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JOURNEYS

FEATURING

SORRY WE MISSED YOU
BEN THOMAS

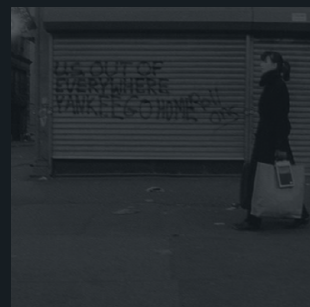
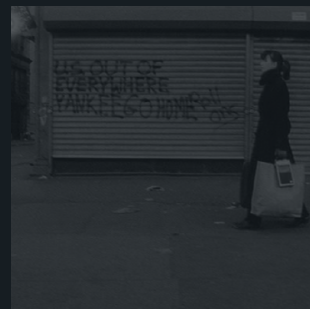
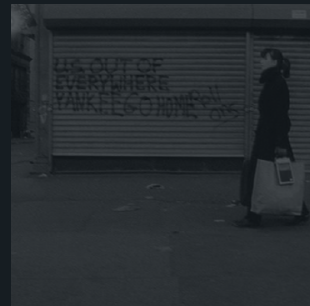
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SORRY WE MISSED YOU

Ben Thomas

The open road is a beckoning, a strangeness, a place where man can lose himself
— William Least Heat-Moon

At the heart of Ken Loach's *Sorry We Missed You* is an intimate connection between journey and precarity. The film centres around a life in which the journey of self-discovery is replaced by journeys of self-perpetuation; when life becomes a sum of never-ending routes more sacrificial than they are stunning, roads along which we travel but do not move forward.

The mythology of the 'journey', from gap years to coming-of-age, is primarily about individual freedom: a process of discovery, experience, pleasure, spiritual exploration and mobility. Jack Kerouac foresaw a 'rucksack revolution', a generation resisting mass consumer culture and liberating themselves from the demand to work, produce and consume. The thrill of the road played a central role in the creation of youth culture and the desire to leave things behind to discover something richer, deeper, better. But what about when the mythology falls apart — the other side of the horizon — when the road becomes a form of restriction, the journey a treadmill and the motor a prison?

In *Sorry We Missed You*, we are introduced to the Turners: Ricky, Abbie, and their children, Seb and Liza Jane, a family struggling in the aftermath of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. They planned to get a mortgage for a house but lost substantial savings tied up in Northern Rock. With the housing ladder torn rung from rung and the negative effects of government austerity seeping into British society (particularly the North), the Turners are forced to re-evaluate.

Ricky, having lost his job in the construction industry, finds a new opportunity as a delivery driver on behalf of Pastels Delivered Fast (PDF), a franchise run by the hardened Gavin Maloney. He is self-employed, running his own business, working *with* the depot and not *for* the depot. In hindsight, we know that Ricky is embroiled in the cannibalism of the gig economy, but there is an allure to the message of self-redemption — the pull of the road. Ricky buys his own van, avoiding the costs of

rental, but sells his wife Abbie's car in the process. She is forced to take the bus to appointments for her carer job — conducting her own gruelling journeys.

At the depot, Ricky is introduced to his scanner, his gun, his black box. This piece of equipment is precious and very expensive: it plans his route, sets out his estimated times, tracks his van, beeps if he's away for more than two minutes. The scanner, not the people, Ricky is told, is the heart of the depot. He must never miss his precise time slots; he must provide a replacement driver if ill; he is given an empty plastic bottle to piss in (just in case). The incentive: if he does well today, he'll get a better, more lucrative, route tomorrow. Ricky must become his journeys and nothing else.

Loach depicts a sinister world, Ricky's world, in which ominous objects dictate and track movement, in which doorstep abuse is the extent of social interaction, in which falling asleep in front of the telly is the only form of relaxation, in which there is no personal, human expression in the workplace or at school. Even the escape of the road becomes a form of deteriorating slavery — a 12-hours-6-days-a-week slug along the boulevard of broken dreams.

Pastels Delivered Fast does not care about people, they care about packages. This is a dangerous and deadly motto. Illness is impossible, crises inconvenient. Ricky is not just hurried, individually to blame for his inability to slow down, he lives in a context of vicious estimation. Everything is plotted. The motorways and roundabouts become a grid of alienation, soundtracked by the whirl of drivers crushed into piano keys. Your family doesn't need to know where you are when the customers do. You will be back late, dinner will be in the microwave, your kids will know your voice but not your presence.

