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## Projection of Multiple Fantasies

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# Projection of Multiple Fantasies: De-subjectivity of Images in *Long Day's Journey into Night*

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*Abstract:* Gilles Deleuze demonstrated the key role of flashback in dealing with the relationship between actual image and recollection-image when interpreting the temporality of images. He established two criteria for judging whether a flashback implies a recollection-image by stating that: (1) it serves as some kind of prompt in the narrative to make the viewer perceive that the scene has entered a flashback; (2) it relies on fate or forking time. But Deleuze also mentioned that, if the context or condition disappears, the recollection-image represented by the flashback will lose its support, at which point, the pure recollection will also disappear. In this case, the actual image no longer forms a connection with the sensor-motor, but is suspended, which produces a fantasmatic effect. Bi Gan extends this suspension in his film "Long Day's Journey into Night" by removing the character being referred to in the flashback, stripping it from figure and confining it in the voice-over. The film features an extreme use of several effects in the sensory-motor situations and the flashbacks, as described in Deleuze's "Cinema 2: Time-Image," namely recollection, dream, and falsification. Thus, the boundary between flashback and reality is completely broken. In addition, Bi Gan uses doppelgangers in the second part of the film to reconstruct the ambiguity of actual images and recollection-images in the first part, turning them into pure fantasies. This essay will analyze issues relating to the images and characters in "Long Day's Journey into Night" and show how this film constitutes a typical case of recollection-images transformed into fantasies through the power of falsification.

*Keywords:* Bi Gan, De-subjectivity, Falsification, Fantasy, Gilles Deleuze, Long Day's Journey into Night, Recollection-Image

## Temporality of Recollection-Image

Gilles Deleuze notes in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* that flashback is a concrete manifestation of recollection-image and discusses how this technique works in films. He believes that a flashback indicates a connection between the actual image and the recollection-image, which is "precisely a closed circuit which goes from the present to the past, then leads us back to the present" (Deleuze 1989, 48). Deleuze proposes two recollection functions of flashback. The first refers to clearly marked flashbacks, whose internal temporality is linear, just like the internal causality based on destiny in Marcel Carné's works. The second involves forking time. Deleuze cites the works of Joseph L. Mankiewicz to explain this temporality. For example, in *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954) and *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949), there are three characters, each with their own flashbacks; but, at the same time, each flashback belongs to all three of them.

The forking of time has become one of the main subjects of recent film narrative research (Bordwell 2002; Branigan 2002; Young 2002; Berg 2006; Buckland 2009). Since the narrative revolution began in the 1990s, the exploration of the temporality of images has gone far beyond the practices of Hitchcock, Mankiewicz, and Orson Welles. Flashback has broken away from the framework of the classic narrative to embody nonlinear temporality. While Welles and Mankiewicz arranged their narratives as trees, in which forking timelines finally returned to their starting points, perfectly compounding the three-act structure of the classic narrative, films after the 1990s gradually escaped the presupposition of a search for rationality or inner destiny.

Deleuze believes that true narrative is "developed organically, according to legal connections in space and chronological relations in time," while falsifying narration is different

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(Deleuze 1989, 133). He used the narrative structure of *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) as an example to explain that “there is never a succession of passing presents” in falsifying narratives (Deleuze 1989, 101). In this film, there is an emotional entanglement between the protagonist X and the female protagonist that both “has happened” and “is about to happen.” Deleuze believes that this constitutes a simultaneous existence of events in different times and spaces. However, Deleuze also mentions that there is another narrative that transcends simultaneity, that is, it “ceases... to claim to be true,” so that it becomes completely fiction (Deleuze 1989, 131). There is a false time experience in this fiction, which is not simultaneous, but “brings together the before and the after in a becoming” (Deleuze 1989, 155). However, in works since the narrative revolution, there are cases that can be used to further explain the function of flashback. Among them, Deleuze’s “simultaneity of images” and “becoming” exist at the same time and are not mutually exclusive. If *Last Year at Marienbad* is the simultaneity of the past and the future in the temporality of images, then the key “anchoring” events in *Pulp Fiction* (1994), for instance, all occurred at the same time and in the same space, but each event is treated as a node and their order rearranged. Hence, they are all self-referential structures; however, the flashback in *Last Year at Marienbad* implies the simultaneity of parallel universes, while *Pulp Fiction* is obviously a jigsaw puzzle game with no fiction, but an actual narrative.

The problems caused by the expansion of the self-referential structure in contemporary films can in fact be regarded as problems of narrative mode. For example, although *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *Last Year at Marienbad* employ some narrative techniques that would have been considered avant-garde at that time, such as the use of flashback as a recollection-image to realize the jump between the past and the present, they are actually based on the classic narrative framework, which means that these flashbacks will eventually have a reasonable explanation, thus conforming with folk psychology (Bordwell 2002).

