and pitiable, as time passes. But, despite their tremendous capacities for compassion, empathy and understanding, even Tom and Gerri have their limits, and, as Mary pushes those boundaries, their friendship gets stretched and strained, threatening the very existence of their relationship. Over time it becomes apparent that something has to change if the friendship is to survive.

As physical beings, we're innately accustomed to living life in a reality where nearly all of its elements—like us—have defined physical parameters. Those inherent boundaries give shape, definition and limitation to everything we encounter within this existence. But, strange though it may seem to some of us, boundaries are not limited to just the physical aspects of our world; they also provide limits to things of a nonphysical nature, like our emotions and the frameworks of our interpersonal relationships. However, given our almost dogmatic preoccupation with physicality, most of us are probably less familiar with the boundaries associated with our reality's nonphysical components, not only in terms of establishing them but of even recognizing their existence. Consequently, it can be quite easy for borders to be crossed that shouldn't be, creating havoc and mayhem, even in situations where we thought we knew where things stood, ultimately yielding emotional pain, suffering and heartache.

Those who are skilled in recognizing and setting such parameters realize their necessity. Even though those boundaries may not apply to items of a physical nature, their existence provides buffers against unwanted intrusions by those who, wittingly or unwittingly, would disregard the limits of another's personal sovereignty. Indeed,

poet Robert Frost probably said it best when he wrote in his poem *Mending Wall* that “good fences make good neighbors,” sound advice that applies whether the boundaries in question are physical or otherwise.

Those who are effective at establishing these kinds of limits are undoubtedly effective conscious creation practitioners, for they recognize that *definition* is an intrinsic part of the materialization process, no matter what canvas of existence they create upon. And it's also quite understandable that those who are skilled at developing such a perspective might eventually lose patience with, or even grow resentful of, others who are unable—or unwilling—to respect boundaries when their limits are reached.

So it is with Tom and Gerri in their relationship with Mary when she starts to cross lines that are off limits. Ultimately she fails to respect the healthy borders that define the nature of her relationship with her friends and their family. This is most apparent when Mary meets Joe's girlfriend, Katie (Karina Fernandez), for the first time. Mary, who had long had an unrealistic crush on the young man, becomes unabashedly snippy with everyone after being introduced to Katie, clearly angering those who had been so giving to her for so long, even when they didn't always need to be. Mary fails to realize that Tom and Gerri's tremendous compassion and generosity of spirit in dealing with her doesn't automatically give her the right to trample all over them as a means to help her solve her problems (problems, by the way, that, by their nature, are of *her own* creating, based on how she's employed the law of attraction).

These circumstances, in turn, speak to another of the film's major themes—the idea that we're each ultimately responsible for creating our own happiness. While it's true that others may come along to help us out in a pinch, such assistance doesn't automatically equate to a license to lean on those compassionate souls completely for helping us attain fulfillment in life. In the end, it ultimately comes down to each of us to develop the perspective that we're each responsible for choosing our own happiness (and fashioning beliefs in line with that notion).

It's indeed sad that there are so many lost souls in the world who experience this these days, and their ranks are amply represented in this film by the likes of Mary, Ken and Ronnie, as well

as one of Gerri's patients, Janet (Imelda Staunton), who appears at the picture's beginning and sets the tone for this theme. They sit idly by, watching yet "another year" pass without any resolution to their unrelenting despair, all the while hoping that something will miraculously alleviate their sadness and grant them new lives. By embracing such a perspective, however, they miss the point that it's up to *them*, and not some outside savior, to create that result. Those who lack this perspective, and who try to milk salvation out of others who, in the end, are not directly responsible for creating their contentment, will pay an even greater price for such ignorance and irresponsibility. Clearly, developing a healthy perspective about life begins with each of us.

"Another Year" is a thoughtful, introspective piece of filmmaking. Some may find the pacing a bit slow at times, an argument I wouldn't totally disagree with, but its character-driven nature nevertheless manages to keep viewer attention quite effectively. The writing is subtle (perhaps even a little too understated at times) but substantive, attributes that helped earn it an Oscar nomination for best original screenplay. The performances are all solid, too, especially Manville, who's very convincing as the troubled lost soul, a portrayal that, sadly, was largely overlooked for consideration in most of the major awards competitions. The film was also a *Palme d'Or* nominee at the Cannes Film Festival (the event's highest honor), as well as the recipient of the Festival's Prize of the Ecumenical Jury.

The ties that bind us can also become ensnaring, especially when the limits of those bonds are breached. If we approach life expecting others to help us achieve happiness and fulfillment, that perspective could easily become the source of our own undoing. Respecting those boundaries is crucial for maintaining significant interpersonal connections, for failing to do so could result in long-lasting disappointment and irreparable harm, damage that, without proper remediation, can easily last for many years to come.

What Truly Nourishes Us

“*Malos Hábitos*” (“Bad Habits”)

Year of Release: 2007

Cast: Jimena Ayala, Elena de Haro,
Marco Treviño, Aurora Cano, Elisa Vicedo,
Emilio Echevarría, Patricia Reyes Spíndola,
Raúl Cardós, Alma Sofía Martínez,
Milagros Vidal, Victor Rivera

Director: Simón Bross

Screenplay: Ernesto Anaya and Simón Bross

Sustenance is essential to our continued existence, and the perspectives we hold about the nature of that nourishment determine the quality of life we experience. As conscious creators, we’re free to choose from a wide range of options in that regard, but we’d be wise to choose carefully, as illustrated in the mesmerizing Mexican comedy-drama, “*Malos Hábitos*” (“Bad Habits”).

“*Malos Hábitos*” is, arguably, one of the most unusual, yet most captivating, films to come out in a long time. Its interwoven storylines revolve around members of the Soriano family, all of whom are affiliated in one way or another with a Catholic university and convent in Mexico City. The narrative’s various strands weave an intriguing tapestry of ideas that examine two seemingly unrelated, but fundamentally essential, aspects of our lives—spirituality and food. As unlikely as this pairing might seem, however, there is a common thread that binds them: They both nourish us, one feeding our bodies and the other feeding our souls. And, in the spirit of conscious creation, the film eloquently explores the beliefs underlying our relationships with these life-sustaining forces.

