

Comparative Analysis of Paranoia in Shakespeare's Macbeth and Miyazaki's Chihiro

Sanjukta Chakraborty, Amity University, India
Varun Gulati, University of Delhi, India
Deepali Sharma, Amity University, India

The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This article examines paranoia in Miyazaki's *Chihiro* from *Spirited Away* and in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* through the lens of Foucault's Psychoanalytic theories as described by Kelly (2020). Foucault's exploration of paranoia and fear's dominion as a function of identity provides a nuanced lens through which to dissect the trajectories of *Macbeth* and *Chihiro* in the realms of the respective texts. The interplay between paranoia, identity, and agency unfolds as a salient thematic thread that underscores the dichotomous ways in which fear can shape destinies. While *Macbeth*'s tragic spiral illustrates the perilous consequences of unchecked paranoia, *Chihiro*'s liberation through confrontation demonstrates the potential for fear to serve as a transformative force, fostering personal growth and emancipation from its stifling grasp. By unpacking the nuanced dynamics of anxiety in the lives of these characters, this study contributes to the scholarship on character development, psychology, and literary analysis. The article underscores the significance of Foucault's psychoanalytic perspective in elucidating the transformative potential and destructive consequences of paranoia in narrative fiction.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Miyazaki, *Spirited Away*, Psychoanalysis

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Introduction

Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* is widely regarded as a literary masterpiece, skilfully exploring a broad spectrum of human motivations and emotions. Through characters like Lady Macbeth, who embodies greed, and Macbeth, who exemplifies pride and ambition, Shakespeare illustrates the dangers of extreme emotions. Within this complex narrative, *Macbeth* also serves as a profound exploration of paranoia. Similarly, Hayao Miyazaki's 2001 film *Spirited Away* masterfully blends realism and fantasy to depict a young girl named Chihiro's adventures in a Japanese bathhouse for supernatural beings. Separated from her parents and compelled to work to free her family, Chihiro is initially terrified of the strange creatures around her. This fear and paranoia not only captivates her but also immerses the audience in the fantastical setting.

Both *Macbeth* and *Spirited Away* explore paranoia as an overwhelming emotion that can stifle freedom and growth. Macbeth's hesitation to murder King Duncan, Lady Macbeth's ensuing trauma, and Chihiro's fear of being alone all illustrate how paranoia can imprison individuals within their circumstances. However, while Macbeth and Lady Macbeth allow their anxieties to consume them, leading to their ultimate downfall, Chihiro confronts her fears, enabling her to escape her predicament. On the other hand, the Japanese title of Miyazaki's film, *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, which roughly translates to 'Sen and Chihiro's Spiriting Away', implies divine retribution and highlights the fear and awe Chihiro feels towards these supernatural forces. This reflects a young girl's natural anxiety in the face of angered gods.

Paranoia manifests in various forms across these works. Macbeth fears the consequences of his actions and the prophecy of his demise. Lady Macbeth descends into paranoia and psychosis after having a hand in the horrific deed. Chihiro is afraid of moving to a new city and the bathhouse's powerful creatures. However, here, we can see that the younger character contends with her fears differently from her Shakespearean counterparts. While Macbeth resorts to eliminating potential threats, and Lady Macbeth ultimately takes her life, in stark contrast, Chihiro faces her anxieties, grows stronger, and triumphs over them.

By confronting her fears and paranoias, Chihiro diminishes its hold on her, emerging from the supernatural bathhouse as a more mature individual. The choices made by Shakespeare's characters and Miyazaki's young protagonist highlight the extremes of human nature and our responses to paranoia, ambition, and fear.

Methodology

Shakespeare's renowned work *Macbeth* stands as a quintessential masterpiece, resonating widely among literary enthusiasts. The characters within this play unveil profound psychological intricacies, unparalleled in literary history. This complexity has spurred a substantial body of scholarly discourse, particularly of a psychoanalytical nature, focusing on distinct characters, with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth taking center stage (Khikani, 2023; Elenany, 2015; Churchill, 2015; Blum, 1986). Khikani (2023) suggests that human behavior, akin to animal instinct, often exhibits inherent aggressiveness driven by primal instincts. Conversely, Elenany (2015) emphasizes probing the motivations, goals, and aspirations that evolve from the early stages of human psyche development, making a psychoanalytical lens imperative for unveiling the characters' unconscious facets.

