An Exploration of Individuation, Mourning, and Self-Healing Processes in the Anime *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* Through Jungian Psychology and Narrative Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores how the Japanese anime *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* portrays the process of female individuation through a Jungian psychological lens (Jung, 1968), focusing on themes of mourning, loss, self-healing, and emotional reconnection. At the outset of the narrative, Frieren experiences the extinction of her elf tribe and the death of her human mentor, resulting in emotional detachment and repression—phenomena closely aligned with Jung's concept of the "shadow." Over time, through prolonged adventures and the formation of new bonds, Frieren confronts her suppressed grief, particularly following the death of her cherished companion Himmel, which initiates her self-exploratory journey. The analysis aligns the anime's narrative arc with Jung's individuation theory (Jung, 1968), Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning (Worden, 2009), and Murdock's Heroine's Journey model (Murdock, 1990). Frieren's process demonstrates how, through relational support and inner confrontation, she integrates both anima and animus elements, internalizes Himmel's virtues, and achieves a higher level of emotional wholeness. Utilizing Labov's narrative structure model (Labov, 1972), this study systematically interprets Frieren's psychological transformation. Findings reveal that anime narratives, especially those with profound emotional arcs, possess significant potential for psychological insight and therapeutic resonance. Through Frieren's journey, the research invites viewers to find meaning and resilience amid the inevitability of loss and change.

Keywords: Jungian psychology, individuation, heroine's journey, grief, narrative analysis

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Introduction: Research Motivation and Objectives

Research Motivation

In contemporary popular culture, hero narratives predominantly center around male protagonists. Especially in American comic adaptations such as the Marvel Cinematic Universe, iconic figures like Captain America, Iron Man, Spider-Man, and Thor exemplify traditional models of masculine heroism — utilizing physical prowess, technological innovation, or supernatural abilities to save the world. In contrast, female heroes remain relatively scarce and are often confined within stereotypical portrayals, either possessing extraordinary powers to rival male counterparts or fitting into archetypes such as the mystical sorceress rather than the archetypal warrior.

Against this cultural backdrop, the Japanese anime *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* presents a strikingly different perspective on heroism, particularly female heroism. Frieren, the protagonist, is not characterized by her capacity to dominate or conquer external enemies but rather by her profound journey of inner growth. As an immortal elf mage, Frieren's narrative revolves less around external battles and more around internal emotional awakening, self-reconciliation, and the rediscovery of human connection. Unlike conventional narratives that often showcase external feats as measures of heroism, Frieren's journey illustrates that true heroism lies in confronting one's inner voids, mourning, and eventual emotional integration.

Furthermore, this anime provides a vital case for examining how female individuation processes differ from male-oriented hero journeys. Traditional studies on hero narratives, particularly Joseph Campbell's *The Hero's Journey*, primarily depict a male-centric path of adventure, conquest, and self-assertion. Female development, however, often involves reconciling disconnection from inner feminine qualities and healing fractured identities. Maureen Murdock's (1990) *The Heroine's Journey* addresses this gap by proposing a different structure where the heroine must not merely replicate masculine paths but must navigate internal fragmentation, reconnection with the feminine, and self-healing. Frieren's story exemplifies this process vividly, offering a rich text for scholarly exploration.

This study thus aims to investigate *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* using narrative structure analysis, Jungian individuation theory, and Murdock's Heroine's Journey framework. By doing so, it seeks to address contemporary cultural concerns about the development of nuanced female hero characters and the representation of internal emotional journeys as heroic endeavors.

In Taiwan, researchers conducting narrative analysis often utilize the frameworks proposed by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998), namely holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-content, and categorical-form analysis, with holistic-content being the most prevalent. Furthermore, following Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, analyzing narrative meaning requires a detour from linguistic structure to reflective interpretation and existential understanding. Narrative research must avoid merely subjective interpretations by carefully structuring semantic analysis followed by reflective engagement (Ricoeur, 1969/2008).

To deeply understand the emotional transformation embedded in anime narratives, it is essential to conduct a semantic-level structural analysis as a foundation, culminating in an ontological interpretation of character existence. Labov's (1972) narrative model provides a useful analytic framework for examining how storytellers organize experiences, construct

meaning, and reveal psychological processes through six structured elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda.

