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Abstracts

Astro Boy vs. Godzilla: the Significance of Its Rivalry in Postwar Japan

Norihiro KATO

“Astro Boy” and “Godzilla” have several common denominators as pop icons of postwar Japan. First, just as Tezuka Osamu was inspired to create Astro Boy in 1951 by a hope that nuclear energy would find peaceful uses, Godzilla emerged in 1954 from a sense of horror at the U.S.’s testing of nuclear weapons. Second, both are non-human, and have bodies in a sense driven by nuclear power. Third, both cultural icons continued to appear in Japanese media until at least the early 2000s. Despite these similarities, it was only after the 3.11 disaster that anyone remarked on the possible significance of the relationship between these two icons. What does this blindness suggest, and what causes it? One hint to answer these questions, perhaps, is that even in the wake of the nuclear disaster, Astro Boy continues to be regarded positively in terms of a sort of nuclear idealism. An eminent critic once asked, in the midst of Japan’s rapid economic growth, “Why is Godzilla is so ‘dark’?”; it now becomes possible to compliment that question with a second: why, after 3.11, is Astro Boy still so “bright”? This article considers the significance of the relationship between Astro Boy and Godzilla from the point of view of a possible contrast between “light” and “shadow”/the “prayers” of A-bomb victims and the “resentment” of the war dead from World War II.

Godzilla: Japanese, All Too Japanese

Yoshihisa HAGIWARA

Among the postwar Japanese films, the monster film such as *Godzilla* is the only genre that allows an artist to represent Japan Self-Defense Forces as playing an active part in the restoration of order. ★¹

Those who were killed in the war still remain sunk at the bottom of the sea, being beleaguered by the Japanese Emperor System; a fact that Godzilla, the monster,

cannot destroy the Imperial Palace attests the burden of the Emperor System on the postwar Japan. If one criticizes *Godzilla* for its political inconsistency, it reveals the person's ignorance toward the "solemn" burden of the Emperor System. ★²

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☆1—Takeshi Sato, *Godzilla, Yamato, and Our Democracy*, pp. 85–86.

☆2—Saburo Kawamoto, "Why is *Godzilla* 'Gloomy'?" in *The Postwar Japanese Film Revisited* (Iwanami Publishers), p. 88.

On the Monstrous Planet: or, How Godzilla Makes a Roman Holiday

Takayuki TATSUMI

Pop heroes and anti-heroes like Astro Boy and Godzilla represent not only our technological consequences but also the mythological unconscious. For example, one of the origins of Godzilla could well be discovered in a pseudo-scientific and pseudo-religious theory championed by a nineteenth century new shintoist Masumi Ohishigori, who was so aware of the limit of Shintoism as to re-locate the origins of man in dinosaurs born of Japanese gods. Therefore, it is his syncretic and creationistic theory of dinosaurs that doubtlessly helped Meiji Japan modernize itself, and even survived the postwar junkyard in the form of Godzilla. Thus, a decade after *Godzilla* (1954), *Ghidorah, the Three-headed Monster* (1964), which re-appropriates Audrey Hepburn's *Roman Holiday* (1954) and dramatizes the way Godzilla, Rodan and Mothra join forces to defeat Ghidorah from outer space, skillfully allegorizes a critical point from the U.S. Occupation period to the High Growth period in Japanese history.

The Secreted Message in Tezuka Osamu's *Astro Boy*: To Meet an "Alien"

Kazuma YOSHIMURA

Osamu Tezuka found the widening gap between his original version of *Astro Boy* and the one in national vogue uncomfortable. This essay sheds new light on the little known side of the *Astro Boy* saga through the examination of its historical background, in the 1960s, when people were fascinated by *Astro Boy*. To discuss *Astro Boy* in the context of 3.11, I analyze cases in which people use its hero character Astro

Boy in their image construction, for example, concerning radioactivity assessment or nuclear power plant industry activities. Then, I highlight the idea of an “alien,” which Tezuka embraced throughout his career, in order to clarify the secreted message in *Astro Boy* and define the core of Tezuka’s thought. This leads us to the positive revisitation of Tezuka in post-3.11 Japan.

There are growing generations who have never read *Astro Boy* or who know Tezuka only as a “past genius.” In response to such dwindling readership, this essay scrutinizes *Astro Boy* along with *Atom Ambassador* (1951), which later developed into *Astro Boy* and *The Last of Astro Boy* (1970), a spinoff of the *Astro Boy* saga, among others.

A Will to Survive in Hayao Miyazaki’s Works

Ryusuke HIKAWA

Addressing contemporary Japan following the natural disaster and nuclear hazard in 2011, this essay examines how Japanese animation has represented relationships between technology, nature, and human beings. My analysis of the prominent Japanese animator and director Miyazaki Hayao’s two works, the earlier work *Future Boy Conan* (1978) and the manga/film work *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (manga 1982–94; film 1984), reveals his philosophy, which does not merely oppose nature against technology. I also compare *Space Battleship Yamato* directed by Reiji Matsu-moto (1974) and *Mobile Suit Gundam* created by Yoshikazu Yasuhiko (1979), which are representative anime works of the late 1970s when anime became popular even among teenagers. The comparison shows a surge in the idea of “the world’s end” that followed the pessimistic doubt about scientism after the paradigm shift from “rapid growth” to “the end of growth.” The essay concludes with remarks on animators’ optimistic will to describe hope beyond total despair.

Life of a Ghost: Godzilla and the Japanese Monster Films

Mario KUMEKAWA

The gigantic earthquake and subsequent nuclear accidents at Fukushima shocked Jap-

anese citizens also in the sense that the reconstruction and the economic development after World War II could totally collapse in one instant. Both in 1945 and in 2011 we experienced historical moments in which our habitat and infrastructure of life were broken into tiny pieces. Catastrophe is thus not a thing of the past, but it repeatedly occurs at any time. The 1954 film *Godzilla* graphically represents traumatic catastrophes. The scenes in which the monster destroys the cities, preserve the memory of wartime on the one hand, and foretell a possible (natural) catastrophe on the other hand. It is also noteworthy that *Godzilla* and the other monster films produced by the same filmmakers have two important motifs in common: the image of the South Seas as a paradise, and the anxiety over nuclear radiation. The former symbolizes Japanese political dreams in wartime and the latter denotes what Japanese people have suffered in the post-war period. The Japanese monster films could be called as ghosts, which connect the past and the present, and repeatedly question the meanings of war, destruction and defeat.