



HWA CHONG INSTITUTION (HIGH SCHOOL SECTION)

HUMANITIES RESEARCH PAPER 2021

Topic: A New Look at *Princess Mononoke*

Slant: Literature

Total Word Count (excluding abstract, footnotes & references): 5441

Student's Name: Poon Wai Yew Gabriel

Class: 3i4 (27)

Name of Teacher-Mentor: Ms Tay Yan Hoon

Declaration

I declare that this assignment is my own work and does not involve plagiarism or collusion. The sources of other people's work have been appropriately referenced, failing which I am willing to accept the necessary disciplinary action(s) to be taken against me.

Student's Signature:

Date of Submission:

1 Introduction

1.1 General background

In July 12, 1997, Studio Ghibli released *Princess Mononoke*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki. *Princess Mononoke* has since been the subject of large amounts of research, analysis and dissection, in particular regarding its ecological, environmental themes. It tells the story of Prince Ashitaka, who leaves his village to cure his curse. He witnesses a conflict between the creatures of a forest and the neighbouring town, Irontown, which actively destroys the forest in search of ironsand. He eventually plays a key role in resolving the conflict.

1.2 Rationale

Pastoral and Wilderness tropes are prevalent in ecofiction - ecofiction tends to portray urban development as harmful, while glorifying rural life and nature. While *Princess Mononoke* has been subjected to large amounts of analysis, these focus solely on depictions of nature within the film, while ignoring the moral complexity of Lady Eboshi and Irontown. These often demonise Lady Eboshi, or portray her as nothing more than a personification of ruthless capitalism. This seems to indicate that *Princess Mononoke*, too, falls into these tropes.

Princess Mononoke, however, does more than simply condemn Irontown and praise the forest-dwellers. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how *Princess Mononoke*'s presentation of urban Irontown in contrast with undeveloped nature diverges significantly from the aforementioned tropes of ecofiction. In addition, by approaching analysis of Lady Eboshi with an explicitly anthropocentric framework, which ascribes the most importance to human beings, this paper hopes to provide a better understanding of Lady Eboshi's underlying motivations. This will hopefully allow greater understanding of *Princess Mononoke*'s non-dichotomous presentation of ecological themes.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does *Princess Mononoke* break away from ecofictional tropes of demonisation of the urban and embracing of the rural and the wilderness in its presentation?
2. How does *Princess Mononoke* present the morality of Lady Eboshi's motivations and actions?

1.4 Thesis Statement

By presenting urban Irontown as a place of safety, stability, and refuge, while portraying the forest as divided, eventually rejecting the extreme viewpoints of Moro and Okkoto, *Princess Mononoke* defies ecofictional convention, outlining the development of civilisation - even at the cost of nature - as necessary. Additionally, by laying out the benefits of Irontown to its inhabitants and showing the human-centric ethics that govern Lady Eboshi's actions, *Princess Mononoke* acts as a moral defense of Lady Eboshi, although at first glance she appears to be the "villain" of the film.

1.5 Scope of Research

This paper will provide an ecocritical reading of *Princess Mononoke*. This paper takes ecocriticism as the study of how a piece of literature depicts the environment and handles ecological themes, with the assumption that protecting nature is good. This paper will use the Pastoral and Wilderness ecocritical approaches, referring to a focus on urban-rural dichotomy and a focus on how the wild is presented respectively, as this allows us to see how *Princess Mononoke* rejects binaristic portrayals or romanticisation of nature and the rural. This paper will not use the Ecofeminist approach, where parallels are drawn between the oppression of nature and of marginalised groups, as it cannot contribute to understanding how *Princess Mononoke* presents the dichotomy between the forest and Irontown.

Furthermore, in analysis of Lady Eboshi, the ethical framework of anthropocentrism will be used. The actions and motivations of Lady Eboshi will be viewed with the underlying assumption that the human interest is the most valid one. As such, it is ethical to take action that can harm other groups, if it benefits humans to an equal degree. The purpose of this is to allow new insight to be shed on Lady Eboshi's actions, as well as the film's overall moral judgement of her. The framework of biocentrism, the idea that all lives of all species have equal value, will not be used.

