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# Images of a Greek Goddess in Anime: Athena and Nausicaä in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

## Abstract

Greek mythology is a rich and powerful inspiration shared by numerous people in different times and place, without which, numerous artistic works worldwide would not have been created. In Japan, despite being far from their place of origin, Greek gods and their stories have also been a part of the commonly shared culture – initially through children’s stories, and often related to the constellations. Having a deep-seated animism (‘feel’ rather than theorised religious belief) as a fundamental element of their culture, the Japanese exhibit obvious affinity to Greek mythology and to its humanlike gods in different forms, powers, and emotions, and their relationship to each other and with humans.

## Introduction

Bennett (1976: 5) articulated, ‘Polytheism is previous as a way to distinguish the modes of power in nature, the sort of distinction without which science could not exist; anthropomorphism as a means of relating those powers to the human mind and psyche for which psychology has yet to find an equivalent modality.’ Similar to the deities in Greek mythology, the oldest existing Japanese records, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, depict human-like gods/superior beings and their relationships to each other and to humans. Japan has been polytheistic/pantheistic and even amalgamated the gods in the ancient, animistic Shinto into Buddhism. Folklore also includes various stories

of non-human brides (for example, crane, fox, green willow), who are superior to human husbands, and sons in non-human shape (for example, mud snail) or an extremely small human who later grows to ordinary size with magic.

In the cultural and psychological landscape, Geek myths in diverse forms and interpretations became one of the popular sources for contemporary manga/anime (the printed and animated Japanese cartoons) and their related media (such as games). Invented by the gifted and ambitious manga/anime artist, Osamu Tezuka (1928–1989), known as the ‘god of manga’, most manga/anime today are story-driven and deal with ‘nearly every imaginable subject’ (Schodt 1996: 27), and hence are able to accommodate diverse readers/audiences of different sex, generation and interest. Manga/anime and related media gained a phenomenal popularity in Japan for some decades, although only recently has it reached a global market, initially through anime and games. Napier claimed (2001a) that anime has begun to offer powerful, possibly ‘post ethnic’ spheres of fantasies to global audiences.

In this article<sup>1</sup> I will explore the inspiration/influence of Greek mythology in a Japanese anime, Miyazaki Hayao’s<sup>2</sup> *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* (*Kaze no Tani no Nausicaä*, 1984), particularly the characterisation of the heroine, Nausicaä, Princess of the Valley of Wind, and its landscape. This anime was based on the first two volumes of Miyazaki’s extraordinarily complicated manga/comic version (1982–1994),<sup>3</sup> but I will focus on the anime version.

The story is a post-disaster narrative, set in a remote future, after a millennium of the global wars, called the ‘Seven Days of Fire’ (*Hi no nanokakan*), and the deployment of ‘God soldiers’ (*Kyoshinhei*), which are monstrous biotechnological weapons capable of total destruction of the Earth, its ecological system and human civilisation. Nausicaä is a young, resourceful, sympathetic leader who devotes herself to the protection of the Valley of Wind, a small, somewhat utopian community constantly resisting the encroaching destruction by the poisonous fungi forest, *fukai* (lit. rotten sea/the sea of corruption).

The anime opens with a snapshot of Yupa (Nausicaä’s mentor, a well-known swordsman) searching a ruined village which was destroyed by the *fukai* insects and is about to be swallowed by them. This is followed by a credits roll and the visual epic of the battle between humans and the *fukai* ending with an angelic, feminine figure in a long blue dress, replaced by

Nausicaä on her little jet-powered glider, *mehve*, flying toward the *fukai*. This opening image suggests her messiah-like significance in the story.

A masked Nausicaä, moves freely among the poisonous *fukai* collecting spores. She finds a gigantic shell of an *ohmu* (huge beetle-like insects that protect the *fukai*) and carefully removes one of its lenses with a sword and a small amount of gunpowder. Then, through the clear lens (that is through the *ohmu*'s view), she admires the beauty of the falling snow-like spores, sadly thinking of the beauty that exists in the poisonous *fukai*. In this way, the anime introduces Nausicaä's essential yet complex qualities: femininity and masculinity, a caring personality, love of life and nature, a mind of a scientist and the soul of an artist. In spite of her feminine figure, her androgyny is evident, affording her physical and psychological freedom, and an independent individuality with integrity and self-esteem – 'more independent in thought and action from the group-orientated characteristics traditionally celebrated in Japanese culture' (Napier 2001b: 473). Nausicaä has been criticised as too ideal and unreal (Shimizu 2001), but her behaviour and personality are given verisimilitude by Miyazaki's careful mixture of realistic and fantastic details (Napier 2001: 121-126).

