

Shōjo Savior: Princess Nausicaä, Ecological Pacifism, and The Green Gospel

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Abstract

In the distant future, a thousand years after "The Seven Days of Fire"—the holocaust that rapacious industrialization spawned—the earth is a wasteland of sterile deserts and toxic jungles that threaten the survival of the few remaining human beings. This is the world of Hayao Miyazaki's film, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. In this film, Miyazaki offers a vision of an alternative to the violent quest for dominion that has brought about this environmental degradation, through the struggle of the young princess of the Valley of the Wind, Nausicaä. As a messianic figure, I contend the *shōjo* Nausicaä offers a beneficial estrangement from common conceptions of the gospel and opens up the ecological significance of Christ's message of non-violence. Exploring the ecological and pacific aspects of the gospel through this figure, I argue, may provide a helpful lens for examining our own distorting visions in this age of war and environmental crisis.

[1] In the distant future, a thousand years after "The Seven Days of Fire"—the holocaust that rapacious industrialization spawned—the earth is a wasteland of sterile deserts and toxic jungles that threaten the survival of the few remaining human beings. This is the world of Hayao Miyazaki's film, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*.¹ In this film, Miyazaki offers a vision of an alternative to the violent quest for dominion that has brought about this environmental degradation, through the struggle of the young princess of the Valley of the Wind, Nausicaä. As Nausicaä struggles to lead her world into a sustainable future, she functions as a savior in this post-apocalyptic dystopia, forging a nonviolent path of love aimed at the restoration of harmony between warring human beings and the natural world. In the process, she also must wrestle with her own violence, and finally grasp the ultimate significance of seeking peace. Prophetically, she comes to understand that the natural world is no enemy to be fought against, but rather a benevolent force, which is slowly restoring the ruined earth. Her commitment to love and understanding—even to the point of death—transforms the very nature of the conflict around her and begins to dispel the distorting visions that have brought it about.

[2] In light of the film's plot and context, Nausicaä's *shōjo* identity is of crucial importance. Like many of Miyazaki's protagonists, Nausicaä is a young female, neither child nor adult—a so-called *shōjo* in Japanese anime and *manga* (comic books). The liminal status of the *shōjo* coupled with Miyazaki's alluring and yet 'estranging' visions of the world enables us, as Susan Napier writes, to "open up to the new possibilities of what the world could be."² As a messianic figure, I contend the *shōjo* Nausicaä offers a similarly beneficial estrangement from common conceptions of the gospel and opens up to the ecological significance of Christ's message of non-violence. Exploring the ecological and pacific aspects of the gospel through this figure, I argue, may provide a helpful lens for examining our own distorting visions in this age of war and environmental crisis.

1. Narrative Influences: East and West

[3] An amalgam of East and West, Nausicaä is a character global in both inspiration and reach—emblematic of Hayao Miyazaki's ability to weave new myths by from the fibers of the old. The character, Nausicaä, according to Miyazaki, combines elements of Homer's Phaeacian Princess of the same name and a Japanese heroine of the story "The Lady who Loved Insects" (*Mushi Meduru Hime-gimi*), from an eleventh century collection of tales, *Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari*.³

[4] Miyazaki's impression of Homer's Nausicaä came through an account of her in a translation of one of Bernard Evslin's handbooks of Greek mythology. From Evslin's description Miyazaki imagined a fearless, compassionate, beautiful, and spirited girl who delighted in nature and spurned convention—an image he admits being somewhat disappointed to see did not seem so splendidly displayed in the *Odyssey* itself.⁴ The heroine of the Japanese story, however, is the core of the Miyazaki's Nausicaä. This girl, as the story's title suggests, loves insects, something not only unusual but also socially unacceptable for a female of her class; her friends and parents are appalled by her fascination and fear for her future. Her response to their anxiety reveals a broad critique of human conventions with respect to nature: "People's love for such things as flowers and butterflies is indeed superficial and strange," she says. "It is when a man has sincerity and seeks the true nature [of things] that his spirit is good."⁵ Having sincerely sought the true nature of things, she concludes that people's revulsion at her love of caterpillars is childish; after all

she reasons, "Caterpillars turn into butterflies."⁶ Her embrace of nature leads her to regard "all the artificial ways of people [as] evil."⁷ Accordingly, she does not pluck her eyebrows or blacken her teeth as was customary for women of the Heian period, preferring instead their natural state. Miyazaki says that "even as a child I couldn't help but worry about the princess's fate" in an era defined by the conventions and taboos she so cavalierly flouted.⁸

[5] This insect-loving princess embodies the intelligence and wisdom that form the heart of Nausicaä's character. Nausicaä's essential insight is that the natural world is lovely, even when it is dangerous, awesome, and frightening. In *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, then, Miyazaki creates a space where the eccentricities of this princess who loved insects prove to be assets, as well as a space where his audience might be persuaded that an understanding of the true nature of things makes it possible to embrace what, at first, seems most frightful.

2. *The Spiritual Dimension of Miyazaki's Films*

[6] Miyazaki has expressed a general skepticism toward organized religion, pointing in one interview to the way that Shinto was used in Japan "to unify the country and . . . ended up inspiring many wars of aggression against [its] neighbors."⁹ Elsewhere he has said,

Dogma inevitably will find corruption, and I've certainly never made religion a basis for my films. My own religion, if you can call it that, has no practice, no Bible, no saints, only a desire to keep certain places and my own self as pure and holy as possible. That kind of spirituality is very important to me. Obviously it's an essential value that cannot help but manifest itself in my films.¹⁰

This view accords well with Lucy Wright's description of ancient 'natural' Shinto, which she suggests has "no dogma or moral doctrine, except for its tenets of worshipping and honouring the *kami* (gods), respect for nature, and the practice of purification rituals."¹¹ For this sort of spiritual practice, Miyazaki has expressed a "very warm appreciation."¹² Humble, non-dogmatic, non-violent spirituality that promotes the continued striving for purity in oneself and of one's place, then, is what we encounter in many of Miyazaki's film—a perspective that stands as a critique of organized religion and the evils it has often been used to underwrite. Accordingly, while there is little doubt that Shinto, Buddhist, and other religious themes find their way into his films,¹³ it is also clear that his films are meant to invite a reevaluation of these religious traditions, rather than simply to dramatize their dogma.

[7] Nausicaä is explicitly cast as a messianic figure that delivers humankind from self-destruction and restores a harmonious connection between the earth and its human inhabitants; she is a messiah whose gospel resonates with the animist¹⁴ notions that nature should be respected rather than blindly exploited or vilified. While Susan Napier notes that there is some precedent for such a messianic figure in Buddhism¹⁵ and though it is unlikely that Miyazaki intended Nausicaä as a Christ-figure *per se*, I will argue that understanding Nausicaä in this way is both natural and fruitful.