1.6 Significance

This study provides a better understanding of *Princess Mononoke*'s depiction of nature, the rural, and economic development. This study also demonstrates how ecofiction does not have to conform to the common tropes, such as dichotomous presentation of the developed and the undeveloped, or a condemnation of human activity. In addition, this study hopes to provide insight into the moral philosophy of Lady Eboshi, explaining how she goes beyond being a stereotypical ecofiction villain.

1.7 Limitations

Apart from physical constraints, this analysis is conducted through ecocriticism, which has inherent moral assumptions. Ecocriticism has also been noted to have a Western bias, which may impede its suitability in analysing a Japanese film. Analysis of *Princess Mononoke* with different frameworks or theories may yield contrasting results, as ecocriticism's focus is solely on how literature depicts nature. Therefore, this analysis does not cover other major themes in *Princess Mononoke*. Additionally, approaching *Princess Mononoke* with solely the Pastoral and Wilderness approach means that we will not analyse the social dynamics or power structure, as the Ecofeminist approach will not be used.

Analysing *Princess Mononoke* with an anthropocentric framework further limits potential analysis. By approaching analysis with the implicit assumption that the human interest is more legitimate than other interests, the perspective of the animals will be neglected somewhat.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Ecocritical Approaches

Garrard (2004) identifies three major approaches of ecocriticism - the study of depictions of nature in literature. These are the Pastoral, Wilderness and Ecofeminist approaches, the last of which will not be covered. It is noted that ecofictional works are not expected to fall into just one of these categories, often instead being a mix of two or more. These three approaches to depiction of nature are the primary ways they are depicted in ecofiction.

2.1.1 Pastoral

The Pastoral approach is the one that has received the most analysis and attention. As Garrard defines it, the pastoral approach focuses on the presented dichotomy between rural and urban life. In ecofiction, there is a general idealisation of the rural and demonising of the urban. Garrard further presents two major sub-branches. “Classic” Pastoral, portraying the rural as a place for reflection and relaxation; and “Romantic” Pastoral, portraying the rural as a place of independence. Note that in both, the rural is still portrayed as a place of safety to reside in.

Raymond Williams, another ecocritic, had a different critique of pastoralism. He viewed it as a portrayal of the rural and nature in accordance with five ‘R’s: “refuge, reflection, rescue, requiem, and reconstruction.” (Sales, 1983) In this case, the pastoralist trope is the presentation of the rural as a place of escape and safety.

Gifford (2019) points out a growing “anti-pastoral” trend in ecofiction, where life in rural areas is deliberately portrayed as harsh and tiring. However, Gifford further notes that ecofiction can have both pastoral and anti-pastoral element within, bringing up several examples where some elements of a rural life are depicted in a “pastoral” manner, or romanticised, while other elements are presented in an “anti-pastoral” way, where the burden of those elements are emphasised.

2.1.2 Wilderness

According to Garrard, the Wilderness approach focuses on how the wilderness - the untouched, unaltered, true nature - is presented. Garrard claims that the Wilderness approach lacks common, specific tropes, instead existing in a dichotomy. As Garrard puts it, there are two representations of the wilderness - that of the “Old World” and that of the “New World”. The “Old World” depiction portrays the wild as a place of exile, and one of danger. The “New World” depiction, in contrast, applies pastoral tropes to the wild itself, presenting the wild as a place of refuge or of solace, similar to how the rural is presented in many pastoral depictions.

Nash (2014) further analyses these portrayals. Nash speaks about the “Old World” depiction of the wilderness as the “antipode” of paradise, the opposite of “man’s greatest good”. Here, the wilderness is viewed as an obstacle to overcome. Similarly, mythological figures such as satyrs and centaurs were conjured as spirits of that dangerous forest, and they reflected that danger by their deceitful, dangerous nature, which would kidnap or kill those straying too far into their territory.

Nash goes on to speak of the “New World” depiction of the wilderness. What has previously been the reason for portraying the wilderness as dangerous - its “solitary, mysterious, and chaotic” character - were the same attributes that turned its portrayal into a place of repose. This further renders the wilderness more passive than before. In addition, this presentation paints the wild as something novel and unique; and therefore, desirable. This could suggest that the technical portrayal of nature in “Old World” and “New World” depictions are actually not so different, both depicting nature with certain characteristics and with a certain strength, and that the difference is the characters’ position, viewpoint or motive within the wild.

