

## Environmentalism and The Animated Landscape in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke

### Introduction

This chapter will explore the animated landscape in relation to Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Kaze no Tani no Naushika) (1984) and Princess Mononoke (Mononoke-hime) (1997), which were written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki. These films will be shown to be significant because they provide a mechanism for provoking and contributing to debates concerning environmentalism.<sup>1</sup> At present environmental debates, especially those concerning climate change, have become a contentious and politically charged realm (Chomsky, 2013; Latour, 2013). Moreover, in the second decade of the twenty first century, advanced technological and industrial societies are subject to environmental risks that have global consequences (Beck, 1992). For instance, the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear reactor accident which occurred in Fukushima, Japan in March 2011 had wide reaching impact in terms of environmental pollution (Yoneyama, 2013). Documentary films such as An Inconvenient Truth (dir. Davis Guggenheim, 2006), The Polar Explorer (dir. Mark Terry, 2011) and Trashed (dir. Candida Brady, 2013) tend to highlight environmental issues through the use of detailed investigation and presentation of rational arguments. In contrast, Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke enlarge our perspective of environmental issues on an emotional level through representing the beauty and majesty of the landscape and by illuminating the interconnections between the human and non-human realm. Indeed this chapter will suggest that these films may leave audiences with memorable experiences through the

representation of the beauty, fragility and powerful aspects of nature. Nonetheless, these films do not simply call for an outright rejection of science, technology and industrialisation. Furthermore, they do not uncritically idealise or offer sentimental representations of the landscape. Instead, this chapter will indicate that these films can be interpreted as an attempt to find ways of using technology wisely and establishing communal concern for environmental issues.

The existing scholarly literature surrounding the anime films of Hayao Miyazaki has focused on themes such as mythology, history and the representation of gender. For instance, John A Tucker (2003) and Susan J. Bigelow (2009) provide in-depth studies of the mythological dimensions to Princess Mononoke as a historical drama. Meanwhile Susan J Napier provides an overview of a range of anime films, paying particular attention to the representation of female characters in Miyazaki films. Meanwhile in The Anime Art of Hayao Miyazaki (2006), Dani Cavallaro also provides insight into the production processes involved in anime film and provides a thematic overview of Miyazaki's oeuvre. Building on this existing scholarship, this chapter aims to provide a detailed account of Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke in relation to representations of the landscape through the specific qualities of anime as a medium.

To make the discussion manageable, this chapter will focus on three specific areas in relation to the animated landscape. Firstly, it will explore the ways in which these films draw upon a range sources including Shinto, Buddhism, Taoism, Greek mythology and folk tales. Secondly, it will indicate that these films are notable because they do not simply dismiss technology on the basis of the impact it has upon the landscape, in terms of the depletion and degradation of natural resources. Instead these films offer a more nuanced and complex representations of technology and the

landscape. Therefore, this chapter will go on to suggest that these films raise the issue of finding ways to use technology which complement the patterns and forces of emergence, growth, decay and renewal found in nature. Thirdly, the chapter will explore the ways in which these films represent the landscape as the site of awe and wonder through imagery of majestic forests, mountains which are lush and teeming with diverse life forms. By rendering the landscape as majestic and the site of biological diversity and ecological importance, Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke encourage audiences to care about environmental concerns.<sup>2</sup> Before proceeding further, it is important to briefly outline these two films in order to prepare the ground for the subsequent discussion of the animated landscape in relation to environmentalism. Initially, Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind was an epic manga production which spanned seven volumes that were produced between 1982 and 1994. The film version Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind was produced by Top Craft Studios and released in 1984. However, Jonathan Clements explains that when Nausicaä was transposed for the global market in 1986, it was made into a ‘...shorter, bowlderised video release called Warriors of the Wind’ (2013, 180). Of note is that the shorter version of Nausicaä provides an optimistic resolution to the narrative in comparison to the darker apocalyptic vision of the manga. One explanation for the changes that were made to the film version is that they aimed to maximise the appeal of the film to global audiences and maximise revenues from box office and subsequent video and DVD releases.<sup>3</sup>

