

**THE INFLUENCES OF JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY AND SHINTO ON
THE CREATION OF NO-FACE IN “*SPIRITED AWAY*”**

Submitted to English Letters Study Program of Universitas Ma Chung in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the Undergraduate Degree of English Letters

THESIS



By

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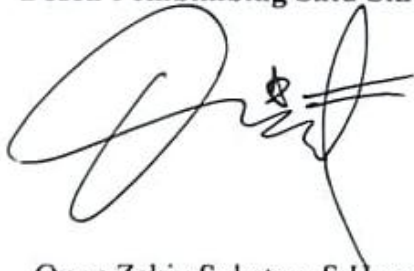
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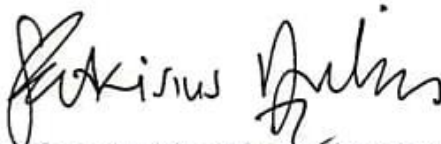
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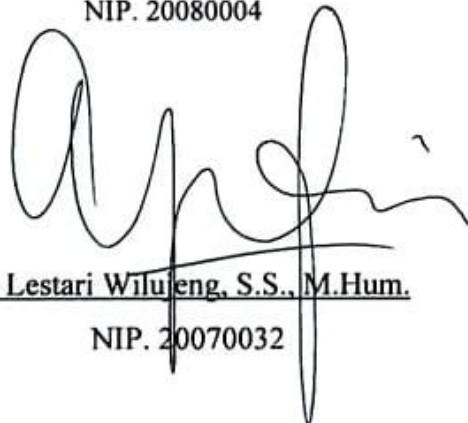
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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCES OF JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY AND SHINTO ON THE CREATION OF NO-FACE IN “*SPIRITED AWAY*”

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Advisors: Ounu Zakiy Sukaton, S.Hum, MGAL & Prof. Dr. Patrisius Istiarto

Djiwandono,

This study explores the cultural and psychological dimensions behind the creation of No-Face (*Kaonashi*), a character selected for analysis in *Hayao Miyazaki's Spirited Away*. It focuses on how elements of Japanese mythology and Shinto beliefs influence the characterization and symbolic role of No-Face in the film. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research examines the narrative, mise en scène, and character development through various theoretical frameworks. These include Shinto concepts such as *kami*, *tsumi*, *misogi*, and *wa*. Additionally, characterization theory is applied to interpret No-Face's behaviors and transformations throughout the story. The findings suggest that No-Face embodies spiritual imbalance and human desire, serving as both a reflection of traditional Japanese spirituality and a critique of modern alienation.

Keywords : Characterization, Japanese Mythology, *Kami*, *Mise-en-scène*, *Misogi*, *Shinto*, *Tsumi*, *Wa*, and *Yokai*.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Originating in Japan, anime is a unique kind of animation that has gained global recognition for its unique characters, striking visuals, and creative storytelling. The ability of anime to combine fantasy aspects with real-world themes to create narratives that are both amusing and inspiring is what makes it so fascinating. Studio Ghibli is a shining example of artistic brilliance and imagination in the varied field of anime. This studio has created a number of highly regarded films that have hooked viewers all over the world. The 2001 release of "*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*," one of Studio Ghibli's best-selling and most well-known animations ever, is included in its outstanding catalogue, "Spirited Away" in Japanese.

The narrative begins with a girl named *Chihiro Ogino*, a 10-year-old child, is moving to a new home with her parents. Her father decides to take a shortcut through the forest, which leads them to an old building that turns out to be the entrance to the spirit world. As night falls, *Chihiro* realizes her parents have been turned into pigs after eating food meant for the spirits. Stuck in a mysterious world inhabited by strange and spiritual beings, help friend *Haku*, who is also stuck in this world, and to save her parents, *Chihiro* must overcome several obstacles. She also trying to put *Yubaba's* spirit bathhouse back into balance and helps No-Face, a weird creature looking for peace.

In other than being a masterwork of visual art, "Spirited Away" is packed with mythological and cultural references particularly to Shinto and Japanese mythology. The movie's depiction of yokai, supernatural creatures that are important to Japanese mythology, is among the film's most intriguing characteristics. *Yokai*, described as weird or mysterious creatures, add an element of intrigue, and wonder to the story (Foster, 2015). In "*Spirited Away*," these creatures populate the spirit world that the protagonist, *Chihiro*, must navigate.

No-Face, a painted lonely spirit who interact with Chihiro and the other characters emphasise issues of identity, loneliness, and transformation, is one particular character that sparks interest (Asakura, 2017). No-Face's ambiguous nature and evolving role throughout the film raise questions about the nature of spirits and the human qualities attributed to them.

Moreover, the practice of Japanese religious life is unique and interesting (Azmi, Siregar & Ramadi 2023) link with the film's deep connection to Shintoism, a religion that centers around *kami* (spirits or deities) and their interactions with the physical world, provides a rich backdrop for exploring how spiritual beliefs shape societal norms and individual behavior in Japan (Hardacre, 2017). This connection is further amplified by the cultural context of Japanese mythology, which has historically intertwined with everyday life, giving rise to a unique societal fabric (Ashkenazi, 2003).

This deep spiritual connection in *Shinto* practices is not only reflected in religious ceremonies but also in the everyday rituals that shape Japanese society. A notable ritual that emphasises the continuous connection between people and the kami is *Miya Mairi*, in which babies are brought into contact with the supernatural

world for protection and blessings. Depending on the gender of the baby, newborns are typically brought to a shrine on the 30th or 31st day after birth for the purpose to be blessed and given their official names. In order to build a bond between the newborn and spirituality, the baby's name is given to a *kami*, a those who practice *Shinto* supernatural being.

referencing the *kami's* protection and blessings, this naming ceremony also signifies the child's official entry into the community. This tradition emphasises the importance of family, heritage, and society in Japanese culture and serves as a social in addition to spiritual ritual. The presence of *kami* during the ceremony signifies the child's connection to both the divine and the human realms, emphasizing the Shinto belief in the sacredness of life and the environment. In some areas, especially rural regions, *Miya Mairi* is a communal event, with extended families and neighbours coming together to celebrate the newborn's introduction to the spiritual world (Bocking, 1997).

In contemporary Japan, while urbanization has altered the scale and frequency of such rituals, according to Breen, J., & Teeuwen, M. (2010) *Miya Mairi* remains a key cultural marker for many families, reinforcing a sense of continuity with Japan's religious and cultural heritage. The practice illustrates how Shinto beliefs continue to influence daily life, linking individual identity to broader spiritual and societal responsibilities. This connection to the *kami* helps instil a sense of responsibility and respect for both the individual and the community, highlighting the enduring relevance of Shinto practices in contemporary Japanese life.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

This research will be conducted to answer several problems encountered, namely:

1. How do elements of *yokai* and spirits from Japanese mythology influence the character design of No-Face in *Spirited Away*?
2. In what ways do *Shinto* beliefs, particularly the concept of *kami* and the emphasis on purification, influence the depiction of No-Face in *Spirited Away*?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine how Japanese mythology and Shinto beliefs, particularly the concept of *kami* and purification, influence the characterization and symbolic role of No-Face in *Spirited Away*.

1.4. Significance of the Study

1. Personal Significance

This study holds significant personal importance for the writer as it allows for the exploration of an interest in anime, particularly the film "*Spirited Away*" by Studio Ghibli. By studying the character No-Face and the representation of *yokai*, the writer gains a deeper understanding of how psychological issues such as loneliness and isolation, as well as Japanese mythology, can be portrayed through animation. This research is also worth conducting because it offers a detailed and underexplored analysis of the character No-Face, who is typically overlooked in previous studies that focus more on the film as a whole. This provides the writer

with the opportunity to make a new and significant contribution to the study of anime, character psychology, and Japanese culture.

2. Significance for the Audience

For the audience, this study offers a new perspective on the character No-Face and *yokai*, which have not been widely studied before. By exploring the psychological and social aspects related to the characterization of No-Face and the representation of *yokai* in "*Spirited Away*," this research helps the audience better understand and appreciate the complexity of characters in animated films, as well as identify the relevance of these issues in real life. This research is useful due to how it provides considerable value towards our understanding about how animated characters may represent and deal with the complexities of human beings, as well as how the movie's *yokai* relate to the traditional roles in Japanese folklore and the practice of Shinto a religion based on kami (Hardacre, 2017).

