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THE AXES OF FANTASY: A LACANIAN EXPLORATION OF TIME AND SPACE

A Thesis Presented

by

Amelia Royce

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Arts  
Specializing in English

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## *Abstract*

While the work (the *what*) of fantasy is widely theorized, its workings (the *how*) remain largely unexplored. The first chapter of the text forwards a Lacanian theory of fantasy that relies on the intersection of linear time and physical space. Using a variety of texts—Gene Roddenberry’s original *Star Trek*, Wong Kar-wai’s *Happy Together*, and Leonora Sansay’s *Secret History; or the Horrors of St. Domingo* among them—I argue that time and space constitute the axes along which we plot our desire. It is time and space that uphold the fantasy structure of reality, that both project our desire and protect us from it. The process of mapping desire onto these axes is one of signification, desire ultimately proves untranslatable

The second chapter works to examine how ideology is informed by and interacts with fantasy. It is essential for the functioning of ideology that fantasy is constructed via time and space. For instance, Capitalism does not function without some notion of linear progression, of forward momentum. Ideology leverages the subject’s spatiotemporal relationship to their own desire towards its own reproduction.

Finally, in my third chapter, I examine how non-normative narrative structure can interrupt the fantasy-scene. I locate this discussion primarily in the realm of queer theory, a branch of literary criticism long invested in disrupting standard and ideological chronologies. Working with James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* and Wong Kar-wai’s *Happy Together* I explore how form can work to undermine the reality of fantasy and delve into what destabilizing this reality accomplishes.

*For Edward, Jeffrey, Nick, and Anika because the OP at seven-thirty is the closest fantasy comes to properly signifying desire. For Casey, who makes so much time and space for me. For Matt because our fantasies align.*

## *Acknowledgements*

Thank you to my committee for helping me to realize this project. Thank you to Todd McGowan for always being willing to talk about theory. Thank you to Hyon Joo Yoo, who taught my first film class four years ago without which I never would have considered graduate school. Thank you to John Waldron for being a willing and communicative reader.

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## *Introduction*

*“What is an up and coming neighborhood?  
And where is it coming from?”  
Parquet Courts, “Violence”*

While the work (the *what*) of fantasy is widely theorized, its workings (the *how*) remain largely unexplored. It is my intention to do just that, generating a theory towards the functioning of fantasy, rather than its function. Slavoj Žižek asserts that “the fundamental point of psychoanalysis is that desire is not something given in advance, but something that has to be constructed—and it is precisely the role of fantasy to give the coordinates of the subject’s desire” (*Looking Awry*, 6). What, then, do these coordinates look like? What is the utility of naming them? How can we leverage these coordinates to get closer to the Real of our desire? In the following text, I forward a theory of fantasy that relies on the intersection of linear time and physical place. I argue that fantasy, which props up our experience of reality as such, functions primarily by introducing linear time and physical place to desire. It is along these two axes that we construct our experience of reality, that we are taught to desire and encouraged to continue desiring.

It is first necessary to briefly examine the relationship between desire and fantasy. The first chapter begins with a basic overview of psychoanalytic ideas of desire (as a product of our lack) and fantasy (as the thing that allows us to stage our desire in the ‘real’ world). Put simply, desire arises from our primordial lack and fantasy, in turn, teaches us how to plot our desire. I work to examine the tension between the trajectory of fantasy and the oftentimes circuitous path of desire.

The introduction of linear time to is not a smooth one. This has to do with fantasy's paradoxical function—existing to both posit objects of desire and protect us from their inadequacy. In positioning desire in space and time, fantasy create a temporal paradox in order to serve both of these purposes. The work of fantasy is therefore not to realize our desire—an impossibility—only to situate it in reality. Further, the structure of fantasy must accommodate our disappointment with its failure to either interpret or actualize our desire. Fantasy uses its own dimensions reflexively, positioning failures of identification as inopportune collisions of time and space. Here, it is important to note the absence of the dimensions of time and space in the unconscious and therefore their irrelevance to the shape of desire. The process of mapping desire onto these axes mirrors that of signification, desire ultimately proves untranslatable.

In this initial chapter, I employ Wong Kar-wai's *2046*, an exemplary text with which to explore nontraditional representations of temporality and physical space. The movie's jumbled chronology and constricted framing draw attention to our assumptions about the filmic spatiotemporal landscape and, in doing so, make the typical functioning of fantasy and its shortcomings uniquely visible. I also work with Gene Roddenberry's "This Side of Paradise," an original *Star Trek* episode that displays a bizarre utopia whose inhabitants are devoid of desire. The episode demonstrates the import of our desire—and its mistranslation by fantasy—in constituting our subjectivity. Both texts imagine different possibilities—at the level of both form and content—for fantasy and desire within a filmic landscape.

My second chapter delves into the interplay between ideology and fantasy. If we understand fantasy as constructed by time and space it is exceedingly difficult to

decouple it from ideology. Ideological systems, more often than not, rely on fantasy functioning in precisely this way, providing particular conceptions or coordinates of time and space that move the subject towards the reproduction of a particular ideology. For instance, linear time allows colonial powers to position people and cultures as primitive or antiquated, therefore justifying their enslavement and erasure. The logic of colonialism and imperialism also hinges on a specific conception of physical space, a fantasy that space occupied by the other is a *terra nullius* and therefore rightfully belongs to the conquering power. Capitalism appeals to linear time to espouse a narrative of infinite progress, of unceasing improvement. While these ideologies use the language of fantastic desire—time and space—they are not interested in driving the subject towards some inadequate and partial object of desire but instead in securing their own continuation, their own enjoyment.

I locate this discussion in two texts. The first is Jia Zhangke's *Still Life*, a film about the building of the Three Gorges dam. Zhangke meditates on the connection between ideology and physical space, showing the complete restructuring of the Yangtze river valley in the name of Chinese nationalism and market expansion. *Still Life* shows temporal and spatial resistance to this particular ideological project. The second text I engage is Leonora Sansay's *Secret History; or the Horrors of St. Domingo*, an epistolary novel authored by a white woman and set in Haiti in the throes of the Haitian revolution. The narrator and narration of the novel are inseparable from the ideological hold of colonialism, nation, and racism. The novel provides us an opportunity to engage the ideological project of self-recreation as well as to further explore the hold that place has on ideology.

My third and final chapter is devoted to the way in which these two theoretical problems inform and are informed by narrative structure in various ways. I am particularly interested in looking at texts that provide an irregular or subversive chronology. How can the narrative structure of a text work to undermine the “reality” of fantasy? What does undermining this reality accomplish, particularly in regards to dominant ideology? How can alternative chronologies get at the function of desire?

I have primarily directed this chapter towards queer theory and queer narratives. Alternative temporalities have long been on the forefront of queer theory, expressing the precarious and powerful position of the queer subject in time. I work with a variety of queer theory texts invested in temporality—among them Lee Edelman’s *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Elizabeth Freeman’s *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, and David Eng’s *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*. These three texts all interact with the theory I have attempted to elucidate in the prior two chapters and situate the inadequacy of spatiotemporal renderings of desire within a conversation about particular subjects and bodies. They give us an entry point into potential destabilization of the fantasy structure and its ideological hold.

This final section grounds itself firmly in the potential of texts—filmic and literary—to draw attention to and disrupt structures of fantasy and those ideologies that latch onto them. In service of this point, I utilize James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* which, aside from demonstrating a non-traditional narrative form, puts conversations about time and space (between queer men) at the forefront. The novel asks its reader to reflect on the ideological implication of the spatiotemporal trajectory they inhabit. I also

look at another Wong Kar-wai film, *Happy Together*, that represents the queer immigrant experience in a formally subversive way. The film demonstrates the inadequacy of traditional filmic time in representing the queer migrant subject and, in doing so, disrupts the ideological promises built on the back of fantasy.

Before setting out, I should introduce one caveat to this text. I have chosen to engage the concept of psychoanalytic desire rather than that of drive. While I think it is important, in some cases, to clearly delineate the two, for the purposes of this thesis we can consider them as operating in tandem. I will forward, though some other psychoanalytic thinkers might disagree, that both desire and drive are atemporal, that temporality is only introduced at the level of fantasy and the symbolic. The primary difference that I will highlight between desire and drive is that desire operates in pursuit of an object while drive pursues loss as its object. I did not—though perhaps would have in a longer project—delve into the spatiotemporal distinctions between desire and drive. However, because of the nature of desire, as in pursuit of an object rather than lack, desire renders itself far easier for fantasy to take hold of than drive.

## Chapter One

*“But you were standing there so close to me  
Like the future was supposed to be  
In the aisles of the grocery  
And the blocks uptown”  
Ezra Koenig, “Taxi Cab”*

*“There's a fall in my head  
It floods what you said into the room, babe  
I don't belong in the desert  
Yes, I can see it, take me home, babe  
Say again, this place  
Here is your princess  
And here is your horizon”  
Aldous Harding, “Horizon”*

Jafar Panahi's *The Circle* tells the story of several women who have just escaped from prison in Iran. While the narrative of the film is linear the chronology feels anything but ordinary. The film is composed of several vignettes, each one bleeding into the next, a network of women tangentially connected as they move through time and space. Just as we become attached to a character, another appears to replace her and we are left wondering at the fate of the previous subject. The result is a reinforcement of both the title and thesis of the film. We progress in a sort of spiral, the events collapsing in upon themselves. Eventually we find all of our characters reunited in a circular panning shot, returned to the cells they escaped from, mere hours after they are introduced to the viewer. Western cinema tends to show the linear progression of the subject, moving through the space he commands, but does so by presenting a highly edited timeline with the appearance of uninterrupted advancement. The lack of continuity editing, montage, and other Western conventions makes *The Circle* feel as though we move alongside the

women throughout their entire day—it becomes clear that time is not on their side, we reach the end exhausted.

