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The Rhetorical Significance of Gojira

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THE RHETORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF *GOJIRA*

by

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Bachelor of Arts
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1993

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the

Master of Arts in Communication Studies
Department of Communication Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Shannon Victoria Stevens

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The Rhetorical Significance of *Gojira*

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Master of Arts in Communication Studies

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ABSTRACT

The Rhetorical Significance of *Gojira*

by

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Gojira, commonly known as the "original" Godzilla movie, is a clear commentary on the horrors the Japanese people suffered during and after the dropping of nuclear bombs in their country at the end of World War II. The intent of this thesis is to demonstrate that *Gojira* is a rhetorical experience that permitted the Japanese to discuss the un-discussable—namely, the destruction of Japan caused by the awakening of the American "monster" of war and nuclear weapons. The thesis is argued in four chapters. Chapter one is the prospectus, chapter two provides historical context of the emergence of nuclear culture, chapter three examines the film thematically from a psychoanalytic and narrative framework within its historical context while explaining its rhetorical significance, and chapter four serves as a conclusion. It is hoped that this project will contribute to the body of rhetorical studies of film as well as communication research related to nuclear weapons research and use.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Having been born and raised in Pennsylvania, one of my earliest memories of fear on a grand scale was set in the spring of 1979 when I was just nine years old. That's when the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant had an accident that we now know as "the most serious in U.S. commercial nuclear power plant operating history."¹ As the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is quick to point out, the accident that melted as much as half of the reactor core did not lead to any documented deaths or injuries at the plant or in the surrounding communities. However, that assessment speaks little to the anxiety and fear in the area as residents watched the weather for wind patterns and waited for television reports on measured radiation. Not long after the accident, my family and I were on a road trip that took us by Three Mile Island, and when I saw those cooling towers I was convinced I could feel radiation burning my skin. Of course, there was no radiation or burning going on outside of my imagination, but that visceral response does point to the profound influence the accident had on my understanding of, and sentiments about, all things nuclear: danger, fear, pain, and sickness.

It is not surprising, then, that nearly thirty years later I would find myself drawn to the Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas as a paper topic for COM 711, Research Methods II, in my second semester in graduate school. In my preparations to write about the museum, I spent weeks examining the site, talking to the workers there, and interviewing Troy Wade (a former Nevada Test Site engineer, Reagan advisor, and founder of the museum). My studies of the museum and those associated with it generated an interest in understanding more about nuclear culture. And my understanding deepened as my studies took me to the work of various rhetoricians interested in nuclear culture, from Robert Ivie to Paul Loeb. One thing I noted, however, was that just as the Atomic Testing Museum focused on an American perception of nuclear weapons (giving the Japanese virtually no voice at all), the body of rhetoric devoted to nuclear culture also focuses almost exclusively on the American perspective.

At the time of my museum studies, keenly aware of the lack of non-American perspectives regarding nuclear culture and, in particular, the dropping of the atomic bombs in Japan, happenstance led me to view a science fiction film that I had heard much about but had never actually seen. The first time I watched the film it affected me deeply,

nearly moving me to tears with its painful images of injured and dying children in overflowing hospital wards, of poisoned wells in small villages, and of mothers trying in vain to shield their children from the fires about to consume them, a clear homage to the suffering brought about by the atomic bombing of Japan. Here, at last, was a Japanese perspective of atomic bombs and nuclear culture. The film, produced in Japan in 1954, is *Gojira*, known to most Americans as "Godzilla," a crude phonetic interpretation of the Japanese name for the country's most memorable monster.

Gojira is commonly known as the "original" Godzilla movie. Both the film and the character of Godzilla have been mimicked for decades in this country as a silly movie and ridiculous monster, as examples of the inferiority of the Japanese people. Far from a silly monster movie, however, *Gojira* is a clear commentary on the horrors the Japanese people suffered during and after the dropping of nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The intent of this thesis is to show that *Gojira* is a rhetorical experience that permitted the Japanese to discuss the un-discussable—namely, the destruction of Japan caused by the awakening of the American "monster" of war and nuclear weapons.

Disciplinary inattention to *Gojira* should not be misconstrued as critical inattention either to nuclear issues or to the rhetorical analysis of film. What is missing, however, is a critical assessment of *Gojira's* rhetorical dynamics. That such an assessment is both due and promising should become evident once the literature review, analytical approach, and plan of development/contribution to scholarship unfold in the following pages.

Literature Review

Assuredly there is no shortage of rhetorical analysis of texts that speak to nuclear culture and perceptions about nuclear war here in the U.S. For example, Martin J. Medhurst, in "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' Speech: A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language,"² uses a close reading of the text of Eisenhower's speech as well as archival material illustrating the development of the speech to give us insight into the thoughts and political maneuverings of the President, his cabinet, and the American public at the time. And, at the same time that Medhurst was showing us how to use close readings and archives to develop our understanding of the rhetorical significance of the speeches delivered during that tumultuous time in U.S. history, Robert L. Ivie looked at

the addresses of Cold War-era pacifists opposed to nuclear weapons use to illustrate how their metaphors failed to garner opposition to the dominant cold war ideals promoted by those in power. Ivie argues that their reliance on motifification-based metaphor could not succeed because its focus on the negative shut down audience reception because of the American culture's reliance on scapegoating as the only pathway to redemption. That analysis that provides further insights into the belief structure then in America.³

To be clear, not all scholarship about the era is focused on the more traditional texts such as speeches and policy papers. Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light*, though inclusive of official perspectives at the start of the atomic age (1945-1950), equally utilizes nuclear references in the arts, sciences, media, and popular culture in his efforts to analyze the origins of Americans' thinking and believing about all things nuclear.⁴ *Nuclear Culture*, a book published by Paul Loeb in 1986, gives insight into the life of Americans in the 1940s and 1950s through his extensive use of interviews and his analysis of popular culture at the time, work that is useful in supplementing that of Bryan C. Taylor by exposing the pervasiveness of Cold War ideology among nuclear scientists.⁵ Taylor, who specializes in criticism of public

spaces in the American Southwest, has opened doors of understanding about the ways that a museum can persuade its visitors to see and know the cold war, nuclear testing, and use of nuclear weapons in a particular way. Further, Taylor has begun to explore the ways in which the life experiences and thinking of cold-war veterans in the U.S. influence the messages they produce in their museums.⁶ Specifically, Taylor in "Reminiscences of Los Alamos" points to the pervasive use of bureaucratic language and ways of thinking as defined by that language. For example, the intensive record keeping and details of the mundane that characterize government work also characterize the museums, illustrating the ways that culture influences message.

For analysis of *Gojira*, a useful piece of rhetorical criticism on nuclear culture as it relates to work based on popular-culture texts comes from Elizabeth Walker Mechling and Jay Mechling in "The Atom According to Disney."⁷ The Mechlins combine a close reading of the Disney film "Our Friend the Atom" with an assessment of other popular cultural trends happening when the film was released in 1957 to argue compellingly that the film played a significant role in persuading the American public that nuclear power was "natural."

While there is a substantial and growing body of rhetorical criticism on a variety of texts that relate to nuclear culture or nuclear war, these overwhelmingly focus on the American perspective. "Our Friend the Atom" was released in America in 1957, with publicized fanfare and a "tremendous marketing blitz"⁸ and helped to shape the dialogue about nuclear power and nuclear weapons in the U.S. Thus, a study of the Disney film has proved fruitful in expanding our understanding of the thoughts of the time in America. It was just three years prior that *Gojira* was released in Japan at a time when Japanese society was still struggling to come to terms with the results of nuclear war. "The Japan of the mid-1950s still bore the scars—both physical and emotional—of total war and defeat,"⁹ and the Japanese people were "repressed formally and informally"¹⁰ from discussing their loss. Knowing the significance that a film can play in shaping the understanding of a situation, a time, and a place—particularly when open discussions are denied a place in society—a rhetorical analysis of the film *Gojira* presents itself as an opportunity to begin to understand a Japanese perspective of nuclear culture and nuclear war. The film has a two important parallels to "Our Friend the Atom," in that both films were heavily marketed and both reached a broad audience in their respective

countries, which opens *Gojira* to further study as a persuasive element that helped define Japanese sentiments about nuclear bombs at the time. Yet, it has not been analyzed by rhetorical scholars to date.

Although it appears that rhetoricians have not discovered this rich text, in other fields—including film, popular culture, science fiction, and even some history—*Gojira* is a popular subject. But for all the work done on the film in other disciplines, it still lacks the insight a rhetorician can add to the discussion in uncovering the way the film spoke to its people simultaneously defining their nuclear experience and reflecting it. For example, Chon Noriega, in "Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When *Them!* Is U.S.," places *Gojira* in its historical context, yet his focus is a psycho-analytical deconstruction of the meaning of the monster.¹¹ Similarly, in "Monster Island: Godzilla and Japanese sci-fi/horror/fantasy" Philip Brophy works to explain to the reader what *Gojira* means/symbolizes rather than what the film says.¹² Nancy Anisfield goes even further with the exploration of the symbolism of the monster by studying the development of Godzilla into an icon and what that making of an icon says about American culture and nuclear metaphors therein.¹³ While film, science fiction, popular culture, and history scholars do much to

put *Gojira* in the context of its time and to provide some insights into possible subconscious meanings of the monster, none tells us how the film functions rhetorically. A rhetorical analysis of *Gojira* will fit into the existing work about the film by introducing its rhetorical significance, and will add to the growing body of rhetorical work about film as well as cultural response to the nuclear experience by providing insight into another culture's understanding of the nuclear.

Analytical Approach

To argue that *Gojira* is a rhetorical experience that permitted the Japanese to discuss the un-discussable—namely, the destruction of Japan caused by nuclear weapons—analysis of some important aspects of the film that make it stand out as a rhetorical experience will be addressed, including its use of imagery and music as well as representations of science, military, and politics. Clearly nuclear-related imagery includes the opening scene when a boat is destroyed by a powerful and unexpected wave that wipes away everything in its path just as the wave of destruction from a nuclear bomb would do; the burning cities set aflame by *Gojira*'s atomic fire breath; and the devastating footage in the villages and hospitals in which Geiger counters show radiation poisoning the water and the

children. Musically, while the film overall uses traditional Japanese music, when *Gojira* is on screen, the soundtrack has a distinctively American sound—American military marches, in fact. Also, throughout the film, the role scientists play in destruction is explored, the guilt the Japanese people feel for bringing this wrath upon them is hinted at, and the post-war anti-nuclear movement is alluded to in Parliamentary scenes.

The planned approach for arguing the rhetorical significance of *Gojira* will come in four parts. First, the historical framework must be laid out to put the film in proper context. Martin J. Medhurst succinctly explains the need for such context:

Speakers, messages, and audiences never exist in a vacuum. All are creatures of the geography they occupy, the ideologies they espouse, the political systems they work within, and the historical moment that they appear upon the world's stage. In short, they exist within a specific context. Here is where rhetorical analysis and historical investigation necessarily overlap.¹⁴

Medhurst incorporates this approach in his own criticism of film, which allows him particular insights that might not

otherwise be possible. In "Temptation as Taboo: A Psychorhetorical Reading of *The Last Temptation of Christ*," Medhurst lays out what was happening at the time the film was released and in particular what responses the film engendered from various parts of society.¹⁵ That overview opens the door to his criticism that zeroes in on what made the film so powerful to its audiences.

Medhurst is not alone, of course, in this approach. In "Looking for the Public in the Popular: The Hollywood Blacklist and the Rhetoric of Collective Memory" Thomas W. Benson uses a selection of films as a way to understand how Hollywood was influenced by the anti-communist hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities in the late '40s and early '50s.¹⁶ By incorporating historical context and close readings of texts spanning fifty years, Benson is able to develop insights in American "culture's notions of the public, the popular, and the private," concluding that the films "function not only as rhetorical appeals but also as a sort of implicit rhetorical theorizing about American society."¹⁷ In other words, Benson uses films as a way to understand American culture. In the particular case of *Gojira*, the need for historical context must be approached in three parts: what was happening in Japan at the time as it relates to World War II and nuclear weapons, what was

happening in the U.S. at the time as it relates to World War II and nuclear weapons, and what the state of Japanese/American relations was in the 1950s. Understanding the intersection of Japan and America as it relates to nuclear weapons is vital to understanding *Gojira* and what it says about nuclear sentiment in Japanese culture.

The second part of the analysis, just as Medhurst did in "*Hiroshima, Mon Amore*"¹⁸, as Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenzt do in *Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film*,¹⁹ and as Brian L. Ott does in "(Re)Framing Fear: Equipment for Living in a Post-9/11 World," will be choosing important themes in the film to study will provide an avenue to understanding its rhetorical significance.²⁰ Though Rushing and Frenzt use a psychoanalytic approach to understand the texts they examine, Medhurst's method is to use various themes to analyze the text from the inside out (or to put it another way, he applies his close-reading technique used to analyze speeches to the different medium of film).

Brian Ott's "(Re)Framing Fear," although it applies to a television series, also will serve as an important resource for the project both because of the historical contextualization of his analysis and because the criticism focuses on science fiction as an avenue to understanding.

Ott uses the current science fiction program *Battlestar Galactica* to explore how people "find symbolic resources in public discourse to confront and address social anxieties."²¹ He chose the show's recurring themes of torture and political dissent and related what was happening in the fictional outlet to real-life occurrences, exploring how those metaphors functioned simultaneously to allow Americans to explore the unsettled state of existence post-9/11 and to communicate anxieties about where our society was/is heading. As Ott argues, "For all its imagination—its exotic aliens, its innovative technologies, and its foreign landscapes—science fiction is inevitably about the culture that produced it."²² That holds regardless of the originating country—science fiction out of Japan is as much a reflection of that culture as American science fiction is of our own.

For the *Gojira* project, the method of close reading within historical context will be used to analyze the film and seek better cultural understanding through what emerges from the analysis. The primary recurring themes that should be analyzed are: (1) the monster himself, which will include analysis of his theme song, when he appears and why, what he does, and how he dies; (2) obvious bomb references including images of radiation sickness, poisoned

wells, and burning cities; and three, the socio/political vignettes including parliamentary debates, the press, and familial relations between father and daughter. All of the above-named themes can be contextualized historically and should provide windows into an understanding of Japanese sentiment at that time in their history. Analysis could also be done to assess what scenes were removed and with what they were replaced when the film was cut and released in America under the name *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*. This final bit of analysis, by looking at how the narrative changes because of the cuts and substitutions, should help support the argument that the film said some things rhetorically that were unacceptable to America.

Plan of Development and Contribution to Scholarship

This project will contain four chapters. Chapter one will consist of an amplification of the prospectus, taking into account the comments of the committee. It is in this section that it should be made clear what is intended (a rhetorical analysis of *Gojira*), why (to provide insight into the Japanese perspective on nuclear weapons post-World War II), and how (through close reading of the text within a historical context).

In chapter two, the goal will be to provide the historical context of the emergence of nuclear culture.

Though most rhetorical scholarship on this topic to date has focused on the U.S. and not on Japan, it will be important as this chapter unfolds to research and explain as much as possible what was happening in Japan after the war. Obviously, the people there were recovering from an existence-shifting occurrence—the dropping of the atomic bombs on their country. But what did that mean for the Japanese in their daily lives? Clearly there was anxiety in the country about poisoned water and unseen threats; about the same time that the film was being made, the U.S. was conducting nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific, one of which poisoned the crew of a fishing boat and radiated fish. This caused such fear among the Japanese people that the Emperor of Japan declared that he would not eat fish until the testing stopped. But there were perhaps less obvious shifts in Japanese culture at the time as well. For one, there was a forced shift away from a patriarchal society and toward a more equal one. The allies forced equality in education of the sexes, which was a profound shift. Open government was also required, which again is a profound change from a country ruled by emperors for centuries. How did these shifts affect the people? And what role did emerging technology play in Japan at the time? Clearly this was a period of scientific advancement, and

advances in science and technology universally create tension and anxiety in Western culture. Is the same true in Eastern culture?

Chapter three will be the critical essay portion of the thesis. It is in this chapter that the film will be examined thematically, with each theme placed within a historical context and its rhetorical significance addressed. The immediately apparent themes to address are, again, the monster, bomb-related imagery, and socio-political vignettes. In the thematic areas there will likely be some overlap as film seldom, if ever, provides distinct delineation between ideas, images, and sound.²³ For example, when the audience actually sees Godzilla for the first time, the visual experience is prefaced by the monster's footfalls and screams and the villagers running away in fear. Those footfalls sound like bombs dropping and they shake the earth and cause waves in the water, which obviously could be categorized as readily under bomb imagery as it can be related to the monster. However, tied directly to the monster as it is in this scene makes it more logical to use the bomb imagery as a way to understand the monster's rhetorical message.

Vice versa, in the very opening of the film, it is the monster that causes the waves and fiery destruction of

fishing boats, but as the monster is unseen and unknown at this point in the film, it makes more sense to study that element as bomb imagery. Similarly, although it is the damage done by the monster and his presence that causes the wells in seaside villages to be poisoned with radiation and that created the mass of injured and radiated children in the hospitals, they seem best suited to the theme of nuclear bomb-related imagery. It is important to note that the goal here is not one of classification, but of understanding, so that a scene such as that in which the mother and her children, cowering in the street in Tokyo as she reassures them that they will be joining their father soon (and they do in a fiery death), will be analyzed for the message it sends, not where it fits on a chart.