This methodological framework supports the present study's intention to reveal how the anime encapsulates Frieren's individuation, mourning, emotional re-integration, and eventual self-healing.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To explore Frieren's individuation journey throughout the anime and analyze how her psychological growth reflects Jung's concept of self-realization.
    - Investigating how Frieren integrates her inner anima and animus through her experiences.
    - Analyzing how collective cultural consciousness influences her identity development, inner conflicts, breakthroughs, and reconciliation.
2. To examine the applicability of Murdock's *Heroine's Journey* model to Frieren's narrative and discuss how female roles in cultural narratives are evolving.
    - Mapping Frieren's growth stages against Murdock's ten-phase model.
    - Exploring how the heroine's psychological maturation and reintegration of feminine strength are depicted.
3. To analyze how Frieren's process of grief and healing aligns with Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning and enables the reconstruction of her inner self.
    - Using Worden's tasks as a theoretical scaffold to examine Frieren's mourning process after trauma.
    - Analyzing the journey from emotional collapse and disintegration to new meaning-making, relational re-connections, and psychological vitality restoration.

Literature Review

Jungian Psychology and the Process of Individuation

Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology centers on the concept of individuation — the psychological process of integrating the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche to achieve a unified and fully realized self. Jung (1968) proposed that individuals are often fragmented, with different facets of their inner world — such as the persona (the social mask), the shadow (the repressed unconscious parts), the anima (the feminine aspect in males), and the animus (the masculine aspect in females) — being split and unintegrated. The task of individuation is to confront these internal figures, reconcile their oppositions, and achieve psychological wholeness.

In the context of Frieren's journey, Jung's concept of the shadow is particularly pertinent. The shadow comprises emotions and desires that the conscious self finds unacceptable and thus represses. Frieren's initial emotional detachment and her cold indifference to human mortality reflect her unacknowledged grief and relational longing, forming a "shadow self" she must gradually confront and integrate.

Furthermore, Jung's constructs of anima and animus serve as vital frameworks for interpreting Frieren's internal development. Jung viewed the anima/animus not merely as gendered figures

but as bridges to the unconscious, facilitating emotional growth and creativity. In Frieren's story, the deceased hero Himmel represents a projection of animus energy — embodying courage, emotional warmth, and relational integrity — qualities Frieren must internalize to achieve her individuation.

Thus, Jungian psychology provides a profound foundation for analyzing Frieren's psychological transformation from isolation to relational integration, marking her individuation journey.

Murdock's Heroine's Journey

While Joseph Campbell's (1949) *Hero's Journey* has profoundly shaped the study of narrative structures, it predominantly reflects a masculine developmental arc: venturing outward, achieving heroic feats, and returning empowered. In contrast, Maureen Murdock (1990) proposed the *Heroine's Journey* to address the unique psychological path of women, emphasizing the inner struggle to reconcile feminine and masculine energies.

Murdock's model outlines ten stages:

1. Separation from the Feminine
2. Identification with the Masculine and Gathering of Allies
3. Road of Trials: Meeting Ogres and Dragons
4. Finding the Illusory Boon of Success
5. Awakening to Feelings of Spiritual Aridity: Death
6. Initiation and Descent to the Goddess
7. Urgent Yearning to Reconnect with the Feminine
8. Healing the Mother/Daughter Split
9. Healing the Wounded Masculine
10. Integration of Masculine and Feminine Energies

Unlike Campbell's model, which valorizes external conquest, Murdock's journey underscores inner emotional repair and identity reconciliation. For Frieren, her adventure is not merely about facing external enemies but about confronting emotional detachment, rekindling human connection, and embracing the vulnerability associated with love and loss.

Applying Murdock's framework to *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* illuminates how the heroine's psychological growth involves mourning, healing, and integrating both strength and sensitivity, illustrating a feminine path to wholeness.