The diversity of human responses to adversity remains a central theme. Churchill (2015) posits, however, that Thane and Lady Macbeth's experiences of paranoia, fear and repentance lean toward a state of annihilation rather than transformation. In contrast, Blum (1986) underscores the indispensability of psychoanalytic insights in excavating both primitive and sophisticated dimensions of the human psyche. *Macbeth* entwines a tapestry of human intricacies, inviting meticulous psychoanalytical scrutiny to fathom the depths of character motivations and responses to the challenges they confront. The scholarly discourse underscored by previous scholars accentuates the value of psychoanalysis in deciphering the intricate facets of human nature portrayed within the play.

Similarly, Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* holds a unique position in Japanese film, boasting an extensive discourse attached to its name. Each character within the story brings a grounded reality, helping the audience identify with them, even if they are supernatural creatures from a different culture. This has led to numerous works on the psychoanalytical aspect of Miyazaki's characters. Through her psychoanalytical study, Athira (2023) asserts that although Chihiro begins the story as a young, immature girl, the struggles she faces build her character, transforming her into a confident and independent young adult. Sun (2020) supports this, adding that Chihiro's parents failed to provide the support she needed, neglecting her loneliness after leaving her friends behind. This is also reflected in Yubaba's controlling and dominating parenting style (Papastavros, 2021). Since there is a clear question of identity and the development of ideologies in *Spirited Away*, it becomes imperative to use a psychoanalytical approach to comprehend the myriad of emotions driving every action and decision of the characters in both the stories (Swale, 2015; Brockmann, 2008).

Given these considerations, it becomes a compelling pursuit and an intellectual imperative to discern the intricate nuances of paranoia shaping the protagonists' experiences in both the literary and cinematic works. To achieve a profound comprehension of these fear-induced attributes, a more exhaustive exploration is warranted, particularly through an analytical lens inspired by Kelly's (2020) interpretation of Foucault's psychoanalytical framework. This framework holds the potential to unveil a deeper understanding of paranoia's multifaceted impacts, encompassing both its detrimental and transformative dimensions.

The critical psychoanalytic approach, as elucidated by Foucault within Kelly's (2020) discourse, serves as a potent tool for dissecting the distinct attributes and consequential decisions enacted by the characters across both the theatrical and cinematic versions. Employing this approach allows for an incisive exploration of the underlying traits and intricate personalities that drive the characters' pivotal actions. Indeed, this method elucidates the 'psychological reality' (Hossain, 2017) of fictional characters, enabling a comprehensive deconstruction of their motivations and aspirations.

While Foucault's stance on Freudian Psychoanalytical Criticism may be ambivalent, he contends that integrating 'existential phenomenology' can elucidate 'certain dimensions of the human experience' (Kelly, 2020). This approach theorizes that characters within a narrative possess latent unconscious states motivating their overt actions (Sollod, 2008). Consequently, a scholarly examination of these characters through Foucault's psychoanalysis can unravel the profound interplay between paranoia, ambition, and fear.

Thus, a meticulous critical inquiry into the protagonists' motivations, decisions, and psychological underpinnings within both the theatrical play and cinematic masterpiece can

elucidate not only the destructive ramifications of paranoia but also the indispensable role of courage in navigating dire circumstances. This article offers an opportunity to glean insights into the human psyche, discerning the interplay between internal fears and outward actions, ultimately enriching our comprehension of human behavior complexities and the tenacity required to confront and overcome adversity.

Discussion

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is one of his most widely read works, showcasing characters with unprecedented psychological complexity. Consequently, several scholars have conducted psychoanalytical examinations of the play, focusing particularly on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth (Khikani, 2023; Elenany, 2015; Churchill, 2015; Blum, 1986). Khikani (2023) suggests that humans, driven by instinct and primal drives, exhibit aggressive tendencies that can escalate. Conversely, Elenany (2015) contends that understanding the motivations, goals, and aspirations developed from a young age is crucial, necessitating a psychoanalytical approach to study the unconscious mind of the characters. Churchill (2015) argues that the fears, paranoia and repentance experienced by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth became annihilatory rather than transformative. Blum (1986) emphasizes the importance of psychoanalytic insights in uncovering both the primitive and advanced aspects of the human psyche. Together, these analyses underscore the value of psychoanalysis in exploring the depths of Shakespeare's characters.

On the other hand, Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* holds a distinguished place within the realm of Japanese cinematography, characterized by its intricate narrative and richly layered themes. This cinematic masterpiece is renowned not only for its visual splendor but also for its deep, multifaceted discourse that resonates with viewers across cultural boundaries. Each character in this animated feature contributes to a profound sense of realism and relatability, despite their existence within a fantastical and supernatural context. Miyazaki's exceptional storytelling prowess allows audiences to form a deep connection with these characters, who, while rooted in a distinctly Japanese cultural milieu, evoke universal emotions and experiences.