The socio-political vignettes constitute a more easily recognized theme in part because they function in more stagnant scenes that are reliant upon dialogue. These scenes include the presentation of the elderly scientist before parliament in which he explains what is happening (attacks by a monster) and why (the monster, once a beast that slumbered beneath the sea, was burned by underwater atomic testing and has been awakened into a rage). His presentation is heckled by women in attendance who are opposed to atomic testing. The scenes with the daughter

could also prove enlightening as she moves openly within society, but also because she defies her father, casting aside his belief structure for a newer one that she believes is appropriate. The key to the critique of all of the themes is to provide rhetorical analysis that can shed some light on the Japanese perspective on the bombing, by exploring the film as a voice that spoke what could not otherwise be said.

To support the claim that much of what is expressed in the film could not be stated openly, it could prove helpful to analyze the differences between the original *Gojira*, which was released to and viewed by record numbers of Japanese citizens, and *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, the Americanized version that was released a few years later in the U.S. Film scholars note that the American version distinctly changes the narrative. Reading both versions from a rhetorical perspective could provide enlightenment by looking at what was made absent in the revised version and what was redefined. If significant cuts were made that helped to redefine the film as a silly monster movie rather than a profound commentary with anti-American sentiment, it could provide evidence of the "unspeakable" nature of much of the film's content. Finally, chapter four will serve as the conclusion, and as such will mirror chapter one with

the addition of a synopsis of the conclusions reached in the analysis phase of the project.

It is hoped that this project, by providing some fresh insight into the culture and society of the Japanese people post World War II, will expand the existing rhetorical scholarship regarding nuclear culture and nuclear war. Particularly, as our understanding of the Japanese perspective during that era is limited, adding to the scholarship should provide some new ways of thinking about atomic weapons and the relationship between the country that unleashed their wrath and the country that was ravaged by them.

Additionally, there is a branch of communication studies that is trying to open dialogue about the Pacific war, as evidenced by a panel discussion at the National Communication Association conference in 2008. Titled *Unconventional Historicisms and Communication of Collective Memories of the Pacific War: Moving Beyond U.S.-Japanese Dichotomies*, the scholars presenting were doing just what the title suggests—attempting to prevent either side from rewriting history to their advantage. Work that opens understanding of the Japanese culture in the 1950s can only help to enhance such efforts by those in the communication

field, and science fiction film is one avenue to such enhanced understanding.

Finally, it is hoped that this work will contribute fresh thought to the work being done by rhetoricians in the area of film. Science fiction film is particularly inductive to rhetorical study, as argued by Ott, Hocker-Rushing, and Frentz, because of its metaphorical existence. Using science fiction film as a way to access other cultures, particularly those with which we have common experiences from uncommon perspectives (such as those with whom we wage war), can only help broaden our perspective as rhetoricians and thereby make us better scholars.

¹ "Fact Sheet on the Three Mile Island Accident," United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Accessed Feb. 1, 2009, at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/3mile-isle.html>.

² Martin J. Medhurst, "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' Speech: A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," *Communication Monographs*, 54 (1987): 204-205.

³ Robert L. Ivie, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War 'Idealists,'" *Communication Monographs*, 54 (1987): 165-182

⁴ Paul S. Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 1994).

⁵Paul Loeb, *Nuclear Culture* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1986); Michael C. McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 61, 3 (1975): 235-249.

⁶ Bryan C. Taylor, "Reminiscences of Los Alamos: Narrative, Critical Theory, and the Organizational Subject," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 54 (1990): 395-419; Bryan C. Taylor, "Radioactive History: Space, Time, and Rhetoric in the Post-Cold War Nuclear Museum," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, (2007).

⁷ Elizabeth Walker Mechling and Jay Mechling, "The Atom According to Disney," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 81 (1995): 436-453.

⁸ Mechling and Mechling, *Disney*, p. 436.

⁹ William Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 16.

¹⁰ Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind*, p. 18.

¹¹ Chon Noriega, "Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When *Them!* Is U.S.," *Cinema Journal*, 27, 1 (1987), pp. 63-77.

¹² Philip Brophy, "Monster Island: Godzilla and Japanese Sci-fi/horror/fantasy," *Postcolonial Studies*, 3, 1 (2000) pp. 39-42.

¹³ Nancy Anisfield, "Godzilla/Gojiro: Evolution of the Nuclear Metaphor," *Journal of Popular Culture*, (), pp. 53-62.

¹⁴ Martin J. Medhurst (Editor), *Critical Reflections on the Cold War : Linking Rhetoric & History*, College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press (2000): p 268.

¹⁵ Martin J. Medhurst, "Temptation as Taboo: A Psychorhetorical Reading of *The Last Temptation of Christ*" in *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film*, ed. David Blakesley. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press (2003): pp 55-69.

¹⁶ Thomas W. Benson, "Looking for the Public in the Popular: The Hollywood Blacklist and the Rhetoric of Collective Memory," in *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film*, ed. David Blakesley. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press (2003): pp 129-145

¹⁷ Benson, "Hollywood Blacklist," p 141.

¹⁸ Martin J. Medhurst, "Hiroshima, Mon Amour: From Iconography to Rhetoric," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 345-370.

¹⁹ Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenzt. *Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1995.

²⁰ Brian L. Ott, "(Re)Framing Fear: Equipment for Living in a Post-9/11 World," in *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, eds. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group (2008): 13-26.

²¹ Ott, "(Re)Framing Fear" p. 14.

²² Ott, "(Re)Framing Fear" p. 16.

²³ Bruce Krajewski, "Rhetorical Conditioning: *The Manchurian Candidate*," in *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film*, ed. David Blakesley. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press (2003): pp 213- 233.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL/RHETORICAL CONTEXT OF *GOJIRA*

Immediately upon the spread of the news that the American military had used nuclear weapons against Japan, America's full-blown love/hate affair with the nuclear began. Mixing pride, fear, and guilt, our understanding of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy infused every aspect of our society from politics to civic engagement and even pop culture, launching us into the Cold War that would define America and much of the world for decades to come. As the oppression of Cold War politics and culture dominated in the U.S., the science fiction genre as we know it today emerged, providing an outlet for expression of fear and guilt at a time when the dominant powers attempted to create a positive world view regarding atomic energy and weapons. Though Japan was made the closest partner to the U.S. in all things nuclear by the powerful intersection of the as-yet solitary use of atomic bombs against a people—bombs dropped by America into Japan—so repressed was Japanese society before and after the bombing that it wasn't until after the Allied occupation that any windows opened for anti-nuclear expression in that country. First, it is important to explore how nuclear research affected American society pre- and post-war and the artistic

expression of the Cold War. Next, the pre- and post-war life in Japan will be examined as it relates to societal and community restrictions on expression, which led to a powerful—if delayed—science fiction response in the form of *Gojira*.

Nuclear Culture: The United States

First, consider that the greatest scientific and engineering minds in America had worked more than five years to develop an atomic bomb, many of them completely immersed in military and nuclear culture¹ while being lauded from the outside as brainiac heroes.² Once that is taken into account, it is not surprising that after the bombs were dropped, the first emotions to erupt were pride and elation with a dash of vengeance.³ After all, in August of 1945 the U.S. was exhausted from almost four years at war.⁴ The country was battling a fierce opponent in the Japanese people, an opponent demonized in the American propaganda of the time as cruel, inhuman beasts set on the utter destruction of the American way of life—and given events in the Pacific, with reason.⁵

The U.S. hated and feared the enemy as much as the U.S. hated and feared the idea of continued conflict. The use of nuclear weapons in Japan was seen not just as a way to bring a swift end to the conflict but also as a display

of national superiority. When the American people learned that the bombs had been successfully deployed, and that as hoped their use had hastened the surrender of the Japanese, the elation and pride felt at home was neither surprising nor inappropriate. Already 400,000 American lives had been lost in World War II.⁶ Whatever means were necessary to stop the blood loss quickly would be utilized and accepted.

As natural as it was to rejoice in the use of superior technology against the enemy to end the war and to celebrate revenge for Pearl Harbor, it was also natural for a Judeo-Christian-based society like the U.S. to feel guilt once there had been time to reflect upon the massive and instantaneous destruction that its military had unleashed.⁷

While the American military had used many gruesome and untidy methods of warfare already against Japan—including firebombing and blockades that were starving the people—the speed with which the atomic weapons took the lives of hundreds of thousands of Japanese with minimal risk to the two bombers used to transport them proved a shocking realization.⁸ So pervasive was the guilty sentiment that even today, more than 60 years later, many struggle still to come to terms with the decision to use the bomb.⁹

It was only a matter of weeks after the bombings that photos and newsreels of the desolate Hiroshima and Nagasaki

landscapes reached the American public, as did news reports of radiation sickness.¹⁰ Such news and imagery fueled a pre-existing fear condition.¹¹ Even before the bombs were used and nuclear research was in its infancy, many people had an uncanny apprehension about radiation. It was an apprehension that led to far greater safety measures in the nuclear research and development industry than in equally dangerous chemical research facilities, for example, and provided fodder for doomsday predictions in popular culture (particularly science fiction) and by some in the scientific community.¹²

As early as 1939 the *New York Times*, *Scientific American* and *Reader's Digest* were just a few of the mainstream outlets in which hundreds of articles were published about the wonder of a new scientific discovery: fission.¹³ Already embracing the connotative language of birth with a name based on the division of living cells, this new science provided fodder for H.G. Wells-style visions of utopian societies fueled by endless supplies of free energy.¹⁴ In a curious mix of art imitating life and life imitating art, Hungarian scientist Leo Szilard—as well as other nuclear physicists who had been influenced by the science-inspired fiction of Wells—actually used Wellsian language in his reports.¹⁵ Of course, Wells is as well known

for his horrific visions of a post-apocalyptic future as he is for utopian dreams. As such, the scientists' Wellsian-language use not only helped them raise money and recruit new minds, but it also helped fuel journalists' reports on the topic making it less than surprising that *New York Times*, *Scientific American* and *Reader's Digest* articles would warn of the potential for an apocalyptic release of power.

Naturally, then, science-fiction readers, writers, and editors were particularly entranced by the power of nuclear fission. John W. Campbell, Jr., who attended MIT as a physics major for a time and was a prolific writer of science fiction, is best known for his work as editor of the magazine *Astounding Science-Fiction*, a job he began in 1938.¹⁶ Under Campbell's guidance and exacting standards of fiction based in *actual* science, the magazine provided a rich outlet for much of the speculative musings about a nuclear future, speculations based in the research and writings of actual nuclear scientists.¹⁷ A common theme was the fear that such power in the hands of a few could lead to complete disaster and the end of the world, and that radiation was so dangerous that fantasies about atomic-powered cars and kitchens were too absurd to be considered even in the realm of fiction.¹⁸ In other words, even in the

rich world of fantasy, the dangers of radiation and atomic bombs were the dominant themes.

The pre-existing fear of radiation, compounded with guilt after the real-life bombings, grew in the U.S. and around the globe to become a dominant sentiment after 1945, virtually eradicating the vengeful rejoicing of the immediate aftermath.¹⁹ The fear of radiation—a powerful and unseen cause of sickness and death—was also reflected in newsreels, the government reaction to negative radiation reports, and popular culture ranging from novels to movies to comic books.²⁰ Newsreels and reports outside Japan exposed the public to information about the radiation sickness that was causing Japanese survivors to experience nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, as well as bleeding gums, hair loss, and often death. Scientists and reporters who discussed such matters were “severely harassed” by American officials who, truthfully enough, argued that many of the injuries were the result of ordinary bomb blasts and fires.²¹ Regardless, the focus of the public was not on standard war wounds and burns but on the new and frighteningly invisible radiation. Such fear was further fueled by the 1946 start to weapons testing on Bikini Atoll. The tests were featured in newsreels that reflected both “the official caution and unofficial anxiety” about

radiation, Spencer R. Weart argues, by showing government signs reading "Danger Radioactivity—Keep Out."²²

At the same time that the Bikini Atoll tests were going on, the American public got its first truly personal glimpse into the effects of the bombings with the release of journalist John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, a collection of stories about people who had survived the bombing there.²³ Although criticized by some at the time for being too emotionally removed from the situation, for most Hersey's book put the bombings in human terms, giving equal "weight to horror, heroism, and mundane banality."²⁴ The life Hersey depicted was not unlike the pre-bombing doomsday visions of fiction writers—priests struggling to help and serve people while maintaining the faith,²⁵ mothers struggling to help their wounded children,²⁶ thievery and black markets²⁷—except that the true horrors he witnessed in the wake of radiation poisoning could not be imagined until after the event: a woman, hiding in shame in what was left of her home after her hair began falling out in fistfuls, leaving her entirely bald;²⁸ soybean-sized hemorrhages pocking the skin of survivors as their flesh ruptured from the inside out;²⁹ pregnant women having miscarriages, their menstrual cycles ceasing.³⁰

While Hersey's book was fairly straightforward for the most part, as Weart³¹ points out even this experienced war correspondent was occasionally pulled into the mythical realm of radiation, as when he wrote of the lush vegetation that sprang up after the bombing: "The bomb had not only left the underground organs of plants intact; it had stimulated them."³² Obviously, radiation does not enhance growth; more likely the fertilizing ashes and bright light where buildings once shaded the earth were the cause of growth.³³ A further mystification of radiation in a 1948 book called *No Place to Hide* focused its coverage of the Bikini tests on "how bombs had contaminated the idyllic atoll until it became a land of ghostly peril, focusing on radioactivity as if that were the bombs' chief danger."³⁴

Though the American public and much of the rest of the world certainly had an appetite for non-fiction reports of the bombings and nuclear testing, the hunger for science fiction stories rooted in the experience proved nearly insatiable. The list of science fiction stories in print includes Ray Bradbury's famous *The Martian Chronicles* (published between 1946-1950), a series of stories that dealt with a range of nuclear holocaust themes; Pat Frank's *Mr. Adam* (1946), a bleak tale about the last man on earth to escape sterilization by a nuclear power plant accident;

and Ward Moore's *Greener Than You Think* (1947), in which a deadly, mutant strain of grass serves as an allegory for atomic threat.³⁵ In fact, so great was the production of "atomic-doom science-fiction stories" that, according to Isaac Asimov, many editors began to refuse them on sight.³⁶

Even comic book creators jumped on the atomic bandwagon, with the post World War II revelation that Superman had a vulnerability to the invisible emanations of Kryptonite, which it turns out came from the same planet as Superman himself—a planet that had been destroyed in an atomic blast.³⁷ Poets and songwriters, too, incorporated the atomic into their work,³⁸ though of all the popular arts it was the American film industry that most aggressively tapped into the new cultural obsession with its steady stream of monster movies and doomsday dramas. Joyce A. Evans, in *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*, documents some 67 Hollywood films related to nuclear science in just the first 10 years after the bombings alone—and many more in the decades of the Cold War that followed.³⁹

One of the earliest films to take on directly the subject of nuclear warfare was the 1947 docudrama, *The Beginning or the End?*, which points as much to the American obsession with nuclear bombs as it does to American guilt about actually using them. One of the most creative

segments in this film, which Evans says was greatly influenced by government pressure, is in the justification for use of the bomb. The film "blatantly fabricates historical fact" by dropping leaflets on Hiroshima for ten straight days as a means of warning the citizens to leave.⁴⁰ No such warning occurred. Other than an ultimatum to surrender or face annihilation, no warning about the use of nuclear weapons existed in reality; most of the American scientists involved in the making of the bomb did not even know it was to be dropped.⁴¹ But, Evans speculates, it was a likely a necessary move by MGM "to help alleviate American guilt for destroying a target composed mainly of civilians, so that this 'entertainment film' would not oppressively burden and alienate the audience. . . ." ⁴²

Other films reflected the written science fiction of the time, exploring atomic weapons with *Sombra, the Spider Woman* in 1947 and *The Flying Missile* in 1950 or post-holocaust survival with *Rocketship XM* in 1950 and *Red Planet Mars* in 1952. One clearly anti-nuclear proliferation film released in 1951, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, still has a cult following today. The movie took on apocalyptic anxiety in a manner quite similar to the stories published under the editorial guidance of Campbell: scientists are the heroes, while government and military pettiness

endangers us all.⁴³ The nuclear transmutation monster films for which 1950s Hollywood is known quickly followed, not only because they tapped into public anxieties, but also because they were cheap to make and highly profitable.⁴⁴

Importantly, the proliferation of all of all of these atomic-centered popular culture outlets—from novels and short stories to comics and song and, especially, to movies—worked in American society “as something of a safety valve, allowing fears to find expression as artists indulged their creative vision.”⁴⁵ The fears that existed even before the bombs were dropped, augmented by the growing knowledge of the damage that had been done in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as germinating fears about atmospheric testing in light of what was happening on the Bikini islands, led to the burgeoning of the science-fiction industry in the U.S.⁴⁶ However, outside the U.S., in the one place on earth where one might expect a similar expression of nuclear fear—Japan—such a safety valve would not exist until after the Allied occupation came to an end.