3. Significance for the English Letters Study Program of Universitas Ma Chung

This study is important for the English Letters Study Program at Universitas Ma Chung because it demonstrates how literary and social theories can be applied in the context of popular media, such as anime. By combining psychological and social analysis in the study of the character No-Face and the representation of *yokai* in "*Spirited Away*," this research expands the scope of literary studies at the university and enriches the curriculum by adding relevant interdisciplinary dimensions.

This study is worth conducting because it not only provides a new and significant perspective in the study of anime and Japanese mythology but also encourages other students to explore unique and innovative topics in their research, thereby enhancing the academic profile of the study program through original and valuable contributions. By delving into the representation of *yokai* in "*Spirited Away*" and comparing their depiction in the film to their traditional roles in Japanese folklore, this research highlights the deep connection between the film and Shintoism, as well as Japanese mythology (Ashkenazi, 2003).

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

1. Yō kai:

Foster (2015) stated that *yokai* is a weird or mysterious creature, Foster (2015).

2. Shinto:

Shinto is the current name for the practice of believing in *kami*, stated by Ono & Woodard (2011).

3.Characterization:

The methods a writer use to develop the characters in a story are commonly referred to as characterization, Barbour (1992). it allows readers and manages brings the story richness and allows readers to connect with the characters, Crites (1971).

4. Mise-en-scène:

Mise-en-scène is a French term that translates to "placing on stage" and is used in film studies to describe the visual arrangement of a scene in a film, Busuttil (2016). This concept encompasses various elements such as setting, lighting, costume, and the behaviors of figures within the frame.

5. *Kami*:

Etymologically, the word "*kami*" can be interpreted as "the one above" or "something superior", reflecting their prominent position in Shinto cosmology, Ono & Woodard (2011). "In my grandparents' time," Miyazaki himself states, "it was believed that spirits or kami existed everywhere." Sacred spirits known as kami can be noticed in ancestors, unique things, rivers, trees, mountains, and animals. They stand for the world's sacred and organic harmony but are not all-powerful deities. Through proper behaviour and traditions people are supposed to show their reverence for the kami.

6. Japanese Mythology:

A broad diversity of tales, gods, and magical creatures that explain the beginnings of the world, the gods, and humans are all part of Japanese mythology, which has its roots in the Shinto religion, stated by Okuyama (2017).

7. *Tsumi*:

According to books of Bocking (1997), *tsumi* means pollution or sin in Shinto

8. *Misogi*:

When the spirit breaks the taboo, they become tainted. It then goes to perform a *misogi* ritual, purifying itself by cleansing in the sea water (Hartz, 2009).

9. *Wa*:

Refers to social and spiritual harmony in *Shinto* and Japanese culture, Yamakage, (2006).



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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Literary Theory

Literary Theory is the study used to analyze, understand, and interpret literary works. It provides a framework that allows for the exploration of various aspects of a text, such as themes, characters, narrative structure, and cultural context. Among the key topics discussed in this chapter are the concepts of characters and characterizations, which are essential to storytelling. Moreover, literary analysis is enriched through the approach of Comparative Literature, not only expands appreciation for the narrative structures of different cultures but also highlights the similarities and differences in character development across time and place. This provides a more nuanced approach to analyzing characters within both the individual text and its cultural context.

This chapter specifically focuses on the fundamental concepts of characters and characterization, which are pivotal to the way stories are told and understood. Characters are the driving forces in any narrative, and their roles often shape the story's direction and impact. Through characterization, the writer analyzes not only their physical traits or behaviors but also the underlying motivations, emotional states, and psychological depths that influence their actions and relationships within the plot.

2.1.1 Characters

A character serves a strategic role in a story, functioning as a medium to deliver and convey meanings, messages, moral values, or specific ideas intentionally aimed at the audience.

Ash-shiddiqy, Natsir, and Astuti (2020) explains that characters can be divided into two categories: main characters (Major) and supporting characters (Minor). The main character plays a central role in advancing the story, referred as major character. In contrast, minor characters, or supporting characters, have a more limited role, often existing to support the main character and make the story stands out.

Kao nashi or No-Face in *Spirited Away* can be seen as a successful minor character because, despite the limited role, *Miyazaki* manages to capture the audience's attention through a unique design and mysterious aura. *Kaonashi* or No-Face presence enriches the atmosphere of the spirit world and adds depth to the bathhouse setting, inviting curiosity about the character's nature and purpose. This aligns with Galef (2010) observation that "a successful minor character may invite curiosity, but a well-drawn flat character provokes no further probing," as *Kao Nashi* strikes a balance between being intriguing without demanding extensive exploration of the backstory.

A. No-Face (*Kaonashi*)

No-Face, or *Kaonashi* in Japanese, is one of the most iconic characters in *Hayao Miyazaki's* film "*Spirited Away*." According to Asakura (2017), No-Face is a lonely and masked spirit, they have an ability to absorb the traits and behaviors of

the creatures it meets by eaten them. The role and behavior of No-Face in the film are significant. No-Face first appears as a shadowy figure who seems lonely and harmless. This character does not speak and appears interested in *Chihiro*, the film's protagonist, who shows kindness.

After entering the bathhouse owned by *Yubaba*, No-Face's behavior begins to change. This character starts to mimic the behavior of the non-human human-like around, for instance "Frog Men" (*Kaeru Otoko*) particularly for their greed and desire for attention. No-Face uses shining gold nuggets to manipulate the bathhouse workers, showing how he absorbs the greedy and materialistic traits of his surroundings

No-Face then becomes aggressive, swallowing several bathhouse workers, and causing chaos. This behavior reflects the dualistic nature of *yokai* in Japanese mythology, which can change from benign to dangerous depending on the situation and their interactions with humans. At the end of the film, after leaving the bathhouse, No-Face returns to the original, calmer nature. No-Face finds a place with Zeniba, *Yubaba*'s twin sister, where this character is accepted and finds peace.

No-Face represents many themes in Japanese culture, including the Shinto concepts of purity and impurity, as well as the duality of human nature. This character reflects how environment and social interactions can influence an individual's behavior. As a *Yō kai*, No-Face has a mutable nature and the ability to absorb the traits of others, demonstrating the flexibility and adaptability of supernatural beings in Japanese mythology.

2.1.2 Characterization

Characterization Theory focuses on how characters are constructed in literary texts, including their actions, dialogue, and interactions with other characters. This theory helps in understanding character development and motivations. The review of related literature on characterization will aid in determining the data for this study, particularly in highlighting the main character, No-Face, in "*Spirited Away*."

The Role of Characterization in Analysis plays a pivotal role. Through characterization, the writer can communicate deeper themes and engage audiences by creating relatable or symbolic figures. In "*Spirited Away*," the characterizations of No-Face, *Chihiro*, and other supporting characters serve as a lens through which cultural, psychological, and mythological elements are explored.

Moreover, literary analysis is enriched through the approach of Comparative Literature, not only expands appreciation for the narrative structures of different cultures but also highlights the similarities and differences in character development across time and place. This provides a more nuanced approach to analyzing characters within both the individual text and its cultural context. By using Characterization Theory, it is possible to see how No-Face develops as a complex and multifaceted character. The review of literature related to characterization will ultimately help in determining data for this study, showing how No-Face reflects the characteristics of *yokai* and how behaviors change with the environment and social interactions in *Yubaba*'s bathhouse.

2.1.3 *Mise en Scene*

Mise-en-scène is a French term that literally means 'placing on stage' (Bordwell & Thompson 2013). *Mise-en-scène* refers to the arrangement of all visual components within a cinematic shot, such as the backdrop, illumination, attire, and the placement and motion of performers. It is a crucial tool that filmmakers use to convey themes, feelings, and underlying storyline layers, which affects how audiences interpret and interact with the work.

A. Visual Design

Featureless Mask: No-Face's blank mask symbolizes a lack of identity or a blank slate, aligns with Shinto beliefs, where spirits (*kami*) can exist without fixed forms, embodying the idea of fluidity and transformation.

Yubaba's Extravagant Clothing and Large Body: Yubaba's fancy attire and powerful physical presence symbolize her authority, greed, and materialism.

B. Setting and Background

The Bathhouse: The bathhouse serves as a liminal space between the human and spirit world; it's a concept deeply rooted in Shintoism. According to Tamas (2014)

In Shinto belief, water is a sacred element used for purification rituals, and the bathhouse's function as a place for cleansing spirits reinforces this connection. No-Face's appearance here underscores his role as a spirit tied to the spiritual realm, while his actions reflect the moral and emotional corruption that can arise in such a place.

