

The following essay first appeared in *Triumph of the Past* in January and February 2003. *Triumph of the Past* is a monthly magazine about "social credit" economic and political ideas. Future issues will contain further writing on Miyazaki and Kurosawa. For information on the e-edition contact Michael Lane at triumphofthepast@aol.com.

## A Comic Book That Moveth to Tears

By Michael Lane

### Part I

In 1958, Hayao Miyazaki, age seventeen, saw an animated film called *Hakujaden*. He writes: "I have an embarrassing confession. I fell in love with the heroine of a cartoon movie."<sup>1</sup> Viewer's of Miyazaki's own animated films *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, and *Princess Mononoke* also know this experience. Miyazaki's magnum opus, however, is not a film but a thousand-page comic book thirteen years in the making (1981-94), also called *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind*.<sup>2</sup> The true name of this genre is *manga*, or, in English, "graphic novel." If you are not familiar with comic-book conventions, it takes a little practice to learn to read the panels in order, to pay attention to sound effects, and to interpret what is happening in the little pictures (a magnifier helps). It is well worth the effort, for *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind* is one of the most profound and moving books ever penned. It is a war epic whose plot is driven relentlessly forward by its own enormous energy, but at the same time it contains some of the most beautiful lyrical moments in all literature.

"In a few short centuries," reads the prologue,

industrial civilization had spread from the western fringes of Eurasia to sprawl across the face of the planet. Plundering the soil of its riches, fouling the air, and remolding life-forms at will, this gargantuan industrial society had already peaked a thousand years after its foundation: ahead lay abrupt and violent decline. The cities burned, welling up as clouds of poison in the war remembered as the Seven Days of Fire. The complex and sophisticated technological superstructure was lost; almost all the surface of the earth was transformed into sterile wasteland. Industrial civilization was never rebuilt as mankind lived on through the long twilight years. (1.3)<sup>3</sup>

The time of the story is a thousand years after the Seven Days of Fire. Nausicaa<sup>4</sup> is the princess of the Valley of Wind, a small, independent state in the Periphery, near the Forest, where weird fungi give off poisonous miasma and giant insects dwell. The different kinds of plants and insects

of the Forest are carefully distinguished. The greatest and most mysterious of the insects is the ohmu, a perpetual larva that looks like a potato bug the size of a ship or a sectioned, crawling whale, with multiple eyes whose color (a fierce red or a serene blue) changes with the creature's feelings. The Forest used to be far off, but three hundred years ago a new Forest was born in a cataclysmic event remembered as the Daikaisho and associated with a continental stampede of ohmu. While most people hate and fear them, Nausicaa has a special affection for these mysterious creatures.

The chief hard material of this civilization is industrial ceramic, which they obtain by excavating buried cities. (Ohmu shell is harder but rare.) This is where they get the engines that keep ugly, centuries-old aircraft running, though they would not know how to build new ones. Miyazaki's uncle owned the family business, an airplane factory, and Miyazaki loved flying machines, which appear in almost all his movies. In the manga there are planes, hovering craft, and barges and kites that can be towed by planes from a cable--all carefully distinguished. All the airships fly at low speed, so that you could stand on the deck. Nausicaa comes and goes on a pretty little white jet-kite called Mehve, reading every subtlety of wind and air. Land transportation is by "horseclaw" (large flightless bird) or, among the Doroks, a kind of hooved beast. There are no watercraft, and all "ships" are airships.

Everyone lives with a constant awareness of the Forest. They must wear gas masks when going into it or flying over it, and they must promptly burn off any spores that land on their fields. In this hostile environment, everyone is at risk, and population is declining. Nausicaa herself is the only survivor of eleven children, and her father is dying from the disease.

Nausicaa's beloved teacher Yupa has devoted a lifetime to trying to understand what the Forest means, and his gifted pupil has inherited his passion for this question. She takes him to a secret room, where she has grown Forest plants free of miasma merely by giving them a clean environment: it is not the plants that are poisonous but the earth.