Nuclear Culture: Japan

The lack of cultural expression of nuclear fear in Japan was a function of the communication constraints placed upon the government, the news, scientists and all people in Japan after the war. It is not that the Japanese

lacked the pre-bomb radiation fears experienced in America and Europe; in fact, "radiation held as much mythical meaning in Japan as anywhere," according to Spencer Weart.⁴⁷ Japan's battle flag evoked ancient mythology about the Japanese losing a battle when fighting with the sun in their eyes but having victory with the rising sun's rays behind them, and Medieval Buddhist icons in Japan featured rays shooting from a divinity's eyes as well as halos emitting rays. Further, Weart writes, one top scientist during the war had a dream of "a deep cavern containing a great atom smasher from which emerged luminous rays, striking around the earth to destroy Washington," which evokes Japanese mythology about a Sun Goddess hidden in a cave.⁴⁸ In essence the Japanese shared a certain mythological understanding of radiation with the rest of the world.

The deep cultural and mythological ties to ancient war stories involving powerful rays likely fed into what we know about the response of many Japanese survivors of the bombings. For most survivors—known as *hibakusha*—the bombings seemed less like military actions and more like "a rupture of the very order of nature, an act . . . of sacrilege" that was often merged with childhood anxieties and apocalyptic fear fantasies.⁴⁹ Considering such powerful

psychological drives, which were combined with the literal horror of immediate destruction followed by radiation poisoning, it would at first appear all the more surprising that so little artistic expression existed in Japan in the years immediately following the bombing. However, a look into the pre-war culture in Japan and the rules of the occupation forces provide some means of understanding. It was not until the Allies left in 1952 that in Japan, at last, began to emerge what was such an immediate expression of fear and horror in other parts of the world.

Although the Japanese people were accustomed to functioning under Empirical rule as they had for centuries, in July 1937, the country went to war with China. It was then that the government began to increase the pressure on civilians to conform to ideals determined by the leaders. Because the civilian population was not particularly supportive of the war with China, Japan's leaders formed in October of 1937 the National Spiritual Mobilization Central League. The organization's goal was to use spiritual and psychological motivation to mobilize the people in support of the war. The motivational techniques used included pamphlet distribution, a lecture series, and encouragement to visit various shrines to patriotism. Subcommittees organized dramatic ceremonies to send soldiers off to war

and to provide honoring ceremonies to receive the soldiers who were returned dead. Within a few months, the "encouragement" to participate escalated as the government instituted programs to quell social dissent, including the removal of liberal scholars from Tokyo Imperial University and the arrest of hundreds of leftist activists.⁵⁰

During the next three years, societal controls—many inspired by the Nazi party—continually expanded. The changes included introduction of the monthly "Public Service for Asia Day," when various labors were required, sale of sake was not permitted, and neon signs were turned off; entertainment was made more patriotic, as everything from cigarette names to stage names that had a Western tenor were changed to something more Japanese; rationing was heightened to include basic food stuffs as well as clothing, given that it was illegal to produce silk for clothing or neckties and standard uniforms required to be worn by both sexes had limitations placed on sleeve length; and neighborhood association meetings were brought under strict government control, as the meetings were centrally scheduled and groups would have to listen to prescribed radio broadcasts. By 1941 the military extended its cultural influence further by drastically altering the public school system more in alignment with Nazi-style

youth education, which meant more focus on military-style exercise as well as regular bowing to the Imperial Palace. The military became so dominant that travel by groups was forbidden as was the frivolous use of telegrams for condolence messages or greetings.⁵¹

From 1931 to 1940, Japan's military budget as a percentage of total expenditures more than doubled from 29 percent to 66 percent. For a country widely dependent on imports for food, that military budget meant severe hardships for the citizens even before the Allied bombings of Japan began in 1945, further cutting off access to food. So, as the days of occupation approached, the Japanese people had endured nearly a decade of participation in government-mandated social control activities, the shifting of society away from intellectual development and toward military service, and extreme hardships and malnourishment. Japan was primed to obey Allied mandates by the time the U.S. began its occupation. "Japanese society was mentally and physically disarmed."⁵² Besides what was happening internally to reprogram the people, the anti-American propaganda machine in Japan was effective in making the people terrified of what fate they faced when the evil American soldiers reached their soil. Those fears were clearly supported and amplified by the bombings of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁵³ Naturally, the citizens had no desire to bring down further wrath upon themselves through disobedience to the occupation forces.

Additionally molding the Japanese to be pliable to occupation demands was the very means by which they learned of their country's surrender. In a dramatic effort to calm his people and to convince a Shinto culture that had been told for centuries that death was preferable to surrender,⁵⁴ Emperor Hirohito used radio for the first time ever to announce Japan's surrender.⁵⁵ In his speech, carefully constructed to prevent mass suicides and to provide a positive and common vision for his people, he instructs the masses to cooperate, as cooperation would be the only path to survival for Japan:

Unite your strength to be devoted to the construction for the future. Cultivate the ways of rectitude, nobility of spirit, and work with resolution so that you may enhance the innate glory of the Imperial State and keep pace with the progress of the world.⁵⁶

Essentially, Japanese civilians were asked to be the good and loyal subjects they had already proved themselves to be—only now, they would answer to occupation forces instead of Japan's military.

While it might seem at first glance that the wartime anti-American propaganda combined with the brutality of the bombings—the B29 firebombing raids as well as the atomic bombs—could just as well foster an immediate hostility to occupation troops and everything they represented, that did not prove to be the case. Rather, an early poll in Japan asking who was responsible for the atomic bombings found 19 percent blamed the Americans, 35 percent blamed Japan, and 29 percent blamed neither, viewing it rather as an “inevitable consequence of war.”⁵⁷ Further, it was not uncommon for Japanese citizens to feel guilty about giving in to their government’s propaganda machine to such devastating consequences.⁵⁸ So in addition to the guidance of its emperor, the populace had its own drives toward cooperation with occupation forces. Beyond the poll results, that drive is reflected in the popularity of Article 9 of Japan’s postwar constitution, the provision that essentially banned a military in Japan. Overwhelmingly, the sentiment in Japan was that it was time for peace, which meant maintaining an alliance with the U.S.⁵⁹

However dominant the Japanese people’s desire to move toward peace, one ought not underestimate the role that occupation forces played in silencing any criticism of

America or its use of the bomb. What is important to remember is the willingness of the Japanese government, news industry, scientific community and citizenry to capitulate to occupation constraints as the pathway to peace was embraced. For many government servants in Japan, it was in their best interest to keep discussions of war atrocities to a minimum, as they preferred to have their own atrocities "bur[ied] in the past" along with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁶⁰

For those outside the government, the censorship constraints were extreme, virtually shutting down any fodder for the public to discuss the negative aspects of the bombings. Almost immediately after taking control of Japan, a press code issued by the Americans was adopted. The new rules prohibited any media outlet from publishing something that could evoke "mistrust or resentment"⁶¹ of the occupation forces. That meant pretty much anything that had to do with the nuclear bomb was off limits as, rightly, the occupation forces feared that open discussion of the bomb "might tarnish the reputation of the United States both in Japan and in other nations."⁶² Also off limits was any mention of the existence of censorship itself.

There was only one attempt, in September 1945, by the Japanese press agency Domei and a prominent newspaper,

Asahi Shimbun, to run a story critical of nuclear weapons. The censorship bureau responded swiftly, shutting down both news outlets as punishment. After that the "Japanese press tamely submitted to the occupation's program of prepublication censorship," which meant that stories about the peace movement in Japan or about atomic weapons seldom made it to print, unless the focus was on the bomb ending/shortening the war and leading to peace. Any stories about the findings of the U.S. Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission—findings that included reports about sterility and genetic mutations among hibakusha—were suppressed, while fake stories about healthy, scar-free survivors were run.⁶³

Occupation authorities aggressively censored literature and the arts, which have already been established in this chapter as a natural human outlet used to cope with emotions rooted in the bombs' destruction and the radiation they left behind. Lawrence S. Wittner, in *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Volume One*, covers the censorship of the arts extensively. For example, Yoko Ota, author of *City of Corpses*, a novel based on the three nights she spent in Hiroshima "surrounded by disfigured bodies and moaning survivors," completed her book in November, 1945. But it was three years before it was

published, and then "only in expurgated form."⁶⁴ The book *Bells of Nagasaki* by physician Dr. Takashi Nagai, though complete in 1946, was barred from publication until material about "Japanese atrocities in Manila"—material compiled by the U.S. intelligence division—were included; it was finally published in 1949 with the American additions, two years before Nagai died of radiation poisoning.⁶⁵

Drawings by artists Iri Maruki and Toshiko Takamatsu's, begun when they visited Hiroshima three days after the bombing, had their work published in 1950 by a peace group in the book *Atomic Explosion*, but it was seized and suppressed. Even the American journalist John Hersey's book, *Hiroshima*, had difficulty making it through the censorship barrier, as the censors sought to quell the spread of all information, not just that issued by the Japanese. Finally—though only after a 1949 public protest in America by the Authors' League of America—U.S. authorities gave in and let it be published in Japan.⁶⁶ Further censorship was also commonplace in school textbooks and in medical and scientific research publications. It was not until the occupation ended that Japanese scientists were free to conduct independent investigations of bomb-related injuries. Any early footage obtained by Japanese

scientists after the bombing was confiscated by U.S. authorities, so complete was the control on bomb-related information.

Even among the hibakusha, who certainly came the closest to open criticism of the bombings, references to the bombs were likely allowed because of the focus on their significant roll as an end to the war and a pathway to peace. Hiroshima's mayor after the war, Shinzo Hamai, led a peace movement that attracted great numbers—10,000 to a park in Hiroshima in 1947, 15,000 in 1948, and by 1949 some 30,000 people met at the Hiroshima Memorial Tower of Peace. Yet even at these ground-zero gatherings, criticism was not the primary message; rather, activists looked to the bombs as a means to an end of war, forever.⁶⁷ Similarly, the Japanese membership of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) concentrated their post-war efforts on the development of a world government that would assure peace, even as their counterparts in the WILPF in the U.S. were extremely hostile and morally critical of the use of the bombs. The U.S. chapter declared that the use of the bombs had "'shattered' the 'moral authority of the United States,'" a sentiment not repeated by the membership in Japan.⁶⁸

Finally, in 1952, the occupation forces left Japan to its own rule and to decide for itself what would and would not be discussed openly.⁶⁹ However, after more than a decade of strict Japanese and American governmental controls, and more than five years of legal constraints on freedom of expression about the nuclear, what was once *verboden* through hegemonic means remained as a cultural taboo that limited open criticism of atomic weapons and weapons testing.⁷⁰ Shortly after the occupation forces departed, the scientific community was the first to begin researching and writing about the after effects of the bomb and, much as in America, what was discussed in the scientific community would be reflected in science fiction.

At last, in 1954, from the only country ever to be bombed with atomic weapons, emerged a response to that rhetorical situation in the form of a Hollywood-modeled, blockbuster movie: *Gojira*. At once reflecting the monster-movie genre that had grown so popular in America since 1945, the profound fears of atomic blasts and radiation poisoning, and the experience of being bombed, *Gojira* was "the coalescing into solid form"⁷¹ of nearly a decade of suppressed thought and feeling as well as a curious blend of two cultures entwined by war.

Conclusion

As the business here is the rhetorical-critical analysis of *Gojira* as, at least in part, a response to the historical-contextual dynamics discussed in the chapter, it is useful to keep in mind how critical work responds to such variables. There already exists in the field of rhetorical study a vast collection of criticism that would not—and could not—exist without the critic's thorough understanding of the historical and cultural milieu in which the text originally functioned and so came into "rhetorical being."⁷² In fact, history and rhetoric is often so intertwined that, as Stephen E. Lucas wrote, "historical understanding is not simply a prolegomenon to critical understanding, but an organic element of the whole process of rhetorical analysis."⁷³

Taking a very brief foray into work done in the general area of visual media, it is easy to find examples of rhetorical criticism that could not exist isolated from historical context. For example, Bonnie J. Dow's extensive work on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*⁷⁴ could not have achieved its goal of showing that the main character of the program functioned rhetorically to support existing gender norms had Dow not thoroughly immersed herself in the historical-cultural timeframe of the 1970s (particularly the feminist

movement). Similarly, when Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites provide criticism of the famous Vietnam War photo "Accidental Napalm,"⁷⁵ it is their ability to place the photograph in its historical-cultural context that enables them to proceed with their argument explaining why the photograph reached and maintained iconic status in relation to that troubled time in U.S. history.

It is particularly vital in the case of *Gojira* to understand the historical context of the film's creation and release because it exists in response to a rhetorical situation that cannot be seen nor understood without knowledge of the environment in which it was created. To be sure, with just a perfunctory knowledge of the use of atomic weapons in Japan, a casual viewer might be able to connect a mysterious flash of light or radiated water in the film with nuclear warfare—but the understanding would not likely progress further. It would be too easy for the casual observer to see the film as just another monster movie or a Hollywood knock-off, neither of which is true. To truly appreciate the way the film functions rhetorically it is necessary to understand the extreme limitations of expression that existed in Japan, especially in relation to nuclear weapons, as well as how the science-fiction genre came to flourish during the Cold War.

Additionally, as an American critic seeking to find avenues of understanding from a non-American perspective, it proved vital to expand the knowledge and understanding of the time and place in which *Gojira* first existed so that the full rhetorical significance of the film could be recognized. Having been fully immersed in the history of the time as well as in those early days of the burgeoning science-fiction film industry, there now exists an opportunity to hear the voices of a population silenced for decades. Those voices not only serve to open our eyes to a differing perspective on the use of nuclear weapons, but also allow us to share in the grief and fear of a nation while simultaneously getting a glimpse of the U.S. through the eyes of those it conquered. *Gojira* exists as a rhetorical response to a profound historical-cultural experience, and as a close reading of the text will show, it is a response worthy of critical attention.

¹ Paul Loeb, *Nuclear Culture* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1986); Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press: 1994.)

² Elizabeth Walker Mechling and Jay Mechling, "The Atom According to Disney," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 81 (1995): 436-453.

³Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: 12-14*; Allan M. Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud: American Anxiety About the Atom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 35.

⁴ "Principal Wars in Which the United States Participated," Department of Defense. Accessed 11/30/2008.
<http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/WCPRINCIPAL.pdf>

⁵ Bryan Hubbard, "Reassessing Truman, the Bomb, and Revisionism: The Burlesque Frame and Entelechy in the Decision to Use Atomic Weapons Against Japan," *Western Journal of Communication*, 62, 3 (1998): 374; "Calls Enemy Torture Deliberate," *New York Times*, January 30, 1944, p. 28.

⁶ "Principal Wars," Department of Defense.

⁷ Weart is the primary source identified here who addresses the guilt of the American people in relation to use of nuclear weapons. However, the other scholarship is listed as well because it represents various explorations of the way guilt functions as a defining and motivating force, particularly among those with a Judeo-Christian bent. Robert Ivie specifically explores how guilt and mortification functioned in America during the Cold War, making his publication listed here particularly useful for those who wish a more detailed exploration of this concept. Barry Brummett, "Burkean Scapegoating, Mortification, and Transcendence in Presidential Campaign Rhetoric," *Central States Speech Journal*, 32 (1981): 256; Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" from Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, 3rd ed, 1973, (University of California Press, 1973), 191-220; Joyce A. Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom*

Clouds (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998): 31-32. Robert L. Ivie, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War 'Idealists,'" *Communication Monographs*, 54 (1987): 165-182, in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism* 3rd ed, ed. Carl R. Burghardt (State College, Pennsylvania: Strata Publishing), 325. Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki, "The Politics of Negotiating Public Tragedy: Media Framing of the Matthew Shepard Murder," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 5, 3 (2002); Mari Boor Tonn, Valerie A. Endress, and John N. Diamond, "Hunting and heritage on Trial in Maine: A Dramatistic Debate Over Tragedy, Tradition, and Territory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 79 (1993): 165-181. Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 107.

⁸ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 11; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 107; Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 37-38;

⁹ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*; Also, each year on the anniversary of the bombs dropping, it is not uncommon to see documentaries on television that examine the decision to drop the bombs. Even the Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas generally marks the anniversary with a function hosted jointly with the Japanese American Society. This past year featured an artist who had survived the bombing in Hiroshima and remained adamantly opposed to the bombings; the event was attended almost equally by peace activists opposed to the use of atomic weapons, war veterans in favor of their use, and scholars.

¹⁰ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 109.

¹¹ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 15.

¹² Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 264-265; Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 7.

¹³ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 77-78, 80.

¹⁴ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 77-81.

¹⁵ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 81.

¹⁶ *World Authors 1950-1970*, s.v. "Campbell, John W(ood) (Jr.)" (eds. Stanley Kunitz and John Wakeman) <http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com> (accessed August 30, 2009). According to his biography, after Campbell failed out of MIT he went on to earn his bachelor's of science degree at Duke University.

¹⁷ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 114 ;Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 81.

¹⁸ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 114-115; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 82.

¹⁹ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 13; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 101-102; Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 35.

²⁰ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*; Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*; Loeb, *Nuclear Culture*; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 191; Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*.

²¹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 109.

²² Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 110.

