

Deconstructing the Metaphorical Architecture of Parallel Universes (World): Makoto's Journey in Hayao Miyazaki's *The Boy and the Heron* (2023)

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Abstract

This paper explores the in-depth construction of parallel universes in the Japanese animated film *The Boy and the Heron* (2023), directed by Hayao Miyazaki with a focus on how these metaphorical architectures represent the protagonist Makoto's emotional states of grief, loss, longing, and trauma. Through a textual analysis approach, the research investigates how these parallel worlds are not merely fantastical realms but are carefully designed to reflect the complexities of Makoto's psyche. Each universe is intimately tied to his inner state, challenging him to confront his unresolved emotions and guiding him through a process of introspection and growth. The obstacles within these worlds serve as metaphors for the emotional barriers Makoto must overcome, ultimately leading to a profound moment of clarity. The return to reality is framed not just as a physical transition, but as a significant psychological closure that marks the culmination of Makoto's personal development. This study highlights the power of cinematic storytelling where Miyazaki's masterful blending of parallel worlds and reality creates essential spaces for emotional exploration and healing, allowing Makoto to return to reality with a renewed sense of peace and understanding.

Keywords: Parallel Universe, Metaphorical Architecture, Japanese animated film, Hayao Miyazaki, Animation Film.

Introduction

Directed by Hayao Miyazaki and animated by Studio Ghibli, *The Boy and the Heron* (2023) employs a character-driven narrative centered around a teenage boy named Makoto, who embarks on a transformative journey through strange parallel universes that intersect with the real world. The film follows Makoto as he encounters a magical, talking heron, leading him into a series of parallel worlds where magical events unfold, providing a unique backdrop for his emotional growth and development. This paper critically explores the construction of these parallel universes, focusing on how their metaphorical architecture reflects Makoto's complex emotional states of grief, loss, longing, and trauma. Using a textual analysis framework, this study examines how the narrative's parallel worlds are intricately designed

to mirror the Makoto's internal psyche, offering not just a fantastical setting but a deeply symbolic space for emotional exploration. The paper argues that these parallel universes are essential to understanding Makoto's character arc, as they serve as metaphorical representations of his psychological and emotional struggles, guiding him through a process of introspection and eventual reconciliation with his inner turmoil.

In a broader context, this study situates *The Boy and the Heron* within the philosophical and metaphysical discussions surrounding multiverse theories, as explored by scholars such as Alexander A. Antonov, Simon Friederich, and James R. Johnson. These scholars have shown that multiverse theories challenge our conventional understanding of reality, pushing the boundaries of metaphysical thought by raising critical questions about the nature of existence, the fine-tuning of our universe, and the possibility of alternate realities. The film's depiction of parallel worlds can thus be seen as a narrative embodiment of these deeper philosophical inquiries. The parallel universes in *The Boy and the Heron* are not merely creative constructs; they are reflective of the broader existential and philosophical questions posed by multiverse theories, making the film a rich text for exploring the intersection of narrative storytelling and complex metaphysical concepts. Through this lens, the paper highlights how Miyazaki's film not only contributes to the ongoing discourse on multiverse theories but also offers a profound exploration of the human condition through the metaphorical architecture of its parallel worlds.

Literature Review

Parallel Universe Concept and Definition

The concept of parallel worlds in narrative storytelling introduces the idea of alternate realities, creating a diverse array of settings that allow for complex character dynamics and thematic exploration. Each parallel world within a narrative operates according to its distinct set of rules, laws, and internal logic. These worlds may be governed by elements such as magic, advanced technology, or unique natural laws, but their effectiveness relies heavily on maintaining internal consistency within each world's framework. This consistency is crucial for the coherence and believability of the story. In film narratives, the construction of parallel worlds typically begins with establishing a foundational premise, followed by defining the world's operating rules and meticulously designing its fantasy elements. These rules govern not only the fundamental aspects of time and space within the parallel world but also shape the identities and interactions of its inhabitants, creating a rich and immersive narrative experience.

The concept of the multiverse encompasses various theories and philosophical considerations about the existence of multiple universes beyond our observable reality. Antonov's 2012 paper, "Earth, Portals, Parallel Universes," offers a profound exploration of the concept of the Multiverse, tracing its origins back to the late 19th century. The term "Multiverse" was first introduced by American philosopher and psychologist William James in 1895 and was later popularized by science fiction writer Michael John Moorcock. Antonov builds on this foundation by defining the Multiverse as "a multitude of parallel universes, with the number varying across different hypotheses, but often considered to be infinitely large" (464). This definition situates the Multiverse as an all-encompassing structure that contains every possible universe, including our own, each with potentially distinct physical laws and conditions.