The landscape of *The Circle* is also striking. Almost all of the film occurs in the streets of Tehran. However, instead of lending an openness to the oppressive temporal structure, it further increases anxiety by demonstrating how little control these women have over their environment. Many of the public spaces that the women inhabit throughout the film mimic the descending structure of the narrative, seeming to narrow to a point. Enormous concrete spiral staircases and oval floor plans do not lend—but instead limit—mobility for the subjects Panahi represents. Panahi's refiguring of public space as oppressive is in keeping with his temporal project, the two concepts united and problematized.

Panahi manipulates our traditional cultural reading of time and space—forward moving and open—demonstrating the ways that these constructions serve to exclude certain subjects. Panahi's project, as I understand it, is to destabilize the reality presented by time and space, to undermine the efficacy of fantasy. The following pages contend with both the construction of and exclusion inherent in time and space within a psychoanalytic framework. I assert time and space as the essential dimensions of fantasy and as inadequate for representing the desire of the subject.

It is necessary, before setting out, to take the time to delineate precisely what we mean by desire and fantasy and, further, how we intend to enact those concepts in conjunction with one another. Our unconscious gives rise to desire, ineffable but unfolding according to a precise logic. Lacan's aphorism "*The unconscious is structured like a language*" points to this logic, to the bizarre chain of signifiers that comprise our

unconscious desire. The order of the unconscious does not render our desire accessible to us—far from it. This is where fantasy comes into play. Broadly, we can understand fantasy as the structure which translates the mess of our desire, which seeks to situate it in reality as such. This process is imprecise, in part because fantasy premised on some idea of satiable desire. Fantasy ignores the fact that desire is not realized in its deliverance but instead in its constant reproduction, its attachment to new objects. It is the irreconcilable tension between the determined circularity of desire and the shape of fantasy—a shape I will attempt to draw out—that the first portion of this project intends to explore.

While fantasy rests, in part, on the promise of desire fulfilled, the tension between desire and fantasy is not accidental. Instead, the failure of fantasy to realize our desire is a necessary one, rooted in its twofold function. Žižek expresses the paradox of fantasy, identifying it as acting simultaneously as “the frame coordinating our desire” and “a defense against it” (*Sublime Object*, 132). This means that fantasy willfully ignores the functioning of desire in order to protect us from its impenetrability, from our inability to fill our lack. Nevertheless, it is this lack that creates desire, that provides fantasy with points to plot. Žižek further asserts that “‘reality’ is a fantasy-construction which enables us to mask the Real of our desire” (*Sublime Object*, Žižek, 29). In other words, our perception of reality is entirely mediated by fantasy—our access to desire and our experience of disappointment.

It is useful to understand fantasy as teaching us how to desire rather than securing the object of our desire. Žižek writes that “the usual definition of fantasy (‘an imagined scenario representing the realization of desire’)” does not suffice and further, that “in the

fantasy-scene desire is not fully ‘satisfied’ but constituted (given its objects and so on)—*through fantasy we learn how to desire*” (*Sublime Object*, 132). This bears repeating, that the fantasy-scene is not simply a daydream in which the subject can imagine themselves securing their dream job in Cleveland or getting a brand new bicycle on Christmas morning. Instead, before offering us either of these scenarios fantasy must first elevate these objects. This is not to say that the unconscious, the site of the Real of our desire, plays no role in assigning certain objects consequence. However, it is the job of fantasy to posit and position objects of desire within the symbolic order.

The question then becomes one of *how* fantasy operates rather than *why*. If fantasy exists to provide the coordinates of our desire it is necessary to examine those axes along which our desire is plotted. If fantasy does not deliver—rather constitute—the objects of our desire then said objects must appear within some sort of structure. Linear time and physical space provide a productive framework through which to examine the functioning of fantasy and the constitution of reality as such. The preliminary claim I’d like to make here is that fantasy operates by positioning our desire within the dimensions of space and time. Thus, our desires are not delivered to us but potentiated—offered as the result of proper maneuvering in space and time. Likewise, our lack is repositioned as improper maneuvering. This spatiotemporal imagining of fantasy requires us to unpack and augment existing Lacanian ideas of temporality.

Theories of temporality often forward the idea that meaning is retroactively assigned to events, timelines and narratives arranged as a necessary postscript. While this is undoubtedly a component of the our temporal fantasy-image, it is not whole. I cannot argue with Žižek’s assertion that “the experience of a linear ‘organic’ flow of events is an

illusion (albeit a necessary one) that masks the fact that is the ending that *retroactively* confers the contingency of an organic whole on the preceding events” (*Looking Awry*, 69). However, I think it is worth more explicitly examining the nature of the illusion that he identifies, a component of which I suspect could not be created retroactively. There is a component of fantasy that is future-looking. Žižek emphatically states that “instead of the linear, immanent, necessary progression according to which meaning unfolds itself from some initial kernel we have a radically contingent process of retroactive production of meaning” (*Sublime Object*, 114). Again, while I would agree that it is impossible to assert meaning as springing from some kernel of the Real, unfurling logically and linearly, I do think there is some projection, some proactive imagination of linear progression. Further, I think that we can locate this proactive creation of meaning at the site of fantasy.

#### *Who Would Want to Counteract Paradise?*

“This Side of Paradise,” a season one episode of Gene Rodenberry’s *Star Trek: The Original Series* is a useful text for a preliminary examination of the interplay between desire and fantasy. When the USS Enterprise is sent to search for survivors on the planet Omicron Ceti III, a planet besieged by deadly Berthold Rays, the crew arrives to find the settlers of the agricultural colony—presumed dead—alive and well. Better than well, actually—happy, healed, and ageless. The crew are initially suspicious but eventually fall prey to the same spores that enable the colony to continue. These spores are responsible for keeping the colonists alive despite Berthold bombardment and for maintaining the paradise they inhabit. Even Spock becomes infected, climbing trees and

falling into the arms of a former lover. Only Captain Kirk remains skeptical of the spores, insisting that in order to be, man must need, must strive.

The utopia imagined in “This Side of Paradise” is one in which the subject is divested of any want or need—“complete health and peace of mind,” reports their leader. The colonists work side by side, harvesting just enough food to sustain themselves. While it is tempting to relegate their utopia to the realm of fantasy, I would argue that the stagnation presented on Omicron Ceti III—however contented—is antithetical to the project of fantasy. This is in large part because the world presented is one entirely devoid of lack, in turn causing the structures of desire and fantasy to collapse. Put another way, desire is what arises from our original lack and fantasy, in turn, is how we learn to stage our desire. Desire moves us towards an object, though one we can never reach, while fantasy helps us to (mis)recognize that object as attainable and encourage our continued pursuit. The spores do not function to realize the subject’s desire nor to provide the subject with the coordinates of their desire but instead to remove desire from the equation all together by first removing lack.

The absence of lack comes with myriad consequences beyond blind contentment. One of the first things that the crew of the Enterprise note upon arriving on Omicron Ceti III is that all of the livestock and pests have disappeared—“there seems to be a total absence of life on the planet” with the exception of the original colonists, all of whom are in perfect health. It seems important to note, in this context, that these original colonists have also not reproduced in the four years since landing on the planet. We can then deduce that the Eden created in “This Side of Paradise” is one without sex. Suffice to say that “there is sex only in something that doesn’t work” and the colonists have found

themselves a planet where everything seems to “work” (Zupančič, *What is Sex?* 23). The result of this working is not paradise but absence, not only of sex but of life—an absence that is not lost of Captain Kirk.

Kirk repeatedly expresses that man is only a man when he needs, when he is posed a challenge; he seems to subscribe unflinchingly to an idea of linear progress, one that functions a lot like fantasy. Kirk monologues: “No wants. No needs. We weren’t meant for that! None of us! Man stagnates when he has no ambition, no desire to be more than he is!” and later describes man as being made to “march to the beat of the drum.” This image of marching to the beat of a drum is one which often comes up in discussions of temporality and one that is oftentimes coupled with some vague ideological fantasy of conquest. Kirk disavows the paradise in front of him in favor of the one that he feels he will eventually reach, once time and space permit. The constant desire to be more than what we are is, in fact, a desire to return to what we believed we had, to stop up our lack. It is fantasy that allows us to position our desires as just around the next bend and ideology that tells us how we will get there (but more on this later).

Kirk is undoubtedly correct when he claims that Omicron Ceti III has robbed its inhabitants of their humanity but he perhaps misrecognizes the point from which this humanity arises. Kirk insists that there is something linear, something driving at the core of man. For the captain, and for *Star Trek*, this fantasy is quite literally bound up in space—a map of desire contingent upon constant spatial repositioning, on marching again and again towards something more. The project of the USS Enterprise is to leave no planet unexplored and it is this project Kirk appeals to when disavowing the paradise on

Omicron Ceti III. The physical stasis of the people and planet upsets him as much as their unquestioning complacency.

Spock, after coming out from under the effect of the spores, says to Layla, the woman he is leaving behind on Omicron Ceti III, that “if there are self-made purgatories then we all have to live in them.” Spock seems unable to subscribe to either paradise with Layla or progress with Kirk, instead opting for purgatory. The shapes of each of these words is markedly different, fantasy and progression appearing as linear, paradise a single and unmoving point, and purgatory circular and repeating. What Spock identifies seems most in keeping with the actuality of desire, where movement becomes movement *around* rather than movement *towards*. Spock is possessed neither of immediate satisfaction nor the promise of satisfaction to come. This is not as bleak as it appears. Spock sits with his lack in this moment—and our lack often serves to create excess and in excess there is enjoyment, there is sex, there is death, there is life.