Self-referentiality is no longer limited to images and identities in narratives because images and identities themselves have greater potential for expansion. This should be regarded as a problem of narrative logic: while the flashback based on classic narrative technique will definitely return to the unity of image and character, the narrative revolution has broken this situation. When Slavoj Žižek analyzed Krzysztof Kieślowski, he proposed a concept called “flashback in the present” in which he used the judges in *Three Colors: Red* (1994) as an example—the past experiences of the old judge are very similar to what a young judge is experiencing in the present in the film (Žižek 2001, 79, 82, 83). Although this may be considered the same kind of simultaneity as found in *Last Year at Marienbad*, *Three Colors: Red* provides no clues in the form of a logical relationship; instead, it deliberately obscures the flashback, and even directly substitutes it into the present. By contrast, *Last Year at Marienbad* appears to deliberately let the viewer understand the boundary between reality and flashback. This is the special feature of a flashback in the present: it has simultaneity, but as there is no boundary between actuality and falsity, it cannot be classified as a memory, a lie, or an illusion.

Bordwell designed a classic analytical narrative framework: *fabula* and *syuzhet*. He borrowed these two terms from Russian formalism to propose a theoretical framework capable of solving the problem encountered in Aristotelian mimesis, that is, the “difference between the story that is represented and the actual representation of it” (Bordwell 1985, 48). Furthermore, this framework must be based on Aristotelian logic: either  $A = A$  or  $A \neq A$ . Deleuze suggests using  $I = \text{another}$  to replace  $Ego = Ego$  when describing falsifying narration (Deleuze 1989). This also constitutes a typical form of Aristotelian logic.  $I = \text{another}$  means that falsifying narration makes viewers doubt whether the character corresponds to the figure, which implies that  $Ego = Ego$  is no longer valid at this point. But if this suspicion appears in flashback in the present, then “either...or...” no longer holds. For example, in *Three Colors: Red*, both the old and young judges have a connection with the heroine Valentine, and the logic here is that  $I = \text{another}$  but at the same time that  $Ego = Ego$ . This is taken a step further in *The Double Life of Véronique*, where the two Véroniques present the problem  $I = \text{another}$ , but raise the question,

which one is Ego? The temporality of the image produces many presents, and the past and future described by Deleuze no longer exist.

Furthermore, this mode is more in line with another time-image concept proposed by Deleuze: the pseudo-story. When this concept was first put forward, the narrative revolution had not yet occurred, and the cases Deleuze used were limited to the avant-garde films of the time. For example, he used the films of Shirley Clarke and John Cassavetes to explain the concept of the pseudo-story, noting that the filmmakers were “forming their combinations, [...] passing the frontier between the real and the fictional, [...] bring[ing] together the before and the after in the incessant passage from one state to the other” (Deleuze 1989, 153).

A more intuitive example of this time-image is the flashback in the present in Kieślowski’s *Three Colors: Red*. The same example can also be found in Theo Angelopoulos’ *Ulysses’ Gaze* (1995), where there is a large amount of transformation between the past and the present. In the process of searching for the legendary film recorded by the Manaki brothers, the Greek producer A traveled through several countries in the Balkans on his own, referring to the Manaki brothers’ documented experiences, and was finally able to track down the film. In this process, the same actress (Maia Morgenstern) appears in a different role in each Balkan country, each with an emotional bond with A. In both *Three Colors: Red* and *Ulysses’ Gaze*, the narratives follow a newer form of forking time, which is different from the pseudo-story to be found in Shirley Clarke’s and Cassavetes’ films, in that it appears to be more random. More intuitively, the so-called “flashback in the present” in this mode relies on the overlap of recollection-image and pseudo-story to complete the conversion between the past and the future. Compared with the pre-narrative revolution films that featured forking time, the more recent films are further removed from the nucleus of the classic narrative.

As the image deviated from the narrative nucleus, “time became an end rather than a means” (Schrader 2018, 25). Deleuze’s time-image is based on his analysis of film narratives after World War II, but predicts the direction of the narrative revolution. His pseudo-story is mainly based on Nietzsche’s “eternal return” and Leibniz’s “impossibility” (Deleuze 1989, *The Powers of the False*). In the eternal return, time does not have an ultimate purpose other than to allow a “becoming,” as Deleuze further states: “That the present moment is not a moment of being or of present ‘in the strict sense,’ that it is the passing moment, forces us to think of becoming, but to think of it precisely as what could not have started, and cannot finish, becoming” (Deleuze 1983, 48). Becoming “shatter[s] the empirical continuation of time,” and forms the coalescence of different instants of order; this order constitutes a kind of vertical time (Deleuze 1989, 155; Bachelard 1985, cited in Small 2010, 46; Small 2010, 64, 65, 70, 71). This can be seen as the coalescence of different dimensions of time, rather than a simple mechanized and cyclical process; that is, it cannot be seen as the return of identity (Deleuze 1983). Deleuze cites the continuum transformation found in Alain Resnais’ works, where two different types of continuums are not “assimilated to the transformation of a single one” (Deleuze 1989, 119). This can be extended to *Ulysses’ Gaze*, in which the Greek producer A, after experiencing several flashbacks in the present, eventually becomes the A who is lying on his lover in the fog and crying. At this point, A is no longer the A who was originally searching for the film. Furthermore, when A enters each Balkan country, he is no longer the A of before. It is worth mentioning that there is also a female character in each experience; although these females are all played by the same actress, each one is different. This also implies that A is no longer the same person when entering the time order of eternal return. For the destruction of identity, Deleuze uses Leibniz’s “impossibility” concept to offer a creative explanation: “It is not the impossible, but only the impossible that proceeds from the possible” (Deleuze 1989, 130).