The dynamic interplay of these elements has sparked extensive scholarly interest, particularly in the psychoanalytical dimensions of the characters and their development. Miyazaki's ability to weave complex personas into the narrative fabric of *Spirited Away* invites a wide range of interpretations and analyses. Scholars have delved into the psychological underpinnings of the characters, exploring themes such as identity, transformation, and the interplay between fear and paranoia.

For instance, Chihiro, the young protagonist, embarks on a journey of self-discovery that is fraught with anxiety and uncertainty. Her initial trepidation gradually transforms into resilience and empowerment, mirroring the psychoanalytic concept of individuation. The various supernatural entities she encounters, each with their own distinct personalities and symbolic significance, further enrich the narrative tapestry, providing fertile ground for psychoanalytical exploration. The film's depiction of the bathhouse as a microcosm of society, complete with its own hierarchies and power dynamics, offers insights into human behavior and social structures. The interactions between characters, such as Chihiro's evolving relationship with the enigmatic Haku and the complex figure of Yubaba, the bathhouse's formidable proprietor, highlight the intricate web of motivations, desires, and fears that drive human actions. This rich, multidimensional approach to character and

narrative has positioned *Spirited Away* as a seminal work in the field of animation studies. It stands as a testament to Miyazaki's genius, reflecting his deep understanding of human psychology and his ability to infuse his storytelling with layers of meaning that resonate with audiences and scholars alike. The scholarly explorations focused on the psychoanalytical aspects of Miyazaki's characters continue to expand, contributing to a greater appreciation of the intricate artistry and profound themes embedded within this animated classic.

In an insightful psychoanalytical exploration, Athira (2023) delves into the transformative arc of Chihiro's character in *Spirited Away*. Initially depicted as a young and somewhat immature girl, Chihiro's journey through a series of arduous trials serves as an alchemical crucible, ultimately forging her into a poised and self-reliant young adult. This metamorphosis highlights the profound impact of adversity in shaping one's character and fortitude. Athira's (2023) analysis underscores how the challenges Chihiro faces are not merely obstacles but essential components of her developmental journey, contributing to her emotional and psychological growth.

This perspective is echoed by Sun (2020), who discerns a poignant undercurrent within Chihiro's familial dynamics. Sun (2020) contends that the root of Chihiro's initial immaturity lies in her parents' inadvertent failure to provide the requisite emotional support during her time of need. Rather than empathetically acknowledging her sense of isolation upon departing from her long-time friends, Chihiro's parents manifest an unintended neglect, setting the stage for Chihiro's solitary odyssey. This lack of parental support is a crucial factor in Chihiro's initial state of helplessness and confusion as she navigates the unfamiliar and often daunting world of the supernatural bathhouse.

Further, this mirroring of Chihiro's parental experiences is extrapolated through the prism of Yubaba's authoritarian parenting style. Yubaba, the bathhouse's domineering proprietor, exercises a controlling influence over Chihiro and the other workers, reflecting a style of parenting that is characterized by rigid control and a lack of nurturing. Papastavros (2021) offers insights into this dynamic, noting that Yubaba's oppressive control serves as a foil to Chihiro's growth, highlighting the contrast between oppressive authority and the liberating potential of self-discovery and resilience.

Yubaba's authoritarian approach starkly contrasts with the nurturing guidance that Chihiro eventually finds within herself and through her interactions with other more benevolent characters. This dichotomy underscores the film's exploration of different parental archetypes and their effects on a child's development. The contrast between Yubaba's harshness and Chihiro's eventual self-reliance illuminates the resilience that can emerge from adversity, reinforcing the idea that overcoming significant challenges can lead to profound personal growth.

Chihiro's transformation is not only a personal victory but also a commentary on the broader human experience. Her journey through the fantastical world of the bathhouse, fraught with trials and tribulations, mirrors the universal process of growing up and finding one's place in the world. Through this lens, Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* becomes a rich text for psychoanalytical exploration, offering insights into the dynamics of familial relationships, the impact of adversity, and the journey toward self-discovery and empowerment.