[8] Further, as I have suggested, the spirituality in Miyazaki's films lends itself to comparison with and reevaluation of religious traditions generally. In this sense, then, Miyazaki's messiah narrative invites a critical reflection on Christianity's messiah, estranging viewers enough from received notions of the Christian gospel to see how Jesus's non-violent love might be expressed in this age of violence and environmental devastation. In the Japanese context, Christine Hoff Kraemer argues that Miyazaki's films perform and destabilize cultural values, rather than simply affirming them.¹⁶ I would argue that Nausicaä, taken as a Christ-figure, destabilizes our own notions of the gospel in a way that enables us to see more clearly its implications for the contemporary society. To appreciate the precise ways Nausicaä achieves this destabilization and to see why she is so well suited to bear the image of Christ, it is necessary to consider briefly how she fits into the larger context of Japanese *shōjo* culture.

3. *Nausicaä: A Shōjo Savior*

[9] Young girls—so-called *shōjo* in Japanese anime and *manga* have figured prominently in many of Hayao Miyazaki's films (Satsuki and Mei in *Totoro*; Kiki, in *Kiki's Delivery Service*; Chihiro in *Spirited Away*; San in *Princess Mononoke*; Sophie in *Howl's Moving Castle*, and Nausicaä in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*). As Freda Freiberg notes, these heroines are "classic *shōjo* in their age, cuteness, love of animals and pets, and sexual innocence."¹⁷ And yet, according to Susan Napier, Miyazaki's *shōjo* are distinctive:

Unlike the classical *shōjo*, who is usually characterized by an ultrafemininity that is often passive or dreamy (or perhaps ditzy . . .), Miyazaki's girl characters are notably independent and active, courageously

confronting the variety of obstacles before them in a manner that might well be described as stereotypically masculine.¹⁸

The *shōjo* and the culture surrounding it is both complex and controversial and has prompted a great deal of scholarly attention.¹⁹ In what follows, I limit my focus to the 'liminal identity' of the *shōjo* and Miyazaki's particular—subversive—use of this figure in his films.

3.1 Miyazaki's Subversive *Shōjo*

[10] Addressing the threshold status of the *shōjo*, Tamae Prindle writes: "What fascinates the Japanese is that the *shōjo* nestle in a shallow lacuna between adulthood and childhood, power and powerlessness, awareness and innocence as well as masculinity and femininity."²⁰ Given their "amorphous identities" in contemporary Japan, these young girls "seem to embody the potential for unfettered change and excitement that is far less available to Japanese males, who are caught in a network of demanding workforce responsibilities."²¹ The *shōjo* attract our attention and identification,²² because they represent the potential for growth and the possibility for change; they represent a freedom from constraining social conventions.²³ Their youth and femininity disarm, allowing them to bear attributes that might otherwise be threatening. From the border region she occupies, the *shōjo* stands in a place where she can challenge our notions of power and gender. I say 'can' here, because it is clear that characters occupying this space do not necessarily exert any such pressure—one need only think of the many Disney heroines that simply entrench gender stereotypes.²⁴

[11] Miyazaki's *shōjo* in general, and Nausicaä in particular, however, do exert such pressure. They are strong, active, omni-competent and independent, displaying the stereotypical 'feminine' virtues such as care, sacrifice and forgiveness in ways that encourage us re-evaluate the stereotypical masculine ways of violence and force that have often characterized heroes. It isn't that these 'unfeminine' characteristics are altogether absent in his heroines: Nausicaä, in a burst of fury at her father's murder, slays five armed soldiers. Rather these signifiers of power are ultimately shown to be illegitimate by placing them within a character animated at the most fundamental level by empathy and love. As Miyazaki has said, "[W]e've reached a time when the male-oriented way of thinking is reaching a limit. The girl or woman has more flexibility. This is why a female point of view fits the current times."²⁵ Nevertheless, Miyazaki's heroines stretch the conventional idea of femininity to the point, perhaps, of redefining it altogether, proving the 'flexibility' of the feminine and leaving us with something new—neither stereotypically masculine nor feminine, but human in the most hopeful sense.

3.2 *Shōjo as Christ-Figure*

[12] The *shōjo*, as Miyazaki deploys it, proves especially well suited to function as a Christ figure. For my purposes, a character is a Christ-figure if a plausible case can be made for points of resonance between the character and the person and work of the Jesus of the gospels. Non-literal figures of Christ, such as Nausicaä, invite comparison with Christ without demanding identity in every detail.²⁶ Nausicaä differs both in age and gender from the Jesus of the gospel, and yet these differences, I argue, sharpen, rather than distort, our understanding of Jesus's message of liberation and love, revealing dimensions of the gospel familiarity obscures.

[13] Female Christ-figures in particular are apt for motivating such reflection. Eleanor McLaughlin suggests that restricting our imaginations to "*a merely male Jesus . . . [limits] the richness of the good news*" and in some sense, therefore, is unfaithful to the Gospel message itself.²⁷ Jesus's life both transcends and dismantles human categories, particularly traditional notions of strength in his adoption of what McLaughlin calls the "'women's ways' of love, sacrifice and forgiveness."²⁸ Female Christ-figures, then, may more adequately represent the gospel message, in particular, the notion that non-violent love can overcome anger and violence. The *shōjo* in Miyazaki's hands is similarly category transcending, inviting us to reevaluate our conceptions of power, our gender conventions, and, most prominently, our relationship to the natural world.

[14] This expectation shattering transcendence of the *shōjo* is vividly displayed in a scene in *Nausicaä* in which Obaba, the wise grandmother, relates the messianic prophecy Nausicaä will realize. As she speaks, Obaba refers to a bearded figure in blue robes surrounded by a field of gold depicted in an elaborate tapestry in the throne room. According to the prophecy, this person will come "to restore mankind's connection to the earth that was destroyed." Nausicaä herself completes the words of the prophecy, "and he will guide the people of this planet at last to a land of

purity." Here we see Nausicaä voicing the prophecy that unbeknownst to her she will fulfill. Within the film, Nausicaä as *shōjo* is not the expected messiah, who is depicted as a mature and male. Like Jesus, Miyazaki's Nausicaä is an unexpected messiah, both attractive and strangely alien. As such, she is an excellent bearer of Christ's message of non-violence and peace. With these things in mind, I want to turn to an analysis of Nausicaä and her gospel.

4. *Nausicaä's Gospel: A reading of Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

[15] In this section, I touch mainly upon what I have referred to as the ecological pacifism of Nausicaä, since this is, in my view, the distinctive contribution she makes as a figure of Christ.²⁹ Ecological pacifism, as I am using it, refers to the extension of the love of one's neighbor and enemies advocated by Jesus, to the environment that provides for their flourishing. In this sense, ecological pacifism is not an addition to Jesus's call to love, so much as it is a particular application of it, an application made salient by the damage ecological devastation has done to neighbors both near and far. This gospel embraces the sanctity of the earth itself and recognizes that humanity's place within the created order is not to dominate it, but to live in harmony with it—even, to recognize God through it. As Jesus holds the raven and the lily before his disciples, he affirms that nature itself displays the caring provision of God and that these fellow beings, resting each in its specific niche, show the way of faith—they serve as exemplars of living in harmony with the world and with God.³⁰ Nausicaä, then, indicates the shape these attitudes of Jesus might take in a world that has been ravaged by ecological violence. Like an anime version of Saint Francis of Assisi, her deep connection with and love for the natural world—disfigured as it seems to be in this film—allows her to forge a peace between it and its human inhabitants.³¹ If Nausicaä is a savior, the salvation she heralds is one of connection, not violation, specifically, connection to the earth and through it connection to each other.