The film opens at a family gathering hosted by Ramón Soriano (Emilio Echevarría). All of the relatives have assembled to meet Elena (Elena de Haro), the new girlfriend of Gustavo (Marco Treviño), Ramón’s brother. However, not long after the family sits down to dinner, Ramón begins to choke on his food, prompting his daughter, Matilde (Alma Sofía Martínez), to begin praying desperately. As a deeply spiritual young girl, she promises to devote her life to God if her father is spared, a prayer that’s quickly answered.

Flash-forward several decades to a time when a now-older Matilde (Jimena Ayala) receives her medical school degree. Everyone is thrilled for her. Yet no sooner is the ink dry on her diploma when she announces her intention to become a nun, proudly proclaiming that she's keeping her promise to God for sparing her father's life so many years before. Ramón is somewhat baffled by her decision, but Matilde contends that religious faith can do as much to heal the body as anything that medicine can, and she's eager to prove that, doing whatever she can to spiritually facilitate miraculous recoveries.

However, as Matilde sees it, becoming a successful healing intercessor requires personal sacrifice, particularly regarding anything worldly, including even basics like food. She willingly abides by her vow but struggles to live up to it; she's torn between sustaining the needs of the body and fulfilling the sacrificial obligations she believes are required of her. The beliefs driving this internal conflict cause her much pain and strife, eventually jeopardizing both her physical health and psychological well-being.

Meanwhile, in the years while Matilde toiled to fulfill her promise, Gustavo and Elena married and started a family. As an architect and university professor, Gustavo has managed to provide handsomely for his wife and their young daughter, Linda (Elisa Vicedo). By all accounts, one would think the upscale couple's life should be happy, but nothing could be further from the truth, at least for Elena. She wrestles with a number of control issues, most notably her preoccupation with her daughter's growing waistline.

As a chubby (though certainly not obese) little girl, Linda is a constant (albeit grossly exaggerated) source of embarrassment to Elena, who'll go to almost any lengths to get her daughter to slim down. She's particularly upset that Linda struggles to fit into her First Communion dress, prompting her to pursue assorted weight loss tactics with a vengeance. Elena's fixation saddens Linda, who clearly doesn't understand or share her mother's fanatical views. Ironically, Linda eventually seeks guidance from—of all people—her Aunt Matilde, who counsels her niece that eating is not a sin, advice that positively infuriates *Madre dearest*.

But Elena's fanaticism doesn't stop with Linda. She's become so preoccupied with *her own* body image that she virtually stops

eating altogether, getting by on little more than bottled water and cigarettes. She becomes so emaciated that her bones protrude everywhere. Her obsessive behavior, sickly appearance and hostile attitude about others' eating habits eventually cause Gustavo to turn away from her. He seeks solace in the arms of a buxom, voluptuous Peruvian woman (Milagros Vidal), who unapologetically indulges her love for life and all its carnal and gastronomic pleasures. Gustavo willingly goes along with her, enthusiastically embracing everything that his wife so inexplicably denies herself.

Given their fundamentally different perspectives on life, it should come as no surprise that Elena and Gustavo drift far apart. But that mutual isolation quickly proves to be the least of their troubles with the rise of events that force them to examine some of life's bigger questions, such as the quality and meaning of existence, topics directly impacted by the twin sources of nourishment that are at the heart of this film's narrative. *How* those sustaining elements affect them (and us), though, is what's most important, and "*Malos Hábitos*" probes their impact (and the beliefs that drive them) from a variety of angles.

At the risk of oversimplifying matters, the characters who hold fast to "healthy" perspectives about these sources of physical and metaphysical sustenance, such as Gustavo and his girlfriend, are happiest, while those who embrace "unhealthy" views, like Matilde and Elena, experience a host of challenges, ranging from frustration to ill health to despair. And then there are those in between, like Linda and her friend Lalo (Victor Rivera), who struggle to find their way with their beliefs and end up experiencing manifestations reflective of both extremes. For each of these characters, the combined beliefs they hold color their overall perspectives, which, in turn, shape their realities extensively.

So why do the characters embrace such distinctly different perspectives? To a great degree, it has to do with the life lessons they've chosen to experience. The beliefs and perspectives associated with those lessons lead them to attract the conditions that make such teachings possible. Those conditions shape their subsequent beliefs and frame their overall perspectives, *reinforcing* the prevailing paradigm of ideas and experiences in their respective lives. And that reinforcement "feeds" those circumstances, perpetuating them until

they become played out (by which time, one would hope, the lesson in question is learned).

The impact of perspective reinforcement makes its presence felt repeatedly throughout the film. Linda, for example, is often dismayed by her circumstances, especially when she's regularly subjected to Elena's extreme weight loss "treatments" and bombarded with her insensitive "advice," which includes such statements as "No one likes a fat person" or (even more shockingly) "I'd rather my daughter be dead than fat." Yet, on some level, Linda truly doesn't believe her mother's obsessive actions and judgmental statements, that her life choices and creations are just fine as they are. She thus quietly yet routinely draws contrary manifestations into her reality to counter (and confound) her mother's relentless onslaught of criticism, such as Aunt Matilde's heartfelt advice, a doctor's reassuring prognosis and the warmth of Lalo's friendship, all of which support and reinforce Linda's alternative outlook. How this life lesson eventually plays out for Linda will naturally depend on which viewpoint she chooses to embrace—and which form of reinforcement ultimately proves more compelling.

Reinforcement manifests in many ways, too. Besides the foregoing illustrations, it also arises by way of inspiring personal examples, something Matilde regularly draws upon in shaping her beliefs. For instance, she believes her spiritual and intercessory callings parallel those personified by historical religious figures. The development of a spiritual sense early on in life, for example, calls to mind the experiences of a youthful St. Francis of Assisi. Similarly, as a healing intermediary, Matilde identifies with the sacrifices of St. Nicholas, a benevolent figure who willingly took on the lion's share of his followers' penance burdens so that they needn't suffer as greatly, an example she sincerely believes she can follow. In fact, she's so convinced she can succeed at working miracles that she believes she might one day even be able to emulate the works of Jesus himself, a notion revealed to her in a vision in which she literally follows in his footsteps—and atop a body of water at that.