Besides the Periphery, there are two great empires, the Torumekian one to the north, whose symbol is a Double Serpent, and the Dorok one to the south, whose symbol is an Eye. The Dorok Empire is a theocracy. The heart of the empire is the Holy City of Shuwa, and the heart of Shuwa is a black crypt, an underground structure a thousand feet deep, at the bottom of which lives a god called the Master of the Crypt. With him live the high priests, who have cheated death at a price: their lives have been

prolonged to centuries by use of the ancient black arts of genetic engineering.

The Master of the Crypt rules the empire through secular emperors, whom he bribes with power and seeming immortality. In Nausicaa's time there is an ongoing power struggle between the emperor, Namulith, and his brother, Miralupa, both of whom have had their lives unnaturally prolonged. Miralupa depends on regular immersions in solution to keep his brittle skin intact. Namulith, on the other hand, has been transplanted into heedra (artificial bodies), a procedure Miralupa shuns because of the horrors their father suffered. According to the ruling religion, the ohmu and the Forest are justice--a punishment to right the scales before the new world can be born. But the forbidden ohmu-cult and the promise of a Blue-Clad messiah still thrive in secret.

The Seven Days of Fire itself was an apocalypse brought about by the unleashing of terrible fiery man-made giants called god-warriors. In the war between the two empires, the Doroks will use their arts to turn the ohmu and the Forest into weapons and finally even resuscitate a god-warrior.

Two other groups of people may be mentioned, the most despised and the most noble. The wormhandlers are an ignorant, unclean, and groveling people, who have made a trade of killing ohmu for their shells and of training larvae (about the size of dogs) to serve as bloodhounds. They have villages in the Forest, purifying the air in underground chambers. They wear ugly gas masks in public, concealing their faces. The Forest People are a mysterious and almost legendary people who live in the Forest. They took to the Forest after their city, Eftal, was engulfed in the last Daikaisho. They wear big, fuzzy body-suits that make them look bearlike. They camp in bubbles made of insect-foam into which they pipe fresh air from underground. Despite their contrast, these two peoples are from the same stock.

The character of Nausicaa is vivid from the start. She is collecting spores in the Forest when she comes upon a perfect ohmu shell shed by its owner. It towers above her. She climbs onto it and taps a bit of gunpowder (her gun shoots flares or sound-makers, not bullets) in a neat circle around an eye-casing, then ignites it to break it loose. This clear semiglobe will make a perfect canopy for the gunship. At this moment, the trees release their afternoon spores. They fall through the air like snowflakes, and Nausicaa lays under the eye-casing gazing at them. They are so beautiful! She falls asleep

She is awakened by the mind-cry of an enraged ohmu, for she is telepathic. It is charging across the plain in pursuit of a man on horseclaw. Circling round it on Mehve, she uses a strobe grenade to stun it, then, as it comes to, flies in circles around it forcing air through a hand-held whistle, to soothe it. She talks to it in gentle tones, calling it a "child" and encouraging it to return to the Forest. It obeys. Catching up with the traveler, she finds it is none other than her beloved teacher Yupa just returned from his travels. Now she is all girl, and he marvels at how grown she is. She is blond and looks to be about seventeen. She sees something squirming in his pouch. It is a little squirrel-fox. He had fired his gun to rescue it from an insect, mistaking it for a human baby. His use of his gun was the reason for the ohmu's attack. Despite Yupa's warning that it is wild, Nausicaa lets the creature run up her arm. Coaxing it with her hand, she gets bitten, but she just keeps talking to it: "It's all right, don't be afraid. See, don't be afraid. You were frightened, weren't you? But it's all right now" (1.21f). Its ears droop, and its tongue comes out. It licks the wound that it made. She names him Teto, and he will stay with her to the end. Yupa marvels at her mysterious gifts.