Fear, according to Foucault, establishes a precarious dynamic wherein an individual's perception of self-worth becomes entwined with their capacity to accommodate and succumb

to fear's dominion (Kelly, 2020). In this vein, paranoia, another form of fear, thus evolves from a mere emotional response into a defining facet of one's identity, becoming a pernicious force. Macbeth's tragic trajectory attests to the corrosive nature of such fear-induced identity entanglement. His dread of the prophetic revelations, coupled with the allure of power, sets in motion a series of transgressions that not only lead to his moral decline but also cement his inexorable fate. Macbeth's inability to reconcile his paranoia with his burgeoning ambition drives him further into the abyss, ultimately culminating in his downfall. His fearful submission to the prophecy becomes the fulcrum upon which his actions pivot, inexorably leading to his tragic demise.

Conversely, Miyazaki's portrayal of Chihiro in *Spirited Away* presents an illuminating counterpoint to Foucault's premise. Chihiro's journey unfolds as a narrative of paranoia transformed into empowerment through her tenacious defiance of its grasp. The spectral realm of the bathhouse, where Chihiro finds herself, symbolizes the domain of her fears, both tangible and intangible. Initially, her hesitations and anxieties hold her captive within this ethereal plane. However, her transformative evolution is catalyzed by an astute realization: the dominion of paranoia can only hold as long as she allows it to shape her identity.

Chihiro's resolve to confront her fears head-on, exemplified by her determined descent down the rotting stairs, serves as a pivotal turning point. This courageous confrontation enables her to reclaim agency over her narrative, breaking the shackles of fear's control over her. As she navigates the challenges of the bathhouse, Chihiro's character matures. Her journey is marked by acts of bravery and selflessness, such as her determination to save her parents and her interactions with the bathhouse's residents. These acts signify her growing resilience and the gradual erosion of her initial timidity. Chihiro's transformation is profound. From a frightened and uncertain child, she evolves into a confident and self-reliant individual. This metamorphosis underscores the theme that true courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to confront and overcome it. Her story contrasts sharply with Macbeth's, as Chihiro's ability to transcend her fears leads to empowerment and growth, while Macbeth's submission to his fears leads to destruction and despair.

Foucault's exploration of fear's dominion as a function of identity provides a nuanced lens through which to dissect the trajectories of both Macbeth and Chihiro. The interplay between paranoia, identity, and agency unfolds as a salient thematic thread, underscoring the dichotomous ways in which fear can shape destinies. Macbeth's tragic spiral illustrates the perilous consequences of fear's unchecked control, leading to his moral and eventual physical demise. In stark contrast, Chihiro's liberation through confrontation demonstrates the potential for fear to serve as a transformative force, fostering personal growth and emancipation from its stifling grasp.

Through Foucault's perspective, we see that fear, when allowed to define one's identity, can become an all-consuming force, leading to actions and consequences that perpetuate a cycle of despair and downfall. However, when confronted and managed, fear can become a catalyst for growth, resilience, and empowerment. The contrasting outcomes of Macbeth and Chihiro's narratives illustrate the complex and multifaceted nature of paranoia, highlighting the profound impact it has on the human psyche and the trajectories of their lives.

The dichotomy between Macbeth and Chihiro offers a compelling study in the contrasting trajectories that fear can engender. Macbeth's fearful capitulation ultimately seals his fate, an embodiment of Foucault's assertion of fear's power when permitted to define one's identity.

In contrast, Chihiro's emancipation from fear's grasp underscores the potential for resilience and personal growth when fear is acknowledged, confronted, and ultimately overcome. Her narrative serves as an eloquent testament to the transformative potency that lies in embracing fear as a catalyst for change.

The narrative tapestry of *Spirited Away* is intricately woven with threads of identity formation, ideological maturation, and moral development, all orchestrated through the prism of Chihiro's tumultuous journey. This confluence of psychological nuances and existential dilemmas necessitates a psychoanalytical vantage point to unearth the intricate tapestry of emotions underpinning every consequential action and pivotal decision. In this way, *Spirited Away* stands as a remarkable testament to Miyazaki's unparalleled ability to interweave narrative depth with a rich palette of human experience. The scholarly works of Swale (2015) and Brockmann (2008), who articulate the profound relevance of the psychoanalytical approach in unravelling the multi-dimensional layers of *Spirited Away*, illuminate this thematic tapestry. Their analyses highlight how Miyazaki's creation invites us to traverse the labyrinthine corridors of the human psyche through the transformative journey of Chihiro and her supernatural companions.

