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Two Ways Out/Back “Home”: Two Transnational and Literary Perspectives in *Budapeste* and *Chinese Puzzle*

In current global cinematic practices, filmmakers typically leave home to film in spaces beyond the borders of their homelands. These films are often categorized as transnational films. According to Hamid Naficy, “transnational films are framed within the ‘national cinemas’ of their host countries and established cinematic genres” (204). *Budapeste* (2009), directed by Walter Carvalho, and *Chinese Puzzle* (2013), directed by Cédric Klapisch, are both transnational films from two different regions: South America (Mercosul, Brazil) and the European Union (France). The significance of analyzing these two films lies in the similarities of the main characters’ journeys, their displaced identities as writers, and, finally, the directors’ overall approach to their filmmaking. In both films, characters cross many borders and engage in home-seeking journeys and journeys of homelessness. Because both films present transitional places (airports) and transnational spaces, the physical spaces and symbolic borders between Brazil and Hungary in *Budapeste* are clear, as well as the physical cityscapes from France to the United States in *Chinese Puzzle*. However, because these journeys are not just territorial, the displaced main characters find themselves in deeply emotional, psychological, and cultural journeys. Therefore, there is a need to rethink the notion of home in these two films. On the one hand, in *Budapeste*, Costa wanders through national and transnational spaces, literary displaced identities, and national allegories. On the other, in *Chinese Puzzle*, Xavier reconstructs for himself a transnational identity in New York, and reconnects with his lost family and his fatherhood. Both Costa and Xavier engage in the quest of finding a “new home.” In both films, the notion of an established home is never completely settled; nor is home a definite possession, but rather

follows Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's theory of "becoming" ("A Thousand Plateaus" 1448). It appears as an unstable element that must be conquered through ongoing battles. In this essay, I am concerned less with the traditional depiction of home as a space where one is born and finds his/her roots or original identity, but rather the ways in which one must strive to possess it by means of "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization." By comparing how these characters make their ways out or back home, I explore in both films the motherland as a place of alienation resulting in the loss of faith in national institutions. I then analyze the juxtaposition of literary migrations in *Budapeste* and how it contributes to a "non-established home" for Costa, and how finding a new home embraces Hungarian identity through literary creation. Finally, in *Chinese Puzzle*, I focus on Xavier's perpetual search for home, and the city of New York as a utopian space that cures the journeyer from the trauma of his lost homeland.

Recent Brazilian films produced from the 1990s to today show more transnational cinematic ties than the ones produced during the New Cinemas of the 1960s and 1970s. The economic crises that provoked economic recessions in the 1980s and early 1990s impacted Brazilian cinema, and consequently, there was a need for new avenues to finance and produce films. Even though films exploring national identities and cultures were still important, transnational themes and international productions were on the rise. Natália Pinazza affirms that in recent films, the nation was no longer the focal point as it was during the era of New Cinemas: "the cinema that has emerged in neoliberal Argentina and Brazil transcends national projects and centers on characters as individuals rather than as actors for social mobilization" (3).

One can view *Budapeste* in this film scope. The main character is José Costa, a Brazilian ghostwriter who falls deeply in love with Hungary, its language, and its culture to the extent that he becomes alienated from his native country and family. He leaves his Brazilian wife and child

to journey to Budapest. Ironically, José Costa reconstructs his previous Brazilian life in Hungary; he learns Hungarian and marries a Hungarian woman approximately the same age as his Brazilian wife. She also has a child around the same age as his first son. Surprisingly, in *Budapeste*, because of Costa's dual identity (Brazilian and Hungarian), he finds himself speaking and thinking in Hungarian in a local context while in Brazil. An iconic scene on a beach in Rio illustrates Costa's inclination for Hungarian culture. While Costa walks along the beach, he imagines the lyrics of a folkloric Brazilian performance in Hungarian.

In parallel with *Budapeste*, *Chinese Puzzle* depicts a strong Chinese-language community and diaspora in transnational, metropolitan New York. The film features Xavier Rousseau, an unhappy Parisian man, who has just turned forty and still struggles to find contentment despite cohabitating for ten years with Wendy, his British college roommate, with whom he has two children. Xavier is a writer, still searching for inner peace, even though he has reached adulthood. Equally unhappy in the relationship, Wendy suddenly leaves Xavier for her new American lover and moves to New York with their two children. Xavier finds himself very alone, and then embarks on a journey to New York to live closer to his children. Despite numerous troubles in New York, Xavier finally finds a home in Chinatown, which reflects the director's transnational focus. In fact, whenever Xavier is not busy fighting for visitation rights with his children, he sits on a bench and observes Chinese women performing a traditional Chinese dance in the neighborhood park.