As should be apparent from the foregoing, the film's storylines deal extensively with issues of denial and indulgence. Those who adhere to the perspective of sacrifice, be it in a spiritual or culinary context, seem to believe that they're traversing a moral high road,

that denial is a noble, enlightened pursuit and that indulging our appetites is something about which we should feel guilty. But, considering the impact such a perspective has on the health and well-being of those characters, is their path really one to which we should aspire? After all, by incarnating in this reality, we've chosen to be *physical* beings with *physical* needs for our continued existence. And, given that, one can't help but ask, why would anyone intentionally deny themselves what they need to survive? Isn't our attraction to life's physical pleasures something that's fundamentally meant to keep us alive and healthy? Compare the experiences of the picture's principal characters, and draw your own conclusions.

The impact of these perspectives is also apparent in the experiences of both individuals *and* en masse. For instance, the archaic, often-dour perspective held by Church traditionalists (like the aging convent residents depicted in this film) has contributed greatly to declining support for the institution, even in a heavily Catholic country like Mexico. Many former and would-be followers have turned away, looking upon the Church as rigid and irrelevant. So, when the convent faces a financial crisis, it desperately needs to do something to raise funds. The Sisters' inventive solution is to sell the delicious food they create in the convent's kitchen, an idea that goes over big with the public and gives the facility a much-needed infusion of cash. The Sisters' experience thus shows that, when you have something substantial to offer, people will flock to you. Indeed, even if the Church's message fails to nourish, at least its culinary offerings do, thanks to the practical, life-affirming beliefs underlying their creation (maybe the Church should apply the same perspective in the pulpit that it uses in the kitchen).

Interestingly enough, all of this is set against an intriguing mass-created backdrop—a city besieged by incessant rain, an image that can be interpreted in multiple ways. For instance, the rain can be viewed as “God's tears,” a physical manifestation of our divine collaborator's despair over the state of a world we've asked it to help us co-create. Similarly, the rain could also symbolize God's tears in response to how we've grossly misinterpreted the gifts our celestial partner has bestowed upon us, sadness over how we've come to misconstrue as vices the blessings that we *should* regard as pleasures. But, in yet another interpretation, the rain could be seen as a baptismal

symbol, a divinely initiated sacrament aimed at cleansing us of our “sins,” which conceivably could apply to the circumstances noted in either or both of the foregoing analyses. In all of these instances, though, the resulting materialization is a mirror of the creative beliefs that invoked it, no matter which perspective is at play or from what source the manifesting intents originated.

There is *so* much more I could say about this film that I could easily go on for many pages. So, to simplify matters, as I wrote about “A Serious Man” earlier in this Chapter, let me just say *see it*. Admittedly, that may be easier said than done, since this film is, regrettably, rather hard to find. It played mostly at film festivals in the U.S. (which is where I first saw it), having never received a general release domestically, either in theaters or on cable TV. The best bet for finding it is to look for it on DVD from specialty movie sellers. The picture is definitely worth it, however. Its thoughtful writing, expert direction, superb performances and skillful editing make for a movie that will hold your attention during every single frame.

It’s been said that “we are what we eat.” That’s true enough, but I’d like to expand on that to say “we are what we *believe*,” for the beliefs and perspectives we maintain about what sustains us serve to shape the general state of our health and well-being, both physically and psychologically. “*Malos Hábitos*” shines a brilliant spotlight on those notions, providing us with a clear, concise and illuminating guide to what truly nourishes us.

What Do We *Really* Believe?

“Sound of My Voice”

Year of Release: 2012

Cast: Christopher Denham, Nicole Vicius,
Brit Marling, Davenia McFadden, Kandice Stroh,
Richard Wharton, Christy Meyers, Alvin Lam,
Constance Wu, Avery Pohl

Director: Zal Batmanglij

Screenplay: Zal Batmanglij and Brit Marling

What we believe makes up who we are. Much of the time we take that for granted, too, never giving our beliefs a second thought.

But every so often we undergo profound experiences that prompt us to examine our beliefs, perhaps even our overall perspectives, to see how they form the basis of our individual realities, a notion explored in the intense drama, “Sound of My Voice.”

Intrepid documentary filmmakers Peter Aitken (Christopher Denham) and Lorna Michaelson (Nicole Vicius) are so eager to make a movie about cults that they’re willing to secretly infiltrate one to conduct research. Besides the investigative journalism value, Peter has a personal stake in making the film: Having been orphaned at age 13, when his mother, a longtime follower of a New Age movement that eschewed the merits of modern medicine, died of cancer, Peter now seeks retribution for the “brainwashing” inflicted upon her by documenting and exposing the alleged fraud and false hope he believes such charlatan-esque organizations peddle to gullible followers. It’s a crusade to which he’s fervently committed—and one that’s eminently more fulfilling than the day job he holds as a substitute teacher at a private elementary girls’ school.

After successfully surviving a period of recruitment and scrutiny, Peter and Lorna are indoctrinated into the inner circle of a secret fellowship led by an enigmatic guru named Maggie (Brit Marling). The charismatic, soft-spoken leader offers up her singular pearls of wisdom to a small group of disciples in informal gatherings in the basement of an undisclosed residential location somewhere near Los Angeles. And what’s the basis underlying Maggie’s philosophy/theology? She claims to be a time traveler from the year 2054, having come back to the past to share information about what lies ahead with a select handful of followers, people whom she claims to know and care about in her own future life.

Peter initially sees Maggie’s claims as the pinnacle of lunacy, becoming quietly angered whenever he thinks about how she’s preying on a band of weak-willed, vulnerable followers, not unlike what happened to his mother years before. However, the more involved he becomes with Maggie and her minions, the more he loses his focus—and himself—in the mindset of the group. He’s particularly captivated by Maggie’s insights about him personally, revelations that involve information she couldn’t possibly know about him without some kind of foreknowledge—the kind that would come about only from intimate personal interaction. And, since Peter

has never met Maggie before, the only way she could possibly have come into possession of such facts would be from interaction that hasn't yet happened but that *could* conceivably happen at some other time—like the future.