Ricky's story is representative of countless real-life examples. University College London

published research in 2018 legitimising the link between the expanding gig economy and an increase in health and safety risks on the roads: men and women falling asleep at the wheel, cutting up on roundabouts, running red lights, taking risks with their lives in order to survive.

Two notable journeys, past and present, interrupt the dangerous deliveries with glimpses of humanity. More than halfway through the film, Abbie tells the story of how she met Ricky. She explains how he used to take trips to the raves in Morecambe, to see her, travelling from Manchester in his 'crappy little van'. She doesn't delve any deeper than that, but we can imagine what it must have been like — the explosions of purple and red, the spasmodic, jerking, impossibly rhythmic movements, the feeling of being privy to the heartbeat of the underworld.

The interjection of this story emphasises some of what is missing in the present. Ricky and Abbie have lost so much: lust or love, experience and pleasure, the thrill of music, people and possibility. Desire has dissolved and sex has lost its spontaneity; Abbie puts it on her to-do-list — and then forgets it anyway. Creativity has been destroyed; Seb's much maligned graffiti is the only noticeable form of artistic expression in the film. Ricky and Abbie have grown older, and the nature of our journeys obviously changes as that happens, but there's also a sense in which growing older is conducted in a particular way under the current system. The pressure increases, the needs escalate, and the burden becomes too much. Is it a choice between raves and responsibility? Are we supposed to mourn the loss of the road?

Later in the film, the family gathers around the table for a Chinese takeaway, a powerful moment of communal, full-house fun. The

conversations begin to pop with teasing and excited interruption. As the room reaches the point of ecstasy, the phone rings: the family is intruded. Abbie is asked to attend to a client who has been left alone and unable to get to the toilet. She will try and find a taxi. Instinctively, Seb suggests they all go in the van together instead, 'double bunking' so there is enough space. It is a rare glimpse of familial love and compassion. As they sing karaoke in the van, it becomes a space of laughter, silliness and joy.

It is a radical, self-sacrificial, scene. But, underneath, there is this feeling of futility, that individual acts of self-sacrificial love don't change the wider implications of scarcity. Not long after the family arrives outside the house of the client, the film settles back into its suffocating rhythm. Tomorrow, Ricky continues to travel.

The conclusion of the film is sadistically symphonic. The journeys accumulate with only moments of respite. Ricky is assaulted, goes to hospital, has his keys stolen. He slips out of the house, the morning still resuscitating the night, preparing to journey once again. As he turns the ignition, his son runs out to stop him. Seb implores Ricky to rest. In his battered state, with one good eye, he's going to kill himself when he's driving. Seb wants his dad as he was before, for everything to be as it was before. Abbie runs out too, Liza watches from the front door. Ricky — yelling — reverses up the street. The family turns in resignation back towards the house. Ricky must go to work. He begins yet another route, sobbing, the sun shining through the window, as the screen fades to black. Does he kill himself? The indication is that he is already dead.



LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

Jodie Jeffs

The image of Miss America accepting her tiara reflects and refracts from the television screen onto the lens of a pair of oversized glasses on a completely captivated young girl. This is how we meet Olive, the youngest daughter of a dysfunctional family and an aspiring beauty pageant queen. From the opening shot, the film shows Olive's dream through the distorted lens of her framed glasses and it becomes immediately apparent that her dream is nothing short of an optical illusion.

Little Miss Sunshine is both a classic American road movie and a bittersweet comedy about the journey towards finding authenticity and genuine truth in a world of manufactured success and false promises. Set in the American southwest, the film follows the Hoover family as they travel 700 miles from dusty Albuquerque to sunny California so that their daughter, Olive, can participate in the Little Miss Sunshine beauty pageant. Sheryl and Richard (Olive's parents) pack Olive, Dwayne (Olive's silent older brother), Uncle Frank (the heartbroken and depressed Proust scholar), and Grandpa (an abrasive drug addict and Olive's dance coach) into an old mustard yellow VW minivan; a temperamental vehicle with a faulty car horn that can only get going with an assisted rolling start, and essentially another member of the dysfunctional family of eccentric so-called 'losers'. Their journey takes them on the seemingly never-ending pursuit of the promise of Californian success, following the road so many have taken, only to reach their terminus and find themselves in a world of fake teeth, hair extensions, and damaging ideas. The film advocates the importance of non-conformity and authenticity over the superficial American values, which are so perfectly summarised through the grotesque world of beauty pageants. Directed by the husband-and-wife team of Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris and written by Michael Arndt, the film offers a remarkably unique take on the myth of the land of promise.