According to Claude Beylie, transnational productions have always been part of the French film industry since the beginning of cinema (52). Beylie recalls the ambition of French film producers in the 1910s to conquer the American market, resulting in the production of several films in the United States: *The Perils of Pauline* (1914) and *Les Mystères de New York*

(1915), directed by Louis Gasnier for Charles Pathé, and several westerns produced by Gaston Méliès (brother of Georges Méliès), for example *Roped In* (1912). Jean-Pierre Jeancolas affirms that the success of French cinema in the past fifteen years is due to the same guiding principle of production drawn since the end of World War II: the support of the French government and CNC (Centre National de la Cinématographie) (103). As such, the CNC guarantees the stability of the French film industry, and seeks the funding it needs through banks, Soficas, and television channels such as Canal+ and TF1. Jeancolas calls this recent period of French cinema “Jeune Cinéma” or “cinéma des jeunes.” It is characterized by abundant film production, distribution, and a heterogeneous film genre: from 2001 to 2009, over 180 feature films were produced each year, and 206.5 million people in France attended the cinema in 2010. Resultantly, Klapisch’s *Chinese Puzzle* reflects aspects of the “Jeune Cinéma” era. In fact, *Chinese Puzzle* is the third film of his commercially successful trilogy that began with *The Spanish Apartment* (2003), followed by the sequel *Russian Dolls* (2006).

One could make the case that no French fictional films in recent years have implicitly or explicitly advocated for the Europeanization process as much as Cédric Klapsich’s trilogy, because of Xavier’s long journey that unveils Klapsich’s euro-optimistic vision. Of course, Xavier is a master border-crosser, and ERASMUS (a European study abroad program) in *The Spanish Apartment* serves as an allegory of the new European project of the 1990s. It appears as a pure celebration of the new European multiculturalism through the medium of cinema. The sequel *Russian Dolls* could not be any clearer about some European countries proudly joining the Union. Xavier’s (French) and Wendy’s (British) matrimonial union reinforces the hope for the united nations of Europe and also depicts the bright future promised when the Maastricht treaty was signed in 1992. However, a close look at Cédric Klapsich’s *Chinese Puzzle* reveals a

different shift from his previous two films, as it constitutes a less optimistic vision of the European Union. In fact, it is mostly filmed in New York. This is reflected in a deleuzian view—"deterritorialization"—as a process of moving beyond the territorial borders of where one is born and raised to somewhere else. Deleuze adds that "the process of deterritorialization here goes from the center to the periphery, that is, from the developed countries to the underdeveloped countries, which do not constitute a separate world, but rather an essential component of the worldwide capitalist machine" (*Anti-Oedipus* 231). This displacement from the center to the periphery is caused by alienation in a place once called home. In *Chinese Puzzle*, Xavier's alienation resides in the fact that he finds himself unhappy after ten years with his British partner Wendy, despite his successful career as a writer. Throughout the film, Paris is depicted as the alienating center in which fathers do not have healthy relationships with their children. Immediately after Wendy and their two children board a plane to New York, Xavier finds himself conflicted and lost in Paris at the publication ceremony of his new book. Without his children, he has lost any connection with his homeland, due to his unhealthy relationship with his own parents.

Paris, in fact, is depicted as a city of aborted family. The notion of "failed family" in relation to Paris is recurrent in Klapisch's trilogy. In *The Spanish Apartment*, Xavier breaks up with his longtime girlfriend Martine right after he returns home to Paris from Spain. Furthermore, acquaintances of Xavier, newlyweds Anne-Sophie and Jean-Michel, leave Paris to live in Barcelona. In *The Russian Dolls*, Xavier and Wendy work together out of London for several months while writing a script for a television show. In the *Chinese Puzzle*, Xavier's best friend, Isabelle, leaves Paris to settle with her partner in New York City to raise a child—for whom Xavier donated his sperm—with her partner Ju. In short, families typically leave Paris,