There is a lovely, almost silent scene with Teto a little later. After an outrage, Nausicaa, in a fury like one possessed, has killed a man, and Teto had run off. We see Teto in the early morning picking his way through Nausicaa's retainers asleep on the ground. He picks up a scent. He sees Nausicaa at a distance. She is sitting on the ground with her arms on her knees and her head buried in her arms. Teto comes close. He jumps up to his usual spot on her shoulder. She lifts up her face, which is dirty. "Teto," she thinks, then says out loud, "I thought you'd never come back to me." Then she thinks, "Thank you. Why did I have to be born a princess?" (1.68). This takes up one page, eight panels.

Nausicaa will go to war. The Torumekian emperor has declared war against the Dorok Empire and called on the free states of the Periphery to honor their treaty obligations by contributing each a manned gunship. Because her father, Jhil, is dying, Nausicaa will go in his stead. While the Torumekian main force attacks south across the plains, Princess Kushana leads the Periphery convoy south across the Forest to her secret encampment at the Acid Lake, where vapors kill the miasma in the air.

Nausicaa is not with them, for she was separated in an air attack and then captured by the Doroks, who, however, treat her well and even give her a robe. Kushana's position has been compromised, for the Doroks are somehow aware of it. They have tortured a baby ohmu and are dangling it

from a small hovering craft called a flying jar, to provoke a stampede of the ohmu herd, which destroys everything in its path. Nausicaa escapes on Mehve and succeeds in returning the baby to the herd, who become motionless and quiet, their eyes blue. Suddenly Nausicaa finds herself lifted in the air by their golden feelers. Her robe has turned blue, stained by the blood of the baby she had rescued, and as the scene is described to a blind Dorok priest, he recognizes the fulfillment of a prophesy--the coming of the Blue-Clad savior.

While separated from the convoy, Nausicaa stumbled onto a strange place--a cavern underneath the Forest where the air is pure. The roof of the cavern is held up by petrified trunks that conduct water upwards, and the floor of the cavern is sand. Nausicaa understands that Forest upon Forest petrifies and then crumbles, thus turning the poisons it has absorbed from the earth into sand-crystals and leaving a hollow. Thus, the Forest is cleaning the earth.

An ohmu told Nausicaa a strange thing, too: the herd is going south because a forest there is calling for help. Nausicaa resolves to go south, too. She makes her blue robe into a flight jacket and cap and will accompany Kushana. Kushana suspects her whereabouts were betrayed to the Doroks by her own family. Her plan is to find the Third Army--her own highly trained men, loyal to her, who were commandeered for the main front--and reclaim command. Nausicaa says she feels no fear, just a voice in her heart saying, "Go forward!" As the Torumekian warship flies through the night, she hears the mind-cry of the blind priest, giving his life for her sake.

After the terrible events at the Acid Lake, this priest defied Miralupa himself in his determination to end the use of ohmu. He exhorts the people: "Already your homeland is lost, your relatives slaughtered; and now you must continue to wander, bent under the tyranny of overbearing authority. But do not despair, my family. Endure your pain, bear children even in these days of shame, and raise them well" (1.250). He announces that the Blue-Clad One has come and then tears off his gas mask to die. Miralupa, like Nausicaa, is telepathic. As he zeroes in on her like a cold shadow, the dying priest's powerful spirit protects her. She feels it as a hot spot on her chest. Miralupa's dark spirit cannot find Nausicaa because she has no anger or fear to give her away. The priest-martyr is henceforth known as the Holy One.

The Holy One's courageous death befell in a wormhandler village, which, as it happens, Yupa has also reached; for after Nausicaa went to

war, Yupa set off again in search of answers to the puzzle of the Forest. Together with two confederates, he escapes Miralupa by plane, only to be shot down over the Forest. They are rescued by a boy named Selm, one of the Forest People, and spend some time with them. Yupa sees the ruins of Eftal and learns what Nausicaa has already learned--how the Forest is cleansing the earth. In the thousand years since the Seven Days of Fire, he reasons, the oldest part of the Forest must have completed its cycle: What happens there? The Forest People refuse to speak of this. After a time, the trio take their leave heading south, for flying insects are on the move in that direction. Something is happening.