Natural and Supernatural Elements: The bathhouse is surrounded by natural landscapes, such as forests and rivers, which are considered sacred in Shinto.

C. Symbolism and Colors Palette

Gold and Wealth: The ability of No-Face to create gold represents the shaping strength that materialism and greed. This contrasts with Shinto values, which emphasize harmony with nature and spiritual purity. The gold also serves as a tool for manipulation, reflecting how material wealth can distort relationships and moral integrity.

Rich, Vibrant Colors: The film's vibrant color palette, particularly in scenes of wonder and magic.

Darker, Muted Tones: In moments of danger or sadness, the color palette shifts to darker with low lights.

2.2 Critical Theory

In this research, the writer used Cultural Studies theory along with ideas from Japanese mythology and Shinto beliefs to analyze the story in *Spirited Away*. Since the film is strongly connected to Japanese culture, these traditional beliefs helped to understand the deeper meaning of the story and the characters. Two main Shinto concepts used in this study are *tsumi*, which means spiritual pollution or sin, and *misogi*, which is a ritual to clean or purify oneself.

These ideas were important to explain the character of No-Face. Their actions from being quiet, to becoming greedy and out of control, and later becoming calm again show a journey of spiritual pollution and purification. By

using these concepts, the writer tried to show how Shinto beliefs influence No-Face's behavior and motivations. This analysis helped explain how the film reflects Japanese values like balance, cleansing, and spiritual growth.

2.2.1 Cultural Study

Cultural Studies is a field of study that looks at how culture is made, shown, and used in different times and places. It focuses on the connection between cultural works and the ideas, power, and identities in society (Storey, 2015). Cultural Studies also tries to understand how things like movies, books, and art both show and affect society. From this point of view, as supported by Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg (2013), media is not seen as something separate, but as part of the culture and messages around us.

The writer used Cultural Studies as the main theoretical framework because they aimed to show that the character No-Face was shaped by Hayao Miyazaki's cultural background. This includes his personal experiences, beliefs, and family history during childhood. Cultural Studies is suitable here because it helps examine how cultural referents like mythology and religion inform media texts and character creation.

First, Miyazaki stated "It was thought in my grandparents' day that spirits were present everywhere, so we should all cherish everything because they might be there."(Miyazaki, n.d., as cited in AZQuotes, n.d.).

This reflects an animistic worldview rooted in Shinto that shapes his storytelling. He also stated, "I do not believe in Shinto, but I do respect it, and I feel that the animism origin of Shinto is rooted deep within me" (The Independent,

2010). Since Shinto beliefs and Japanese mythology are key parts of Japan's cultural heritage, using cultural studies enables the writer to analyze No-Face not just as a fictional figure, but as a cultural product shaped by Miyazaki's worldview. Through this approach, the analysis connects *tsumi* (impurity) and *misogi* (purification) to No-Face's character arc, showing how these spiritual dimensions emerge from cultural context and narrative craft.

2.2.2 Japanese Mythology

Japanese mythology is a collection of ancient stories and beliefs from Japan that explain how the world, nature, and the gods began, as well as how people should live. These myths are mostly found in two of Japan's oldest historical texts: the *Kojiki*, written in 712 CE, and the *Nihon Shoki*, completed in 720 CE (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.).

Ross (2007) explained that the Japanese people's belief in myths has lasted for centuries and is reflected in their folktales. These stories are known as *mukashi banashi*. Many of them include supernatural themes, which are strongly connected to Japanese culture and customs.

In Japanese myths, there are many gods and spirits known as *kami*. People believe that *kami* live in natural places like rivers, trees, and mountains, and even inside certain objects or people (Benedict, 2020). The sun goddess *Amaterasu*, who is believed to be the ancestor of the Japanese emperors, is one of the most important *kami*.

According to Weiss, D. (2022), Others well-known deities include *Susanoo*, the god of storms, and *Tsukuyomi*, the moon god (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.).

These myths are part of the Shinto religion, which is the traditional religion of Japan. But over time, Japanese stories were also influenced by Buddhism. Buddhism came to Japan from other countries, and its ideas mixed with Shinto beliefs. Because of that, Japanese mythology has both Shinto and Buddhist elements. Some stories include ideas like rebirth, karma, and the balance between good and bad actions.

This mix makes Japanese mythology full of different spirits, gods, and magical creatures. In *Spirited Away*, we can see this clearly. The world in the movie is full of spirits, and many of them show ideas from both Shinto and Buddhism, like cleaning the spirit, being too greedy, or starting a new life. That's why Japanese mythology is helpful to understand the story and characters, especially No-Face.

2.2.3 Shinto Beliefs

According to Toshio, Dobbins, and Gay (1981), Shinto is the traditional religion of Japan. It does not have a single founder, sacred scriptures, or formal doctrine like many other religions. Instead, it is based on ancient customs, nature worship, and respect for invisible spiritual beings known as *kami*. These beliefs have shaped Japanese society and values for over a thousand years; the indigenous animistic beliefs of the Japanese people strongly tied to nature were further enriched when Buddhism arrived in Japan around 552 AD.

Shinto teaches that *kami* live in natural elements such as trees, rivers, rocks, and mountains. People believe that these spirits are part of everyday life and must be respected. To show this respect, individuals perform rituals at shrines, offer food and prayers, and take part in festivals. Purification is also an important part of Shinto practice. If a person becomes spiritually polluted (*kegare*), they must go through a cleansing ritual, such as *misogi* or *harae*, to restore purity and harmony between themselves and the *kami* (Karataş, 2019).

Toshio et al. (1981) explain that Shinto has no fixed system because it developed over time through practices tied to nature and community. This flexible structure helped Shinto continue to evolve and adapt, even after Buddhism arrived in Japan. As a result, many Japanese people today still follow both Shinto and Buddhist traditions in their daily lives.

Although Buddhism later came to Japan, Shinto continued to exist and was practiced alongside it. In daily life, the relationship between humans and *kami* is based on harmony. If humans disturb nature or become spiritually "impure" (called *tsumi*), they need to perform purification (*misogi*) to restore balance. This shows that Shinto is not only a religion but also a way of living in peace with the natural world.

A. The Concept of *Tsumi* and Spiritual Imbalance

According to books of Bocking (1997), *tsumi* means pollution or sin in Shinto. It includes any actions that cause harm or contamination, whether from disturbing spirits or impure thoughts. This idea is shown when the River God (or *Kami* of the River) bathes in *Yubaba's* bathhouse. The scene can be seen as a symbol

of cleansing, which connects to the concept of *tsumi* in Shinto. The River God arrives at the bathhouse covered in dirt and garbage from the river. When they go through the cleansing process, it represents the removal of *tsumi* or sin and spiritual pollution in Shinto belief.

Tsumi in Shinto refers to spiritual defilement or transgressions against natural and social harmony. In the film, Chihiro and her parents' ignorance of the spirit world leads them to consume food meant for the gods, an act considered *tsumi*. As a result, her parents are cursed and transformed into pigs, supported by Hamagawa (2006) stated, that pigs are symbols of greed and spiritual imbalance.

Likewise, No-Face falls into *tsumi* by absorbing the greed prevalent in the bathhouse, which triggers their aggressive and gluttonous behavior. Once removed from that corrupt environment, he reverts to their quiet and solitary nature.

B. The Concept of Misogi as a Process of Purification

In *Shinto*, *misogi* is a purification ritual conducted to cleanse one from *tsumi*. In the film, *Chihiro* undergoes a series of symbolic and emotional purification processes. From having her name changed to *Sen*, to facing numerous challenges in the spirit world, all of these represent stages of *misogi*.

When the spirit breaks the taboo, they become tainted. It then goes to perform a *misogi* ritual, purifying itself by cleansing in the sea water (Hartz, 2009). The theme of purification is reflected in one of the scenes where the River God, covered in mud, undergoes purification at *Yubaba* 's bathhouse by soaking or

bathing, assisted by *Chihiro*. As a reward for helping the River God, they gave *Chihiro* a small pellet of herbal medicine. *Chihiro* then gave a half of it to No-Face.

Chihiro's encounter with the polluted river spirit and her assistance in purifying it serve as a literal representation of cleansing. Furthermore, she helps No-Face rid himself of their dark side, symbolizing a spiritual purification for both characters. By helping others and overcoming moral and emotional trials, *Chihiro* gradually purifies herself from fear, ignorance, and selfishness emerging as a spiritually mature and resilient individual.