McCoy, once host to the spores, asks Captain Kirk “who wants to counteract paradise, Jim-Boy?” While this is obviously intended to be rhetorical, if we look to Lacan, our simple answer might be “everyone.” It is our fundamental lack that asks us to repeatedly walk out of paradise, our desire that carves a circular path, fantasy that promises that—though the path seems repetitive—we are in fact moving forward in space and time.

It seems that the temporality—the functioning—of fantasy adheres to much the same paradox as its function. If fantasy functions both to plot our desire and to protect us from it, than the illusion of linearity exists to support the former and the retroactive

conference of meaning intervenes to accomplish the latter. We are not able to formulate our desire without aid of linear temporality as the circularity of desire does not translate from the unconscious to the symbolic order. We need a structure within which to situate the objects of desire—enter linear time. Reflexively, because we cannot contend with the insatiability of our desire, fantasy must work retroactively to reassure us that our disappointment upon reaching the object that fantasy has posited is not due to our essential lack but, instead, to a failure of timing. Put simply—perhaps reductively—fantasy must work both to convince me that I will be happy once I find a partner *and* that the reason I am not happy with my eventual partner is because they’re moving to Cleveland for work and I think I’m ready to go back to school—our spatiotemporal coordinates are not aligned. This is of course a much more palatable reality when held up against the idea that the reason I am not totally satisfied with my partner, the perceived object of my desire, is that my primordial lack gives rise to something that can never be fully sated by any of the objects fantasy places in my path.

In a course on “*Star Trek*, Sex, and Society,” Todd McGowan offered a caveat to Lacan’s insistence that *there is no sexual relation*, suggesting that—while this is true—there is such thing as compatible (sexual) fantasy (2019). Further, McGowan suggested this as one way to understand being in love. It is worth exploring and complicating this idea within our framework—I think falling in love warrants a brief digression. There is certainly something to the idea that the alignment of fantasy looks a lot like love. When the fantasy-projection of our desires looks much like someone else’s we are likely to feel that, at long last, we are in the right place at the right time. However, I think it is also worth looking into the ways that love can interrupt ideological and fantasy structures.

Mari Ruti writes that “the more intimate our relationships, the more potential they hold for allowing us to make contact with the disclaimed aspects of ourselves” (*Call Of Character*, 86). Ruti’s larger argument centers on the idea of a malleable ‘character’ built on our bizarre and banal desire, a character that calls out to us and whose call we should answer. Ruti forwards the potential for intimacy to reveal the shape of our desire. This does not directly contradict McGowan’s point but instead introduces the idea that, should our fantasy align with another’s, it may provide an opportunity to augment our fantasy-structure, to push it closer to the Real of our desire. This might account for the way that being in love oftentimes seems to operate outside of normative space and time. These concepts are, in a way, made far more abstract or relative by being in love, becoming space between and time spent around.

Perhaps we could extend this further, arguing that fantasy recognition necessarily involves some recognition of our own (and the other’s) lack and in doing so defies the functioning of fantasy. Lacan understands love as *giving what we do not have* (likewise opening ourselves up to receive what the other does not have). Lack, of course, is not the stuff of fantasy but of the unconscious. The role of lack as the constituent element of love, therefore, renders something of the experience as outside of the spatiotemporal limits of our reality. This makes love a very powerful tool for disrupting our space-time reality, for causing rupture.

I am invested in reading the process of mapping desire onto the axes of fantasy as essentially one of signification. While desire unfolds in accordance to a set of laws, these are not legible to us. Our induction into the symbolic order renders the Real of our desire inaccessible to us. Alenka Zupančič states that “subjects are not constructed by language;

they are produced as a response to its inherent limit” (*What is Sex?*, 57). Likewise, we can understand the subject as being constructed by the limitations of fantasy as a tool for exploring and expressing desire. This is perhaps apparent but it seems necessary—particularly given the context of time and space—to assert fantasy as enmeshed with and operating parallel to language, as existing at the level of the symbolic. Temporality is often more transparently arbitrary to us than language in its construction, some combination of daylight savings and leap years making it clear that the system doesn’t account for everything, that there is something leftover. Despite the visible limitations of linear time, we are nevertheless beholden to it just as we are to language. However, the more apparent disfunction of time is significant in that it draws attention to the constraints of symbolic subjectivity.

It is necessary to acknowledge that fantasy, like desire, is particular (though they are both born from the universal experience of lack). The objects that fantasy elevates for us are specific to our desire even if they do not properly encapsulate it. This is not to say that there is anything innate about the specificity of desire. Our desires—and those objects we attempt to slot into the gap—are a product of the particularity of our socialization, they belong to the other. It is for this reason that fantasy must be constructed with broad dimensions, making allowances for the particular and the peculiar. Time and space have the appearance of objectivity and inclusivity and are therefore hard to find a way around.

Let’s return to the image of Christmas Eve, as a particularly potent site of fantasy in the US American popular imagination. It is worth noting that there is also significant ideological weight (religious, capitalistic) attached to the fantasy scenario presented

here—a relationship we'll explore in the following chapter. When I was four, the promise of Christmas was entirely mediated through time and space. I was assured that sometime in the middle of the night Santa Claus would deliver my presents via chimney and promised that, upon waking, I would be able to collect them from under the tree. While the spatiotemporal details of the fantasy-scene are fuzzy here (reflecting my four-year-old capacity for the spatiotemporal), they are crucial in supplying and staging the object of desire. Christmas morning was inevitably devastating for me once it had come to its pre-constructed spatiotemporal end. When my presents were integrated into my day-to-day landscape they were quickly divested of their fantasy elevation. Some combination of a year's worth of anticipation and a bad night's sleep prevented fantasy from efficiently performing its secondary temporal function, from explaining away the inadequacy of the proposed objects of desire. For a few hours, at least, I was with my lack.

With Christmas in mind, it is interesting to consider the ways that circularity creeps into progressive or linear time even as it is vehemently disavowed by fantasy. Our calendars and clocks, even as they promise forward momentum, are all premised on some idea of return. Something of the shape of desire is inescapable. The dimensions of time and space are notably absent from our unconscious but 'reality' cannot be entirely divested of desire. This—for me—has always been most evident on birthdays, my awareness of my own compulsion to repeat heightened by this particular return. Similarly, I would argue that the concept of space is not totally without the shadow of our unconscious. There is something in the word itself that, for me, suggests a gap, an opening. There is an implication of space between or space around that speaks towards the functioning of desire and persistence of our lack. While this is not a wild observation,

it does lend itself to beginning to work our way around the functioning of the fantasy-structure.

*Lack and Return in “2046”*

This inescapable circularity and its spatial counterpart is a central component of Wong Kar-wai’s 2004 film *2046*. *2046* comes as a loose sequel to *In the Mood for Love*, following Mr. Chow (Tony Leung) through a series of relationships in the wake of the failure of his partnership with Su Li-zehn, the married woman he became emotionally involved with in *In the Mood for Love*. The chronology of the film is odd—it is at once patterned (returning often to specific dates and moments) and scattered (not linear or contiguous in presenting various arcs)—but characteristic of Wong’s body of work. In this brief unpacking of the film, I want to pay attention not only to specific visual and thematic moments but also the function of the narrative structure as a whole, which is not only a product of the political positionality of Hong Kong but also operates with the intention of undermining the reality presented by fantasy.

The film opens with a brief scene from the science fiction story Mr. Chow is working on, titled “2047,” in which the narrator describes a place called 2046 where one’s desires are suspended within reach. There, nothing ever changes and there is no loss or sadness. This unnamed character is the first to return from 2046, hurtling home on a train populated only by himself and several femme androids, all of whom resemble Mr. Chow’s lost lovers. 2046 and 2047 are important numbers not only in the world created by the films but in the context of contemporary Hong Kong. 2046 is the number of the hotel room in which Mr. Chow and Mrs. Chan (Su Li-zehn) wrote together during their

emotional affair in *In the Mood for Love*. When Mr. Chow seeks a room in Hong Kong upon his return, he first asks to rent the occupied number 2046, and then settles for 2047 where he watches as tenants come and go from the room next door. It is no coincidence that 2047 marks the end of Chinese control of Hong Kong and the first post-colonial moment for the island which has shifted between British and Chinese control. Though this fact is never referenced directly in the film, it is undoubtedly present in the structure Wong creates, particularly in the science fiction arc.

The fictional 2046 speaks directly to the functioning of fantasy. What Mr. Chow's character describes is not a world in which our desires are fulfilled but instead one where they are suspended within reach. This is a slight distinction but an important one. The absence of loss and sadness does not arise from possessing that which we desire but from the constant assurance that we need only reach out our hand and take it, an assurance that it is, of course, best not to test. This is precisely the promise of fantasy, that what we want is around the next corner, that our satisfaction is only a matter of our temporal and spatial maneuvering. This is why the real world Chow never moves into room 2046, as was his original plan, even as new tenants come and go. He is comforted by the potential of fulfillment, undoubtedly spoiled by the realization that life inside of room 2046 is much the same as that within room 2047. It is this disillusionment that Chow's science fiction alter ego encounters upon arriving in his fantasy destination.