²³ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 204; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 110.

²⁴ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 205.

²⁵ John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 39.

²⁶ Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 68.

²⁷ Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 92.

²⁸ Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 68.

²⁹ Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 70-71.

³⁰ Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 78.

³¹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 110.

³² Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 69.

- ³³ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 110.
- ³⁴ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 110.
- ³⁵ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 258-261
- ³⁶ Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 7.
- ³⁷ Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 98.
- ³⁸ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*; Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 96-97.
- ³⁹ Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*, 15-19.
- ⁴⁰ Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*, 31.
- ⁴¹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*.
- ⁴² Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*, 32.
- ⁴³ *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1951 (DVD issued 2002, Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment Inc.); Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*.
- ⁴⁴ Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*, 67 and 71.
- ⁴⁵ Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 7.
- ⁴⁶ Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*, 66.
- ⁴⁷ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 108.
- ⁴⁸ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 108-109.
- ⁴⁹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 107.
- ⁵⁰ *Oxford Companion to World War II*, s.v. "Japan: Domestic life, economy, and war effort" (by Gordon Daniels)
<http://www.oxfordreference.com> (accessed September 7, 2009).
- ⁵¹ *Oxford Companion to World War II*, s.v. "Japan"
- ⁵² *Oxford Companion to World War II*, s.v. "Japan"
- ⁵³ "The Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Chapter 10—Total Casualties," *The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and*

Diplomacy, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School. Accessed 03/01/2008. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mp10.asp; William L. O'Neill, *World War II: A Student Companion*, ed. William H. Chafe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 146; Otto D. Tolischus, "The Savage Code That Rules Japan," *New York Times*, February 6, 1944, p. SM5.

⁵⁴ Tolischus, "The Savage Code."

⁵⁵ O'Neill, *World War II*, 146.

⁵⁶ Source: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/hirohito.htm>. (Mount Holyoke College, The Ruth C. Lawson Chair of International Politics website.) Accessed 11/02/08. This transcript of the radio address is identical to that found in the "Text of Hirohito's Radio Rescript" in the *New York Times*, August 15, 1945, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Volume One—One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement Through 1953* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 45-46.

⁵⁸ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 45.

⁵⁹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 108; Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 46.

⁶⁰ "Calls Enemy Torture Deliberate," *New York Times*, January 30, 1944, p. 28; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 196.

⁶¹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 46.

⁶² Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 46.

⁶³ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 46.

⁶⁴ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 47.

⁶⁵ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 47.

⁶⁶ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 47.

⁶⁷ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 48-49.

⁶⁸ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 56.

⁶⁹ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 46.

⁷⁰ William Tsutsui. *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

⁷¹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 191.

⁷² James R. Andrews, *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 2nd ed. (White Plains, New York: Longman, 1990), 33. Also, in the same text please refer to Andrews' entire Chapter 2 (Constituents of the Rhetorical Act: Context and Audience), pp. 16-34, as well as to Malcolm O. Sillars and Bruce E. Gronbeck, Chapter 6: Neoclassical Criticism-- Communication as Persuasion, in *Communication Criticism: Rhetoric, Social Codes, Cultural Studies* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2001), 112-137 for an exhaustive analysis of the incorporation of historical and cultural context into criticism.

⁷³ Stephen E. Lucas, "The Schism in Rhetorical Scholarship," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 67 (1981): 20.

⁷⁴ Bonnie J. Dow, "1970s Lifestyle Feminism, the Single Woman and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*" in *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture and the Women's Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 24-58.

⁷⁵ Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: UC Press, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS

*Although most films provide avenues for escape and are primarily produced for profit they do much more than that. They pull us into our cultural unconscious to meet our shadows, those disowned aspects of ourselves that we loathe.*¹

In *Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in America*, Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenzt incorporated Jungian psychology and American mythology into their rhetorical examination of American film as a means of exploring cultural fears and beliefs. And in *The Terministic Screen*, editor David Blakesley presents a varied collection of approaches to rhetorical criticism of film, asserting that "In the end, we share the belief that taking rhetorical perspectives on film creates alchemic possibilities, new ways of understanding...that can impact our lives profoundly."² As rhetorical studies of film have continued to grow and develop, criticism has helped open windows of understanding to things as diverse as our complex relationships with our bodies³ to choosing a path to self realization.⁴ And although Brian L. Ott's "(Re)Framing Fear: Equipment for Living in a Post-9/11 World" provides insight into not a film but rather the television show "Battlestar Galactica," the exploration of torture and

political dissent in that complex science fiction series also argues the importance of visual media as "symbolic equipment for living."⁵

Though such theoretical approaches were kept in mind, repeated close readings of the text led to the analytical approach used here. When first sitting down to analyze *Gojira*, it was tempting to structure the analysis based on obvious representations of nuclear bombings, be it a flashing light and subsequent burning of boats or the footfalls of the monster that so closely parallel the thud and quake of a bomb hitting the earth. But such an analysis would fall short of exploring the film's rhetorical power. For one thing, the actual *existence* and *use* of Fat Man and Little Boy was never denied, was never censored in Japan. What was censored was the *interpretation* of the use and *consequences* of the bombs. Recall that for the Japanese during the occupation, it was acceptable to discuss the bombs in public and in the media as an inevitable outcome of war and, more significantly, as a means to an end of the war and a pathway to peace. What was *not* acceptable was any mention of negative consequences or emotions, even though both are universal results of war.⁶ Considering that from a mental health perspective it is vital to talk about the emotions that inevitably surface after a trauma, it is not

surprising that *Gojira*, one of the earliest post-occupation/post-censorship public artifacts to be created in Japan, would be rife with emotional themes.

Research into the area of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which in World War II was called "shell shock," is extensive. That matters here for two reasons: first, it is increasingly apparent that trauma affects humans universally regardless of their ethnic background; and second, when PTSD is ignored the effects on those who have experienced the trauma can be socially and psychologically crippling.⁷ In one study of rural Burundian survivors who had witnessed a variety of traumatic events, results showed that even those who had never been exposed to the Western language of PTSD still expressed emotional equivalents to PTSD, including anxiety, depression, anger, and somatization.⁸ Studies of Japanese Americans as well as Holocaust survivors also show that what we in America refer to as PTSD is universally experienced by humans exposed to trauma, be they individuals, family units, or whole cultures.⁹ The universality of PTSD is important because it underlies the validity of using emotional representation in *Gojira* as a way to explore response to the trauma of the bombs. Regardless of the ethnic and cultural differences between the Japanese and Americans, using emotion is a way

to bridge communication and understanding. Therefore, the exploration of emotion in the film provides new information to add to the post-bomb discussion.

The importance of recognizing the emotional and psychological ramifications of trauma in leading a healthy and productive life can help make it clear why the emotionality of *Gojira* was so important for the Japanese, many of whom left the theaters in tears after seeing the film the first time.¹⁰ Further, recognition of the grief of others is an important step toward reconstructing the traumatized peoples' reality positively, as Donna K. Nagata and Wendy J. Y. Chen observed in relation to redress for Japanese Americans put in concentration camps after Pearl Harbor. The American Government's admission of wrongdoing in that case opened the door for more open discussion of the experience by the survivors and their offspring, thereby leading to reduced feelings of guilt and shame.¹¹ A growing body of research also points to the use of narrative as an effective treatment approach for those with PTSD¹²; through guided story telling about the traumatic events--story telling that is encouraged to include metaphor--therapists and social workers can help their clients find avenues to growth as opposed to "chronic interpersonal, societal, and medical problems."¹³

To be clear, although the label PTSD includes the word "post," delayed response is not necessary. It is important to remember that those who suffer from PTSD often get stuck in a heightened emotional state, causing them to relive almost constantly the emotions related to the trauma. Narrative is especially useful in helping people recover from trauma because it allows them to experience concurrently the trauma of the past in the present, but in a guided and safe way.¹⁴ A film that explores trauma metaphorically allows viewers to revisit their past trauma simultaneously with the characters on the screen, who are fictionally experiencing the emotions for the first time. While it is impossible to return to 1954 and study the audience response to *Gojira*, we do know some things that indicate its powerful effect on viewers. Many left the theater in tears, but their tears did not discourage others from watching the film; rather, *Gojira* became a blockbuster success viewed by millions of Japanese.¹⁵ And while it was certainly the intent of Producer Tomoyuki Tanaka and Director Ishiro Honda to create a blockbuster film, multiple sources from IMDB to William Tsutsi to the liner notes of the *Gojira* 2004 DVD release tell us that both men also intended the film to be a response to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As such, it can be reasonably assumed that their

intent, at least in part, was to evoke war-related emotion with the film's narrative.

When approaching narrative in this way, it is vital to understand how narrative functions not just from a psychology or sociology standpoint, but rather how it functions rhetorically to create meaning, a paradigm first explored by Walter R. Fisher.¹⁶ In essence, Fisher's work takes Kenneth Burke's definition of humans as the "symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal" to the next level, explaining that "the idea of human beings as storytellers indicates the generic form of all symbol composition" that gives "order to human experience."¹⁷ Considering narrative this way makes it possible to understand how stories, particularly dramatic ones, create "the fabric of social reality for those who compose them," and as such have "persuasive force."¹⁸ Finally, narrative holds as a particularly useful method of study when crossing cultural and historical boundaries, as it has been established across academic disciplines that "narrative, whether written or oral, is a feature of human nature and that it crosses time and culture."¹⁹ By examining the strong emotional themes expressed in the narrative *Gojira* we can begin to understand better the experience of the Japanese survivor of World War II, as well as the part Americans

played in the creation of that reality at a most profound intersection of cultures, technologies, and war.

This thematic approach, endorsed by Martin Medhurst and Janice Hocker Rushing, among other rhetorical critics of film, is embraced here by articulating the ways in which PTSD and narrative work together to bring understanding and meaning to the paired themes prevalent in the film. Close reading of *Gojira* reveals three dominant emotional pairings in the film, pairings that are included in mental health literature among the primary responses to a war experience and are prevalent in PTSD. Those pairings are: guilt/anger, pain/suffering, and powerlessness/fear. Of course, there may be overlap of emotional themes in one scene, which often creates heightened tensions that will be addressed where necessary as each theme is explored below. However, to maintain focus, the analysis in this chapter is divided into four parts. The first three sections correspond to the above-mentioned emotional pairings, the fourth looks at key areas of overlap. Overlap is especially important where all three emotional pairings merge to create the most profoundly expressive and rhetorically powerful segments of the film. Within each theme, the scenes are addressed chronologically in the order in which they occur in *Gojira*.

It is important to keep in mind as this chapter unfolds that science fiction then and now functions as a safe outlet for explorations of guilt. In 1954 in Japan it would have been socially and culturally unacceptable to have a loud and open discussion about causality and the bombs. However, by using metaphor and allegory, the topic can be explored with less risk of criticism. The emotions remain and the ideas remain; it is the scene and the facts that change to allow greater freedom of expression of emotions and ideas.²⁰ By assessing the film from this thematic approach, it is possible to see how *Gojira* functions rhetorically to provide for the Japanese people (the creators of the film as well as their audience) a safe venue for post-war expression and healing.

Guilt/Anger

Guilt and anger are complex emotions that are often intertwined, mixed up as they are in feelings of causality, culpability, and responsibility. While rhetoricians including Kenneth Burke and those working within the framework of Dramatism have parsed mortification and transcendence of guilt as motivations in Western culture, the guilt and anger theme of *Gojira* presents another opportunity for productive analysis.²¹

In *Gojira* it is possible to explore expressions of guilt and anger by an Eastern culture, which in this case is particularly important as a means to exposing a new voice in the ever-expanding chorus that attempts to make sense of the use of nuclear weapons in World War II.

It is known from historical accounts, as discussed in the prior chapter, that shortly after the war ended in Japan, many of the country's citizens felt some responsibility for bringing upon them the wrath of American technology. At the same time, many of the country's leaders preferred to avoid discussions about the bombs as a means of avoiding a related conversation about Japan's own guilt of committing wartime atrocities. In *Gojira* some of that complexity of guilt and anger about the war can be observed early in the film, just after the first official citing of the monster in the chapter aptly named, "Atom Breeds Monsters." In this scene, the character of the respected senior scientist Professor Yamane--played by Takashi Shimura, a famous and beloved actor in Japan known at the time for his work in *Rashomon*, *Ikiru*, and *Shichinin no Samurai*, aka *Seven Samurai*²²--explains to officials the results of his fact-finding mission to Odo Island, where the first land attack by *Gojira* occurred.

In this scene, set in a courtroom-sized area in a building that resembles the Diet, Japan's Parliament, the audience for the scientist and his team has three representational components: the press, the conservative traditionalist men, and the pacifist liberal women. Professor Yamane calmly and methodically explains what Gojira is, how it was formed, and why the people are guilty of creating it. First he notes that Gojira is a prehistoric creature that has survived undetected in its deep-sea environment until "recent experimental nuclear detonations may have drastically altered its natural habitat. I would even speculate," the character says somberly, "that a hydrogen bomb explosion may have removed it from its surroundings." The men in the audience react with a mixture of surprise, disbelief, and amusement, even snickering. The women, in stark contrast, shake their heads affirmatively with utterances of "incredible!" and "really!" though they seem less surprised at the news than by the telling of it.

While the professor plods along with his somewhat dry and definitively somber anthropological evidence and accompanying slide show that places Gojira in the Jurassic period, one of the agitated male spectators suddenly jumps up and demands to know how Professor Yumane "knows this has something to do with the bombs." The Professor stares

evenly at the man and at the audience and continues.

"Because our Geiger counter readings of the radiation in this sand indicate the presence of Strontium 90. . . . This sand that came from Gojira has absorbed a massive dose of radiation, the type generated only from an atomic bomb." As this information explodes into the room, the audience erupts, becoming loud and rowdy as order is called for. Meanwhile, with the slide show over, the curtains that had been darkening the room are drawn open, and the audience transcends from the darkness of pre-bomb knowledge into the harsh light of understanding. The professor removes his glasses before giving his very last bit of testimony: "The evidence suggests that Gojira itself must have absorbed an enormous amount of atomic radiation."

For the remainder of the chapter,²³ the scene is an eruption of anger fueled not only by the guilty knowledge that it was human action that created this gigantic and fierce threat to Japan, but also by disagreement about what should be done with the new information. In a clear representation of two competing cultures in Japan at the close of the occupation, the film depicts conservative, older men in the audience as stuffy and controlling, maintaining the status quo. Their representative argues that anything as serious as the creation of Gojira being

caused by atomic testing must be kept secret from the public, as "world affairs are fragile enough as it is."

In contrast, audience members led by clearly educated women--they wear business attire and have notebooks and pens unlike their peasant counterparts on Odo Island who wear traditional hats and robes--argues for exposure of the truth, as did the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) of the time.²⁴ In an increasingly intense and angry exchange the stuffy men tell the women to "be quiet!" and try to explain that such knowledge would "engulf the country in a panic," leading down the slippery slope to the old guard's final argument: "the government, the economy and international relations would plunge into total chaos!" The fallacious argument enrages the spokesperson for the liberal women's group in the audience, as she jumps up, slamming the table with her hands, and shouts "You stupid idiot! What are you saying?!"

As this scene comes to a close, the guilt and anger are unresolved, as the exchange between the opposing groups erupts into a full fight with shouting, shaking of fists, pounding of tables. The man demands an apology, the woman demands the truth. The media fuel the frenzy with their flashing cameras while the pounding of the gavel and shouts for order seem only to encourage the fray instead of

calming it. Meanwhile, as the mayhem ensues in the background, the cameras move to the group of scientists. They all remain seated, somber, motionless, watching the result of their report that Japan is guilty of creating this terrifying new threat, a threat that would not exist had science not progressed to the point that it could create atomic weapons. The scene closes as the scientists cast their eyes to the floor in an expression that combines guilt, shame, and perhaps even embarrassment.

To be clear, who is responsible for the atomic testing that unearthed Gojira is never overtly stated in the film; however there is nothing to indicate a reference here to American testing while there are multiple indicators to imply that it is the Japanese themselves who have been experimenting in this fictional account. For one thing, the map used by Professor Yumane to illustrate where Gojira used to reside in the ocean depths shows the location just off the coast of Japan, and it was in fishing waters close by Japan that the initial attacks occurred. Additionally, the scientists in the "Atom Breeds Monsters" scene often cast their eyes down indicating guilt. Finally, the overall emotional sense--not just of this initial scene but others that will be discussed in relation to the creation of the monster--is one of guilt in a fairly obvious metaphor for

the awakening of the sleeping beast of the United States with the bombing of Pearl Harbor.²⁵

The next segment of the film in which there is a clear indication of the guilt of the Japanese people for enraging the beast spans four chapters: "Godzilla Attacks," "Unstoppable Rampage," "Live From the Scene," and "Air Strike." In this central part of the film--the monster's attack on Tokyo--the retribution response of Gojira is shockingly severe, yet somewhat understandable, as the Japanese leaders and military enact a plan devised to crush the monster. Instead, their plan merely hurts Gojira, further enraging it and incurring its wrath just as Japanese military action did to the United States in World War II. The attack on Tokyo is one of the primary areas of overlap among emotional pairings, and as such requires examination in each context. For this section of analysis, however, indications of guilt and related anger are discussed.

