

KONSHUU

vol. 51 #12
Nature



Berui and Zerui

Origin: Spirits of the Past

Art By Tammy Lee



Deer God
Princess Mononoke
Art By Sharrel Narsico



owlbeans

Time Gear
Art By Athena Chen

EUREKA SEVEN: PSALM OF OUR PLANET



ERIK NELSON

2nd Year, Mathematics and Music
For he is one with Earth-Chan

Writer

SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOI

Eureka Seven is one of my favorite anime. It's sadly underrated too. It has so much going on in it, it's like a flaming garbage heap of ideas. It's like a mix between *Evangelion* mindfuck and environmentalist propaganda. Instead of the third impact, there's a global environmental catastrophe. Instead of alien angels, there's alien coral, which is weird but it's something a hippie environmentalist would think up. The show mixes messages about the environment with spirituality and the supernatural, and weaves these in with all the other main themes in the show. On one hand *Eureka Seven* is an inspiring coming of age story ala *Gurren Lagann*; like many shows of this nature, there is a major antagonist who has philosophical significance: the conflict is what causes the main character's development. In the case of *Eureka Seven*, the main conflict is between humans and mysterious aliens called the scub coral. The main antagonist of the show, Dewey Novak, wants to de-

stroy the scub coral because he sees them as enemy invaders; in a way he's right. However, the main character, Renton Thurston, falls in love with a humanoid coralian called Eureka. The scub coral seeks to understand humanity and become friends, so it sends out Eureka as a messenger to understand how humans work. Plot happens, but the point is that Renton doesn't want the scub coral to be destroyed or else Eureka would be gone.

Interestingly, despite being technically aliens, the scub coral seem to represent the earth (spoilers, the show takes place on earth) and nature but also the "supernatural" and mystical powers of nature. What seem to be just an element of their world, energy waves called trapars that they skateboard on, are actually scub coral emissions. Scub coral eruptions cause earthquakes, and people becoming part of the scub coral causes "desperation disease." Skyfish, which fly on trapars are coralians. Natural (in the sense that nature has supernatural powers) elements of the world of *Eureka Seven* are associated with the scub coral. The oppressed religious group, the Vodaracs, who possess seemingly supernatural powers, and are based off of buddhist ideas, are merely one with the scub coral. Kind of like being one with nature. This is the framework of the environmentalist ideas in this show, basically by giving nature a representation as an intelligent lifeform and making the central conflict of the show surround it.



In particular, one episode stands out to me, episode 25: World's End Dancehall Garden. This episode focuses on Renton's encounter with William B. Baxter. Will represents the first true antithesis to Dewey's way of thinking that we encounter in the show. Whereas Holland and the Gekkostate are fighting Dewey for political reasons, Will represents a pure philosophical departure from Holland and Dewey's entire way of thinking, like Holland and Dewey are on opposing ends of a spectrum, but Will is on a different spectrum entirely.

Will is happy and carefree in an apocalyptic world. He is attuned with trapars, and can apparently communicate with this comatose wife who has desperation disease. However, he says it's not desperation disease because



he's not desperate. He can remove giant steel pile bunkers (used to suppress scub coral) with barely any effort. Will's character makes everything in the show up to this point seem foolish, while he is presented as almost foolish himself in a Tom Bombadil kind of way. His philosophy is made clear, when he tells Renton "If you fight the force of the land with force, someday you'll fall." The essence of his character is living with the land. His home is in the middle of a garden, which is in the middle of a wasteland. Furthermore, his soup is, according to Renton, "the most delicious soup I've ever had," which makes sense considering that it was made from the land. Will is fundamentally about being one with nature, and everything that comes with it: "People shouldn't use up more energy than the sun shines down on us." He accepts the duality of nature, the good and the bad: "The wind teaches you more than I can say, but be careful, each breath you take brings you one step closer to death." When he dies in episode 49, he is smiling and holding hands with his awakened wife. His

character and its role in the show is not only explicit environmental messaging, but also acts as thematic counterpoint, the effect of which makes more subtle themes about the environment and spirituality more apparent.

