



Research Article

## **An Analysis of Temporal and Spatial Dimensions in Korean Television Season *The Legend of the Blue Sea***

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### **Abstract**

This study analyzes the temporal and spatial aspects of the Korean series *The Legend of the Blue Sea*, employing Gilles Deleuze's theory of temporality to show that the series intertwines past, present, and future in a non-linear narrative, and challenges conventional notions of time and space. This study explores how the series presents time not as a mere succession of events but as a multiplicity of temporalities that coexist and interact. Furthermore, it delves into the double narrative script to investigate as how the series transcends traditional narrative forms by exploring how flashbacks and parallel timelines interact. Besides, the study offers a profound understanding of narrative structure, and character evolution aligning with Deleuze's philosophy of time as a multiplicity of coexisting temporalities. In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of *The Legend of the Blue Sea* through Deleuze's lens, and the research shows how the series' narrative, and spatial dynamics collectively create a complex and multi-layered representation of time. The discussion showed an emergence of a beautiful correlation between dynamics of time and space featured through double narrative script.

Keywords: Temporal shift, Spatial dimension, Fantasy, Pearls, Dual narrative, Korean season, Parallel timelines, Virtual and actual, Multiple temporalities.

## **Introduction**

A Korean television series, commonly known as a K-drama, is produced in the Korean entertainment industry. *The Legend of the Blue Sea* is a complex romantic fantasy Korean television series. It modernizes the tale by incorporating elements of fantasy romance, focusing on the reincarnation of characters across different eras (Kim, 2023). *The Legend of the Blue Sea* utilizes a dual timeline that spans centuries, bringing together the Joseon Dynasty era and the contemporary world, centered on the reincarnated love between a mermaid and a nobleman. In the past, Kim Dam-ryeong and the mermaid Se-hwa are tragically separated by societal pressures and greed. Dam-ryeong leaves warnings for his future self to prevent history from repeating. In the present, con artist Heo Joon-jae meets Shim Cheong, Se-hwa's reincarnation, who struggles to adapt to human life. Their growing bond triggers Joon-jae's memories of his past life, leading them to confront fate and rewrite their tragic love story. The drama reflects broader themes found in oceanic myths, which often serve as philosophical reflections of community life and local wisdom (Olivia et al., 2024).

In this study, the researchers aim to analyze the narrative of *The Legend of the Blue Sea* to explore its temporal aspects through the lens of Gilles Deleuze's theory of Temporality. This approach offers a deep understanding of how the series manipulates time and space to enhance its storytelling. This interweaving of temporalities

enriches the narrative and challenges the viewers' perception of time as a linear progression.

Furthermore, the spatial dynamics in the series are equally significant. The shifting settings from the ancient Korean land to modern-day Seoul highlight the series' exploration of space as more than a mere backdrop. According to Deleuze, space, much like time, is a complex construct experienced subjectively and interactively. By delving into the spatial transitions and their impact on the narrative, this study will explore how *The Legend of the Blue Sea* creates a rich, multi-dimensional experience that challenges conventional spatial perceptions. Moreover, this qualitative research focuses on the temporal and spatial aspects in *The Legend of the Blue Sea*. Through this analysis, the researchers negotiate how the series embodies Deleuze's concepts, ultimately offering a deeper appreciation of its narrative complexity and artistic innovation.

### **Significance of the Research**

This study aims to contribute to the broader temporal and spatial narrative discourse. It will highlight how the series entertains and invites viewers to engage with profound philosophical questions. This study is significant as it connects literature and media and contributes to media studies, film, and theater studies. The research shows how Deleuze's theory of temporality provides a profound lens that helps to understand the narrative complexity and philosophical depth of *The Legend of the Blue Sea*. Contextually, this study attempts to contribute to studying *The Legend of the Blue Sea*, one of the Korean melodramas. The researchers have selected the area that is still unexplored by filling the research gaps, the other researchers left by intending to explore the temporal and spatial shifts in the plot of this Korean Season. This study would also contribute to postmodern literature and Korean media, and media studies.

### **Literature Review**

The series *The Legend of the Blue Sea* is a blend of fantasy, comedy, and romance that revolves around the parallel love story of a mermaid, and a skilled con artist set side by side with their Joseon-era incarnations. It includes the themes of rebirth, love and romance, fate and destiny, identity and redemption, society and class, friendship and loyalty, good vs. evil, sacrifice and selflessness, time, memory, and spatial elements. With the combination of threefold genres and themes, its captivating storylines intertwine the characters' lives between their past and present.

In the book "The Fairy Tale World", the researcher Lee (2019) has explored that "The Legend of the Blue Sea" combines elements from different cultural traditions, such as "The Little Mermaid," reincarnation themes, and the Korean folktale "Kongjwi and Patjwi." According to her, the series follows the story of Shim Cheong, a mermaid who must find love within a set timeframe or face death, similar to the plot of Hans Christian Andersen's tale. Shim Cheong's name, meaning 'very stupid' in Korean, is given to her by Heo Jun-Jae due to her initial lack of knowledge about human customs, akin to Ariel's character in Disney's adaptation. Furthermore, Shim Cheong shares her name with a legendary figure known for her filial devotion in Korean folklore, who undergoes various trials before being reunited with her father (Lee, 2019)

Lee (2019) has also portrayed multifaceted array of allusions, particularly drawing from the Korean folktale "Kongjwi and Patjwi" (Korean Cinderella story). Firstly, there are two versions of the Kongjwi and Patjwi narrative. Cha Shi-A represents an inept Patjwi figure, hoping to intensify her friendship with Jun-Jae into romance. Meanwhile, Jun-Jae himself embodies a male Cinderella who fled from mistreatment by his stepmother. Cha Shi-A's plans are disrupted when she realizes that Mo Yu-Ran, their abused house servant, is Jun-Jae's missing mother. Additionally, Cheong saves Jun-Jae's life, resonating Kongjwi's purity and unresolved grudge. Cheong disappears for three years, mirroring Kongjwi's absence. When Cheong returns, unrecognized, she is ultimately recognized as the genuine bride, akin to Kongjwi's revelation after Patjwi's guilt is exposed. Through a blend of melodrama and comedy, the series intertwines motifs from various cultural sources, inviting viewers to decipher its complex web of references (Lee, 2019, p. 357-358).