We can extend this reading, numbers and all, to the political situation in contemporary Hong Kong. . The timeline of world history—and with it the teleology of colonialism—is doubly undermined by Hong Kong, a space no pre or post-colonial history to speak of and a bustling hub of late stage capitalism. Wong seems to revel in the

contradictions of the space through his representations of temporality. With no pre or post, the city hangs suspended, a perpetually cresting wave. It might be tempting to suggest that, with the 2047 close of the “One Country, Two Systems” chapter and the independence of Hong Kong, this wave might break. However, everything in *2046* seems to caution against this way of thinking. Wong demonstrates not only the sustaining power of temporal/spatial fantasy, the power of the as yet unkept promise, but also the devastation inevitable at the moment of acquisition, the realization that what we desire is not quite what we thought.

Fittingly, Christmas Eve is another recurring date throughout *2046*, both in the science fiction universe and outside of it. The idea of “eve” operates in much the same way as the image of a cresting wave—revealing fantasy for what it is, as suspension rather than delivery. Chow repeatedly encounters past lovers on Christmas Eve, entertaining the possibility of rekindling romance for the night. The first of these occurrences results in a brief physical affair between Chow and Bai Ling in which she develops feelings and he does not. After falling in love with Wang Jing-wen (the twice unavailable daughter of Chow’s real-life landlord, out of reach both because she is coupled with a young Japanese man and forbidden by her father), Chow invites her to dinner on Christmas Eve. She reveals lingering feelings for her ex and Chow brings her to his office so that she can phone him, the two become involved again. Chow is devastated but expresses pride in not taking advantage of the young woman; it seems possible that it is not Chow’s chivalry that comforts him but his postponement of disappointment, his freezing of fantasy.

Chow's alter-ego remarks that sections 1224-1225 (the dates concurrent with Christmas Eve and Christmas Day) on the long journey home are the coldest and loneliest on the train, passengers are encouraged to huddle close to their android attendants for warmth. The alter-ego embraces and sleeps with an android who is an exact double of Wang Jing-wen. By the final section of this narrative, Chow's alter-ego has fallen in love with her. He repeatedly asks the android to return home with him, revealing his romantic feelings, but she does not respond to him, pretending not to hear his request. He first attributes this to a delayed processing time, a failing mechanism caused by the long journey and cold conditions. This is the explanation that fantasy offers, that a failure of romantic identification is not, in fact, a result of the ineffability of desire, the constant retreat of satisfaction, or the reality of primordial lack but instead a simple failure of timing. Eventually, the alter-ego decides that it is not the result of a mechanical malfunction but instead simply that the android is already in love with someone else or rather, that their fantasies are ultimately incompatible. This shift, at its core, is from the fantasy that one's desires can be reached within the reality created by time and space towards the idea that the subject in love must engage in a reciprocal decision to be with what is lacking in the other, which necessarily means to be with what is lacking in oneself.

Space and time are undoubtedly inseparable from our experience of the world and from our social reality. Our entire lives are constructed around being in particular places at certain times—work, school, the grocery store. It is therefore relatively simple to assign these dimensions as the axes upon which fantasy plots out desire. It is more

interesting to think about how these axes function and how they fail. It is more complex once we begin to think about the specific limits that space-time reality places on the subject and their desire. It is more exciting once we begin to examine the stickiness of the temporal paradox fantasy must adhere to. In the next chapter, I begin to explicate a relationship between fantasy and ideology and to explore to way both interact with and inhibit our desires.

## Chapter Two

*“Now I've got all morning to obsessively accrue  
A small nation of meaningful objects  
And they've got to represent me, too  
By this afternoon, I'll live in debt  
By tomorrow, be replaced by children.”  
Joshua Tillman, “Bored in the USA”*

*“And you may ask yourself, well  
How did I get here?  
Letting the days go by, let the water hold me down  
Letting the days go by, water flowing underground  
Into the blue again after the money's gone  
Once in a lifetime, water flowing underground”  
The Talking Heads, “Once in a Lifetime”*

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* begins with an extended discussion of the “tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the utmost ends of the earth,” to the “dark places of the earth” populated by monstrous savages (105). This opening passage, aside from being obviously racist, is primarily spatial in nature. This spatial introduction to Marlow's narrative of colonialism and empire is not insignificant; it locates the text within the structure of fantasy and provides us an avenue into ideology. It is clear that these opening passages carry some ideological weight—for an extended reification of the Thames as a river that has floated “the germs of empires” and coursed in “unceasing service” to the “race that peopled it's banks” can hardly stand on ideologically neutral ground (Conrad, 104). Marlow's picture of the Thames is dotted with named explorers and unknown knights, captaining “ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time” (Conrad, 104). He understands the river not simply as delivering spatial reach to the people of England but assuring their past and future dominion over time. The projected spatial reach of the river (to the ends of the earth) is coupled with its temporal

expansiveness (from mythology to empire). In this imagination, the Thames acts as the vehicle for the deliverance of Christian, colonial, and market ideology. The deliverance of this ideology is mediated through space and time, it is reliant upon the fantasy structure.

It is worthwhile to explore the intricacies of this mediation, to examine how ideology latches itself on to the functioning of fantasy. Later in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow reflects on his boyhood passion for maps saying, “I would... lose myself in all of the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it,” claim it (Conrad, 108). This moment is undoubtedly fantasy driven, Marlow projecting his desire for ownership and for exploration onto the globe, imagining himself eventually as occupying these “blank” spaces. The reality is that while the map before Marlow may be blank, the earth itself is populated. Marlow conflates the two, creating an ideological slip between map and earth. The map, of course, is a fantasy-construction, it projects Marlow’s reality and enables him to elevate the “blank spaces on earth” to the object of his desire by giving him longitudinal coordinates and a timeline of British expansion. However, the intimate relationship between map and empire mirrors that between fantasy and ideology, ideology employing the space-time construction of fantasy towards its own desires.

Now that we have spent some time examining the ways that fantasy scenes and ideological structures operate in a particular text, we can begin to explore the ways that fantasy informs and interacts with ideology at large. The two are intricately entwined, both crucial in creating and sustaining our reality. If fantasy constitutes our reality via

time and space, ideology then leverages these dimensions in order to direct our desire towards its own ends. Ideology does not act concurrently with fantasy but waits for fantasy to generate the spatiotemporal conditions for desire and then declares its own want as a function of time and space, projecting this want onto the fantasy subject. This is not to say that ideology is completely absent in generating fantasy objects—far from it—but, instead, that ideology is dependent upon the coordinates that fantasy creates. Further, ideology manipulates these coordinates towards sustaining itself, rather than the subject. This requires ideology to interact with both components of the paradoxical temporal process we identified in the previous chapter, both projecting and revising our space-time image.

The idea of ideology as directing desire towards its own ends, while not unique, warrants sustained attention. Žižek posits that “ideology serves only its own purpose, that it does not serve anything—which is precisely the Lacanian definition of *jouissance*” (*Sublime Object*, 92). There is something libidinal about ideology, then. It resists embodiment even as it moves in and acts through the subject. Again, I posit that fantasy is invested in generating reality and sustaining the spatiotemporal subject of reality full stop. Ideology, on the other hand, is only interested in its own regeneration. Should the subject and their reality have to endure for ideology to continue, so be it. This almost mirrors the basic relationship between desire and drive, desire sustaining the subject as its function while drive sustains the subject as vessel for disfunction.

Let’s return to colonialism and empire in order to situate a particular ideology within this conceptual framework. The ideology of colonialism relies on a specific rendering of time and space, one not as all as linear or logical as fantasy might suggest

despite its narrativization. I posit that the temporal conditions that enable Conrad's Marlow, and colonizers more broadly, to envision the world as blank essentially involve time travel or, at the very least, some temporal gymnastics. In order to colonize the other, the colonizer must first declare the culture of the other primitive, antiquated, savage. This effectively relocates the other within the temporal framework, marking them as of a different time. The imagination of the other as behind or backwards opens their newly temporally vacated space to the conquering power, using temporality to create blank space. Ideology effectively authorizes a new spatiotemporal reality towards its own reproduction, harnessing the desire of multiple fantasy subjects towards its enjoyment. The repurposing of space-time coordinates towards a particular goal is not a graceful one but it is in keeping with the functioning of fantasy which allows us to move both backwards and forwards in time in order to, ultimately, create a singular narrative of desire. Ideology relies on the established mode of fantasy but recognizes and utilizes how clunky that mode is.

There is never a point at which the subject operates underneath a single ideological temporality. This does not mean, however, that the ways that these ideological systems leverage the space-time construction of fantasy are identical or even particularly compatible. For instance, the temporal requirements of capitalism—that we must spend much of our waking life working so as to buy more products—do not always align with those of Judaism which might ask us to refrain from working the high holidays and Shabbat. In this instance, ideology again leverages the shortcomings of fantasy's spatiotemporal structure, insisting that it is not that the space-time requirements of our ideologies are fundamentally irreconcilable but simply that we do not have enough space

or time to perform our ideological due diligence. Our own capacity to traverse space and time efficiently and effectively becomes justification for those moments when ideology and fantasy are at odds, when neither can create a unified vision of reality.

### *Still Life*

Jia Zhangke's *Still Life* tells the story of two people looking for their loved ones amidst wreckage left in the wake of the construction of the Three Gorges Dam. The film wrestles with the importance and impermanence of physical space—both in the formation of identity and ideology. The enmeshment of and tension between identity and ideology is worth exploring at some length especially those moments of tension that are located in space-time.