As they arrive in Dorok lands, Kushana finds the Third Army under siege and in dire straits. The Torumekian attack dismally failed. The Doroks attacked with masks through a cloud of miasma, and her picked troops were ordered to dismount and fight to the last man to cover the retreat of the rest. She is furious at how they were wasted, and she also learns it was her own father who set her up at the Acid Lake. The retreating Torumekians are burning what they can't carry off and carrying off everything they can, including civilian captives. Nausicaa secures their release, but only by promising to ride with Kushana in battle. Kushana breaks the siege with a brilliant maneuver in which Nausicaa distinguishes herself. Nausicaa then heads south on her own, declaring, "If I stop moving, I'll drown in grief" (2.163). Kushana, a great and noble figure in this drama, ponders in her heart their two paths: "Nausicaa, you walk the path you have chosen as you see fit; it's a fine way to live. And I will walk my own crimson path, a cursed path, father, brothers, sisters, shedding each other's blood" (2.153). During their time together, Nausicaa has shown herself a natural leader, easily winning the love of Kushana's men--and Kushana's respect--by putting their lives before her own.

One of Miralupa's division commanders, the priest Charuka, had caught a glimpse of the Blue-Clad One in the turret of Kushana's plane. He vowed to kill her but soon finds himself helping her. When he sees the recklessness with which artificial Forest and mold are created and used as weapons, he realizes that even if the war is won, they will destroy their own country in the process. Sure enough, an accident occurs. Slime-mold stored on Miralupa's airship begins to grow out of control, spewing miasma. Nausicaa appears, helps Charuka scuttle the ship, and gets him safely off. The mold, however, puffs out, falls gently to the ground, and begins to move and grow. It turns out that this happened in three other places, and now the four molds are trying to unite.

Nausicaa has a new companion with her, a strange boy named Chikuku. She had found him at a ruined temple where the last of the monks of the forbidden cult was waiting for her. He is very telepathic and acts as her “radio” enabling her to speak to Charuka even though they lack a common language. Nausicaa and Chikuku fly from village to village warning people to evacuate to a hill to the east. Among those they warn are a remnant of the Third Army.

After Nausicaa’s departure, Kushana had launched her coup only to be captured by her brother. At that moment, however, the southbound swarm of insects arrives and destroy the prince’s plane, in which he had been trying to flee. Kushana, sitting in a trench quietly till the insects pass and nursing her wounded lieutenant, remembers the sad story of her mother (alive but insane, victim of a cup meant for little Kushana). A wing-worm comes near. “Are you my death?” she wonders. As she waits to die, she finds herself singing a lullaby, her soul at peace (2.230f.). When she recounts it later, she says, “But I could never do it again. No, I don’t even want to try to emulate her [Nausicaa]. With all of this fierce, burning anger inside, for me to have felt not contempt and hatred, but sorrow!” (3.51). It is a beautifully realized scene.

The insects pass, and Kushana and her men must now try to survive the miasma and wait for rescue, which comes in the form of Nausicaa’s faithful old retainer, Mito, and Yupa, to whom she surrenders. After the events at the Acid Lake, Mito had been despatched by Jhil in the gunship to find Yupa and take him to Nausicaa. He found Yupa and his two confederates quite by chance, and they headed south. With Kushana, they find a remnant of the Third Army massacred and learn from a survivor that the remnant had waited for Kushana, while the rest withdrew to a hill eastwards, warned by a girl on a kite! Those waiting were killed by heedra, which in this case are giant, hairy, almost unkillable creatures with three eyes controlled by Namulith, who is nearby. At this moment the heedra attack. There is no stopping them; but Kushana, so conscious of her own terrible sins, charges up the stairs, turns sword in hand, and cries, “Over here, you monsters!!” (3.97). She will give her own life to give the others time to escape. It is her moment of truth and atonement and a glorious scene.