Worden's Tasks of Grief

J. William Worden's (2009) *Tasks of Mourning* provide a systematic and dynamic framework for understanding the grieving process, emphasizing active engagement rather than passive endurance. Unlike models that conceptualize grief as a series of emotional stages to be endured passively, Worden posits that effective mourning demands conscious work from the bereaved, facilitating emotional healing and adaptive transformation. According to Worden (2009), healthy adaptation to loss involves the accomplishment of four critical tasks:

1. **Accepting the Reality of the Loss**:
   The first task involves confronting the undeniable truth that the loved one is no longer physically present. This acceptance extends beyond intellectual acknowledgment; it requires emotional internalization of the loss. Individuals often oscillate between denial

and acceptance during this phase, as the permanence of death is emotionally daunting. In *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, Frieren initially displays a rational acceptance of mortality due to her long lifespan, yet Himmel's death catalyzes a deeper emotional reckoning, highlighting the multidimensional nature of this task.

2. **Processing the Pain of Grief**
   The second task requires experiencing and working through the intense emotional pain rather than avoiding or numbing it. Grief involves a spectrum of feelings, including sadness, anger, guilt, and sometimes relief, depending on the relationship dynamics. Worden (2009) emphasizes that failure to process emotional pain can lead to pathological mourning, where unresolved grief manifests as depression or emotional numbness. For Frieren, the revisiting of past adventures, places, and shared memories with Himmel serves as a narrative vehicle for her gradual engagement with sorrow, illustrating her movement through this painful but necessary process.
3. **Adjusting to an Environment Without the Deceased**
   Beyond emotional processing, the bereaved must adapt to practical and relational changes. Worden (2009) identifies three levels of adjustment: external (changes in daily living), internal (alterations to the individual's self-concept), and spiritual (rethinking life values and beliefs). In the anime, Frieren's gradual formation of new bonds with Fern and Stark reflects her adaptation to a new social reality, where she must redefine her identity not as a passive survivor but as a mentor and guide, fulfilling external, internal, and spiritual adjustments simultaneously.
4. **Finding an Enduring Connection with the Deceased While Moving Forward**
   The final task involves creating a new relationship with the deceased — one based on memory and inner emotional presence — while continuing to live meaningfully. Rather than severing all ties to the departed, healthy mourning allows the bereaved to retain symbolic bonds while engaging actively with life. Frieren embodies this principle by internalizing Himmel's values of compassion and courage, allowing his spirit to live on through her actions without remaining trapped in paralyzing grief.

Frieren's psychological journey mirrors these stages closely. Initially, she suppresses her grief and treats death as an inevitable aspect of her long lifespan. However, Himmel's death catalyzes profound emotional turmoil, forcing her to actively mourn, reassess her relational world, and build new emotional connections with her apprentice Fern and warrior Stark.

Worden's framework thus serves as a valuable lens for analyzing how Frieren's narrative embodies the dynamic processes of grief, adaptation, and emotional reconstruction, ultimately leading to renewed vitality and deeper humanity.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative narrative analysis approach, primarily utilizing Labov's narrative structure model as the analytic framework, while integrating theoretical perspectives from Jungian psychology, Murdock's Heroine's Journey, and Worden's Tasks of Mourning.

The objective is to systematically analyze the protagonist Frieren's psychological development and emotional transformation within *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* by identifying narrative patterns, psychological milestones, and emotional evolution.

Narrative analysis is particularly suitable for this research because anime storytelling often involves complex temporal structures, flashbacks, and symbolic events, requiring an interpretative framework that accommodates both textual structure and emotional depth (Riessman, 1993).

The research process included the following steps:

1. **Text Selection**: The original *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* manga series and its anime adaptation were selected as primary data sources. Key scenes depicting emotional change, grief reactions, and relational development were identified for detailed analysis.
2. **Narrative Structuring**: Using Labov's six-step narrative model, critical events in Frieren's story were mapped into Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda.
3. **Theoretical Interpretation**: Events and character developments were interpreted through the lenses of Jung's individuation process, Murdock's heroine development stages, and Worden's grief tasks, enabling a multilayered psychological and thematic analysis.
4. **Triangulation**: Collaborative coding between the first and second authors was employed to enhance the credibility and dependability of interpretations, minimizing individual bias.