Living in an ecologically hostile world, Nausicaä possesses an intact subjectivity and actively engages in communicating with her external world. Her unprejudiced curiosity and indiscriminating openness embody a harmonious animism that enables her to discover that the *fukai* restore the earth damaged by humans, by purifying the polluted air, water and soil and by standing as a buffer against humans, who indict the *fukai* as the monstrous *other*. She is represented as an empathic and telepathic figure, with strong sympathy for marginalised existences. With these qualities, she functions as a mediator between humans and the *fukai*, especially through her communication with the *ohmu* insects. At the end of the film, risking her life as a catalyst, Nausicaä accomplishes the reconciliation between humans and the *fukai* as well as between the humans themselves.

This anime presents its world with intense clarity and integrity, with consistent logic and realism of outlook underpinning the imaginary perspectives of the post-apocalyptic world, as evidenced by the hopelessness experienced by Nausicaä and her community in response to the invasion of the valley by the militaristic Kushana, Princess of the Torumekian Empire.

The limitation of human power is visualised by the ever encroaching *fukai* and the resultant illness of people, like Nausicaä's father, Jil, and other elderly men whose bodies became stiff and stone-like. The realistic representation of humans' lives appears common with Greek mythologies, where the insignificance of human lives is often clearly and bluntly depicted.

Simultaneously, Nausicaä and the anime itself have a mythical aspect. Ohmu, which are intelligent and telepathic with healing powers in their golden feelers, clearly exhibit holiness and spirituality. With her telepathic ability, Nausicaä is like a 'performing shaman' able to know the truth and act as executor/mediator of the will of nature (Kitano 1998). Her fights may be considered as her responsibility in this context (Saitō 2000).

The sphere of *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* is textured with diverse sources, including various religious and mythological meta-narratives, as Schodt 'finds the traces of Old and New Testaments, ancient Greek, and even Norse myths' (1996: 278). Moreover, many of Miyazaki's anime have a western/European atmosphere, which distance his works and his characters from the Japanese culturally specific context and make them universally acceptable.

Greek mythology functions in the same way in that it is sufficiently distant from Japanese cultural context, but it provides rich human qualities that are universally shared. Miyazaki himself acknowledged the hybridity of his works and he declared that the creation of his Nausicaä was partially inspired by two ancient heroines, Princess Nausicaä in the *Odyssey*,<sup>4</sup> and a peculiar noble girl who loved insects, mainly caterpillars, in a Japanese folktale, 'Girl who loves insects.' (*Mushi mezuru himegimi*), possibly written in the twelfth or thirteenth century and included in a collection of ten stories, *Tsutsumi Chūnagon monogatari* (The riverside middle counsellor's stories).

However, there may be a larger significance to Greek mythology in the anime, than the producer acknowledged, including the choice of the story framework as a mythological epic, the visualisation of the world and the integrated image of the goddesses, Athena and/or Artemis in Miyazaki's Nausicaä. Miyazaki (1983) wrote that in his mind, the images of the Phaeacian princess Nausicaä (daughter of Alcinous, King of the Phaeacians and his consort, Arete) as described by Bernard Evslin (1975), and the Heian noble girl who loves insects, merged together and his Nausicaä evolved.

In general, it is understood that Nausicaä in Homer's *Odyssey* (Book VI) represents an idealised youthful image of femininity, feminine beauty, tenderness, pride and desire. Nausicaä rescues the shipwrecked hero, Odysseus, on the island, Scheria, on his return from Troy (Butcher & Lang 1910). She sees his nobility and instructs him to go to the palace to see her parents and ask for their help. Later, admiring Odysseus, she wishes that he would stay and marry her. Nausicaä's rescuing of Odysseus is however directed in a dream by Athena,<sup>5</sup> – this underpins Nausicaä's obedience and caring nature within the accepted perception of an ideal female figure. Evslin's Nausicaä, however, has a slightly different focus. Here, she was depicted as a beautiful, sensitive and caring girl with fleet feet and a rich imagination, one who loves music (singing and playing a harp) and enjoys being one with nature, rather than pursuing worldly happiness fit for a woman, visualised by her parents. After Odysseus's hasty departure, urged by her parents who feared the development of her relationship with him,<sup>6</sup> Nausicaä remained unmarried and travelled as a first minstrel and sang about Odysseus's voyage. This image of Nausicaä appears to be more vivid and independent than the more popular image of her. Capable, independent, with a strong love of nature, Evslin's (1975) Nausicaä shares significant qualities with both Miyazaki's Nausicaä and the tomboyish, caterpillar-loving girl whose 'masculinity' was unacceptable and ridiculed in the gendered Heian noble society.