Following these two concepts, the time-image deviates from the classical narrative; Deleuze called it the “direct time-image” (Deleuze 1989, 270–279). Just like the Tarkovsky ring described by Paul Schrader, different “slow cinemas” roam around the space outside of the narrative core, spreading in different directions (Schrader 2018, 32). In his study of the forking

path narrative after the 1990s, Allan Cameron proposed a modular time theory. In discussing the concept of modular time, he cites the views of Dana Polan and Žižek, both of whom point to hypertexts. While analyzing the narrative structure of *Pulp Fiction*, Polan noticed parallels between computer hypertext and the characteristics of “diegetic spaces, narrative segments and pop-culture references” (Cameron 2008, 43). Žižek also put forward a similar view when analyzing *Lost Highway* (1997), highlighting the similarities between the multiple fantasmatic narratives in *Lost Highway* and hypertext (Cameron 2008, 44). This kind of hypertext is almost a reprint of “direct time-image.” It can also be said that in his analysis of films after World War II, Deleuze foresaw the trend of the 1990s (Deleuze 1989, 270–279). This trend involved a form of “futur antérieur” (future perfect), as if the novels of Dickens or Emily Brontë could almost be transformed into narrative films using close-ups or flashbacks, and the use of off-screen space in *Madame Bovary* were almost equivalent to a modernist avant-garde film.

The new (for readers in the nineteenth century) narrative techniques in these novels would not be truly understood until the cinematic narrative rules in the next century had matured. People sought to understand their meaning, but it was not until the standardized film narrative appeared that it suddenly became clear that the earlier novels constituted a form of “futur antérieur” (Žižek 2000, 42–44).

### Coalescence of Time-Images in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*

*Long Day’s Journey into Night* (2018a) is Bi Gan’s second feature film, which continues the narrative framework of his first film *Kaili Blues* (2015)—the filmic narrative is also divided into two parts. Both parts feature characters constantly changing between reality and fiction contained in direct time-image. This narrative pattern began with Kieślowski’s *The Double Life of Véronique* and can later also be found in David Lynch’s *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001). The schismatic narrative in the films of Kieślowski and Lynch involves the sudden transformation of a character corresponding to a particular figure in the image. For example, in *The Double Life of Véronique*, the death of Weronika in Poland caused Véronique in France to make a new life choice through a mysterious connection. In *Lost Highway*, the husband Fred, who killed his wife Renee, inexplicably, turned into Pete in prison; the other party had a lover, Alice, who seemed to be a replica of Renee. In *Mulholland Drive*, Betty and Rita are transformed into Diane and Camilla.

In *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, this transformation becomes more complicated. The names of the first part and the second part come from the poetry collection *Poppy and Memory* of the Romanian-born German-language poet Paul Célan (1972).<sup>2</sup> Bi Gan reversed the word order so that the titles became *Memory* and *Poppy* (Bi Gan, interview by Wang, April 28, 2018b). The structure of these two titles coincides with Deleuze’s “From Recollection to Dreams” (the subject of Chapter 3 in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*), and there is an inherently synchronic relationship. The *Memory* part of this film contains multiple manifestations about the flashback, which Deleuze believes can be used as a recollection-image to show the past.

Deleuze proposed that flashbacks have a short-fiction expression when representing memories, that is, “memory is voice, which speaks, talks to itself, or whispers, and recounts what happened. Hence the voice-off which accompanies the flashback” (Deleuze 1989, 51). He further states that flashbacks will always be accompanied by special effects as a kind of reminder, “like a sign” (Deleuze 1989, 48). This is no longer the norm in films since the narrative revolution, just as there are no special effects to serve as a reminder in *Pulp Fiction*—after one narrative, there is a direct cut to the next narrative, at which point the recollection-

<sup>2</sup> After verification, in several versions of Paul Célan’s poetry collections published in China, there is only the German title “Mohn und Gedächtnis,” so perhaps Bi Gan himself translated the English titles—“Poppy” and “Memory” that appeared in the official subtitles.

image serves more as an instant database. However, in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, classic special effects continue to be used. Some flashbacks use ambiguous transitions, such as a theater scene in the opening shot that switches to a small hotel by means of special effects, accompanied by a voice-over. There is a transition effect of temporality here. Both the special effects transition and direct cut belong to flashback technology, but the former is more ambiguous. So, when the recollection-image begins to show signs of a falsifying narrative, special effects are even more advantageous. For example, when Weronika in Poland died, the shots became a subjective perspective of transcendence, and thus transitioned to Véronique in France. With the use of special effects, the nature of flashback shifts from recollection to fiction. While Bi Gan used voice-over in *Memory*, essentially, this was in fact the same as Kieślowski's transcendental subjective shots. Thus, the voice-over in *Memory* is transformed into transcendental shots in *Poppy* reasonably by Bi Gan.