[16] The film begins in a world beset by the domination and destruction of the environment by human greed; it depicts the consequences of failing to abide by the gospel of ecological pacifism. The arc of the film is set by Nausicaä's struggle with those who see nature as an enemy to be pacified through violence. In *Nausicaä*, Miyazaki raises the problem of violence and its connection to the environment in a unique way that helps us to see that peacemaking must include the establishment of environmental conditions in which human beings can flourish. Indeed, he suggests that such conditions cannot be brought about through violence; harmony and care, not domination, make for peace.³²

[17] To appreciate Nausicaä's gospel, we need first to consider the attitudes toward the natural world and toward the use of violence that are displayed by Nausicaä and how they contrast with those displayed by the other main characters, most notably, the Tolmekian leader, Kushana. Let us turn to the natural world first.

4.1 *Nature in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

[18] Nature in the guise of the toxic jungle and giant insects that guard it provides an organizing danger that defines each of the characters insofar as they are animated, for better or worse, by their attitudes toward it. In this section, I begin by showing how the film portrays the history of human interaction with nature and its fall-out. Then, I turn to Nausicaä's attitudes toward nature and the way that it contrasts with that of her Tolmekian counterpart Kushana, and marks a continuation of those of her own people.

4.2 *The Pre-History of Desolation*

[19] The film opens with a vision of desolation: winds whistling, we watch a man in a gas-mask, Lord Yupa, explore an empty village that is covered with some sort of fungi, the air swirling with what we later learn are poisonous spores. The first words we here are these: "Yet another village is dead. Let's go, soon this place too will be consumed by the toxic jungle." In this opening scene, the jungle is cast as an imminent threat to a humanity on the brink of extinction. A sentiment immediately confirmed as the narrator states that "a thousand years have past since the collapse of industrialized civilization. A toxic jungle now spreads, threatening the survival of the last of the human race." As the credits roll, we see a tapestry that tells how humanity has arrived at this point; it depicts what the opening words of the original *manga* version states so elegantly:

In a few short centuries, industrial civilization had spread . . . across the surface of the planet. Plundering the soil of its riches, fouling the air, and remolding life-forms at will, this gargantuan industrial society had

already peaked a thousand years after its foundation: Ahead lay abrupt and violent decline. The cities burned, welling up as clouds of poison in the war remembered as the seven days of fire. The complex superstructure was lost; almost all the surface of the earth was transformed into a sterile wasteland.³³

The tapestry shows the violent destruction of the world in haunting images of giant bioengineered humanoid weapons marching over the glowing ruins of the great cities this civilization had built. The attitudes that fueled the violation of the earth, we are led to believe, also fueled the construction and use of these exquisitely powerful weapons—the objectification of nature and human enemies go hand and hand. With this more complete picture, we see that the exploitive practices of industrialization created the toxic jungle and the giant insects that now imperil humanity. Nature itself has shown the limits of human hubris and avarice both.

[20] The tapestry ends with an image of a winged woman in blue, being received as a *savoir* who can deliver human beings from this menacing wilderness. As this image fades, we glimpse a tiny figure in blue, Nausicaä, flying a simple glider amidst the clouds above this threatening jungle. From the outset, Nausicaä is cast as a messianic figure, who, in the words of the ancient prophecy, will "restore mankind's connection to the earth that was destroyed. . . . [and] guide the people of this planet at last to a land of purity".

4.3 *Nausicaä's Attitude Toward Nature:*

[21] Nausicaä's attitude toward nature is one of wonder, empathy, and love. She lands her glider and confidently strides into the darkly beautiful jungle. The air is filled with the sounds of wildlife; the place is intensely alive, crawling with enormous insects and dense with strange fungi. Unfazed by these apparently frightful organisms, Nausicaä collects spores in a test-tube, marking her scientific interest and desire to understand this ecosystem. The scene culminates with her discovery of recently shed shell of an *ohmu*, a colossal trilobite-looking insect that fiercely protects the jungle. Recognizing its potential utility for her village, she deftly removes one of its hemispherical eyes with gunpowder and her zirconium sword. Afterwards, as Nausicaä admires the beauty of the eye canopy she holds above her head, a blizzard of spores begins to fall around her. As she looks through the *ohmu*'s eye, Nausicaä momentarily takes up its perspective, and sheltered beneath the eye, recognizes her own fragility amidst this terrible sublimity.³⁴ Rapt in awe, she says, "It's so beautiful, it is hard to believe these spores could kill me."

[22] This scene establishes several significant aspects of Nausicaä's character. Nausicaä is adept, courageous, and inquiring—subverting classic *shōjo* ultra-femininity—as well as generous and loving in her admiration for the natural world, despite the clear danger it poses for her. Nausicaä's attitude toward nature, as the opening of the film suggests, is also fueled by scientific insight. Later, we learn Nausicaä has constructed a garden deep under the castle, using pure water and sands from one of the valley's deep wells. In this pure environment, she has discovered that the plants of the jungle are not themselves poisonous; they become so only when they are planted in toxic soil. The source of the poison is not nature, but humanity. In another scene, Nausicaä discovers that the jungle itself is slowly purifying the soil. The jungle and its insect guardians, she reasons, have evolved to restore the earth's purity, making it habitable again for human beings.³⁵ Her affection for the natural world intensifies her interest in understanding it, and her understanding in turn intensifies her affection and deepens her trust. Before she fully understands how the jungle operates, Nausicaä recognizes at an emotional level that it isn't ordered to the destruction or punishment of human beings. Consequently, nature even in the form of the toxic jungle is enchanted for Nausicaä—a cause of delight scientifically and aesthetically as well as a source of hope.

[23] Nausicaä does not see nature as an enemy, even when it is threatening and dangerous; a view supported by her intellectual understanding and emotional connection to it. Not only does she not understand nature as an enemy, she grasps that it is benevolent even in its ferocity, working to purify what human beings have polluted. Nausicaä embodies an attitude toward the environment that Miyazaki calls 'courtesy': "We need courtesy towards water, mountains, and air in addition to living things. We should not ask courtesy of these things, but we ourselves should give courtesy toward them."³⁶ Nausicaä understands that she and her people must work with nature, not strive against it, if there is to be harmony. This rejection of anthropocentrism allows her to see that nature deserves the courteous respect of human beings. She displays this sort of courtesy in a scene in which she and her crew have had to make a crash landing in the midst of an *Ohmu* nest. She addresses them this way: "Ohmu, Please forgive us for disturbing your nest. We're very sorry. We're not your enemies. We mean you no harm." Subsequent to the speech, the *Ohmu* extend their golden tentacles, entwining the unresisting Nausicaä with them, to read her mind.