and fathers, except for Xavier, are distant from their families in *Chinese Puzzle*. Due to his parents' divorce when he was a child, Xavier never had a connection with his own father. His failed relationship with Wendy and the departure of his children ultimately make him a simulacrum of his own father. In the opening sequence's narration, Xavier reprimands himself: "Do not be like your father." To emphasize the depiction of Paris as a place where good fathers cannot function, not only do his two children with Wendy leave Paris, but Isabelle takes his third child to New York City. Theorizing about transnational spaces in transnational films, Hamid Nacify mentions that "space in transnational cinema, therefore, mediates between cosmos (order) and chaos (disorder)" (211). The cityscape of Paris, revealed as a chaotic space for a father, symbolizes the loss of faith in national institutions. It also potentially serves as allegory of the political scatterings of the European Union; the separation of Wendy and Xavier in Paris could be read as Cédric Klapisch's prediction of the Brexit.

Whereas *Chinese Puzzle* takes the main characters from Europe to the United States, in *Budapeste* the main character, Costa, initiates a reverse migration that takes him back to Europe. In a deleuzian sense, *Budapeste* shows protagonists who immigrate and migrate back to their roots under different circumstances. Their migrations are evocative of a trend regarding young filmmakers in the 1990s that Natália Pinazza refers to as the pioneers of the "Reemergence of Brazilian Cinema." She uses the Portuguese expression of "retomada do cinema brasil" which alludes to "Brazilian Cinematic Renaissance" or "Rebirth of Brazilian Cinema," according to some Brazilian film critics (12). By highlighting an increase in Brazilian film production since the 1990s, Pinazza highly praises these young Brazilian filmmakers as the main reason for such a success: "The reemergence of Brazilian cinema in the mid-1990s was due in large part to the appearance of a new generation of filmmakers who moved away from the notions of national

cinema entrenched by filmmakers associated with the avant-garde movement of the 1960s” (13). The new start in the Brazilian film industry also emphasizes films that depict journeying, migrations, and border crossings outside of Brazil. This approach is found in Carvalho’s *Budapest*, which displays an ambiguous conception of home with several international border-crossings between Brazil and Hungary. To oppose *Budapest* with the previous Brazilian cinema era, Natália Pinazza writes:

Since their reemergence 20 years ago, films dealing with journey narratives appear to testify to a postmodern fragmentation of both the self and of narratives of nationhood, and thus they move from the relationship between cinema, anti-colonial thinking, and national liberation that characterizes New Cinemas of the 1960s and 1970s. (3)

As directors, Walter Carvalho and Walter Salles both have a long history of collaboration in previous films. In fact, Carvalho is the cinematographer of Salles’s *Central Station* (1998) and he has worked on numerous projects with Salles. For him, cinema is a collective art and a film’s success leans on multiple talents. Carvalho, like Salles, believes that the role of transnational ties into a film’s success. Because of their numerous collaborations, there is no doubt that we could find some resemblance in the style and pictures depicted in *Central Station* and *Budapest*.

In the adaptation of Chico Buarque’s novel *Budapest* (2004), Carvalho’s cinematography adds layers of border-crossing between transnational physical spaces and bilingual literary production. In terms of deterritorialization, Carvalho contrasts the fact that Costa cuts ties with his Brazilian roots to the socio-political era in Hungary. When Costa leaves his family in Brazil and soon arrives in Budapest, his first stop is next to the Danube river. He contemplates a dismantled Lenin statue on a freight boat heading down the Danube, one of the longest rivers in Europe. Budapest is one of the largest cities divided by the Danube river with one of the largest

populations. The filmic coincidence is striking: as Costa is un-rooting himself from Brazil, the symbol of Lenin is being deterritorialized from Hungary. The final shot of this scene is a panoramic view of the horizontal, dismantled statue in a moving boat, which symbolizes political crisis as a metaphor of the end of socialism.

