

= Parallels (Star Trek : The Next Generation) =

" Parallels " is the 11th episode of the seventh season of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation , the 163rd overall . It was originally released on November 29 , 1993 , in broadcast syndication . The episode was written by Brannon Braga , and directed by Robert Wiemer . Executive producer Jeri Taylor wrote the final scene of the episode , but was uncredited .

Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the crew of the Federation starship Enterprise . In this episode , Lt. Worf (Michael Dorn) returns from a bat 'leth tournament and slowly discovers that he is being moved across parallel universes . The crew of an alternative Enterprise realise what is happening and seek to return him to his own reality , but , after an attack by a Bajoran ship , a space @-@ time fissure explodes , causing hundreds of thousands of alternative versions of the Enterprise to enter the same universe . After Worf reverses the course through the fissure , he and all the versions of the Enterprise are returned to their respective universes .

Braga intended to focus the " Parallels " on Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) , but this was changed to Worf . The change was made in order to make the differences more obvious across the timelines , as Braga worried that Picard 's relationships could not significantly differ across near @-@ universes . The producers were concerned with the confusing nature of the initial proposal , but felt that further changes greatly improved it . Wil Wheaton appeared as Wesley Crusher , replacing the initial plan to include Tasha Yar , after Braga was concerned about copying " Yesterday 's Enterprise " . " Parallels " received Nielsen ratings of 12 @. @ 8 percent , one of the highest for the season , but some fans were upset at a Worf / Deanna Troi romance . Critics responded favorably to the episode , with praise directed at both Dorn and Marina Sirtis .

= = Plot = =

After competing in a bat 'leth tournament on the planet Forcas III , Lieutenant Worf returns to the Enterprise and is treated to a surprise birthday party , much to his annoyance . As he attends the party , he starts to notice subtle changes , such as the flavor of the cake changing , and a painting given to him by Data appearing on a different wall . The changes start to become more pronounced ; as a Cardassian vessel attacks the Enterprise , unfamiliar controls result in Worf failing to raise the shields , leading to the death of Geordi La Forge . Despite retaining his initial memories , Worf has no evidence that reality has changed , and his own personal logs support the stories given by the other crew members . Other major changes occur : Riker is Captain of the Enterprise in a reality wherein Picard was killed by the Borg , the Bajorans became the oppressors of the Cardassians and enemies of the Federation , Wesley Crusher is a lieutenant on the Enterprise , Alyssa Ogawa is the Chief Medical Officer , and Worf finds himself married to Deanna Troi .

Upon investigation , the crew find that Worf 's RNA has an unusual quantum signature and confirm that he is from a different universe . The crew theorizes that Worf , on his original return from the bat 'leth tournament , passed through a time @-@ space fissure , with the shuttlecraft 's engines causing Worf to quantum flux between several parallel universes . Data determines that Worf 's proximity to La Forge 's VISOR caused Worf to shift between universes , and that each universe covers a different possibility . In effect , anything that could possibly happen has done so in a parallel universe , hence the believable changes in the reality that Worf is experiencing . The Enterprise returns to the location of the fissure , attempting to return Worf to his original universe . The Enterprise is then attacked by a Bajoran ship , which causes the fissure to destabilize and the various realities to merge , resulting in over 285 @, @ 000 versions of the Enterprise appearing in the same area of space .

Data determines that the only way to restore the realities is to send Worf via shuttlecraft to the Enterprise of his universe , passing through the fissure and using the shuttlecraft 's engines to reseal it . After locating the correct ship , Worf begins to travel back but is attacked by another Enterprise that has come from a Borg @-@ overrun universe , its crew refusing to return . The Enterprise that he left fires upon the hostile ship and destroys it . Worf safely passes through the

fissure , finding himself back in normality with a single Enterprise in front of him . After boarding , Worf finds that no time has passed since he initially entered the fissure . When he returns to his room expecting a surprise party , he finds only Troi waiting to give him a single present and , knowing that the two are married in many alternate universes , he invites her to share dinner with him .

= = Production = =

Writer Brannon Braga initially conceived of the episode as centered on Captain Picard , rather than Worf . It was only when planning out the story that he realised that there would not be a great deal of personal differences across realities with Picard . As such , he decided to include Worf as the main character , and chose to place him in a romance with Troi as he felt that most people would not have expected it . Braga considered writing Tasha Yar into the episode , but he felt that this would have copied " Yesterday 's Enterprise " , so he replaced her with Wesley Crusher , played by Wil Wheaton . Further changes were made to the script as Braga had intended for Worf to be sung " Happy Birthday to You " in the Klingon language , but the cost for the rights to the song would have been prohibitive and so the idea was dropped .