Ironically, such incidents cause Peter to question his own skepticism. As he's increasingly drawn into the workings of the group, he finds himself ever more willing to comply with the questionable tasks asked of him by Maggie and her lieutenants. At the same time, Lorna grows concerned that Peter is losing his perspective, especially when she witnesses some of the dubious activities that Maggie's closest advisors, like Joanne (Kandice Stroh) and Klaus (Richard Wharton), engage in. More red flags get raised when Lorna learns that Maggie is the target of a Department of Justice investigation led by special agent Carol Briggs (Davenia McFadden). But, given the uncanny disclosures that continue to stream forth as part of Maggie's cryptic pronouncements, doubt persists about the real truth of what's going on. Is Maggie who she claims to be? Or is she a flagrant and potentially dangerous fraud? Or is "the truth" even more incredible than either of these possibilities? In the end, it would seem, it all comes down to one's perspective.

But, then, when it comes to assessing the reality we experience, it *always* comes down to the beliefs we employ in manifesting our existence, and that point is driven home subtly yet repeatedly in this film. For the followers of her group, Maggie becomes *exactly* whoever each of them needs her to be. In doing so, she assumes a chameleon-like persona reminiscent of the unassuming gardener Chance (Peter Sellers) in the whimsically delightful comedy, "Being There" (1979). For those who need Maggie to be a prescient time traveler, she's a prescient time traveler; for those who need her to be a New Age con artist, she's a New Age con artist; and for those whose personal uncertainty calls for her to be an inscrutable enigma who ambiguously seems to embody qualities alluding to both of these characters, she once again complies accordingly. In each instance, though, the beliefs of those perceiving her govern which permutation appears in each of their respective individual realities, for better or worse and regardless of whether seemingly contradictory qualities are involved. Such is the fundamental nature of the law of attraction at work.

To some, this may sound like a notion devoid of credibility. But, if we assume that our individual beliefs shape all of the other elements of the existence we each experience, why should it be any different for the beliefs we associate with the people who populate our realities? In fact, we already do this, often unwittingly and even if we don't readily associate the "creation" aspect with it. Why, for example, would one person perceive another individual as a paragon of virtue while another perceives that "same" individual as an unmitigated jerk? In both instances, the characterizations are defined by the beliefs of those doing the perceiving/manifesting. So it is also with Maggie.

In this film, however, the characters' beliefs have implications far more significant than just what version of Maggie crosses their paths. They delve into much deeper subjects, such as the concept of time travel and whether it's possible. That, in turn, raises other profound questions, such as would Maggie's appearance in her past alter the course of the timeline going forward? Could her presence in contemporary Los Angeles potentially have a temporal "butterfly effect" for the events leading up to the time from which she claims to have come? Would such alterations affect her alone or all involved? Again, it all turns on one's beliefs and perspective, for they dictate what manifestations arise.

This, of course, raises questions related to the notion of choice and how what we choose determines what we ultimately experience. It also underscores the importance of personal responsibility, for each of us is accountable for what we choose to believe and what we each materialize as a result of those choices. Exercising care and caution would be a wise course in this pursuit, for embracing the "wrong" choices can potentially carry consequences that fly in the face of hoped-for expectations. Indeed, whether our choices involve matters as seemingly innocuous as what to have for breakfast or as seemingly life-changing as whether to join a cult, in each case we should all strive to choose wisely. (For more on Choice, see Chapter 4.)

"Sound of My Voice" is a thoughtful exploration of the foregoing considerations, going far beyond the surface attributes of its narrative. Much of the picture's action takes place in the aforementioned basement, shot close-up, creating an intimate, almost claustrophobic feel that closes in on the characters (and, by extension,

the viewers), effectively emphasizing the intensity of an experience that impels serious examination of oneself and one's beliefs. The crisp writing and fine performances serve to bring all of this to life, making for a gripping viewing experience one soon won't forget.

Beliefs are powerful forces that can frame our existence or shake us to our very core, as the characters in this film find out for themselves in many different ways. What we do with those beliefs, and how we respond to the materializations that they birth, impact what we experience, both now and in the future that lies ahead of us. "Sound of My Voice" draws these ideas sharply into focus, giving us pause to think about who we are, where we are and, perhaps most importantly, where we're going. We'd be wise to give serious thought to such notions; after all, our future depends on it.

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- Pugh, Robert (“The Ghost”)
- Purnell, Ella (“Never Let Me Go”)
- Puthoff, Hal (“Something Unknown Is Doing We Don’t Know What”)
- Quaid, Dennis (“The Express”)
- Quinn, Daniel (“I Am”)
- Quinto, Zachary (“Star Trek”)
- Rabourdin, Olivier (“Midnight in Paris”)
- Rachidi, Mustapha (“Babel”)
- Radin, Dean (“I Am”; “Something Unknown Is Doing We Don’t Know What”)
- Rajskub, Mary Lynn (“Julie and Julia”; “Safety Not Guaranteed”)
- Ramplng, Charlotte (“Never Let Me Go”)
- Ramsey, Laura (“Shrink”)
- Rao, Dileep (“Avatar”; “Inception”)

- Regan, Laura (“Poor Boy’s Game”)
- Remnick, David (“The Other Dream Team”)
- Renner, Jeremy (“The Hurt Locker”)
- Rennie, Callum Keith (“The X-Files: I Want to Believe”)
- Reyes Spíndola, Patricia (“*Malos Hábitos*”)
- Ribisi, Giovanni (“Avatar”)
- Riccardi, Emilio (“The Impossible”)
- Rickman, Alan (“Alice in Wonderland”)
- Rickman, Allen Lewis (“A Serious Man”)
- Rintoul, David (“The Ghost”)
- Riseborough, Andrea (“Never Let Me Go”)
- Riva, Emmanuelle (“*Amour*”)
- Rivera, Victor (“*Malos Hábitos*”)
- Roberts, Dallas (“Shrink”)
- Roberts, Julia (“Eat Pray Love”)
- Rockwell, Sam (“Conviction”)
- Rodriguez, Michelle (“Avatar”)
- Rolland, Sonia (“Midnight in Paris”)
- Rosen, Beatrice (“2012”)
- Rosenman, Zvi Howard (“Milk”)
- Ross, Chelcie (“The Express”)
- Rostain, François (“Midnight in Paris”)
- Roukhe, Driss (“Babel”)
- Roukis, Mike (“Doubt”)
- Rowe, Charlie (“Never Let Me Go”)
- Rubinek, Saul (“The Express”)
- Rudolph, Maya (“Away We Go”)
- Ruffalo, Mark (“The Kids Are All Right”)
- Rush, Deborah (“Julie and Julia”)
- Rush, Geoffrey (“The King’s Speech”)
- Ryder, Winona (“Star Trek”)
- Sabara, Daryl (“World’s Greatest Dad”)
- Sabonis, Arvydas (“The Other Dream Team”)
- Sahmi, Wahiba (“Babel”)
- Sahtouris, Elisabet (“I Am”)
- Saldana, Zoë (“Avatar”; “Star Trek”)
- Saleh, Nasser (“*Beautiful*”)
- Sanderson, Brodie (“*Amreeka*”)
- Sannie, Andrew (“*Amreeka*”)
- Sarandon, Susan (“Cloud Atlas”)
- Savage, Martin (“Another Year”)
- Sayegh, Christopher (“The Hurt Locker”)
- Schirripa, Steven R. (“Hereafter”)
- Schlitz, Marilyn (“I Am”)
- Schneider, Paul (“Away We Go”)
- Schreiber, Liev (“Taking Woodstock”)
- Schull, Amanda (“Mao’s Last Dancer”)
- Schwartz, Gary (“Something Unknown Is Doing We Don’t Know What”)
- Schwenke, Taylor (“Higher Ground”)
- Segal, George (“2012”)
- Selby, David (“The Social Network”)
- Senge, Peter (“People v. The State of Illusion”)