Like Xavier in *Chinese Puzzle*, Costa is a master border crosser and he deterritorializes himself from Brazil, where he feels alienated. In terms of recent national cinema, Jack Draper III finds this kind of journey characteristic of Brazilian films: “Costa’s deconstruction and reconstruction of his national identity and language, as well as the fragmenting and reorientation of his affective attachments to nation, family, and lover, fit into a general trend of Brazilian postmodernism” (115). The beginning sequences of the film reveals Costa’s fascination with the Hungarian language. A full travelling shot displays a panoramic view of the cityscape of Budapest followed by a language-learning scene in a hotel. Costa repeats “Budapest” several times after the presenter on the television. Then he listens to a newscast in Portuguese, while reading the Hungarian subtitles, yet translating the report into Hungarian in his head. The camera slowly zooms to reveal a close-up of Costa touching the screen of the television in an attempt to read the Hungarian subtitles. Costa’s unhappiness in his own home becomes evident in the next sequence. Back in Brazil, he walks around his empty house, and the only contact he has with his wife Vanda is through the television, as she is a television reporter. In an erotic scene with Vanda, Costa is mentally and emotionally absent. At the dinner table, right before they go to bed, Vanda tells him that she is ovulating while he remains indifferent, writing notes in Hungarian in a notebook he keeps for learning. The irony of this mise-en-scene reinforces the image of a dysfunctional couple. As Costa writes the word “passion” in Hungarian, Vanda gets up and Costa grabs her arm. A close-up on the front page of a Hungarian magazine shows a beautiful

Hungarian woman. Then, the next scene depicts the couple making love without passion, Costa seeming irresponsible and unattached to his wife. He is so romantically disinterested and disconnected that his double sees himself making love to Vanda without passion. By evoking the notion of doubling his old life as a way of escaping an alienation in Brazil, Draper III says that “the life that Costa builds for himself in Budapest is a very much mirror image of his life in Rio, rather than an escape from it” (123). To succeed in a recreation of the life he had in Brazil, Costa knows that he must speak and write in Hungarian. If for Xavier in *Chinese Puzzle*, becoming American means going through bureaucratic obstacles and marrying a Chinese-American woman, for Costa it is a process of first learning Hungarian language and culture. He eventually cuts all ties to the Brazilian language to the extent of substituting his Portuguese with Hungarian in one key scene. Back in Brazil on the beach, a group of musicians performs Chico Buarque’s *Feijoada Completa*, and while the performers sing the lyrics in Portuguese, Costa’s mind begins echoing these lyrics in Hungarian. A medium shot reveals Costa with an unpatriotic smile. This unconscious means of translating linguistically to Hungarian what was naturally part of his Brazilian identity denotes a process of “becoming” in a delezian sense. Even if he is physically back home in Brazil, he no longer fits in. His heart now belongs to Hungary.

The title of Carvalho’s film, *Budapeste*, reflects Costa’s fascination for Hungary which is shown in an abundance of scenes depicting Hungarian music, statues, libraries, and bookstores. In fact, he meets his new wife, Kriska, in a bookstore. The notion of Hungary as a new home becomes ambiguous through the emotional distance Costa decides to take from Brazil because his life in Hungary is mostly a reconstruction of what alienated him in Brazil. Kriska and Vanda, Costa’s wives, are both around the same age and have sons of similar ages. Costa even duplicates his love for writing in Hungary. As a ghostwriter, he invests in learning to speak and write in

Hungarian and decides to explore folkloric Hungarian poetry. Carvalho deploys lengthy scenes in which Costa learns to speak Hungarian first with Kriska, then reads books about folkloric Hungarian poetry, and writes on a typewriter. Ghostwriting in *Budapeste* is linked with the notions of death and life. To better understand its relevance from the prospective of the character Costa, consider what Roland Barthes said about writing in “The Death of The Author”:

Writing detaches itself from an immediate context. It is a language which speaks, not the author. (...) In its celebration of the birth of the reader, “The Death of the Author” explores the consequences of freeing the reading from the constraints of fidelity to an origin, a unified meaning, an identity or any other pre-given exterior or interior reality. (1317-1318)