In the research paper titled as "Inspirasi 'The Legend of The Blue Sea' Dalam Penerapan Pada Teknik Tekstil Manipulation", Hariyanto et al. (2023) discuss how the visual elements of the series portray the fashion culture

and textile stylization. Furthermore, the researchers portrayed the picture of roses. Through the illustration of that picture of roses, researchers de code the significance of the emotions of falling in love as depicted in the series. They investigated that the petals of the roses are wavy and curved and can be stylized into curved lines to form the waves that are stacked to create harmony. "A curved line is a line that comes from a row of points that are parallel and gives a pattern or curve" (Hariyanto et al., 2023, p. 72).

In addition, the researchers also investigated the sad emotions which are illustrated through the image of hands tied in a rope with mixed pearls that symbolize the tears of mermaids, and the emotion of sadness as the love stories of mermaids ended tragically. This discussion revealed the aspect that a teardrop becomes a white pearl, so it is stylized into the shape of an imperfect circle. "An imperfect circle is a plane bounded by curved lines coming from connecting points, an imperfect circle is also a two-dimensional geometric construct" (Hariyanto et al., 2023, p. 72).

Moreover, after the visual analysis of the images of roses, tied hands, and pearls, the researchers suggest that these stylizations are used to design details, embellishments, lines and shapes that can be applied to the sector of fashion (75). Numerous viewers praised the series for its innovative plot and incredible cinematography. As IMDb member Cmaglaqui states that: "This one was not only fun and humorous, but also very cinematic. I even had fun with all the costumes and backdrops of the show. Nicely casted and great storyline" (Cmaglaqui, 2018). Likewise, another IMDb member Tancquan asserts that it was "a good story with little or no loose ends. The characters are loveable and arc was thoroughly explored and explained" (Tancquan, 2019).

## Theoretical Framework

This section of the study deals with the discussion of Gilles Deleuze's theory of temporality. The researchers have selected Deleuze's concept of time and space as a theoretical framework for the present study. The theory of Temporality, under the idea of time and space, is a part of Deleuze's theory of Philosophy.

Deleuze's works can be categorized into two main groups: firstly, monographs that interpret the ideas of various philosophers and artists, including Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Foucault, as well as artists like Proust, Kafka, and Bacon. Secondly, he wrote eclectic philosophical texts organized around central concepts such as difference, sense, events, schizophrenia, economy, cinema, desire, and philosophy. Critics and analysts note that these two aspects of his work often intersect, as Deleuze's prose style and the unique structure of his books allow for multiple interpretations and connections between seemingly disparate ideas (Smith et al., 2023).

The theory of temporality by Gilles Deleuze emerges from his broader philosophical framework, heavily influenced by thinkers such as Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche. His complex theory of temporality challenges traditional conceptions of time. His conceptualization diverges from the linear, sequential model of time, proposing a dynamic and multi-dimensional understanding characterized by notions of becoming, virtuality, and the interplay of past, present, and future.

Deleuze's temporal theory proposed the concept of becoming. He rejects the notion of time as a fixed, linear sequence of moments and argues that time is a continuous process of change and transformation. The concept of becoming, as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), emphasizes the process of transformation and emergence, focusing on how entities transition from one state to another, highlighting the dynamic nature of existence rather than fixed identities or definitions (Hillier, 2017). Becoming suggests that the present is not static but is always in flux, constantly transitioning into something else. This perspective emphasizes the fluidity and openness of time, where novelty and difference continually emerge.

Deleuze emphasizes the dynamic and transformative nature of existence. His concept of becoming is defined in a research paper titled *The Pure and Empty Form of Time: Deleuze's Theory of Temporality*, as follows: "Difference and Repetition present Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return as the highest expression of the third synthesis, but Deleuze interprets the eternal return not as a return of the same but as the repetition of the different" (Smith, 2023, p. 61).

Furthermore, Deleuze talks about time in a way that multiple temporalities exist. Deleuze defines multiple temporalities as coexistence of heterogeneous time planes, where past, present, and future interact non-linearly. This concept emphasizes memory's chaotic, diffuse nature, allowing for simultaneous updates of experiences rather than a strict chronological succession (Hur, 2013). These temporalities represent various ways that time can be experienced – some may feel fast, some slow, and some seem to stretch on forever. Instead of thinking of time as one straight line, Deleuze sees this multiplicity of time in different rhythms, durations, and speeds overlapping and affecting each other. Deleuze's pluralist approach to time challenges the idea of a singular, uniform experience of temporality, and encourages an appreciation of the diversity of temporal phenomena.

Deleuze's concept of virtual time suggests the realm of potentialities and possibilities that shape the present. According to him, the past and future are not fixed entities but are virtual, existing as a reservoir of potential actions, events, and trajectories that can actualize in the present moment. The scope of temporal possibilities expands through virtual time, allowing for a more open and indeterminate understanding of the future and the past. The concept of virtual time also has spatial implications. The virtual realm, which encompasses potentialities and possibilities, is not limited to temporal trajectories but can also involve spatial configurations and arrangements. For Deleuze, time “does not go from one actual term to another [chronologically]... but from [the idea] to its actualization” (Smith, 2023, P. 55).

Deleuze uses the notion of Greek Philosophy to support his idea of distinguishing between two forms of time: Chronos and Aion. Chronos represents the quantitative, measurable time that shows how time passes. It is associated with clocks and calendars like seconds and minutes, while Aion embodies qualitative, lived time, marked by experiences, sensations, and affects. In a research paper titled “Deleuze's Elaboration of Eternity: Ontogenesis and Multiplicity”, Luzecky (2022) states: “Deleuze explicitly identifies Chronos as the ‘vast present which . . . is an encasement, a coiling up of relative presents’ from which the analytically discrete temporal domains of the limitless past and the infinite future are excluded. Deleuze cautiously notes that both of these are comprehended by a separate aspect of temporality (Aion), which is illustrated with the geometric image of a straight line progressing towards both the past and the future-” (Luzecky, 2022, P. 58).

Additionally, in the research paper “The Logic of Fate: Time and Ethics in Deleuze's Reading of the Stoics in Logic of Sense,” the researcher Parsa states that “Aion is the eternal truth of time” (Parsa, 2018, P. 44). Aion, in Deleuze's theory, represents a form of time characterized by pure repetition, distinct from chronological time. It emphasizes the experience of repetition beyond analogy, providing a framework for understanding the temporal aspects of series fiction (Newland, 2013). This difference emphasizes the contrast between quantifiable, outward assessments of time and personal, internal interpretations of time, emphasizing the complex nature of temporal occurrences.

