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“Flowing Perpetually Outward”: Quest and Journey in Terrence Malick’s *The Thin Red Line* (1998)

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Abstract: North American director Terrence Malick’s films poetically explore inner journeys that, particularly in his early work, deeply engage with the narratives surrounding the American Dream, often intertwining these with literal journeys. The protagonists of Malick’s cinema share a common experience of existential inquiry, which propels their personal journeys and serves as the core narrative element of his films. In Malick’s transcendentalist framework, the interplay between a character’s path and the surrounding landscape connects to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s concept of the Over-Soul, a philosophical idea in which all things converge and unify. This article examines Malick’s interpretation of mobility in *The Thin Red Line* (1998), analysing its (meta)physical journey through thematic and philosophical lenses. This approach aims to illuminate how the notion of the Over-Soul continues to shape Malick’s spiritual approach to storytelling. The analysis will consider both narrative structure and formal style to explore this relationship.