Antonov's discussion on the nature of the Multiverse extends to the introduction of portals—conceptual gateways that allow for interaction between these parallel universes. Unlike conventional travel through space, which is bound by the speed of light, Antonov suggests that these portals offer a means of transition that bypasses such limitations. He likens the movement between universes via portals to stepping through a door rather than breaking through a wall, emphasizing a fluid and almost seamless interaction between realities. This idea challenges traditional understandings of space and time, proposing a new dimension of movement that defies conventional physical constraints.

The notion of portals as regions where universes "touch" or partially overlap also opens intriguing possibilities for the movement of particles, and potentially living beings, between these realms. Antonov speculates on the implications of such interactions, suggesting that the existence of these portals could revolutionize our understanding of the universe's structure and the fundamental principles that govern it. His hypothesis, though speculative, invites a re-examination of the boundaries of reality and the potential for cross-universe interactions that could expand the scope of scientific inquiry.

In the context of Antonov's work, the Multiverse is not merely a theoretical construct but a dynamic and interconnected system, where the interplay of parallel universes offers endless possibilities for exploration. The introduction of portals adds a tangible element to this concept, transforming the Multiverse from a distant abstraction into a realm with practical implications for physics, cosmology, and even the philosophical understanding of existence. Through his exploration of these ideas, Antonov contributes to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the Multiverse, challenging us to rethink the limits of our universe and the potential for interaction with worlds beyond our own.

In *Multiverse Theories: A Philosophical Perspective* (2021), Simon Friederich explores into the philosophical implications and challenges that multiverse theories pose within the context of theoretical physics. He critically engages with the fine-tuning problem in cosmology, which questions whether the specific laws of nature that allow for life in our universe might suggest the existence of other universes governed by different laws. Friederich defines the multiverse as the concept that multiple, potentially infinite, universes exist simultaneously, each characterized by its own unique physical laws and constants. Friederich's exploration is deeply intertwined with the ongoing debate over fine-tuning, a significant point of contention among both cosmologists and philosophers. The fact that our universe's laws and constants seem precisely calibrated to support life leads to two primary interpretations. One possibility is that this fine-tuning is an extraordinary coincidence. The other, which Friederich explores, is that our universe is part of a broader multiverse where different universes have different laws, making the emergence of a life-supporting universe statistically inevitable.

Friederich's work encourages a re-examination of the foundations of cosmology and the implications of multiverse theories. If the multiverse exists, it could explain why our universe appears so finely tuned for life; in an infinite multiverse, a life-permitting universe like ours might simply be one of many, reducing the need for any special explanation. However, this also raises significant philosophical and scientific challenges, particularly concerning the empirical testability of multiverse theories. If these other universes operate under entirely

different physical laws, our ability to observe or interact with them is severely limited, if not impossible, which complicates the application of traditional scientific methods.

James R. Johnson (2018) in his article "Multiverse Assumptions and Philosophy," critically examines the various assumptions underlying multiverse theories and their philosophical implications. Johnson contends that multiverse theories are essentially predictions derived from specific theoretical frameworks, and he emphasizes the importance of scrutinizing the assumptions that form the basis of these theories in order to assess the validity of the proposed multiverses. As Johnson puts it, "a multiverse (many universes) is a prediction based on a theory or hypotheses. The theory, in turn, is predicated on assumptions. However, it is convenient to gloss over the assumptions when contemplating the bizarre ramifications envisioned, such as an infinite number of duplicate 'yous' living in alternate universes" (8). Johnson identifies several metaphysical assumptions that are commonly found in multiverse theories. These include the existence of an infinite number of universes, the potential for duplicate versions of ourselves, and the implications of higher dimensions. Such assumptions, Johnson argues, challenge our intuitive understanding of reality and push the boundaries of traditional metaphysical thought.

In conclusion, the exploration of parallel worlds and the multiverse concept reveals both the creative potential within narrative storytelling and the profound philosophical and scientific challenges posed by multiverse theories. While the idea of parallel worlds enriches fictional narratives by allowing for diverse settings and complex character dynamics, the concept of the multiverse extends this idea into the realm of theoretical physics, suggesting the existence of multiple, possibly infinite, universes with their own distinct laws and realities.

As scholars like Alexander A. Antonov, Simon Friederich, and James R. Johnson have demonstrated, multiverse theories invite us to reconsider the very nature of reality, challenging our intuitive understanding and pushing the boundaries of metaphysical thought. These theories raise critical questions about the fine-tuning of our universe, the potential existence of alternate versions of ourselves, and the limits of empirical science. Ultimately, while the multiverse concept offers intriguing explanations for some of the deepest questions in cosmology, it also underscores the need for careful philosophical analysis and rigorous scrutiny of the assumptions that underlie these speculative ideas.