Swale (2015) delves into the psychoanalytical undercurrents of Chihiro's character, suggesting that her initial paranoia and uncertainty serve as catalysts for profound personal growth and resilience. By confronting her fears head-on, Chihiro evolves from a timid and vulnerable child into a courageous and self-assured young adult. This transformation is not merely a journey of survival but a testament to the human spirit's capacity to transcend adversity and emerge stronger. In a similar vein, Brockmann (2008) explores how *Spirited Away* encapsulates Miyazaki's thematic exploration of identity and moral development amidst fantastical and surreal circumstances. The bathhouse, a surreal realm where spirits converge, becomes a metaphorical crucible wherein Chihiro confronts her deepest fears and navigates the complexities of identity formation.

Together, these scholarly analyses underscore the profound impact of Miyazaki's creation, inviting readers and viewers alike to delve deeper into the profound themes of fear, identity, and personal growth as illuminated through the transformative odyssey of Chihiro and her supernatural companions.

Conclusion

Paranoia as a potent and destructive force serves as a poignant common thread interwoven between Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*. Both works intricately delve into the multifaceted dimensions of paranoia, elucidating its corrosive influence on characters' psyches and the transformative potential inherent in confronting and overcoming such fears.

At the beginning of their respective narratives, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and Chihiro stand as embodiments of the human psyche confronted with the paralyzing grip of fear. Each protagonist is thrust into an unfamiliar realm, their prior certainties and comforts giving way to an unsettling and unknown landscape. This shared beginning, characterized by trepidation and vulnerability, sets the stage for a profound exploration of how paranoia manifests and exerts its influence.

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare portrays fear as a catalyst for the protagonist's descent into moral decay. Propelled by ambition and the prophetic instigation of the three witches, Macbeth becomes ensnared in a web of fear. As he grapples with the harrowing implications of the witches' predictions, his paranoia metastasizes, catalyzing a series of nefarious actions driven by his desperate quest to thwart the ominous prophecies. The initial fear of the unknown and the potential loss of power manifests as a self-fulfilling prophecy, culminating in an inescapable cycle of paranoia, violence, and moral decay. Lady Macbeth, too, becomes a victim of fear, her initial ruthless ambition giving way to overwhelming guilt and psychological torment, leading to her tragic demise.

Similarly, Chihiro's entry into the enigmatic world of *Spirited Away* marks the commencement of her odyssey into the realm of fear. The sudden and bewildering transformation of her parents, the unfamiliarity of the bathhouse, and the presence of formidable supernatural beings collectively contribute to her profound sense of vulnerability and paranoia. Unlike Macbeth, Chihiro's narrative trajectory diverges as she embarks on a transformative journey of self-discovery, courage, and resilience. Her willingness to confront her fears head-on engenders a process of empowerment and enlightenment. As she negotiates her fears with unwavering resolve, Chihiro navigates her path toward emotional growth and self-actualization.

While the characters' initial encounters with fear and paranoia are comparable, the divergent paths they traverse in response to fear's influence are emblematic of the thematic nuances delineated by Shakespeare and Miyazaki. Macbeth succumbs to his fears, allowing them to transform him into a tyrant consumed by paranoia and brutality. In stark contrast, Chihiro emerges as an embodiment of resilience, embodying the potential for growth through the deliberate confrontation and transcendence of fear.

Foucault's exploration of paranoia's dominion as a function of identity provides a nuanced lens through which to dissect the trajectories of Macbeth and Chihiro. The interplay between fear, paranoia, and agency unfolds as a salient thematic thread that underscores the dichotomous ways in which fear can shape destinies. Fear, as Foucault suggests, intertwines an individual's self-worth with their submission to fear's dominion. This turns paranoia into a destructive force when it becomes integral to one's identity. Macbeth's tragic path exemplifies this, driven by dread of prophecy and lust for power, leading to moral decline and his demise. In contrast, Miyazaki's Chihiro defies fear's grip, her journey evolving from paranoia to empowerment. The bathhouse represents her fears, and her transformation begins when she acknowledges fear's hold on her identity. Chihiro's resolution to face her fears marks her turning point. She regains narrative agency, unshackling from fear's control.

The dichotomy of Macbeth and Chihiro reveals how fear's influence can diverge. Macbeth's surrender seals his fate, illustrating Foucault's concept of fear defining identity. Conversely, Chihiro's liberation highlights resilience through confronting and surmounting fear. Her story exemplifies the power in embracing fear for transformative change. The divergent responses to paranoia by Macbeth and Chihiro underscore the profound thematic explorations of both Shakespeare and Miyazaki, offering rich insights into the complex interplay between paranoia, fear and agency.

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Contact email: sanjukta.chakraborty@s.amity.edu