Nash then delves into a third portrayal of nature, which I will refer to as the “modern” approach, that of the wild being something to protect. Nash shows how this was a natural reaction to the gradual elimination of the wilderness in the nineteenth century in combination with the aforementioned rising popularity of “New World” depictions of the wilderness. This new portrayal of the wild as in danger instead of it being the danger is generally accompanied by the presence of characters who oppose such protection, and even wish to destroy the wild. Included

in this portrayal are discussions on how the presence of wilderness or its protection clashes with human civilisation, mirroring real world events. It emphasises that the wild is helpless without human intervention, calling on us to act.

In conclusion, Nash lays out a spectrum of perception of the wilderness. On one end, is the wilderness as a place of danger; but this shifts into a place of solace, and then safety, and then a place in danger. Garrard's ideas in this case are a simplification of Nash's more complex presentation of various different portrayals of nature in literature.

2.2 Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism is an ethical framework that shapes human action and philosophy. Hu (2021) identified a trend of “deconstruction of ideologies such as anthropocentrism” in ecofiction. This refers to the ecofiction often opposing and challenging anthropocentric ideas.

Kopnina et al. (2018) defined anthropocentrism as the viewpoint in environmental ethics that “value is human-centred”, and consequently, other beings are means to human ends. Kopnina et al. summarise anthropocentric viewpoints into four main points:

1. Criticism of anthropocentrism is counterproductive as it “fail[s] to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate human interests”.
2. Humans differ in their impact on the environment, and thus human inequalities are a necessary topic of discussion when discussing environmental protection.
3. Anthropocentrism acts as a motivator for environmental protection, as human survival is tied to ecosystem survival.
4. Human self-love is natural and is a starting point for love of non-humans.

Hayward (1997), in another defense of anthropocentrism, points out that a certain degree of anthropocentrism is present in all ethics, even biocentric ones, as they were derived from a human perspective. Furthermore, Hayward argues that supposed flaws in anthropocentrism are instead largely manifestations of discriminatory attitudes towards other species, something which is not inherent in anthropocentrism in the first place. In addition, Hayward points out that

ecological issues do not arise from human concern for humans, but rather, a lack of concern for non-humans, thus demonstrating how anthropocentrism cannot be the root of the problem.

As Elliot (2014) points out, in fact, the strongest defenses of and motivation for environmentalism have stemmed from anthropocentrism. Elliot proposes that the most convincing arguments for protecting the environment are those which have human motives, such as the creation of jobs, or the protection of human health. Elliot further notes that policy-makers require such incentives before pushing out environmental policies, therefore negating the idea that anthropocentric and environmentalist frameworks are fundamentally opposed.

According to Watson (1983), a key point of contention between those who support anthropocentrism and those who oppose it, biocentrists, has been the concept of equality between species. Anthropocentrism ascribes greater value to humans than members of other species. While this does not mean that the needs of other species should be disregarded, it does mean that the needs of humans should be prioritised. This is further inflamed when the idea of sentience is brought up, as anthropocentrism maintains that even if there was irrefutable proof that an animal was sentient, that is, aware of feelings and sensations, the human interest should still be prioritised.

2.3 Existing Analyses of *Princess Mononoke*

While *Princess Mononoke* has been subject to large amounts of analysis, a large portion of ecocritical analysis of the film approaches it from the ecofeminist approach, in particular analysing San. However, there have been attempts at analysing it using different approaches.

Smith (2019) analyses the portrayals of deforestation in *Princess Mononoke*. When discussing Lady Eboshi and Irontown, he likens Eboshi to a mere “head of industry”, and refers to Irontown as nothing more than a corporation, something which fails to represent the complexities of their actual portrayal. Furthermore, Smith fails to consider how the depictions of the forest are not as rosy as he suggests; he describes the ape tribe as merely innocent “victims of Irontown”, seemingly ignoring their more brutal desires, such as their wish to devour Ashitaka. Similarly, in speaking of the wild charge by the boars which resulted in their death, Smith implies that this

massacre's blame lay solely on Irontown, pretending that the creatures in the forest were one homogenous group, and ignoring how the boars had already been warned about the futility of their charge.

