

From the contrast between consciousness and matter inside Princess Mononoke (San) to the war between Humans and Nature

Researcher: Uyen Bui



Instructor: Eleanor Hogan

FYS 149 – Japanese Pop Culture, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA

01 BACKGROUND

Set in late 14th century Japan, a golden age of samurai, political, military, and ruling elites, Princess Mononoke seems to center on the marginal part of history. The main character is San - a daughter, who was abandoned by humans and was raised by wolves. Growing up in the mountains and with the animals, she soon understood the problems that Humans create in Nature because of their indiscriminate exploitation of resources. Nature could not tolerate it and took revenge. The animals had attacked the Human village, causing many casualties and material damage. On the opposite side is Tataraba village which represents Humans, specializing in producing weapons. Tataraba is governed by Lady Eboshi. She built her own "Modern kingdom" where women's rights are upheld and disadvantaged people in society are given equal opportunities to earn a better life. Eboshi's ambition to capture the forest as the source of raw materials for weapons production led to a material conflict between Humans and Nature, creating an endless loop.



02 THESIS STATEMENT

By analyzing the internal conflict of the character San from the anime Princess Mononoke, the broader conflict of Man versus Nature can be explored. San's unique upbringing with wolves and spiritual connections makes the relationship with her human side complicated. This paper will explore contradictions in San as the microcosm to represent the larger conflict between Humans and Nature.

MAIN PLOTS

03

Ashitaka was exiled from the village after shooting down Nago to protect the tribe because people agreed that he is haunted and no longer "pure".

Based on the clues found from the iron bullet shot at the wild boar, he then set out to break the curse and when to the Tataraba village.

Ashitaka then met San during a small battle between Nature and Tataraba village. When San infiltrated Tataraba village to find a way to kill Lady Eboshi, Ashitaka stopped the fight and brought San out safely.

Because of that, Ashitaka was shot through the back by a bullet and nearly died. San took him to a stream in the middle of the forest so that God could heal him.

The final war between humans and Nature was waged. Finally, Humans succeeded in obtaining the satyr's head after many efforts. However, they only received a dead forest, the satyr killed it.

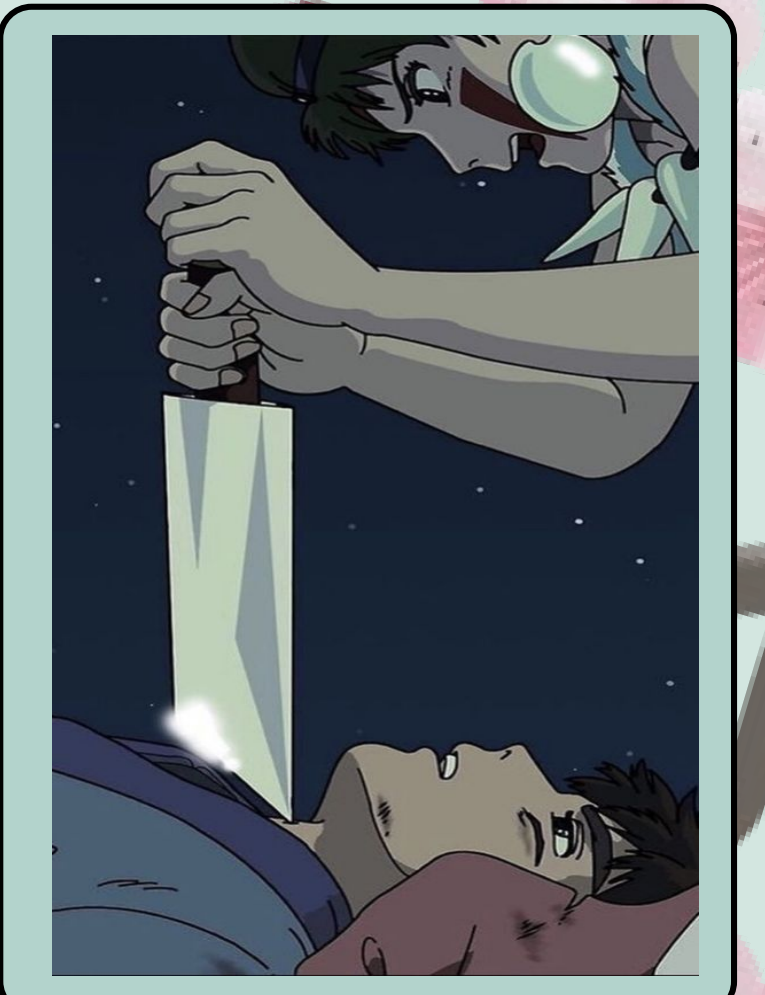
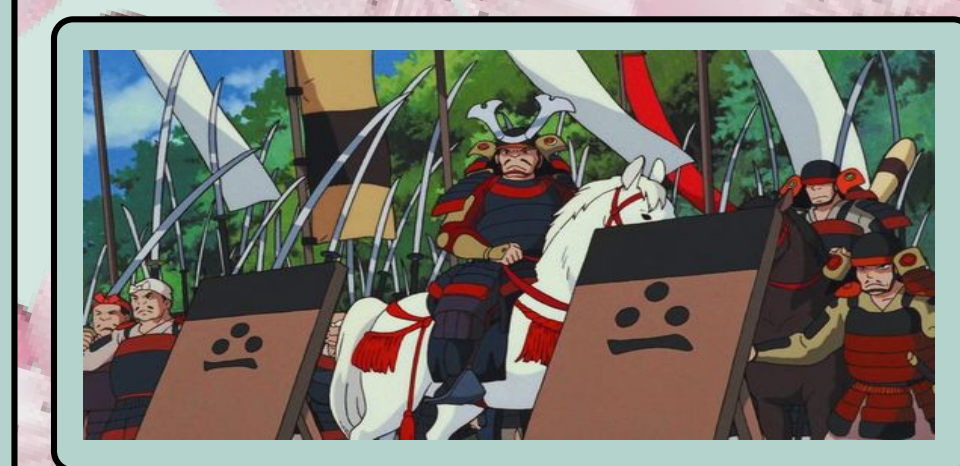
The ending is that San and Ashitaka, "hybrid people who are in the middle of the war," return the head to the satyr to save Nature and Humans