In this theory, Deleuze also explores the notion of duration as a qualitative aspect of time, emphasizing the intensity of lived moments rather than their duration. According to Deleuze, the significance of an event or experience lies not in its length but in its affective intensity and transformative potential. This perspective shifts the focus from the quantitative measurement of time to the qualitative richness of temporal experiences, highlighting time's subjective and experiential dimensions.

Deleuze and his collaborator Félix Guattari introduce the concept of the rhizome to describe a non-linear, decentralized mode of organization. This rhizomatic structure extends to their temporal theory, where time unfolds non-hierarchically, interconnectedly. Like the rhizome, time proliferates and spreads in unforeseeable directions, defying linear order and fixed boundaries.

Deleuze's theory of temporality has profound implications in various fields, including philosophy, psychology, literature, and art. It challenges conventional notions of time and invites us to reconsider our understanding of temporality and its implications for our lived experiences and perceptions of reality. By emphasizing time's dynamic and multi-dimensional nature, this temporal theory offers a radical reimagining of temporality that has far-reaching implications for understanding the nature of existence, agency, and change.

Deleuze's theory of temporality provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending the intricacies of time and space. By introducing concepts like Chronos and Aion, Deleuze distinguishes between objective time measurements and subjective experiences, revealing the intricate interplay between these aspects. Additionally, his examination of multiplicity in temporal experiences highlights the fluid nature of time, which intersects with spatial dimensions in profound ways. Through his emphasis on becoming and the coexistence of multiple temporalities, Deleuze challenges conventional views of time as linear and uniform, prompting a deeper understanding of the diverse temporal phenomena shaping our perception of reality. By integrating Deleuze's insights into space, his theory of temporality offers a deeper comprehension of the complex relationship between time and space, enriching scholarly discussions across various disciplines, from philosophy to geography.

## **Research Methodology**

The current research has analyzed the narrative of the Korean television season, *The Legend of the Blue Sea*. It has applied qualitative research design methods to explore this research and collect data about the topic under study. The researcher's technique is analytic and interpretive; therefore, the researcher has utilized the interpretative method in analyzing and interpreting data.

The researchers in this study dissect the temporal and spatial aspects of the narrative under the theoretical framework of Gilles Deleuze's theory of temporality. The material and data collected in this study are based on qualitative methods and approaches. The script for the season has been taken as text. The researchers have adopted this approach in gathering, arranging, analyzing, and interpreting the information regarding the topic under observation. For this purpose, the visual narrative, script of the season, subtitles of the season, setting, and characters' on-screen appearance serve as sources for analysis in this research study. Besides, the researchers have also effectively used other sources, including scholarly journals, research articles, and reviews of various literary scholars and authors, while conducting this study.

## ***Analysis of Temporal and Spatial Dimensions in The Legend of the Blue Sea***

As designed to analyze *The Legend of the Blue Sea* under the framework of Gilles Deleuze's theory of temporality, the study proceeds towards the narrative of the season through the lens of temporal and spatial shifts, which refer to the development between two alternate time periods. As already mentioned, the series depicts parallel timelines that intertwine the past and present lives of the characters in the narrative. One timeline is the Joseon era in the 16th century, and the other is modern-day Seoul, Korea.

Shim Cheong is a mermaid who is the season's central character throughout the narrative. Mermaids are fantastical and mythical figures, so they should live in oceans. In this season, Shim Cheong experiences the lives of a dual world between the interplay of two timelines. She struggles to cope with her dual lives in the past and present, parallel temporal modes, from a naive mermaid to an adaptive lady on land. The world of humans has its demands to live in, which would affect the lives of the people connected to her once she comes to land. Moreover, her extraordinary capabilities, as she shares the qualities of a fish and humans, make her even more prominent. She is unable to recognize the greed of worldly people towards her. Thus, it becomes the cause of her sufferings in parallel time intervals.

The series starts with the scene of a great storm in the Joseon era, providing the narrative with a mythical and historical background. The first episode sets one type of temporal mode: the historical past.



Figure 1: Villager's wonder towards the mermaid (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 02:38, episode 1)



Figure 2: First dramatic appearance of mermaid (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 02:52, episode 1)

Figure 2 shows the first dramatic appearance of the mermaid when she is found in the cave near the ocean, which establishes the tone of the fantasy genre in narrative, and also captivates the eyes of the town's people. By seeing the mythical being, the villagers react oddly due to astonishment. For instance, one of the townspeople utters "Is it a human or a fish?" (02:50, episode 1), which evidences the wonder and curiosity of the people of the town towards the otherworldly creature that can also be visualized in figure 1.

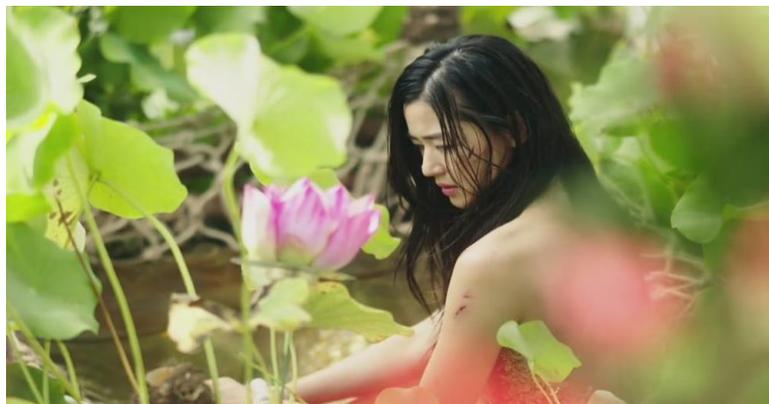


Figure 3: Mermaid tied in ropes in a pond (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 04:20, episode 1)

In the second dramatic appearance as shown in figure 3, the mermaid appears in a pond covered with plants and flowers in the middle of the town, and is at the center of many men. Thus, when the townspeople tied her in ropes in the pond, it gives the visual image of the treatment of the people of the town towards the fantastical being.