She does not die, however, for kidnapping her was Namulith’s intention. He intends her for his wife. The others are saved by the arrival, at that moment, of the ohmu herd, which disperses the heedra. As Namulith takes off with his captive, Yupa hops aboard. The others are left on the

ground. Namulith announces to the Doroks that Miralupa is dead (murdered in his vat), the theocracy deposed.

The ohmu have arrived. Nausicaa hears the mind-cry of the scout-ohmu and flies to it. Mold is sprouting on it, and it is dying. It gradually dawns on her that the mold itself is the "forest needing help" that the ohmu had spoken of, that they are giving their lives as seedbed for a new Forest. The established religion is wrong. The ohmu and the Forest are not punishments, they are simply healing agents. This is the Daikaisho. This is what she came for. She sits and waits on a cliff. "Is this the end of my journey?" she wonders. She gives Teto her last nuts, and he chases a butterfly. She thinks, "The world is so beautiful. The world shines so. So why--?" Exhausted, she falls asleep.

When she wakes, the Daikaisho is underway. She hastens to the massing herd and cleans an encrusted eye to find it a peaceful blue. This confirms what she had guessed. It brings peace to her own heart. She will give her body, too--become a tree! But while she is thinking these thoughts, the ohmu on whom she is riding lifts her on its feelers and puts her into its mouth!

She is later pulled out by her friends. The ohmu had kept her alive by encasing her in serum, which is supplying her lungs with oxygen; but her eyes are empty. Selm (Yupa's host when he was with the Forest People) says her spirit is on the shore of the Abyss that is the Heart of the Ohmu and must endure the gaze of the darkness. He moves her to a quiet place and watches over her till the serum wears off. As the rays of the morning sun touch the mold, great green bugdung trees spring up before their eyes, the Forest's green canopy.

Twenty-four hours pass. As the serum wears off, Nausicaa finds herself in spirit in a desolate landscape. The spirit of the murdered Miralupa is also there, now a pitiful old man who clings to her like a puppy dog. She sees a forest full of light and Selm beckoning to her. She enters it, but also pulls the old man after. They come to the end of the Forest, the place Yupa had wondered about. Here are grass, leafy trees, a lake of fresh water, birds, and cute little bugs! Miralupa scampers happily off like a child. Nausicaa must now decide--to stay in this paradise and lose her bodily life or go back to the land of the living. "I-I threw it all away once," she says. "You were carrying the weight of the whole world on your shoulders," answers Selm. She chooses life.

At that moment Nausicaa awakens in body in the predawn hours, where Selm is watching over her. From a clifftop they watch the sun come

up. Looking again at the world of the living, she exclaims: "It's beautiful. I feel as if I've been reborn. I can't stop crying." "Are you cold?" Selm asks. "No," she says. I was just wondering if it's all right to be so happy" (3.240). In vivid symbols, she has passed through death, out of the Heart of the Ohmu, to life.

Selm asks her to come live in the Forest with him, and she answers in profound words: "You have placed yourself within the *flow* of life, whereas I find myself involved with every individual living thing. I love the people of the world too much. I'll live out my life in the twilight of this world that humankind has polluted." "Yes," acknowledges Selm. "Perhaps it would be cruel of me to take you away. There are far too many here who love you. Even this little one." It is Teto! Nausicaa embraces Selm fiercely (3.241f.).

A little scene back at the Valley of Wind does not advance the plot but is lovely in and of itself. There is a little wind-rider, a girl named Tepa, Nausicaa's pupil. A Dorok ship crashes in the Valley. Little Tepa's wing breaks, and she is in danger; but remembering the princess's lessons, she "sees the wind" for the first time and lands in a field. As the Valley people debate what to do about the crash and wonder aloud what Nausicaa would do, Tepa answers without hesitation, "The princess would already be on her way to help them" (3.259). And we know it is true.