- Seydoux, Léa (“Midnight in Paris”)
- Shadyac, Richard (“I Am”)
- Shadyac, Tom (“I Am”)
- Sharma, Kunal (“The Kids Are All Right”)
- Sharma, Vishnu (“The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”)
- Sharp, Hannah (“Never Let Me Go”)
- Shaw, Fiona (“The Tree of Life”)
- Shawkat, Alia (“*Amreeka*”; “Ruby Sparks”)
- Sheen, Michael (“Alice in Wonderland”; “Midnight in Paris”)
- Sheen, Ruth (“Another Year”)
- Sheldrake, Rupert (“Something Unknown Is Doing We Don’t Know What”)
- Shepard, Sam (“Fair Game”)
- Sheridan, Jamey (“Game Change”)
- Sheridan, Tye (“The Tree of Life”)
- Shetty, Bhuvash (“The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”)
- Shimell, William (“*Amour*”)
- Shivers, Elizabeth (“The Express”)
- Shmulenson, Yelena (“A Serious Man”)
- Simmons, Henry (“World’s Greatest Dad”)
- Simpkins, Ryan (“A Single Man”)
- Sinclair, Carol (“Poor Boy’s Game”)
- Singh, Rushita (“Eat Pray Love”)
- Skagford, Brent (“Source Code”)
- Slattery, John (“The Adjustment Bureau”)
- Sleiman, Haaz (“The Visitor”)
- Smith, Kurtwood (“Hitchcock”)
- Smith, Lois (“Please Give”)
- Smith, Maggie (“The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”)
- Smith, Miriam (“*Amreeka*”)
- Solivéres, Thomas (“The Intouchables”)
- Song, Brenda (“The Social Network”)
- Soni, Karan (“Safety Not Guaranteed”)
- Spacek, Sissy (“Get Low”)
- Spacey, Kevin (“Shrink”)
- Spall, Timothy (“Alice in Wonderland”; “The King’s Speech”)
- Speirs, Greg (“The Other Dream Team”)
- Spoto, Yves-Antoine (“Midnight in Paris”)
- Stamp, Terence (“The Adjustment Bureau”)
- Staton, Rebekah (“Hereafter”)
- Stanton, Imelda (“Alice in Wonderland”; “Another Year”; “Taking Woodstock”)
- Steele, Sarah (“Please Give”)
- Steen, Suzie (“Mao’s Last Dancer”)
- Stern, David (“The Other Dream Team”)
- Sternhagen, Frances (“Julie and Julia”)
- Stiller, Ben (“Greenberg”)
- Stoll, Corey (“Midnight in Paris”)

- Streep, Meryl (“Doubt”; “Julie and Julia”)
- Stroh, Kandice (“Sound of My Voice”)
- Studi, Wes (“Avatar”)
- Stuhlbarg, Michael (“A Serious Man”; “Hitchcock”)
- Stuhr, Jerzy (“We Have a Pope”)
- Sturgess, Jim (“Cloud Atlas”)
- Subiyanto, Hadi (“Eat Pray Love”)
- Sundberg, Jan Roland (“The Impossible”)
- Sundberg, Johan (“The Impossible”)
- Sutherland, Rossif (“Poor Boy’s Game”)
- Suzuki, David (“I Am”)
- Swank, Hilary (“Conviction”)
- Sy, Omar (“The Intouchables”)
- Tahir, Faran (“Star Trek”)
- Tarchani, Said (“Babel”)
- Tart, Charles (“Something Unknown Is Doing We Don’t Know What”)
- Teller, Miles (“Rabbit Hole”)
- Temple, Juno (“Greenberg”)
- Tenney, Jon (“Rabbit Hole”)
- Tharaud, Alexandre (“*Amour*”)
- Thay, Lee Hong (“The Ghost”)
- Thomas, Craig (“Source Code”)
- Thompson, Glen (“*Amreeka*”)
- Thompson, Hugh (“Poor Boy’s Game”)
- Thompson, Jack (“Mao’s Last Dancer”)
- Thompson, Sophie (“Eat Pray Love”)
- Thongruang, La-Orng (“The Impossible”)
- Thurman, Robert (“Infinity: The Ultimate Trip—Journey Beyond Death”)
- Timberlake, Justin (“The Social Network”)
- Tomlinson, Eleanor (“Alice in Wonderland”)
- Toure, Absa Dialou (“The Intouchables”)
- Traylor, Susan (“Greenberg”)
- Treviño, Marco (“*Malos Hábitos*”)
- Trintignant, Jean-Louis (“*Amour*”)
- Trucks, Toni (“Ruby Sparks”)
- Tucci, Stanley (“Julie and Julia”)
- Turner, McKenzie (“Higher Ground”)
- Tuttle, J.B. (“People v. The State of Illusion”)
- Tutu, Desmond (“I Am”)
- Urb, Johann (“2012”)
- Urban, Karl (“Star Trek”)
- Urbanski, Douglas (“The Social Network”)
- V., Tony (“World’s Greatest Dad”)
- Valančiūnas, Jonas (“The Other Dream Team”)
- Vandermark, Michael (“People v. The State of Illusion”)
- Vergotis, Camilla (“Mao’s Last Dancer”)
- Vicedo, Elisa (“*Malos Hábitos*”)
- Vicius, Nicole (“Sound of My Voice”)