Certainly, Deleuze's concept of rhizome temporality can be applied here as this perspective challenges traditional notions of linearity, opening up new possibilities for understanding temporal phenomena. Mermaids are often connected to folklore, which embodies multiple interpretations as they can transcend time. In addition, the following dialogues clearly strengthen the relevance of the concept of rhizome.

VILLAGER: They say that if you touch a mermaid, the mermaid will take your soul and erase your memory.

2ND VILLAGER: I also heard some seamen went crazy from touching mermaids.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 03:45-04:07, episode 1)

The above dialogues between the people of the town and Dae Young support the concept of rhizome in a way that they share multiple myths about mermaids that are not strictly linear, and also reflect the town's people's fear of the unknown, spanning across time.

When the newly appointed town head, Dam-ryeong, arrives in the village, he is immediately captivated by Shim Cheong's beauty at first sight, which strengthens the themes of their past relationship and future preordained love story in a modern time period.



Figure 4: The Town head and the mermaid take each other's hands for the first time (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 12:47, episode 1)



Figure 5: While taking hands, they both feel a connection (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 12:53, episode 1)

Ultimately, Dam-ryeong releases Shim Cheong back into the sea. This act shows his empathetic nature and reflects the idea that he has a soft corner for Shim Cheong in his heart. Thus, he watches her from a boat, and when she swims near the boat, offering her hand, despite feeling fear from Dam-ryeong, she takes her hand, which foreshadows the idea that they both feel a connection between them, as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

In addition, when they meet again, Dam-ryeong discovers that she can speak. The following dialogues add to the knowledge about the world of mermaids and their abilities.

SE-HWA: There is no reason a mermaid can't do what a human can. Mermaids can read each other's minds, so there's no need to speak.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 02:18-03:00, episode 2)

These dialogues show mermaids' extraordinary capabilities as they possess human qualities and merge the lives of two worlds over time. On the other hand, they shed light on the idea that there is a difference between the worlds of mermaids and humans, but their far human abilities make them able to cope in both worlds in different temporal modes.

Moreover, she tells him the story of her childhood and teenage years, that she had a friend named Se-hwa, and they used to spend time with each other. After listening to the whole story, he asks out of curiosity, "Am I...that boy?" (*The Legend of the Blue Sea*, 07:55-07:59, episode 3). This question is pivotal as he realizes they have a connection in the past. Additionally, it is significant as it emphasizes the mermaid's direct interaction with humans in the historical backdrop and eventually in the modern timeline. Hence, this realization of a strong relationship became the cause of her later journey into the world of humans.

Though, Dae Young is a corrupted character in the narrative. He has evil intentions toward the mermaid. He wants to recapture the mermaid out of his greed to collect pearls from the mermaid's tears, and while talking to his mistress, he makes her aware of his thoughts. His evil intentions can be evident in the following dialogues.

DAE YOUNG: I'm on fire trying to catch a mermaid. Do you know why? If I see a mermaid, I can repeatedly extract her tears until she dies, so every step you take can be lavishly adorned with pearls.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 01:39-01:53, episode 4)

Thus, this negative energy reveals Dam-ryeong's materialistic character. Furthermore, his actions confirmed that he couldn't overcome his corrupted nature even between the interplay of the two periods.



Figure 6: Dam-ryeong is giving a flower to Se-hwa (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 02:57, episode 5)



Figure 7: Se-hwa is holding a flower (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 03:22, episode 5)

After saving the mermaid from Dae Young's attackers, they walk along, and Dam-ryeong gives her a flower, as shown in figure 6 and 7. While giving the flower to her, he tells her the symbolic meaning of the flowers, as evidenced in the following dialogue.

DAM-RYEONG: Flowers in this world have unique meanings. Do you know the meaning of this one?

SE-HWA: What is it?

DAM-RYEONG: Something you have, but I don't....Memories.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 02:55-03:14, episode 5)

These dialogues show the prominent role of memories in their lives, as they make them connect again across different time periods and rebuild their strong relationships from the past by recalling them. On the other hand, they symbolize their shared passion and love.

Eventually, the mermaid is caught by Dae Young's people, and Dam-ryeong finds her in a miserable condition with a basket full of pearls, which are the product of the mermaid's tears. It represents the pain she endures in the human world and foreshadows the greedy nature of humans associated with it.



Figure 8: Dam-ryeong holds Se-hwa (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 07:57, episode 7)



Figure 9: Dam-ryeong is whispering in Se-hwa's ear (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 08:04, episode 7)

Moreover, he whispers in her ear while carrying her that can be visualize in figure 8 and 9, which is evident in the following dialogue.

DAM-RYEONG: Se-hwa, you liked listening to my dreams. Can you hear me?

In my dream, we were born again and were together. You come from a faraway ocean to meet me. Though I could not remember you, you are already in my heart.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 08:03-08:40, episode 7)

These dialogues reflect that their past lives are connected and have intertwined fates spanning time. It also supports the modern time narrative of their reincarnations.

Furthermore, Dam-ryeong asks her not to remove his memories this time, as he wants to keep her memories

with him forever. This highlights that they had deep emotional connections in their past and present lives and would have strong bonds in the future. However, it also adds a layer to the reinforcing theme of memories in the narrative. This can be evidenced in the following dialogues.

DAM-RYEONG: This time... don't erase my memory. You must not erase it. This memory, this remembrance...Even if it hurts...I'll keep it forever.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 57:58-58:29, episode 7)

Consequently, Dae Young's order to kill the mermaid reflecting his evil nature, foreshadows that his corruption remains unchanged despite the later shift in timeline. It also suggests the contrast between the evil character of Dae Young and the good character of Dam-ryeong, who sacrifices his life for Se-hwa, which can be observed in Figure 18. Furthermore, Figure 18 illustrates the pictorial insight of the good and evil contrast of these two characters. In addition, the following dialogues expose the wickedness in the character of Dae Young.

DAE YOUNG: Did we catch her? Look and see if we catch her! Shoot arrows or throw a harpoon. You must catch her even if you kill her! I will give a big reward to whoever catches her!

HIS MAN: Yes, sir.