The Japanese girl collects and scientifically observes caterpillars, particularly the transition from 'ugly' caterpillars to beautiful butterflies. She asserts that the truth lies in 'naturalness' and refuses the artifice of make-up, detesting her ladies-in-waiting. She runs in the garden, despite the fact that the image of a noble female running was considered absurd. She enjoys a close and caring relationship with her boy servants who collect caterpillars for her, which was again unacceptable for noble girls/women. She has a logical, intellectual mind and, using Buddhist concepts, overcomes her parents concern, at her extraordinary appearance and behaviour. She is portrayed as a much younger girl than either the Greek or Miyazaki's Nausicaä, however, in the Heian period (794-1192), this was an ambiguous age between asexual childhood and a marriageable age (around the age of fourteen). Therefore, her tomboyish imagery suggests her refusal, either intentional or unconscious, of conforming to the socially expected feminine role. In other words, she is proud of being herself.

Similar to the insect loving girl, Miyazaki's Nausicaä also has a strong belief in beauty and truth in nature. She frequently visits the fukai and bravely carries out her research there. She collects fukai spores and grows them in her secret laboratory, all of which was prohibited or at least strongly discouraged by community rules. She struggles to find why the threatening, toxic fukai exists and expands. She wonders if the fukai's expansion is inevitable, and humans are doom to extinction. Her communication with the ohmu and research into the fukai indicate a new interpretation of the boundary between humanity and nature, as the fukai, seen as an embodiment of evil, are discovered to be the cleansers of the poisoned earth.

Miyazaki's Nausicaä, enjoys freedom, symbolised in her ability to fly in an endless sky, which may have evolved from his compassion toward both girls who long for freedom but are constrained by the pressure of social conformity: Greek Nausicaä with parents who hope to see her happily married thus separate her from Odysseus; and the Heian noble girl facing hardships in the closed, suffocating Heian noble society.

Additionally, in Miyazaki's work, we are able to see a shadow of the Greek virgin goddesses such as Athena in Nausicaä. There are a wide variety of stories regarding both goddesses and their images are diverse and equivocal (Baring & Cashford, 1993; Abbott, 1999). This diversity and ambiguity is not in fact unlike *Nausicaä in the Valley of Wind*, particularly when we look at the original comic version, where Nausicaä, who hates killing, goes through many battles and ends up terminating all seeds/eggs. The very life, that was created and stored for the future at a time when the restoration of the Earth was completed and fresh air and water returned.

Athena, the patron of the city Athens, the Goddess of wisdom, strength, and weaving was a beautiful virgin yet an excellent warrior. She fought to protect her cities and people, like Miyazaki's Nausicaä. She represents male and female qualities, although Nausicaä's youthfulness and non-sexuality is emphasized in contrast with the mature and often jealous misogynist, Athena. Athena has a strong but an ambiguous relationship, with her father Zeus. Although she is the daughter of Zeus and Metis, she was born from Zeus' head after he swallowed Metis fearing his prospective son and Metis together would overpower him. Zeus suffered severe headaches, and demanded Hephaestus (god of the blacksmiths) to open his head, from which the fully matured and armed Athena emerged. Despite the fact that she was said to have changed

from male to female in Zeus' body, her masculinity and independence is immediately evident. Her freedom from a feminine role is also strengthened by the absence of a mother's presence or influence.

This is somewhat similar to Nausicaä, who lost her mother early in life and had a strong bond with her father, Jil. She hysterically slaughters the Torumekian soldiers who killed the defenceless Jil in bed. Her concerns about his illness motivate her to study the fukai. The ambivalence of their relationship is, however, indicated in her image/dream in her mind while she is falling into the depth of the fukai. In the image, her father is represented by a dark silhouette, forcing the young Nausicaä to give up her friend, a baby ohmu. Furthermore, the comic version depicts Nausicaä's sorrow and alienation after her mother's rejection. It suggests that the strength of her love for others is not simply her nature, but also lies in her lonely and independent soul.