When the Ohmu recognize her affection and sincerity, they retreat without doing any harm.³⁷ Her openness to being probed serves to emphasize Nausicaä's desire to understand and be understood, her desire to connect with nature. Her brief speech—which culminates in this intense experience of harmony with the Ohmu—expresses her profound reverence for the Ohmu and the world they inhabit and protect. As she is held in the golden embrace of the Ohmu, Nausicaä has a vision of a great tree shot through with lights.³⁸ For Nausicaä, even the darkness of the toxic jungle, is incandescent—lovely, benevolent and finally redemptive.

4.4 *Kushana and the People of the Valley of the Wind:*

[24] Nausicaä's attitude sharply contrasts with that of the leaders of the other kingdoms that figure in this film, particularly that of Kushana the commander of the Tolmekian army. Early in the film, a Tolmekian airship infested with insects and spores crash-lands in Nausicaä's utopian homeland, The Valley of the Wind. Festooned with windmills and verdant croplands, this pristine valley has been protected from the miasma of the toxic jungle by the prevailing winds off the Acid Sea. This valley has learned to live close to the soil, utilizing, as some of its elders say at one point, the gentle ways of "water and wind", not the fierce and destructive ways of fire—the ways that spawned this age of desolation. Into this peaceful valley, the Tolmekian ship crashes, revealing in its wreckage a deadly cargo—the last God Warrior, the bioengineered weapons responsible for the holocaust known as 'The Seven Days of Fire'..

[25] Kushana, the commander of the Tolmekian army, invades the Valley of the Wind to retrieve this weapon. After she has taken over the valley, killing King Jhil and occupying the castle, Kushana explains what she plans to do with the God warrior weapon.

Villagers we have come to your land in the name of peace. Our goal is to unify the kingdoms surrounding Tolmekia to build a world of prosperity. You now live at the edge of the jungle on the verge of extinction. Follow us and join our enterprise. We shall put the toxic jungle to the torch and resurrect this land together. . . . I have in my possession mankind's greatest tool, the awesome force that once allowed human beings to rule the earth.

Despite her dubious claims to have come in peace—betrayed by her violent take-over of the castle—Kushana's speech encapsulates her view of nature and humanity's relation to it. Nature is to be ruled, dominated, destroyed, if need be, though force—this alone, in her words, will guarantee that a life "without fear of the insects or the jungle's poisons." Later we learn that the leadership of the neighboring kingdom of Pejite, from whom Kushana stole the God warrior, desire to use it in the same way. Both view nature as an enemy to be met with violent force—an object to be dominated and shaped to human ends.

[26] It is essential to note that as Miyazaki portrays these characters, their views seem perfectly rational. After all, the toxic jungle is slowly absorbing the places where humans dwell, and none of them are left unaffected by its miasma. Accordingly, Kushana and the Pejites seem to have just cause to fight against the jungle. But, as we have already seen, this vilifying of the jungle is based on ignorance of the jungle's true function as well as an ignorance of the history of human aggression against nature—a history that has created the jungle that is now such a threat.

[27] By contrast, Nausicaä carries with her a deep awareness of this history, which is both a product of her own inquiry and the traditions of her people. Nausicaä's wise grandmother, Obaba, responds to Kushana's speech by recounting the fact that the jungle's spread has been exacerbated through past attempts to attack it with fire. She sees that attempts to rule through violence do not succeed and that learning to live in harmony with nature is the best course. While Nausicaä is strong and independent, she is also deeply rooted in her community, drawing strength and wisdom from her elders. She represents a continuation of the ancient ways of 'water and wind', and stands as a paradigm for renewing tradition in a post-apocalyptic age.³⁹ Nausicaä and her people represent an understanding that nature is something human beings must respect, give way to, and trust, not an enemy to be feared, pushed back, and ultimately destroyed.

4.5 *Nausicaä and (Non)Violence*

[28] Nausicaä's view of nature is inextricably connected to her attitude toward violence. While her counterparts see violence against human and natural enemies as an acceptable means for achieving peace, Nausicaä rejects this path, embracing one of non-violence. In this rejection of violence, Nausicaä reflects the love of one's enemies and the

rejection of violence toward them so central to the Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. She, however, makes explicit that this love and non-violence must reach beyond human enemies to the common ground we share—this earth, its land, water and air. Her character, then, suggests a fundamental connection between non-violence and the environment, which I have termed ecological pacifism.

[29] Interestingly, Miyazaki does not present Nausicaä as a simple, cute, *shōjo*, pleading for her enemies to stop the killing. Instead, he has her struggle with her own violence, showing it to be real, so that her non-violence, when it emerges, is equally real. When the Tolmekian's invade, they storm the castle, attacking and killing, the bed-ridden King Jhil. Nausicaä realizes their intention, but arrives only to see the Tolmekian soldiers huddled over her father's corpse. Enraged, she rushes the soldiers, shouting, "I'll kill you!" She proceeds to slay five Tolmekian soldiers. When she turns to attack Kushana's armored guard, Lord Yupa blocks her sword, letting it plunge into his own forearm. Yupa stands between Nausicaä and the armored guard and attempts to de-escalate the conflict by explaining the proper rules of war. While he is talking, Nausicaä's shocked gaze focuses on the blood from Yupa's wound dripping from her sword. The ambient noises fade and with her we hear only the isolated drops of blood as they hit the floor. Nausicaä's face reflects her fear and disbelief at what she has done. In a later scene that completes this one, Nausicaä collapses, sobbing in Yupa's arms, saying "I'm afraid of myself, Lord Yupa. I had no idea that my rage could drive me to kill. No more killing. It has to stop." Having seen her own real violence, Nausicaä now categorically rejects it.⁴⁰ Her rejection of violence through the remainder of the film is more significant, because we know it isn't merely imaginary violence she renounces. Furthermore, by representing Nausicaä as imperfect, as growing and mastering her rage, Miyazaki allows us to relate to this character, to identify and potentially control our own tendencies toward violence.