Tarlo and Rutherford (2018), in another analysis of *Princess Mononoke*, claims that Eboshi and Irontown have a "hatred for animals" and nature. Furthermore, they claim that Eboshi is a mere representation of corporate, soulless "capitalism" with her "iron and gun developments". Tarlo and Rutherford romanticise the forest, especially evident when they speak of Moro; they use Moro's adoption of San as evidence of Moro's lack of hatred or disgust towards humans. This is despite multiple moments in the film where this is disproven, and even Moro's own comments on San, not viewing her as truly human. They also neglect the displayed benefits Lady Eboshi brought to the previously oppressed townspeople, and ignore the more negative portrayals of the gods of the forest.

3 Methodology

This paper will use the Pastoral and Wilderness ecocritical approaches to analyse the depiction of Irontown, the 'urban', and the forest, the 'rural'. Furthermore, this paper will use the philosophy of anthropocentrism to analyse the character of Lady Eboshi, her actions, motivations, and the eventual moral judgement of the film on her.

A selection of 10 scenes will be analysed in order to answer the Research Questions. These scenes are chosen as they either depict life in Irontown and the Forest, provide impressions or information about Lady Eboshi's ethical framework, or show the moral judgement of the film.

4 Discussion and Interpretation

4.1 Contrasting Perspectives of the Forest

In interpreting the forest, it is important to analyse the views of the three animal gods – Moro, Okkoto, and Shishigami. Regarding the forest, Moro and Okkoto have opposing views - views that in fact correlate to respective ecofictional tropes.

At one point in the film, Ashitaka awakes in the wolves' den. Walking out, he steps out to the edge of a stone overhang, while the camera zooms back to emphasise the immensity of the surrounding forest. At this Moro speaks, encouraging Ashitaka to jump off and "end it all". As he speaks, instead of moving back to encompass both in the frame, the camera deliberately pans upwards, depicting Moro alone. The purpose of this is to naturally distance Moro from Ashitaka - he is alone and above him; this perspective corresponds to the "New World" view of the wilderness, where it is "mysterious" and "solitary". The power disparity between Moro and Ashitaka is cultivated through the rest of the scene using the camera angles. When Ashitaka is alone in the frame, the camera looks down; when Moro is alone in the frame, the camera looks up. This corresponds to elements of the "New World" view of the wilderness as some powerfully passive entity. Moro continues, "I was hoping you'd cry out in your sleep. Then I would have bitten your head off to silence you." This statement, however, is at odds with his position; if he wanted to kill Ashitaka, he could have done so at any time. Moro is a passive actor who reacts but does not take up initiative. "The humans are gathering for the final battle. The flames of their guns will burn us all." Despite this hopeless proclamation, Moro's countenance does not shift. He is resigned to the forest's fate, passive and helpless. Even as Ashitaka pushes Moro, questioning Moro about San's fate and identity, Moro stays on top of the rock, reacting in anger but doing nothing. The constant passivity and defeatism is reminiscent, once again, of the viewpoint that the wilderness is something that should be protected, that is in danger. The belief Moro holds that the destruction of the forest is inevitable mirrors the "modern" viewpoint. When questioned about San, Moro responds snappishly: "San is my daughter. She is of the wolf tribe." However, there is a degree of irony here, as moments before his utterance, we saw San shivering and bunching herself tighter in the cold night air. Anti-pastoralism comes to a forefront here, as despite the cave being outfitted with traditional survivalist garb, such as a bed of leaves and fur for blankets, it reveals these comforts as ineffectual; sorely lacking compared to Irontown.

There is one last significant scene with Moro. After Okkoto has corrupted into a tatari god, and San is trapped in his mouth, Moro stares down Okkoto disdainfully and pries San away. In his supposed final act, Moro makes no grand gesture to save the forest, instead choosing to save San. After this, Shishigami takes his life away. When Shishigami is killed, however, the liquid seeping from his body reanimates the head of Moro which leaps up and bites off Eboshi's arm, recalling an earlier line of Moro's: "I dream of the day when I will finally crunch that gun woman's head in my jaws". With these final acts, Moro reclaims agency - breaking free from his earlier perceptions that resistance was hopeless, and defying the convention of the wilderness as something helpless without human intervention.