Discussion

The concept of parallel worlds narrative provides an alternate realities, diverse settings, and complex character dynamics. Thus, the parallel world in *The Boy and the Heron*

Designing An Emotional Architectures Parallel Worlds

In *The Boy and the Heron* (2023), Hayao Miyazaki masterfully designs parallel worlds that function as complex emotional architectures, directly tied to the Makoto's internal struggles. These worlds are not merely fantastical settings; they are deeply symbolic landscapes that reflect the complexities of Makoto's psyche as he navigates through grief, loss, longing, and trauma. This concept of "emotional architecture" is crucial to understanding how these parallel worlds are constructed and how they serve as critical components in Makoto's journey toward self-discovery and healing. The idea of designing emotional architectures within parallel worlds relates closely to the theoretical frameworks of the multiverse as

explored by scholars like Alexander A. Antonov, Simon Friederich, and James R. Johnson. In these frameworks, parallel universes are conceptualized as distinct realities, each governed by its own set of rules and conditions, much like the emotional landscapes in Miyazaki's film. These worlds operate independently but are interconnected through the protagonist's psychological journey, mirroring the way multiverse theories propose different universes with unique laws of physics.

Designing Emotional Architectures

The parallel worlds in *The Boy and the Heron* are crafted to reflect Makoto's inner state. Each world is an embodiment of a particular emotional challenge he must face, whether it be the overwhelming grief of losing a loved one, the deep longing for connection, or the traumatic memories that continue to haunt him. Miyazaki's design of these worlds is an exercise in emotional architecture—creating spaces that are not just visually distinct but emotionally resonant. The environments, characters, and rules within these worlds are carefully aligned with the specific emotional barriers Makoto needs to overcome.

For instance, the distinct rules governing each parallel world symbolize the different ways in which Makoto's emotions manifest and how they must be navigated. These rules, much like the unique laws of physics in a multiverse, define the boundaries and challenges within each world. The scarcity of resources in one world could represent the feeling of emptiness and loss, while the hierarchical dynamics in another could symbolize the pressure and expectations Makoto feels in his real life. These elements create a rich tapestry of emotional experiences that guide Makoto through his journey.

Multiverse Theories and Emotional Architectures

Relating this to Simon Friederich's exploration of multiverse theories, we see a parallel in how both the film and the multiverse concept challenge the traditional understanding of reality. Friederich discusses the idea that different universes within a multiverse operate under their own unique laws, which can explain the fine-tuning of our own universe. Similarly, the parallel worlds in *The Boy and the Heron* each operate under their own set of emotional "laws," which are crucial to understanding the protagonist's journey. These worlds are not just separate realities but are integral to Makoto's process of emotional reconciliation, just as different universes in a multiverse might provide insights into the conditions that make life possible.

Moreover, Friederich's discussion of the empirical testability of multiverse theories can be applied to the film's portrayal of emotional architectures. While the parallel worlds in this film may not be verifiable in a literal sense, their impact on Makoto's emotional development is real and significant. The film suggests that these worlds, while existing in a fantastical realm, are essential to the protagonist's psychological growth, much like how speculative multiverse theories offer real insights despite their speculative nature.

Scrutinizing Assumptions in Emotional Architectures

James R. Johnson's critique of the assumptions underlying multiverse theories further enriches our understanding of Miyazaki's emotional architectures. Johnson argues that multiverse theories often rest on unexamined metaphysical assumptions, and he stresses the importance of scrutinizing these foundations. In *The Boy and the Heron*, Miyazaki similarly challenges viewers to consider the assumptions that shape the parallel worlds within the

narrative. Each world reflects a different aspect of Makoto's identity and emotional state, and the film invites us to question how these worlds—and the emotions they represent—are constructed.

The design of these emotional architectures within the film mirrors the varied ways individuals process complex emotions like grief, trauma, and longing. Just as Johnson critiques the potential for duplicate versions of us in alternate universes, Miyazaki explores different versions of Makoto's identity within these parallel worlds. Each world serves as a space where Makoto must confront and integrate different facets of himself, ultimately leading to personal growth and emotional reconciliation. This narrative technique aligns with Johnson's argument that the assumptions underlying multiverse theories challenge our conventional understanding of reality and identity.