The opening sequence of Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind features a *Media Res* which invites the audience to figure out how the situation which is represented has occurred.<sup>4</sup> The opening sequence is set 1000 years in the future, at a time when industrialised civilisation has been destroyed by a cataclysmic war. Toxins

have been released into the environment and this has enraged a species of giant insects known as the Ohmu. After rampaging through the environment, the Ohmu and humans now live in a state of conflict. The back story is told through the representation of a tapestry featuring mythological images of fearsome monsters, great battles and the use of voice-over.<sup>5</sup> During the opening sequence, a series of tracking shots of the tapestry are intersected by flashbacks which portray giant demonic like figures (known as God Warriors in the film) which tower over a fiery apocalyptic landscape of burning skyscrapers and ruined buildings. The film then moves on to the representation of a post-apocalyptic era which has re-configured the landmass and oceans of the Earth. In this post-apocalyptic era there are a series of small nations including the Valley of the Wind which are surrounded by huge areas of toxic, un-inhabitable land.

Princess Mononoke was released in 1997 in Japan by Dentsu Inc (1997) and in the US by Miramax films (1999). According to East Asian philosophy scholar and historian, John A Tucker the film ‘...remains one of the highest grossing domestic films in Japanese history’ (2003, 65). However, Tucker also recounts that Princess Mononoke was also one of the most expensive Japanese animated films to produce (costing circa \$30 million). The film is set in a period of Japanese history known as the Muromachi era (1392-1573), when Japan made contact with the Portuguese and firearms were imported into the country. The narrative of the film concerns the tensions between iron production (for such items as firearms) and how this impacts upon natural resources, the habitat of different species and the landscape. The main setting of the film is the Tataro Iron Works, which has been built on land that was formerly a forest. The production of iron is shown to impact upon the environment through the usage of raw materials such as sand and wood. Tensions arise between

human civilisation and the environment when Lady Eboshi, leader of the Iron Works, shoots a wild boar (Nago) who was the guardian of the forest.

After he is shot, Nago becomes an enraged demon (Tatari kami) who rampages through the forest.<sup>6</sup> Notably, Nago has become a vengeful spirit after coming into conflict with human society and industrial production processes. Eventually Nago reaches the land of the Emishi people where he is fatally wounded by Prince Ashitaka. However, during the skirmish Ashitaka's arm becomes infected with black ooze which symbolises rage, hatred and aggression.<sup>7</sup> As Nago is dying, the wise woman of the village reverentially bows to Nago and explains that he will receive funeral rites and a proper burial ground. Despite the wise-woman's reverence, Nago continues to be spiteful towards human beings and curses them due to the suffering he has experienced. Later at a village gathering to discuss Ashitaka's fate, the wise woman explains that an iron ball was found in Nago's body and this is what caused him to suffer and become enraged. Now that Ashitaka has become infected with this hate, he must go on a journey to find out the source of Nago's suffering in order to find a possible cure. Mayumi, Soloman and Chang explain that 'a curse by the Tatari represents a mythical belief of the Japanese that the forest is full of gods who occupy a superior position to humans, and that when humans are aggressive against the forest the forest god tortures humans in return' (2005, 4).

It is also important to consider different definitions of the terms 'animation' and 'anime', because Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke, represent the landscape through this specific medium. As film scholar Jonathan Clements (2013) points out, Japanese animation has a long and varied history. Prior to the twentieth century other terms such as 'senga' (line art), 'kuga' (flip pictures) and 'manga-eiga' (cartoon film) were used to refer to animated films. However,

during the twentieth century ‘anime’ was used to refer to animated films that were mainly produced in Japan. More recently, the term ‘anime’ refers to Japanese animation in the contemporary era of global media consumption. Importantly, Clement states that anime is not a genre; rather the term refers to a medium. Shinobu Price (2001) also contends that Westerners often conflate Japanese animation with children’s cartoons which are associated with simplified storylines and formulaic happy endings. On this basis, cartoons are perceived as an inferior art form in comparison to other forms of visual culture. Countering these assumptions, Price states that when:

The term cartoon is applied to the world of Japanese animation, a great injustice is made. Partaking in this mind-set is just another form of ethnocentrism, looking at a different culture through your own culturally specific set of values and definitions (2001, 154).