The place where Selm and Nausicaa are is not far from the site of the heedra attack, where her friends are still surviving on the ground. Their horseclaw senses her nearness and leads them to her, and so she is reunited with Mito and the crew of her gunship. There she first learns of her father's death. As Mito recounts the scene, "We had been wondering how we could possibly console her. But the princess said nothing. She just stood up, and took the gray-haired heads of these old men in her hands as you would a child's. She stood there holding us like that for the longest time" (4.9). The wormhandlers have found her, too. She persuades them to remove their masks. They are just young boys. They call her their goddess, but she lets them touch her, see that she is just like one of their own girls. They rejoice: "Our goddess is a human being! She's just like us!" (4.6).

The Daikaisho is over, but the war continues. At the eastern hill, refugees are gathering. Namulith's airship arrives bearing one end of a huge fleshy thing--a god-warrior! The creature as tall as a skyscraper had lain dormant under a city since the Seven Days of Fire and was now partially resuscitated. Nausicaa boards the ship, fights Namulith, and cuts

him to pieces; but his heedra body will not die. As his heedra bodyguards attack, Yupa (who, you will recall, was on this ship) disguised as an imperial guard tries to help. Suddenly, the heedra are destroyed by the fire-bolts of the roused god-warrior; and Nausicaa hears his mind-cry, his first words: "Ma-ma!" He picks her up, but as he prepares another blast, she begins to talk to him like a mother: "You're worried about me? I'm fine! See? I feel much better now! All right? There's a good boy" (4.48f.).

Yupa and Kushana come out on deck with Namulith's heedra head, which has come off but is still talking. Nausicaa tells them she will take her "child" to Shuwa to seal the crypt that is the mysterious source of the black arts. Kushana promises to join her there and throws her her cloak to protect her from the light of the god-warrior's body, which is like radiation. So Nausicaa goes forth to her moment of truth wearing a Torumekian cloak over a Dorok robe dyed in the Blood of the Ohmu.

The god-warrior can fly, and on Nausicaa's command, he heads west. They stop to rest in the mountains, and she notices that his flesh is putrid. She says that she wants him to "become a fine person" (4.81). He must not think of his power as a toy to play with. To commemorate his promise, she gives him a name, Ohma, "Innocence." Receiving a name seems to switch on his intelligence, for he begins to use big words. In fact, he begins to call himself ominously Arbitrator and Judge. These names reflect the vengeful intention of his creators (for he is an artificial being) and their religion of an angry god. Thus, love is struggling with anger in his heart.

Continuing on their journey, they encounter Kushana's two devious brothers, who are on their way to join their father's attack on Shuwa. Nausicaa and Teto are getting so sick from the light that they embark on the princes' plane, letting Ohma fly behind. Flying through the night, Nausicaa wakes in a sweat. Two loved ones have died: Yupa and, in her shirt, poor Teto.

On the refugee hill, Namulith had been pronounced dead amid much rejoicing, but neither side yet trusts the other. Yupa gave his life saving Kushana from an assassination attempt. In death, his image blends with that of the Holy One, the first martyr; and his brave act brings peace. Kushana had confessed only a little before: "My path is already awash with an ocean of blood. There is no hope of redemption for me," but with his dying breath he gives her an answer full of hope: "Blood has not sullied but cleansed you" (4.125, 130).

Nausicaa wants to bury Teto, so they land. Ohma collapses. The

place appears to be a ruined village; but this is a façade giving entrance (through a wall) to the end of the Forest, the same place she had visited before in spirit. She, too, collapses; and when she wakes she is naked in a medicinal bath, marvelously refreshed. Her host is called the Master of the Garden. The Garden is a store of good things--books, music, healing arts, animals, and crops held in reserve to recreate civilization when the period of purification is over.