The two parts of *Long Day's Journey into Night* signify the relationship between recollection and dreams, and possess the various characteristics proposed by Deleuze. The two protagonists, each of whom has a corresponding figure, are cross-edited between reality and flashbacks. In *Memory*, there are two supporting roles, which are mostly present in the voice-over. In flashbacks, the male protagonist and the female protagonist are together. In the real image, only the male is left. In reality, the male protagonist learns that his lady acquaintance cheated him, and the flashbacks turn the corresponding recollection-image into a false narrative. In the *Poppy* part of *Memory*, the two protagonists are transformed. The male protagonist wanders in his dreamland, where he meets the red-haired version of the female protagonist. Just as with the four roles played by the Greek producer and Maia Morgenstern in *Ulysses' Gaze*, "I" becomes a nonidentical "I" in a different world. In this way, the male and female protagonists in *Memory* not only become a nonidentical "me," but they are also projected into two other supporting roles without figures, and become the coalescence of the past, the present, and the future in the eternal return. Unlike the transformation caused by regional changes in *Ulysses' Gaze*, *Long Day's Journey into Night* separates recollection and dreams in the form of chapters.

### ***Multiple Time-Images Presented in "Memory"***

In *Memory*, the male protagonist and the female protagonist guide the narratives of what is real and what is recollection respectively. The two supporting roles mainly exist in the narration (voice-over). Thus, there are four essential narratives in the first part of the film, some directly reflected in the plot (such as the stories of Luo and Wan) and some in the narration of the lines (such as the stories of Mother and White Cat, where they are roleless characters). In order to facilitate the explanation of the key anchors of the projections between these four characters later, I briefly describe them below.

Hero: Luo Hongwu. When Luo was young, his good friend nicknamed "White Cat" was killed by the gangster Zuo Hongyuan. Luo wants revenge and starts to follow Zuo Hongyuan's lover Wan Qiwen. But in the end, the two become underground lovers. Later, he is found by Zuo, and then persuaded by Wan to assassinate him. After succeeding in this endeavor, he finds that Wan has already left, so he also decides to leave. Twelve years later, due to his father's death, Luo returns to his hometown, hoping to find Wan along the way.

Heroine: Wan Qiwen. She has no real name, only two fake names: Wan Qiwen and Chen Huixian, which are the names of Hong Kong actresses. She closely resembles the mother in Luo's memory. In Luo's memory, her name was Wan, the gangster's mistress who urges Luo to assassinate the gangster. Then, she disappears. In an investigation twelve years later, Luo discovers that she was a thief as a teenager and

was later trafficked to the gangster Zuo. After Zuo is killed by Luo, she stays in a hotel and marries the owner. While married, she calls herself Chen. After her divorce, she works as a singer in a karaoke hall.

Supporting actor: White Cat. He is killed by Zuo, and his body is found in a mine.

Supporting actress: Luo's mother. When Luo was a child, she eloped with the beekeeper next door, and set fire to the beekeeper's house that same day.

Of the four timelines along which these four characters exist, Luo's is the only real narrative, with the other three characters existing only in recollection.

### **Projection between Luo-Wan and White Cat-Mother**

As regards the three roles that exist only in the form of memory, the mother exists in Luo's childhood; White Cat exists from Luo's childhood until Luo's youth; and Wan Qiwen enters Luo's life after the death of White Cat. She disappears after Luo goes to murder gangster Zuo. Here, the role of the mother only exists in the (voice-over) narration; she does not have a figure. White Cat is the figure of a teenager in a "purely optical situation." This teenager is not associated with any actual image. He is seen either standing quietly in a train compartment or eating an apple facing the camera. Wan has a more complicated existence. On the one hand, she is the protagonist in the recollection-image, where she has a matching figure (visual persona), while on the other, when there are several versions of her in the other person's narration in the actual, as a character without a figure (she does not have a visual role in these versions), she presents the characteristics of a false narrative, that is, I = another.

The actual image and recollection-image are twelve years apart. The young Luo and Wan are in the past. The middle-aged Luo exists in the present, and the "real" Wan only exists in the narration of others. Between these two types of images, White Cat's and Luo's mothers are interspersed, as "optical and sound situations" running through the past and present. In this structure, the recollection seems to be trapped in a cycle that has been disrupted by the order of time. At first, the mother is just a character without a figure, because she eloped when Luo was only a child, and Luo cannot remember what she looks like. In the recollection-images that follow, Luo has obtained a photo of his mother in her youth, but with her face removed. This setting is not only a figuration of childhood memory loss, but also a strategy to confuse reality and fiction.

Hence, he is relying on some vaguely held impression when he believes that Wan resembled his mother in her youth.<sup>3</sup> Second, White Cat is Luo's good friend from his childhood to his youth. He appears in flashbacks in the form of optical and sound situations. The figure of the White Cat of Luo's childhood is missing, and, just as with his recollections of his mother, what remains is but the vaguest of impressions. The death of the young White Cat was how Luo meets Wan. Third, Luo starts to form a connection with Wan for an absurd reason: he believes that she looks similar to his mother, in spite of the fact that he has no recollection of his mother's features. Wan is also the mistress of the gangster Zuo. She bewitches Luo, who is already in love with her, and persuades him to kill Zuo and then flee with her. In addition, in the third-person narration, Wan follows Zuo, because Zuo helped her kill someone who had trafficked her. Hence, the Wan of the recollections is the archetypal femme fatale, "her most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be. She harbors a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable" (Doane 1991, Introduction, para. 1).