C. The Concept of Wa and the Restoration of Harmony

Wa refers to social and spiritual harmony in *Shinto* and Japanese culture, Yamakage, 2006. In the film, the disrupted harmony at the beginning is gradually restored through character interactions. *Chihiro*, initially portrayed as sullen and self-centered, learns to develop respectful and sincere relationships with the spirits in the bathhouse world.

In Shinto belief, a person's name holds significant spiritual power, often seen as directly tied to their identity and relationship with the universe. *Chihiro* decision to remember and tell *Haku*'s real name to him is an action that free him from *Yubaba*'s control symbolizes the restoration of harmony between humans and spirits. This is similiar with *Miya Mairi*, underscores the importance of names as a conduit for establishing a person's presence in the spiritual world, forming a link between them and the *kami*, Săpunaru, 2016.

No-Face, once a figure of chaos, eventually finds peace living with *Zeniba* in a calmer setting. The film conveys that the restoration of *wa* can only be achieved through sincere actions, cooperation, and respect for the spirit world and traditional values.

2.3 Earlier Studies

Previous studies have explored *Shinto* themes, their contribution to environmental education, and Shinto perspectives in "*Spirited Away*." Rowland (2020) discusses the influence of *Shinto* themes in Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli films and their educational potential. Boyd and Nishimura (2004) examine *Shinto* perspectives in "*Spirited Away*," focusing on the film's overall portrayal of *Shinto* beliefs and practices. These studies offer valuable insights into the broader thematic and cultural context of the film, but they do not specifically focus on the character of No-Face.

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CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Studied Material

The primary material studied in this research is the film "*Spirited Away*" (2001) directed by *Hayao Miyazaki*, produced by Studio Ghibli. The focus is on the character No-Face or *Kaonashi* and how this character embodies aspects of Japanese mythology and Shinto influences. Additional materials include traditional Japanese literature that features *yokai*, such as classic folktales and historical texts on Japanese mythology. These sources provided a comparative basis to understand the representation of *yokai* in the film.

3.2 Study Design

The study employs a descriptive comparative design. This approach allows for an in-depth description and comparison of the character No-Face in "*Spirited Away*" with *yokai* in traditional Japanese culture. By using Characterization Theory and Comparative Literature, the study will describe the traits, behaviors, and roles of No-Face and compare these with similar elements found in classical texts. This design helps to highlight both the unique and shared aspects of *yokai* representation across different media.

3.3 Data Gathering

Data gathering for this study involves several key steps:

3.3.1 Film Analysis

Detailed viewing and analysis of "*Spirited Away*" to identify scenes, dialogues, and actions that characterize No-Face. Notes were taken on No-Face's behaviors, interactions with other characters, and significant changes throughout the film

3.3.2 Literature Review

Examination of traditional Japanese literature, including folktales, mythological texts, and scholarly works on *yokai*. Key characteristics, behaviors, and narratives involving *yokai* will be noted for comparison.

3.3.3 Secondary Sources

Review of existing academic studies and articles that discuss Shinto themes, *yokai*, and character analysis in "*Spirited Away*." This includes works like Rowland (2020) and Boyd and Nishimura (2004), which provide context and background information relevant to the study.

3.3.4 Characterization Theory

By utilizing Characterization Theory, this study aims to analyze how No-Face develops as a complex and multifaceted character. The review of literature related to characterization will help in determining data for this study, highlighting how No-Face reflects the characteristics of *yokai* and how behavior changes with the environment and social interactions in *Yubaba's* bathhouse.

3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis focuses on the character of No-Face in *Spirited Away* and how Japanese mythology and *Shinto* beliefs influence its creation. The data for this study is derived primarily from the film itself, supported by secondary sources such as academic articles, books on Japanese mythology, and *Shintoism*. After the data collection process, the writer proceeded to the analysis phase, which was designed to systematically address the research questions. The analysis of the collected data, including *mise en scene*, dialogues from transcripts and scene captures from the film, was conducted in several stages to ensure a deep and meaningful interpretation.

The first stage involved transcribing the collected data, which primarily consisted of dialogues and key scenes from the film. The transcribed data was then examined to identify themes, patterns, and recurring behaviors related to the character of No-Face. Specific scenes and dialogues were highlighted to illustrate the behavioral changes and interactions of No-Face with other characters, such as Chihiro, Zeniba, Frog Man, and others.

These interactions were analyzed to understand how No-Face's actions and transformations reflect deeper cultural and spiritual concepts rooted in Japanese mythology and Shinto beliefs. Behaviors such as No-Face's initial loneliness, his obsession with gaining attention, and his eventual transformation were grouped into distinct categories. These categories were then linked to theoretical frameworks such as the Shinto concept of *tsumi* (impurity or sin), and *misogi* (ritual purification). This approach provided a lens through which No-Face's actions could be interpreted within the context of psychological and cultural-spiritual dimensions.

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Elements of Yokai and Spirit from Japanese Mythology Influencing the Character Design of No-Face

Kao Nashi, or No-Face, from *Spirited Away* (2001), can be analyzed through the lens of Yokai elements and Spirit from Japanese Mythology. No-Face attempt to gain attention and acceptance, reflects a desire to fulfil they needs, as they seek validation and a sense of identity.

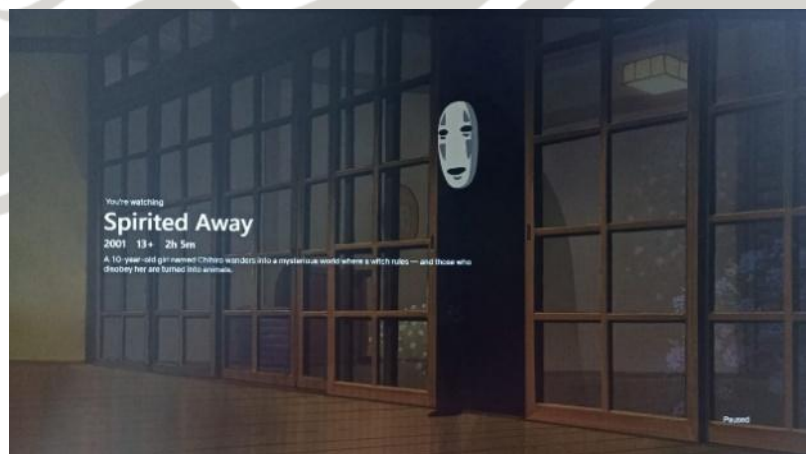


Figure 1. No-Face is a lonely spirit who wear a mask
Timestamp: 53:10 – 53:30

While in timestamp 53:10 - 53:30 *Chihiro* start a conversation with No-Face, making they enter the bathhouse from the door that *Chihiro* opened, because they feel welcome.

0:53:03.31 --> 0:53:05.90
Chihiro: Hello. Aren't you getting wet?

0:53:10.01 --> 0:53:13.01
Lin : Hurry up, Sen!
Chihiro : Coming.

0:53:13.08 --> 0:53:15.68
Chihiro : I'll leave this open.

0:53:15.75 --> 0:53:18.00
[No-Face looks at Chihiro, his mouth stretching into a wider smile than before.]

0:53:18.10 --> 0:53:20.00
[No-Face quietly enters the bathhouse from the door that Chihiro opened.]

When *Chihiro* says “*I’ll leave this open*”, No-Face navigate that she opens space, hope, and a little kindness for a lonely No-Face. And notice how they smile wider than before, they are silent, mysterious, and do not speak. On the other hand, *Chihiro* is innocent and kind, without suspicious feelings towards them. This also marks the beginning of No-Face's transformation from merely observing *Chihiro* passively, they begin to evolve into a more active character and starts to show their respond trough their actions, chasing her to absorb others, and adapt their personality depending on who they are around, like what *yokai* characteristic.