Research Instruments

(1) Textual Data

- Primary Texts:
  - *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* manga (written by Kanehito Yamada, illustrated by Tsukasa Abe).
  - Anime adaptation produced by Madhouse studio.
- Analytical Frameworks:
  - Labov's Narrative Model: Structural analysis of storytelling (Labov, 1972).
  - Jungian Psychology: Concepts of shadow, anima/animus, individuation (Jung, 1968).
  - Murdock's Heroine's Journey: Ten-stage model of female psychological growth (Murdock, 1990).
  - Worden's Tasks of Mourning: Four-task model of grief processing (Worden, 2009).

(2) Application of Labov's Narrative Model

Table 1
Application of Labov's Narrative Model

Step	Definition	Application to Frieren
Abstract	Summarizing the story's essence	Frieren's long journey symbolizing emotional healing
Orientation	Setting the time, place, and character background	Post-Demon King era; Frieren as immortal elf mage
Complicating Action	Main events creating tension and development	Death of Himmel; Frieren's emotional awakening
Evaluation	Expressing the significance of the events	Recognizing the depth of human bonds and grief
Resolution	How the events are resolved	Rebuilding emotional connections through mentorship
Coda	Returning to the present and reflecting on change	Ongoing individuation journey integrating past and future

(3) Data Analysis Strategy

The data analysis for this study followed a multi-layered qualitative approach, integrating structural, thematic, and interpretative methods to comprehensively examine Frieren's psychological evolution.

- **Coding**: Story episodes were initially segmented and coded according to Labov's (1972) narrative model. Each significant narrative unit—defined by a clear beginning, emotional pivot, and resolution—was mapped onto Labov's six components (abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda), facilitating a systematic breakdown of Frieren's emotional and relational shifts across the series.
- **Thematic Analysis**: Following the initial coding, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns in Frieren's character development and emotional transformation. The interpretation was guided by constructs from Jungian psychology (Jung, 1968) — such as shadow integration and individuation — as well as Murdock's (1990) Heroine's Journey stages and Worden's (2009) Tasks of Mourning. Particular attention was given to themes of grief processing, relational reconnection, and internal feminine-masculine balance.
- **Interpretative Synthesis**: Finally, an integrative synthesis was performed, weaving together psychological interpretations and narrative structures to elucidate the stages of Frieren's inner growth. Rather than treating narrative elements and psychological constructs as separate layers, the analysis emphasized their interdependence, consistent with Ricoeur's (1969/2008) notion of the narrative arc as a hermeneutic bridge between lived experience and meaning-making.

This multilayered strategy ensured that both the structural flow of the story and the deep psychological transformations it represents were given analytical attention.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the qualitative findings, the study adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

- Credibility: Achieved through prolonged engagement with the primary texts, involving multiple close readings of both the manga and anime adaptations to fully capture narrative nuances. Additionally, peer debriefing was employed, with the second author critically reviewing coding decisions, thematic interpretations, and theoretical alignments to minimize individual researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- Dependability: Ensured through the consistent application of analytic frameworks across all narrative episodes. Each event or emotional shift was systematically analyzed using the same theoretical lenses (Labov, Jung, Murdock, Worden), enhancing methodological coherence and traceability.
- Confirmability: Maintained by anchoring interpretations firmly in textual evidence, with direct references to specific scenes, dialogues, and narrative structures. Analytic memos documenting interpretive reasoning were kept throughout the research process to provide an audit trail.
- Transferability: Although focused specifically on *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, the analytic strategy—combining narrative structure analysis with psychological frameworks—offers potential applicability to similar anime, manga, and fantasy narratives that explore themes of emotional maturation, grief, and individuation. Thus, the methodological design supports both depth and broader adaptability (Shenton, 2004).

Through this rigorous approach, the study ensured that interpretations were not idiosyncratic but reflected a credible, transparent, and transferable analysis of narrative and psychological development.