Fig 1. Moro framed above Ashitaka.

Okkoto's first appearance is him proudly standing on a height, more grand than mysterious, imposing and surrounded by other boars. However, as Moro questions the decision to risk the whole tribe on one final battle with the humans, Okkoto responds: "Even if every one of us dies, it will be a battle the humans will never forget." Okkoto alone embodies the spirit of the "Old World" wilderness viewpoint. Nash defined the "Old World" wilderness as a place of danger for humanity, and Okkoto is physically the largest threat, with the aggressive nature of boars, sharpened tusks and his sheer girth relative to those around him. He also has a strong inclination to fight back and annihilate humanity. The camera draws back when depicting Okkoto to emphasise how large he is relative to those around him. He is dangerous but not mysterious nor

solitary - the threat he poses manifests itself clearly, as is seen in “Old World” depictions of the wilderness as a very tangible obstacle. He is always pictured with his tribe behind him, and he draws strength from them too. Later on, when the assault has failed completely, with the boar tribe wiped out, we see Okkoto, bleeding heavily, attempting to make his way to the forest spirit. Only San and another wolf accompany him. When warriors arrive to follow them, disguised as boars, Okkoto believes that his tribe has resurrected. He falls for the final time, cries out: “There are flames growing within me”, and begins his transformation. The hate and rage in Okkoto cause him to turn into a being who is defined by it – a tatari god. In his last moments, when Shishigami is finally in front of him, he is fearful, pupils dilating, recoiling. And with this, Shishigami takes his life too. As Okkoto was once the embodiment of the “Old World” wilderness, his transformation is simply the natural evolution of that viewpoint. While running through the forest to find Shishigami, he puts total faith in miracles which will not occur, the pastoral viewpoint of “refuge” Okkoto believes in. And when his faith and hopes are dashed, he transforms into a demon, like the horrors of the “Old World”. The beast fears Shishigami, the physical manifestation of the forest, for the beast is no longer part of the forest. The corruption of Okkoto is the film condemning the ideas of the “Old World” wilderness – that portraying the wild exclusively as a place of danger is a corruption of reality.



Fig 2. Okkoto standing proud and mighty, surrounded by the other boars.



Fig 3. Okkoto's immensity is further emphasised.



Fig 4. The demon who was once Okkoto is frightened by Shishigami.

There is one more god to cover, Shishigami. Shishigami is the ultimate representation of the forest, and as Moro reminds us, Shishigami “gives life and takes life away”. Shishigami is the arbiter of life and death. Why, then, does Shishigami take the life of both Moro and Okkoto when he could have saved them? As Shishigami represents the forest itself, he takes away life to reject the viewpoints and conventions which Moro and Okkoto represent. Shishigami is the most direct representation of the moral the film wishes to convey, a functional author’s mouthpiece. In

crucial moments, he is framed such that he is looking directly at the camera and the audience, breaking the fourth wall, representing the moral message the film wishes to directly impart on the audience. His actions reject portrayals of the wild as a hostile obstacle to be overcome, or something in need of protection. It merely exists, a reflection of the actions of those around it. Even as Shishigami is 'killed', his rebirth following the return of his head signifies how while humanity can cause deep damage to the environment, with help, it will always return.



Fig 5. Shishigami stares at the audience.

4.2 Presentations of Irontown

Irontown's first characterisation exists to highlight that Irontown is uniquely urban - unlike anything else we have seen so far. It begins with a group of residents of Irontown making the journey up a mountain, carrying food for Irontown. The ominous mood of rain, darkness and the sheer drop to their left is justified when the group are attacked by Moro and her pack, with oxen and men alike tumbling down the mountainside. However, the people of Irontown stand their own, and Lady Eboshi, equipped with a gun, shoots Moro off the mountain itself. This scene places Irontown firmly into the realm of the urban: like most urban cities, they are not self-sufficient food wise, relying on imports; indicating that their economy works on quite a different industry. Nature is opposed to them, as the rural are opposed to the urban. At the same time, the

introduction of the gun in the time period of feudal Japan shows how Irontown is focused on technological development – another hallmark of the urban.