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATTER AND CONSCIOUSNESS

05

"Worldview"

The relationship between matter and consciousness when surrounding elements affect the formation of the mind and human personality



Living among the mountains and Nature has made San a wild person, an "animal" in the truest sense. She is physically Human but her social culture is that of wolves. This showed a contradiction between her body and mind, between matter and consciousness inside her. She could not be complete without one of them. But at the same time, her two parts, matter, and consciousness contradict each other, destroying each other.

From San's inner conflict...

... to the contradiction between Human and Nature.

San's identity as half human and half animal shows that they are not totally separate, but rather they form sets of assemblages (Cheng). Humans need to exploit natural resources to sustain life. Nature needs people to reclaim, cultivate, and help fertilize the land. However, they also compete with each other's interests.

In the decisive moment between death and life, Ashitaka uttered a sentence to San: "You are so beautiful." This is an arrow going through her animal part, awakening San's human part. Ashitaka's courage and affection changed the werewolf girl San, teaching her to love and sympathize.

"Awakening moment"

If Humans and Nature can begin to empathize and respect each other, no war can happen.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

04



Lady Eboshi

Govern Tataraba village, she signifies Human consciousness. Eboshi elevated the ambition, take over the forest and exploit it for profitable purposes.



Forest's God

A majestic mythical creature that governs Nature, the lives of animals, plants, and souls, represent "Matter".



Neutral Go-Between

Ashitaka belongs to no place. San is a hybrid with a human body and a wolf soul. They are in the middle of the war.

07

REFERENCES

Works cited

Abbey, Kristen L. "See with Eyes Unclouded": Mononoke-hime as the Tragedy of Modernity." *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, vol. 2 no. 3, 2015, p. 113-119.

Barkman, Adam. "the Earth Speaks to Us all": A Critical Appreciation of Filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki's Shintō Environmental Philosophy." *Christian Scholar's Review*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2019, pp. 323-335.

Cheng, Catherine Ju-yu. "Nature and the Smiths in Hayao Miyazaki's Princess Mononoke." *Tamkang Review*, vol. 49, no. 2, June 2019, pp. 27+.

Denison, Rayna. *Princess Mononoke: Understanding Studio Ghibli's Monster Princess*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

Napier, Susan J. *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. Palgrave, 2001.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. Abacus, 2002.

Shimizu, Kosuke. "The Ambivalent Relationship of Japan's Soft Power Diplomacy and Princess Mononoke: Tosaka Jun's Philosophy of Culture as Moral Reflection." *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2014, pp. 683-698.

Images citation

"Princess Mononoke | Ghibli Wiki | Fandom." *Ghibli Wiki*.

Cartwright, Mark. "Muromachi Period." *World History Encyclopedia*, 19 Sept. 2022.

Jujurevu, View All Posts By. "Lady Eboshi (Princess Mononoke)." *WordPress.com*, 20 Sept. 2022.

"Lady Eboshi | Ghibli Wiki | Fandom." *Ghibli Wiki*.

"Asthu Shahindha". *בשמיים* Twitter, 31 May 2020, "The Great Japanese Epic From Studio Ghibli Princess Mononoke Ashitaka and San Ashitaka." *Fans Share*.

Zamudio, Sebastian. "PARODIA a DROSSROTZANK (Dross) | TOP 5 Las CRIATURAS Mas ESPANTOSAS De STUDIOS GIBLI | KILINKAR." *Pinterest*, 27 Oct. 2019.

Princess Mononoke Final Draft – Cinema With Fletcher. 16 May 2017.

Caputo, Giuseppe. "Hello Welcome." *Pinterest*, 7 Nov. 2022.

Basurto, Edward. "Studio Ghibli Art." *Pinterest*, 22 Jan. 2022.

06

CONCLUSION

Princess Mononoke is a profound animated film containing messages about environmental protection, feminism, and many other valuable lessons. The character San has an intense inner struggle between the human part on the one hand and the wolf on the other. Throughout the film, she learns to balance her consciousness and nature to achieve a state of wholeness. San seems to be a small version of a real war between Humans and Nature. People need to learn how to drive their consciousness to treat Nature properly. Besides, *Princess Mononoke* pointed out the importance and connection between matter and consciousness. People's consciousness is influenced by their surroundings and is governed by what they perceive, hear, and see. Human consciousness is affected by the environment, so when people become addicted to Japanese popular culture, they immerse themselves in the fantastic worlds created by media franchises. Japan disseminates its soft power to the world through many forms such as anime, comic books, art, music, and games. Japanese soft power built on the foundation of consciousness is as strong as hard power built on material foundations. Through its focus on consciousness, Japanese popular culture has its own following, almost like a religious group forming a powerful force worldwide. This can be both good and bad depending on the outcome. Everything can be white or black, from Lady Eboshi to Humans and Nature, and so too with Japanese popular culture. The main point is how we follow the correct path towards developing positively rather than negatively by immersing ourselves, which is similar to addiction.