[30] From this moment in the film forward, Nausicaä works to prevent violence and killing. Nausicaä's pacific love reaches both to her enemies and to the hostile elements of the natural world; her pacifism consists not in a simple, passive rejection of violence, but in an active striving to bring about substantive peace between those who are at enmity. Instead of being united against a common enemy—the toxic jungle and its insect protectors—she urges that human beings might be united by their common place in this larger ecosystem. She believes that harmonious co-existence is possible. Miyazaki vividly shows that this belief is central to Nausicaä's character in a scene where Nausicaä has been knocked unconscious in a fall through the jungle's floor into the pristine caverns that show her how the jungle is making the earth pure. As she regains consciousness, we are brought back to an incident in her childhood. She is riding with her armor-clad father, when she realizes that he intends to kill a baby ohmu that she has been secretly caring for. Rushing to protect the ohmu, she cries "It hasn't done anything wrong. Don't kill it." Her father, King Jihl, responds, "Insects and humans cannot live in the same world. You know that." Nausicaä's love and nurture of this insect represent her faith that they can live in harmony, that they need not be enemies. As the film progresses, we see Nausicaä acting on this belief by striving to put away the enmity between both human beings and the natural world that has led to the current fear and anger that now characterizes their relationship.

[31] Nausicaä's embodiment of the gospel ideal of loving one's enemies is nowhere better exemplified than in a scene where she saves the life of her captor, Kushana. When Kushana needs to return to Tolmekia, she takes Nausicaä and a small group of her father's guards hostage to ensure the continued compliance of the people of the valley. Along the way, a Pejite fighter attacks and destroys Kushana's ship along with its escorts. As their ship is going down, Nausicaä climbs through one of the shattered windows, fixing her eyes on the fighter as it bears down on the ship to finish them off, crying "Stop it! All this killing must stop!" When the pilot fires, he sees Nausicaä, arms outstretched, cruciform, shouting "You must stop!" Nausicaä is not wearing the uniform she has on in the scene—it is as if she has projected an image of herself into the pilot's mind.⁴¹ Pulling up in a shock of recognition, the pilot is shot down. After a pause, indicating her sadness at the violence she has just witnessed, Nausicaä guides one of her supposed protectors, Mito, to the gunship stored in the hull of the Tolmekian craft. As they are about to launch, Kushana emerges from the flames with a menacing look. Instead of leaving her behind to die, Nausicaä responds by inviting her aboard. They escape the falling ship together.⁴²

[32] The difference between Kushana and Nausicaä's attitudes toward violence is instructive. Kushana, who has lost limbs in an insect attack, is driven by a desire to exact revenge. She bears in her own body, which is now comprised in part of mechanical members, a faith in technological might as the path to peace. She believes violence is the only viable way to encounter enemies. Nausicaä's contrasting attitude is borne out as this scene unfolds. Immediately after Nausicaä saves her life, Kushana pulls a pistol on her and mocks her for being naïve. Nausicaä diagnoses

Kushana's disposition to violence as being rooted in fear⁴³ and ignorance, and meets Kushana's aggression by directing her attention to their shared predicament, namely, their violating presence in the toxic jungle in the heart of an Ohmu nest. Nausicaä proceeds to engage and calm the Ohmu, ignoring the threats of Kushana. Her openness to the probing of the ohmu, as I described above, saves all of their lives.

[33] Nausicaä's refusal to engage violence with violence and her capacity to care for her enemy allow her to prevent violence from escalating. She refuses to engage Kushana's violence or exact revenge by leaving her behind, she urges her own companions, the Tolmekians and the Pejite fighter pilot, to refrain from killing. In the case of the Pejite pilot, Nausicaä flies into the jungle and the swarm of raging insects to save him, refusing to objectify him as an enemy. In this scene, Nausicaä stands as a mediator between her companions and their enemies both human and non-human, prefiguring the climactic interposition to which we now turn.⁴⁴

4.6 Nausicaä's Abnegation of Violence in Sacrifice:

[34] The film's climactic scene reveals Nausicaä to be the long awaited messiah—the one who restores the connection with the earth and is a guide to purifying it.. This revelation and restoration come through Nausicaä's sacrifice and resurrection. By standing between the warring factions, rejecting violence, she users in an age of peace.

[35] The film's final conflict is instigated by the Pejites' attempt to retrieve the God Warrior weapon from the Tolemekians by causing the Ohmu to over-run the valley of the wind. When Nausicaä learns of this plan, the Pejitie leaders imprison her so she will not interfere. But, with the help of the Pejitie women, who understand the horror of what their men are doing, Nausicaä escapes.⁴⁵

[36] As she flies toward the valley of the wind, Nausicaä sees that the Pejities are baiting the Ohmu with one of their young, suspended from cables, bleeding, and crying out in pain. The sight of this tortured baby Ohmu enrages the herd and prompts them to charge after the Pejitie ship from which the ohmu is suspended. Upon seeing this, Nausicaä seeks to save the tortured ohmu and stop the stampede. She goes without a weapon, on her simple glider, and brings down the Pejite craft. After rescuing and comforting the baby Ohmu, she has the Pejite's place her and the baby Ohmu between the stampeding herd and the valley.

[37] She stands calmly before the onrushing herd—the baby at her side as evidence of her good will. Still, silent, and at peace, she stands as the ohmu, blind with anger, charge into her, launching her skyward. When eventually she descends, she is lost beneath the stampede, trampled to death. Shortly after, as the herd comprehends what Nausicaä has done, their rage subsides and they fall silent. Circled around Nausicaä's body, they extend their golden feelers and with them lift her into the air. In this golden field, Nausicaä's is given rebirth. As the children describe what they are seeing to Obaba, she gasps and repeats the prophecy. Nausicaä, whose red dress has turned blue by the blood of the ohmu, is the messiah of this ancient prophecy. In this act of love and mediation, Nausicaä not only restores the connection with the earth, cementing it with her sacrifice, she also shows the way forward—the way of purity is through peace.

5. Nausicaä and the Gospel of Green

[38] In the previous sections, I have sought to show how Nausicaä's connection to nature and commitment to non-violence enable her to plant the seeds for ecological peace. Taken as a Christ figure, I have argued Nausicaä's gospel of ecological pacifism has special relevance to our time, inviting a re-evaluation of the shape the Christian gospel should take in an age of ecological crisis that helps to recover what is popularly termed 'the green gospel'. In this section, I suggest that Nausicaä represents remarkably well the sort of criticism and vision offered by contemporary Christian environmentalism,⁴⁶ in particular that of one of its most eloquent spokespersons Wendell Berry. Taken together Berry and Nausicaä highlight the way the gospel of love and non-violence might prove to be a resource for recovering from the ways that have brought the world to the ecological brink.