Fig 6. Irontown depends on imports for food.

Apart from this, there is a single scene that perfectly encapsulates everything unique about Irontown, and the moral complexities of it. It also demonstrates how any judgement of Irontown is intrinsically tied to the judgement of Lady Eboshi. Contextually, Ashitaka has just learned the two things: he now knows that the women in Irontown were brothel girls who had their contracts bought over by Lady Eboshi to set them free, and he has just heard the story from Irontown's men of how they burned down the forest and chased Nago away. Correspondingly, audience viewpoints of Irontown have never been more mixed. They are clearly in the wrong, being the aggressor and the intruder, yet they also seem to provide shelter for those who are disadvantaged. This is compounded by how the men of Irontown are oblivious to any wrongdoing, proudly proclaiming Lady Eboshi's success, not understanding why Ashitaka appears so grim. The scene opens with Eboshi leading Ashitaka to her private garden. In sharp contrast to the forest that Ashitaka had earlier walked in, Irontown at night is lit by fire, and industrial smoke drifts upwards. We see both men and women performing heavy labour, hammering iron, lifting bundles and working the bellows that power the iron forge. The choice of framing this during the night is significant, as the melting iron and Irontown itself both shine brightly, like a beacon in the darkness - as the iron produced is what protects Irontown, and Irontown itself protects its

citizens. The garden, when Ashitaka walks in, is shot in its full glory from the air, with neat, orderly rows of vegetables and herbs. Ashitaka walks past that and enters the building after Lady Eboshi, and sees that it is not just brothel girls that Eboshi protects, but also people whose whole bodies are covered in bandages - lepers. Small talk between Eboshi and the lepers is heard, and Eboshi refers to them as “these people”, despite their ostracized nature. Only in Irontown can they be viewed as humans. The scene moves to the rooftop, and it is shown that at the back of Irontown, in stark contrast to the beautiful garden, the forest is withered and dead. This demonstrates the necessary sacrifice that Irontown has made without hesitation - to protect themselves, who would normally be trampled over without its protection, the townspeople have created relative prosperity, peace and equality within Irontown at the expense of those around them, be they forest or warring king. After all, Eboshi muses that the guns manufactured are also capable of piercing “the thickest samurai armour”.



Fig 7. Lepers, heavily bandaged, are protected and housed in Irontown.

Shortly before its destruction, we see Irontown one last time. When the destruction of the Nightwalker approaches Irontown and the people flee, the forge, the central structure of Irontown, starts burning, destroying itself - mirroring the calamity Irontown inadvertently brought down upon itself by killing Shishigami. Yet, once Shishigami’s head has been returned, the winds blow the flames out, and the gargantuan structure, though massively damaged, still stands. The forge was to the people of Irontown what Shishigami was to the animals of the forest

- it was their saviour. As was proclaimed during the fleeing, should the forge burn down, “It’ll be the end of Irontown”. Yet it survives, damaged but still alive, like the forest. The parallels drawn between the forge and Shishigami are deliberate: they were both revered; they both brought life and death; when Shishigami has been killed, the forge burns, but when Shishigami is restored, the forge survives. They signify to us that Irontown was not simply a blot on the landscape, not something that should have been destroyed to make way for nature. *Princess Mononoke* accepts it for what it is: Irontown was flawed, but it was also great, a guardian of its people like Shishigami was.



Fig 8. The forge still stands amid the destruction.

4.3 Beliefs and Actions of Lady Eboshi

Before passing moral judgement on Lady Eboshi’s actions, it is first necessary to understand the beliefs and ethical frameworks Lady Eboshi operates by. Throughout the film, Lady Eboshi follows a clear set of principles that guide her actions.