Another way of interpreting the term ‘animation’ is that it refers to ontological processes and this is also pertinent to the analysis of Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke. The Oxford English Dictionary has several entries relating to the word ‘animation’ which indicate that the term relates to a sense of being animate, alive or the representations of things as alive through the ‘creation of an appearance of movement from still images’([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)). Taking these definitions of animation into account, Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke represent the landscape through a series of still images that are animated; yet they also represent the landscape in a way that suggests that it is animated in an ontological sense. Indeed the representation of humans, animals, other life forms and the landscape in these films operates via sequence and movement between still images, which create the illusion of a dynamic environment infused with

life. Discussing definitions of environmental animation in film, Media, Culture and Communication scholar Nicole Starosielski, observes that what is significant about environmental animation is that it can create ‘...imperceptible and imagined worlds’ (2011, 148). Going further, Starosielski remarks that ‘with its ability to contort the space and time of representation, animation can more easily visualize imagined environmental change’ (2011, 150). Hence this chapter will indicate that these films invite us to consider the landscape as animated, as alive and part of an interdependent web of life.

### Animation and Environmentalism

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke can also be regarded in the context of other popular animated films that also feature environmental themes such as Ferngully The Last Rainforest (1992, dir. Bill Kroyer) and Wall-e (2008, dir. Andrew Stanton). Whilst these popular Hollywood films have environmental themes, they are categorised as family action adventures that are mainly aimed towards children, since they contain scenes of mild peril and tend to have clear divisions between good and evil. For example, in Ferngully the Last Rainforest clear battle lines are drawn between the spirit of destruction (Hexxus) and the environment. Furthermore the tensions between industrialised civilisation and the natural environment are chiefly centred upon the romantic relationship between a fairy called Crysta and Zak, who works for the logging company who are chopping down trees in the rainforest. Wall-e can also be interpreted as a morality tale about the environmental impact resulting from mass production and consumption. Wall-e also centres upon a romantic relationship between a robot from Earth and an extra-

terrestrial robot named Eve. In contrast, Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke can be interpreted at a number of levels and cannot be understood as just films that are aimed towards children. Instead, as film scholar Keiko McDonald (2006) points out, a strong message found in films of Miyazaki is to retain a childlike wonder and openness towards nature. Moreover Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke provide nuanced narratives which do not pivot around romantic relationships. Princess Mononoke also challenges the conventional narrative resolutions that are usually offered by popular Hollywood films. <sup>8</sup> For instance, talking about the narrative of Princess Mononoke John Grant states that:

Although the movie's resolution is in fact perfectly satisfying from a philosophical viewpoint, it does not concur with the demand by Western commercial movie makers that there must always be a happy-ever-after ending (2001, 171).

There are also differences in terms of the aesthetic qualities of popular Hollywood animation films and the oeuvre of Miyazaki. For animated films made by Disney, DreamWorks Animation SKG and Pixar are predominantly made using computer-generated imagery, which features strong outlines and flat blocks of bright colour. In contrast, Miyazaki's anime films seem to be aligned more with the codes and conventions of painted and hand-drawn images. For instance, commenting on the detailed hand-drawn qualities of Princess Mononoke, John Grant remarks that Miyazaki '...personally altered or touched up' around 80,000 cels (2001, 161). Moreover, images of the landscape in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke are rendered through the use of perspective and subtle use of light and shade, evoking the qualities of eighteenth and nineteenth century European



landscape painting. The association of Miyazaki's films with visual arts is further reinforced by the lavish book publications that detail the preparatory sketches and watercolour paintings he produces for anime films such as Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Miyazaki, 2011).