DAE YOUNG: Catch her. Aim and shoot.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 51:30-52:24, episode 13)

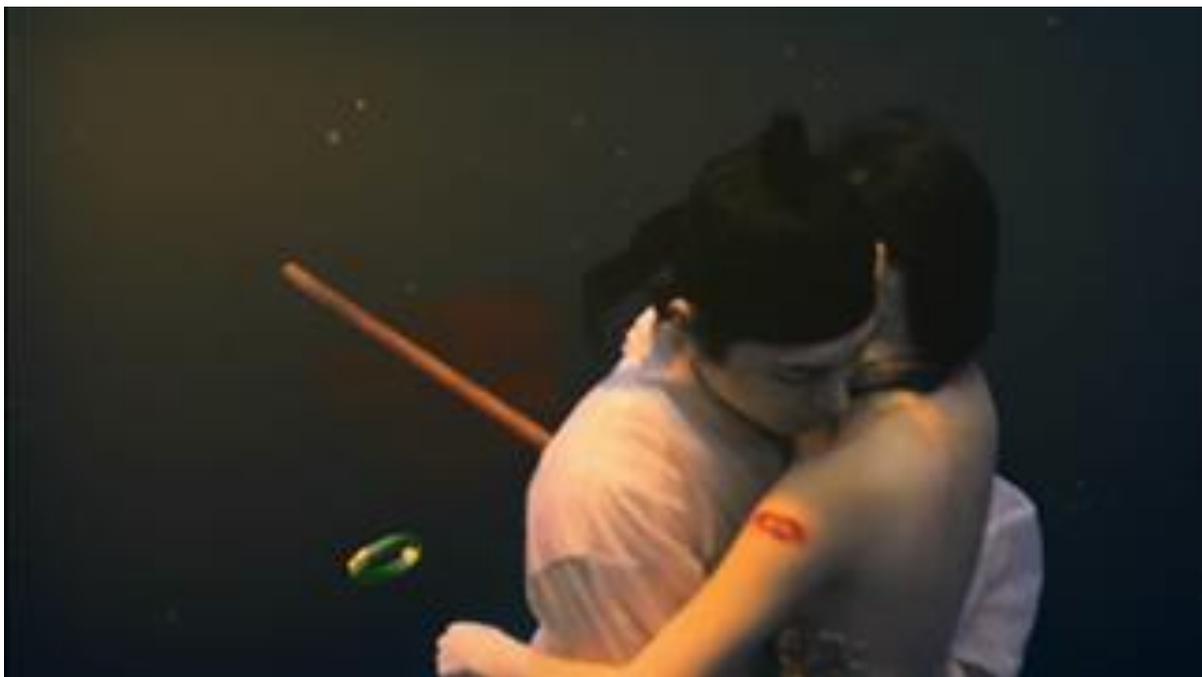


Figure 10: Harpoon pierces Dam-ryeong from back and jade bracelet slips from the wrist of Se-hwa (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 58:44, episode 13)

However, there is a temporal shift in the storyline, and the whole narrative shifts to the present-day Seoul, Korea. Yet, in modern temporal mode, the mermaid first appears in Spain's ocean with a jade bracelet as shown in Figure 10. The jade bracelet holds a symbolic significance in the narrative as it symbolizes the eternal love connection between Se-hwa and Dam-ryeong that spans across time. It connects their Joseon era lives and the modern period, which helps them recall their connection in past lives and recognize each other in the present day.

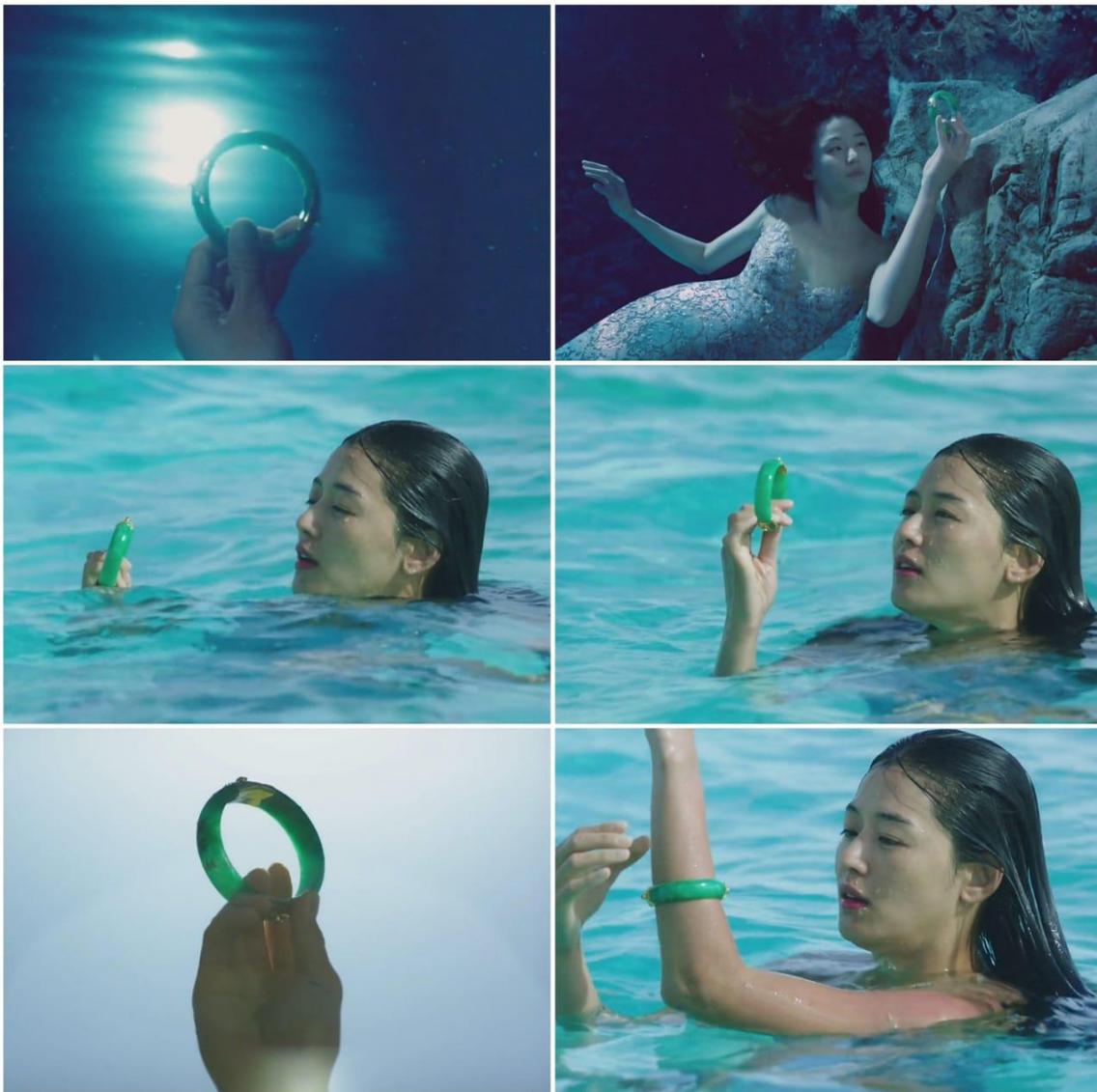


Figure 11: First appearance of Shim Cheong with jade bracelet in modern time period (*The Legend of the Blue Sea*, 23:26-24:33, episode 1)