In conclusion *The Boy and the Heron*, Hayao Miyazaki creates parallel worlds that function as carefully designed emotional architectures, guiding the protagonist Makoto through a profound journey of self-discovery and healing. These worlds, much like the theoretical multiverses discussed by Antonov, Friederich, and Johnson, operate under unique rules and conditions that reflect the complexities of the human psyche. By relating these emotional architectures to multiverse theories, we gain a deeper understanding of how Miyazaki uses these parallel worlds not just as narrative devices but as essential components of Makoto's emotional growth. The film challenges viewers to consider the underlying assumptions that shape these worlds and their impact on the protagonist's journey, ultimately highlighting the power of cinematic storytelling to explore and resolve the complexities of human emotion.

Grief, Loss and Longing

In *The Boy and the Heron*, the parallel world is uniquely designed and constructed to reflect the Makoto's emotional state, particularly his grief, loss, and longing for his deceased mother. This parallel world is not merely a fantastical realm; it is a complex emotional architecture that is depicted through three distinct perspectives—those of the great-Uncle, the stepmother, and Makoto himself. Each perspective offers a unique lens through which Makoto's internal struggles are explored, creating a multifaceted narrative that explores deeply into his psychological landscape. The film's layered storytelling approach provides a rich exploration of how personal grief and loss influence the alternate reality Makoto inhabits, offering a profound and emotionally engaging narrative experience.

The construction of the parallel world in the film is governed by the laws embodied in the building blocks held by the great-Uncle. These blocks symbolize the stability and equilibrium of the parallel world; their collapse signifies the disintegration of this fragile reality. The building blocks serve as a powerful visual metaphor for the construction of one's personal inner world, particularly in the context of grief loss and longing. In this parallel world, each character—Makoto, the great-Uncle, and the stepmother—contributes to the creation of this alternate reality, each bringing their own emotional baggage and psychological states into the mix. This suggests that the parallel world is not a monolithic construct but a composite of the emotional states of its inhabitants, particularly those of Makoto, who is deeply affected by his mother's death. The film uses these characters' interactions and movements to visually depict the construction of their inner worlds, bringing their complex, personal, and often dark realities to life.

One of the key elements of this parallel world is the presence of creatures like the *wah-la-wah-la*, which mature within this realm, ascend to the sky, and eventually reincarnate as humans. This narrative element draws on traditional Asian beliefs about reincarnation and the cyclical nature of life and death. The ascension and reincarnation of the *wah-la-wah-la* symbolize the hope and belief Makoto holds regarding his mother's journey in the afterlife. However, this hope is shattered when the *wah-la-wah-la* is devoured by a flock of pelicans just as it is about to reincarnate. This plot twist injects tension and suspense into the narrative, reflecting Makoto's frustration and disillusionment with his life in the real world. The *wah-la-wah-la*'s fate can be interpreted as a manifestation of Makoto's unresolved grief and the harsh reality that his mother is truly gone, complicating his emotional journey.

The rules governing the parallel world are crucial in shaping the characters' actions and decisions. These rules establish the boundaries and dilemmas that the characters must navigate, making their choices and actions appear logical within the context of the world. For example, Makoto is attacked by the parrot inhabitants, who are depicted as cannibalistic, but they refrain from eating him because he carries a heron's feather. Similarly, his stepmother is not attacked because she is pregnant. These rules are not arbitrary; they are carefully designed to reflect and influence Makoto's emotional state, particularly his sense of loss and longing. By overcoming the challenges posed by the parallel world's rules, Makoto's actions drive the narrative forward in a plausible and emotionally resonant manner.

The construction of the parallel world, with its distinct laws and governing principles, reflects the film's deeper exploration of Makoto's emotional reality. The rules of this world are starkly different from those of the real world, serving as a catalyst for Makoto's emotional growth and understanding. This divergence from reality encourages viewers to engage more deeply with the narrative, prompting them to reflect on the intricacies and differences between the parallel world and the real world. The film's exploration of these unique principles enhances the viewer's connection to the story, as it invites them to consider how the parallel world serves as a reflection of the characters' inner lives, particularly Makoto's.

In conclusion, *The Boy and the Heron* uses the concept of a parallel world to create a richly layered narrative that explores the complexities of grief, loss, and longing. The emotional architecture of this world is tied to Makoto's psychological state, with each element—whether it's the building blocks, the *wah-la-wah-la*, or the rules governing the world—serving as a reflection of his inner turmoil. Miyazaki masterfully crafts this parallel world not just as an alternate reality, but as a space where the characters' deepest emotions are brought to life and confronted. Through this design, the film offers a profound commentary on the nature of grief and the ways in which individuals construct their own emotional realities in response to loss.