As the chapter "Godzilla Attacks" begins, a radio bulletin announces that Gojira has been spotted and that it is time to power the thirty-meter high, eighty-meter deep electric fence. The fence was built in conjunction by the Coast Guard and the Army at the water's edge in Tokyo, despite the opposition of Professor Yumane. The goal of the

fence is to have fifty-thousand volts of current run through it in order to electrocute Gojira when it comes ashore, which the leadership apparently deems an inevitable occurrence. By ignoring Professor Yumane's repeated warnings about bright lights aggravating the monster, the military does in fact drive Gojira to shore with giant spotlights shone over the ocean. The soldiers also aim cannons at the monster as it lumbers toward land, though they appear as toys in comparison to the towering, fifty-meter high Gojira; the electric fence comes up only as high as the creature's chest. As the fence is reached, the power is turned on, electrifying it, and the cannons are fired.

However, despite the efficiency of the military in erecting its electric barrier, rather than kill Gojira the fence merely causes the creature to scream out in pain and rage. The cannon balls exploding earth at its feet further anger the creature as it tears the fence apart with its "hands" and screams its unearthly bellow,²⁶ tearing more of the fence down with its tail. Now completely outraged by what is happening, Gojira melts the fence with its breath and its back fins light up the angrier it gets. With those fins aglow it exhales hot wind that instantly ignites, as would an atomic radiation flash, whole blocks at a time, incinerates people to ash where they stand, and burns and

melts vehicles both stationary and in motion. It is impossible to watch this scene and not think of atomic blast testing videos and Hiroshima and Nagasaki footage and reports. As the scene progresses, the military's next line of defense opens fire, unloading cannon balls into Gojira's abdomen and chest. Again, the military's action fails to stop the monster's progress; to the contrary, the monster responds by advancing farther and unleashing more hot breath onto the tanks and then all of Tokyo. Though we are not sure if Gojira would have advanced on Tokyo anyway, the film makes clear that Japan's military ensured the monster's attack and increased its ferocity many times, which again clearly functions metaphorically for Japanese responsibility for the actions taken by the United States during the war.

The final two chapters of this section, "Live From the Scene" and "Air Strike," are the last two segments that illustrate the guilt of the people in fueling the wrath of Gojira. In "Live From the Scene," which follows the near-complete destruction of Tokyo, the ever-present reporters are seen in a large radio tower from which they are reporting the entire scene on camera, by radio, and with notebooks as it unfolds. From Gojira's perspective the tower is a maddening collection of flashing lights--again

Professor Yumane's warning about bright lights goes unheeded. It is clear from the audience's perspective that the camera flashes simultaneously disturb and attract the monster. Reporters fall to their deaths in the midst of their reports as the monster melts and tears the tower to the ground. At last, Gojira heads back toward the sea, though the military still has time for one more hapless attack in "Air Strike." This time the military tries using its planes to shoot guns and rockets at Gojira, which, like all other attempts to conquer, only causes it to become angry and confused as it bats the planes from the sky. Finally, as Gojira submerges into the water--seemingly because it is exhausted for now rather than defeated--the sea glows and bubbles and steams as the enraged monster disappears. The scene closes with rays spreading out over the water, not unlike the rays on the flag of the Japanese Navy, which had itself been ineffective in keeping America from Japan's shores.

The next two dominant references to guilt in the film relate directly to that felt by scientists about creating deadly weapons, a guilt that often erupts into anger. The first scene expressing scientific guilt is in "An Ultimate Weapon," the chapter in which Emiko has a flashback to an earlier conversation with Professor Serizawa, the scientist

and war veteran whom she has known all her life and is expected to marry (although she intends to marry Ogata, not Serizawa). It is during the flashback that the secret weapon developed by Serizawa is revealed. Dubbed "Oxygen Destroyer," the fictional weapon, initially studied as a source of energy in a clear nuclear parallel, works by splitting oxygen atoms into liquids. Its power is illustrated as a small version (in the form of something resembling a ball bearing) is dropped into a fish tank in the lab. The ball begins to bubble and as Emiko watches the fish are reduced first to skeletons, then to a few pieces of flesh, and finally to nothing in a foreshadowing of another guilt-ridden scene, also to be discussed. After the flashback, the scene continues in the chapters "A Moral Dilemma" and "Never to Be Used Again," when Ogata and Emiko break into the lab and an argument about the use of the weapon against Gojira ensues.

Serizawa expresses the emotion of guilt in these scenes both verbally and nonverbally. Verbally it is expressed in his conversations first with Emiko and then with Ogata. In the early part of the scene, Emiko functions as an externalization of Serizawa's own conscience when she asks questions such as "why are you working on such an awful project?" and "what if your discovery is used for

some horrible purpose?" While at first he tries to defend his work--in an irritated tone--by claiming to perform it "strictly as a research scientist," he quickly admits that if his discovery were to be used as a weapon, its power would equal a nuclear bomb. "I could totally destroy humankind," he says.

In the very next chapter, "A Moral Dilemma," back in the lab and immediately following a violent altercation between Serizawa and Ogata, Serizawa tries to explain to Ogata why the Oxygen Destroyer must not be used against Gojira. Serizawa says that if his device could be used for a good purpose, of course he would "announce it to everyone in the world! But in its current form, it is just a weapon of horrible destruction." His guilt about his creation is further expressed verbally as he explains that to use the weapon even once would expose it to politicians worldwide. "Of course they will want to use it as a weapon Bombs vs. bombs, missiles vs. missles. And now a new superweapon to throw upon us all. As a scientist, no, as a human being, I cannot allow that to happen! Am I right?" Serizawa also expresses his anxiety further when he says that "humans are weak animals," and that even if all of his notes were destroyed, so long as the secret exists in his head, humankind would be at risk. "Until I die, how can I

be sure that I won't be forced by someone to make the device again?" asks Serizawa before crying out in anguish, "What am I going to do?"

Nonverbally, the scenes just discussed are rife with guilt imagery as well as eruptions of guilt into anger. When Serizawa talks about how the Oxygen Destroyer works, he does so standing up straight, hands behind his back, and head up in a noble but rigid stance as he explains that his intent was to devote his life to the study of oxygen; all the while, Emiko (still in the role as an externalization of Serizawa's conscience) stares at him with a mix of horror, anguish, and accusation. As his story progresses and he discloses his terrifying discovery, the character begins leaning heavily on a work table covered in glass testing equipment, apparently weighed down by this knowledge. He casts his head down as he tells Emiko that he didn't eat for two or three days, so heavy was the guilt about his discovery.

Serizawa's upset and feelings of guilt become even more obvious as he begins pacing. He reaches down and picks up the mortar and pestle that contains his Oxygen Destroyer as he shouts out its destructive ability, holding it chest height and away from his body, in a pose at once reverential and filled with fear and disgust. He pauses,

looks at it. Then, weighed down by guilt, he continues at a methodical pace to walk toward the cabinet where he locks up the Oxygen Destroyer. As the flashback ends and the film continues with "A Moral Dilemma" the nonverbal expressions of guilt intensify. First, just after Ogata and Emiko have broken into the lab to find Serizawa burning his notes, the tension that has been building over the weapon erupts into a physical altercation between Serizawa and Ogata which ends with the war-veteran scientist victorious, standing over the younger, wounded Ogata who is bleeding on the floor. Serizawa's expression is one of stunned embarrassment rather than victory, however, and he soon kneels to the floor to help Ogata. As Emiko is wrapping Ogata's head wound, Serizawa looks on in horror, sweat covering his face, and then he turns away and hangs his head as his guilt, shame, and anguish overtake him.

After discussing with Ogata his fears that if the weapon is used against Gojira it will be turned next against all of humankind unless Serizawa himself dies along with all his research, the scientist ends up crying and hunched over in his chair, rocking back and forth with his head in his hands. It is not until the next chapter, "Never to Be Used Again," that we see a physical change in Serizawa as he finds a way to assuage some of his guilt by

destroying his research. A televised prayer vigil with children singing a chant for peace finally spurs Serizawa out of his crippling state of guilt and into action. While still appearing to show the manifestations of his guilty conscience with his head down and his shoulders hunched over, the character clearly has an internal change. He steadies himself and stands up, wordlessly moving past Emiko, Ogata, and the television to pick up a stack of papers. As he burns his research notes and so purges the cause of his guilt, for the first time in the film Serizawa looks happy and at peace, smiling serenely as he tells Emiko not to cry. In the final scene of the film the audience learns that his peace comes from his decision to destroy not just his research, but to sacrifice his own life to secure his guilty secret.

The next chapters that express guilt rooted in science are also the last two of the film, "Weapon of Choice" and "Danger of the Deep," the scenes in which the Oxygen Destroyer is used to kill Gojira. In those final chapters the verbal expressions of guilt come through the words of the old scientist, Professor Yumane. Most of the expressions of guilt are nonverbal as much of the closing chapters take place under water or on deck where Emiko and Ogata appear to be too wracked with guilt and grief to say

much. Interestingly, the sorrowful expressions of Professor Yumane are in direct contrast to the exhortations of the throng of reporters present to witness the demise of Gojira. The reporters shout their news, reporting "exhilaration" and "jubilation" at the victory over Gojira, a success they attribute to the "young scientist Serizawa," a jubilation reflective of the journalists during World War II who reported on the latest scientific and weapons advancements often with unabashed enthusiasm.²⁷ Professor Yumane, however, when he realizes that Serizawa has sacrificed his life with Gojira's on the ocean floor, stands up on deck on the ship that floats above where his friend is dying and removes his hat in respect, his face filled with sorrow, saying only "Serizawa" Though the actual last words of the film are "Salute!" and "At ease," part of the final farewell to Serizawa, the last meaningful words spoken by a known character are Professor Yumane's. The words hark back to the earlier expressions of guilt as it relates to humankind's role in creating Gojira, while simultaneously preparing the audience for a sequel. "I can't believe that Gojira was the only surviving member of its species. . . ," he says, trailing off in sadness at the death of the monster. "But, if we keep on conducting

nuclear tests, it's possible that another Gojira might appear somewhere in the world, again."

The nonverbal expressions of guilt in those final chapters begin underwater where Serizawa and Ogata have trekked in diving suits to release the Oxygen Destroyer where Gojira rests. Serizawa tricks Ogata into returning to the surface without him, leaving Serizawa to his planned suicide. He sweats profusely as he watches the monster writhe in pain. Once he is certain his weapon has worked, he releases Ogata and Emiko to one another by wishing them happiness, shouting out "Goodbye farewell!" as his weapon destroys him.

It is primarily Emiko and Ogata who physically express guilt in that last chapter. Ogata's head is bowed as he weeps, still wearing his diving suit, as all the guilt about his clandestine relationship with Emiko, his inability to save Serizawa, and his unwillingness to consider another fate for Gojira coalesce. Emiko is next to him, holding onto his shoulders, sobbing. Ogata picks up his head just long enough to look at Emiko and says of Serizawa, "He wanted us to be happy"; that causes both to bow their heads again and weep in sorrow and guilt. Their eyes are cast away from one another in a nonverbal expression of guilt too great and shameful to allow them to

look at each other. Finally, Emiko lets go of Ogata and falls to the deck sobbing, she is so overcome. Finally, the secondary character of Professor Tanabe, who has assisted Professor Yamane throughout the film, gives the last indication of scientific guilt after Yamane makes his statement about continued nuclear testing likely to create more monsters. Tanabe, who has been seated behind Yamane, gets up as the words are spoken, pulling his hand through his hair, his face troubled, and he walks slowly away, his shoulders slumped.

Pain/Suffering

There is surely no shortage of information available regarding the pain and suffering experienced by all peoples involved in World War II, or any war for that matter. Pain and suffering are virtually a requirement of warfare and are themes that crop up not only in PTSD research but in narratives of all kinds, including novels, films, documentaries, and even history books. Pain and suffering, common in many narratives both fictional and factual, also have an inherent drama as every human can relate to the emotions on some level. Pain and suffering can also be effective tools for moving a plot forward as those feelings often elicit a response and can lead to growth and change. As illustrated here, however, the pain and suffering themes

in *Gojira* are more than effective plot-driving mechanisms; clear metaphors with the war and the bombings throughout the scenes, rife with pain and suffering, emphasize that the emotions are a post-war expression and purging.

The first scenes in which pain and suffering are the dominant motifs come early in the film in the chapters "Missing at Sea" and "Sole Survivor," which occur after the mysterious first attack of a ship at sea. A fishing boat finds three survivors of the attack on the fictional Eiko-Maru, an attack that at once evokes Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Bikini Atoll tests that affected the Fukuryu-Maru fishing boat in real life. The three survivors, who are pulled from the ocean where they have been clinging to debris to stay afloat, look unwell and resemble a survivor of radiation poisoning. They are clearly exhausted, have had their clothes torn, and show bewildered expressions and indications that they are nauseated. The one of the three who is able to speak has trouble breathing and using his voice, and he nearly passes out just from sitting up; the other two are too sick to do anything but lie still as their rescuers attend to them.

That brief scene is quickly followed by "Sole Survivor," when one man makes it to the shore of Odo Island where all the villagers have been watching and waiting for

the return of the fishing boat. That man, Masaji, is so damaged that he barely comes to consciousness; when he does, all he can utter is "He did it. . . . A monster " Unfortunately for Masaji, the trials of being the only survivor, of washing up on shore after days at sea, and of nearly drowning are not the end of his pain and suffering. Though still unseen by the audience, Gojira makes its first land attack; the audience gets to witness the terrible screams as Masaji and his family, all except a brother who ran outside, are crushed to death inside their home. Soon after, in the chapter "Analysis of the Aftermath," the suffering of the survivors of the Odo Island attack is clear when scientists use Geiger counters to assess the damage done by Gojira. The Geiger counters click rapidly at the village well. The native islanders, mostly women and children in traditional dress, are told not to use the water or it will kill them, a command that means they will have to go to the other side of the island if they are to have water.

The next elements of pain and suffering surface during Gojira's first urban attack in "Destruction From the Deep." Gojira comes ashore, trampling in its methodical way the massive power lines in its path as it heads toward the railroad tracks that run along the bay. The oblivion of the

engineers and the passengers of the train to the danger ahead of them changes abruptly when the monster's foot falls on the tracks just as the train gets there, causing a terrible crash and destruction. People are hurled about the train cars; while some escape from the windows, many do not as Gojira even chomps on a train car before tossing it aside with his jaws to the sounds of people screaming in pain and fear.

Pain and suffering are palpable in those key chapters during which Gojira attacks Tokyo, chapters already discussed in relation to guilt and anger. Here the pain and suffering are not just that of the humans under attack by the monster but also that of the monster itself. First, the pain caused to Gojira by the electrified fence is clear by its screams and its physical response of tearing at the fence with its "hands" to get the fencing off its body. Its pain and suffering are also clear as it bends and screams when it is being pelted with cannon fire, when it is shocked as it runs into a train station, and again when it swats at the planes that shoot at it as it attempts to return to the sea. However, in the chapters that span the Tokyo attack, it is clearly the humans who suffer most.

First, Gojira in its rage and pain exhales hot wind that instantly ignites whole blocks at a time and

incinerates people where they stand. The people under attack endure not only a painful death by fire, but they get the added suffering of knowing it is coming; they try to run, but they cannot run fast enough. Fire spreads from district to district, burning anything in its path in a scene reminiscent of the fire bombings before the atomic bombs were dropped as well as the aftermath of the atomic bombs themselves. In a particularly emotional vignette, a mother and her two small children cower in an alley while Gojira continues on its rampage. Huddling in their street corner, the mother says to the children, "We'll be joining your father in just a moment! A little longer, a little longer, and we'll be with your daddy!" The audience endures with the mother the pain of knowing her children are about to die with the simultaneous recognition that she has likely been suffering since her husband's death. Though the film does not show the family dying, their death is clearly implied with the destruction of a massive building like the one beneath which they crouched. The final bit of human pain and suffering in that section of the film is the death of the reporters as their radio tower is torn down and the reporters all die, fully aware of what is about to happen to them.

"The Human Toll," the chapter following the attack on Tokyo, is among the most powerful of the expressions of pain and suffering, which is certainly fueled by the direct allusion to the aftermath of the devastating fire bombings and atomic attacks on Japan. The chapter opens with the camera panning over what is left of Tokyo in the morning--and it is not much. Crumbled buildings, smoking rubble, spots of flame, melted metal--it looks virtually identical to the post-bombing photos of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The hospital shown next is full of people--nurses, military paramedics, and civilian paramedics all bringing in the wounded in a steady stream. As the camera moves inside the hospital it is clear that it is filled to capacity as the wounded continue to be brought in where they are placed on stretchers on the floor. Even the floor and hallways are filling up to capacity with wounded. Emiko is inside volunteering as a scientist and takes Geiger counter readings on a child who sits on the floor next to her mother and sister. The child looks forlorn and stunned, and the rapid ticking of the Geiger counter tells us that the pain she suffers likely is just the beginning.