Research Quality

In qualitative research, ensuring the **trustworthiness** of findings is crucial. Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework, this study emphasizes **credibility**, **dependability**, **confirmability**, and **transferability** to uphold research rigor.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the data and interpretations. To enhance credibility in this study:

- **Prolonged Engagement**: The primary researcher engaged extensively with both the manga and anime versions of *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, enabling in-depth familiarity with character arcs and narrative nuances.
- **Triangulation**: The use of multiple theoretical frameworks (Jungian psychology, Murdock's Heroine's Journey, Worden's Tasks of Mourning, and Labov's narrative model) allowed for cross-validation of findings from different perspectives.
- **Peer Debriefing**: Collaborative analysis with the second author served as a peer review mechanism, minimizing researcher bias and enriching interpretation.

Dependability

Dependability emphasizes the consistency and replicability of research processes. This was ensured through:

- **Systematic Analytical Procedure**: Consistent application of Labov's narrative steps to all identified episodes.
- **Audit Trail**: Maintenance of detailed analytic memos documenting decision-making throughout the coding and interpretation phases.

Confirmability

Confirmability concerns the extent to which research findings are shaped by the participants or text rather than researcher biases. Strategies included:

- **Evidence-Based Interpretation**: All thematic claims were grounded in specific narrative scenes and direct textual evidence.
- **Collaborative Coding**: Dual analysis by both authors helped ensure interpretations were not idiosyncratic or overly subjective.

Transferability

Although this study focuses on a specific anime narrative, the analytic methodology — integrating narrative structure with psychological theories — can be adapted to analyze other cultural texts, particularly those exploring grief, growth, and individuation in popular media.

Research Ethics

As this study involves **textual analysis** rather than human participants, it inherently poses fewer ethical risks. Nevertheless, several ethical considerations guided the research process in accordance with the **American Psychological Association (APA, 2019)** guidelines.

Respect for Original Sources

Respect for intellectual property was strictly observed:

- All manga and anime materials were appropriately cited.
- The interpretations acknowledge the cultural and artistic intentions of the original creators.

Avoidance of Misinterpretation

To maintain academic integrity:

- Interpretations aimed to remain faithful to the narrative content and emotional dynamics portrayed in the anime, avoiding distortions or impositions of external biases.
- Reflective engagement was employed, drawing on Ricoeur's (1969/2008) hermeneutic philosophy, to approach the text respectfully and thoughtfully.

Cultural Sensitivity

Anime and manga are deeply embedded in Japanese cultural contexts. Throughout the analysis:

- Cultural nuances such as notions of time, interpersonal connection, and grieving practices were considered.

- The study avoided imposing Western-centric psychological frameworks inappropriately, instead using universal psychological theories as flexible interpretive tools.

Transparency

The entire analytic process — from text selection to theory application — was documented transparently to enable external scrutiny and replication if needed.

Research Results and Findings

Narrative Analysis Results

Drawing upon an integrative methodological approach, this study systematically traced Frieren's psychological evolution throughout *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* by combining Labov's (1972) six-step narrative model, Jungian analytical psychology (Jung, 1968), Murdock's (1990) Heroine's Journey, and Worden's (2009) Tasks of Mourning. Labov's framework provided the structural blueprint for segmenting and interpreting key narrative episodes, while Jung's theory of individuation and shadow integration offered insight into the protagonist's internal conflicts and gradual self-realization. Murdock's ten-stage heroine model contextualized Frieren's emotional descent and eventual reconciliation with both feminine and masculine energies, and Worden's tasks illuminated the adaptive mourning processes underlying her relational transformations.

The multi-theoretical analysis revealed that Frieren's development does not follow a linear trajectory but unfolds through a complex emotional cycle characterized by initial emotional suppression, subsequent grief awakening, progressive internal integration, and the rekindling of relational engagement.This cyclical pattern aligns with Ricoeur's (1969/2008) understanding of narrative identity as a recursive process of memory, reinterpretation, and reformation rather than a straightforward arc.

The following structured analysis presents a synthesis of narrative development and psychological interpretation, mapping Frieren's journey according to the intersecting lenses of narrative structure, individuation, mourning adaptation, and feminine psychological integration.