The road is, of course, not a simple journey; the Hoovers seem to encounter problem after problem in their personal lives, as a family, and with the vehicle itself. Olive is often oblivious to these difficulties deafened by her comically large headphones and with a head full of youthful optimism, blissfully unaware that she is the glue holding her family together. Confused about whether she can eat ice cream and still be as pretty as the beauty queens she idolizes and consumed with the overwhelming fear that she might be seen as a loser in the eyes of her father, she so desperately clings to the hope of standing on the stage herself and winning the title of Little Miss Sunshine. Yet, in a devastatingly tender moment the night before her big performance, she breaks down to her Grandpa and we finally see that Olive's outward optimism and joy are all a performance. Questioning her worth against the traditional values of contemporary American society, she softly asks her Grandpa, behind a blubbing cascade of tears, whether she is 'pretty', and it is heartbreaking to see such a joyful, youthful child with a smile that has filled the frame begin to question whether she is good enough at all. Her Grandpa doesn't hesitate in reassuring her that she is beautiful, without holding her to any standards of beauty or requirements of success. This moment wholly encapsulates the film's message of the journey toward self-acceptance; something that Olive must come to discover on her own.

After a series of devastating losses and when the family should be at a breaking point, they become closer than ever when they see Olive on stage, finally competing for her dream only to find that she is horrendously out of place in the world of glamorous beauty pageants. Performing a mock striptease, choreographed by her Grandpa, to Rick James' 'Super Freak' Olive is met with repulsion and disgust by the audience and the uptight judges. Yet her performance doesn't seem any more grotesque than the appalling parade of young girls in

swimming costumes, wigs, and makeup. In a glorious moment of solidarity, the entire Hoover family joins Olive on stage, after being ordered to get her off, to expose the double standards and hypocrisies of these beauty contests and embrace the joyful innocence of Olive's dance routine, much to the seething disapproval of the judges.

Olive's journey was never really in pursuit of a plastic crown or the audience's applause. Rather, it was a desperate attempt to gain approval from her family for being herself, something she soon realises she never needed to pursue. Shunning a world of fake dreams and regressive ideals, Olive sets off back to Albuquerque and into the sunset with her family in their dusty old van and its noisy broken horn; without a crown, feeling like a winner.



AFTER HOURS

Nicole Sanacore

Martin Scorsese's dark comedy *After Hours* isn't just a journey, it's a *trip*, highlighting Scorsese's range as a director. It follows Paul Hackett (Griffin Dunne) through a wild night in lower Manhattan. Upon meeting the strange and beautiful Marcy Franklin (Rosanna Arquette), Paul decides to take a chance and break the mundane routine of his life as an office worker. As opposed to the "yuppies" that Paul is used to encountering in upper Manhattan, he finds himself in the company of eccentric artists, violent punk rockers, and working class heroes. Paul finds himself traversing a surreal version of the familiar city in which he works and lives, with most of his night focusing on simply getting home.

Paul's call to adventure occurs when he leaves his data entry job in an uptown Manhattan office and decides to go to a cafe, feeling dissatisfied with his life. There he meets Marcy, and is quickly enamored with her. After some dialogue where Marcy mentions her artist roommate Kiki who makes sculptures of cream cheese bagels to sell as paperweights, he gets her phone number. Kiki could be considered the "supernatural aid" throughout the film, as Paul uses the excuse that he wants to buy one of her paperweights to call Marcy and go to her apartment.

He crosses the threshold into the unknown by hailing a cab from his apartment to SoHo, but his money flies out the cab window, and he's unable to pay the driver when they arrive. The driver is furious and curses Paul before driving off. Unlike the heroes of journeys past, Paul is left without a guide to help him through the unknown. Any mentors or helpers that appear through Paul's journey, such as Tom the bartender who offers him money for the increased night fare for the subway, are sabotaged by Paul's previous actions. When Paul goes to see Marcy, he rejects her sexual advances because he comes to assume that he has terrible burns on her body. She's devastated

by his rejection.