Our first impressions of Lady Eboshi come from Moro’s attack on the food caravan. While it set the stage for Irontown, it also did so for its leader, Lady Eboshi. When the wolves attack, she stands in the background, shouting orders, and the defence holds until Moro attacks. It is at this point, when the men dissolve into chaos, that the camera zooms in on Lady Eboshi, and she is framed in the forefront. Her face is one of concentration and anger, without fear. Calmly, as

Moro approaches, she takes aim, and when there is nothing between her and Moro, she fires. With assistance from her bodyguard, Moro tumbles off the cliffside. This is something that is key in her character: she does not fear nature. Apart from this, we do see that she is a capable leader and one who inspires the loyalty of those around her, as her orders were obeyed rapidly, without question.

A second significant scene is the scene where Ashitaka meets the lepers. Lady Eboshi's private garden serves another purpose - it is the first part of nature that we actually see in Irontown, which before had been nothing but industry. This one piece of greenery cultivated by Lady Eboshi demonstrates how, unexpectedly, she does not hate nature – she prefers to control it. Eboshi's interactions are equally illuminating, as she speaks casually to the lepers living under her protection, who even tease her - "You better watch out... Lady Eboshi wants to rule the world". She responds in a similar fashion, stating with a smile that the guns were "the perfect thing for ruling the world". She is clearly capable of deep empathy, as she notices how the lepers have been pushing themselves, apologises and promises to "have wine sent down later" - a luxury. Upon knowing of Ashitaka's curse, she admits freely that she shot Nago, and apologises to Ashitaka. In this same breath, she calls Nago a 'brainless pig', and muses that the curse should have gone to her. On the roof, she speaks openly of her wish to kill Shishigami. Also on the roof, she fires a single shot into the forest to prevent the apes from replanting it. Although her portrayal here may seem contradictory, it makes sense once we recognise that her ethics system is different from conventional ideals, especially conventional ideals in ecofictional works. While Eboshi has deep empathy, this empathy extends only to humanity. As seen by her utter disdain towards the creatures of the forest, she dislikes them, but not because they are animals; recall that she describes the guns as both being able to "kill forest monsters and pierce the thickest samurai armour". They are both obstacles to Irontown, and thus must be opposed. Eboshi holds an anthropocentric viewpoint, in particular focusing on the downtrodden she protects. She at least recognises and accords to three of the points Kopnina et al. present: she recognises the protection of Irontown as a legitimate human interest; she believes in the necessity of her actions to correct existing inequality; and she does not hate nature, but merely loves humans more.



Fig 9. Eboshi's private garden, with nature set in orderly rows.

We see Lady Eboshi again later when the samurai attack Irontown. Many parallels are drawn between this scene and the earlier scene of the wolf attack. It also opens with handlers failing to keep their oxen calm; Eboshi again stands at the back, commanding everyone; and she calmly shoots and kills general after general herself, exactly like she shot Moro. The purpose of this scene is to rearticulate: whom she fights does not matter. Her focus is on protecting those under her charge, be they under attack from wolves or samurai.

Before the epilogue, one final scene with Eboshi of note. Before the assembled troops in the forest, she proclaims that she is going to kill Shishigami, advising them: "The trick is not to fear him". True to her word, she runs into the open and shoots Shishigami. While Ashitaka and Shshigami try to stop her, they fail. Even while Shishigami's body bursts into liquid killing everything it touches, Eboshi walks forward and throws the head over. Even after Moro bites off her arm, she smiles. Through this scene, we see that Eboshi is a true anthropocentrist. She does not fear the forest, or its gods - she recognises them as equals, opponents. She is not fueled by hatred for the animals, or for nature. When she smiles through the pain, she does so because she knows the forest has taken its due from her, and even accepts this bargain implicitly when she implores Ashitaka not to waste his sympathy while Ashitaka binds her injury. She does not see herself as a victim of the forest, nor does she despise its creatures. The only remaining reason for

her persistence in destroying the forest is that they are an opposing force to her, and she will deal with them as she must.



Fig 10. Eboshi implores Ashitaka to not waste his sympathy on her.

5 Conclusion

Ultimately, *Princess Mononoke* rejects the conventional approaches to depictions of the wilderness and the rural. The film presents Moro and Okkoto who believe in and embody the two extreme tropes of pastoralism and the wilderness, but passes judgement on them through Shishigami, killing both of them, denouncing them as false.

Similarly, *Princess Mononoke* presents Irontown not as a singularly harmful entity, but one which helps those inside survive and thrive, getting by as they must. It concludes that Irontown is ultimately still vital to the people, as Shishigami is to the forest.