Executive producer Jeri Taylor approved the initial outline but was concerned that it might be potentially confusing . She was happy with the outcome and described it as having " worked like gangbusters " . She felt that the Worf / Troi romance had been subtly played by the writers on the show since the fifth season episode " Ethics " and had been an ambition on the show since " A Fistful of Datas " in the sixth season . After being included in " Parallels " , the relation was featured several times during the final season of The Next Generation . Michael Piller was not enthused with the initial idea , but Taylor felt that the means by which it evolved saved it .

Braga thought in hindsight that Crusher 's appearance could have been explained more but at the time he felt it was most intriguing if he was " just there " . He also wanted to avoid suggesting that Worf was going insane , since that theme had been covered in the previous season in the episode " Frame of Mind " . Director Robert Wiemer sought to have a conclusive ending to the episode to state Worf 's future intentions . Worf 's suggestion of champagne to Troi was written by Taylor to accommodate this .

" Parallels " re @-@ used a number of previously seen props and costumes , including Troi 's entire uniform wardrobe with the exception of the first season outfits . Other elements such as the Argus Array (a space station model) had appeared in other episodes , and alternative comm badges used in the episode had been seen in the " Future Imperfect " . The space station Deep Space 5 was a re @-@ dress of Regula One from Star Trek II : The Wrath of Khan . Modifications were made to the bridge set in one reality ; these would later be re @-@ used for the future Enterprise in the series finale " All Good Things ... " . The effect shot with multiple Enterprise 's was achieved by photographing the same model from multiple angles , resulting more than 100 appearing on screen , while the scene with multiple Worfs was produced through the use of split screens and stand @-@ ins .

This simultaneous portrayal of numerous different universes was cited by Roberto Orci , one of the screenwriters for the 2009 film Star Trek , as proof that , despite the movie 's creation of a secondary timeline , the " regular " Trek universe was unaffected and everything from The Original Series onward still went on as it had before . He said that " Parallels " was using the many @-@ worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics in which a new timeline does not overwrite a previous one , unlike previous episodes in the franchise such as " The City on the Edge of Forever " and " Yesterday 's Enterprise " .

= = Themes = =

The multiverse idea featured in " Parallels " has been discussed by commentators . Theoretical physicist Lawrence M. Krauss praised the episode for the inclusion of the idea in his book The Physics of Star Trek , although added that it incorrectly explained measurement in quantum

mechanics . This quantum mechanics theory explained during the episode was called " a little sketchy " by Michelle and Duncan Barrett in their book *Star Trek : The Human Factor* . They based this on mathematical physicist Roger Penrose 's theory that there is no identified physics for bridging the gap between physics and quantum physics . The Barretts noted the use that the Star Trek franchise has had out of the idea of the multiverse , and different timelines .

= = Reception and home media release = =

The episode aired during the week commencing November 27 , 1993 , in broadcast syndication . According to Nielsen Media Research , it received ratings of 12 @. @ 8 percent . This means that it was watched by 12 @. @ 8 percent of all households watching television during its timeslot . This placed it as the second most watched syndicated show for that week , and it was the fourth most viewed episode of the season behind part two of " Descent " , " Eye of the Beholder " and " All Good Things ... " . Some fans were upset at the introduction of a romance between Worf and Troi , as they felt that Riker and Troi was the correct paring . Taylor said that some of the fans felt that the Riker / Troi relationship was so inevitable that the show simply should have " got it over with " and not introduced a new romance for Troi instead .

Zack Handlen , in his review for the A.V. Club , gave the episode a grade of A- . He said that it was a " nicely balanced " episode , and that Sirtis and Dorn had good chemistry . Handlen further praised Dorn 's comic timing . He enjoyed the image of the other versions of the Enterprise appearing in the same universe , but criticised the level of technobabble during the second half of the episode . IGN writer Scott Colura released a podcast asking whether " Parallels " was the most underrated episode of the series .

Keith DeCandido gave the episode a rating of 10 out of 10 in his review for Tor.com. He expressed his love for the episode , praising the centering of " Parallels " on Worf " partly because no one does frustrated befuddlement better than Michael Dorn " . He enjoyed the increasing changes to each universe , but his highlight of the episode was the Enterprise from the Borg invasion timeline which fired on the shuttle at the end . DeCandido said that this kept the episode memorable after 19 years , and " cemented this as one of TNG 's top episodes " . In a list of the top 100 episodes of the Star Trek franchise , " Parallels " was placed in 89th place by Charlie Jane Anders at io9 .

The first release on home media for " Parallels " within the United States was on VHS cassette as part of a single episode release , which took place on January 1 , 2000 . " Parallels " was released on DVD in 2002 as part of the season box set . It was later released as part of the season set on Blu Ray within the United States on December 2 , 2014 . This included an audio commentary from Braga .