### Shinto, Animism and Kami

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke both feature Shinto symbolism and mythology. In Japan, Shinto has a long history and relates to matters of daily life such as social welfare, the importance of community and purification rituals. A major aspect of Shinto is animism, whereby natural phenomena are regarded as life forms or expressions of divinity. Discussing the importance of animism in Japanese culture, C. Scott Littleton states that 'the reverence shown by the Japanese toward nature stems from Shinto's most ancient and fundamental belief that spirit-beings govern the natural world' (2002, 6). The meanings associated with spirit-beings and animism has implications in terms of how the non-human realm is perceived and valued. According to Shinto cosmology, throughout the universe there are various kami or spirits that can take numerous forms such as animals, humans and even natural phenomena such as mountains or forests. The Shinto approach to kami is evident in rituals and in ecological views towards the natural world. Discussing the role of kami in Shinto, Littleton states that they '...are believed to animate every object in the universe – from prominent geographical sites, such as Mount Fuji to the souls of deceased children' (2002, 23). In Shinto mythology, kami is a vitalism an animating force that permeates everything (the human and the non-human realm). From this perspective the landscape can be perceived as the site of wonder, awe and

enchantment. However, film scholar Susan Bigelow points out that 'Miyazaki invokes Shinto myth, not as literal belief but as a metaphoric opening to the dimension of mystery and wonder that may offer clues on how to live a human life' (2009, 61).

Animism continues to play an important part in contemporary Japanese culture particularly in terms of conceptualising the relationships between technology and living beings. For instance, scientists in Japan offer services to animals used in research, a practice known as *kuyou* and in some rural communities there are also memorial services to venerate the insects that have died during the farming season. Even inanimate objects have memorial services, for instance, there is the practice of *Hari-Kuyo*, an annual memorial for needles (Boyd, 2014). A further point to consider is that nature is a socially and culturally constructed concept that changes over time. In Western culture nature may be thought of as a pure, wild or untainted realm. However, Casper Bruun Jensen and Anders Blok remark that Japanese conceptions of nature are pragmatic and are based on the inter-relationships between life and death.

The work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) also provides useful insight into the rapacious impulses of capitalist production and consumption. These issues are particularly pertinent to the representations of the landscape in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* and *Princess Mononoke*. In particular, Heidegger's work can be used to provide a powerful critique of a controlling technological mind-set and the impact this has upon the environment. In *The Question Concerning Technology* (1993), Heidegger discusses human being and our relationship to Being (the ground of existence). Heidegger notes that technology has a long historical trajectory in terms of finding ways to manipulate and master the world around us. Yet Heidegger does not offer an outright rejection of technology.

Instead Heidegger argues that technology becomes problematic when it is used as a mechanism to dominate and master Being.

In Nausicaä, the villagers in the Valley of the Wind are represented as living a medieval type lifestyle, as agricultural workers and power is provided by windmills. In his study of Heidegger, Graham Parkes (2003) makes some significant points about technology that are also relevant to the representation of the Valley of the Wind. Parkes suggests that there are cultural crossovers between Heidegger's view of technology and Daoist (Taoist) literature. In particular, Parkes outlines the ways in which concepts of wu-wei and you-wei relate to technology. Providing further exploration of these terms Taoist scholar John Lash (2002) remarks that wu-wei is a concept that refers to non-action, yielding or flowing with natural forces. Therefore wu-wei refers to technologically related activities that are aligned with natural processes such as windmills. Conversely, you-wei refers to those technologically related activities that disrupt natural forces such as using petroleum for fuel, which has environmental implications in terms of its extraction and usage since it releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. In Nausicaä, the images that represent the destruction of a former technologically advanced era could be interpreted as an environmental warning of the dangers of you-wei, whereas the Valley of the Wind is represented as a place where humans utilise technology in a way that does not unduly disrupt natural processes. The representation of the demise of advanced industrial civilisation, environmental pollution and toxicity in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind has particular resonance in the light of the Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011. Indeed the Fukushima disaster highlighted the risks involved in the production of nuclear energy and the vulnerability of advanced technological processes, in relation to powerful natural forces such as earthquakes and tsunamis. The tensions between

industrial production and the landscape are also explored in Princess Mononoke through the representation of the depletion of natural resources during the production of iron.