The first act begins with Sanming—a former coal miner—who is returning to Fengjie after a long absence. He intends to reunite with his ex-wife, someone he hasn't seen in close to sixteen years. Upon returning, Sanming asks a young man to take him to his former address, 5 Granite Street. The motorcycle comes to a stop on the bank of a wide river and the driver announces their arrival. Sanming is upset with the driver—"but it's underwater"—and the young man replies "I didn't order it flooded! See where that ferry is moored? That's where my home was." The significance of this moment is twofold. It not only highlights the ease with which space has been restructured for the purposes of the Three Gorges Dam but also points to the inability of ideology to restructure the shared memory of space. The erasure of physical landmarks does nothing to change the landscape of memory and identification, for either Sanming or his driver.

However, neither of them, in pointing to floating former landmarks, is able to return what was lost.

As Sanming moves through what is left of his hometown we see red lines and characters drawn on many of the remaining buildings, marking rising water or imminent demolition. Story after story consumed by the rising Yangtze, asking the poor to pay the ideological debts of the rich. These markers constantly invade the visual space, a reminder of the impermanence of the city. Eventually Sanming finds a job as part of a demolition crew, his own body used in service of the ideological dismantling of his home—for this is what ideology asks of us. In destroying these buildings he is also removing the marks of this restructuring, removing the tracks that the government has left behind as evidence of their violent reimagining of space. One of the young men on the crew, who Sanming has grown to like, is crushed by a falling building (an accident or made to look like one) and his physical body becomes symbolic of the significance of this erasure.

When Sanming goes to the relocation office in an effort to discover his wife's updated information the clerk is unable to find her. She half apologizes for the failure of the database, saying "of course there are problems, a city with 2000 years of history was demolished in just two years." While this woman's grievance is with the computer system, her position as a government employee lends larger resonance to this statement. It is ideologically inconvenient that collective memory should resist the reconstruction of space so completely, even as physical markers of violence are removed. While the building of the dam might signify a new era for China and the Chinese market to some, this is not the extent of its implications. The problem of memory and the problem of

imagination (the young man's ability to envision his home beneath the ferry floating on the river) are fundamental in unsettling ideology. Though this is, of course, not to say that either memory or imagination exist with ideological purity.

The Three Gorges Dam is an undoubtedly ideological project at both the level of nation and capital. China touts the dam's construction and celebrates its image as a mark of Chinese modernity. This is in part because the widening of the Yangtze river in service of the dam allows for increased shipping capacity, increased trade. In one scene in the film, one of Sanming's companions holds up a ten yuan note, showing his fellows his bend in the Yangtze river, his home. This image knits together ideology and physical space. The broad expanse of the river, underneath it people's homes and livelihoods, displayed on a bank note—uniting nation and capital alike with the new landscape. The decision of the Chinese government to reprint bank notes with the new Yangtze is an effort to restructure public memory. However, the destruction and repurposing of public space precedes the attempt to reposition identity.

One of the scenes in the film shows a ferry boat tour winding through the scenic riverbed. The tour guide gives thanks to the Three Gorges Dam for allowing access to such a beautiful portion of China and briefly acknowledges the sacrifice of many people whose homes were abandoned in the service of their country and capital. What the tour guide does not acknowledge is that these people did not voluntarily or heroically give up their homes but were instead forced to surrender to the China's new spatial imagination, a spatial restructuring designed to move China into the future. The only alternative was to be swallowed whole by the oncoming river, to die. This is the decision that one couple in the movie arrives at, refusing to abandon space in service of the larger ideological goal

(which they describe as “bullying”) and instead saying, “we can’t wait to die here together.” It is difficult not to commend this act of resistance but I have to condemn its necessity.

*Still Life* contains, without comment, a few surreal scenes. The first shows an enormous monument lifting up, propelling itself like a rocket ship into the night sky. The second shows a tightrope walker moving between buildings, silhouetted against the darkening sky. Jia Zhangke presents these images without comment, even without particular emphasis. What do we make of them in the context of ideology? There are several viable answers to this question. First, these bizarre happenings further unsettle the permanence and reality of physical space. This is particularly true of the monument which obliterates itself unceremoniously from the landscape. Second, the surrealism speaks to the limits of fantasy in representing the Real, to the limits of reality in representing desire. There are things (desire among them) that cannot be mapped onto the axes of linear time and physical space, that can cause rupture in the symbolic order. Third, Jia suggests that, in recognizing the limits of spatiotemporal fantasy, we may be able to disrupt ideology.

Earlier I asserted the power of ideology to authorize a precise spatiotemporal arrangement towards a particular end. This concept of authorizing suggests that part of the work of ideology is to narrativize (or re-narrativize) time and space. This looks similar to the secondary temporal function of fantasy we identified—that which retroactively intervenes to provide spatiotemporal justification for our inevitable dissatisfaction, to further defer our experience of lack. The ultimate end of this

narrativization is distinctly different in the case of fantasy than in that of ideology. Žižek asserts that “the function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us a social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel” (*Sublime Object*, 45). The framework Žižek posits suggests that ideology and fantasy are both invested in sustaining our reality but does not differentiate as to why each has a stake in this illusion.

Žižek understands ideology as offering the subject justification for their lack and fantasy as providing the subject a way around that lack. He writes “ideology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our ‘reality’ itself: an ‘illusion’ which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel” (*Sublime Object*, 45). Žižek positions fantasy as an obscene supplement to ideology. The appearance of non-contradictory reality that ideology creates—in which our lack is attached to our relationship with god or our acquisition of capital—is, in Žižek’s view, not necessarily a satisfying one. This is where fantasy intervenes, offering the subject a way around this lack. Ideology needs fantasy to continue.

The relationship I propose is slightly different, in which fantasy is not an obscene supplement to ideology but ideology acts as the parasitic attachment to the fantasy structure. It is still true that ideology does not function without fantasy. This is, in part, to do with the common ground that Žižek and I share; it is necessary that fantasy coexist with ideology because fantasy compels the subject to keep desiring despite their lack. This, I think, is true. However, I understand ideology as borrowing from this

function of fantasy directly as a way to self-replicate. In Žižek's formulation, Capitalism tells the subject that the feeling of lack or loss that they experience is the direct result of not owning enough things, knowing full well that there won't ever be enough things or the right things to fill this hole. Fantasy then emerges to suggest that, maybe, the subject could in fact possess the right type or the right number of commodities to stop up this lack. Fantasy asks the subject to keep desiring despite the shortcomings of ideology. In my formulation, ideology witnesses the functioning of fantasy, which insists that the subject must desire towards an object, one positioned in the spatiotemporal landscape. Fantasy is invested in sustaining the subject not in sustaining ideology. Ideology, acting only in service of itself, intervenes to direct the desire of the subject towards its own ends. The capitalist insists that the object fantasy should elevate is capital, the colonizer asks for land. The risk, of course, is reducing this relationship to a chicken and egg scenario, arguing about which comes first with little attention paid as to why it might matter.

Why, then, should we explore the implications of reversing (on some level) the relationship between fantasy and ideology that Žižek posits? If fantasy predates—for lack of a better word—ideology, spatiotemporality gives us a point of entry into destabilizing dominant ideological structures. By representing and affirming alternate chronologies or the limits of chronology itself, by looking for who is violently excluded from space and time, we may be able to force ideological shift. If ideology is the parasitic growth on the body of fantasy, perhaps there is some potential for exorcism or at least for augmentation. If fantasy is not invested in plugging up the holes in ideological satisfaction but instead in sustaining the subject and their desire full stop, and in doing so through space and time,

perhaps addressing the limits of time and space in signifying desire unsettles the subject, introduces new modes of being, and in doing so, unsettles the dominant ideological modes.

In his book *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema*, Todd McGowan opens up the possibility of a subject of the drive as an alternative to the subject constituted by desire. McGowan asserts desire as necessarily temporal while drive operates on the level of our atemporal unconscious. It follows the subject of drive has the potential to resist the ideological implications of temporality, that amassing more and more of these subjects might shift the ideological landscape all together. Again, I don't think that our points are entirely at odds, though McGowan locates linear temporality at the level of desire, rather than arising from desire's transition into the realm of fantasy. I stated briefly in my introduction that fantasy latches itself onto desire (rather than drive) because of desire's attachment to an object—the object is inevitably easier to locate in normative time and space than the gap. This is keeping with McGowan's point, he has simply imagined away around the structure imposed by spatiotemporal fantasy. Perhaps this gets at what I am suggesting above, with regard to Žižek's point, that while time is what inculcates fantasy, thinking about, around, or through time could also be a way out.

McGowan explores the implications of the age of digital instant gratification of the structure of desire, saying that “the subject's desire depends on a temporal distance between the desiring subject and the object desired” and that “digital technology has the effect of eliminating all barriers between the subject and object of desire” (*Atemporal Cinema*, 26, 27) This understanding of the relationship between desire and fantasy reads as similar to my own, though I might replace the first instance of ‘desire’ in this initial

quote with fantasy. While McGowan does not position the increased accessibility of objects as an explicit push toward aligning the subject with drive, he does suggest that our increased experience of obtaining the posited objects of our desire and realizing that they are not satisfactory opens up the space for a shift. “The point is not that desire suffocates through instantly obtaining its object but that it becomes increasingly difficult to invest oneself in the project of desire when one recognizes that the object will never be *the object*” (*Atemporal Cinema*, 28).

What McGowan posits here seems to me a short circuiting of the fantasmatic temporal paradox. Increased availability of objects within a shortened spatiotemporal reach asks fantasy to work overtime, positing more and more objects and all the while explaining to us why the previous ones did not fill the gap. McGowan suggests that this could be a way into becoming the subject of atemporal drive. Further, he asserts that inhabiting this subject position—one based not on realization but on repetition—has the potential to “thwart capitalist relations of production” and, at a large scale, “portends the possibility of a transformation of capitalist relations of production” (*Atemporal Cinema*, 29). Here, the short circuiting of fantasy acts as the catalyst for ideological resistance. The disruption of the spatiotemporal fantasy allows the shortcomings and contradictions to become visible and in, McGowan’s imagination, opens up the potential for new modes of being. It seems to me that this is the theoretical utility of positioning ideology as the attachment to fantasy rather than fantasy as supplement to ideology.