Lady Eboshi, despite committing morally dubious actions, is never wholly condemned in the film. Although her mistakes are punished, her virtues are presented in equal stride, and her moral basis does not change - it instead grows stronger, as she now understands how the survival of her people is tied to the survival of the ecosystem. Thus, she concludes by promising that she will build something 'better'. In this way, the film acts as a moral defense of Lady Eboshi's viewpoint.

References

1. "歴代興収ベスト100". Kogyo Tsushinsha. Archived from the original on August 8, 2017. Retrieved March 3, 2021 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20170808031813/http://www.kogyotsushin.com/archives/alltime/>
2. "過去興行収入上位作品 一般社団法人日本映画製作者連盟". Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan. Retrieved March 3, 2021, from <http://www.eiren.org/toukei/1997.html>
3. Alpert, S. (2020, September). *Sharing a House with the Never-Ending Man: 15 Years at Studio Ghibli* (No. 9781611720570). Stone Bridge Press.
4. Clark, T. (2011). *The Cambridge introduction to literature and the environment*. Cambridge University Press.
5. Dwyer, J. (2010). *Where the wild books are: A field guide to ecofiction*. University of Nevada Press.
6. Galbraith IV, S. (2008). *The Toho Studios Story: A History and Complete Filmography*. Scarecrow Press.
7. Gifford, T. (2019). *Pastoral*. Routledge.
8. Glotfelty, C., & Fromm, H. (Eds.). (1996). *The ecocriticism reader: Landmarks in literary ecology*. University of Georgia Press.
9. Greg, G. (2004). *Ecocriticism*. London and New York: Routledge.
10. Hayward, T. (1997). Anthropocentrism: a misunderstood problem. *Environmental Values*, 6(1), 49-63.
11. Hu, J. (2021). *Degrowth in American Ecofictions: An Ecocritical Study of Joyce Carol Oates's The Falls, Don DeLillo's White Noise, and Edward Abbey's The Monkey Wrench Gang—With A Comparison of A Chinese Ecofiction: Jiang Rong's Wolf Totem* (Doctoral dissertation, szte).
12. Jiang Yue, A. (2019). *On Feminism Toned-Down In The English Dubbing of Princess Mononoke*.
13. Johnson, Jayme. "Biocentric Ethics and the Inherent Value of Life" (PDF). umass.edu. Archived from the original (PDF) on 19 April 2014. Retrieved 10 November 2012.

14. Kevin C. Elliott (2014) Anthropocentric Indirect Arguments for Environmental Protection, *Ethics, Policy & Environment*, 17:3, 243-260, DOI: 10.1080/21550085.2014.955311
15. Kopnina, H., Washington, H., Taylor, B., & Piccolo, J. J. (2018). Anthropocentrism: More than just a misunderstood problem. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 31(1), 109-127.
16. Le Blanc, M., & Odell, C. (2019). *Studio Ghibli: The Films of Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata*. Oldcastle Books.
17. Love, G. A. (2003). *Practical ecocriticism: Literature, biology, and the environment*. University of Virginia Press.
18. Moore, B. L. (2017). *Ecological literature and the critique of anthropocentrism*. Springer.
19. Naess, A. (1973). The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary. *inquiry*, 16(1-4), 95-100.
20. Nash, R. F. (2014). *Wilderness and the American mind*. Yale University Press.
21. Passmore, J. (1976). *Man's responsibility for nature*.
22. Routley, R. and V. 1980. 'Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics' in *Environmental Philosophy* (eds) D.S. Mannison, M. McRobbie and R. Routley. Canberra: ANU Research School of Social Sciences: 96-189
23. Sales, R. (1983). *English literature in history, 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* (Vol. 3). Hutchinson.
24. Smith, J. (2019). *Japanese Environmentalism Reflected through Princess Mononoke*.
25. Tarlo, E., & Rutherford, S. (2018). *Desire, Disgust, Humans and Gods; The Paradox within Princess Mononoke*.
26. Watson, R. A. (1983). A critique of anti-anthropocentric biocentrism. *Environmental Ethics*, 5(3), 245-256.