- Vickers, Austin (“People v. The State of Illusion”)
- Vidal, Gore (“Shrink”)
- Vidal, Milagros (“*Malos Hábitos*”)
- Villoldo, Alberto (“Infinity: The Ultimate Trip—Journey Beyond Death”)
- Wagener, Ana (“*Biutiful*”)
- Wallach, Eli (“The Ghost”)
- Walsch, Neale Donald (“Infinity: The Ultimate Trip—Journey Beyond Death”)
- Walton, Bill (“The Other Dream Team”)
- Wang, Shuang Bao (“Mao’s Last Dancer”)
- Wasikowska, Mia (“Alice in Wonderland”; “The Kids Are All Right”)
- Watanabe, Ken (“Inception”)
- Watts, Naomi (“Fair Game”; “The Impossible”)
- Weaver, Sigourney (“Avatar”)
- Weaving, Hugo (“Cloud Atlas”)
- Webber, Mark (“Shrink”)
- Weiss, Brian (“Infinity: The Ultimate Trip—Journey Beyond Death”)
- Wever, Merritt (“Greenberg”)
- Wharton, Richard (“Sound of My Voice”)
- Whishaw, Ben (“Cloud Atlas”)
- Whitehouse, Paul (“Alice in Wonderland”)
- Wiest, Dianne (“Rabbit Hole”)
- Wight, Peter (“Another Year”; “Babel”)
- Wilkinson, Tom (“The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”; “The Ghost”)
- Williams, Jermaine (“World’s Greatest Dad”)
- Williams, Olivia (“The Ghost”)
- Williams, Robin (“Shrink”; “World’s Greatest Dad”)
- Williams, Tonya Lee (“Poor Boy’s Game”)
- Williams, Wes (“Poor Boy’s Game”)
- Wilson, Freya (“The King’s Speech”)
- Wilson, Owen (“Midnight in Paris”)
- Wilson, Patrick (“Watchmen”)
- Wilton, Penelope (“The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”)
- Wincott, Michael (“Hitchcock”)
- Windsor, Barbara (“Alice in Wonderland”)
- Wisden, Robert (“Watchmen”)
- Wolff, Aaron (“A Serious Man”)
- Wolff, Alexander (“The Other Dream Team”)
- Woll, Deborah Ann (“Ruby Sparks”)
- Woodcock, Fagin (“The X-Files: I Want to Believe”)
- Worthington, Sam (“Avatar”)
- Wright, Jeffrey (“Source Code”)
- Wu, Constance (“Sound of My Voice”)
- Wyner, George (“A Serious Man”)
- Xzibit (“The X-Files: I Want to Believe”)
- Yakusho, Kôji (“Babel”)

Yelchin, Anton (“Star Trek”)
 Yeo, Josh (“Hitchcock”)
 Young, Aden (“Mao’s Last
 Dancer”)
 Young, Karen (“Conviction”)
 Yue, Xiu Qing (“Mao’s Last
 Dancer”)
 Yunt, Catherine (“Something
 Unknown Is Doing We Don’t
 Know What”)
 Zhang, Su (“Mao’s Last Dancer”)
 Zhou, Xuo (“Cloud Atlas”)
 Ziegler, Joseph (“*Amreeka*”)
 Zinn, Howard (“I Am”)

Directors:

Abrams, J.J. (“Star Trek”)
 Allen, Woody (“Midnight in
 Paris”)
 Batmanglij, Zal (“Sound of My
 Voice”)
 Baumbach, Noah (“Greenberg”)
 Bayona, J.A. (“The Impossible”)
 Beresford, Bruce (“Mao’s Last
 Dancer”)
 Bigelow, Kathryn (“The Hurt
 Locker”)
 Blomkamp, Neill (“District 9”)
 Bross, Simón (“*Malos Hábitos*”)
 Burton, Tim (“Alice in
 Wonderland”)
 Cameron, James (“Avatar”)
 Carter, Chris (“The X-Files: I
 Want to Believe”)
 Cervine, Scott (“People v. The
 State of Illusion”)
 Cholodenko, Lisa (“The Kids Are
 All Right”)
 Coen, Ethan, and Joel Coen (“A
 Serious Man”)
 Cooper, Scott (“Crazy Heart”)
 Dabis, Cherien (“*Amreeka*”)
 Dayton, Jonathan, and Valerie
 Feris (“Ruby Sparks”)
 Eastwood, Clint (“Hereafter”)
 Emmerich, Roland (“2012”)
 Ephron, Nora (“Julie and Julia”)
 Farmiga, Vera (“Higher
 Ground”)
 Fincher, David (“The Social
 Network”)
 Fleder, Gary (“The Express”)
 Ford, Tom (“A Single Man”)
 Fricke, Ron (“Samsara”)