Despite their celibate independence, Nausicaä and Athena exhibit motherliness. Athena becomes affectionate towards a baby, whilst Nausicaä expresses her mother-like, or elder sister-like tenderness towards others, including non-humans. Their motherly affections are not necessarily contradictory with them being excellent warriors, as their involvement in fights is to protect people for whom they care. This may be a typical perception of female warriors. According to Nochlin (1999), women's fights were acceptable when they substituted for missing male warriors to defend their own territories/homes and their young, even in the Revolutionary period when 'the woman warrior is transformed into a negative rather than a positive signifier.' It is, however, noteworthy that being a girl, Nausicaä's care for others is not exclusive but lenient and spiritual.

Moreover, Nausicaä and Athena are similarly involved in agriculture, which help their people respectively. During her dispute with Poseidon, Athena creates an olive tree, which wins her the city, Athens. Nausicaä grows spores from the fukai in her laboratory to find out the secret of the fukai. She also takes care of the forest which has been protecting the valley for three hundred years. Her eradication of the fukai's spores, brought in by Kushana's crashed cargo ship, shows her dedication and commitment to the forest and her people's lives. This forest seems manmade and looked after, similar to the olive plantation. At the very end of the anime, the image of a sprout of the Chico, the tree that belongs to the valley, together with Nausicaä's flying cap

in the deep interior of the fukai, indicate her role and presence as guardian of humans and the potential future coexistence between humans and nature.

Artemis, the goddess of Moon and wildlife may also share some aspects with Miyazaki's Nausicaä. Artemis is a daughter of Zeus and Leto and her twin brother is Apollo. She remains unmarried in order to be independent, and she obtained Zeus's support. This suggests her solitude as well as self-centredness. Although Artemis is a hunter, she also relates to animals (wild, untamed) and protects them,<sup>7</sup> which is common with Nausicaä (Teto, ohmu and other insects) as well as the insect loving girl. Teto, her fox-squirrel, bites Nausicaä's finger hard, before he realises her caring nature and becomes her faithful companion. In addition, she loves dancing and in Homer's *Odyssey* Odysseus admires Nausicaä's dance and compares her with Artemis. Miyazaki's Nausicaä also dances with joy in the fukai, lifting up the ohmu's lens after she has successfully removed it from its shell. In Evslin's depiction (1975: 145), the name of Artemis is mentioned when Nausicaä meets Odysseus: Odysseus had wit enough to address her as the goddess Artemis.

The image of Athena is also visually glimpsed in Miyazaki's Nausicaä, particularly with her helmet and ceramic sword. Athena is often painted or sculptured, as wearing a bronze helmet and holding a sword. While outside her home/castle, Nausicaä generally wears a long sleeved army type short coat, with whitish tights, knee-high long spats, boots, and large gloves, handling a sword. In the air, she wears a soft helmet or flying cap and also a mask when in the toxic fukai areas.

The militaristic Kushana, Princess of the Torumekian Empire, is also an excellent warrior, who reminds us of Athena. However, her body is heavily covered by metal armour of white and gold, which is different from the light and swaying movement of the attires of Athena and Nausicaä. Athena is often accompanied by her owl and Nausicaä is accompanied by Teto on her shoulder. The legendary male figure in the tapestry also has a large bird on his shoulder. Moreover, the pictures of the winged Athena and Artemis may be compared to the angelic female figure in the opening of the anime, as well as Nausicaä's light, free and smooth flight on her white glider. According to Kōzu (1965), Athena's frequent appearance in bird form in *Homer* may be the trace of her being a goddess in bird form in Mycenaean culture. Unlike Greek gods/goddesses and angels in Christianity, Japanese myths and folktales generally did not have the imagery of winged beings, although there were flying heavenly beings.



