

Originally, *Godzilla* was an allegory for fears of the misuse of nuclear power, both militarily and otherwise, along with the dangers of radiation, mutation, and fallout. This represents a more traditional Japanese view of nature, one that is very spiritual and respectful. As time passed, and Japanese culture changed as values of business acumen and technological prowess were passed down over that of traditional rites and mindsets, *Godzilla* changed too. *Godzilla* was no longer a metaphor for avoiding dangerous interference with nature through nuclear power, but rather, a display of the ferocious power of nature. More and more deadly tsunamis and earthquakes hit Japan, and *Godzilla* became a representation of the power of nature, rather than what could happen if nature was not respected. These values have slowly resurface in *Godzilla*, however, especially after the Fukushima reactor disaster. This is seen particularly in the most recent Japanese *Godzilla* film, *Shin Godzilla* (translated *Godzilla: Resurgence*) where pollution and nuclear waste dumping mutates a creature into the king himself.

*Shin Godzilla* is a return to form for the *Godzilla* franchise, though less subtle than the original, contains a lot of societal commentary. There are many criticisms launched at the ineffective and stifling Japanese bureaucracy forced upon it by the Americans during the post-war occupation and constitution. The American's and the rest of the world's readiness to launch yet another nuclear weapon at Japan is also a major source of tension within the film. In more recent years, although nuclear power still plays a large part, *Godzilla* has come to be seen as a force of nature. Here, *Godzilla* can be seen as a metaphor for the tsunami and earthquake which caused the Fukushima disaster, as an unstoppable force of nature with no true defense.

A lot of rightful criticism has been levied against the American version of *Gojira*, however, I like the deliverance of this line in this version more than the Japanese one. What this quote can be seen as is one man's struggle representing the struggle of a nation. How is Japan, the only nuclear victim, supposed to exist in a nuclear world? How can they rebuild themselves when America is pushing them down a specific path? Should they adopt nuclear weapons as a deterrent? Or, as they chose to when they signed it into law in 1967, take a stand against nuclear arsenals by not allowing any possession, deployment, or development of nuclear weapons within their territory. Dr. Serizawa's struggle with the Oxygen Destroyer can be seen as Japan's struggle personified.

My research further affirmed my previous beliefs, but it also helped me to learn more specifics. I never knew the history that many of the key figures in *Godzilla* had with the Second World War and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

My research also showed me that the film was so subtle in delivering its message that it could be viewed as entertainment, yet the message was clear enough that American filmmakers sought to tone down the film, intentionally or not, to remove the connection to the atomic bomb.

*Godzilla* is distinctly anti-American. Both the film and the G-Man himself are a result of the American atomic bombings and how America changed elements of Japanese society during its

occupation, the repression of their society and the repression of nature return to the front in this film.

It is the opposite of American monster movies, where the monster is a figure of terror, its creation, accidental or intentional, usually forgotten as it goes on its destructive rampage. The nuclear weapons that created it are used to destroy it. The Japanese, on the other hand, sympathize with their monsters as tragic heroes. The self is immersed in the other (Noriega, 68). The monster and the culture become intertwined. While the Japanese version keeps the atomic scars open, the American version uses Godzilla and his death to repress the guilt. We can't let special-effects forget the fact that *we* are the other in *Godzilla*.

All our readings and materials this semester have been written by Western authors. *World War Z* is the one work that has elements outside of Western culture in it. Studying *Godzilla* is important as it is one of the most famous and widely known nonhumans in Eastern culture.

Not many people know about the subtext within *Godzilla*. This makes it good practice, as finding the incredibly rich subtext within the film that launched a franchise of cheesy, low-budget monster movies can help us to recognize the elements of the nonhuman within other aspects of popular culture.

*Godzilla* is a great example of the two-sided other. In most of our texts, the other, the nonhuman, has been one-sided: Frankenstein's monster, Helen, The Androids, The Babyheads and Evolved Animals, and Zombies (Area X is the one possible exception). *Godzilla* represents interference with nature and nuclear fears, along with anti-American sentiment.