### The Forest

The forest is a major location in Princess Mononoke, since this is where the main sites of conflict occur between humans, other species and nature. Through the use of voice over, the opening sequence outlines the ways in which the forest was once the realm of the gods. However, the narrative explains that over time things have changed since most of the great forests have been destroyed by human intervention. The tensions between other life forms and humans is highlighted in a scene in which Lady Eboshi and a group of workers are transporting food supplies back to Iron Town, when they are attacked by wolves. The scene takes place during dark stormy weather and in an environment where the trees are blackened stumps, both of which seem to underscore the tensions between iron production and the impact this has upon the landscape. Whilst on his journey to find the source of Nago's rage, Ashitaka comes across some of the workers who have been injured after the attack by wolves.

Ashitaka carries the men through a forest but they are scared when they see small white childlike creatures called Kodama. Ashitaka tells the men that the kodama is a tree spirit which brings good luck and symbolises the health and vitality of the forest. Ashitaka considers the forest as a magical environment and this is emphasised by horizontal panning shots of verdant green land, clean water and butterflies. However, the men from Iron Town tell Ashitaka that the forest is not safe because it is haunted by gods and demons. As the narrative unfolds, Ashitaka continues to be represented

as a character that is attuned to Shinto beliefs about kami and the spiritual dimension of the landscape. In contrast, Lady Eboshi and the workers from Iron Town can be interpreted as representing a belief in technological progress rather than ancient cosmologies such as Shinto.

Considering the importance of the forest in Princess Mononoke, it is worthwhile exploring the meanings and practices surrounding the forest in Japanese culture and society. Environmental scholars, Hiromi Kobori and Richard B Primarck (2003) outline the ways in which Japan has an incredible diversity of species and ecological systems. Kobori and Primarck explain that the term Satoyama refers to Japanese forests, rice paddies, fields and streams. In the past the Satoyama environment was closely intertwined with the social and cultural practices of Japanese life, as those who lived in the villages used the area to grow food and obtain clean water. Kobori and Primarck explain that during the Edo period (1603-1867) the Satoyama was managed through human intervention through the cultivation of the environment. For instance, 'the constant collection of leaves and wood kept the forest open and prevented succession to large trees and dense shade' (Kobori and Primarck, 2003, 4). This openness of the environment was important because dense shade from overgrown trees prevented sunlight from reaching ground level and this impacted upon plant and animal life. So when villagers cultivated the area sunlight could reach ground level and this encouraged a diverse range of plant and animal life to thrive. As Kobori and Primarck contend 'though not "natural" in the usual sense...the Satoyama helped to maintain a rich biodiversity in the Japanese countryside' (2003, 4). Cycles of renewal were also taken into account as trees were harvested in 15-20 year periods. Yet forest environments in Japan changed as new modes of farming came into use such as the use of commercially produced fertilisers. Kobori and Primarck claim that

when farmers started to use chemical fertilisers this killed ‘...many insect and aquatic species’ (2003, 6). Village farmers were also unable to make a living selling timber because their production processes were labour intensive and expensive. Furthermore wood was no longer the primary energy source and was replaced by coal, oil and electricity. Over time the Satoyama environment changed, trees were not cut down and the forests became overgrown. In addition, many of the Satoyama environments were transformed into industrial and residential areas. These ecological aspects of forests in Japan remain an important and contested terrain. Bruun Jensen and Blok also explain that ‘...the environmentalism manifested in attempts to preserve scenic and communal shrine landscapes does not oppose human activities against some pristine “wild nature”. Rather, human intervention is valued here as a source of ecological cultivation...’ (2013, 100). Similarly Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke do not overly sentimentalise or simply glorify the natural environment; instead they address the tensions arising from human intervention and ecological concerns.