[39] Berry advocates a re-enchanting of the natural world, a kind of mysticism in which God's presence is disclosed to human beings as they learn to belong to and be governed by the created order in which they live and move and

have their being. Philosopher Norman Wirzba calls this ambition 'agrarian mysticism' and argues that it marks a path whereby we can learn to be at peace with each other and God by learning to be altogether at home in creation.⁴⁷

[40] The accusation that Christianity has been complicit in the destruction of the natural world is, according to Berry, largely justified, and now cliché.⁴⁸

Throughout the five-hundred years since Columbus's first landfall in the Bahamas, the evangelist has walked beside the conqueror and the merchant, too often blandly assuming that his cause was the same as theirs. Christian organizations to this day remain largely indifferent to the rape and plunder of the world and of its traditional cultures.⁴⁹

Though it is true that Christians have ignored or worse even underwritten what Berry calls the "military-industrial conspiracy to murder creation," he argues that an adequate understanding of the bible and the faithful cultural traditions that derive from it show Christianity to have abundant resources for correcting the ecological destruction surrounding us. Christians need, in Berry's view, "to read and understand the bible in view of the present fact of Creation."⁵⁰

[41] Reading the bible with an eye to its ecological significance enables Christians to recognize what he calls "the holiness of life." Quoting the Greek Orthodox theologian Philip Sherrard, Berry affirms the view that "Creation is nothing less than the manifestation of God's hidden being," and goes on to conclude that "we and all other creatures live by a sanctity that is inexpressibly intimate. To every creature the gift of life is a portion of the breath and spirit of God."⁵¹ Once this sanctity of the earth and everything in it is grasped, we see that the ecologically devastating practices of our increasingly globalized economy are a direct attack against God. According to Berry, the apostle Paul's claim that "God made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands . . . For in him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your poets have said . . . (Acts 17:24 and 28), implies that Christians must be advocates for ways of living that do not require the exploitation of nature. Berry calls this simply, good work:

Good work uses no thing without respect, both for what it is in itself and for its origin. It uses neither tool nor material that it does not respect and that it does not love. It honors Nature as a great mystery and power, as an indispensable teacher, and as the inescapable judge of all work of human hands.⁵²

Nature and work understood in this way will not do violence to the earth, but seek to establish a sustainable harmony between humanity and the land they live upon.

[42] Nausicaä and the people of the valley of the wind embody the sort of respectful belonging to place that Berry here identifies with authentic Christian practice. The Valley of the Wind is a simple and beautiful agrarian community, harnessing the wind to draw pure water from its deep wells. Unlike the Pejites and Tolmekians, the people of this valley do not seek or possess sophisticated technology, preferring as the old farmers put it, "the ways of the water and wind." Even though they recognize the power of nature and see that the toxins from the jungle are slowly killing them, they are repulsed by Kushana's plan to put the jungle to the torch—they understand that peace cannot be achieved by such destruction.

[43] Nausicaä's own attitude is even more deeply informed than that of her community, who still live in fear the jungle. She understands that the jungle is not ordered to the destruction, but to the ultimate benefit, of human beings; the jungle is both the "indispensable teacher" and "inescapable judge," to use Berry's phrase. The lesson it teaches Nausicaä is that the plundering of the earth perpetrated by industrial society and the belief it was predicated upon, namely, that the planet is to be unrelentingly shaped to serve the ever increasing desires of humanity, are bankrupt. Human beings instead must learn to belong in the world, to understand its demands and limits, and live in ways that reflect that understanding. Nausicaä helps us to see the connection between the ways of violence and environmental degradation, and the ways of peace and environmental restoration. As a *shōjo* figure of Christ, Nausicaä represents a critique of the logic of domination that has characterized the relationship between humans and nature in her world and ours. She shows vividly how the gospel of love can extend beyond human neighbors and enemies to the environment that sustains them, how non-violent sacrificial love can restore the vital connection between human being and the earth, quelling both anger and fear. Nausicaä suggests that ecological pacifism is an essential element of Jesus's call both to love and to work for peace. It is not possible to love neighbors without caring for their environs, feeding the hungry requires tending the earth.

[44] While I have argued for the benefit of seeing Nausicaä as a Christ figure, it is essential to notice that this gospel reaches beyond any particular tradition. Miyazaki has created in *Nausicaä* a new myth that challenges the notion that human beings stand at the center of a world that is for their unrestricted use, regardless of the tradition in which such a notion is grounded. This new mythology reflects the complexity of the problems faced in post-industrial societies and holds out a hopeful vision of a path toward purity and peace. Nausicaä in this sense is a savior of global appeal and relevance.⁵³

Notes:

¹ *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. DVD. Directed by Hayao Miyazaki.

(Burbank, CA : Distributed by Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2004). All subsequent quotations from the film are from this version.

² Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 155-6.

³ Hayao Miyazaki, "On Nausicaä," in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, 2nd edition, vol. 1 (San Francisco, VIZ: 1983/2004).

⁴ Hayao Miyazaki, "On Nausicaä," in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, 2nd edition, vol. 1 (San Francisco, VIZ: 1983/2004).

⁵ *Translations From Early Japanese Literature*, 2nd edition, ed. E.D. Reishauer and J.K. Yamagiwa (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 186.

⁶ *Translations From Early Japanese Literature*, 187.

⁷ *Translations From Early Japanese Literature*, 187.

⁸ Hayao Miyazaki, "On Nausicaä," in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, 2nd edition, vol. 1 (San Francisco, VIZ: 1983/2004).

⁹ Mark Vallen and Jeannine Thorpe, "Spirited Away: Miyazaki at the Hollywood Premier," *The Blackmoon: Art Anime and Japanese Culture* (Sept. 13, 2002), <http://www.theblackmoon.com/Deadmoon/spiritedaway.html>. Quoted in The quotation is from Mark Vallen and Jeannine Thorpe, "Spirited Away: Miyazaki at the Hollywood Premiere," *The Black Moon*, 13 September 2002. Available at: www.theblackmoon.com/Deadmoon/spiritedaway.html

¹⁰ Quoted in Elisabeth Vincentelli, "Bittersweet Sympathies: For a Japanese Animator, Grown-up Messages Are Kid Stuff," *The Village Voice* (October 26, 1999), <http://www.villagevoice.com/film/9943,vincentelli,9453,20.html>.

¹¹ Lucy Wright, "Forest Spirits, Giant Insects and World Trees: The Nature Vision of Hayao Miyazaki," *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* Vol. X (Summer 2005) <http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art10-miyazaki.html>.

¹² Mark Vallen and Jeannine Thorpe, "Spirited Away: Miyazaki at the Hollywood Premier" *The Blackmoon: Art Anime and Japanese Culture* (Sept. 13, 2002), <http://www.theblackmoon.com/Deadmoon/spiritedaway.html>. The context of this quotation suggests that Miyazaki's worry of Shinto is not with the practice *per se*, but with the way the 'religion' has been used by the state in the past. His positive regard, then, is directed to, as he put it on this occasion, "various, very humble rural Shinto rituals that continue to this day throughout rural Japan. Especially one ritual that takes place on the solstice when the villagers call forth all of the local Gods and invite them to bathe in their baths".

¹³ Lucy Wright ["Forest Spirits, Giant Insects and World Trees: The Nature Vision of Hayao Miyazaki," *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* Vol. X (Summer 2005) <http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art10-miyazaki.html>.] makes a compelling case for the pervasive presence of Shinto elements throughout Miyazaki's oeuvre. James W. Boyd and Tetsuya Nishimura make a similar case for a Shinto reading of *Spirited Away* ["Shinto Perspectives in Miyazaki's Anime Film *Spirited Away*," *The Journal of Religion and Film* vol. 8/2 (October, 2004), <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol8No2/boydShinto.htm>].