### *Early American*

Returning to the decidedly pre-digital, the Early US novel provides an interesting literary landscape in which to explore ideology and fantasy. The creation of the nation-state is inevitably a hot bed of fantasmatic imagination and ideological projection. The ideological project of the nation rests on some promise of unified space and collective history, even going so far as to presuppose the conditions of its own existence within these dimensions, declaring itself inevitable. All of this is at work within Leonora Sansay's novel *Secret History; or The Horrors of St. Domingo*. Sansay uses feminine sexuality and female bodies as a stand in for nation and as a way to condemn the enjoyment of some while celebrating that of others. While the texts I have examined thus far—with the exception of *Heart of Darkness*—primarily engage in some subversion of the ideological and fantasmatic landscape, Sansay's text is entirely embroiled in it. It is impossible to read this text as pushing its characters, particularly our narrator, closer to the Real of their desires. It is worth examining these texts, though far more prolific, that use their spatiotemporal authority to hold up dominant ideologies. It is further important to explore precisely what is left out of these texts in service of fantasy and ideology.

Sansay's epistolary text contains primarily letters written by the fictional Mary to her lover, Aaron Burr. Later in the novel, there are a few letters penned by Mary's sister Clara. As a brief aside, the genre of the epistolary novel seems especially ripe for temporal and spatial unpacking as the epistolary form requires the author to be uniquely aware of both, considering where and when a character might receive post, how post might travel in and out of the colonies. Mary often notes this at the open or close of her letters, saying such things as: "a month has passed, since our arrival in this place, in such a round

of visits and such a variety of amusements, that I am afraid, my dear friend, you will think I have forgotten you” (Sansay 111). The action of *Secret History* takes place in Haiti, where the unmarried Mary lives with and chronicles the life of her sister, the coquettish Clara. Clara is in an abusive relationship with a French colonial officer stationed in Cape Francis at the time of the Haitian revolution. Clara eventually leaves her husband, fleeing into the Haitian countryside and the arms of other single white women.

The novel culminates in a bizarre vision of the future—“Clara and myself [Mary] will leave this for Philadelphia, in the course of the ensuing week. There I hope we shall meet you...[Clara] will find in you a friend and a protector, and we may still be happy” (154). Despite the obvious oddity of the situation—two unmarried women moving in with vice president Aaron Burr—I am more interested in Mary’s seeming need to locate her desire both temporally and spatially within the United States rather than Haiti, where the two are already safe and united. This is a perfect example of ideology harnessing fantasy towards its own goal, directing Mary’s desire towards the new US republic lest she should align herself with the Haitian subjects or landscape and subsequently with their cause.

Mary has no concept of being “held” by the ideologies of colonialism, racism, or the nation-state—it is fully integrated into her reality. This, Žižek asserts is the result of being fully incorporated into a particular ideological teleology, that “the ideology succeeds in determining the mode of our everyday experience of reality itself” (*Sublime Object*, 49). Mary’s reality, though not located physically in the United States, is determined entirely by the promise of this space and by the history it enacts and timeline

it projects. In this vein, it is important to acknowledge that the bizarre utopia Mary pens is never realized within the pages of the text, instead satisfaction is perpetually suspended in the final letter, fantasy has done its job.

The Hattian revolution is at once central and silent in Sansay's text. It seems that this event marks the traumatic kernel for Mary. Even as she commends and eroticizes acts of feminine resistance, Mary is unable to turn directly towards their origin or historical import. The novel is littered with tales of violence against Haitian bodies, but they are never afforded the same consideration that Mary allows her sister, who she considers to be a full subject. Despite her creeping feeling of being denied access to her desire, Mary's racism prevents her from being able to locate her own desire within the landscape of the Haitian revolution. Further, the ideological tug of the new United States insists that she direct her fantasmatic energy towards its constitution and continuance.

The relationship between Clara and her husband, Saint Louis, therefore acts as a whitewashed microcosm of the revolution, one in which Clara is able to recognize oppression without acknowledging her complicity in it and celebrate resistance without commending black subjects. This is particularly interesting for our purposes because of the way in which Mary's racism and nationalism ask her to pull back from an acknowledgement of universal history (Haitians as historical actors and subjects). These ideological structures cannot integrate the revolution into the singular and dominating Western timeline that both Conrad's Marlow and Sansay's Mary are emphatically complicit in.

My primary intention here is to affirm the participation of both ideology and fantasy in constituting our social reality. The parasitic position I assign to ideology has to do with its self-regenerative project. Ideology exists only in service of itself, of its own continuation. In this way ideology relies on fantasy's investment in sustaining the subject and their desire. However, ideology has no investment in the subject or their desire beyond their utility in propagating a specific ideological project. Ideology, in latching on to the space-time functioning of fantasy, leverages both the triumphs and failures of these dimensions. It is therefore productive—politically, theoretically, personally—to locate and name the shortcomings of fantasy, even as it sustains us as desiring subjects. This offers a way in to shifting dominant ideological structures and opening up new modes of subjectivity.

*Chapter Three*

*“Our days were long, our nights no longer  
Count the seconds, watching hours...  
There's no future, there's no answer  
Though we live on the US dollar  
You and me we got our own sense of time”  
Ezra Koenig, “Hannah Hunt”*

*“The people of cinema can be relied on.”  
Jafar Panahi, “Taxi”*

Barry Jenkins’s 2016 film *Moonlight* was widely regarded as a triumph in bringing queer stories to a mainstream audience. The film earned the 2017 Academy Award for best picture but, despite its enormous popularity, does not adhere entirely to filmic conventions of time and space. The coming-of age drama follows, at first glance, a predictable temporal structure in which a young boy wrestles with the intersection of his sexuality and race. The piece is broken into three distinct acts (a product of its adaptation from a play called *In the Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue*) in which the main character, Chiron, is played by three different actors. Despite the predictable march from childhood to adolescence and on through to young adulthood, there is something in Jenkins’ film that resists the typical functioning of fantasy, that works against a single unified narrative of the subject and his desires. Each of the three sections has a distinct aesthetic, emulating different film stocks. This striking aesthetic break between sections acts as a visual reminder that the narrative we are privy to is not temporally unified. Try as fantasy might, there is something left out of the whole it posits. The breaks between sequences are not mediated by montage or other temporal editing conventions intended to ease transition, they are definitive and sharp. The result is a chronology without causality, events existing in time rather than because of it. This, too, informs our experience of the

text. The subjects presented in *Moonlight*, cannot be neatly integrated into the landscape of fantasy and Jenkins is sure to underscore this. Because of its mainstream success and its resistance to progressive linear time (even as it nominally adheres to it), this film seems a fitting entry into queer texts as historically invested in undermining the time-space functioning of fantasy and ideology.

Many queer texts (across genres and mediums, with *Moonlight* among them) have worked to challenge normative narrative structures, creating jumbled and unusual chronologies. Queer theory has often looked towards alternate temporalities as a tool through which to express queer identity and its potential for ideological upset. In this chapter I will use queer theory to explore the ways text can be employed to interrogate and disrupt the fantasy-scene. How can text be used as a tool through which to draw attention to fantasy-constructions and their ideological implications? How does drawing attention to the function and functioning of these structures create space for people and ideas traditionally marginalized by the dominant ideology? How can we use text to get at the Real of desire? This chapter operates on the assumption that film, television, and literature have immense potential to disrupt.

Lee Edelman's *No Future* argues that political ideology centers around the image of the child, around reproductive futurity. Put very simply, reproductive futurity is the cultural focus on the image of the Child, the constant reproduction of ideology and fantasy structures based on reifying the eventual and abstract next generation. Edelman positions queerness as the inherent negativity invested in the concept of reproductive futurity, as embodying the death drive and jouissance. Further, Edelman identifies temporality as existing within the scheme of fantasy, writing that reproductive futurity

“works to affirm a structure, to authenticate social order, which it then intends to transmit the future in the form of its inner Child. That child remains the perpetual horizon of acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention” (*No Future*, 3). My conception of fantasy is similarly future-looking, invested in projecting our desire as just around the next bend, attainable but at a distance. The distant horizon and the cresting wave function almost identically. Edelman’s argument, however, elevates this idea to the level of culture—for lack of a better word—examining not only the particular desire of the single subject but the way in which fantasy seeks to signify desire at large. This is necessarily entwined with ideology as ideology seeks to collect and unify the desires of many subjects towards its own ends.

What Edelman’s theory opens up is a space of potential temporal resistance, it highlights, yet again, that there is something that exists outside of time and space. His assertion that “the Symbolic refuses the queer” removes queerness and the queer subject from the reality posited by fantasy because spatiotemporal reality inhabits the Symbolic. Edelman writes that “fantasies reproduce the past, through displacement, in the form of the future” (Edelman, *No Future*, 26, 31). The view of temporality that Edelman establishes looks much like the temporal paradox that I am wrestling with in the previous chapters, a relationship between future and past that operates to maintain the reality of fantasy alongside ideological centers of power but must do so through constant, invisible negotiation. Edelman understands queerness as a way around this, as the gap that disrupts the fantasy structure, the persistent and excessive negativity that fantasy cannot operate without (however much it might wish too). It is important to highlight the potentiality of negativity, because this can, at first, feel counterintuitive. This is particularly true when

the dominant narrative is premised on productivity. Queerness—for Edelman, and perhaps for us—provides a point of entry into the subjects potential to destabilize the order of things, just by being. By being, specifically, with their lack.