Further vignettes of pain and suffering--even horror--in the hospital include children and other family members kneeling by their mother's side. The mother's head is

clearly wounded and she lies motionless on a mat on the floor, unable to tend to her hurt and dirty children. The hospital workers put a cloth over her face and then haul her away as the children cry and wail. The stairwell, seen as Ogata winds his way up to answer a page, is crowded with wounded, their bloody injuries wrapped in bandages, their heads hanging down in exhaustion and pain. Emiko, though not injured herself, suffers also as she tries to help by comforting the child who was taken away; just looking at the devastation around her causes her face to crumple in anguish.

In the next chapters, set in Serizawa's lab, there are a few scattered images of pain and suffering, such as Ogata's injuries after his fight with the scientist and the televised report that shows row upon row of wounded being tended by medical personnel as well as family, again including children both as wounded and as tenders. However, for the most intense pain and suffering imagery, it is necessary to move on to the final chapter, "Danger of the Deep." It is Gojira and Serizawa that best illustrate this emotional pairing in the closing scenes. Serizawa's pain and suffering, of course, also function as his release from the same, which he has endured since discovering the Oxygen Destroyer. Regardless of his resolve, the desperate tone in

his voice as he shouts his "Goodbye . . . farewell!" to Emiko and Ogata makes it clear that his death will not be a comfortable one. Witnessing the death of Gojira drives home that point as well.

Once the Oxygen Destroyer has begun to bubble, almost immediately Gojira begins to writhe in pain. Soon it is clear that the monster is screaming in pain, though because it is underwater, nothing can yet be heard. However, with the flailing of its arms and its mouth wide open and thrown back as it was when screaming on land, its pain and its suffering are obvious. The death is not a quick one. As the scene progresses the cameras show the boat that holds the scientists and military; the Oxygen Destroyer creates tremendous turbulence in the water next to the boat. Gojira rises up out of the water to its shoulders and utters its familiar scream one long, last time. It falls backwards into the furiously bubbling water soundlessly. As it reaches the ocean floor, it is nearly motionless. Lying face down, it is only able to lift one arm slightly, its last move in a painful death. The pain and suffering end only when the monster is dissolved, first into a skeleton, then into nothing.

As should be clear, both pain and suffering are dominant and important motifs in *Gojira*. Serving as more

than plot-moving devices, the emotions give voice to much of the Japanese experience toward the end of and after World War II. The destruction of cities in Japan was a traumatic experience that affected all of its citizens. By separating out the complexities of emotion into individual pairings, it is easier to understand and indentify with this one-time enemy. For example, it can be difficult for American World War II veterans to identify with hibakusha in any meaningful way because guilt and anger make it difficult to see past the Japanese atrocities that played a part in bringing the wrath of atomic weapons upon them. By extracting guilt and anger and focusing on pain and suffering, it is possible to relate better to the humanity of the people and to see how profoundly the events of the war affected their group and individual psyches.

Powerlessness/Fear

Powerlessness and fear is the final emotional pairing theme to be addressed. The emotions are rampant in *Gojira* and are most often tied to scenes that evoke wartime occurrences through imagery or allegory. Remembering the importance of narrative in working through PTSD, it can be extremely useful for those who have endured trauma to give voice to their feelings of powerlessness both during and after the event, particularly in story form. Putting

powerlessness into a narrative gives the story teller and the listener the ability to rewrite the outcome in beneficial ways²⁸. The same goes for fear, which in those with PTSD is an emotional response that is often amplified in reaction to stimulus long after the event has passed. By exploring it in story form, fear can be understood and dealt with and, hopefully, reduced from daily life.

Powerlessness and fear are the very first emotions expressed in the film. From the opening scene, "Attack on the Eiko-Maru," when the happy sailors are suddenly attacked and run in fear, it is obvious that they are powerless to escape or fight their unseen enemy. In the very next chapter, "Missing at Sea," powerlessness and fear are the overwhelming emotions as the Southern Sea Salvage workers are unable even to figure out what is happening to their boats, except that they think there was an explosion. The families of the sailors crowd into the office, completely distraught, unable to do anything to get answers or to help their loved ones. In the subsequent scenes through "Sole Survivor," the fear of the first three survivors is obvious in their initial screaming; their powerlessness is made clear by their inability to so much as sit up. Though the powerlessness is exaggerated further when the families back at the shipping company are first

told that there are three survivors; there is so little ability to get information that the company does not even know who they are. Then, before the news of the three survivors has set in, the fishing boat with the survivors is destroyed as is the search boat that was sent to help its crew in an ultimate expression of powerlessness.

The next scene to display powerlessness and fear is "Myth of the Monster." Although it is still unknown what is causing the mayhem, soon the people at the fishing village on Odo Island cannot catch anything. It is then that the monster is named by an elderly villager when he blames Gojira for their troubles, citing an ancient myth (which is fictional, incidentally). All the villagers can do is hold an ancient dance ceremony to try to appease the monster in hopes that it will stop eating all their fish. Obviously, such a technique has no power over Gojira, who attacks that night. In this agonizing scene, as the monster tramples the sole sea-attack survivor in his hut, the survivor's brother watches from a hill, screaming; the boy is completely powerless to do anything to save his brother, his family, or anyone else in the village. Many of the survivors of Hiroshima, it should be noted, lived because they were protected from the initial blast by hills at the edges of

the city. Clearly, they were powerless to do anything in the face of an atomic bomb.

The scene discussed in the last section in which the villagers are told that their well is poisoned with radiation is as much an example of powerlessness as it is of suffering. Neither the scientists nor the villagers can do anything to fix the problem of the poisoned well. Next, in "Atom Breeds Monsters," the monster is finally witnessed. First, a bell at the top of a hill is rung frantically in warning as the steady thud of Gojira's footfalls can be heard; they sound like bombs being dropped at regular intervals. The people start running and yelling to try to escape the unknown on the other side of the island. In an at once subtle and strong illustration of powerlessness, a few of the older villagers, ready to defend their island, gather at the top of a hill. With their few small rifles, Samurai swords, tattered clothes and sandals the depth of their powerlessness to fight their enemy seems almost absurd, not unlike the state of the Japanese Army toward the end of its days as it faced off against technologically and economically superior foes.

Powerlessness and fear take on a different face as the chapter picks up in the parliamentary setting first discussed in the guilt/anger section of this chapter. It is

when the male traditionalists, driven by fear about the outcome of making public the cause of the emergence of Gojira, argue for secrecy on the issue that a glimpse of life under censorship is given. In essence, censorship is powerlessness for the people and, in this scene, also for the women in opposition to it and for the scientists who want the truth told. The entire scene closes with a sense of powerlessness as the opposing parties end up not making decisions but rather shouting at one another, calling names, and demanding apologies.

Besides the powerlessness of the government to resolve a dispute about information in the face of fear, the powerlessness of the military is reflected in many scenes. The first time is in "The Navy Responds," when to a happy battle tune a military fleet of 10 vessels drop depth charges—a response that seems immediately absurd when one considers that the monster itself came to the surface because of deep water testing of a hydrogen bomb. The military attack is learned of through a news broadcast being listened to in Professor Yumane's home. Despite his respected role as a leading scientist and zoologist, the elder is powerless to stop the military from bombing Gojira, though it is his belief that the monster should be studied rather than killed.

As the film progresses and Gojira makes its first urban attack in "Destruction From the Deep," Professor Yumane again is powerless to stop the military from making terrible mistakes that exacerbate the situation. He tries to tell them to stop shining bright lights because it angers the monster. A soldier tells him, "We don't have time for that now," in a tone both gruff and disrespectful. At the same time, the military is powerless to stop the monster as it tosses aside bridges, burns emergency vehicles and tanks, and wipes out whole blocks at a time with its tail. The powerlessness of the citizenry is also illustrated in another scene evocative of wartime activities, including evacuations. People are seen running, all their possessions on hand carts, as small children are lifted up by soldiers and put onto military trucks. Clearly frightened, everyone runs at the command of the Army soldiers, trying to flee the approaching footfalls. Their efforts will be largely useless, though there is nothing else for them to do, so powerless are they against the force coming down upon them.

The next scene rife with powerlessness and fear has been touched upon twice, and that is the attack on Tokyo. It does not matter what the military does, what the scientists say, what the journalists report--no one has the

power to stop Gojira. Cannons fail, fighter planes fail, giant electrified fences fail, barricades fail, tanks fail, rifles fail. Firefighters' attempts to quell the damage also fail. Concrete is fallible, children are not exempt, even birds in an aviary are incinerated. The reporters, even as they report blow by blow what is happening, are powerless to stop their own death. As a powerless observer of not one but two attacks, the boy who screamed as his brother Masaji was trampled to death on Odo Island stands next to Professor Yamane during the Tokyo attack. As the monster returns to sea, the boy curses, "Damn it. Damn it." Finally the scene concludes with one more impotent attempt by the military to shoot down Gojira by plane; though some people cheer as it submerges, it is clearly not a real victory as the monster has gone away--for now--because it is tired, not because of any efforts to force it to leave. That powerlessness is reflected in the clear allegory for the failed efforts of Japan to thwart its enemies as the scene closes with the rays of the sun spread over the water under which Gojira waits. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, those rays evoke the Japanese Naval flag, and when seen in light of the powerlessness of the Navy to actually defeat its enemy, the imagery strengthens that feeling of powerlessness with undertones of irony.

The next expressions of powerlessness arrive in the hospital scenes in "The Human Toll." The scientists who hold the ticking Geiger counter on the children are powerless to do anything about it, as indicated by the grave shaking of heads and downcast eyes. Even Emiko's attempts to comfort the frightened child whose mother has been taken away are useless as she is completely powerless to help the child. As Emiko tells her that her mother will be alright, that is clearly a most unlikely scenario. Interestingly, it is that powerlessness and fear of more of the same that drives the character to break her promise to Serizawa and tell Ogata about the Oxygen Destroyer.

In the flashback scene in which Emiko visits Serizawa's lab, the powerlessness and fear expressed is primarily related to scientific discovery. Remember that in the scene, Serizawa talks about his accidental (i.e. without the power of control) discovery of an unknown form of energy, a powerful force that scared him "beyond words." Much as J. Robert Oppenheimer and other scientists involved in the Manhattan Project experienced terrible anxieties about the potential destructive use of their research,²⁹ Serizawa is terrified that his discovery will be used as a weapon that would "destroy humankind." So powerless is he over the use of his discovery that he keeps it a complete

secret, revealing it finally only to his betrothed, whom he has known since they were children. Even so, he swears her to secrecy as he explains further that if anyone finds out about his device he will destroy all of his research so that it cannot be created again, and here he alludes to his death as a necessary outcome if he is to keep the discovery secret. In a strange twist on powerlessness and fear, Serizawa can only conquer both by essentially taking his life as his last act of self will, an act that permanently removes all power at his own hand.

This same discussion continues in "A Moral Dilemma" as Serizawa is forced to explain his reasoning to Ogata. The scientist's terrible dilemma puts him in the unenviable position of being the only human with the power to stop the monster, yet he has the knowledge and understanding that to do so must mean his death or else the end of the world. This complex portrait of a scientist, clearly an allegory for nuclear researchers, is further deepened when the television kicks on and the terrible images of Tokyo destroyed and sick wounded children and families in the hospital brings Serizawa's anxiety to a head. Of course, witnessing such destruction and suffering is too much for the war veteran, and so he internally makes the decision to take action. As he knows he is powerless against the

military and government machine, once he has made the decision to use the Oxygen Destroyer, he begins burning his research as Emiko looks on, powerless herself to do anything to stop him for the same reason that he must destroy his work.

At last, the culmination of powerlessness and fear in the film is exhibited in Gojira itself. It is in "Danger of the Deep" that Gojira is for the first time shown when it is at rest rather than out on a rampage. It does not look as scary when it is sleeping at the bottom of Tokyo Bay, resting its head on a rock. As it notices the arrival of Serizawa and Ogata in their diving suits, it is slow to move its head around, and as it moves to get up for the first time it is possible to see without distraction that its flesh appears burned and ragged like the body of someone wounded or killed by an atomic bomb. The imagery of burned flesh and a resting sea creature drives home the point that the monster itself was powerless to decide its fate; it was once a peaceful resident of the deep sea. The actions of scientists, the military, and governments without provocation drove Gojira from its home, burned it, irradiated it, leaving the simple animal few outlets for its rage other than turning it on the humans that changed its world.

Gojira's giant stature is irrelevant once the Oxygen Destroyer is released. The monster is powerless to defend itself, despite the fear it must be experiencing during the attack. In the first stages Gojira is asphyxiated when all Oxygen is removed from the water. Obviously, Gojira remains powerless as its flesh is liquefied and finally its skeleton rolls from the rocks to the sandy bottom of the ocean in a last illustration of the monster's complete defeat before its bones disappear as well. Meanwhile, above the water, powerlessness and fear are expressed primarily by Professor Yumane, Emiko and Ogata. For Yumane, the entire execution of Gojira underscores his inability to affect change in the military despite his arguments that a creature that can survive an H-bomb ought to be studied, not killed. Yumane's powerlessness is further deepened as his dear friend Serizawa--whom he thought to be his future son-in-law--commits suicide at the bottom of the bay. It is Ogata's inability to protect and save Serizawa that illustrates powerlessness from that character, while Emiko is powerless to say or do anything that can help Serizawa nor is she able to comfort her father or Ogata. All she can do is stand by and watch everything unfold before her, as was the case for many Japanese during and after the war;

During the war the Empire ruled, and after the war, censorship was the law of the land.

Emotional Overlap

While the scenes discussed thus far illustrate the separate emotional pairings of guilt/anger, pain/suffering, and powerlessness/fear throughout, it should start to become clear that the most powerful scenes in *Gojira* occur when there is an overlap of these themes, particularly when all three are present. This is important to note for two reasons. First, exploring the pathos of a film in this manner can provide a useful way to understand why a particular film or scene within a film is emotionally impactful on its audience, which in turn gives a deeper understanding of how messages are sent and received through this medium. Secondly, keeping in mind the PTSD literature discussed earlier, it is useful to note that as more and more emotional response is loaded into a narrative, that narrative becomes increasingly evocative to the point that it can hamper the ability to see clearly what is happening in the story and why. In this case, by separating the layers and looking at each distinctly and then together, the critic can more easily see how this film functions as a rhetorical expression of post-war anxiety and why it would have moved audiences at the time to tears.³⁰

The first scene in which all three emotional pairings overlap is when Gojira attacks Tokyo. At first viewing, it might seem that the scene has such emotional resonance because of the obvious allegory for cities that were burned and bombed in Japan during World War II. But that explanation falls short; this scene does feature, after all, a man in a latex suit pretending to be a giant fictional sea monster with glowing fins stomping through a scale model of Tokyo. Regardless of the impressive special effects for the day, by today's standards the scene should be laughable; it is far from it.³¹ However, it becomes clear why the scene has such resonance once there is recognition of the post-war trauma that is represented in the combined threads of guilt/anger (the people made this happen and continued to exacerbate the problem), pain/suffering (of innocent bystanders, including children, as well as the monster itself), and powerlessness/fear (nothing can stop Gojira). Considering that the Japanese were not permitted to discuss any of those emotions after the war, it makes awareness of this scene all the more important as an avenue of understanding into the Japanese psyche at the time, which in turn broadens the perspective on this important time in history for both of our countries.

The second scene with the magical triple pairing occurs in Serizawa's lab when he is joined by Ogata and Emiko.³² In this scene the guilt/anger (scientific guilt and eruptions of anger of the use of the discovery), pain/suffering (Ogata's injury along with what is shown on television after Gojira's Tokyo attack), and powerlessness/fear (inability to control the discovery and fear that he'll be forced to reveal it) work together to provide an emotional window into some of what must have been going on with scientists such as Oppenheimer who were so troubled by their work on the atomic bomb.³³ It is also interesting to consider that the outcome in this fictional Japan is quite different from the outcome of the Manhattan Project. While a few of our scientists may have been disturbed by guilt after the fact or concern before the bombs' use, as the research was in the hands of the government even if one had wanted to prevent the use of atomic weapons that would not have been possible. In this narrative, however, the Japanese scientist, recognizing the inherent danger in his discovery, chooses to sacrifice his life's work and, ultimately, his life rather than destroy humankind. It would not be unreasonable to argue that rewriting the narrative in such a way, as is done in PTSD

therapy, could have proved quite useful in helping the people cope with what happened to them.

It is, of course, the final chapter, "Danger of the Deep," that brings together all of the emotional pairings for the climax of the film. Guilt/anger (over the creation of Gojira and the Oxygen Destroyer, the inability to prevent Gojira's and Serizawa's death, and finally about the clandestine relationship between Ogata and Emiko), pain/suffering (primarily of Gojira, but also of Serizawa), and powerlessness/fear (of all of the characters, including Gojira, in various manifestations) combine here to create a devastating end to the film. Again, as with the attack on Tokyo, it is at first surprising to find that the death of a fictional monster with something as, frankly, silly as an Oxygen Destroyer could stir such palpable emotion more than 50 years after the film was made. But by understanding the powerful emotional chords running through the scene and again remembering the importance of narrative in addressing PTSD it becomes clearer why this scene works so well. While they are far from perfect here, as the dire warning from Professor Yumane reminds us (testing is still going on so there could be more monsters/sequels), the Japanese do put an end to the monster and all that it stands for here. That means putting an end to the U.S. as the enemy, an end to

the errors that brought about Gojira's wrath, an end to the threat of radiation and unexpected attacks. That encompasses a great deal of post-war trauma being explored and put to rest.