- Gervasi, Sacha (“Hitchcock”)
 Goldthwait, Bobcat (“World’s
 Greatest Dad”)
 Goldwyn, Tony (“Conviction”)
 González Inárritu, Alejandro
 (“Babel”; “*Beautiful*”)
 Hancock, John Lee (“The Blind
 Side”)
 Haneke, Michael (“*Amour*”)
 Holofcener, Nicole (“Please
 Give”)
 Hooper, Tom (“The King’s
 Speech”)
 Jones, Duncan (“Source Code”)
 Lee, Ang (“Taking Woodstock”)
 Leigh, Mike (“Another Year”)
 Liman, Doug (“Fair Game”)
 Madden, John (“The Best Exotic
 Marigold Hotel”)
 Malick, Terrence (“The Tree of
 Life”)
 Markevicius, Marius (“The Other
 Dream Team”)
 McCarthy, Tom (“The Visitor”)
 Mendes, Sam (“Away We Go”)
 Mitchell, John Cameron
 (“Rabbit Hole”)
 Moretti, Nanni (“We Have a
 Pope”)
 Murphy, Ryan (“Eat Pray Love”)
 Nakache, Olivier, and
 Eric Toledano (“The
 Intouchables”)
 Nolan, Christopher (“Inception”)
 Nolfi, George (“The Adjustment
 Bureau”)
 Pate, Jonas (“Shrink”)
 Polanski, Roman (“The Ghost”)
 Roach, Jay (“Game Change”)
 Romanek, Mark (“Never Let Me
 Go”)
 Scheltema, Renée (“Something
 Unknown Is Doing We Don’t
 Know What”)
 Schneider, Aaron (“Get Low”)
 Shadyac, Tom (“I Am”)
 Shanley, John Patrick (“Doubt”)
 Slade, Renee, and Ri Stewart
 (“The Quantum Activist”)
 Snyder, Zack (“Watchmen”)
 Trevorrow, Colin (“Safety Not
 Guaranteed”)
 Tykwer, Tom, Andy Wachowski
 and Lana Wachowski (“Cloud
 Atlas”)
 Van Sant, Gus (“Milk”)
 Virgo, Clement (“Poor Boy’s
 Game”)
 Weidner, Jay (“Infinity: The
 Ultimate Trip—Journey
 Beyond Death”)

Screenplay/Teleplay Writers:

- Allen, Woody (“Midnight in Paris”)
- Anaya, Ernesto, and Simón Bross (“*Malos Hábitos*”)
- Arriaga, Guillermo (“Babel”)
- Batmanglij, Zal, and Brit Marling (“Sound of My Voice”)
- Baumbach, Noah (“Greenberg”)
- Black, Dustin Lance (“Milk”)
- Blomkamp, Neill, and Terri Tatchell (“District 9”)
- Boal, Mark (“The Hurt Locker”)
- Briggs, Carolyn S., and Tim Metcalfe (“Higher Ground”)
- Butterworth, Jez, and John-Henry Butterworth (“Fair Game”)
- Cameron, James (“Avatar”)
- Cholodenko, Lisa, and Stuart Blumberg (“The Kids Are All Right”)
- Coen, Joel, and Ethan Coen (“A Serious Man”)
- Connolly, Derek (“Safety Not Guaranteed”)
- Cooper, Scott (“Crazy Heart”)
- Dabis, Cherien (“*Amreeka*”)
- Eggers, Dave, and Vendela Vida (“Away We Go”)
- Emmerich, Roland, and Harald Kloser (“2012”)
- Ephron, Nora (“Julie and Julia”)
- Ford, Tom, and David Scarce (“A Single Man”)
- Fricke, Ron, and Mark Magidson (“Samsara”)
- Garland, Alex (“Never Let Me Go”)
- Golder, Ted (“The Quantum Activist”)
- Goldthwait, Bobcat (“World’s Greatest Dad”)
- González Inárritu, Alejandro, Nicolás Giacobone and Armando Bo (“*Biutiful*”)
- Gray, Pamela (“Conviction”)
- Hancock, John Lee (“The Blind Side”)
- Haneke, Michael (“*Amour*”)
- Harris, Robert, and Roman Polanski (“The Ghost”)
- Hayter, David, and Alex Tse (“Watchmen”)
- Holofcener, Nicole (“Please Give”)
- Kazan, Zoe (“Ruby Sparks”)
- Leavitt, Charles (“The Express”)
- Leigh, Mike (“Another Year”)
- Lindsay-Abaire, David (“Rabbit Hole”)
- Malick, Terrence (“The Tree of Life”)
- Markevicius, Marius, and Jon Weinbach (“The Other Dream Team”)
- McCarthy, Tom (“The Visitor”)
- McLaughlin, John J. (“Hitchcock”)
- Moffett, Thomas (“Shrink”)
- Moretti, Nanni, Francesco Piccolo and Federica Pontremoli (“We Have a Pope”)
- Morgan, Peter (“Hereafter”)

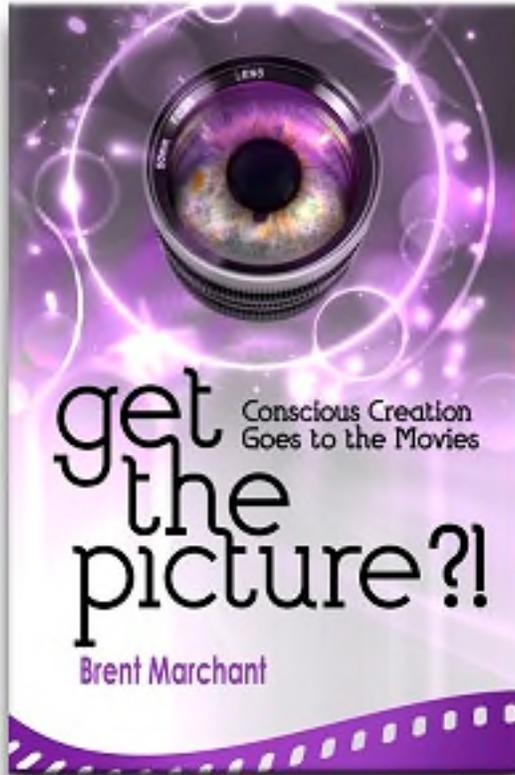
- Murphy, Ryan, and Jennifer Salt
("Eat Pray Love")
- Nakache, Olivier, and
Eric Toledano ("The
Intouchables")
- Nolan, Christopher ("Inception")
- Nolfi, George ("The Adjustment
Bureau")
- Orci, Roberto, and Alex
Kurtzman ("Star Trek")
- Parker, Ol ("The Best Exotic
Marigold Hotel")
- Provenzano, Chris, and C. Gaby
Mitchell ("Get Low")
- Ripley, Ben ("Source Code")
- Sánchez, Sergio G. ("The
Impossible")
- Sardi, Jan ("Mao's Last Dancer")
- Schamus, James ("Taking
Woodstock")
- Scheltema, Renée ("Something
Unknown Is Doing We Don't
Know What")
- Seidler, David ("The King's
Speech")
- Shadyac, Tom ("I Am")
- Shanley, John Patrick ("Doubt")
- Sorkin, Aaron ("The Social
Network")
- Spotnitz, Frank, and Chris
Carter ("The X-Files: I Want
to Believe")
- Strong, Danny ("Game Change")
- Thorne, Chaz, and Clement
Virgo ("Poor Boy's Game")
- Vickers, Austin ("People v. The
State of Illusion")
- Wachowski, Lana, Tom Tykwer
and Andy Wachowski
("Cloud Atlas")
- Woolverton, Linda ("Alice in
Wonderland")