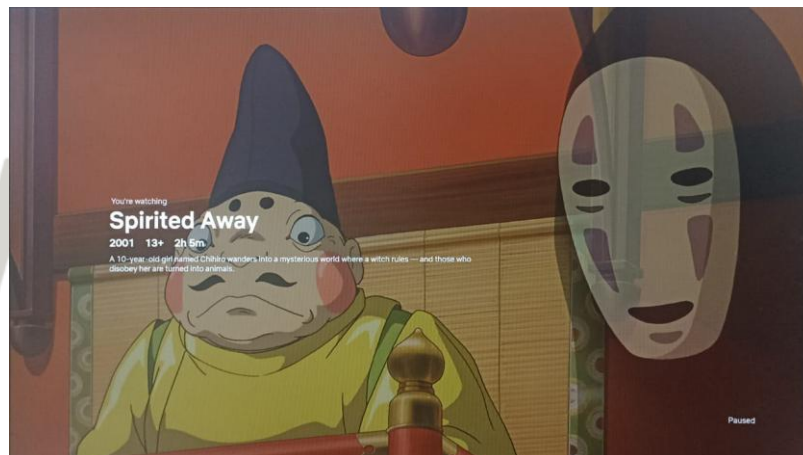


Figure 2. No-Face shows playful behavior

In Japanese mythology and folklore, *yokai* are supernatural beings, monsters, or spirits that take on many different forms, as the writer mentioned

earlier. As figure above, proof that some yokai are shapeshifters, some are harmless or playful, while others are dangerous and mysterious. No-Face also shows playful behavior, especially when they try to help Chihiro. For example, they offer her many gifts and gold to get her attention, which reflects a childlike way of seeking connection.

Chihiro tried to ask for the herbal soak tag, but she struggled because the Foreman didn't seem to care about her request and even told *Chihiro* to scrub the mud bath with her hands without the help of the herbal soak tag. At that moment, No-Face (or *Kaonashi*) suddenly appeared, very mysteriously. No-Face appeared behind the Foreman and immediately use their power to assist *Chihiro*. No-Face stole the herbal soak tag from the Foreman's desk. The tag floated in the air and immediately flew toward *Chihiro*'s face, handing her the herbal soak tag.

Time stamp 57:03 show that, No-Face reappears in the corner of the bathroom, where *Chihiro* is preparing a bath using the herbal soak tag she obtained for the dirty guests. No-Face's way of trying to get noticed by *Chihiro*. No-Face even forces *Chihiro* to accept many of the soak tags it has stolen.

0:57:25.50 --> 0:57:28.23

Chihiro : Sir, the bath's not ready yet.

0:57:31.71 --> 0:57:36.51

Chihiro : There's so many.

(No-Face shows a handful of bath tags)

0:57:38.11 --> 0:57:42.78

Chihiro : What? They're all for me?

No-Face : Uh... Uh...

(No-Face tries to communicate)

0:57:42.85 --> 0:57:45.38

Chihiro : *Thanks, but I don't need any more.*

0:57:47.56 --> 0:57:49.92

No-Face : *Uh...*

Chihiro : *No. I only need one.*

Chihiro firmly rejects No-Face, and then they disappear, causing the tags to fall and scatter around the room. At this moment, it's the first time No-Face makes a sound. They try to communicate with *Chihiro* through gestures and vocalizations, but it's more of a groan, like ghostly sounds.

Yokai often reflect human emotions, fears, or desires, and they can change their behavior depending on their surroundings (Foster, 2009). However, their actions later turn aggressive, showing how their nature changes based on their surroundings just like many yokai in traditional stories.

No-Face (*Kaonashi*) from *Spirited Away* (2001) can be seen as a modern interpretation of a yokai. Although No-Face is not based on a specific creature from folklore, their behavior and abilities resemble yokai traits. No-Face can change shape, absorb others, and adapt their personality depending on who they are around. For other example, in the bathhouse, No-Face becomes aggressive and greedy when exposed to others' desires. But when they are with Chihiro, they act quiet and gentle. This shifting nature is a key characteristic of yokai.



Figure 3. No-Face offers a lot of gold in both of their palms
Timestamp: 01:15.19 - 01:15.57

No-Face also shows characteristics of a spirit (*kami*) from Japanese mythology. They are silent, mysterious, and do not speak until they consume another being. Their presence creates a feeling of unease, and they cannot be clearly identified as good or evil. This duality is common in both *yokai* and *kami*, where one spirit can be helpful in some situations but dangerous in others, depending on the context.

This dual nature becomes more visible after No-Face consumes a frogman, one of the bathhouse workers. Before this moment, No-Face is completely silent and only communicates through gestures. However, after eating the frogman, No-Face begins to speak, which marks a shift in their behavior from a quiet, lonely spirit to a more assertive and demanding presence.

This transformation can be clearly seen in the scene around 1:15:19 in the film, when No-Face walks through the bathhouse like an honored guest. The workers respect and fear them, calling them “our guest” and stepping out of the

way. Then, Chihiro thanks No-Face for helping her, and they try to offer her gold in return

1:15:19.91 --> 1:15:22.34

Worker: Get out of the way! Our guest is coming through here!
(No-Face is walking through the crowd, as a distinguished guest)

1:15:23.95 --> 1:15:25.94

Chihiro: Thank you for helping me earlier.
(Chihiro bows her head as a sign of respect to No-Face)

1:15:26.01 --> 1:15:28.98

Worker: Don't talk to him (Refers to NO-Face), you stinking hum... Hey!
(No-Face offers a lot of gold in both of his palms)

1:15:49.44 --> 1:15:52.07

Chihiro: I don't want any, but thanks.

1:15:54.78 --> 1:15:57.71

Chihiro: I'm sorry, but I'm in a really big hurry.

Chihiro choose to run chasing *Haku*, weaving through the crowd at the party held for No-Face (1:14:53). No-Face chooses to approach *Chihiro* and ignores everyone else because No-Face has learned what the bath workers desire: wealth. As a result, No-Face treats them harshly, even eating some of the workers. However, in contrast to them, No-Face approaches *Chihiro*, who is pushing her way through the crowd with her small body. No-Face offers a lot of gold to *Chihiro*, who is out of breath while chasing *Haku* (1:15:52).

Chihiro doesn't care about the gold. She ignores No-Face and chooses to keep chasing *Haku*, who is flying, being pursued by flying origamis. *Chihiro* understands that it seems to be a malevolent entity chasing *Haku*, causing him to bleed heavily (1:15:57)."

Some scholars also compare No-Face to *Tatarigami*, a type of vengeful spirit or curse god in Shinto belief. *Tatarigami* are known for being dangerous and for bringing misfortune when disrespected or ignored (Takahashi, 1997, p. 89). Just like *Tatarigami*, No-Face wears a mask, and their real face or form is hidden. In one scene, No-Face's mask cracks open vertically to reveal a large, sharp mouth similar to how some *Tatarigami* are described in visual culture.

Even though No-Face is a unique creation by Hayao Miyazaki, they are clearly inspired by the visual and behavioral elements of traditional Japanese spirits and yokai. Through this, Miyazaki introduces cultural ideas about desire, pollution, and the need for spiritual balance, using a character that blends old beliefs with new storytelling.

4.2 Shinto Beliefs Influencing the Depiction of No-Face

This study analyzes the film *Spirited Away* by Hayao Miyazaki using key concepts from Shinto beliefs, namely *kami*, *tsumi*, *misogi*, and *wa*. The aim is to identify how these elements of Shinto shape character development, narrative structure, and symbolic meaning within the film. Through a qualitative approach utilizing characterization theory and comparative studies, the film is examined to highlight the influence of Japanese culture in the creation of its characters and storyline.

The author of the movie, Hayao Miyazaki draws inspiration from this tradition and once stated, “My grandparents believed that *kami* lived in trees, rivers, and insects. My generation no longer believes this, but I like the idea of respecting everything because there might be a spirit there.”

This Shinto perspective serves as the spiritual foundation of *Spirited Away*. Chihiro's experience is essentially a *misogi* (禊) or ritual purification journey, in which she must cleanse not only the physical pollution of the bathhouse guests, but also *tsumi* (罪), the moral and spiritual impurities surrounding her and within herself. These concepts are not only embedded in the story's setting but are also crucial to character development, particularly in *Chihiro's* interactions with No-Face.

In Shinto belief, spiritual impurity or wrongdoing is called *tsumi*. This concept refers not only to moral sins, but also to any form of imbalance, pollution, or harmful action that disrupts harmony with nature or the spiritual world. In *Spirited Away*, No-Face can be seen as committing *tsumi* when they begin to consume others, cause chaos in the bathhouse, and display greed and aggression. These behaviors represent a spiritual disturbance. No-Face, who was originally quiet and neutral, becomes corrupted after being exposed to the greed of the bathhouse environment. By eating the frogman and other workers, No-Face adopts their voices and personalities, showing how they are spiritually polluted by the surrounding negative energies.