#### Toxicity, Purification and Renewal

In Greek mythology, *The Odyssey* by Homer features the character Nausicaä who heals Odysseus after he was shipwrecked.<sup>9</sup> However, in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, the character Nausicaä discovers the healing and restorative processes of nature. The toxins that were produced when industrialised civilisation was destroyed take the form of airborne spores and if humans are exposed to them they become sick and die. Even Nausicaä’s father King Jihl becomes infected by these environmental toxins and becomes weak and bedridden. When her father becomes ill, Nausicaä

begins to carefully collect and study the flora and fauna of the Valley of the Wind and the surrounding lands, to understand how the toxins function in the hope of finding a cure for them.<sup>10</sup> Nausicaä's study of nature is reminiscent of the Japanese microbiologist, Minakata Kumagusu (1867-1941) who was a prolific and renowned writer who published numerous essays in the journal *Nature*. Kumagusu raised concerns about the preservation of the ecological system within forests which were threatened when the Japanese Government instigated a Shrine Merger programme (1906-1910). He also argued for the importance of fungi to the forest eco-system. Writing about the work of Kumagusu, Hiroyo Hasegawa (2012) points out that he was: '... particularly eager to collect nonflowering plants that reproduce by spores instead of seeds, such as moss, ferns and algae, as well as fungi'.

Themes of purification and renewal are underscored further when Nausicaä attempts to rescue Asbel, the pilot of an aircraft from the toxic jungle.<sup>11</sup> During the rescue attempt, Nausicaä falls from her mehive glider and descends into the jungle. After falling through quicksand she lands in a pale blue landscape of underground caverns that represent a state of cleanliness and purification. After inspecting the caverns, she realises that the cycles of nature are purifying the environment. During a dialogue with Asbel she says:

The trees of the toxic jungle must have evolved to purify the earth of all the pollution that we humans have made. The trees absorb the pollution so it becomes inert then they die and petrify and crumble into purified sand. That's how these underground caverns must have formed and the insects evolved to guard this place.

Asbel considers the implications of Nausicaä's finding saying 'If that is true, then mankind is destined to go extinct. It will take centuries for these trees to cleanse the

earth. We can't survive with insects that long'. Yet Asbel swiftly moves towards a pragmatic and problem solving approach stating that 'somehow we are going to have to find a way to stop this toxic jungle from spreading'.

The differences between natural cycles of purification and renewal and human existence are also highlighted by Rachel Carson in Silent Spring. Carson discusses temporal cycles of the physical environment and life on earth stating that '... it has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings. To a large extent, the physical form and the habits of the earth's vegetation and its animal life have been moulded by the environment' (1962, 23). Carson goes on to compare the long history of the cycles of evolution and the ways in which different forms of life impact upon their environment. 'Considering the whole span of earthly time, the opposite effect, in which life actually modifies its surroundings, has been relatively slight' (1962, 23). However, writing in 1960s Carson warned that 'only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species-man-acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world' (1962, 23). Silent Spring particularly concerns the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides and the impact this has on the interdependent web of life. Carson points out that:

The thin layer of soil that forms a patchy covering over the continents controls our own existence and that of every other animal of the land. Without soil, land plants as we know them could not grow, and without plants no animals could survive (1962, 60).

The representation of toxicity in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind also relate to catastrophic environmental events in Japan. During the 1950s in the Minamata Bay area of Japan the Chisso Corporation, a chemical company, dumped methyl mercury into the bay over many years (McCurry, 2006). Consequently many life forms



became contaminated with toxins and when humans ate polluted fish they also became sick. Former fisherman Ogata Masato has written about the pollution of Minamata Bay and environmentalism. A key theme in Masato's writing is that it envisions '...people as being part of a complex and mutually supporting web of life' (Yoneyama, 2013, 579). More recently Masato has raised concerns about risk and nuclear power in Japan in the aftermath of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident which occurred in Fukushima. Extending these ideas further, arguably Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind could open up issues and debates surrounding toxicity in relation to environmental risks throughout the world.