Book, Story and Source**Material Creators:**

- Arriaga, Guillermo, and Alejandro González Iñárritu (“Babel,” story)
- Belón, María (“The Impossible,” story)
- Blomkamp,Neill (“District 9,” film short adaptation source, “Alive in Joburg”)
- Briggs, Carolyn S. (“Higher Ground,” book, *This Dark World*)
- Carroll, Lewis (“Alice in Wonderland,” source books, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*)
- Carter, Chris (“The X-Files: I Want to Believe,” TV series source material, *The X-Files*)
- Cobb, Thomas (“Crazy Heart,” book, *Crazy Heart*)
- Dick, Philip K. (“The Adjustment Bureau,” story, *The Adjustment Team*)
- Fricke, Ron, and Mark Magidson (“Samsara,” concept)
- Gallagher, Robert (“The Express,” book, *Ernie Davis: The Elmira Express*)
- Gilbert, Elizabeth (“Eat Pray Love,” book, *Eat Pray Love: One Woman’s Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia*)
- Harris, Robert (“The Ghost,” book, *The Ghost*)
- Heilemann, John, and Mark Halperin (“Game Change,” book, *Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the Race of a Lifetime*)
- Isherwood, Christopher (“A Single Man,” book, *A Single Man*)
- Ishiguro, Kazuo (“Never Let Me Go,” book, *Never Let Me Go*)
- Jason Leigh, Jennifer, and Noah Baumbach (“Greenberg,” story)
- Lewis, Michael (“The Blind Side,” book, *The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game*)
- Li, Cunxin (“Mao’s Last Dancer,” book, *Mao’s Last Dancer*)
- Lindsay-Abaire, David (“Rabbit Hole,” play, *Rabbit Hole*)
- Mezrich, Ben (“The Social Network,” book, *The Accidental Billionaires*)
- Mitchell, David (“Cloud Atlas,” book, *Cloud Atlas*)
- Moggach, Deborah (“The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel,” book, *These Foolish Things*)
- Moore, Alan (author), and Dave Gibbons (illustrator) (“Watchmen,” graphic novel, *Watchmen*)
- Powell, Julie (“Julie and Julia,” source book, *Julie and Julia*), and Julia Child and Alex Prud’homme (“Julie and Julia,” source book, *My Life in France*)

- Provenzano, Chris, and Scott
Seeke (“Get Low,” story)
- Reardon, Henry (“Shrink,” story)
- Rebello, Stephen (“Hitchcock,”
book, *Alfred Hitchcock and the
Making of Psycho*)
- Roddenberry, Gene (“Star Trek,”
TV series source material, *Star
Trek*)
- Shanley, John Patrick (“Doubt,”
play, *Doubt*)
- Tiber, Elliot, and Tom Monte
 (“Taking Woodstock,” book,
*Taking Woodstock: A True Story
of a Riot, a Concert and a Life*)
- Villoldo, Alberto, and Jay
Weidner (“Infinity: The
Ultimate Trip—Journey
Beyond Death,” concept)
- Wilson, Joseph (“Fair Game,”
source book, *The Politics of
Truth: Inside the Lies that Led
to War and Betrayed My Wife’s
CIA Identity: A Diplomat’s
Memoir*), and Valerie Plame
Wilson (“Fair Game,” source
book, *Fair Game: My Life as a
Spy, My Betrayal by the White
House*)

OTHER WRITINGS BY BRENT MARCHANT



Get the Picture?!: Conscious Creation Goes to the Movies

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Official Web Site of Brent Marchant

www.BrentMarchant.com

Featured Contributor, Arts & Entertainment

VividLife magazine

www.VividLife.me

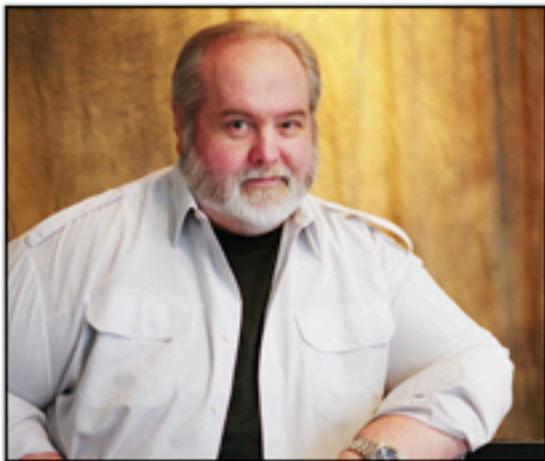
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Smart Women's Empowerment

www.smartwomensempowerment.org

Consciously Created Cinema

Author Brent Marchant's latest book, *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lover's Guide to the Law of Attraction*, takes a truly inventive approach to a topic that's both enlightening and entertaining—how the world of film helps to illustrate how we create the world we experience. Marchant's singular perspective on the subjects of movies and metaphysics offers readers an engaging, practical look at these topics and the complementary relationship between them for explaining how our reality comes into being. By citing examples from genres as diverse as comedies, dramas, science fiction and even documentaries, the author acts as a cinematic tour guide to the mystery and magic of how we manifest our existence.



As a lifelong cinema buff and longtime metaphysics student, author Brent Marchant explores the connections between movies and meaning. His latest work, *Consciously Created Cinema: The Movie Lover's Guide to the Law of Attraction*, provides a reader-friendly look at how conscious creation (also known as the law of attraction) is illustrated through film, a topic also examined in his predecessor work, *Get the Picture: Conscious Creation Goes to the Movies* (2007). Brent also maintains a blog about metaphysical cinema and related topics on his web site (www.BrentMarchant.com) and is Featured Contributor, Arts & Entertainment, for *VividLife* magazine (www.VividLife.me). His additional writing credits include contributions to *Master Heart Magazine*, *BeliefNet*, *Library Journal* and *Smart Women's Empowerment*. Brent holds a B.A. in magazine journalism and history from Syracuse University. Follow him on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as through his web site. Email him at info@brentmarchant.com.

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