There is however a crucial difference between the Greek goddesses and Miyazaki's Nausicaä, regarding their social perspective and their individualistic and powerful presences. The Greek virgin goddesses enjoy freedom because they are powerful goddesses and have Zeus' special support; hence they are totally privileged and cannot be understood as role models of women in general (Blundell & Williamson 1998; Fujinawa 1971).<sup>8</sup> Their personalities may be consistent, particularly regarding their self-centredness, yet some of their actions cause social frictions. The conflict lies between themselves and their society. They can be perceived as a threat to the society, the patriarchal community, both of the gods and the humans. They are worshiped but also feared as potentially monstrous. In contrast, Nausicaä's intrinsically selfless, compassionate personality makes her 'beneficial' to her society and an idealistic role model for both men and women. She may be seen as able to cause some potential social harm, for example, a young Nausicaä tried to protect a baby ohmu, which eventually was taken from her by adults, as they believed that ohmu and humans could not live together. However, this could be understood as a reflection of the hostility between two worlds which she simultaneously belongs to, rather than a personal confrontation with society.

The negative aspects of Athena, Artemis and many other female figures in Greek myths are depicted as womanly jealousy, which again is absent in Nausicaä. She has a womanly body and an affectionate heart, although she does not seek heterosexual love. She accepts each individual as he/she is. Her love and care for others is expressed as daughterly, sisterly and motherly or as a friend and a leader. In a sense, she is closer to Artemis, who is considered to embody 'purity'. She only enjoys an equal friendship with Asbel, the prince of another small country, Pejite. The absence of Nausicaä's jealousy and desire for love is essential for her independence, within a Japanese socio-cultural framework, where gendered role-playing penetrates everyday life.

The absence of negative or threatening characteristics in the portrayal of Nausicaä can be considered that she is characterized not as a mature woman but as a girl, with an emphasis on her innocence. Ohtsuka (1987) saw that Nausicaä's inner self, which is represented by the young Nausicaä's voice, is the key to transforming herself from a guardian deity of a small community to a 'god' who participates in the rebirth of the earth. Natsume (1997) similarly claimed that the key is Nausicaä's purity and innocence, and that these

qualities make her a legitimate successor of the moral ethics of the post-war manga and anime. It can be safely said that Nausicaä established herself as the first soul, a talented and autonomous fighting hero in the anime and the icon of the period.

According to Miyazaki, he chose her as the hero of this story, because in the current situation, it was difficult to create male characters with initiative even in their fights (quoted in Kiridōshi 2001: 19). This is a reflection of the period when girl (*shōjo*) and cute girl fighters became significant icons in literary creations, and were consumed fervently everywhere in Japan through media and consumerism. Sakakibra (2004) saw *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* as an exemplary work of 'beautiful girls' stories, in which a girl becomes a fighting hero and her special/magical power (such as Nausicaä's telepathic communication with ohmu) becomes a decisive factor in rescuing the world. This image strongly contrasts to the image of a boy's loss of position as a saviour/protector of a girl whom he loves. Honda (1986) also argued that Nausicaä's combined girl-ness and boy-ness is tragic, and the longing for a girl as a saviour indicates people's implicit desire to destroy the social order in the real world.

Nevertheless, the girl heroes' attraction is ambivalent and lies in their 'innocent cuteness', which can be admired as ethereal, sacred, magical, ethical, powerful, independent but also sexually attractive and thus vulnerable, depending on the audience's viewpoints. This means their external persona, their expected roles, are more significant than their inner selves, which may signify the potential absence of girl heroes' inner depth. Although very subtle, this may be common with Nausicaä. Her face is hidden under a mask in her first appearance and symbolizes the ambiguity of her presence, the deep-rooted discrepancy of her role and her inner self, whose absence underpins her mythical purity.

This anime, *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind*, gives significance to the colour blue, one of the two colours of the Greek national flag, and symbolize the Hellenic sea and sky (alexandros.com 1996). The colour blue dominates the world of this anime. It is importantly employed to signify metonymically nature, the ohmu, and the healer of the injured earth, and the connection between Nausicaä and nature, particularly the deep blue of her clothes when, in the climactic scene, they are dyed by a young ohmu's blood. The ohmu's numerous eyes are blue when they are calm. The colour of Nausicaä's outside

attires (her flying cap, short coat, knee-high spats and large gloves) are also light blue, suggesting her serenity, logical mind and spirituality.

