

The Role of Love and Destiny in Your Name (2016)

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82-278 Japanese Film and Literature: Art of Storytelling

Throughout the second half of the course, we've focused on more recent works like "Café Lumière" and have read works of radical authors like Yoshimoto Banana. *Your Name (2016) (Kimi no Na Wa)* is a Japanese *animated* romantic fantasy drama film written and directed by Makoto Shinkai. It tells the story of a high school boy in Tokyo and a high school girl in rural Japan who swap bodies. A deep theme running through Japanese culture is the complex intertwining of "love and destiny". *Your Name* elaborates on the impact of pure love and fate to bring together people despite all odds. My thesis is, Japanese culture follows the notion that what is fated will definitely happen, and if one strongly desires something, the universe conspires to give it to them. The movie exemplifies this theme by focusing on Musubi, the transiency of human life and the odds of people meeting in busy everyday Tokyo.

Musubi, in Japanese tradition, is associated with the Shinto religion. It is used to refer to the proliferation of life and spirit. As Mitsuha's Grandmother mentions "*Tying thread is Musubi. Connecting people is Musubi. The flow of time is Musubi. These are all God's powers.*" *Kimi No Na Wa* invokes the red thread of fate in the Mitsuha's braided hair tie. Taki later clips it around his wrist after Itomori is destroyed. In the opening, the red cord is shown to wrap the protagonists together. "*The two people connected by the red thread are destined lovers, regardless of place, time, or circumstances. This magical cord may stretch or tangle, but never break.*" On top of the mountain, the red thread briefly flashes as Taki and Mitsuha pass each other, and the two can feel

the pull of fate connecting them. In essence, whenever the two are thinking of each other, the thread makes its appearance. The cord symbolizes the unbreakable bond between the two soulmates and the power of faith.

Death is another prevalent theme, as Taki travelled back in time to prevent the Itomori comet crash casualties to save Mitsuha. The mortality of human life is exemplified. However, though death is the permanent demise of a person, through the power of love and determination Taki was able to save Mitsuha and meet her after five years. This once again shows that nothing can conquer destiny and love.

The chances of two people meeting in the busy streets of Tokyo after five years is minimal, especially given the population density of the metropolitan city. This is aside from the fact that Taki and Mitsuha hadn't seen each other or heard from each other in years. However, when they were in each other's vicinity, their hearts guided them on the right path to collide with their soulmates.

Thus, through the concept of *Musubi*, mortality and pure chance, *Kimi no Na Wa* successfully shows the importance of belief, passion and destiny in one's life. Referring to my thesis, the universe allowed Taki to travel back in time and events played out in just the right way for the meeting of the two soulmates in Tokyo. This goes to show that the universe does indeed work in favor of will and destiny.