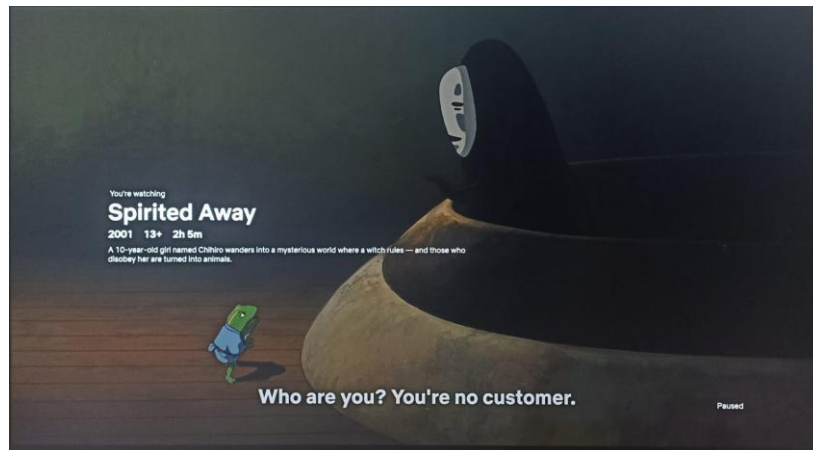


Figure 4. No-Face meet *Kaeru Otoko*
Timestamp: 01:08.15 – 01:09.00

At night, No-Face sneaks into the place where the former river god's bath was. There, they meet *Kaeru Otoko* (the frog man), who is prying at the tatami (traditional Japanese floor mats) to find leftover bits of gold and money. *Kaeru Otoko*, driven by greed, desperately tries to gather any remaining wealth. No-Face, observing his desire, satisfies his hunger by offering *Kaeru Otoko* a small piece of gold, which drips from his palm.

After consuming *Kaeru Otoko*, No-Face is approached by other workers, who, under the influence of the gold, begin to communicate using *Kaeru Otoko's* voice. This is when No-Face is treated as a "distinguished guest" by all the workers. No-Face realizes that the bathhouse workers deeply desire gold. No-Face understands that if they give the workers gold, they will treat No-Face with great respect. This is when No-Face learns that gold can make people bow down to him.

A few moments later, another worker approach No-Face. They communicate with No-Face using the same voice as *Kaeru Otoko*, who had been consumed. This

is when No-Face begins to be treated as a "distinguished guest" by the workers, who now serve them with great respect, seeing them as a source of wealth.



Figure 5. No-Face tosses so many pieces of gold

Timestamp 01:14.57 – 01:15.05

In this scene, No-Face tosses so many pieces of gold from the palms of his hands, and the bathhouse workers, seeing the wealth, begin to call No-Face 'the great master,' bowing down before him, treating them with great respect, and offering them lavish food. No-Face has transformed from a mysterious and ambiguous entity into a figure of immense power, symbolized by the large amounts of gold they freely give away.

This sudden display of wealth completely changes how the bathhouse workers view No-Face. The workers begin to revere them, referring to them as a "great master" and worshipping them with exaggerated acts of respect. The workers, who were once focused on their own duties, now only have one thing in mind to please No-Face and benefit from the riches they have given to the workers. The

workers even go as far as offering No-Face large meals in the hopes of gaining more gold, showing how easily they can be swayed by material wealth.

0:1:14.47 --> 0:1:14.49

Worker 1: Welcome, rich man.

0:1:14.49 --> 0:1:14.53

Worker 1: time to beg for tips, time to start begging

0:1:14.53 --> 0:1:14.56

Worker 1: Beg for tips

Worker 2: Make yourselves a dime

0:1:14.57 --> 0:1:15.01

Workers (shouting): Give me some dough!

Workers (shouting): Give me some tips!

0:1:15.01 --> 0:1:15.05

Worker 3: I'll do anything for you!

Worker 4: Just give me some tips!

Meanwhile, *Haku* is seen crashing into the bathhouse workers' room, a significant action that causes a shift in the dynamics. *Chihiro*, who had been resting or sleeping in the same room, is caught in the middle of this chaos. However, despite the commotion and the dangerous situation with *Haku*, the bathhouse workers remain oblivious to the unfolding crisis. Their attention is entirely consumed by No-Face, who is now feeding off their greed. They are unaware of the sinister nature of No-Face, who has already devoured *Kaeru Otoko* (the frog man), showing his true destructive

The bathhouse workers' obsession with gold and their worship of No-Face contrasts sharply with *Chihiro*'s focus on *Haku* and the bigger threat at hand. No-Face's ability to manipulate the workers with gold reveals the danger of materialism and greed.

According to Shinto belief, this kind of impurity must be cleansed to restore harmony. Therefore, No-Face's actions can be understood as a form of *tsumi* that requires misogi a ritual or journey of purification to return to a pure state. In the film, this process begins when Chihiro gives No-Face a ball of herbal pill, the same one she received from the river spirit earlier. After consuming it, No-Face vomits all the things they have consumed workers, objects, and the greed that had taken over them. This act of expelling what they had absorbed symbolizes a form of spiritual cleansing, much like misogi in Shinto rituals.



Figure 6. No-Face meets *Chihiro*, they express their feelings by complaining.

Timestamp: 1:33.02 - 1:33.51

1:33:02.80 --> 1:33:06.97

No-Face: Want some gold? I'm not giving it to anybody else.

1:33:10.58 --> 1:33:14.11

No-Face: Come closer, Sen. What would you like?

1:33:14.18 --> 1:33:16.51

No-Face: Just name it.

1:33:16.58 --> 1:33:18.68

Chihiro: I would like to leave, sir.

1:33:18.75 --> 1:33:21.24

Chihiro: I have someplace I need to go to right away, please.

1:33:23.36 --> 1:33:26.09

Chihiro: You should go back to where you came from.

1:33:26.16 --> 1:33:30.79

No-Face: Yubaba doesn't want you in the bathhouse any longer.

1:33:30.87 --> 1:33:34.10

Chihiro: Where is your home? Don't you have any friends or family?

1:33:35.50 --> 1:33:38.23

No-Face: No. No!

1:33:38.31 --> 1:33:41.04

No-Face: I'm lonely. I'm lonely.

1:33:43.21 --> 1:33:45.27

Chihiro: What is it that you want?

1:33:45.35 --> 1:33:48.68

No-Face: I want Sen. I want Sen!

1:33:49.95 --> 1:33:51.94

No-Face: Take the gold. Take it!

As seen in the figure below, Chihiro invited by No-Face into a quiet room and speaks to them gently. She also brings No-Face with her on a peaceful train ride, away from the noisy and polluted bathhouse. When No-Face begins offering gold by saying, "Want some gold? I'm not giving it to anybody else," it marks their desperate attempt to "buy" attention and validation. They long to be respected and acknowledged, but the form of appreciation they seek is artificial and transactional. There is no genuine affection or respect being returned to them, leaving them emotionally unfulfilled.

"Come closer, *Sen (Chihiro)*. What would you like? Just name it." These lines reveal No-Face's emotional confusion. They do not know how to form real, meaningful connections, so they attempt to gain affection through material offerings. Their generosity is not selfless it is a form of emotional bargaining, driven by the hope that they will be needed or wanted in return.

However, when *Chihiro* replies, "I would like to leave, sir," and "I have someplace I need to go to right away, please," her rejection of the gold challenges No-Face or Kao Nashi's belief that worth and companionship can be purchased. This moment begins to unravel their composure and reveals the emptiness behind their attempts to connect.

No-Face then cries, "No. No! I'm lonely. I'm lonely." This is the rawest and most honest expression of their deep feeling. All the wealth, power, and attention in the world cannot help the deep loneliness they feel. Their inability to find authentic companionship leaves No-Face trapped in emotional isolation and confusion because of their wrongdoing or sin.

No-Face makes a strong effort to fulfil their need for esteem by offering gold to the bathhouse workers. They receive instant recognition and are treated like a noble guest, but the respect they gain is artificial and transactional rooted in material wealth rather than sincerity.

Although No-Face outwardly gains prestige and admiration, their inner state begins to fall apart. The recognition they receive lacks authentic connection and fail to build genuine self-worth. Instead, they lose emotional control going as far as

consuming several workers driven by frustration and the emotional emptiness that remains unmet.

When Chihiro politely refuses their gold, No-Face begins to realize that relationships cannot be bought. Her rejection shakes their belief that worth can be established through superficial praise. They eventually express their feelings by crying out, “I’m lonely.” This is an honest expression that beneath all their efforts to gain attention and validation lies a deep desire to be accepted for who they truly are.

Their failure to build sincere connections leaves No-Face increasingly withdrawn and unsure of themselves. It reinforces the idea that esteem needs cannot be fulfilled solely through external means without healthy recognition and meaningful emotional bonds, one’s sense of identity remains fragile and unstable.