#### The Landscape as the site of conflict

A key point identified by French sociologist Bruno Latour (2013) is that environmental experts have already produced data which verifies the human role in climate change. Yet crucially this data has not really resulted in fundamental changes in terms of environmental policies or behavioural practices. Instead of urgent calls to do something about climate change, we appear to be in a quagmire of different ideological conflicts, scepticism, inertia and even denial. However research indicates that humans are not simply rational agents who make objective decisions (Damasio, 2006; Ariely, 2010; Kahneman, 2013). Instead our rational capacities about issues such as environmentalism are often undercut by emotional impulses. Although Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke do not provide factual, rational or logically consistent arguments about environmental concerns they do attempt to engage audiences at an emotional level. Indeed these films invite audiences

to identify with different locations and characters in order to develop an emotional connection to the environmental concerns they represent.

The tensions between animism, technology and political power are highlighted in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke through the representation of different locations and key characters. For instance, in Nausicaä the character Kushana from the kingdom of Torumekia represents the priority given to economics and wealth creation at the expense of the environment. After the Torumekians invade the Valley of the Wind, Kushana addresses the villagers and claims that she has come to the valley to unify their different kingdoms and create prosperity. In addition, Kushana's approach to the environmental pollution which threatens their kingdoms is to 'put the toxic jungle to the torch'. Therefore Kushana is represented as a powerful political leader who offers promises of future prosperity and, at the same time, attempts to quell the fears of the villagers regarding the threat of pollution. However, Kushana's solution to pollution is to exercise power and control *over* the environment. Kushana's dominating approach to environmental concerns is contrasted with the character Obaba who is an old wise woman. After listening to Kushana's speech Obaba warns them that they must not 'touch the toxic jungle'. Instead Obaba issues a warning to the villagers stating that:

Since the origin of the toxic jungle 1,000 years ago people tried time and time again to burn it. But time and again, their attempts did nothing but enrage the Ohmu and swarms of them emerged from the jungle and stampeded across the lands.

From Obaba's perspective burning the toxic jungle is an act of aggression that will enrage the Ohmu and result in further destruction. However, Obaba's wisdom is undercut by Kushana's aide Kurotowa who dismisses her warning shouting 'silence

you old hag. We will have none of your raving'. Through Kurotowa's statement we learn that Obaba's insights are dismissed and devalued. In his study of fairy tales, Rudolf Meyer discusses the ways in which knowledge and the construction of meaning changes over time. For instance, Meyer notes that the emphasis placed on rational thought from the eighteenth century onwards shifted the value accorded to other forms of knowledge which were then devalued as mere superstition. Meyer states:

Of course animals could not speak or princes become bears or lions, and there were no dragons laying the country to waste and devouring maidens. Life had been placed on a reliable bourgeois footing where the world moved strictly in accordance with the laws of nature; this was the victory of modernity... (1997, 10).

There are similarities to this changing view of knowledge and the character of Obaba. For as Meyer contends, 'the deeper intuition, the ancient original heritage of spirit is mocked and dethroned where its inner nature is no longer understood' (1997, 21).

In Princess Mononoke, Lady Eboshi also represents the dethronement of ancient belief systems such as animism. From Lady Eboshi's perspective, Nago is considered 'a brainless pig'. Furthermore, Lady Eboshi tells Ashitaka that she wants to kill the spirit of the forest so that animals can be what she 'dumb again'. Once the animals are 'dumb again', Lady Eboshi intends to clear them from the surrounding landscape in order to produce more iron, and thereby increase the economic wealth of the population of Iron Town.

In Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind the tensions between human activities and the landscape are resolved through an emphasis on the purification processes of nature and personal sacrifice. In the end, Nausicaä dies and is reborn, which resonates with the idea that elements of the landscape operate in an on-going cycle of creation,

decay and renewal. Similarly when Lady Eboshi shoots and decapitates the forest spirit it emits black ooze which encompasses and destroys the landscape. When Ashitaka hands the severed head back to the forest spirit it falls on Iron Town totally destroying the forge, reducing it to rubble. However, the narrative ending in Princess Mononoke suggests that it is necessary to find ways of fostering economic wealth alongside the cultivation and preservation of the landscape. The forest spirit lifts Ashitaka's curse in recognition of his help in returning the severed head. Yet Ashitaka does not return to the Emishi people, rather he remains in Iron Town to work alongside the existing inhabitants to rebuild their future.

### Conclusion

This chapter has explored the anime films Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke in order to highlight debates around the relationships between the landscape, industrialisation and environmentalism. In doing so, the chapter emphasised the ways in which these films draw upon a range of mythological sources, which offer audiences a way of finding meaning about human life and our place in a wider interconnected web of ontological existence. Miyazaki's films do not present rational arguments about the management of the landscape nor do they engage in didactic political environmental messages. Instead Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke invite audiences to become enchanted with the natural world through the representation of the beauty and majesty of the landscape. Additionally, through identification and emotional involvement with the characters in these films, the audience is able to consider a range of different viewpoints that illustrate the challenges and tensions between industrialisation, technological

development and the environment. Indeed these films do not offer easy solutions to these tensions, nor do they simply sentimentalise nature or provide a nostalgic vision of pre-industrial society. In conclusion, as this chapter has indicated, the issues raised by Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke resonate with wider debates about the environment, climate change and risk. Overall these films attempt to establish a shared sense of concern for environmental issues, which are especially acute in the context of growing levels of production and consumption in contemporary capitalist culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Other anime films such as My Neighbour Totoro (dir. Miyazaki, 1988) and Pom Poko which was co-written and directed by Miyazaki and Isao Takahata (1994) also offer intriguing representations of the landscape whilst engaging with environmental themes.

<sup>2</sup> This chapter is underpinned by an acknowledgement that film audiences are not passive recipients of ideological messages and may interpret these films in a variety of ways (Hall, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> In the Nausicaä' manga the Ohmu are referred to as Aums. In his study of the Nausicaä manga, Japanese scholar Inaga Shigami points out that it has a much darker and disturbing ending than the film. 'In the comic version, not only Aums but all kinds of insects continue their massive suicidal march of migration, presaging the total environmental disaster called Daikaishō' (1999,117).

<sup>4</sup> *Media Res* is a Latin term for the middle of things and refers to a situation that has already started (Bordwell and Thompson, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> What is interesting is that in this opening sequence similarities can be drawn from tapestry (as a series of images and text that construct a narrative in an orderly sequence) and the medium of animation

<sup>6</sup> John A Tucker explains that the word Mononoke in the title of the film '...refers to wrathful, vengeful spirits, either of the living or the dead' (2003, p.73).

<sup>7</sup> Tucker (2003) also points out that the black ooze can be interpreted as symbolising nuclear fallout, which relates to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and the AIDS virus which was particularly prevalent in the 1990s when Princess Mononoke was initially released.

<sup>8</sup> Princess Mononoke also addresses themes of social exclusion at a sophisticated and nuanced level through representations of women from a former brothel and lepers who are workers in Iron Town which challenges the idea that it is merely a film that is aimed towards young children.

<sup>9</sup> Homer's epic poem is thought to have been written circa 800 BCE, a revised and reprinted version translated by Robert Fagles was published by Penguin (London and New York) 1997.

<sup>10</sup> These aspects to Nausicaä's character resonate with the Japanese text Mushi Mezuru Himegimi (which was written circa 1055-1185) The Young Lady Who Loves Insects. Michelle Osterfeld Li states that Mushi Mezuru Himegimi refers to '...the daughter of the Major Counselor and Inspector of The Provincial Administrations (Azechi no daimon) who defies social convention by collecting insects' (2009, p.156).

<sup>11</sup> Asbel is from a neighbouring country Pejite and his plane has been attacked by forces from the kingdom of Torumekia which illustrates the tensions between different human communities in the film and not just the relationships between humans, other species and the natural environment.