Moreover, figure 11 correlates with the event which shows the slip of a jade bracelet from the wrist of Se-hwa in a past life as shown in figure 10, and figure 11 shows Shim Cheong wearing the same bracelet in the modern time period. Moreover, these two correlated scenes from the past and present temporal modes parallel Deleuze's concept of becoming. Deleuze's temporal theory proposed the idea of becoming. He rejects the notion of time as a fixed, linear sequence of moments. Instead, he argues that time is a continuous process of change and transformation. Becoming suggests that the present is not static but is always in flux, constantly transitioning into something else. This perspective emphasizes the fluidity and openness of time, where novelty and difference continually emerge.

However, the researchers imply that figure 10 from the Joseon era and figure 11 from the modern time period are just a repetition of the difference. This concept of becoming is also illustrated in the event when Shim Cheong, the mermaid in modern-day Seoul, Korea, appears with legs on land. On one hand, this transformation ability of Shim Cheong contrasts with the historical period when Se-hwa could not transform her tail into legs, revealing that the supernatural abilities of mermaids have evolved over time, as shown in Figure 13. On the other hand, it showcases the changes and advancements in modern temporal mode, enriching the characters' lives within the narrative. In addition, Figure 12 highlights the visual picture of her wonder at seeing her bodily transformation. Hence, it suggests that the nature of existence is dynamic and transformative in various modes.



Figure 12: Shim Cheong wonders to see her body (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 27:17, episode 1)



Figure 13: Shim Cheong is seeing her legs (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 27:32, episode 1)

Shim Cheong finds modern food strange and unfamiliar as the modern narrative progresses. Dining in the modern time period involves etiquette that Shim Cheong is unaware of. Her lack of knowledge about these modern practices often leads to humorous and awkward situations that can be visualized in Figures 14 and 15. The transition from her natural diet as a mermaid to contemporary human food showcases her struggle to adapt to human customs and adjustment to modern cuisine, and habits in modern temporal displacement. In addition, the portrayal of her struggle with food would also be taken as a metaphor for her broader challenges in adapting to a new temporal and cultural environment. Besides these visual representations of her odd experience with food, the following dialogues of Joon-jae also show evidence of Shim Cheong's awkward treatment towards food.

HEO JOON-JAE: Are you from the jungle? Are you a wolf maiden? Why are you so wild?

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 49:49-49:55, episode 1)



Figure 14: Shim Cheong is shoving the spaghetti in her mouth (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 49:38, episode 1)



Figure 15: Shim Cheong is eating cake with her hands (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 51:04, episode 1)

Furthermore, in modern times, Shim Cheong offers her hand to Joon-jae as shown in figure 16, which correlates with the event where Se-hwa offers her hand to Dam-ryeong in the Joseon era. By analyzing these scenes through the lens of Deleuze's theory of temporality, the researchers want to identify that the gesture of offering a hand exists both as an actual event in the narrative, and as a virtual one with different possibilities. The act is a crystallization of a virtual past, as shown in Figure 17, which influences the modern moment. This intertwining of the virtual and the actual scenes reflects Deleuze's idea that the past is not merely a record of what has happened but an active force that shapes the present and future temporal modes.



Figure 16: Heo Joon-jae and Shim Cheong are holding each other's hands (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 57:47, episode 1)



Figure 17: Dam-ryeong and Se-hwa are holding each other's hands (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 12:53, episode 1)

Shim Cheong's character adjusts to a new environment as the story progresses. Her encounter with the laptop shows her unfamiliarity with modern temporal mode technology. For instance, in Figure 18, Shim Cheong's actions highlight her shift in time and show that her knowledge of technology is ancient. Moreover, this event foreshadows dramatic and humorous moments as she struggles to make sense of modern goods like the laptop, and this also reflect her centuries-old marine background which stands in blatant contrast to the contemporary world she inhabits.



Figure 18: Shim Cheong's peculiar behavior towards a laptop (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 15:41-16:05, episode 2)

Joon-jae's familiarity with technology contrasts sharply with Shim Cheong's ignorance, highlighting their different backgrounds. This contrast emphasizes her cultural displacement while showcasing Jae's modern, sophisticated lifestyle. His following dialogues show his curiosity and concerns.

HEO JOON-JAE: What are you doing? You came recently, yes. You were born in 1980, the year of the tiger, right? Your parents didn't register your birth incorrectly, did they?

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 15:44-15:53, episode 2)

These dialogues exhibit his frustration at her persistent misunderstanding. He is both exasperated by her lack of knowledge and empathetic towards her situation, reflecting his internal struggle to understand her weird behavior.

Indeed, in modern narrative, Heo Joon-jae plays the character of a con artist. According to Merriam-Webster, a con artist is "a person who tricks other people to get their money." (Merriam-Webster, 2024). The gaggle of men chase him due to his scams and arrive to shoot him at the edge of the sea. To save the life of Joon-jae and her own, Shim Cheong jumps into the sea alongside Joon-jae as shown in Figure 28. On one hand, jumping foreshadows safety as water is Shim Cheong's natural habitat, and reveals her true identity as a mermaid. On the other hand, water symbolizes danger, and a threatening element for Joon-jae. His fear can be evident in the following dialogue.

HEO JOON-JAE: Hey. Why are you looking down there? I have a fear of heights and water. I would rather be shot.

SHIM CHEONG: No! You will die like a dolphin.

HEO JOON-JAE: Of course. But I will also die when I drown.