Table 2
Structured Analysis

Labov's Step	Frieren's Storyline	Worden's Grief Task	Murdock's Heroine Stage
Abstract	Frieren's journey is introduced through a flashback, depicting her adventures with human companions and foreshadowing her emotional evolution.	Task 1: Acceptance of the reality of loss	Stage 10: Integration of masculine and feminine energies
Orientation	Set in a post-Demon King world, Frieren faces the natural aging and death of her human comrades, contrasting her own longevity.	Task 1: Acceptance of the reality of loss	Stages 1–2: Separation from the feminine and identification with the masculine
Complicating Action	The death of Himmel triggers profound grief, confronting Frieren with emotions she had long suppressed.	Task 2: Processing the pain of grief	Stages 3–5: Road of trials, illusory success, and spiritual aridity
Evaluation	Through memories, regrets, and new relational bonds, Frieren reinterprets her past emotional detachment.	Task 2–3: Processing pain and adjusting to the environment without the deceased	Stages 6–8: Descent to the Goddess, yearning for reconnection, and healing the mother/daughter split
Resolution	Frieren builds new attachments, particularly with Fern and Stark, demonstrating renewed emotional openness and mentorship.	Task 3: Adjusting to an environment without the deceased	Stage 9: Healing the wounded masculine
Coda	Frieren reflects on her journey, carrying the influence of her past companions forward while continuing her path of individuation.	Task 4: Finding an enduring connection and moving forward	Final Integration: Full internal harmony

Source: Organized and analyzed by the researcher and co-researcher.

Thematic Findings

(1) Confronting Emotional Detachment: Awakening the Shadow

At the outset, Frieren presents a seemingly detached and stoic attitude toward human mortality, perceiving death as an inevitable consequence of her vastly extended lifespan. This emotional distance reflects the defense mechanism of emotional detachment, a common protective strategy against the vulnerability of loss. However, the death of Himmel—a trusted and deeply

influential companion—shatters this façade of detachment, forcing Frieren into an emotional reckoning she can no longer postpone.

According to Jung (1968), the activation of the shadow occurs when repressed and unconscious feelings surface into conscious awareness, demanding confrontation and eventual integration. Himmel's passing serves as a catalytic event, awakening Frieren's buried sorrow, guilt, and longing. This crucial turning point marks the beginning of her individuation journey, where healing necessitates embracing the painful emotional dimensions of her existence that she had long denied.

(2) Mourning and Meaning-Making

Following Himmel's death, Frieren's experiences closely align with the sequential tasks outlined in Worden's (2009) model of mourning:

- **Acceptance**: Frieren must move beyond cognitive acknowledgment to emotionally internalize the permanence of Himmel's absence. Initially, she exhibits intellectual acceptance but struggles with profound emotional realization.
- **Pain Processing**: Her visits to places intertwined with past adventures act as conduits for re-experiencing memories and emotions. Rather than suppressing grief, Frieren gradually allows these feelings to emerge, embodying Worden's emphasis on actively working through emotional pain.
- **Adjustment**: Developing mentorship bonds with Fern and collaborative relationships with Stark illustrates Frieren's effort to adapt to a new reality where her old companions no longer accompany her.
- **Connection**: Rather than remaining trapped in mourning, Frieren honors Himmel's memory by internalizing his compassion and values, letting them guide her future actions without imprisoning her in sorrow.

Through these progressive stages, Frieren demonstrates that mourning, when actively engaged, can serve as a transformational process, turning devastation into emotional resilience and meaning-making.

(3) Feminine Individuation Through Relational Bonds

Murdock's (1990) Heroine's Journey emphasizes that the heroine's growth involves more than achieving external success; it requires an inward reconnection with relational, emotional, and nurturing aspects often devalued in patriarchal heroic models. Frieren's evolving relationship with Fern encapsulates this movement toward feminine reintegration.

As Frieren transitions from a solitary figure to a mentor and protector, she re-engages with nurturing capacities, embracing vulnerability and emotional openness. Through caring for Fern, Frieren not only imparts magical knowledge but also confronts her own fears of attachment and loss. This relational healing process fulfills the later stages of Murdock's journey, where the heroine repairs fractured connections with the feminine and achieves internal balance between independence and intimacy.