In the landscape, blue bestows the ethereal serenity and depth of nature. More importantly, the fukai itself is compared with the ocean, both visually and linguistically. The word fukai (lit. rotten sea), was coined by Miyazaki. *Fu* means 'rot, decay, decompose', suggesting the ecosystem and the regeneration. *Kai* is written in kanji (Chinese character) and means 'sea', instead of another possible kanji which means 'world' and which seems more suitable for the fungi forest, situated on the ground, surrounded by the desert. This underpins the ocean image of the fukai in the anime. Inside the fukai is filled with soft, somewhat sorrowful light of blue, like the bottom of a soundless sea. It holds abundant clear water in its depth and prevents the occurrences of floods in the desert (Takahata 1984).

Some fukai creatures fly smoothly, reminding us of the sea creatures in the ocean. The shapes of fungi look like coral, rather than plants on the ground. Falling white spores of the fukai plants also resemble corals' spores. Moreover, the depth of the fukai is the place of clean air, sand and water, where Nausicaä and Asbel fall through quicksand. It is dyed soft blue and the scenery when looking up at the upper layer of the forest, resembles the sight from the bottom of the sea to the surface. The crystallized, shining sand, not the moist soil, from the dead trees covers the ground of the fukai. In addition, a wide, flat, blue lake with toxic water, called the acid sea (*Sun no umi*), which distances the valley from the fukai, may be similar to the Mediterranean Sea. The windy, clear sky is Nausicaä's home, where she flies high and free. The blue ocean sends fresh winds to the Valley of Wind, which protect it and all living things from the toxic fukai.

The divine serenity of blue in Nausicaä's world may suggest further cultural complexity. Blue, the colour of the sky, has a sense of holiness and spirituality in many cultures and often used in religious pictures, including the Virgin Mary's garments in Renaissance arts. Additionally, using the rich intertextuality of divine blue, the comic *Nausicaä* goes further to signify the paradise like place called 'the land of pure, clean blue' (*aoki seijō no chi*) filled with clean air and water, that is envisaged when the fukai has accomplished its cleaning of the poisoned earth. However, the irony is that the image of the land of pure blue, as well as ohmu who have blue blood, are all parts of an artificial system invented by scientists before the Seven Days Fire and it will be too clean for currently living forms.

In contrast to the colour blue, red signifies anger and the destruction caused by humans. This is exemplified by the fires, the rage in the eyes of the ohmu, the eyes of the biotechnological weapon, God soldiers, who completely destroyed the earth in the devastating worldwide war, the Seven Days of Fire.

An old man in the valley also makes the contrast between water and fire with his claim that it takes wind and water a hundred years to cure a forest that has been burnt by fire in a day. According to Komachiya (1987), blue and red is in contrast, as blue is physically a distant colour which gives depth to the object in the scenery, whilst red is the closest colour to the body and stimulates lively activities. Furthermore, the contrast between blue and red is compared to Nausicaä who wears blue, constantly touches things in blue and cares for lives and Kushana who constantly use fire. She sees the 'bloody' road as her fate. She represents the belief in the human civilisation and technology (Chūjō 1997). Although these two are contrasted, the story, particularly in the comic version, also suggests that they are possibly a pair, or a doppelganger for one another (Napier 1998). Sasaki (2005) supported this, suggesting that Kushana may be derived from Sanskrit, a name and also a word which refers to 'war' and the word can be spelled as 'Cusianna' which is an anagram of 'Nausicaa'.

Contrasting blue and red colours are powerfully employed in the climatic scene where, in her desperate attempt to stop the ohmu's imminent attack of the Valley of Wind, Nausicaä attired in blue, stands with the baby ohmu (who has blue eyes), in front of the herd of the enraged, stampeding ohmu with red eyes. Both Nausicaä and the baby ohmu are thrown by the unstoppable ohmu, however, the redness of the ohmu's eyes is swiftly replaced by the blue of serenity, as if a field fire being swept by a blue lake. This is followed by the ohmu raising her up with their numerous feelers and forming a golden field whereupon Nausicaä awakes. This is often perceived as her heroic death and mythical rebirth (Akasaka 1988, quoted in Inaba 1996; McCarthy 1999; Shimizu, 2001) and/or criticised that her image implies an unintentional glorification of self-sacrifice (Ohtsuka 1987; McCarthy 1999).