(The Legends of the Blue Sea, 55:42-55:57, episode 2)



Figure 19: Shim Cheong and Joon-jae jumped into the sea to save their lives (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 56:51, episode 2)



Figure 20: Dam-ryeong jumps into the water to save the life of Se-hwa (The Legend of the Blue Sea, 55:02, episode 13)

In addition, this scene of jumping into the sea symbolizes a deeper connection that transcends time and creates a link between their past and present lives. This jumping scene as shown in figure 19, establishes a parallel with the past temporal mode as Dam-ryeong jumps into the water to save the life of Se-hwa, which can be seen in figure 20. Both scenes of jumping from the past and the present involve escaping life and death. Moreover, the repetition of this scene in the modern period underscores the theme of destiny and the long-term bond between the characters.



Figure 21: Painting of Dam-ryeong and Se-hwa (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 36:49, episode 4)

The above painting of Dam-ryeong and Se-hwa on a vase is a myth representing multiple temporal layers. For instance, the artifact in Figure 21 supports Deleuze's concept of two forms of time: Chronos and Aion. The image captures a specific moment in time, an embodiment of historical, and cultural context that undoubtedly signifies Deleuze's concept of time in a measurable mode (chronos). Yet, the researchers imply that the painting is a source of mythological sensation and a continuous source of meaning, which gives an artistic interpretation that imbues it with a sense of timelessness, as this vase painting exemplifies the deep connection and shows the subjective lived time of Dam-ryeong and Se-hwa (aions).

Moreover, the dialogues between Cha Shi-ah and her friends add several layers of significance to the artifact of painting.

CHA SHI-AH: Have you seen this drawing on other artifacts?

FRIEND 1: No. For a vase from the Joseon Dynasty, the design is quite modern. How could someone from that dynasty draw something like this?

FRIEND 2: The professor said the painter may've used a time machine and seen the future.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 36:-15:53, episode 4)

The above dialogues underscore the uniqueness, invite curiosity about its origin, and serve as a linking device between the past and present of the narrative. However, these dialogues show mysterious connections between the two temporal modes and may also develop the future plot.

Furthermore, as the narrative proceeds, Heo Jae becomes curious about the jade bracelet, and by holding it, he asks Shim Cheong a question, as shown in Figure 22. The jade bracelet originally belonged to the past lives of Se-hwa and Dam-ryeong, which symbolizes their eternal love. In modern times, this bracelet helps them recognize their deep connection to past lives. It also foreshadows that their fates are connected across the timelines.



Figure 22: Joon-jae is showing a jade bracelet to Shim Cheong (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 36:49, episode 4)

Subsequently, the narrative shows the development of Jae's character as he cares for Shim Cheong when she opens the door for a stranger, which can be evident in the following dialogue.

HEO JOON-JAE: I told you. You should only protect others after you protect yourself. The same goes for worrying. Before you worry about others, worry about yourself. Take care of yourself first!

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 14:49-15:00, episode 5)

The above dialogues show the gradual change of Joon-jae's behaviour towards Shim Cheong, leading them both to start their preordained relationship in the modern period. This caring attitude of Joon-jae also helps in the progression of the narrative as it triggers him to uncover the mystery of his flashbacks and memories.



Figure 23: Heo Joon-jae is standing in the snow (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 57:40, episode 5)



Figure 24: Dam-ryeong is standing in the snow (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 08:43, episode 4)

Figure 23, represents a scene of snow in the modern era, while Figure 24, gives a visual representation of snow in the Joseon era. These snow scenes correlate with each other in a way that symbolizes the connection of their lives, and the continuity of their eternal love in parallel timelines.

The researchers intend to analyze these snow scenes through the lens of the concept of becoming as this repetition of the snow scenes is not just a simple recurrence of the event; instead, it shows the repetition of the difference, as in both scenes, the experiences of the moments are different and manifest different layers of meanings in past and present temporal modes.

When Shim Cheong suffers from a car accident, she sees Heo Jae as her protector in an unconscious state. This is evident in the following dialogues.

SHIM CHEONG: I had a dream. You held my hand. You saved me.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 12:20-12:28, episode 6)

The above dialogue symbolizes the bond she shares with Heo Joon-jae, which transcends time. This moment reflects the myths of fate and reincarnation central to *The Legend of the Blue Sea*. Her words suggest that, even in moments of unconsciousness, her subconscious mind recognizes Joon-jae as her protector and savior who made sacrifices in both past and present lives. Moreover, these dialogues also reflect the idea that their fates are connected as Joon-jae is always there for her, whether in the past as Kim Dam-ryeong or in the present as Heo Joon-jae. It highlights the recurring motif in the series that their love is destined, as he always finds a way to save her, reinforcing the timeless and enduring nature of their relationship.



Figure 25: Shim Cheong is doing skin care (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 32:09, episode 7)



Figure 26: Shim Cheong is applying lipstick (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 37:14, episode 9)

Besides the progression in the lives of modern Seoul, Korea, Figure 25 and 26, shows the advancement in the habitat of the marine species in the contemporary temporal mode. The above figures reflect the broader visual representation of Shim Cheong's adaptation to the standards and demands for women in the world of humans as she gradually adopts the routine of applying makeup. Moreover, it also signifies her exploration of understanding of what it means to be a woman on land in the modern temporal mode.

Furthermore, as the narrative progresses, Shim Cheong encounters Yoo Jeong Hoon, another male mermaid in Seoul, and wonders if she can see him. He gives her knowledge about the world of humans and tells her how to survive in a money-oriented era, which can be evident in the following dialogues.

YOO JEONG HOON: You don't know about this?

SHIM CHEONG: These are our tears. What do you do with them?

YOO JEONG HOON: These count as money here.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 43:22-43:28, episode 7)

The above dialogues clearly show the difference between the worlds of humans and mermaids. Pearls are ordinary things in the world of mermaids because they originate from their tears, but for humans, it is a valuable thing. These pearls also signify the materialistic humans, and the greed associated with it in modern periods and their past lives. For instance, Jo Nam- Doo stole a pearl from the plastic bag of Shim Cheong as shown in figure 27, revealing the materialistic nature of humans. Through this action, the character of Nam-Doo can be compared with the Joseon era's character of Dae Young, as in his past life, he caught the mermaid to collect all the pearls from her by making her cry. The researchers intend to apply Deleuze's concept of virtual time to this event. According to him, the past and future exist as virtual dimensions, containing a range of potential actions and outcomes that could influence the present. In this scene, stealing the pearl is not just a singular event but is connected to a reservoir of possible actions and consequences. The factors of past events converge in the present moment when the theft occurs, but the event has actualized differently under other circumstances. The stealing of the pearl in modern temporal mode becomes an actualization of particular virtual possibilities of Dae Young's intentions and actions of the past.