Trauma

In *The Boy and the Heron*, trauma serves as a central theme, particularly through Makoto's struggle to come to terms with the death of his mother, who perished in a fire. This traumatic event deeply scars Makoto, leaving him with a profound fear of fire in his real life. The film uniquely weaves this trauma into the narrative through the construction of a parallel world, where Makoto encounters a younger version of his mother, Hiromi. Unlike in the real world, Hiromi possesses the ability to control fire and traverse different dimensions through its

power. Her fearlessness in the face of fire, coupled with her mastery over it, plays a crucial role in helping Makoto confront and ultimately accept the reality of his mother's death by fire.

The parallel world in this film not just a fantastical setting; it is a carefully designed emotional architecture that allows Makoto to process his trauma and denial surrounding his mother's death. Through his interactions with Hiromi in this alternate reality, the film investigates deeply into Makoto's inner turmoil, revealing the full extent of his grief, loss, and longing for his mother. The encounter with Hiromi offers Makoto a chance to confront the emotional pain he has been avoiding in the real world. As the parallel world begins to collapse, Hiromi opens another door, symbolically offering to become Makoto's mother again. When Makoto warns her of the fire that will claim her life, Hiromi's fearless response that she does not fear fire is deeply significant. It not only highlights Makoto's unresolved trauma but also represents his deep longing and inability to let go of his mother.

Hiromi's characterization in the parallel world is important in Makoto's emotional journey. Her control over fire—a symbol of the very trauma that haunts Makoto—enables him to reframe his understanding of his mother's death. By embodying both the nurturing presence of a mother and the destructive force of fire, Hiromi becomes a conduit through which Makoto can begin to reconcile with his trauma. This encounter forces Makoto to confront his fear and grief head-on, facilitating a gradual acceptance of his mother's death.

The parallel world's design, with its fantastical adventures and symbolic challenges, serves as a therapeutic space for Makoto. As he navigates this world, he undergoes a transformation that allows him to find inner peace and tranquility. The trials he faces in the parallel world are metaphors for the emotional hurdles he must overcome in his real life. Through these challenges, Makoto develops a more open and honest attitude toward life and death, ultimately achieving a new perspective that enables him to accept these concepts with greater serenity and clarity.

In conclusion, *The Boy and the Heron* masterfully uses the concept of a parallel world to explore the theme of trauma, particularly through Makoto's fear of fire and his unresolved grief over his mother's death. The parallel world is designed as an emotional architecture that allows Makoto to process his trauma in a way that would be impossible in the real world. Through his interactions with Hiromi, Makoto can confront and reconcile with his deepest fears, leading to a profound emotional resolution. This journey through the parallel world offers a unique narrative approach to understanding trauma, highlighting the importance of confronting one's fears and accepting loss as part of the healing process.

The film's use of parallel worlds serves as a metaphorical exploration of identity, emotional struggle, and personal reconciliation. Just as multiverse theories in cosmology invite us to question the uniqueness of our universe and consider the possibility of alternate realities, the parallel worlds in *The Boy and the Heron* prompt a re-examination of Makoto's personal identity and his journey toward healing. These worlds allow for a narrative exploration of how individuals navigate their inner emotional landscapes, and how confronting these internal universes can lead to profound personal transformation.

Parallel Worlds and Psychological Journeys: The Role of Spatial and Transgressing*Temporal Hierarchy Design in Character Development*

The concept of a psychological journey is deeply intertwined with themes of personal development, emotional growth, and the transition through different stages of life. In cinematic narratives, these journeys often transcend traditional storytelling methods, utilizing innovative techniques such as the construction of parallel worlds and the manipulation of time to delve into the complexities of human experience. *The Boy and the Heron* (2023), directed by Hayao Miyazaki, serves as a compelling example of how reconfiguring temporal hierarchy can deepen the emotional and psychological exploration of its characters.

In contemporary storytelling, the manipulation of time has become a crucial narrative tool, challenging conventional linear structures. This idea is significantly influenced by philosopher Jacques Rancière (2022), who critiques traditional frameworks of temporality and advocates for a more fluid and egalitarian approach to time. Rancière's concept of transgressing temporal hierarchy involves disrupting the linear sequence of events to create narratives that reflect the complexities of reality more accurately. This approach allows for a richer exploration of themes such as memory, identity, and the human condition.