¹⁴ In their article "The Ecological and Consumption Themes of the Films of Hayao Miyazaki," [*Ecological Economics* 54/1 (2005), 1-7], Kozo Mayumi, Barry D. Solomon, and Jason Chang cite Miyazaki as saying: "I feel that there is something inside myself that can be called animism rather than religion. In fact, Nausicaä herself in this movie is governed by a sort of animism".

¹⁵ Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, 252-3. Napier writes: "In this account [The Buddhist doctrine of *mappō*], thousands of years after the Buddha's death, the world will fall into degeneracy and decadence, as his teachings lose their power. The day will be saved by the Maitreya Buddha, who will appear at this hour of need to usher in a new age of Buddhist enlightenment. . . . Although the question of whether the Maitreya Buddha is a messianic figure or not remains problematic, certain popular permutations of the doctrine suggest a utopian, salvatory aspect not unlike the image of the savior and the heavenly kingdom in Revelation."

¹⁶ Christine Hoff Kraemer, "Between the Worlds: Liminality and Self-Sacrifice in *Princess Mononoke*," *Journal of Religion and Film*, 8/1 (2004), <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol8No1/BetweenWorlds.htm>.

¹⁷ Freda Freiberg, "Miyazaki's Heroines" *Senses of Cinema* 40 (2006), <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/06/40/miyazaki-heroines.html>. According to Freiberg, discussion of the *shōjo* has centered on their unique liminal identity, relation to consumer culture, particularly the *kawaii* (cute) kitschy material goods, and the relation between them and their audience. The focus of this section is Miyazaki's distinctive *shōjo* protagonist, and as such, I will be leaving aside the way his *shōjo* fits into the complex idea of *shōjo*.

¹⁸ Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* 154.

¹⁹ Cf. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. (New York: Palgrave, 2005); John Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The *Shōjo* in Japanese Popular Culture," in *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, ed. John Treat (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996); Ann Sherif, "Japanese Without Apology: Yoshimoto Banana and Healing," in *Oe and Beyond*, ed. S. Snyder and P. Gabriel (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 282-283; Sharon Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan" in *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan*. ed. B. Moran and L. Skov (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995); Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 158. Robertson argues that since the 1980s *shōjo* has become emblematic of the conspicuous consumption of consumer capitalism. Miyazaki's characters traffic in *shōjo* trappings, while at the same time rejecting this deeply exploitive culture that denigrates its participants and the damages the world they live in.

²⁰ Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*, 149.

²¹ Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*, 149.

²² Christine Hoff Kraemer argues for the power Miyazaki's *shōjo* have as role models for young girls in media world that still does little to encourage female empowerment ["Disney, Miyazaki, and Feminism: Why Western Girls need Japanese Animation," (2000) <http://www.inhumandecency.org/christine/miyazaki.html>.].

²³ One aspect of *shōjo* that I am not focusing on here is that of the sort of nostalgia for the recent past it often traffics in (Cf. Napier 149). It is easy to see how a figure recalling our youth might aim at and manipulate our affectionate memories of the past. Miyazaki's films do sometimes play on this nostalgia, but, I would argue, do so in a way that draws us in close enough to be challenged by other aspects of his characters. As he put it in an interview about *My Neighbor Totoro*, it "is not nostalgia, it is an appeal to know what we have lost" (Napier, 122). More to the point, in the case of Nausicaä, such nostalgia is non-existent. The closest cultural memory she brings to mind are the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, hardly memories for which people would have any affectionate longing.

²⁴ For a comparison of the young heroines in Disney films with those in Miyazaki's, see Kristin Hoff-Kraemer's, "Disney, Miyazaki, and Feminism: Why Western Girls need Japanese Animation," (2000), <http://www.inhumandecency.org/christine/miyazaki.html>.

²⁵ Osmond cites Paul Wells, "Hayao Miyazaki: Floating Worlds, Flying Signifiers" from *Art and Animation* 22. The Miyazaki quotation is from an interview in Phillip Brophy and Julie Ewington, ed., *Kaboom: Explosive Animation from American and Japan* (Sidney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1994), 219.

²⁶ Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, "Female Christ-figures in Films: A Feminist Critical Analysis of *Breaking the Waves* and *Dead Man Walking*," *Studia Theologica* 56 (2002), 30. Mere reference, at the analogical or figurative level, to the gospel story, however, may not be sufficient to constitute a character a Christ-figure, since such a character may in other respects radically undermine "his message about liberation and love" thereby leaving us with a distorted image of Christ that represents an abuse of the cross. Difference, however, need not imply distortion. In many cases, differences yield a clearer picture of the original.

²⁷ Eleanor McLaughlin's "Feminist Christologies: Re-Dressing the Tradition," *Reconstructing the Christ Symbol: Essays in Feminist Christology*, ed. Maryanne Stevens (New York: Paulist Press, 1993). See also Guðmundsdóttir, 31.

²⁸ "Feminist Christologies: Re-Dressing the Tradition, Reconstructing the Christ Symbol," in *Essays in Feminist Christology*. ed. Maryanne Stevens (New York / Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993), 142.

²⁹ I have already alluded to the fact that as a young person and a female, she opens a new place for identification and reflection. Also, as a *shōjo*, Nausicaä's is an appropriate bearer of this sort of ecological gospel. Rosmary Radford Ruether points out that ecofeminism is particularly well suited to help recover the ecological gospel that was a part of the New Testament and the early Christian church ["Ecological Theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 42/3 (2003), 229-30].

³⁰ Cf. Luke 12.22-29.

³¹ The scenes in which Nausicaä charms the giant insects remind one of the story about Francis forging a peace between the people of Gubbio and the wolf that had plagued them with attacks.

³² See Antonia Levi, "New Myths for the Millennium: Japanese Animation" in *Animation in Asia and the Pacific*, John A. Lent ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 38-9. Levi argues that *Kaze no Tani Nausicaä* signals Miyazaki's intention to create mythologies that promote harmony between human beings and the environment.

³³ Hayao Miyazaki, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, 2nd edition, vol. 1, (San Francisco, VIZ: 1983/2004).

³⁴ I am grateful to Andrew Carlson-Lier for pointing out the way Nausicaä literally takes the ohmu's perspective and thereby marks her deep connection to and empathy with the natural world. The *manga* version makes this connection explicit. There, Nausicaä declares: "I wonder what sort of world the ohmu sees through his fourteen eyes. To him this gloomy forest must seem a warm and comforting place. But we humans can't walk here unmade for even five minutes, or our lungs would decay. A forest of death . . ." (Miyazaki, 7).

³⁵ In this scene, Nausicaä relates this discovery to Asabel, the young prince of Pejite. His response is that if this is true, then mankind is destined to go extinct, since it will take too long for this process to complete. He cannot envision the possibility of humanity living with the jungle and the insects in the mean time. The only solution he sees is finding a way to stop the toxic jungle from spreading. Nausicaä, to Asabel's horror, says he sounds just like the Tolmekians: both see nature as something to be stopped with violent force. I take up the Tolmekian's attitude as it is displaying in the figure of Kushana in the next section.