For Barthes, writing must be considered without the influence of the instance that gives birth to it. In other words, a literary text must detach from an immediate interpretation based on the author’s influences or charisma. Deleuze and Guattari seem to agree with Barthes’s point of view: “A book as neither object nor subject. It is made of various formed matters and meanings. In a book, there are lines of articulation, strata and territories, but also lines of flight” (“A Thousand Plateaus” 1455). Barthes’s celebration of the death of the author is reflected in Costa’s ghostwriting of the best seller *The Gynographer*. The named author who takes credit for the book’s success is Costa’s counterpart, German border-crosser Kaspar Krabbe. Exiled from Germany, Krabbe now lives in Brazil. As a ghostwriter whose identity is unknown in Brazil, Costa has no credibility in the eyes of his wife, Vanda, whose profession as a television anchor makes her a very well-known public figure. Of course, Vanda is attracted to famous writers, and in a scene that celebrates the success of *The Gynographer*, she openly displays this to Kasper Krabbe. Costa becomes extremely jealous, which leads to his departure for Hungary. If in Brazil

ghostwriting alienates Costa and potentially cools the passion he has for Vanda, it has a different resonance in Hungary. In parallel to Kaspar Krabbe benefiting from a fake authorship's fame in Brazil, Costa gains fame as an author in Hungary for the best seller *Budapeste* even though he does not write it. The act of writing in Hungarian becomes a way for Costa to escape his Brazilian roots and to find love and passion in Hungary. He experiences a renaissance learning Hungarian folkloric poetry. The notion of a new home at the end of his journey reveals two aspects: being Hungarian is embracing a literary character's life by the means of ghostwriting, but also embracing Hungarian identity through literary creation.

If ghostwriting in *Budapeste* provokes the death of the real author in his homeland (Brazil) to allow his rebirth in his host country (Hungary), the function of writer allows Xavier to transcend the real world, to connect and to talk with ghosts of famous philosophers of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries: Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Hegel. In addition to crossing physical borders, Xavier deterritorializes himself from the physical world and can reterritorialize in "the world of ideas" in scattering moments because he is a writer. Xavier's border-crossing ability corresponds to what Deleuze and Guattari label as "lines of flights" in their anti-hierarchical model of thinking, "A Thousand Plateaus." They define lines of flights in their rhizomatic process as "the process by which writers detach themselves and their texts from an immobilizing order. They "deterritorialize" themselves from the official culture before "reterritorializing" themselves elsewhere" (1448). This could account for Xavier's alignment with German writers instead of French writers because he has lost faith in his homeland and its national institutions. Klapisch emphasizes Xavier's transcendental ability by giving him the last name Rousseau, a reminder of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In fact, Xavier's father is much like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was also always away from his children. In two

key cuts, Xavier finds himself in conversation with Schopenhauer and Hegel. As he finds himself alienated after the departure of his family, he turns to the philosophers for refuge. In one of his mea culpa scenes, he states: “When we have lost hope and never believed in god, the only people that can help are the philosophers.” While he was still in Paris, he has a fruitful discussion with Schopenhauer during a vision scene, in which he resolves to rejoin his children in New York. Convinced that his life is a lost cause, Xavier finds comfort in Schopenhauer’s ghost, who tells him: “Life is like an embroidery,” referring to the dual reality of life. Life has two sides: the pretty side made of wonderful moments, and the ugly side made of threads that are woven together. The citation explains how the pleasant side of life is created.

The metaphor of the embroidery reflects the evolution of Xavier’s writing career before and after his journey to New York. Xavier went from being a successful fictional writer in Paris to a realistic autobiographic writer describing his own journey in New York. The ugly side of the embroidery represents the different obstacles that Xavier faces while in New York: finding an affordable apartment, legal visitation battles over his children, and immigration and naturalization battles to become a US citizen, among others. The title of Klapisch’s film refers to the self-explanatory title of Xavier’s novel *Chinese Puzzle*, and it refers to the unorthodox, complicated plot of the film, which is a metaphor of Xavier’s universe. Writing in *Chinese Puzzle* becomes therapeutic for the journeyer Xavier during his turbulent stay in New York. The act of writing becomes a liberation from his tribulations and possesses a dual function: sharing his own story and preserving the story by writing it. Creating his own narrative in the film, Xavier’s monologue tells his own story, commenting on his difficulties while he crosses complicated American bureaucracy from a French man’s point of view. Klapisch’s narrative process in his film reflects that of Diderot’s *Jacques le fataliste* (1796) due to the omnipresence

of the narrator, Xavier, and his numerous interventions in the narration. If *Jacques le fataliste* is considered meta-textual, Klapisch's *Chinese Puzzle* is then metafilmic (a narrator questioning the director about his way of directing).