Figure 27: Nam- Doo steal pearl from Cheong's plastic bag (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 14:50, episode 8)

Furthermore, unconventionally, all the surrounding actions and flashbacks paved the way, and urged him to uncover the connections of his past life events. For instance, he encounters his past incarnation in his dream, as shown in Figure 28.



Figure 28: Heo-Joon-jae and Dam-ryeong's encounter in a dream (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 02:48, episode 9)

The following dialogues between Joon-jae and Dam-ryeong in a dream serve as a narrative device that intertwines the past and present.

DAM-RYEONG: Who are you?

HEO JOON-JAE: Who are you?

DAM-RYEONG: I'm Dam-ryeong. If you are me in the future, remember this after you wake up. Everything repeats itself. The fate in my world will continue in yours. That's also true for unfortunate events. Protect that woman from a dangerous person.

(The Legend of the Blue Sea, 02:45-02:47, episode 9)

In addition, as this dream serves as a bridge between two temporal modes, this warning message is a catalyst that urges Jae to uncover his past and understand his relationship. In addition to his dream, his friends also play their role in uncovering the truth about his past life. Cha Shi-ah shows him pictures of a summary of the excavation, which illustrates the past life of Dam-ryeong's family, as shown in Figure 29.



Figure 29: Picture of Dam-ryeong family's home site (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 40:21, episode 9)

Subsequently, the gunshot that Shim Cheong takes to save the life of Joon-jae, as shown in figure 30, correlates with the past event of taking a harpoon by Dam-ryeong to save the life of Se-hwa, as shown in figure 31. The researchers intend to apply Deleuze's concept of repetition and difference here, as for Deleuze, repetition is never the same. Deleuze emphasizes the dynamic and transformative nature of existence. His idea of becoming is defined in a research paper named *The Pure and Empty Form of Time: Deleuze's Theory of Temporality*, as follows: "Difference and Repetition present Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return as the highest expression of the third synthesis, but Deleuze interprets the eternal return not as a return of the same but as the repetition of the different." (Smith, 2023).

The gunshot is a repetition of the harpoon incident, but it is different because it occurs in a different context. This difference highlights how time unfolds in layers, where similar events occur with variations that are influenced by the virtual dimensions of time.



Figure 30: Shim Cheong got shot (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 01:34, episode 19)



Figure 31: Harpoon Pierces Dam-ryeong (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 58:44, episode 13)

Moreover, in Figure 32, Shim Cheong lies in the depth of the natural ocean, and the researchers intend to apply the concept of virtual space here, for Deleuze's virtual realm encompasses potentialities and possibilities. The ocean's depths are often perceived as a mysterious and unknown realm, and it symbolizes the virtual realm where countless possibilities exist, waiting to be actualized. However, the return of Shim Cheong to the land, as shown in Figure 33, could be perceived as the space of actualization. For instance, here she can live with her love Joon-jae. In contrast to the ocean, the land represents a structured and determinate space where the potentialities paved their way to actualize the possibilities. For instance, Shim's return to the land and Joon-jae's act of building the house near the ocean to keep her connected to both spaces, land and water, reveal a complex and dynamic interplay between different spaces. The series' spaces are not static backdrops but are active participants in the narrative, constantly reshaped and redefined by the characters' actions. The ocean, the city, and the house near the sea are key spaces where Deleuze's virtual and actual processes take place, adding depth and complexity to exploring identity, love, and transformation in the narrative.



Figure 32: Shim Cheong is lying at the depth of the ocean. (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 24:48, episode 20)



Figure 33: Shim Cheong returned to land. (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 28:21, episode 20)

In addition, Figures 32 and 33 show the most prominent spatial difference between land and sea. The underwater scenes are serene, mystical, and otherworldly, while the land scenes are more grounded in reality and show Shim Cheong's adaptation to life on land. This spatial difference underscores Shim Cheong's challenges as she navigates between these two worlds.

However, in modern temporal mode, the love relationship between Shim Cheong and Heo Joon-Jae ends positively and happily, as shown in Figure 34. The happily ever after end of Shim Cheong and Heo Joon-jae, rather than the tragic end like Dam-ryeong and Se-hwa in the Joseon era, suggests that characters had multiple paths they could have taken, and their present choices can change their past lives' influence and reshape the repetition of tragedy into something else. The happy end of Shim Cheong and Heo Joon-jae's preordained love story embodies Deleuze's concept of difference. It represents different modes of repetition as the characters encounter new possibilities that transform their past experiences and end in something new and positive.



Figure 34: Heo Joon-jae and Shim Cheong are sitting on the bench (The Legends of the Blue Sea, 59:40, episode 20)

Thus, through detailed discussion, the researchers have negotiated that the temporal and spatial shift in narrative changes their preordained tragic fate into something positive. In this study, the researchers have discussed all the intertextual elements, and aspects supporting the adaptation of characters, along with the relevant references from the selected series.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, the researchers aim to highlight the impact of temporal and spatial dimensions on characters to explore the themes of memory, destiny, and identity. They selected Deleuze's concept of temporality to show

the interplay between past and present. The researchers attempted to show how the characters' choices and actions can transverse their destiny. Contextually, the study emphasizes the parallel scenes from the past and present to incorporate the impact of choices. By contrasting the spatial aspects, from the underwater world to the cityscapes, the study highlights characters' struggles to cope with their identities. Shim Cheong adapts in response to social rejection, moving between the mythic ocean and structured society. This change highlights the importance of adapting to new environments in order to survive. To conclude, this study would be a positive addition to the existing body of Postmodern Literature and Korean media.

The researchers analyzed the season *The Legend of the Blue Sea* under the framework of Deleuze's theory of temporality and spatiality. Still, there is space left to do more research on this series as its dual narrative is open to multiple interpretations and research areas to be conducted in the future. There are some recommendations for future researchers, as they can examine this season by analyzing it from a postmodernist point of view. Moreover, theories about memory could be applied as the narrative of the season based on the themes of memory. Feminist theory could also be used in this season by future researchers to strengthen the role of women in literature and media.

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