The writer of *Eureka Seven*, Sato Dai (of *Cowboy Bebop* and *Ghost in the Shell* fame) said in an interview: "The planet is an organism. The army views it as a threat and wants to subdue it; the heroes campaign for co-existence," pretty much explicitly stating the environmentalist nature of the show. However, he said he "didn't want to be preachy," so he kept it subtextual. I'm glad he did, I don't like preachy stuff. He also said he based Renton's home town off of Tibet. It doesn't seem very analogous to me, but the entire Vodarac religion seems pretty inspired by Tibetan buddhism, in its beliefs and most obviously in how it is oppressed by the government, and its head priest, Norb, is in exile. The Vodarac strive to be one with the scub coral as well. So, in *Eureka Seven*, being one with nature is basically reaching spiritual enlightenment. This is weaved into the main plot of Renton growing up, gaining self worth, taking responsibility, saving the world, and falling in love with Eureka. Perhaps the show is saying that an important part of developing as a human is becoming more enlightened, and that being more in tune with nature is part of that. This is reflected in the climax of the show: Renton saving the scub coral, and making a world where humans can live in harmony with nature. This might be a stretch, but perhaps falling in love with Eureka is like loving nature, since Eureka is a coralian. Who knows?



Clearly, the people responsible for the show had a lot to say about politics and the state of the world, and they did brilliantly in the subtext of a children's show about growing up and the power of love. That's one of the reasons *Eureka Seven* is easily one of the best anime out there, as well as the most powerful environmentalist anime I've seen. It is literally a Psalm of our planet, where Earth is treated as sacred and living.

SHINKAI AND NATURE



ABEER HOSSAIN

3rd Year, Mechanical Engineering and Astrophysics

This quarantine kinda trash but stay home folks

Editor-In-Chief

SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPO!

I wasn't really sure what to write for this issue. While we might not think about it, nature plays quite a big role in anime. We could expand the idea to include all the environments and settings that anime take place in or we could focus on the more traditional concept of nature: forests, parks, beaches, and mountains. I'll actually try to focus on both through the lens of Shinkai films. I've seen all his movies but I wouldn't say I'm an expert as, other than *Your Name*, I haven't seen any of them more than once. However, anyone upon viewing a few moments of any of his films will realize just how many held shots of nature there are. Of course, the scenery the movies present are incredibly beautiful and that alone is reason to show off. However, his movies are often movies of people in a type of "nature" than just about the people themselves.

Let's start with the most popular anime movie of all time, *Your Name*. The movie has a strong focus on nature and there are countless held shots of cityscapes, the small town, the lake, and the massive forest behind the town. The animation is beautiful and often looks better than real life. Throughout the movie, there is a strong dichotomy between Mitsuha's village and the bustling city life Taki is in. The environments they are in have a great impact on how they live their lives. Mitsuha's family is very connected to nature and are very spiritual, as seen with the grandmother. Taki's life in the city is a lot more hectic and we can see them both struggle to adapt to each other's environments when they trade minds.



5 Centimeters per Second and *Garden of Words* also focus on nature quite a bit. The former focuses on spring and the falling of sakura petals and the latter on the garden/park that most of the story takes place in. *5 Centimeters* uses nature as a device that divides our characters following their initial relationship. No matter how physically close they were to each other, the main characters just couldn't overcome a single obstacle every time to finally rekindle what they lost. *Garden of Words*, on the other hand, uses nature, the garden, as a place of belonging. The main characters meet there and grow their relationship there. Rather than physical distance keeping them apart, it's societal norms (though of course, if we're going with a wide definition of nature, societal norms could definitely be thought as a part of it).



Sunlight brings with it radiant smiles.

Weathering With You is the most direct example of how Shinkai uses nature to form a story. In a world that has constant rain, people's moods change. Sunlight brings with it activity and joy, it is associated with energy, excitement, and other positive moods. Rain, on the other hand, is often associated with sadness, sorrow, and mourning. Throughout the movie we see just how much people wish for sunlight. The radiating smiles that appear when Sunshine Girl does her thing. The environments we live in shape who we are and how we act to an incredible degree, and nature, in all its scopes, plays a strong role in that. In this time of quarantine where we are all stuck at home (if you're disobeying quarantine, shame on you), I think we all appreciate nature and being outdoors a lot more.

Staff Picks:

NATURE IN ANIME

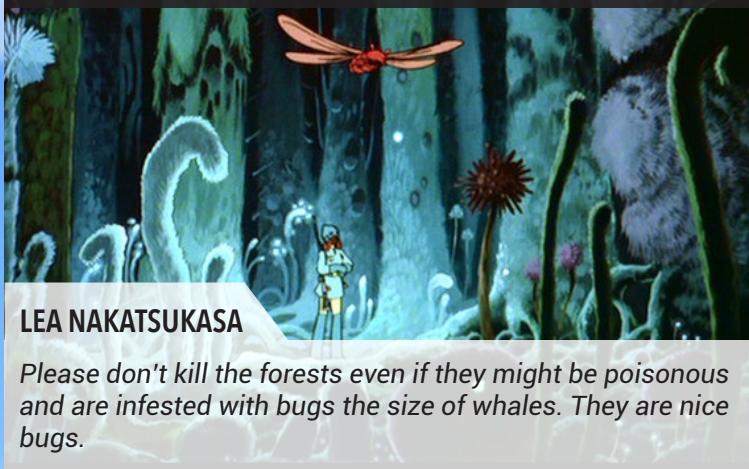
NATSUME YUUJINCHOU



MARC CASTILLO

Best place for retirement is to be surrounded by nature and fluffy yokais

NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND



LEA NAKATSUKASA

Please don't kill the forests even if they might be poisonous and are infested with bugs the size of whales. They are nice bugs.

TOUKEN RANBU HANAMARU



THEO RAI

The Hanamaru citadel follows the change of seasons, as the year progresses we watch the sweet blossoming of trees and hope. (It's not that deep, I just like Touken Ranbu. A lot.)

THE GARDEN OF WORDS



ATHENA CHEN

The perfect location to draw shoes on a rainy day.

MUSHISHI



ABEER HOSSAIN

A very calm and solemn anime based around the tranquility of nature.

WOLF CHILDREN



NERISSA HSIEH

Wolf Children follows the story of a newly moved family in the countryside. It focuses on themes of adolescence and self-identity, with great focus on the environment and how it changes people.

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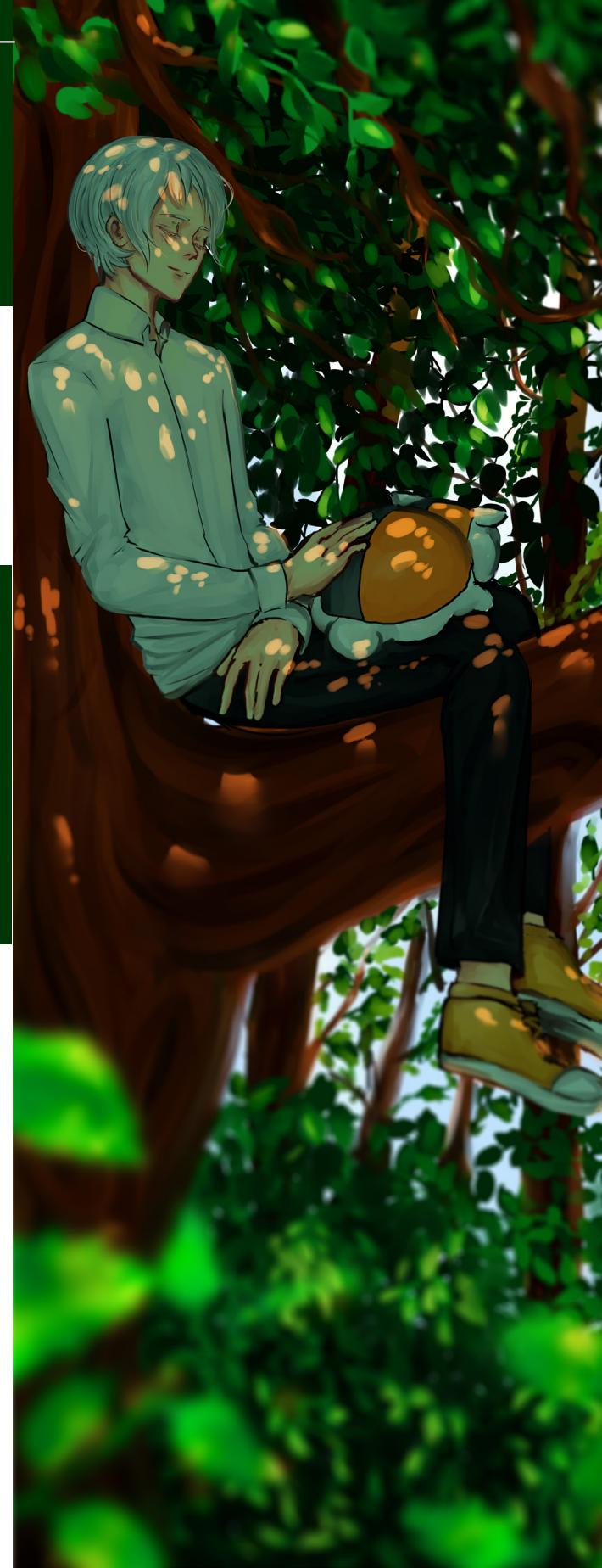
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Natsume Takashi

Natsume's Book of Friends
Art By Kate Bushmareva