

# Japanese art in the movie spirited away by miyazaki hayao

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Name: Tutor: Course: Date: Japanese Art in the Movie Spirited Away by Miyazaki Hayao The movie Spited Away can be described as a lesson in Japanese tradition, culture and religion. Released in 2001, the movie is an adventure of a young ten-year-old girl, Chihiro, who realizes that she has to save her family from a spell. The movie begins with Chihiro's family moving to a new neighborhood. The family is not familiar with the area, and they make a wrong turn, a move that changes their lives forever. The family realizes that they are in a supernatural realm, controlled by spirits. Chihiro's parents turn into pigs, and she is the only one who can save them. The rest of the movie involves Chihiro's efforts as she tries to survive in the world of the spirits as a human.

In the supernatural world of the gods and spirits, Chihiro matures a lot and she learns more about herself and the world. She encounters the good and the evil in the spirit world. She is able to make friends with people different from her. Miyazaki has displayed a lot of Japanese tradition and culture in the movie. Through the movie, he has been able to display different elements of Japanese religion and art, especially concept art and the native religion of Shinto. Shinto is a native belief in Japan. The various elements and principles of the Shinto way of life have become so prevalent, that they have become part of the Japanese culture and lifestyle.

It is not surprising then, that the movie contains several aspects of this religion, which are present in different ways. The fundamental principle of the Shinto religion is that gods, men, and nature originate from the same parents. The religion holds the idea that people are godlike since they

originated from the gods. Everything in nature has a spirit. Many spirits are present in the movie, and Chihiro and her parents are in their world when they make that wrong turn. The earth spirits live below the rocks and ores, and they protect the people (Herbert 13). Chihiro and her family see such rock shrines, which have been abandoned and destroyed by people, as they look for artificial ways of finding happiness through the creation of amusement parks. People have the same blood that flows through other natural things including rivers, mountains, trees, and land among others (Herbert 7).

Since everything is a creation of god, then everything contains the sacredness of god, and all should respect it. Plants, animals, mountains, and rivers are part of nature and people have lived with them for a long time, such that they have established a connection. In the movie, Chihiro is able to interact with the spirits in their world, although she is human. She interacts with them through work and she sacrifices and dedicates her time to them. The spirits and humans can live together if there is respect between them. When they first meet, Haku seems to think that he knows Chihiro, although he cannot remember where they met. After some time, Haku, who is a spirit, remembers how he saved Chihiro from being driven by the river currents. All creatures depend on each other and they influence their environment (Yamakage 29-30).

Humans have failed to respect the spirits by disregarding them and polluting the environment, which is their place of abode. Because of this, there is a tense relationship between the humans and the spirits. The Shinto religion

recognizes that some divine beings are wicked by nature. These deities are responsible for all the evil and sin as well as pollution and disasters (Herbert 12). Shrines are an important element of Shinto. They represent the residing places of the gods and the spirits. People use the shrines as places of worship. Chihiro notices stone shrines on the roads, and asks her mother what they are, to which her mother replies that there are places where the spirits live.

This answer may seem obvious to Chihiro and her family, but it might seem different to someone who does not understand Shinto. The spirits have a residing place, and many people in Japan have shrines even in their homes. This is because the people recognize the presence of the spirits wherever they are. The movie shows a change in people's beliefs concerning their traditions and religious practice. People and spirits are supposed to coexist. People are supposed to show their respect for nature since everything has a spirit.

However, people no longer seem to have any respect for nature, and they no longer revere the spirits. This has led to them destroying the residences of the spirits. In the movie, Haku has to contend with the fact that he can no longer return to his river because humans have put development structures in it. Chihiro's father observes that the spirit realm where they find themselves was an amusement park.

Humans have destroyed the natural things, and in the process, the spirits, and they have chosen to put up artificial structures. Because the spirits no

longer have a home with the humans, they find Yuya, where they can rest from the humans, and where humans are not welcome. The Japanese hold their traditions closely, and they believe that some of their myths are a representation of the wisdom of the sages (Herbert 196). The movie is full of Japanese folklore. For instance, the Japanese believed that a type of spirit from China would take people away to the spirit world, and they would return to the human world with no recollection of where they had been. They believed that these spirits were arrogant and that they punished disrespectful and greedy humans (Gomes 6). The movie has captured this, beginning from the instance that Chihiro's parents are transformed to pigs when they find food in a restaurant and eat it. The spirits punish Chihiro, who they consider disrespectful at the time, as she labors in the bathhouse.