Through *Chihiro* kindness and calm presence, she becomes a guide who leads No-Face through a journey of purification, returning them to a state of balance and harmony just as Shinto teaches that impurity can be cleansed through ritual and moral clarity.

After meeting *Wa* or harmony and after experiencing inner transformation, No-Face finally finds wa, or harmony, when they are welcomed into the home of Zeniba, the kind witch. Unlike the chaotic and greedy environment of the bathhouse, Zeniba’s cottage is peaceful and full of warmth. No-Face chooses to stay there, not because of power or wealth, but because they feel emotionally safe and accepted.

Living with Zeniba symbolizes a new beginning for No-Face to have a life guided by calm, balance, and genuine connection. This moment shows that No-Face has completed their journey from spiritual impurity (*tsumi*) to purification (*misogi*) and has now entered a space of lasting harmony in line with Shinto values.



Figure 7. Zeniba warmly compliments No-Face by saying, “You’re a big help.”
Timestamp: 1:50:44

In *Spirited Away*, this is evident when *Zeniba* warmly compliments No-Face by saying, “You’re a big help.”

Small but sincere gesture and words allows No-Face to feel seen, respected, and emotionally safe marking a shift from the artificial admiration they once sought with gold to a genuine connection built on kindness and acceptance. This moment not only fulfils their esteem needs but also serves as a gateway to their inner *wa* or Harmony, where No-Face begins to understand his identity beyond external validation.



Figure 8. No-Face finds comfort and purpose at Zeniba's house
Timestamp: 1.53.01

At *Zeniba's* home, No-Face finds comfort and purpose, willingly assisting her and learning new things in a nurturing environment. They are no longer a restless spirit following *Chihiro* but instead becomes a being with a clear sense of belonging and direction. Through this transformation, No-Face embodies the essence of harmony in the *Shinto* concept after met the purification process by discovering they own potential, engaging in meaningful contributions, and becoming a better version of themselves within a space that supports they growth, called peak experiences. Happens rare and bring meaningful moments when a person feels deeply connected to life and reality. During these moments, individuals often experience overwhelm emotions such as happiness, amazement, and a sense of wonder, as they view the world with complete openness and clarity.

4.4.1 The Concept of Kami in No-Face and Other Characters that Supported No-Face's Journey

The Original Japanese title *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* (*Spirited Away*) includes the term *kamikakushi*, which literally means “hidden by the gods,” referring to ancient Japanese folklore about people who vanish into the spirit world. This phrase refers to an old Japanese folklore belief in which individuals who disrespect spiritual boundaries or wander into sacred places are taken away by the *kami*, or spirits. This idea sets the foundation for the spiritual world in the film, which is heavily influenced by Shinto beliefs. Shintoism, the indigenous religion of Japan, holds that *kami* reside in all aspects of nature and daily life, and these *kami* can take many forms, from natural elements to ancestral spirits.

Within this context, many of the characters in *Spirited Away* can be interpreted as manifestations of *kami* who both embody and safeguard natural and spiritual forces. These characters not only reflect the Shinto concept of the divine but also serve as narrative agents who support or challenge No-Face's transformation throughout the story.

For instance, *Yubaba* and her twin sister *Zeniba*, while often interpreted as witches, also function as spiritual entities who control balance and duality within the spirit world. *Yubaba* rules the bathhouse with strict authority, representing greed and excess, whereas *Zeniba* offers hospitality and gentleness, embodying forgiveness and healing. It is in *Zeniba*'s humble home that No-Face begins to heal and find peace, suggesting that her nurturing presence as a benevolent *kami* helps them realign with harmony (*wa*).

No-Face themselves is an ambiguous spirit whose form and behavior evolve depending on their environment. Initially quiet and lonely, they become greedy and aggressive when exposed to the toxic materialism of the bathhouse. However, their true nature surfaces in the presence of genuine kindness and respect, especially at Zeniba's cottage. This transformation implies that No-Face, too, may be a spirit figure perhaps a lost or unrecognized one whose balance is restored through human connection and the rediscovery of self.

Together, these characters illustrate that *kami* are not distant gods but are intimately connected to the spiritual and emotional state of the world around them. The film suggests that maintaining harmony with the *kami* and with nature itself requires humility, respect, and a deep appreciation of the unseen forces that sustain life. Through No-Face's journey and the guidance of these spirit-like characters, *Spirited Away* conveys a profound Shinto message: spiritual purity and personal transformation are possible when one lives in harmony with the sacred rhythms of nature and community.

This highlights the consequences of modernization on spiritual relationships with nature. Through these characters, the film not only portrays *kami* as sacred entities but also emphasizes their dependence on human reverence for nature and spirituality.

4.5 The Relationship between No-Face and *Chihiro* in Shinto Elements

No-Face undergoes a character transformation that closely reflects *Shinto* teachings. They cannot be classified purely as an antagonist or protagonist, but rather as a reflection of their environment and relationships. This characterization

is strengthened through Murphy & Wright, (2005) which emphasizes the responses of other characters, actions, and dialogue, emphasizes the importance of the reactions and interactions of other characters in understanding the main character.

As the protagonist, *Chihiro* embarks on a complex spiritual journey. Her development illustrates a transformation from ignorance to spiritual and emotional awareness. Through a comparative lens, both No-Face's and *Chihiro's* transformations represent a *misogi* process that leads No-Face toward *wa*.

4.6 Symbolism in the Film and Reflections of Shinto

Numerous visual elements in *Spirited Away* reflect *Shinto* symbolism, such as *torii* gates, the bathhouse, and nature spirits. These symbols are not mere cultural decorations but hold profound spiritual meaning in the narrative. The *torii* gate signifies the entrance to the sacred realm, marking the boundary between the human and spirit worlds. The *torii* gates appearing at the beginning and end of the film symbolize the transition between the human and spirit realms, Gartlan, 2024. reinforcing the notion that *Chihiro's* journey is a transformative spiritual experience. The bathhouse serves as a transitional space where spirits are purified, aligning with the sacred function of *Shinto* shrines. The bathhouse, as the film's central setting, represents a sacred space where beings are cleansed and healed from *tsumi*. This emphasizes the importance of balance between the spiritual and human worlds.

4.7 Discussion

The character of No-Face (*Kaonashi*) in *Spirited Away* is a rich product of cultural layering that draws heavily from both Japanese mythology and Shinto beliefs. The director design and narrative function reflect a synthesis of *yokai* characteristics and spiritual symbolism, which collectively contribute to their mysterious yet compelling presence in the film.

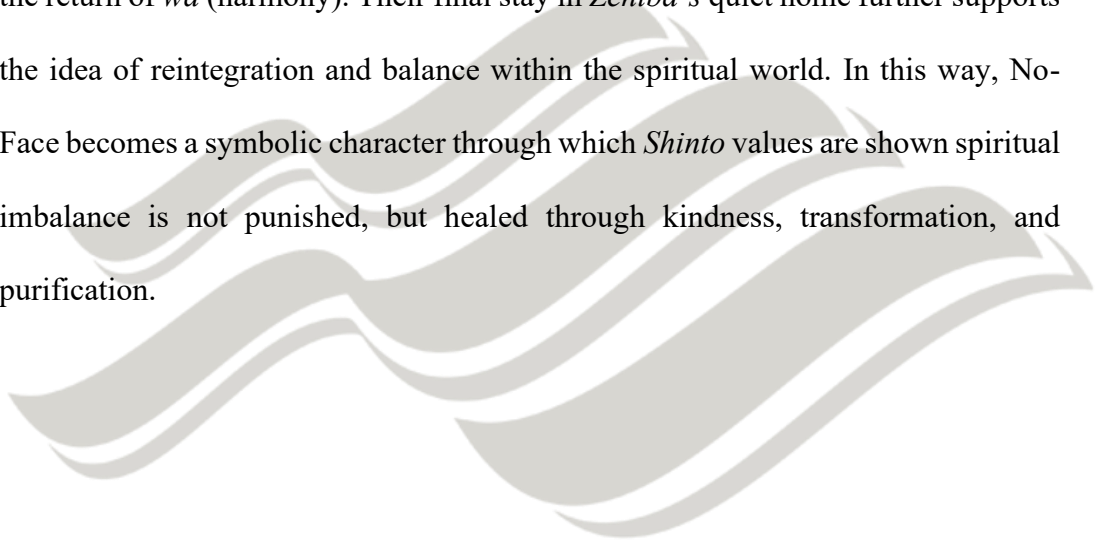
Firstly, the influence of *yokai* and spirits from Japanese mythology can be clearly seen in No-Face's unclear form and behavior. Similar to many *yokai*, No-Face does not fit into a simple category they are neither completely good nor entirely evil. This kind of moral ambiguity is common in traditional Japanese spirits, who often react to the emotions and intentions of the people around them.