Fiction [in this context refers to parallel universes] is not the invention of imaginary beings. In the first instance, it is a structure of rationality. It is the construction of framework within which subjects, things and situations are seen as belonging to a common world, while events can be identified and linked in terms of coexistence, succession and causal linkage. (2)

This interconnectedness allows for the exploration of coexistence, succession, and causal relationships in a way that challenges traditional narrative forms. In *The Boy and the Heron*, this reconfiguration of transgressing temporal hierarchy is not just a stylistic choice but a fundamental aspect of the film's narrative design, reshaping the concept of "the moment" to explore themes of grief, loss, and personal growth. The film employs a parallel transgressing temporal hierarchy that mirrors Makoto's psychological journey, challenging traditional linear storytelling by incorporating non-linear timelines, time loops, and parallel timelines. These narrative techniques enable the story to unfold across multiple dimensions simultaneously, offering a richer and more nuanced exploration of Makoto's character. The construction of parallel worlds within the film adds further complexity to this temporal hierarchy, as these worlds often synchronize with or reconstruct the dimension of time, creating a layered narrative structure that deepens the emotional impact of the story.

Makoto's journey through these parallel worlds is punctuated by significant moments that contribute to his personal growth and adaptation to the profound grief he experiences following his mother's death. These moments are not isolated; rather, they are interconnected within a broader temporal framework that guides Makoto's overall narrative journey. The film's non-linear structure allows for a multifaceted exploration of grief, memory, and trauma, presenting time as a fluid and mutable construct rather than a fixed, linear sequence. This approach invites the audience to reconsider their understanding of time and its influence on identity and relationships.

The concept of parallel worlds in this film serves as both a narrative device and an emotional architecture that reflects Makoto's internal struggles. Each parallel world operates under its own set of rules and conditions, much like the varied emotional landscapes Makoto must navigate. These worlds are symbolic of the different facets of his grief, loss, longing, and trauma, each presenting unique challenges that Makoto must overcome to achieve personal growth. This narrative technique aligns with Rancière's critique of traditional temporality, as it allows for a more dynamic and multifaceted exploration of the character's psychological journey.

The intertwining timelines in the film evoke a sense of disorientation and discovery, mirroring Makoto's internal journey. As he navigates through these temporal layers—often symbolized by corridors and other transitional spaces—Makoto is drawn deeper into his emotional landscape, experiencing the tension between his past traumas and present realities. The disruption of linear time and the creation of a parallel temporal hierarchy not only enhance the film's emotional and psychological depth but also challenge the audience to engage with the story on multiple levels.

The Boy and the Heron illustrates how reconfiguring transgressing temporal hierarchy can transform narrative storytelling, particularly in the exploration of complex emotional and psychological themes. By reshaping the concept of "the moment," the film offers a profound commentary on grief, loss, trauma, and personal growth. The innovative use of non-linear timelines, time loops, and parallel timelines enriches the narrative, providing a deeper emotional and psychological experience for the viewer.

This layered approach to storytelling not only enhances character development but also invites the audience to engage with the narrative in a more active and reflective manner. The film's sophisticated manipulation of transgressing temporal hierarchy challenges traditional perceptions of time and its role in shaping human experiences, offering a unique and compelling exploration of the complexities of the human condition. Through its intricate design of parallel worlds and temporal structures, the film stands as a testament to the power of narrative innovation in cinema.

Thresholds of Longing: Exploring Desire through Door and Corridors Symbolism

The concept of portals closely aligns with the symbolic use of doors in cinematic narratives, particularly in *The Boy and the Heron* (2023). Just as Antonov's portals facilitate a seamless transition between universes, the doors in *The Boy and the Heron* function as gateways connecting the real world with a parallel dimension. Both ideas highlight the transition from one reality to another, underscoring themes of exploration, transformation, and the unknown. In both instances, these gateways challenge characters—and by extension, the audience—to step beyond the familiar and confront the unfamiliar.

Miyazaki's exploration of the Multiverse, through the concept of corridors as portal, introduces a unique perspective on interaction between parallel universes. These portals provide an alternative to conventional space travel, which is restricted by the speed of light, by emphasizing a fluid and almost seamless interaction between different realities, reflecting Mikoto's emotional states. This approach not only simplifies the understanding of such complex ideas but also challenges traditional conceptions of space and time. It adds a new

layer of complexity to our perception of the universe, where interactions between realities transcend the physical laws that govern our own world.

Antonov's discussion, akin to the symbolic use of doors and corridors in Miyazaki's film, prompts a rethinking of how we perceive movement, space, and the potential for interaction between different realities. By comparing the movement between universes to stepping through a door and corridor, Miyazaki invites us to explore Mikoto's grief, loss, longing and trauma where the limitations of physical space are surpassed, opening infinite possibilities for exploration. This concept parallels the symbolic thresholds in *The Boy and the Heron*, where each corridor represents a crucial point in Mikoto's journey, reflecting the potential for growth and discovery within the Multiverse.