Her mythical image is indeed reinforced by the tapestry image of a prophetic saviour, wearing foreign, blue clothes and coming down onto the golden field, as the old, wise Obaba-sama claims. However, there is no indication of her becoming a living god awed and revered, but a beloved member of the community. The story ends with a euphoric and spiritual air of reconciliation between humans and the fukai. It was generally appreciated by the audiences

and Miyazaki himself saw it as an essentially inevitable ending (Miyazaki, 2002), although there are also criticisms which Inaba (1996) summarised as: 1) it offers too easy a solution to the ecological problem, and 2) it advocates Nausicaä's 'divine right of a king' in relation to the Emperor system in Japan. Inaba then asserted that the latter part of the comic version of *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* is Miyazaki's own criticism to the anime's ending.

In conclusion, the complexity of Miyazaki's Nausicaä suggests the presence of rich, diverse pre-texts, which may include not only the Phaeacian Princess Nausicaä's femininity and her caring and independent nature, and the Japanese noble girl's stubbornly logical, independent mind with her passion for insects and nature, but also the diverse, versatile and ambiguous image of the Goddesses, Athena and Artemis. In the anime, utilizing all of her personal qualities and abilities (for example, her asexual appearance, independence, physical and psychological strength, and compassion towards others), Nausicaä, like Athena for Athens, is represented as a devoted protector of her valley and her people. In this regard, the goddess and her image appear to me to have many similar aspects with Nausicaä, physically, psychologically and in her visual presentations. The ohmu with a sense of divinity is compared to non-human/celestial creatures in Greek myths in which mortals and immortals coexist. The imagery of the sphere of the anime and the symbolical significance of the colour blue within also echo some resonances of the scenery of Greece and its seas.

Many Japanese people, whose culture appreciates the impermanence of life, have sympathetically adopted Greek mythologies, particularly those with dynamic and tragic stories. Moreover, both cultures somewhat similarly experience a consistent tension between the dominant patriarchal influence in the public sphere and the strong maternal influence individual women had in private. This renders the psychological needs for the creation of idealistic, androgynous virgin characters, such as Athena (goddess) and Miyazaki's Nausicaä (super 'girl'), who as Napier (2001) summarised, embody ideally compounded human qualities: femininity and masculinity, innocence and maturity, independence and compassion, intelligence and spirituality, and art and nature. The rich Greek narratives have been inspiring writers and artists to create their individualistic representations in quite different forms and context from the originals. Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* is one of the excellent examples of such cross-cultural encounters.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This article is largely based on a 2003 humanities' conference presentation, co-authored with Prof. John Stephens 'Japanese popular culture and character fashioning: the quest for subjective agency in the animated films, *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* and *Perfect Blue*', (Bryce & Stephens 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Hayao Miyazaki is the most successful animator and anime director, whose works include *My Neighbor Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*) in 1988, *Castle in the Sky Laputa* (*Tenkū no shiro Laputa*) in 1986, *Kiki's Delivery Service* (*Majo no Takkyūbin*) in 1989, *Porco Rosso* (*Kurenai no buta*) in 1992, *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke-hime*) in 1997, *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*) in 2000. The most recent anime by him and his team, Studio Ghibli (established in 1985), is *Howl's Moving Castle* (*Hauru no ugoku shiro*, based on Diana Wynne Jones' *Howl's Moving Castle*) in 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Miyazaki's comic version was intermittently published in the monthly journal, *Animage*, between 1982 and 1994. It was subsequently published as a set of 7 volumes, between 1987 and 1995, followed by various translated versions, including *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, translated by David Lewis and Toren Smith in 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Described by Bernard Evslin (1975) in *Gods, Demigods, and Demons: An Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology*. Miyazaki read the Japanese version, *Girisha shinwa shōjiten* (*Small Encyclopedia of Greek myths*) translated by Minoru Kobayashi, Shakai shisōsha, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Lefkowitz claimed that 'the goddess (Athena) gives her (Nausicaä) courage so that she does not flee when Odysseus emerges from the olive thicket' (2003: 92)

<sup>6</sup> This is only one reading. Lefkowitz (2003: 111), for example, stated that Nausicaä's father wanted to make him his son-in-law but Odysseus wanted to go home.

<sup>7</sup> 'She [Artemis] has no special connection with vegetation or fertility. Rather, the wild animals signify her relationship with that aspect of nature which is untamed and even violent' (Marinatos 2000: 97).

<sup>8</sup> Fujinawa (1971) also asserted that the independent goddesses, such as Artemis, are a personification of the (wild, spiritual) nature, and their freedom is opposite to the ordinary women's situation in the ancient Greece.