Although she does not trust her host, Nausicaa learns much. She learns that after the Seven Days of Fire, the Forest and even the ohmu were artificially created to cleanse the earth, and that our bodies were genetically altered to enable us to survive the Forest. But the result is that a natural world is now poison to us. The few Forest People who ever reached here in body vomited blood and died. It is only the medicinal bath that enabled Nausicaa to be here temporarily. She also learns that Namulith and Miralupa's father once went out into the world from this Garden with four heedra vowing to save humanity! Nausicaa, the Master implies, with her god-warrior and her idealism, is making the same mistake. He tempts her to turn inward, to seek release from karma, this cycle of suffering and death. In this crisis, she calls on Selm, who comes in spirit and reveals to her that the Master himself is not human: he is a heedra.

It is difficult for Selm to believe that the Forest and the ohmu are man-made. "How could foolish humans create such a life-form as an ohmu?" he demands--to which Nausicaa answers: "A life is a life, regardless of how it comes into being. . . . The greatness of a mind is determined by the depth of its suffering" (4.181). Which means that the ohmu have suffered most of all. By *mind* here in the translation, I think we can understand *soul*. Even a heedra, even a god-warrior, can have a soul born of suffering.

She is now resolute in her mission. It is neither to escape suffering and seek tranquility nor to "save humanity." It is humbly to do what she can and suffer and hope with her fellow mortals--which does not mean that the peace of the Garden was a lie. "Though I shattered it myself," she says in farewell, "I will never forget the moment of tranquility you gave me" (4.183). She exits the Garden as she entered it to come face to face with the wormhandlers! And Ohma is gone. The wormhandlers came with Mito in the gunship, which has flown ahead following Ohma's tracks. Ohma is walking to Shuwa because he can no longer fly. Nausicaa mounts horseclaw and rides west, with her retinue jogging behind her.

The crypt at Shuwa is an underground structure 1,000 feet deep. What shows above ground is a black cube surrounded by a chasm, with a single door reached by a bridge. Ohma arrives and fires on the cube twice before falling into the chasm. In the ash rain, Nausicaa and her men take a rest, and she tells them that the Forest is making a clean world for their children. She does not tell them of the plan to replace human beings. "What good can come of making that known?" she asks Selm rhetorically:

And besides, something inside me calls out passionately to the landscape I saw, the end of the Sea of Corruption [another name for the Forest] to which you led me. The world is beginning to be reborn. Even if our bodies cannot tolerate that purity, even if the moment we are exposed to it, we spew blood from our lungs, just as the birds migrate across the land, we shall live, and live again. For the sake of a single sprout, countless forest spores rain down again and again, dying a useless death. My own life was supported by the deaths of ten older brothers and sisters. No matter how wretched, every life-form lives by virtue of its own power. On this planet, life itself is its own miracle. Are we supposed to believe that those who planned the reconstruction of the world could have predicted the actions of the ohmu or the giant mold? I don't think so. Something inside is telling me passionately that that isn't true. (4.219f.)

When Nausicaa arrives, she crosses the bridge and walks right in, scattering the priests with her sheer presence and manifest authority. The core of the crypt is a dark hole that one descends in a bubble--a "bubblelevator," you might call it. At the bottom she finds Ohma, his body broken but still alive. The Master of the Crypt is a living, luminous ball of flesh, on which dark writing appears. This is the Law, the Holy Text. On special days, a new sentence will appear, which it is the business of the priesthood to interpret and the emperor to enforce. Nausicaa finds the Torumekian emperor there, Kushana's father. He had come to attack the city, but now that Namulith is dead, he has been escorted to the Master of the Crypt to be offered a similar arrangement.