He ends up returning to Marcy and Kiki's shared apartment when he catches two burglars, Neil and Pepe, stealing one of Kiki's statues. He brings it back and Kiki tells Paul that Marcy was upset and he should apologize to her, inviting him and Marcy to meet up with her and her boyfriend at Club Berlin for an art show later that night. He goes into Marcy's room and finds that she committed suicide by overdose. In a nightmarish coincidence, it turns out that Marcy was Tom's girlfriend, and he's destroyed by the news of her suicide.

The other people Paul meets throughout the night represent his trials. Julie, the bar's waitress who quickly develops a crush on Paul, decides to quit her job. With newfound time on her hands, she offers to let Paul hang out in her apartment while he waits for Tom to reopen the bar so he can return his keys. She reveals she's an amateur artist and uses this as an excuse to draw a portrait of him. When Julie suggests Paul stay the night, he considers until he sees the mousetraps strewn about her apartment. Disgusted, he refuses and insists he needs to go home.

In his various attempts to return to the familiarity of his apartment, Paul finds himself further and further from it. He tries to help Tom, and ends up accused of being the burglar responsible for break-ins in the apartment complex. With a scorned Julie teaming up with Tom's enraged neighbors to catch him. In his last visit to Tom's apartment, he witnesses a couple arguing in an adjacent apartment block, with the woman shooting her husband multiple times. Worn out from the unforgiving journey he's been through thus far, he laments that he'll probably get blamed for that too. Though he's been in the city he calls home the whole night, he's a stranger in the clearly tight-knit neighborhood he's ventured out to. He really doesn't know anyone, and no one knows him.

Even in his attempts to make connections and get help, it's almost as if he's speaking another language as his intentions become increasingly misconstrued by the people he meets that night.

The night takes a truly unexpected turn when the vigilante mob in SoHo wants Paul out of the neighborhood too. Led by Gail, an off-duty ice cream truck driver, the mob relentlessly chases him through the streets. As Paul flees through the labyrinthine alleyways, fire escapes and seedy establishments that are still open late into the night, he can sense he's out of options. Still, all hope isn't lost yet, as he comes up with one final, desperate idea to at least get away from the vigilante mob.

Paul's redemption is, in true Scorsese fashion, a penance – an atonement for his sins. Paul decides to hide in Club Berlin, thinking it would be the last place anyone would look for him. June, a sculptor who lives in Club Berlin's basement, offers to help Paul when the vigilante mob insists on searching the club for him. She quickly hides him by encasing him in papier-mâché, a living sculpture and direct callback to Marcy and Kiki. He remains trapped, his fate now entirely out of his hands as the mob searches the club and June's basement apartment. Empty-handed, they leave, but June refuses to free Paul from the sculpture in case the mob returns.

Though June leaves her apartment for a few minutes, Paul is left in this purgatorial state. He's free from the unforgiving determination of the vigilantes, but he's more trapped than ever as he literally can't go anywhere. His freedom and survival look bleaker than ever as it seems he'll never be able to make it out of SoHo and return back home.

Neil and Pepe, the two burglars who Paul had caught with Kiki's sculpture earlier that night, end up in June's apartment through a manhole. Upon noticing the papier-mâché statue, they decide to steal it, unaware that Paul is inside. The pair argue over the decision to steal the statue over a new stereo, concluding with: "A stereo's a stereo. Art is forever."

The film ends where it begins, at Paul's mundane office job. As the papier-mâché statue he is enclosed in falls out of the burglars' van, it breaks open in the middle of the street. Paul, seemingly unfazed, brushes himself off and walks into the building as a new workday starts. *After Hours* comes full circle, with the debris from the statue dusting his clothes as the only evidence of Paul's surreal journey in SoHo. Paul probably wants to keep it that way.



IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT

Lauren Mattice

While Frank Capra's seminal *It Happened One Night* is heralded as a classic and forebearer of later screwball and romantic comedies, its cultural commentary on the disparities laid bare by the Great Depression is inseparable from its main vehicle as a journey film.

Adapted from the short story "Night Bus" by Samuel Hopkins Adams, the film follows heiress Ellie Andrews and her cross-country escape from her overbearing father Alexander after she marries the "phony" socialite King Westley. Along the way, Ellie meets the recently fired newspaper man Peter Warne, a silky and dry talent who helps her flee in a series of wacky road scenarios kept privy to Ellie in her secluded, wealthy upbringing.