No-Face's ability to take on the characteristics of other becoming aggressive when surrounded by greed, and calm when shown kindness shows how these spirits often reflect or amplify human feelings and the social environment. No-Face's see-through, mask-like face and shapeless body also remind us of traditional shape-shifting spirits, highlighting their position between the physical and spiritual worlds.

Secondly, *Shinto* beliefs, especially the concepts of *kami*, *tsumi*, and *misogi*, strongly influence No-Face's role in the story. They act like a spirit that has lost balance due to *tsumi*, a type of spiritual impurity often caused by excessive desire or the disruption of natural harmony. When they absorb the greed and chaos inside the bathhouse, they turn into a distorted figure of overindulgence. Their violent

transformation is not truly evil, but a result of spiritual imbalance, which matches the *Shinto* belief that impurity affects both the self and the environment.

The turning point happens when *Chihiro* takes No-Face out of the bathhouse, leading them toward *misogi*, a ritual of purification through movement and change. This brings them back to a peaceful and harmless state, representing the return of *wa* (harmony). Their final stay in *Zeniba*'s quiet home further supports the idea of reintegration and balance within the spiritual world. In this way, No-Face becomes a symbolic character through which *Shinto* values are shown spiritual imbalance is not punished, but healed through kindness, transformation, and purification.



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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

In this study, the writer has explored how Japanese mythology and Shinto beliefs especially the ideas of *kami* (spiritual beings), *tsumi* (impurity or mistake), *misogi* (cleansing or purification), and *wa* (harmony) influence the character No-Face in *Spirited Away*. The findings show that No-Face is more than just a quiet spirit.

No-Face appears as a lonely and quiet spirit, showing signs of *tsumi*, or being spiritually out of balance. When No-Face enters the bathhouse, their greedy and wild behavior shows that they are missing basic emotional needs, like friendship, love, and a sense of belonging. As the writer mentioned before, in the story, after they calmed down and welcomed by *Zeniba*, No-Face becomes more peaceful.

This change shows the idea of *misogi*, or spiritual cleansing. In the end, they find a quiet place where they can live peacefully, which reflects the *Shinto* value of *wa*, or living in balance and peace. Thus, No-Face is not merely an imaginative character from *Hayao Miyazaki* himself. their portrayal in *Spirited Away* bridges ancient folklore with modern anxieties, making him a culturally resonant and psychologically complex embodiment of myth and meaning.

Miyazaki (2003) emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional culture amidst modern technology. states that it is unwise to confine all traditional

elements within a narrow folk-culture context. In an age dominated by advanced technology and fragile gadgets, children are increasingly becoming disconnected from their cultural roots. Therefore, it is essential to educate them about the richness and value of our traditions.

No-Face is not merely a fictional character, but a blend figure shaped by profound Japanese cultural beliefs. Reider (2005) stated, they can be interpreted as representing a lonely young individual in Japan who struggles to establish meaningful relationships. Their portrayal in *Spirited Away* effectively bridges traditional Japanese mythology with contemporary social concerns, rendering them a culturally significant and psychologically complex symbol of myth and meaning.

Although No-Face is entirely a product of *Miyazaki's* creative imagination, they do not directly fit into any traditional folk tales. At the same time, No-Face appears to reflect the image of *Tatarigami*, a curse spirit known for wearing a mask that cannot be removed except at death (Takahashi 1997, 89). The mask is shown cracking vertically in the middle, transforming into a large mouth with sharp teeth similar to how No-Face.

Overall, this study shows that No-Face is not just a strange character, but a symbol of an entity who is lost and trying to find connection and meaning. Their journey can be seen as similar to what many people go through in real life when they feel left out or unsure of themselves. Not simply a spirit creature, but a powerful metaphor for the emotional and spiritual journey of a person one who, like many of us, struggles with isolation, longing, and the search for meaning in an overwhelming world.

5.2. Suggestions

After analyzing the character of No-Face through the lens of Japanese mythology, *Shinto* beliefs, the writer would like to offer several suggestions, as follows:

5.2.1 Suggestions for The Readers

This research hopes to help readers see that *Spirited Away* is more than just a fantasy animation; it carries deep spiritual and psychological messages. The character of No-Face encourages us to reflect on identity, inner emptiness, and the importance of connection and balance. By paying attention to these deeper meanings, readers can appreciate that animated films are not only for entertainment but also offer valuable lessons. This study invites readers to watch such films with a more thoughtful and symbolic mindset, noticing the small details that reveal bigger ideas.

5.2.2 Suggestions for Future Researchers

Future researchers might consider exploring other characters in *Spirited Away* or other *Studio Ghibli* films using similar approaches. One interesting topic could be the role of names (*namae*) in *Shinto* belief, as names in Japanese culture are closely linked to identity, power, and spiritual transformation. By examining names more closely, researchers might uncover the origins or true nature of each character, such as *Haku*, whose background has already been mentioned by the writer. Although the film was released some time ago, its rich setting and meaningful story continue to offer a strong foundation for analysis. In addition,

further research into how purification rituals and Shinto values are visually expressed in the storytelling may provide valuable new insights.

5.2.3 Suggestions for the English Letters Study Program

This study considers how films like *Spirited Away* may offer a meaningful way to encourage both critical thinking and cultural awareness in students. In today's digital era, many young learners including the writer and their friends naturally into visual storytelling. For us, watching a beautifully animated film often feels more engaging and emotionally resonant than reading long, dense texts. As *Hayao Miyazaki* once said, "We must try to expand the boundaries of our imagination," and his films encourage exactly like that. They do more than just entertain they invite us to feel, to reflect, and to step into worlds shaped by different values, emotions, and traditions.

Animated films often carry layered meanings through their symbols, character journeys, and cultural settings, that point invite students not only to analyze stories but also to feel them and to reflect on values, emotions, and traditions that may be different from their own. This makes them a compelling gateway not only into Japanese culture, but also into broader human experiences that connect people across time and place. By combining emotional connection with intellectual exploration, this approach to learning becomes something more than academic it becomes memorable. And perhaps, that's what makes it most effective an approach encourages not only intellectual growth but also emotional engagement, resulting in a deeper and more lasting understanding.

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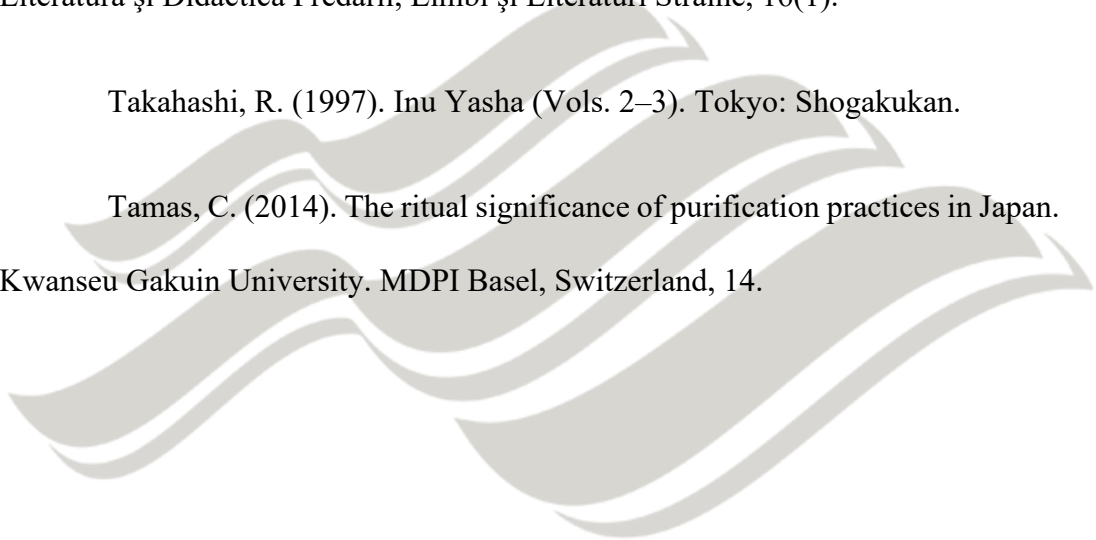
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