Purification is an important element in Shinto. Yubaba tricks Chihiro into trading her name, and she loses sense of who she is. This follows the traditional belief in folklore where people would lose their memory and forget their experiences. Haku gave up his name and his memories to Yubaba when he came to the spirit world so that he could learn her magic.

In the end, both Haku and Chihiro end up remembering their real identities. All things become polluted and they have to be purified. The bathhouse is a central place in the movie. The fact that Chihiro works there is symbolic because it means that she is in need of purification. Different things make people evil and polluted, and they have to cleanse themselves. In the beginning of the movie, Chihiro is grumpy and sad because she has left her

neighborhood. This changes during the course of the movie, as she faces challenges, which transform her.

In the end, she is no longer grumpy, but she is looking forward to her new life. All sorts of creatures come for purification at the bathhouse. The stink spirit purifies itself and he is cleansed of all sorts of things. The process of purification makes the spirit return to its true form.

This follows the Shinto belief concerning purification. Purification is important in helping one to see things as they truly are. Before the process, a person has a polluted mind and heart and this prevents him from seeing things properly. After purification, a person goes through a renewal process and he becomes free from the dirty thoughts. Most of the animations in the movie are hand drawn. The movie used watercolor pencil sketches and concept art. The idea of using hand drawn images instead of computer-generated images makes the movie distinct, especially from many of the animations in western countries. The computer-generated images produce three-dimensional images.

Producers choose to use the images to avoid the laborious process of hand drawn images. Although there is a high level of technology in Japan, many animation artists in the country choose to use hand drawn images.

Computer-generated graphics have other advantages other than saving on costs and time.

For instance, they tend to produce sharper images, which are popular with many people. However, they cannot replicate the essence of hand drawn

images, which have a softer look. There have been different traditional art forms used in Japan. People could not access most of the traditional art forms produced because they were of the imperial class. However, this changed with the developed of Ukiyo-e. Many artists get their influence from Ukiyo-e, which is a traditional Japanese art form.

Works done using this form are two-dimensional and they use watercolor. Most of the artists using this traditional art form showed the images of beautiful women with long faces. The artists did not accentuate the eyes and the lips, only choosing to depict them using minimal features. This is similar to the sketches and drawings done by Miyazaki in the film.

Ukiyo-e represents a world of grief, where people have not received enlightenment. As such, they tend to get what they crave for, and this causes them pain and suffering. This art form, which means a floating world, illustrated scenes such as beautiful women, scenes from the theater, and strong sumo wrestler.

They are a dual representation of “ fantasy as pleasure and reality as grief” (Suzuki 10). Through the film, Miyazaki represents the reality in the world, which is ridden with materialism. Eventually, this materialism only leads to suffering, especially when the person does not get what he or she desires. The interest of the Japanese artist to consider the spiritual aspect when painting and doing other artwork shows the degree at which spiritualism has become ingrained with their culture. Their understanding of spiritualism because of their native beliefs has made it possible for them to combine

different religious beliefs. The concept of desire as a source of suffering is a Buddhist principle. The artist shows that people do not have to endure suffering if they do not have desires. The use of hand drawn images in contrast with computer-generated graphics enhances the realistic nature of the images.

The two images below represent Ukiyo-e art and Miyazaki's art in spirited away. The woman in the Ukiyo-e painting is beautiful but sad. The picture in Miyazaki's painting represents greed, which seems to blind people from what is important. Chihiro's parents are busy indulging in the free food, and they do not seem concerned about their daughter. An Ukiyo-e painting of a beautiful woman (Retrieved from <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/SpiritedAway/jcPix/image011.jpg>) An

image of Yubaba in Spirited Away (Retrieved from <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/SpiritedAway/jcPix/image013.jpg>) Miyazaki's movie has depicted Japanese religion and culture, especially in the art used.

It has reflected many Shinto beliefs. The presence of spirits in nature is a fundamental concept in Shinto. The movie has especially captured the river spirits, and it has noted the presence of other spirits such as those living in the rocks. The movie has captured the changing perspective of humans with their spirit world and with their environment. The people have become less concerned about their environment. They are no longer interested in revering and protecting the residence of the spirits. This has changed the relationship between humanity and the spirit world, as it has caused much



tension between them. The use of hand drawn images with minimal use of computer graphics in the film has distinguished from other animation films.

There is a lot of influence from the traditional art form of Ukiyo-e, in both the technical and symbolic aspect. The religious element is present in the art form, especially in showing the grief in reality, realized after the age of enlightenment. Works Cited: Boyd, W.

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