Edelman returns again and again to the idea of narrative, using the term broadly to refer to “the fantasmatic order of reality in which the subject’s alienation would vanish into the seamlessness of identity at the endpoint of the endless chain of signifiers lived as history” (*No Future*, 8). I am interested, because of space constraints and my field of study, in scaling down this idea of narrative to the level of filmic and literary text. I argue that the creation of texts that enact the gap—in the same way that Edelman’s queer subject does—is an enormously powerful tool for drawing attention to and destabilizing fantasy structures.

Elizabeth Freeman’s book *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* engages two concepts within the discourse of queer identity and normative temporality that are useful for our purposes: chrononormativity and chronobiopolitics. Freeman expresses chrononormativity as

a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches inculcate what the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls “hidden rhythms,” forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege. Manipulations of time convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines (*Time Binds*, 3).

Put simply in conversation with my larger project, chrononormativity allows us to discuss the ways in which the fantasy structure perpetrates violence against particular bodies, the

way that it privileges certain modes of desiring. While Freeman does not definitively assert time as the tool of fantasy, her insistence that time operates to create the illusion of seamless reality aligns her theory with my own. Reality is a fantasy construction, reliant on our temporal indoctrination.

Freeman uses chronobiopolitics to denote the ways that chrononormativity acts on bodies en masse, saying “in a chronobiological society, the state and other institutions including representational apparatuses, link properly temporalized bodies to narratives of movement and change” (*Time Binds*, 4). This is not dissimilar from Edelman’s assertion that normative temporality leaves no room for the queer subject. In this vein, Freeman writes that “the past seems useless unless it predicts and becomes material for the future” (*Time Binds*, 5). This is certainly in keeping with my own framework, whereby past and future are constantly employed and reworked in order to protect the subject from present lack. It is worth noting, in conjunction with this, that Freeman’s argument rests on an idea of the temporalized body. By locating time within the body, Freeman introduces—though not explicitly—space into her imagination of normative temporality. The physicality of the body situates the subject not only as one beholden to time but also to space.

The above passage also peripherally engages the theory of ideology addressed in our discussion of ideology. The language that Freeman uses, that of institutions “linking” the body and particular narratives, gets succinctly at the functioning of ideological systems. Ideology latches itself onto the temporal functioning of fantasy, overlaying a narrative that points the desiring subject towards ideology’s own reproduction. In other words, ideology relies on the temporally conditioned subject, delivering meaning by way

of narrative, asking that the subject move continually forward towards a particular ideological end—though end is, of course, the wrong word.

Earlier, I drew attention to the fact that repetition is notably not erased entirely from temporality, that our calendars and clocks—even as they promise to propel us into the future, are not without points of return. Freeman addresses this saying that “chronobiopolitics harnesses not only sequence but also cycle, the dialectical companion to sequence, for the idea of time as cyclical stabilizes its forward movement, promising renewal rather than rupture” (*Time Binds*, 5). I am interested in the dichotomy between renewal and rupture, particularly as it relates to Edelman’s construction. Edelman positions the queer subject at the site of rupture, as resistant to renewal, because the queer subject is a subject without a future. In her reading of *Hamlet* and *K.I.P.*, Freeman suggests that “temporal misalignments can be the means of opening up other possible worlds” (16). These worlds are opened up in the moment of rupture, existing not outside of time but instead of time. Taking these two together, I am reminded of the subject of the drive that McGowan forwarded as an atemporal answer to fantasy and ideology, McGowan and Freeman, like myself, uses film and literature as sites of atemporal possibility, asserting that text has the potential to dismantle the fantasy structure and, further, to draw attention to those whom it privileges.

### *Baldwin*

James Baldwin’s novel *Giovanni’s Room* tells the story of narrator David’s devastating romance with the charismatic Giovanni, a romance deeply invested in exploring exactly who time and space serve. The two meet in Paris, where Giovanni

works as a barkeep and David postpones his engagement to his girlfriend, Hella. David and Giovanni quickly fall in love and into bed, moving into Giovanni's apartment, a maid's room on the outskirts of Paris. Much of the novel centers around different experiences of time and space, particularly as they are bound up with sexual desire. David fixates on the room as a site of queer desire throughout the text, his discomfort with his sexuality transferred to Giovanni's unfinished renovations and too-thin walls; David is alternately disgusted and enchanted with the suspended feeling of the room. In one of these moments of reverence David says, "I remember that life in that room seemed to be occurring beneath the sea. Time flowed past indifferently above us; hours and days had no meaning" (Baldwin, 75). This exemption from the usual functioning of time and space, the usual insistence of fantasy, is at first joyful for David but, eventually, his joy shifts to anguish. He is ultimately unable to translate his love and his lover into normative temporality, into the future. This is more often than not our experience of love—we are not, or they are not, in the right time or place for a relationship. Some moments feel divested of fantasy ("occurring beneath the sea") but when we are asked to position our desire within the temporal and spatial structure afforded to us by fantasy it often feels like an impossibility.

The difficulty of properly translating desire to the realm of fantasy is at the forefront of *Giovanni's Room* throughout the novel. One of the most pertinent observations in the book is made by one of the more detestable characters, "'Nobody can stay in the garden of Eden,' Jacques said. And then: 'I wonder why'" (Baldwin, 25). This musing (echoing Captain Kirk's assertion in *This Side of Paradise*) gets partially at Lacan's understanding of primordial lack. Jacques's observation falls short because he

fails to realize the falsity of paradise, fixating instead on its impermanence. Mari Ruti writes that socialization “divests us of our infantile fantasy of wholeness and uncomplicated belonging, generating an unquenchable longing for a state of plentitude that we imagine we have somehow been unfairly robbed of” (*Call of Character*, 47). Jacques certainly imagines himself robbed rather than lacking. After this conversation, David reflects on the specificity of desire (and therefore of lack), saying, “Perhaps everybody has a garden of Eden, I don’t know; but they have scarcely seen their garden before they see the flaming sword. Then, perhaps, life only offers the choice of remembering the garden or forgetting it” (Baldwin, 25). David’s acknowledgement that paradise is not singular (for Jacques full of football players and for Giovanni, maidens) is followed by his observation that this does not much matter, for we are each devoid of something—surely and quickly (Baldwin, 25).

As David’s relationship with Giovanni continues to dissolve, David becomes increasingly fascinated with his eventual return to the United States. He understands this return not only as an escape from the bizarre temporality and spatial ambiguity of the room but from his own homosexual desire. This desire is, of course, inextricably bound with the temporal and spatial dimensions of Giovanni’s room, dimensions that David cannot situate himself in because they lack the linearity promised by his engagement to Hella. This forecloses the possibility of his adherence to the heterosexual trajectory which would appease not only his own internalized homophobia but his father and Hella’s concerns. This trajectory is one deeply embroiled in ideology.

When the Giovanni confronts David about his fantasy of return he says, “Why, you will go home and then you will find that home is not home anymore. Then you will

really be in trouble. As long as you stay here you can always think: One day I will go home... Well, isn't it true? You don't have a home until you leave it and then, when you have left it, you can never go back" (Baldwin 116). This is in keeping with the earlier discussion of Eden between Jacques and the couple and, of course, with the idea of innate lack and double negation. What Giovanni expresses, and what Jacques fails to understand prior, is just the sort of with-without that psychoanalysis posits. We are never possessed of a home, only possessed of its absence. Giovanni's relationship with paradise does not invest either in remembering or forgetting, instead in recognizing that home, paradise, or Eden are only created in retrospect, once we feel ourselves severed from them. Certainly this awareness of lack does not exempt Giovanni from the inevitability of desire and fantasy. Ruti writes that "the fact that we never possessed this paradise in the first place, that we were never completely whole and at ease to begin with, does not in the least diminish our resolve to recover it" (*Call of Character*, 47). However, his awareness of this fact does perhaps allow Giovanni the privilege of carving out a space for the unknowability of his unique desire, a space that becomes more and more agonizing for David as he seeks a home that never was.

Before moving on from this particular text, I want to touch briefly on one final moment. One of the first conversations between David and Giovanni is about the differences between France and America, a difference that seems to rest on the perceived progression of time in the respective spaces. I posit that this discussion is ultimately one about ideology. Giovanni teases, "You Americans are funny. You have a funny sense of time—or perhaps no sense of time at all, I can't tell. Time always sounds like a parade, like armies with banners entering a town" (Baldwin, 34). The use of the word parade is of

particular interest to me because it implies some degree of progression or linearity—both necessary for the creation of fantasy but here intertwined with the idea of nation, an idea further entangled with Capitalism, heterosexuality, and militarism. It is this particular ideological landscape to which David longs to return on becoming too involved with Giovanni. However, even in this initial interaction Giovanni is critical of the fantasy of nation and of the promise of linear progression, saying, “And you know what happens in this water, time? Big fish eat the little fish and the ocean doesn’t care” (Baldwin, 35). By the end of the novel, these words seem to predict the fate of Giovanni and David alike, both of their identities seemingly incompatible with the spatiotemporal world they inhabit.