The narrative works so brilliantly because of its leads' ability to adapt and change. Ellie, who recklessly spends her last dollars trying to buy chocolate, admits to never eating raw carrots, and initially escapes her father by jumping off a yacht, plays between resistance to Peter's everyman charms and an outpouring of generosity to show this flexibility.

On the one hand, Colbert's comedic ability is marked by snappy quips to Gable's brashness or in bodily cues such as a lift of the chin or roll of the eyes to Peter's lower-brow antics. In another instant, Ellie is brought back down to Earth, giving the rest of her money to a boy with a sick mother traveling on the bus with them, an all too quick reaction to a situation assumedly never put before her.

This is not to say that generosity like this is unrealistic or a blight on the story's ability to speak to different classes of people. What it does instead is shrink the spectrum of economic disparity from its real distances in the Great Depression in favor of the romantic-comedy plot, or as historian Bernard Dick wrote, "a movie in which romance, social differences, political conversion, and the triumph of goodness coalesced into a myth of America."

Ellie is distinctly marked by the purpose of her journey: the escape from her father's grasp. It is one taken spontaneously with no real safety net besides King Westley on the other side, and abandoned when she thinks Peter has left her just before reaching New York. Despite her troubles of losing her money, having her bag stolen, sleeping outside, and more hijinks played to comedy, they are ultimately fixable and temporary.

While Ellie believes the power is not in her favor, despite several displays of monetary prowess to the contrary, Peter plays to the opposite for his pride. He teases his boss with telegrams of his journey and epithets his stupidity all while his journey is one of redemption, to get his livelihood back. He is closer to the boy on the bus whose mother spent all of their remaining money on a last-ditch journey to New York for a job that might not even be there — but for the film to work as a romantic comedy and for Ellie and Peter to reverse the trope of the "damsel in distress," this distance cannot be expatiated on.

Instead, we see glimpses of his working-class knowledge in the motels or while hitchhiking. They're inserted as one-time lessons on how to get out of a quick jam rather than illustrations of survival in the Depression-era. Ironically, these are some of the most popular and famous scenes but remain still one-offs to laugh about and move on from.

Money is on the other side of this journey to save both Ellie and Peter, and it shifts the film away from the realism of road movies to come and toward the unity of the feel-good genres of comedy and romance that it would later heavily influence.



COLD WAR

Michelle Bernstein

When I think of *Cold War*, the first thing that comes to my mind is the opening scene – the children of war, the people with fragments of their history in a folk song-shaped memory.

In the first shots, we are introduced to the loud serenading of a bagpipe-like instrument – a man with rheumy sad eyes; a violinist's sharp cheeks; chickens pecking around their house. A small boy in a thick coat and a flapped ushanka stands still listening and observing. These first sounds and images reflect upon the entire film, surpassing the state of displacement and a certain longing for simpleness. What once was and will never be again. The contrasting images of everyday life, landscapes of post-war Poland are delicate and naturalistic – they can be easily compared to the works of Andrei Tarkovsky.

While the film tells a magnificent love story, it is also a film about belonging, the emotional odyssey and the physical pilgrimages we find ourselves enduring. *Cold War* is above all else an account of the dimensions of love in position to time and space. How love moves through us and along with us as we go through life in a metaphorical and physical nature. It is like wandering into the past – like looking into someone's recollections.

However, here, representations and definitions of things – such as time and remembrances – function in layers. The central characters, Zula and Wiktor, are constantly travelling back and forth, both in an emotional and a literal context. They cannot seem to find an agreement where they can love one another and be in each other's day to day life as well as fulfil their artistic duties.

The film dances its way through different time frames, some components being more precise and focused, others almost gone with a glimpse, as if they've already been partially forgotten. Occasionally it feels so personal and precisely intimate, like witnessing something you shouldn't see because these moments belong to someone else.

I feel I must write about the editing since it serves a significant role in how we perceive the way time passes, and the relationship the characters sail – it is, therefore, another facet that contributes to the layered perception of time and voyage. The editing is rather sudden and sporadic. One second you are witnessing the mundanity of the Polish countryside, the next you observe an event in an opera house. Instead of being spoon-fed the plot, one is put in a position to make the ties between time and place and its in-between on their own.