Conclusion

Gojira is an important cultural artifact that functions rhetorically as a post-war expression of the guilt and anger, pain and suffering, and powerlessness and fear of the Japanese people during and after World War II. In particular, by utilizing a thematic approach and viewing the film through the lenses of PTSD research and narrative criticism, it becomes clear that this blockbuster monster movie functioned not as throw-away entertainment. Rather it functioned as a safe venue through which the Japanese people could for the first time come together publically to experience their shared memories of the horrors of war.³⁴ In that shared experience, threaded through a narrative that ultimately restores Japan's honor, the creators and watchers of the film could use that fiction to find some peace in the reality of their existence.

As we know, all cultures experience similar emotional responses to trauma, and all cultures use narrative to create social reality. As such, *Gojira* served a needed function in Japan in 1954 by helping its people work

through their trauma and create a healthier narrative in which to move forward with their lives. Further, critical analysis of the film shows us that it has equal import for us today as a bridge to understanding the consequences of war and nuclear weapons' use. The film is particularly valid as a window into post-World War II Japan, as at that time and in that place censorship precluded the existence of more official documents on which to base analysis and understanding. *Gojira*, critically viewed, brings to a conscious level not only some of the darkest shadows of the Japanese people, but also some of the loathed and disowned aspects of self that continue to haunt the American conscience relative to the use of nuclear weapons.³⁵

¹ Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenztz, *Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.

² David Blakesley, ed., *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 14.

³ Christine Harold, "The Rhetorical Function of the Abject Body: Transgressive Corporeality in *Trainspotting*." *JAC: Journal of Advanced Composition*. 20 (Fall 2000): 865-881.

⁴ Martin J. Medhurst, "Temptation as Taboo: A Psychorhetorical Reading of The Last Temptation of Christ." In *The Terministic Screen*, ed. Blakesley: 55-69.

⁵ Brian L. Ott, "(Re)Framing Fear: Equipment for Living in a Post-9/11 World," in *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 14.

⁶ Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 46; Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Volume One-One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement Through 1953*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 46-49 and 56; Mental Health America, "Factsheet: Coping with the War and Terrorism: Tips for College Students," Retrieved November 15, 2009, from <http://www.nmha.org/>.

⁷ Jean C. Beckham, Allison A. Roodman, John C. Barefoot, Thom L. Haney, Michael J. Helms, John A. Fairbank, Michael A. Hertzberg, and Harold S. Kudler, "Interpersonal and Self-Reported Hostility Among Combat Veterans with and Without Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. 9, 2 (1996): 335-342; Donna K. Nagata and Wendy J.Y. Chen, "Intergenerational Communication of Race-Related Trauma by Japanese American Former Internees." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 73, 3 (2003): 266-278; Judith Norman, "Constructive Narrative in Arresting the Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." *Clinical Social Work Journal*. 28, 3 (Fall 2000): 303-319; Crystal L. Park, Carolyn M. Aldwin, Juliane R. Fenster, and Leslie B. Snyder, "Pathways to Posttraumatic Growth Versus Posttraumatic Stress: Coping and Emotional Reactions Following the September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attacks." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 78, 3 (2008): 300-312; Joan M. Cook, David S. Riggs, Richard Thompson, James C. Coyne, and

Javaid I. Sheikh, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Current Relationship Functioning Among World War II Ex-Prisoners of War." *Journal of Family Psychology*, 18, 1. (2004): 36-45.

⁸ Peter D. Yeomans, James D. Herbert, and Evan M. Forman, "Symptom Comparison Across Multiple Solicitation Methods Among Burundians With Traumatic Event Histories." *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. 21, 2. (April, 2008): 232-234.

⁹ To be clear, Burke here is cited because of his groundbreaking work in exploring cultural manifestations of guilt and mortification, which helps clarify how the emotional themes analyzed in *Gojira* transcend beyond the individual who suffers from trauma to include an entire nation. Similarly, the other scholars cited here have studied group responses to trauma: Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" (1941), in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Burgchardt, 188-202, Nagata and Chen, *Race-Related Trauma*; Yeomans, Herbert, and Forman, *Traumatic Event Histories*.

¹⁰ William Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 33.

¹¹ Nagata and Chen, *Race-Related Trauma*.

¹² Norman, *Constructive Narrative*; Yeomans, Herbert, and Forman, *Traumatic Event Histories*.

¹³ Beckham et al, *Hostility Among Combat Veterans*: 341.

¹⁴ Norman, *Constructive Narrative*; Yeomans, Herbert, and Forman, *Traumatic Event Histories*.

¹⁵ The Internet Movie Database, "Trivia for *Gojira*." Retrieved April 24, 2010, from <http://www.imdb.com>.

¹⁶ Walter R. Fisher, "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument," in *Readings in Rhetorical*

Criticism, 3rd ed, ed. Carl R. Burghardt (State College, Pennsylvania: Strata Publishing), 240-262. Note that Fisher himself argues not that he "invented" the concept of narrative as a rhetorical construct, but rather that he built on generations of critical thought to get there.

¹⁷ Fisher, *Narration*, 245.

¹⁸ Fisher, *Narration*, 245.

¹⁹ Fisher, *Narration*, 296.

²⁰ Ott, "(Re)Framing Fear;" Kenneth Burke, "Four Master Tropes." In *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 503-517.

²¹ Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" (1941), in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Burghardt, 188-202; Barry Brummett, "Burkean Scapegoating, Mortification and Transcendence in Presidential Campaign Rhetoric," *Central States Journal* Vol. 32 (1981: 254-264); Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki, "The Politics of Negotiating Public Tragedy: Media Framing of the Matthew Shepard Murder," in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Burghardt, 220-237; Mari Boor Tonn, Valerie A. Endress, and John N. Diamond, "Hunting and Heritage on Trial in Maine: A Dramatistic Debate over Tragedy, Tradition, and Territory," in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Burghardt, 203-204.

²² The Internet Movie Database, "Takashi Shimura." Retrieved September 12, 2009, from <http://www.imdb.com>.

²³ Please note that for ease of analysis, the film will be discussed in chapters. While the original film shown in theaters did not have chapter divisions obvious to the audience, the DVD released by Toho Productions does include chapters. Those chapters are a useful way to segment the film for discussion.

²⁴ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 56.

²⁵ Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 503-504. While the most obvious definition of metaphor is the use of one thing to represent another, thinking in Burkean terms helps to clarify the depth of symbolization and meaning enabled by use of this master trope. Remember that metaphor is a figure of speech that allows us to see "something in terms of something else" and in so doing permits us to shift our perspective so that we can consider virtually anything from a different point of view than would otherwise exist in our more limited frame of reference. In the case of Gojira metaphor is a vital inroad for bringing to life the painful realities of nuclear attack, war, and the politics that brought America and Japan together in such a profoundly violent way.

²⁶ Tsutsui, *Godzilla*, 26. Gojira's roar was created by renowned composer and film-score creator Ifukube Akira by using a leather glove, a contrabass, and an echo chamber.

²⁷ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 77-78, 80-81.

²⁸ Keep in mind again the work of Walter R. Fisher in helping us see how important narrative is in creating meaning.

²⁹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 101-102; Allan M. Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud: American Anxiety About the Atom*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 38.

³⁰ Tsutsui, *Godzilla*, 23-24 and 33. As an aside, on a first viewing this author was also moved to tears, viewed as it was while in the midst of an in-depth study of nuclear rhetoric and exclusion of the Japanese experience in the Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas.

³¹ Tsutsui, *Godzilla*, 23-24 and 33.

³² This happens in the Gojira chapter titled "A Moral Dilemma."

³³ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 101-102, Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 38.

³⁴ The word "safe" is used here to describe the film because it protects its watchers from too much pain and horror by using science fiction, which as discussed in Chapter 2 permits us to think about difficult issues from the once-removed safety of metaphor and allegory.

³⁵ Rushing and Frenz, *Projecting the Shadow*, 6.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

With the dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan in 1945, the U.S. exploded weapons of nearly unfathomable power and destruction. At the same time, the bombs materialized a force that previously had existed only in the imagination. Atoms were purposely split as a means of taking life and terrifying a nation into submission. The years surrounding the development and use of the atomic bomb are among the most tumultuous and fear-filled of the past century. The Cold War followed, a culturally defining reality so interwoven into Western society that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to imagine life outside its constructs of annihilation anxiety. Equally pervasive, though in a popular-culture bent, is the science fiction film genre that emerged from the same well as the Cold War. The genre has provided and continues to provide for many a safe outlet for exploration of horrors otherwise too terrifying or apocalyptic to consider.

As understanding the context that led to the film's creation establishes an essential foundation for productive rhetorical analysis of a text, this chapter begins by revisiting the ways nuclear research affected American society before and after the war. Particularly important

are artistic expression, and how Japanese society during the same period faced tremendous restrictions on expression.¹ Next, the function of *Gojira* as a powerful science fiction response to the war by the Japanese, especially when analyzed from the framework of narrative as a means to work through post-traumatic stress, is examined using the thematic approach advocated by Martin Medhurst. Finally, the contribution this work makes to the growing body of rhetorical studies in the areas of nuclear culture and rhetorical studies of film is explored, along with suggestions for future study.

Though much of America at first rejoiced in the use of nuclear weapons against Japan, exhausted as the country was as it approached four full years at war against a formidable foe,² it did not take long for guilt to set in. That sentiment of guilt, which is still pervasive today,³ along with a pre-existing fear of nuclear fission,⁴ was made worse by horrific images and news coming from Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and bomb tests in the Bikini islands.⁵ Simultaneously, fueled by a national obsession with scientists, the once-fringe science-fiction genre became more widely popular, particularly as the influential editor and writer John W. Campbell, Jr., set the bar high, requiring the work he published to be based in actual

science.⁶ More than the result of improved editing, however, the burgeoning of the science-fiction genre was rooted in its function as a safe venue for exploration of the doomsday fears brought about by the discovery of fission.

Science fiction, popping up in virtually all popular artistic outlets from comic books to song lyrics, was most pervasive in the film arena. Hollywood churned out dozens of films with a nuclear theme, 67 of them in just the first 10 years after the bombings.⁷ Filmmakers who took on nuclear fear or guilt directly, such as the makers of the 1947 docudrama, *Beginning or the End?*, were pressured by the U.S. government to rewrite history to make people more comfortable with the use of nuclear weapons.⁸ It is not surprising, then, that Hollywood would opt for the less politically sensitive monster movies that used allegory to explore the same fears, thereby escaping censorship. The appetite for such films that tapped into public anxieties was nearly insatiable, and Hollywood was happy to fill the need as the genre was cheap to make and turned a tidy profit.⁹ So, the proliferation of science fiction with an atomic theme, particularly films, functioned in America "as something of a safety valve, allowing fears to find expression as artists indulged their creative vision."¹⁰

Yet, for all of the popular expressions of nuclear fear in America, in Japan--a place unarguably at the top of the list for a need to express nuclear fear--the safety valve of science fiction would not come of age until the Allied occupation of its country finally ceased. In fact, the lack of discussion of nuclear fear in Japan was nearly complete because of the extreme censorship conditions that placed communication constraints upon the government, the news media, scientists, and the public. Although the Japanese shared the world's mythological, fearful understanding of radiation pre-bombing, and the actual bombings merged in the psyches of survivors with apocalyptic fear fantasies,¹¹ the cultural pressures that prevented the people from expressing any negative sentiment about the bombings were immense.

Even before the Allied occupation with its unforgiving censorship began, "Japanese society was mentally and physically disarmed,"¹² putting the people in a particularly compliant position. Besides existing under Empirical rule for centuries, Japan's war with China led to cultural changes that severely limited individual expression. Recognizing a lack of support among its citizens for the war with China, Japan's leaders formed the National Spiritual Mobilization Central League in 1937.¹³ The

organization's goal was to use spiritual and psychological motivation to garner support for the war. Various techniques were employed, including pamphlet distribution and encouragement to visit shrines to patriotism. Ceremonies were devised to add drama to the departure of soldiers to war and to honor the return of the dead.

While at first participation was encouraged, it was not long before it escalated to a requirement and programs were put in place to quell any social dissent, including arresting hundreds of leftist activists and removing all liberal scholars from Tokyo Imperial University.¹⁴ Modeling the program of societal controls on the Nazi formula, fewer and fewer personal freedoms were permitted, leading to required uniforms, daily scheduled bows to the Imperial Palace, and militarized schools. So dominant was the military culture that using the telegram system for anything considered frivolous, such as condolence messages or greetings, was forbidden.¹⁵ Concurrently, Japan's military budget as a percentage of total expenditures more than doubled in less than 10 years, accounting for 66 percent of expenditures by 1940. Because Japan relied heavily on imported food, that military budget meant severe hardships for the citizens, a situation made far worse by the Allied bombings that began in 1945 and further cut off

access to food. Compounding the physical and social constraints of the Japanese was their propaganda-fueled fear of Americans, a terror cemented by the nuclear bombings.¹⁶

All those years of societal controls, physical suffering, and fear mongering left the Japanese few alternatives but to cooperate fully with the occupation forces. Even their leader, Emperor Hirohito, in a dramatic move to calm his people used radio for the first time to instruct the masses to cooperate as, he told them, it would be the only means of survival for Japan.¹⁷ Additionally, early polls in Japan found that more citizens laid responsibility for the nuclear bombs on Japan than on America, and many considered it to be an "inevitable consequence of war."¹⁸ That sentiment, combined with a drive to achieve peace after so much suffering because of war, led the Japanese overall to work toward maintaining an alliance with the U.S.¹⁹

While the drive to cooperate was strong, the formative power of censorship that came with the occupation must not be underestimated. Although the Japanese government, news industry, scientific community and citizenry were willing to capitulate (often because of an interest in minimizing discussions of war atrocities as Japan had plenty of its

own), Allied rules cemented the constraints on expression. Censorship was extreme, virtually eliminating any forum for public discussion of the negative in relation to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The American press code put in place prohibited any media outlet from publishing anything that might evoke "mistrust or resentment," a broad stroke to say the least.²⁰ Under that rule, virtually anything related to the bombs was off limits. Also off limits was any mention of the existence of the censorship itself.²¹ Only on one occasion, in September of 1945, did the two prominent news outlets in Japan attempt to run a story critical of nuclear weapons; both outlets were swiftly shut down by the censorship bureau as punishment. After that, the press submitted to the censorship, which meant that the only stories about atomic weapons focused on the bombs shortening the war and leading to peace; no reports of sterility and mutations among the hibakusha were permitted, only fake stories about healthy, scar-free survivors.²²

Besides the press, literature and the arts were also aggressively censored. This is important to note because of the vital role the arts play as a natural outlet for human expressions of fear, anxiety, grief and so on. Drawings, poems, and fiction written in Japan in the aftermath of the

bombings were suppressed or so heavily altered that the published versions bore little resemblance to their initial form.²³ The censorship crossed borders, leading to American journalist John Hersey's book, *Hiroshima*, being outlawed in Japan until American authors protested the suppression in 1949, which led to the American authorities allowing the book to be sold in Japan.²⁴ So complete was the censorship of the downside to the bombs that scientists could not publish their findings, textbooks said nothing of the terrible side-effects from the radiation, and post-bomb film footage was confiscated.²⁵ Even the suffering hibakusha could speak only of the bombs as a means to peace.²⁶

When the occupation forces departed Japan in 1952, the official censorship was lifted at last, leaving the people to decide for themselves what could be discussed and how.²⁷ However, after more than a decade of strict Japanese and American governmental controls, as well as more than five years of legal constraints on freedom of expression about the nuclear, that which was once made *verboden* through hegemonic means became a cultural taboo that severely limited open criticism of nuclear weapons and weapons testing.²⁸ The first group in post-occupation Japan that was willing to engage in researching and writing about the after-effects of the bomb was the scientific community. And

much as what had happened a decade earlier in America, what was discussed in the scientific community would be reflected in science fiction.

At last, in 1954, from the only country ever to be bombed with atomic weapons, emerged a response to that rhetorical situation in the form of a science-fiction film modeled after Hollywood blockbuster monster movies. That film, produced by Toho Studios in Japan with some of the country's finest film professionals, was *Gojira*. The film, which at once reflected the popular American monster-movie genre, the profound fears of atomic blasts and radiation poisoning, and the experience of being bombed, became "the coalescing into solid form"²⁹ of nearly a decade of suppressed thought and feeling as well as a curious blend of two cultures entwined by war. *Gojira* exists as a rhetorical response to a profound historical-cultural experience, which a close analysis of the text shows was a vital right of passage which enabled the to move beyond the bombs.

When one considers from a mental health perspective how vital it is to talk through the emotions that inevitably surface after a trauma, it should come as no surprise that *Gojira*, one of the earliest post-occupation/post-censorship public artifacts created in

Japan, would be threaded with emotional themes. A close reading of the film reveals particular emotions that relate directly to the study of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, emotions that research shows to be universal in human response to trauma.³⁰ That universality of response underlies the validity of exploring emotional representations in *Gojira* as an avenue to understanding Japan's response to the trauma of the bombs; regardless of ethnic and cultural divides, emotion here forms a bridge of communication and understanding.