³⁶ Mayagumi, 3.

³⁷ This same empathy and connection is displayed in another encounter with the Ohmu, which I address briefly in paragraph 29 below.

³⁸ Such giant trees figure in several of Miyazaki's films. In *My Neighbor Totoro*, the great camphor tree is the home of Totoro the spirit of the forest, and in *Castle in the Sky*, when the deadly technological understructure of Laputa falls away, what remains is a gargantuan tree floating free as a symbol of unfettered hope and life.

³⁹ Eric Cunningham has argued that modern historical consciousness itself necessitates apocalypse and that in the post-apocalyptic age we will need ways to move beyond the constraints of such linear, progressive consciousness. Nausicaä, I think, offers us a way to navigate this new age by steering us back to a faith in the providential order of the world and not in human technological progress. ("Apocalyptic Visions and Dystopic Nightmares: The Meaning of the End of History in Popular Film and Anime" presented at The 2nd Annual Faith, Philosophy and Film Conference at Gonzaga University November 1, 2008).

⁴⁰ Yupa's own counsel when he stops Nausicaä's killing spree is this: "Calm yourself Nausicaä. If you fight now, the people of the valley will be massacred. We must stay alive and wait for the right opportunity". His commitment to non-violence seems conditional and strategic; he too appears to be committed to the idea that there can be justified use of violence. Despite this belief, we never see Yupa, "the greatest swordsman in the land," kill anyone. Throughout the film, he models a kind of active non-violence that we see Nausicaä embrace and emulate.

⁴¹ This cruciform image is exactly echoed in a later scene when Nausicaä confronts two Pejite's who are torturing a young ohmu. In this latter scene, Nausicaä unarmed leaps from her glider and sails through the air with her arms outstretched, while the Pejites fire upon her. It is an image of complete commitment that combines the posture of non-violence with active confrontation. In this case, she literally knocks the small Pejite craft out of the air. Hers is not a passive non-violence, but an engaged one that fearlessly throws itself into the fray.

⁴² It is also notable that before she confronts the Pejite fighter pilot, Asabel, Nausicaä is tenderly holding one of the Tolmekians that has been killed in the attack. She refuses to objectify even those set against her as enemies. Later, she goes on to rescue Asabel, ignoring the fact that he sought to kill her along with the others in the plane.

⁴³ Nausicaä consistently diagnoses aggression as being rooted in fear. In an early scene, Yupa has given her a fox squirrel, which he warns is vicious. She reaches her bare finger toward the squirrel, speaking soothingly, and the squirrel responds by biting her. In response, she gently seeks to calm the animal's fear, instead of aggressively attacking or withdrawing. Both the Tolmekians and Pejites fear the jungle and it is this fear that drives their desire to possess and use the God Warrior. Nausicaä, then, suggests that quelling fear is the first step to stopping violence.

⁴⁴ The Ohmu are represented as caring and wise, but also as being easily roused into blinding rages. Nausicaä, as I have already noted, is able to empathize with the Ohmu and understands that they are the protectors of the jungle. Nevertheless, the Ohmu when roused are capable of horrific violence. Many human cities were turned to rubble by

Ohmu enraged by the human's attempts to burn the jungle. Accordingly, Nausicaä's pacifism includes her efforts to calm the Ohmu's rage and stop their human tormentors from harming them. It isn't the case, then, that nature need not be engaged, that it must simply be let alone.

⁴⁵ The women of Pejite, smuggle Nausicaä from her cell, so that she can save her people. These women, particularly Asabel and Listelle's mother, care for both Nausicaä and her people; they understand the horror of what their men have done and beg forgiveness. Unlike Asabel, who seeks to save Nausicaä through violence, the women do so by stealth and subversion. Their perspective in this instance is that the Pejite plan to destroy the valley of the wind is horrendously savage. This scene highlights the way that the *shōjo* Nausicaä represents what Miyazaki calls a female point of view, a point of view that calls the objectifications of nature and enemies into question.

⁴⁶ I am not suggesting that 'Christian environmentalism' is monolithic and speaks with one voice. That said, in recent years there have been a number of efforts by Christian thinkers to reacquaint Christians with the ecological dimensions of their faith. Norman Wirzba, for example, draws heavily on the doctrine of creation and the notion of the Sabbath, to forge a coherent and redemptive view of human engagement with the environment [cf. *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford University Press, 2003)]. Willis Jenkin's work considers the way soteriology might offer particular ecological hope and leave much of classic theology intact [cf. *Ecologies of Grace* (Oxford University Press, 2008)]. My aim here is not to offer an analysis of these contemporary efforts to form a Christian environmental ethics, but merely to note the resonance between these efforts and the gospel I argue Nausicaä represents. Ultimately, my claim is that Miyazaki's film may aid such efforts by articulating in a particularly compelling way a myth centered on the problems of post-industrial environmental degradation that can be read in terms of the Jesus's exhortations to love.

⁴⁷ Wirzba explores how this agrarian mysticism contributes to the larger contemplative tradition in his "The Dark Night of the Soil: An Agrarian Approach to Mystical Life." *Christianity and Literature* 56/2 (Winter 2007), 253-274.

⁴⁸ Wendell Berry, "Christianity and the Survival of Creation" in *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993). Rosemary Radford Ruether also contends that it is simplistic to argue as some have that Christianity as such directly caused sorts of practices that have brought us to the point of ecological crisis. ["Ecological Theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 42/3 (2003), 226-234]. However, there is little question that it has often been drawn along by the cultural and economic forces that have led to the abuse of nature, doing too little to change it. Berry and Ruether both point to the ample resources of Christianity to help transform the attitudes of human beings in a way that will make for more sustainable environmental future.

⁴⁹ Berry, 94. In the years since the publication of Berry's article, efforts to understand the bible in view of the present facts of creation have grown, arguably becoming mainstream. One of the most explicit examples of such efforts is *The Green Bible* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), a bible in which ecologically relevant passages are in green print, along with essays connecting biblical themes to ecological sustainability. The gospel of green, I am arguing, isn't something new *per se*, but something newly and vividly relevant. The situation of ecological crisis as it were *greens* the gospel, quite literally in *The Green Bible*.

⁵⁰ Berry, 95.

⁵¹ Berry, 98.

⁵² Berry, 104.

⁵³ I want to express my gratitude to the participants in Faith, Film and Philosophy seminar at the Faith and Reason Institute at Gonzaga University, the Philosophy and Popular Culture conference at Endicott College, the anonymous reviewers, and Andrew Carlson-Lier for helpful comments on earlier versions of this essay. Finally, I want to thank Margie DeWeese-Boyd for many conversations about this film and for her invaluable feedback throughout the writing of this essay.