In one of his interventions, Xavier analyzes the cityscape of New York while he crosses borders between uptown and downtown, between foreigners' neighborhoods, such as Chinatown, and the neighborhoods populated by the local people of New York. Through Xavier's bicycle border-crossing, Klapisch's cinematography creates a contrast between the linear streets of New York and the labyrinthic streets that create confusion even for a New Yorker. In the yellow cab scene, Xavier and a Chinese taxi driver are stuck in busy traffic due to a delivery truck driver parked in the middle of the street. This incident ends with the Chinese taxi driver's hospitalization after being physically assaulted by the irresponsible, angry truck driver. Unlike Costa, who ghostwrites in Brazil, Xavier appears to be a successful writer in France under the requirements and guidelines of his editor and publisher. As a famous writer, Xavier's professional success does not resemble his real life and his dysfunctional relationships. In fact, his successful writing career has destroyed the passion he felt ten years earlier toward Wendy. Unlike Costa, who purposely renounces his family for his fascination for Hungary, Xavier in *Chinese Puzzle* abandons his homeland and his successful writing career in Paris to live in New York where he can be near his children. His journey to New York symbolizes the restoration of his fatherhood, his family, and his friendship with Isabelle. Most importantly, the cityscape of New York represents a transnational space where Xavier is cured from the emotional disconnect with his own father, and ultimately becomes a better father. In fact, while visiting New York, Xavier's father confesses to him that he fell in love with Xavier's mother while they were in New York. His mother and his father immortalized this precious yet fleeting moment of

happiness by writing their initials in a heart in the wet concrete pavement in downtown New York at the corner of 8th Street and Avenue A. This symbol of their love validates Xavier's reason for his own existence and restores his hope of being a loving father. Also during this scene, Xavier receives a call from Isabelle notifying him of her child's birth, for whom he was the sperm donor. Even more, Klapisch emphasizes Xavier's fatherhood in the film's final sequence. After ten years of separation, Xavier and his first girlfriend, Martine, reconcile in New York and he becomes a father figure to her two children.

In conclusion, the depiction of a new home and how one arrives to it is revealed differently in these two Brazilian and French films. The transnational ties linked to the filmic spaces they display, or the international collaboration that was used in their making, is the common characteristic linking the two films. Even though they depict a common fundamental quest for identity by means of national or transnational border-crossings, both films utilize the road movie genre to drive their narratives. While *Budapeste* focuses on migration from Brazil to the European Union, *Chinese Puzzle* depicts a more pessimistic Europe that becomes a space of alienation for the protagonists who migrate to the United States. Xavier's journey raises the question of home in the current situation of the European Union and focuses on the loss of faith in national institutions. Xavier's homeland, depicted as an alienated place, leads to his migration to the United States. The motif behind Xavier's alienation in Paris is the loss of his children and the futility of his writing career. In contrast to Paris, Klapisch introduces New York as the true fatherland for both Xavier and his children. By deconstructing his French identity, Xavier reconstructs a transnational identity in New York, where he restores his fatherhood and becomes a father figure for his children. In terms of genre, *Budapeste* displays a much more complex journey that involves transnational border-crossings. José Costa, a master traveler, has a more

radical way of exiling himself from his home and Brazilian identity. Alienated by his miserable life in Brazil, he deterritorializes himself from it and recreates a similar home in Hungary. Duplicating only his social life is insufficient; as a ghostwriter, a new home for Costa involves embracing Hungarian identity through literature.

Carvalho's *Budapeste* and Klapisch's *Chinese Puzzle* are simultaneously local and global, national and transnational, because they are created across two transnational spaces. Exploring border-crossing and journeying in these two films from two different cinematic regions reflects recent trends in transnational film production through similar characteristics in collaboration, filmmaking, and their displaced characters' routes. More importantly, these trends highlight the porosity of borders at the national and regional levels, and Pinazza's notion of "postmodern fragmentation of both the self and of narratives of nationhood." (48). Physical and linguistic journeying, literary creations, and the directors' cinematography are much alike in these two films. Costa and Xavier find comfort in Budapest and New York, respectively. The successful reconstruction of their new transnational identities in their new homes leads to questions surrounding current immigration policies in the United States and Europe, despite being utopian representations in both films. In both films, the main characters develop a transnational identity and find home in their new countries after physical, psychological, and literary journeys.

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