Luo's mother emerges from the past (impressions) into the present to become Wan, and her (the mother Luo imagined) life is full of one murder and betrayal after another. The temporality

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<sup>3</sup> This seems contradictory, but I explain it later in the comments to Figure 3.

here is forking and the timeline represented by each role constitutes a new forking path. The mother and Wan represent two different stages of Luo's life twelve years earlier, with the former representing Luo's childhood and the latter representing his youth. The time extends from Luo's mother to Wan. White Cat is a very special character in that he connects Luo's childhood and youth, during which time his mother was absent. Just as fate is about to make Luo meet Wan, White Cat dies. The role of White Cat is to connect the mother-recollection with the Wan-recollection. This double recollection is the essence of the eternal return in *Memory*: Luo needs to eliminate a particular part of himself (so White Cat dies) so that he can go from "losing his mother" to "finding a new mother" (Wan). This is akin to the nihilism of Nietzsche, where "suppress [forcibly end] your recollections, or suppress [forcibly end] yourselves" (Deleuze 1989, 113).

### The Nonidentity and Simultaneity of Eternal Return

When Wan disappears twelve years earlier, Luo enters another stage of the cycle, which involves seeking Wan (his mother's projection). In this new stage, what he needs to eliminate is his own youth stage. Hence, in the process of searching for Wan, he realizes that his previous cognition was false. That is,  $Wan \neq Wan$ ,  $Wan = others$ . This succinctly represents Deleuze's interpretation of "passage":

How can the past be constituted in time? How can the present pass? The passing moment could never pass if it were not already past and yet to come—at the same time as being present. If the present did not pass of its own accord, if it had to wait for a new present in order to become past, the past in general would never be constituted in time, and this particular present would not pass. (Deleuze 1983, 48)

In this cycle, two sheets coalesce in a form of transcendence. As Luo constantly eliminates his past in this cycle and cannot maintain the identity in the eternal return, there is a voice-over that accompanies the actual image and the recollection-image. The voice-over is Luo's voice, but it is impossible to determine to which stage of Luo's life this voice belongs (perhaps, it is Luo in the distant future). At this point, the voice-over represents the transcendent Luo, who, as a specter, separates himself from the temporality of the actual image and the recollection-image, and becomes the narrator. This narrator imbues *Memory* with the characteristics of metafiction, constantly reminding the viewer that the time here is not linear but forking, and that they should not try to find clues to restore the timeline. In the narrative of reality, Luo is split into a youthful version and a middle-aged version, and the transcendental Luo manipulates them both outside of reality. This is similar to *The Double Life of Véronique*, when the puppeteer Alexandre manipulates his marionette. At the end of the plot, he makes a marionette with the appearance of Véronique, which makes Véronique feel that both she and her other Polish self were always controlled by destiny, leading her to collapse. To put it another way, this is another manifestation of Deleuze's "passage": past and present, reality and fantasy, "these two worlds are possible, but are not 'compossible' with each other" (Deleuze 1989, 130).

In different images (actual and recollection), Luo can be understood as the schism of the transcendental Luo into different stages, or the different stages of Luo that have always existed in the wheel of fortune. Although middle-aged Luo looks for Wan, she only actually exists (for him) in his youth (the sheet of the past), and the narration in the actual image proves to be false. Wan's loss of identity also means the severing of the connection between the recollection-image and the actual image. At this point, a fork appears in each stage of Luo's life. Ultimately, the middle-aged man is trying to chase after the impression of his youth, but he finally comes to doubt whether the recollection is in fact true. The voice-over (by the transcendental Luo) is constantly trying to suture reality and recollection; but Luo loses his identity in the following

cycle, so what middle-aged Luo is chasing is the afterimage of Wan, just as he is chasing his mother whose face is missing in the photo. They belong only to specific (lost) sheets of the past.

The events of the previous stage are reproduced in cycles, as with the life of Eve in *All about Eve* (1950), where she replaces the previous singer, but at the end of the film, is herself substituted by another new “Eve.” And this “reproduction” does not mean “identity.” “In effect, there is neither straight line nor circle which completes itself” (Deleuze 1989, 50). Hence, certain similar events are constantly repeating in *Memory*, some of which appear in the form of recollection-image, and some appear in the actual image. The connection between reality and recollection is broken, thereby forming an overlap of the sheets of the past, as in *Ulysses’ Gaze*. The overlapping events increases the complexity of the eternal return. Moreover, “impossibility” as an excuse no longer serves as an effective explanation, which means that *Memory* becomes what Deleuze calls “a new status of narration”: fiction. “It is a power of the false which replaces and supersedes the form of the true, because it poses the simultaneity of impossible presents, or the coexistence of not-necessarily true pasts” (Deleuze 1989, 131).