Further, research shows that discussing traumatic events, particularly in a narrative format, helps people recover to lead healthy and productive lives.³¹ In particular, guided story telling that uses metaphor has helped social workers and other mental health workers set their clients on a path toward growth as opposed to "chronic interpersonal, societal, and medical problems."³² Narrative, as explained by rhetorician Walter R. Fisher, gives "order to human experience."³³ As such, stories, particularly dramatic ones, create "the fabric of social reality for those who compose them," which gives narrative its "persuasive force."³⁴ And, much as with emotional response to trauma, narrative is particularly useful for studies that cross cultural and historical boundaries

because of its universal functionality among humans. Hence, through an examination of the strong emotions present in the narrative *Gojira*, it is possible to begin to understand better the experience of the Japanese survivor of World War II and the part Americans played in the creation of that reality.

A close reading of *Gojira* reveals three primary emotional pairings, all of which are included in mental health literature among the main emotional responses to a war experience and are also prevalent in PTSD discussions. The emotional pairings in the film are: guilt/anger, pain/suffering, and powerlessness/fear. Although each pairing provides emotional depth in the scenes in which it occurs, where those themes overlap a heightened tension exists, creating profoundly expressive and rhetorically powerful segments in the film. By utilizing metaphor and allegory to "discuss" themes otherwise socially and culturally unacceptable in 1954 Japan, the makers of *Gojira* used science fiction in its best form: as a safe outlet to explore shadows too dark to be brought out in polite company.

Guilt and anger, expressed often in the film both verbally and non-verbally, tap into some significant cultural motifs from the time. Among the issues of the day

that emerge in the film are allusions to the sense of guilt many in Japan felt for the part they played in bringing on the wrath of the Americans. That guilt is drawn from not just the actual bombing of Pearl Harbor, but also the arrogance that led to the belief of military and political leaders that they could take on and defeat the Americans, as well as the people's willingness to buy into the propaganda and militarization of their culture. Further, the atrocities committed by Japan's soldiers in both China and against the Allies evoked not just the emotion of guilt, but also the possibility of punishment for the acts. Such guilty sentiments related to culpability are expressed throughout the film, most often in indications that the people brought on the wrath of the monster Gojira first by bombing its far-away habitat, then by allowing the military free reign to enrage the beast further even though the best efforts of soldiers are puny and absurd against such a giant. The scientist characters in the film also serve to reflect the guilt of the real world's scientists about the deadly use of fission. In particular, the fictional scientist Serizawa, whose life is turned dark by his discovery of the "Oxygen Destroyer," a power so great and wicked that it could destroy the world, suffers under the

weight of his guilt, as did many of the scientists who engaged in development of the atom bomb.³⁵

Anger, so often intertwined with guilt, is primarily expressed throughout the film by the monster, which shows its rage by destroying ships, small villages, and finally much of Tokyo. It is an anger that cannot be quelled nor reasoned with, a justified rage expressed in the full force of its terrifying roar, nuclear-hot exhalations, and crushing footfalls. It is an anger born of the creature's survival of nuclear bombs exploded in its very home; unlike the hibakusha in real-life Japan who could only speak of the bombs in terms of peace, in this fictional narrative at last the anger of a nation can be expressed in the safety of the science fiction realm. Although *Gojira* is the primary tool used to express anger, the human characters also express anger reflective of the times, including women activists angered by secrecy and the status quo, men representing the status quo angered by changes to their society, scientists angered by the demands put upon them or the refusal of others to see their point of view, and anger about the monster itself.

Expressions of pain and suffering in *Gojira* are rife with war and atomic metaphors, emphasizing the role that the film plays as a post-war purging of emotion. The

earliest scenes in the film illustrate pain followed by suffering, starting with the first ship attacked by what is yet unseen. The unseen, however, clearly evokes the bomb with the bright flash of light, screams, and death. The subsequent suffering of the survivors who indicate exhaustion, nausea, and pain function as representations of hibakusha, once again allowing through metaphor the communication of negative emotions related to atomic bombs. Further pain motifs reflective of both the fire bombings and nuclear bombings suffered in Japan occur throughout the film, namely when the monster attacks Tokyo and people are burned alive, crushed, tossed about in train cars, and even reduced to ash. Suffering inevitably follows in the scenes that most resemble post-bombing footage of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which exist in this fictional world after Gojira's attacks. Suffering is illustrated in familiar wartime motifs of wounded mothers and children, overwhelmed and hopeless doctors, and people grieving for their dead. In the closing scene, Gojira at once embodies pain and suffering, pain as its molecules are eliminated by the Oxygen Destroyer in what serves as a slow-motion allegory for nuclear destruction, and suffering in the opening of the scene when the audience can observe that the sleeping beast's skin is burned and scarred from the nuclear tests

that brought it to the surface. The complex imagery and metaphor brought forth through expressions of pain and suffering throughout the film's narrative permit those engaged with *Gojira* to recognize their own pain and suffering, thereby moving closer to healing.

When it comes to the powerlessness and fear inherent in a traumatic experience, it is particularly vital to use narrative as a means to explore those emotions and to restructure them in beneficial ways. In *Gojira* the emotions are communicated early and often. The first scenes of the film show the powerlessness of ordinary people to protect themselves or even to understand the situation well enough to devise a plan of action. One particularly striking allegory for the powerlessness of the Japanese citizenry to take on the Allied war machine coincides with the first actual sighting of the monster, its bomb-like footfalls and the screams of the villagers serving as the soundtrack. A cluster of brave old men from the village, wearing tattered clothes and sandals, mount a hill, ready to fight the enemy with a few small rifles and Samurai swords, their powerlessness so extreme as to appear almost absurd. It is a situation not unlike the state of the Japanese Army and people toward the end of its days as the country was faced with a technologically and economically superior foe.

Powerlessness is also illustrated throughout the film in allusions to censorship and to the inability of scientists to control their inventions, in visions of an Army and Navy unable to keep the beast at bay, and even Gojira's inability to defend itself in the end. Fear, too, is an emotion that is communicated regularly in the film, from the terror of the people in the face of impending doom to the fear of the traditionalists about admitting the cause of the Gojira attacks to the monster's fear in its final death scene. Undoubtedly, it would be impossible to produce a monster movie without expressing fear. However, as the fear imagery throughout the film is tied through metaphor and allegory to the bombs, to war, and to wartime struggles such as censorship, it does function in this narrative as a means of addressing the fear of the Japanese people in the years during and immediately after World War II.

In *Gojira*, the most powerful scenes occur when there is overlap of the emotional pairings, particularly when all three are present. This is helpful when studying *Gojira* as, first, exploring the pathos of a film this way is a useful method for understanding why a particular film or scene within a film affects an audience emotionally, which in turn yields a deeper understanding of how messages are sent and received through the medium. Second, the more emotional

response that is loaded into a narrative, the more evocative that narrative becomes, which can hamper one's ability to see clearly what is happening in the story and why, whether that story is a retelling of a real-life trauma or a metaphorical exploration of trauma as is the case with *Gojira*. By separating the layers of emotion and looking at them first separately and then together, it is easier to see how this film functions as a rhetorical expression of post-war anxiety. The three scenes with the most powerful emotional content are Gojira's attack on Tokyo; the scene in which Emiko brings Ogata to Serizawa's lab, leading to a fight and a profound revelation; and the climactic scene in which both Gojira and Serizawa die.

In the attack on Tokyo, which someone with even the most basic knowledge of history could recognize as containing metaphor for World War II attacks on Japan, it becomes clearer why the emotional response evoked by a fake monster trampling a mini-Tokyo is far more powerful than a simple metaphor could explain. The scene's resonance is rooted in the post-war trauma it represents in the combined threads of guilt/anger (the people made this happen and continued to exacerbate the problem), pain/suffering (of innocent bystanders, including children, as well as the monster itself), and powerlessness/fear (nothing can stop

Gojira). Because the Japanese were not permitted to discuss any of the emotions just listed, let alone their underlying causes, it makes awareness of this scene all the more important as a way to understand the Japanese psyche at the time. That understanding moves us beyond more traditional and limiting communication methods and broadens the perspective on this important time in history.

In the scene in Serizawa's lab, guilt/anger (scientific guilt and eruptions of anger over use of the discovery), pain/suffering (Ogata's injury along with what is shown on television after Gojira's Tokyo attack), and powerlessness/fear (inability to control the discovery and fear that he'll be forced to reveal it) work together to provide a window into some of the emotional wrangling of scientists such as Oppenheimer who were deeply troubled by their work on the atomic bomb.³⁶ Interestingly, in this fictional narrative, the Japanese rewrite the story, profoundly changing the outcome. The evil weapon of mass destruction is not completed and used against an entire people, as was the atom bomb; rather, with a Japanese scientist at the helm, the discovery is used to save the Japanese people instead of to destroy them. The scientist opts to die with his research rather than allow it to be used for an evil purpose. As is useful in recovering from

trauma, this sort of revised narrative could have provided a useful way for the people to cope with what had happened to them.

Finally, in the climax of the film, the pairings are brought together with such force that it should not be surprising that audiences in theaters in 1954 Japan were moved to tears.³⁷ Guilt/anger (over the creation of Gojira and the Oxygen Destroyer, the inability to prevent Gojira's and Serizawa's death, and finally about the clandestine relationship between Ogata and Emiko), pain/suffering (primarily of Gojira, but also of Serizawa), and powerlessness/fear (of all of the characters, including Gojira, in various manifestations) combine in this scene to form a devastating end to *Gojira*. Much as with the scenes in which the miniature Tokyo burning evokes surprising emotion, so does the Oxygen Destroyer death of a fictional monster. However, by understanding the powerful emotional themes woven throughout the scene and remembering the importance of narrative when dealing with trauma, it is clear why this scene functions so well. Here the Japanese put an end to the monster and all that it represents. Metaphorically, the film puts an end to the U.S. as an enemy, it puts an end to the errors that brought about Gojira's wrath, and it puts an end to the threat of

radiation and unexpected attacks. It serves as a profound exploration of post-war trauma, a trauma that can be put to rest here, at least for a while.

Gojira, developed simultaneously by its creators to be a blockbuster film and a response to the war,³⁸ functioned as a safe venue for the Japanese people to gather publically and share their experiences and their memories of the horrors of the war that changed everything for them. By sharing that experience through a creative narrative that ultimately restores Japan's honor, the creators and watchers of the film could use the fiction of *Gojira* to find some peace in the reality of their existence. As such, the film served a needed function in Japan by helping its people to work through their trauma and create a healthier narrative in which to move forward with their lives. But the film's usefulness does not end in Japan in the 1950s. Rather, it serves as a bridge to understanding the consequences of war and the use of nuclear weapons, particularly as open communication about the subject was limited in Japan. Also, by using PTSD and narrative as frameworks for examining the film, it is possible for someone outside Japanese culture to begin to understand and share in some small way the trauma of nuclear attack.

It is hoped that this project will contribute to the body of rhetoric in two ways. First, while the method used here to analyze *Gojira* is grounded firmly in the established work of Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenztz, by stepping outside the psychoanalytic framework on which they based much of their work, it is possible to understand meaning and affect in film in new ways. It could prove particularly interesting to explore further the ties between PTSD and narrative, as narrative is tied so deeply to both established PTSD research and sound rhetorical theory. It may be useful to use narrative as a bridge between communication theory that relies more on quantitative studies of human speech and rhetorical theory that works with more abstract representations of meaning. Also, while Hocker Rushing and Frenztz have relied heavily on American myth in their analysis of film, by utilizing a theoretical approach that is more universal among humans regardless of culture--such as the emotions uncovered in PTSD research and narrative--we have an opportunity to use film to learn more about other cultures with fewer language limitations. In essence, we can approach and understand the symbol-making animal in all of us, regardless of origin or experience.

Second, it is hoped that this work will add to the growing body of communication research related to nuclear weapons research and use. While there is no shortage of literature on the American experience related to the nuclear (as the footnotes in chapter two attest), we still struggle to find avenues of understanding related to the survivors of nuclear attack and weapons testing. As has been established here, part of the difficulty is moving past the guilt felt by Americans for using the bomb and the anger of the Japanese about its use, but there are also difficulties in getting past taboos about open dialogue, taboos that exist in both cultures for varied reasons. By studying artifacts that function outside the realm of standard, expected means of persuasion (expected avenues for persuasion could include speeches or government documents, for example), we have an opportunity to understand the effects of nuclear weapons from a fresh perspective, as hopefully has been achieved here.

In the end, *Gojira* is a powerful post-World War II artifact that, thanks to its rerelease by Toho, helps us to understand and perhaps even feel some of the guilt and anger, pain and suffering, and powerlessness and fear experienced by the Japanese after the war. With greater understanding on this side of the Atlantic, perhaps we can

grow closer to reaching more open lines of communication that are freed of blame and guilt. Perhaps the monster, now slain, can serve as an avenue to the ever-elusive transcendence sought by Kenneth Burke.³⁹

¹ Martin J. Medhurst (Editor), *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric & History*, College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press (2000), p. 268.

² Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press: 1994.); "Principal Wars in Which the United States Participated," Department of Defense. Accessed 11/30/2008.

<http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/WCPRINCIPAL.pdf>

³ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*; Also, each year on the anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is not uncommon to see documentaries on television that examine the decision to drop the bombs.

⁴ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 15.

⁵ Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 110.

⁶ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 114-115; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 81-82. Campbell was editor of the magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*.

⁷ Joyce A. Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 15-19.

⁸ Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*, 31; Weart, *Nuclear Fear*.

⁹ Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds*, 67 and 71.

¹⁰ Allan M. Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud: American Anxiety About the Atom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 7.

¹¹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 107.

¹² *Oxford Companion to World War II*, s.v. "Japan: Domestic life, economy, and war effort" (by Gordon Daniels)
<http://www.oxfordreference.com> (accessed September 7, 2009).

¹³ *Oxford Companion to World War II*, s.v. "Japan."

¹⁴ *Oxford Companion to World War II*, s.v. "Japan."

¹⁵ *Oxford Companion to World War II*, s.v. "Japan."

¹⁶ "The Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Chapter 10—Total Casualties," *The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School. Accessed 03/01/2008. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mp10.asp; William L. O'Neill, *World War II: A Student Companion*, ed. William H. Chafe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 146.

¹⁷ "Text of Hirohito's Radio Rescript," *New York Times*, August 15, 1945, pg. 3.

¹⁸ Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Volume One—One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement Through 1953* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 45-46.

¹⁹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 108; Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 46.

²⁰ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 46.

²¹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 46.

²² Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 46.

²³ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 47.

²⁴ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 47.

²⁵ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 47.

²⁶ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 48-49.

²⁷ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 46.

²⁸ William Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

²⁹ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 191.

³⁰ Jean C. Beckham, Allison A. Roodman, John C. Barefoot, Thom L. Haney, Michael J. Helms, John A. Fairbank, Michael A. Hertzberg, and Harold S. Kudler, "Interpersonal and Self-Reported Hostility Among Combat Veterans with and Without Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 9, 2 (1996): 335-342; Donna K. Nagata and Wendy J.Y. Chen, "Intergenerational Communication of Race-Related Trauma by Japanese American Former Internees," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 73, 3 (2003): 266-278; Judith Norman, "Constructive Narrative in Arresting the Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," *Clinical Social Work Journal*. 28, 3 (Fall 2000): 303-319; Crystal L. Park, Carolyn M. Aldwin, Juliane R. Fenster, and Leslie B. Snyder, "Pathways to Posttraumatic Growth Versus Posttraumatic Stress: Coping and Emotional Reactions Following the September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attacks," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 78, 3 (2008): 300-312; Joan M. Cook, David S. Riggs, Richard Thompson, James C. Coyne, and Javaid I. Sheikh, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Current Relationship Functioning Among World War II Ex-Prisoners of War," *Journal of Family Psychology* 18, 1. (2004): 36-45; Peter D. Yeomans, James D. Herbert, and Evan M. Forman, "Symptom Comparison Across Multiple Solicitation Methods Among Burundians With Traumatic Event Histories," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 21, 2. (April, 2008): 232-234.

³¹ Nagata and Chen, *Race-Related Trauma; Norman, Constructive Narrative; Yeomans, Herbert, and Forman, Traumatic Event Histories.*

³² Beckham, et al, *Hostility Among Combat Veterans:* 341.

³³ Walter R. Fisher, "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument," in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, 3rd ed, ed. Carl R. Burgchardt (State College, Pennsylvania: Strata Publishing), 245. Note that Fisher himself argues not that he "invented" the concept of narrative as a rhetorical construct, but rather that he built on generations of critical thought to get there.

³⁴ Fisher, *Narration*, 245.

³⁵ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 101-102; Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 38.

³⁶ Weart, *Nuclear Fear*, 101-102, Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud*, 38.

³⁷ Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind*, 33.

³⁸ Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind*, 23-24.

³⁹ Kenneth Burke, "The Socratic Transcendence." In *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 420-430; Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" (1941), in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Burgchardt, 188-202; Barry Brummett, "Burkean Scapegoating, Mortification and Transcendence in Presidential Campaign Rhetoric," *Central States Journal*, Vol. 32 (1981: 254-264)

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