Through *Cold War*, Pawlikowski preserves a version of his own parents' volatile relationship; the film is also dedicated to them. His parents met in 1948. His mother was a ballerina, his father was studying to be a doctor – they were repeatedly divided and reunited. They divorced only to reunite years later in Germany when both were married to other people, so they divorced their respective spouses and remarried. Both died in 1989, just before the Berlin Wall came down. When his parents died Pawlikowski felt a huge absence in his life, the absence of a "fatherland and motherland," as he explained it.

In his film, Pawlikowski does not only preserve a fictional version of his parents, but also the

stories of people who fell into the emotional turmoil, the web that was the circumstances artists faced during the Cold War. It is also about the hardships people faced to preserve the history and culture, the music and art, after the Second World War.

In the film, Wiktor's and Zula's story unfolds over just fifteen years. As the folk company expands and receives more attention, Wiktor becomes worried about the government's measures to supervise the content of its music and concerts. The couple plans on fleeing to the West, to Paris through Berlin, which at the time was still an open city. Once again, the two are divided, then reunited, then separated again. Periodically for geopolitical reasons and occasionally for deeply emotional ones. They move along the ever-turning landscapes of the times of the Cold War – bearing both a connotation of geographic and spiritual passage.

The history and culture that are portrayed in this film lie close to my heart. The language of the protagonists is the first I ever knew. I know the cold of Berlin during the winter, the painted cheeks of the Mazurek dancers, those desolated timeless folk songs, as weathered as worn linen. It all feels familiar, yet out of reach. Like a word on the tip of your tongue or something you are reaching for with your hands stretched tightly and can barely reach.



STRANGER THAN PARADISE

Ruby Mastrodimos

*U.S. OUT OF EVERYWHERE
YANKEE GO HOME*

This is the message—graffiti emblazoned on the shutters of a vacant storefront—that greets Hungarian immigrant Eva upon her arrival in New York. While the act of vandalism is, of course, a statement against a larger American imperialism, it takes on a decidedly apolitical, personal meaning over the course of Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*. As the aimless characters move from city to city—and from country to country—in search of something to break up the tedium of life, the specter of the graffiti haunts the narrative. *Get out of everywhere, go home.*

The push and pull of this, the constant need to keep moving in friction with the yearning for home, is a hallmark of the road movie. New York is meant to be just a stopover in Eva's trip from Budapest to Cleveland, where she'll move in with her elderly aunt Lotte. The shape of a journey seems to form itself only to be halted: Lotte is ill and in hospital, Eva will have to spend the next ten days at her card-counting cousin Willie's apartment. He's less than thrilled by the imposition, she's annoyed by the delay to her plans and stifles under the sense of confinement. *Out, go.*

Eva and Willie sit in his claustrophobic studio in a dilapidated downtown tenement, smoking cigarettes and watching cartoons; sometimes, they're joined by Willie's friend and partner-in-petty-crime, Eddie. The apartment is a self-contained universe. Jarmusch traps the characters in a series of long, static shots with flat lighting. The windows are over-exposed during the day and under-exposed at night, we get the sense that they're in a void. And yet it's less a purgatory and more a cocoon. *Go home.* The trio fall into a playful, reluctantly affectionate routine—the very enemy of the road film.

But this is just the beginning of a pattern Jarmusch sets out. We watch as the characters move from one room to another; Willie's apartment is followed by Lotte's Cleveland living room and then a cheap beachside motel room. At each stop, Willie seems to be searching for something he lost when Eva left his home. He's trying to recreate the ease, the effortless comfort of the days spent in his cramped studio, but he can't admit it—"I just want to get out of here, see something different for a few days" he tells Eddie before they leave New York to follow Eva. *Get out.*