### Self-Referential Fallacy of Recollection-Images

When the recollection transitions to fiction, the viewer finds that the object image that appeared in the previous shot has a reminder function. This is similar to the view put forward by Angela Hague in her analysis of *Twin Peaks* ([1990–1991] 2017), that through “infinite play,” the author, the character and the viewer are simultaneously all players seeking to solve a certain puzzle (Hague 1995). These signs use the fallacy of self-referentiality to remind the viewer that “recollection is false” and even “reality is false.” Reality-recollection is connected and twisted by the objects of self-referential fallacy, such as the glass ball in *The Double Life of Véronique* or the videotape in *Lost Highway* (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Top: The Same Glass Ball Not Only Appears in the Hands of Weronika in Poland, but also in Véronique’s Handbags in France;  
Bottom: The Video Presents the Past and Future in the Narrative  
Source: Krzysztof Kieślowski 1991; Lynch 1997

Space-image: *Memory* features several frequently recurring scenes of the interior of an abandoned house, where a couple once lived (who they are is not explained in the film). Wan burgled the house when she was fifteen years old, Luo's mother (perhaps there) meets with the beekeeper, the young Luo and Wan have an affair there, and it is there that the middle-aged Luo takes apart a clock left by his father and finds a photo of the woman with her face removed. The scene of the house's interior can be regarded as a Lynchian alien world (e.g., the Red Lodge in *Twin Peaks* and the theater in *Mulholland Drive*). This space is squeezed and folded by multiple sheets of the past, showing the similarities in the "impossible" history of a universe (see Figure 2).

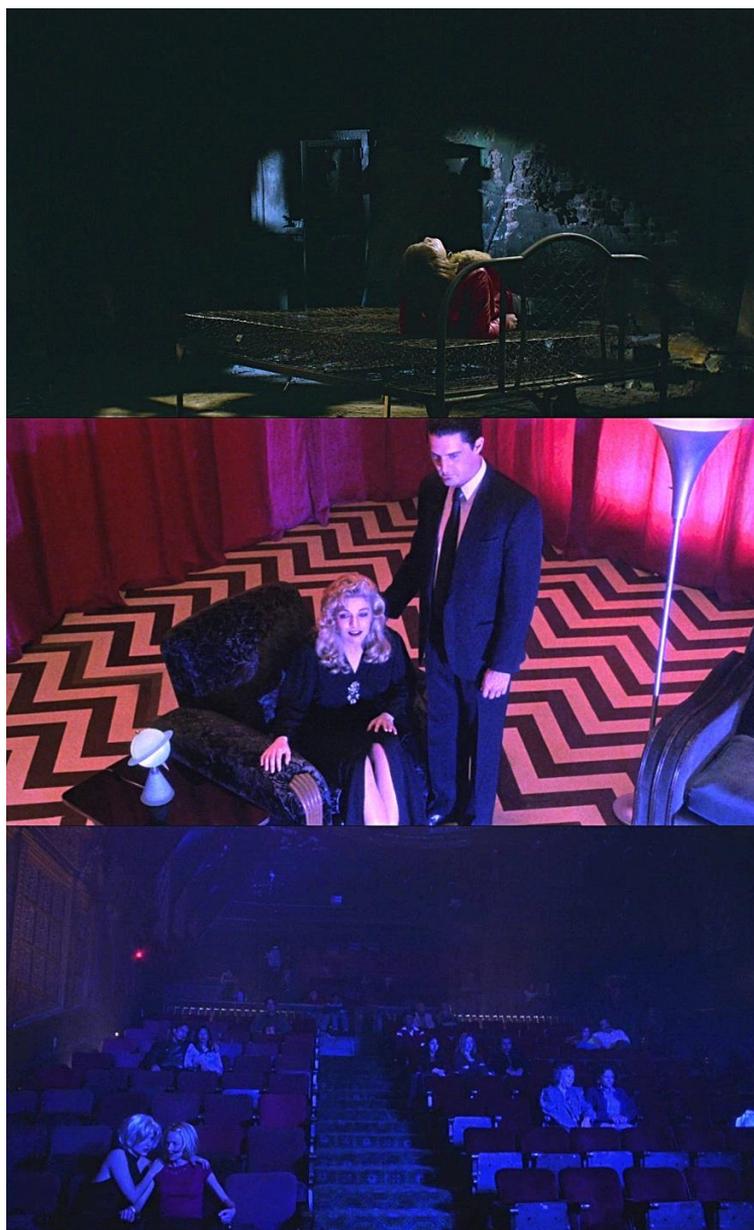


Figure 2: Top: Abandoned House; Middle: The Red Lodge; Bottom: Theater  
 Source: *Bi Gan 2018a*; *Lynch 1992*; *Lynch 2001*

This kind of space is like a zone outside the real world, where time is nonlinear, and connects the past and the future.

Figure-fantasy: Another impossible element of *Memory* is a photo and the figure it shows. When middle-aged Luo opens the clock left by his father, he finds in a battery slot on the back a photo of a woman with her face removed. On the back of the photo is the contact information of Wan's friend when she was a teenager. This prompts the viewer to wonder why the father has the contact information of Wan's friend. When Luo met Wan for the first time, he shows her a photo of his mother when she was young. While the woman in the photo had a face at this point, the viewer, on the other side of the screen, cannot see it clearly. Thus, the situation becomes as follows: there are two versions of a photo of Luo's mother when she was young.<sup>4</sup> One version appears in the actual image as a relic left to Luo by his father. There is no face, but there is the contact information of Wan's friend (his father does not know Wan).<sup>5</sup> Another version appears in the recollection-image. Luo takes out the intact photo from his wallet and shows it to Wan, commenting that she looks just like the woman in the photo. So, who is the person in the photo? It can be surmised that the figure of Wan is self-referential. Combined with Wan's role as a femme fatale, it is not difficult to see that this fallacy means that she represents what is false. Her life is so full of mystery and ambiguity that one might ask what her real name is. Nobody knows the truth; there is a special version of her in each of the roles she plays in the recollections. In the film, even this self-referential figure is false: this figure comes from an unnamed woman who first appears in the opening scene of the film when she has just ended a sexual interaction with the middle-aged Luo. So, it can be said that Wan is just a projection of Luo's mother, and she does not even have a figure, just like Luo's mother. Wan and Luo's mother overlap and take possession of the figure of the unnamed woman. This figure, like Hitchcock's MacGuffin, is a kind of "absence," symbolizing the fantasy produced by reason when it tries to know the ontology of mother or Wan (Figure 3).