(4) Memory as a Catalyst for Growth

In Frieren's narrative, memory functions not as a passive repository of the past but as an active catalyst for transformation. Flashbacks, particularly those highlighting Himmel's compassion and subtle wisdom, recurrently surface, guiding Frieren toward deeper self-awareness.

Notably, Himmel's remark—"If you ever understand human feelings, let me know"—becomes a haunting refrain that propels Frieren to seek emotional comprehension. Each remembered interaction or shared moment acts as a bridge, connecting her past emotional voids to her present capacity for empathy and relational depth. Thus, memory in *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* operates dynamically, continually reshaping Frieren's emotional landscape and motivating ongoing individuation.

(5) Nonlinear Growth: Mourning and Individuation as Lifelong Journeys

Frieren's story resists traditional narrative closure. Unlike conventional heroic arcs that culminate in a definitive victory or endpoint, her psychological journey embodies the recursive, lifelong nature of individuation as described by Jung (1968). Her growth unfolds through repeated cycles of mourning, relational engagement, and meaning reformation, emphasizing that emotional healing is an ongoing, evolving endeavor rather than a finite achievement.

The anime poignantly illustrates that grief and personal growth are nonlinear; setbacks, relapses into sorrow, and renewed moments of connection coexist throughout Frieren's path. By portraying individuation as a fluid, lifetime-spanning process, *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* challenges simplistic models of "overcoming grief," instead offering a vision of psychological maturation rooted in continual openness to vulnerability, loss, and renewal.

Conclusion: Research Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to expand the understanding and application of narrative structures, psychological frameworks, and emotional transformation as portrayed in anime and related cultural texts.

Expanding Narrative Analysis in Media Studies

Future research could apply similar methodologies — combining Labov's narrative model with psychological theories — to other anime, manga, and fantasy narratives that explore grief, emotional development, and psychological growth.
In particular:

- Comparative studies could examine different gendered hero narratives in anime, contrasting male and female individuation processes.
- Longitudinal studies could track character evolution across multi-season series to understand nonlinear patterns of mourning and identity reconstruction.

Additionally, incorporating Genette's (1980) narratology regarding narrative time manipulation (e.g., analepsis, prolepsis) could enrich the structural analysis, particularly in texts with frequent temporal shifts like *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*.

Practical Applications in Animation and Screenwriting

For creators in animation and screenwriting fields:

- Emphasizing "memory–present–growth" cycles can deepen emotional engagement.

- Developing characters who evolve emotionally through grief and relational struggles, rather than solely through external conquest, can produce richer, more resonant storytelling.
- Visually distinguishing memories (e.g., color grading, music cues) from present-time narratives could enhance audiences' emotional immersion and understanding of internal character growth.

Storytelling that mirrors authentic mourning processes allows viewers to connect their own experiences of loss, adaptation, and healing with fictional narratives, thus enhancing narrative empathy.

Psychological and Educational Implications

In psychological counseling and education:

- Narrative therapy approaches could utilize fictional narratives like Frieren's to assist clients in externalizing grief experiences, reconstructing meaning, and recognizing ongoing self-integration.
- Educational programs might use anime narratives to teach adolescents about emotional processing, resilience, and the nature of lifelong personal growth, presenting grief and adaptation not as failures but as universal human experiences.
- Facilitated discussions around narratives such as Frieren's could promote emotional literacy and foster healthier grieving practices, especially among young audiences who often consume anime as a major cultural medium.

Enhancing Objectivity and Audience Perspective in Future Research

To reduce subjective bias in anime narrative studies:

- Audience reception analysis can be integrated, gathering qualitative data through interviews or surveys about viewers' interpretations of characters' emotional journeys.
- Corpus linguistics tools could be used to analyze language patterns in online fan discussions, identifying common themes regarding grief, loss, and growth.
- Triangulated research designs involving multiple researchers and data sources would enhance confirmability and robustness of interpretations.

Such expansions would ensure that future analyses do not merely reflect the researchers' personal readings but also encompass diverse audience engagements and broader cultural meanings.

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