David Eng’s book *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* lends a distinctly spatial element to this realm of queer theory. Eng’s project centers on queer Asian diasporas as sites of difference and defiance. Eng defines queer liberalism as the growing movement to integrate the queer US subject into existing legal structures of family and kinship. He critiques this movement as one that does not address the violence towards and vulnerability of the racial other. He writes that, “in short, queer liberalism is predicated on the systematic dissociation of (homo)-sexuality from race as coeval and intersecting phenomena” (Eng, *QLRI*, 4). Using queer diasporas as a methodological approach, argues Eng, “draws attention to both the nostalgic demands of diaspora and to a history of modernity built on the forgetting of race. It declines the normative impulse to recuperate lost origins, to recapture the mother or motherland” and in doing so seeks to create new ways of knowing and of being (*QLRI*,

13). Eng's determination to examine diasporas destabilizes notions of rootedness in place and his assessment of the visibility/invisibility of the queer migrant makes it clear that place is not a pre-constituted reality. Eng's text centers on a particular component of the fantasy-structure—queer liberalism—but is nevertheless useful for our purposes as a theory which posits the conditions for the destabilization of fantasy structures. In keeping with the project at hand, I focus on those sections of Eng's work that center around literary and filmic text.

Eng argues that queer diasporic texts have the potential to display “the emergence of an alternative historical time and space discontinuous with the sanctioned historical development, conventional historical narratives, and authorized historical representations” (*QLRI*, 64). Here, again, we come up against the idea of narrativizing and authorizing time and space. Eng does not explicitly locate this work in the realm of fantasy but both verbs connote work happening at the level of the Symbolic. Eng later asserts that one of the ideological projects of colonialism is the invalidation of non-Western timelines, or the plurality of timelines at all. The power of representing alternate chronologies in literature and film is implicit in this.

One of the texts that Eng forwards in service of his argument is one that I will also contend with below: Wong Kar-wai's *Happy Together*, a story of two queer Hong Kong men who have migrated to Argentina together on the eve of Chinese takeover of Hong Kong. Eng understands Lai Yu-fai and Ho Po-wing as subjects “who have yet to be visualized with restricted paradigms of knowing and being—others who constitute and haunt, but are nevertheless foreclosed, from the domain of the properly historical” (*QLRI*, 59). Eng goes on to assert the two men as “subjects in waiting” saying, “waiting

structures the temporal and spatial logics of the dis-appearance of their communities of intimacies within the global system” (*QLRI*, 59). Waiting is a distinctly temporal concept but it is opposed to that of progressing. It implies stillness rather than trajectory. Eng writes that, in *Happy Together*, Wong places us “aesthetically at odds with cinematic expectations of time and space and politically at odds with dominant modes of knowing and being” (79). This places the destabilization of aesthetics at the forefront of political disruption.

In his continued exploration of the film, Eng focuses on the physical spaces that Wong creates and the ways in which they are rendered entirely different, newly subversive, by their inhabitants, much like Giovanni’s room. Many of the most intimate scenes in the film are relegated to the impossibly small apartment that the two men share. Eng demonstrates the altered temporal feel of the apartment space—“time in the space of their communal kitchen grinds to a halt...juxtaposed against the rapidly shifting time and space of a Buenos Aires landscape, thumping to its own tempo and beat” allowing “two different structures of time and space [to] emerge simultaneously” (84). Eng pushes away from a reading of the space the two inhabit as liminal, despite his emphasis on waiting, and instead underscores the paradoxically generative and destructive nature of their shared landscape.

### *Happy Together*

Let’s transition into an applied reading of the text Eng identifies as so impactful. Again, Wong Kar-wai’s *Happy Together* tells the story of two queer Hong Kong immigrants—Ho Po-wing and Lai Yiu-fai—who move to Argentina in an effort to

salvage their failing partnership. For the duration of the film, Lai and Ho repeatedly fight and come back together, their love story disjointed and circular. Throughout the film, Wong uses the disruption of filmic time and space to demonstrate their incompatibility with desire, to highlight both the failure and necessity of fantasy.

Many of the more intimate scenes take place in the one room apartment that Lai and Ho share. An alarm clock perches on a shelf above the twin bed, its white block numbers counting down to the end(s) of the relationship between the two men. It is by no means unusual for Wong to feature clocks and watches heavily nor for him to undermine their function. However, this particular clock is of interest to me because it seems to echo the refrain of Ho, who repeatedly pleads with Lai for the two to “start over.” The alarm clock acts as a countdown, each fight shows the large numbers over the bed lower and lower until, finally, Ho stands alone in the room and the clock reads 0:00. This is, of course, not the last time that Ho and Lai connect, just the end of that particular iteration of their relationship. This clock and Ho’s request to “start over” demonstrate the circularity of desire, tracing the same ground again and again, the object of desire retreating constantly. Wong is able to subvert the function of the clock, a tool of fantasy, and use it instead to highlight that traditional time and desire are largely incompatible, irreconcilable.

At one point, frustrated and defeated, Lai says, “I don’t want to start over, I want to return to Hong Kong.” The wish that Lai makes is not, on first inspection, much different than Ho’s. Lai has some difficulty with comprehending the significance of this. It is unclear whether starting over forgets the past or builds from it, whether this requires a complete separation from previous locations of subjectivity. Lai wants to “return to

Hong Kong” rather than start over. While this shift is slight, I argue that it moves his request from the dimension of desire to that of fantasy. Lai accomplishes this by situating his want spatially and temporally. The ambiguity and illegibility of desire is replaced by something more concrete but with just as little potential for satisfaction. After all, fantasy does not help us to realize our desires but instead to situate them in reality. We never see Lai reach Hong Kong.

Lai eventually secures a job at a meat processing plant where he works the night shift. He enjoys working nights because he feels it brings him closer to Hong Kong entirely by virtue of his altered temporality—waking as the sun is rising in Hong Kong but after dark in Argentina. In one of the most beautiful shots of the film we see Hong Kong, a dreamy drive along one of the highways, upside down and voiced over by Lai. This shot, though both brief and simple, is one that draws attention to Lai’s construction, his fantasy of Hong Kong as that object which he has lost, an object only made desirable in his looking. The choice to flip the city shot upside-down is an important one, his gaze and now ours made necessarily strange by desire. The day dream quality of the shot coupled with Lai’s professed temporal relocation draws attention to the oddity of fantasy, its distance from desire.

Hong Kong is just one of the spaces that acts as a site of fantasy in *Happy Together*. The Iguazu Falls act as a visual anchor throughout the film. In one of the first scenes of the film we see Lai and Ho arguing over a map, both recently arrived in Argentina and hoping to see the gigantic cascading waterfall. They end up abandoning the trip without ever reaching their destination. The lampshade in Lai’s small apartment shows the enormous falls in brilliant color. Both Lai and Ho imagine reaching them to be

the key to reaching one another, to gaining stability in their relationship. However, when Lai does finally stand beside the falls he is heartbroken to find himself alone. Ho has returned to the apartment, also alone, and sits beside the lamp. The falls prove to be nothing but inadequate signifiers, unattainable. The space posited by fantasy is, in fact, empty. He attributes this feeling to his loneliness rather than his lack, tying his desire together with time and space to create fantasy.

The opening shot of *Happy Together*, a Hong Kong passport being stamped, briefly indicates to the viewer the temporal setting. This is only referenced again towards the end of the film, when Lai watches the news in a Taipei hotel room. However, as is characteristic of Wong's work, the positionality of Hong Kong is anything but absent from the film—despite the characters' relocation to Argentina. The anxiety of the 1997 Chinese takeover of the island is largely felt in Wong's disavowal of linear time, and subsequently, of fantasy. However, it is amplified by Wong's use of queer migrant bodies.

Here, I would like to briefly discuss Helen Leung's theory of queerscapes, which she describes as “not definitive habitats, but rather emergent sites of possibility, the potential of which cannot yet be properly articulated” (Leung 426). This is of course true on the level of reproductive futurity and heteronormative ideology but can be extended to discuss colonialism and immigration. I think that Leung provides a useful lens through which to examine the particular and precarious nature of Hong Kong as a space and to understand Wong's use of queer migrant bodies in *Happy Together*. Hong Kong is a perpetually colonized island, shifting between British and Chinese control with only a brief interlude in which it was occupied by Japan. The result is a space that undercuts the

narrative constructed by colonialism and world history, one that seems to run in circles rather than proceeding linearly. The relationship between Lai and Ho creates a microcosm of this, Lai imagining the eventual delivery of linearity, of satisfaction and Ho embroiled in the persistence of repetition.

The insistent examination of the constructs of time and space and the interrogation of who these dimensions privilege are both deeply important practices. This can be done at both the level of theory and that of film and literature—which are really not so dissimilar, anyway. It is certainly not revolutionary to suggest that art has the potential to destabilize dominant ideology. However, I do think it is important that that discussion center around *how* we, as artists and scholars, might accomplish this. The thesis I forward here is a simple one, that by upsetting unified and unifying representations of time and space, we are able to unsettle the reality presented by spatiotemporal fantasy and, in doing so, push closer to the Real of our desire. This work is already prolific within the realm of queer storytelling and queer theory but it is by no means relegated to this arena. Queer theory has provided us with immensely powerful tools, tools we have a responsibility to employ.

Spatiotemporal fantasy is an undoubtedly powerful construct, its dual temporal function making it difficult to see the holes in space and time, to look for the gap. However, it is only in seeking out the gaps in this structure that we are able to disrupt dominant ideologies and to move with instead of against the shape of our desire. It is only by looking for what and who fantasy cannot incorporate that we realize we are all done a disservice by the trajectory of fantasy. This is by no means a comfortable prospect but

one that forces us to come up against the reality of our lack, to sit with negativity. This is a productive space, rather than a devastating one, as it allows us to explore new modes of subjectivity.

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