Image-text: At the end of *Memory*, the viewer finds Luo in a cinema where a film is beginning, the name of which is *Long Day's Journey into Night* (the same title as the off-screen film) (see Figure 4). At this point, the viewer realizes that this is a sign that the whole of *Memory* is entirely fictitious. In the recollection-image, Wan and the third-person narration present the "this is not a pipe" concept, which represents the fallacy of self-referentiality between the text and the image.<sup>6</sup> In falsifying narration, recollection, reality, and fiction "belong to the same universe and constitute modifications of the same story" (Deleuze 1989, 132).

<sup>4</sup> This may seem contradictory, but it reflects the subjectivity and uncertainty implicit in memory, as I will explain in the comments to Figure 3.

<sup>5</sup> This is also a paradox, because it might mean that the father knew Wan. But this is not a film about solving puzzles (for related concepts, please refer to the difference between "disorienting but solvable puzzle films" and "impossible puzzle films" proposed by Kiss and Willemsen 2017). "Father" has a metaphorical meaning and can be regarded as a projection of Luo's future.

<sup>6</sup> *La Trahison des images* [The Treachery of Images] is a 1929 painting by René Magritte. The painting shows an image of a pipe. Below it, Magritte painted: "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe").



Figure 3: Top: Middle-Aged Luo Finds a Photo of a Woman with Her Face Removed behind the Clock Left by His Father;  
Middle: The Young Luo Hands This Intact Picture to Wan Qiwen;  
Bottom: An Unnamed Woman Who Has just Ended a Sexual Transaction with Middle-Aged Luo. The Photo and Wan  
Are Self-Referential, and This Figure Actually Comes from Another That Is Outside of This Self-Referentiality  
*Source: Bi Gan 2018a*



Figure 4: Top: At the End of Memory, Middle-Aged Luo Is Watching a Film in a Cinema;  
 Bottom: The Name of This Film Appears on the Screen at This Point  
 Source: Bi Gan 2018a

This is a typical fallacy of self-referentiality between text and images. Luo cannot watch a film in which he plays a role.

### ***The Time-Images Ensemble in “Poppy”***

The first part of the film (*Memory*) presents the complexity of transforming recollection-image into a false narrative. It is a special sample that can simultaneously be used to analyze the relationship between pure recollection, impossible multiple sheets of the past overlap, and the power of the false. It combines memories, fiction, and illusion in such a way that time is constantly forking within the same universe. *Memory* features the use of cross-editing, while in the second part, the universe is concretized into a small town, which becomes the utopia of all the fantasies produced by Luo’s forking time.

When *Memory* is over, Luo inexplicably walks into a labyrinth-like dark town. This is the point at which the second half of the film, *Poppy*, begins. All the roles and events Luo encounters here are projections, stemming from the absence of his mother. His experiences in *Poppy* leave the realm of the eternal return and enter what Žižek calls the “fantasmatic lie” (Žižek 2001, 53, 54). This is where the original fictitious scene is created in Luo’s consciousness.

*Poppy* represents an extreme example of the use of transcendental shots. First, Luo’s voice-over always connects the past and the present, and serves as the inner driving force of the

narrative. If there is no such transcendence, then all projections in the narrative will turn into nothingness. The narratives of all characters other than Luo are affected by the power of the false, including those of Wan, Luo's mother, and White Cat. As Deleuze (1989, 127) puts it, the role of voice-over is to serve as "a truthful narration in the sense that it claims to be true, even in fiction." When *Poppy* starts, there is a continuous switching between follow shots, point-of-view shots, bird's-eye view shots, and focus. Rather than being edited, these shots constitute an extremely long take from beginning to end, as a transcendent Luo stares at the fantasmatic lie he has created. This can be understood as the "continuum" to which Deleuze refers when discussing the relationship between Resnais' shots. In this respect, edits and long takes are not completely different from one another. The latter just connects the order of the former, which represents the point in time. From a "futur antérieur" perspective, the kind of long takes made by Fellini, Tarkovski, and Alexander Sokurov, which depict different perspectives, can be understood by drawing an analogy with the virtual camera systems in 3D games, in which the viewer has access at any time to first-person, third-person (fixed and tracking), bird's-eye, and map views. Combining the above two points, this super-long take indicates that when the recollection-images and text in *Memory* produce the fallacy of self-referentiality, the camera is no longer capturing fiction and reality, but instead is connecting different time sheets.