In conclusion, the idea of portals as gateways within the Multiverse offers a profound reimagining of space, time, and movement. This concept, paralleling the symbolic use of doors in cinematic narratives, challenges our conventional understanding of reality, suggesting that the boundaries between worlds are more fluid than previously believed. Through these portals, Miyazaki presents a universe abundant with possibilities, where the seamless interaction between different realities opens new paths for exploration and understanding.

The Return to Reality: Navigating Emotional Architecture and Reconciliation

The construction of parallel worlds in *The Boy and the Heron* is a masterful narrative device that serves as both a metaphor for and a reflection on the protagonist Makoto's psychological journey. These worlds are not mere fantastical realms detached from reality but are intricately tied to Makoto's emotional state and his process of coming to terms with profound loss and trauma. The inevitable return to reality that marks the conclusion of these journeys is not just a physical return but a significant psychological closure, signalling the completion of a full circle in Makoto's personal growth.

In Miyazaki's vision, parallel worlds function as emotional architecture—complex constructs that represent different facets of Makoto's psyche. Each world Makoto enters is meticulously designed to serve as a mirror to his internal emotional landscape, helping him to navigate and process his grief, loss, longing, and trauma. Miyazaki's approach to these worlds goes beyond the creation of alternate realities; these spaces are integral to the narrative, providing Makoto with the necessary environment to engage in a deep, introspective journey.

This introspective journey is deeply tied to the concept of reconciliation, which is central to the film's thematic core. The parallel worlds, while visually stunning, are fundamentally symbolic representations of Makoto's psychological state. They are designed with specific architectural and environmental features that challenge Makoto to confront his unresolved emotions. The rules and structure of each world are deliberate, forcing Makoto to engage with his emotional turmoil, particularly the grief and trauma stemming from the death of his mother in a fire. The challenges he faces within these worlds are not arbitrary; each one reflects the steps he must take to achieve emotional healing. For instance, the corridors, paths, and obstacles that Makoto navigates in these parallel worlds can be seen as metaphors for the convoluted and often difficult process of grieving. Each turn, dead-end, or breakthrough in these worlds symbolizes a corresponding movement in Makoto's emotional journey. Miyazaki's ability to translate these psychological struggles into visual and structural

elements within the film is a testament to his mastery of the medium. He uses cinematic space not just to tell a story, but to create a profound emotional experience that mirrors the protagonist's inner world.

The process of reconciliation in *The Boy and the Heron* is not immediate or straightforward. It is a gradual unfolding that takes place as Makoto moves through these carefully constructed worlds. The architecture of these spaces guides him, often subtly, toward a resolution. This guidance is not didactic; it is embedded within the very fabric of the worlds he inhabits. The challenges he faces are aligned with the emotional hurdles he needs to overcome, ensuring that his journey through these worlds is also a journey toward emotional resolution.

Miyazaki's design of the parallel worlds is crucial to this process. Each world reflects Makoto's emotional turmoil, serving as both a visual metaphor and a structural embodiment of his internal conflict. The environments Makoto encounters are not just backdrops; they are active participants in his journey, facilitating his growth and aiding in his reconciliation with reality. The film's narrative architecture is carefully aligned with Makoto's psychological journey, ensuring that the parallel worlds function as critical spaces for emotional exploration and healing.

As Makoto progresses through these worlds, the architecture becomes increasingly significant in guiding him towards reconciliation. The distinct rules and challenges of each world are purposefully designed to align with the steps Makoto must take to achieve emotional closure. For example, if a particular world imposes constraints or presents seemingly insurmountable obstacles, these elements can be interpreted as representations of the barriers Makoto faces within his own mind. Overcoming these obstacles within the parallel worlds is symbolic of Makoto overcoming the emotional barriers that have prevented him from fully processing his grief and trauma.

The culmination of this journey, where Makoto integrates the lessons learned in the parallel worlds into his real-life understanding, is not just a narrative resolution but a profound moment of psychological clarity. Miyazaki ensures that the return to reality is marked by a significant transformation in Makoto's character. The experiences in the parallel worlds have equipped him with new perceptions and understandings, allowing him to re-examine and confront the real world with a transformed perspective. This seamless integration of fantasy and reality is one of Miyazaki's great strengths as a filmmaker; he blends these elements in such a way that the fantastical is used to explore and resolve the complexities of human emotion, all without distorting the essential truths of lived experience.