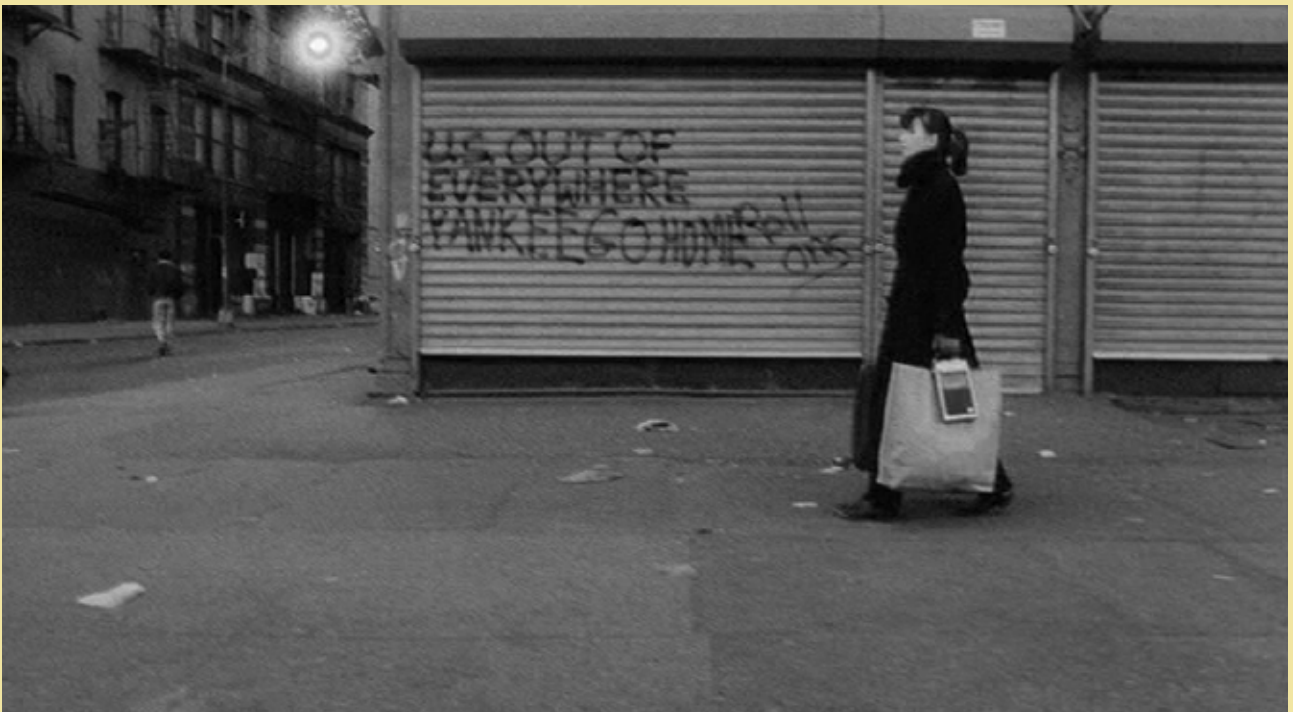
"You know, it's funny," Eddie proclaims midway through the film. "You come to someplace new and everything looks the same."

"No kidding, Eddie," Willie responds. Our own eyes as an audience, however, expose the lie here. We've already seen New York City's claustrophobic, sun-blotting buildings and dirty streets give way to the flat, openness of a snowy Cleveland; soon, after this exchange, they'll migrate down to Florida with its palm trees and ruddy beaches. There is an irrefutable visual *difference* between all of these places; we see what the characters either cannot or don't want to. The irony is that upon entering Cleveland, Willie and Eddie drive past the onion-domed churches of the city's various immigrant communities, leading Eddie to ask whether Cleveland looks like Budapest; Eddie registers Cleveland's newness upon arriving, he remarks on it, but the tedium of sitting in room after room—the thing that was so magical the first time around—flattens his perception of place.

Jarmusch ends the film with a screwball series of mishaps and missed connections. In Florida, Eva reaches her breaking point and goes to the airport. She considers a series of flights to

Europe: Madrid, Paris, and, of course, Budapest. Go home. We cut to black as she considers her options. Suddenly, Willie and Eddie are at the airport trying to discern where she's gone. Willie boards a plane hoping to find Eva and convince her to stay. Throughout the film, Willie has resisted his Hungarian upbringing and insisted on his Americaness, and still, he unwittingly gets trapped on a flight back to Budapest—*YANKEE GO HOME*.

Yet we know Eva's not on that plane with him. With the choice to leave or to stay in front of her, Eva is the character who finally chose "stay" as she returns to the motel room and waits. Jarmusch spends much of the film subverting the conventions of the road movie with scene after slow scene in confined spaces, with abrupt stops and starts rather than a fluid, meditative journey; but throughout *Stranger Than Paradise*, Jarmusch upholds the genre's fixation on what happens when we try to outrun ourselves. Whether a place is new or old, the same or different from what came before, it doesn't matter. Eva comes back to that trashy dive on the Florida coastline because she understands what they've all been running from. The old adage becomes a truism: wherever you go, there you are.



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