At the beginning of *Poppy*, Luo is walking through a dark mine, where he meets a boy living alone. The boy likes to play table tennis using a bat engraved with an eagle. After the two of them play a game of table tennis, the boy sends Luo away from the mine with a sense of satisfaction. The boy here is a multifaceted projection of the "son" in Luo's consciousness, which includes White Cat (his body was found in the mine, and he has a father named Eagle), the aborted fetus (in Luo's memory, Wan was pregnant with his child), and his childhood self (Luo lived by himself all year round after he was abandoned by his mother). Upon leaving the mine, Luo enters a small town, where the reality, memories, and fiction from *Memory* are all gathered. Two fantasies take place in this town, the prototypes of which come from two characters in *Memory*: Luo's mother and Wan, who has been separated from the figure of the Wan in the recollection-image. The mother and Wan are projected onto two other figures: Kaizhen and the old Luo's mother, respectively. Kaizhen is a red-haired girl in a red jacket and is Wan's doppelganger. Kaizhen is a very rustic name, which is in sharp contrast with the sophistication implied by a name such as Wan Qiwen.

In other words, in Luo's subconscious mind, the idealized version of Wan should be Kaizhen, who is rustic and simple. The only trouble Kaizhen encounters is nothing more than a bit of harassment from a few rogues, which Luo easily handles. This contrasts with the reality that Wan is actually the mistress of a gang member, a problem that Luo can do nothing about. After parting ways with Kaizhen, Luo meets an elderly red-haired woman. Holding a torch, the woman passes through a crowded square to an elderly man on the edge of the town. The elderly red-haired woman is the doppelganger of White Cat's mother in the actual image of *Memory*, and they share the same figure. However, her red hair is the same as Kaizhen's, which means that this figure also has multiple projections—all women who have a relationship with Luo are ultimately projections of his mother. She wishes to elope with the old man, but the man refuses, so she burns down his house.

In the dream described above, the three characters Luo meets are a boy, Kaizhen, and an elderly woman. One of the roles projected by the boy is Luo in his childhood. Kaizhen and the elderly woman are not only projections of Wan and Luo's mother, but they also refer to each other. But why is Luo able to meet the boy, while Kaizhen and the old woman do not meet? This question also arises in Kieślowski's films, such as in the case of the old judge and the young judge in *Three Colors: Red*, who also never meet, while the two Véroniques from Poland and France do in fact have a chance meeting. If the Luo in the dream is removed from the figure, he is actually the same thing as the transcendence that controls the two Véroniques. Hence, he can meet one of his versions in the dream as it is an out-of-time existence. The two

avatars in reality-recollection are like the two judges in *Three Colors: Red*; it is impossible for Wan and his mother or Kaizhen and the elderly woman to meet. This effectively unfolds the overlap of the past and present, the recollection and the fiction.

Therefore, this dream can ultimately be explained as follows: *Poppy* is Luo's reconstruction of a false recollection in *Memory*. Luo tries to recognize his absent mother throughout his life. Hence, Wan Qiwen becomes a fantasmatic lie about his mother, because Luo is not sure whether her figure might in fact be his absent mother. At the beginning of the film, the viewer is told that this Wan figure actually comes from an anonymous lady who is engaged in the sex trade. At the end of *Poppy*, Luo's ultimate fantasy (the ultimate fantasmatic lie) is revealed. Here, he transforms Wan Qiwen into Kaizhen, projects Kaizhen as a teenage Wan Qiwen, and borrows the figure of White Cat's mother to represent his elderly mother. In the end, he arrives at the most reasonable excuse for his mother's absence. And after completing the fantasmatic lie about his mother, Luo returns to Kaizhen and they go to the ruined house together. When they make love in the space where the sheets of the past are superimposed, Luo completes his other fantasmatic lie.

## Conclusion

*Long Day's Journey into Night* transforms recollection-images into false narratives. It features several cases that fully demonstrate Deleuze's analysis of recollection, crystals of time, sharp points, and falsities. These cases include two uses of flashback for recollection-image, forking time, the transformation of a recollection-image into an illusion after a failed recognition, the simultaneity of a direct time-image, and the power of the false. Drawing on the developments since the narrative revolution, this film successfully combines fantasy and false narrative to construct a new type of narrative that is different from flashbacks in the present and forking paths. The first half of this experimental film expands Angelopoulos' role projection and the overlapping of different time sheets. It complicates the projection of different figures by experimentally applying Kieślowski's flashback in the present to multiple characters.

The second part of the film explores the use of doppelgangers and technically combines Tarkovski's long takes, which express pure optical and sound situations, with Alexander Sokurov's super-long takes. When expressing direct time-images, *Long Day's Journey into Night* transforms the time-images from recollections to fictions, and then uses fantasy to express the fiction. The recollection-image, the falsifying narration in *Memory*, and the fantasy in *Poppy* all come from the mother and son prototypes. The complicated projection makes this plot seem familiar, allowing the viewer to ponder the details. This actually surpasses the inherent motivation of the narrative and becomes the subjective power that drives the development of the plot. In the end, the film's false flashbacks and its multiple projections and fantasies transform it from being a short fiction into a form of poetry (the intertextuality of the film's titles to Célan's poetry collection is finally revealed), which embodies the dissolution of linear time and the becoming of simultaneity or coexistence.

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