Furthermore, the alignment of the parallel worlds with the real-world timeline is a crucial narrative choice that underscores Miyazaki's respect for the integrity of both worlds. The parallel worlds are not chaotic; they are structured with a precise order that reflects the real world's timeline, ensuring that Makoto's return is seamless and without disruption. This alignment is critical because it preserves the continuity of Makoto's life and experiences, reinforcing the idea that while the parallel worlds serve as spaces for internal exploration and growth, they do not alter the external realities that Makoto must face.

The film emphasizes the importance of this alignment when the parallel world "returns" to the real world. The strict adherence to the objective order of reality reflects a deep respect for the principles that govern the real world. Time reconstruction and the laws of the parallel world are carefully managed to ensure that, while these experiences profoundly impact Makoto's growth, they do not alter the fundamental nature or rules of the real world. This design choice reinforces the idea that the parallel worlds are not escapist fantasies; rather, they are essential spaces for psychological exploration that ultimately lead Makoto back to reality with a deeper understanding and acceptance of his experiences.

In conclusion, Hayao Miyazaki's design of the parallel worlds in *The Boy and the Heron* is a masterful exploration of the intersection between fantasy and reality. These worlds are not merely alternate realities; they are meticulously crafted reflections of Makoto's inner emotional landscape, designed to guide him through his grief, loss, longing, and trauma. Miyazaki's ability to translate these psychological struggles into the visual and structural elements of the film underscores his mastery as a filmmaker. The parallel worlds serve as both emotional architecture and pathways to reconciliation, facilitating Makoto's journey toward healing and ultimately allowing him to return to reality with a renewed sense of peace and clarity. Miyazaki's seamless integration of these worlds into the broader narrative highlights his profound understanding of cinema as a medium that can explore and resolve the complexities of human emotion while maintaining the integrity of the real-world experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the construction of parallel worlds in *The Boy and the Heron* serves as a profound metaphor for Makoto's emotional and psychological journey. These worlds are tied to his inner state, representing his grief, loss, longing, and trauma. Far from being mere fantastical realms, these parallel worlds are carefully designed emotional architectures that reflect the complexities of Makoto's psyche. Each world challenges him to confront his unresolved emotions, guiding him through a process of introspection and growth. The return to reality, therefore, is not just a physical transition but a significant psychological closure that marks the completion of Makoto's personal development.

Hayao Miyazaki's design of these worlds emphasizes their role as critical spaces for emotional exploration. The unique rules and structures of each parallel world are purposefully aligned with the steps Makoto must take to achieve reconciliation. As he navigates these worlds, the obstacles he faces serve as metaphors for the emotional barriers he must overcome. This journey culminates in a profound moment of clarity, where the lessons learned in the parallel worlds are integrated into Makoto's real-life understanding, allowing him to confront reality with a transformed perspective. Ultimately, Miyazaki's masterful blending of parallel world and reality in *The Boy and the Heron* highlights the power of cinematic storytelling to explore and resolve the complexities of human emotion. The parallel worlds are not escapist fantasies but essential components of Makoto's healing process, enabling him to return to reality with a renewed sense of peace and understanding.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of philosophical analysis and rigorous scrutiny of the assumptions underlying both speculative cosmology and the emotional narratives depicted in cinematic storytelling. While the concept of the multiverse offers fascinating possibilities for both scientific and narrative exploration, it also demands careful

consideration of its implications. In the context of the film, the multiverse is not merely a backdrop for action but a vital component of the protagonist's emotional and psychological journey, reflecting the complexities of human experience and the intricate process of emotional reconciliation.

Research Contribution

By giving a detailed understanding of the metaphorical architecture of parallel universes that can be seen in Hayao Miyazaki's film *The Boy and the Heron* (2023), this research makes a significant contribution to the bodies of knowledge that are currently available. Through the utilization of concepts like as the multiverse, emotional architecture, and psychological journeys, this work not only adds to a more profound grasp of cinematic storytelling, but it also serves to bridge the gap between narrative theory and metaphysical research. Incorporating concepts from several universes into the analysis of emotional landscapes is a novel approach that has been offered. This approach lays an emphasis on the role that parallel worlds play as crucial spaces for the growth of characters and the emotional reconciliation of persons among the characters. From a contextual standpoint, this research makes a contribution by situating the film directed by Hayao Miyazaki within the larger themes of human development, trauma, and sadness. A further point that is brought to light is the significance of the film in modern discussions concerning the intersection of philosophy, psychology, and narrative art. When examined through this particular perspective, the study emphasizes the significance of investigating alternative worlds in film as a means of resolving the complexities of the human experience for the sake of reflection and resolution. Additionally, it offers knowledgeable individuals in the fields of film studies, psychology, and philosophy the opportunity to gain valuable insights.

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