Nothing will stop Nausicaa, who is like one possessed by a demon herself. She puts her hand on the Master, darkening his light. She accuses him of concealing his plan to replace human beings. She calls him a liar and addresses him in ringing words:

NAUS: If such a morning is to dawn, then we shall live to face that morning! We are birds who, though we may spit up blood, will go on flying beyond that morning, on and on!! To live is to change. . . . But *you* cannot change. You have only the plan that was built into you, because you deny death. Speak the truth! We have no need for you.  
MAST: Which truth? Have you ever tried to imagine the degree of hate and despair that filled the world in those days? . . . We created a god to arbitrate. . . . We had no time. We decided to entrust everything to the future. . . . We even have the technology to restore the bodies of you who have been adapted to a polluted world, so that all may live

in the newly purified world. The transition should be a smooth one. When the long period of purification is over, the human race shall become a peaceful part of the new world. . . . NAUS: . . . I do not doubt that you were created out of idealism and a sense of purpose in an age of despair. Why didn't those men and women realize that both purity and corruption are the very stuff of life? Suffering and tragedy and folly will not disappear in a purified world. They are a part of humanity. That is why, even in a world of suffering, there can also be joy and shining light. . . . Because you were created as an artificial god of purity, you have become the ugliest creature of all, never knowing what it means to be alive. MAST: . . . Girl, are you saying that efforts to rebuild the world should be abandoned, and humanity left to become extinct? NAUS: Your question is laughable. We have lived all these centuries with the Sea of Corruption. Extinction has long since become a part of our lives. MAST: I am speaking not of individuals but of humanity. . . . Without me, humanity shall surely become extinct. You cannot live beyond that morning. NAUS: That is for the planet to decide. MAST: That is nihilism!! Nothingness!! NAUS: The sympathy and love of the ohmu were born from the depths of nothingness. MAST: You are a dangerous darkness. Life is light!! NAUS: You are wrong. Life is the light that shines in the darkness!! (4.246-49)

At that moment there is an explosion--a missile from the gunship that old Mito succeeded in jamming into the closing crack of the wounded crypt. Nausicaa calls on Ohma, who summons the last energy of his dying body to grab the ball of flesh and squeeze it till it bursts. A heedra incubator with eggs to repopulate the world is also destroyed. Nausicaa is knocked out for a moment, then comes to. Her final exchange with her son is the most affecting moment in the whole story:

OHMA: Mother. I want to see you, but my eyes- NAUS: I'm just happy that you are well. OHMA: I'm unsure, Mother. Have I become a good person? NAUS: Ohma, you are my son and I am very proud of you. You are a brave warrior, proud and pure of heart. And--you are so gentle. OHMA: Mother--don't--cr-- (4.264f.)

The crypt is coming to pieces. Nausicaa's friends are there, and she is got out. Kushana's dying father, who never loved her, expresses regret, confers the throne on her, and warns her against his example. Everyone is spattered with blue. Nausicaa thinks, "The blood of the ohmu and the blood of the crypt are the same"; but the spirit of Selm interrupts her thought: "Let us keep that our little secret. Let us live, entrusting everything to this planet. Together." "Yes," answers Nausicaa, and then to the people, echoing the last words of the Holy One: "Everyone. Let us depart. No matter how difficult it is, we must live" (4.270f.).

## Notes to Part I

1. Miyazaki, "About Japanese Animation," in *Course Japanese Movies 7: The Current Situation of Japanese Movies* (Iwanami Shoten, 1988).

2. An English version in four volumes is published by Viz Communications, P.O. Box 77010, San Francisco, CA 94107; it can be purchased online at [www.viz.com](http://www.viz.com) or [www.j-pop.com](http://www.j-pop.com). The film *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind* is one of Miyazaki's best--maybe even *the* best. But for those who *believe in* Nausicaa (as I do), it is a little disconcerting that the film's story completely contradicts the manga.
3. References to the book are by volume and page number.
4. Miyazaki was charmed by a description of the Greek heroine in a dictionary of mythology and borrowed the name. The Japanese pronunciation is three syllables, NOWshika.