humanities

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Up from the Depths: The Cultural Appropriation of Godzilla in 1970s American Animation and Comics

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Abstract: The approach taken by Marvel and Hanna-Barbera to adapting Godzilla for a young American audience is a form of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation involves removing the subject from its cultural context. In this case, Marvel and Hanna-Barbera removed the character from its origin, where it emerged as a consequence of the atomic bomb. Gojira is first a scourge of Japan and later its savior against invasion from cosmic forces and nefarious *kaiju*. Godzilla is changed into what is ultimately a sanitized version of imperial inventory. The properties of the 1970s Godzilla, however, were not wholly negative. Indeed, they laid the foundation for an American rediscovery of the original Gojira film and its sequels, which have since been released in their original versions. This article will examine how Marvel Comics and Hanna-Barbera cartoons culturally appropriated Godzilla for American children, but how this also led to an appreciation of the Japanese films.

Keywords: Godzilla; Gojira; Marvel; Hanna-Barbera; animation; comics; Hiroshima; Nagasaki; imperial inventory; cultural appropriation

1. Introduction

Hailed as the "King of the Monsters" by Marvel Comics in its 1977–1979 ongoing series, Godzilla came "up from the depths" every Saturday morning in 1978, compliments of American animation icon Hanna-Barbera, to capture the imagination of American children. Godzilla was first introduced to American audiences in *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* (Morse and Honda 1956). The film was an American import of the landmark Japanese version *Gojira* (Honda 1954). *King of the Monsters!* drastically cut the original *Gojira*, adding new scenes with White Canadian actor Raymond Burr playing an American reporter in Japan. Along with other English-dubbed Toho movies, Godzilla found an audience with American children in syndicated UHF television.

By 1977, the time was ripe for the comic book and children's cartoon industry to strike. In the wake of the box office flop *Terror of Mechagodzilla* (Honda 1975), Toho Studios was disinterested in making more Godzilla movies. This opened up the possibility of licensing deals in America (Criterion Collection 2019, p. 34). Marvel Comics was specifically interested in growing their market in the demographic of young children, which Godzilla was known to appeal to. *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* ran for 24 issues from 1977 to 1979. Marvel decided to make Godzilla a part of their shared universe concept (the Marvel Universe). Marvel superheroes, including the marquee groups The Fantastic Four, The Avengers, and the lesser-known Champions, tried to stop the monster from destroying their cities, New York and San Francisco, respectively, as Godzilla himself encountered his own foes derivative of the Toho films. Writer Doug Moench established tension between

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Received: 1 November 2024
Revised: 9 December 2024
Accepted: 12 December 2024
Published: 30 December 2024

Citation: Maravilla, C. Scott. 2025. Up from the Depths: The Cultural Appropriation of Godzilla in 1970s American Animation and Comics. *Humanities* 14: 2. https://doi.org/10.3390/h14010002

S.H.I.E.L.D. operative Dum Dugan and the costumed heroes. Whilst accepting their help, Dugan prefers that superheroes not get involved.

One year later, Hanna-Barbera animation studios, best known for their Saturday morning children's cartoons (although they also produced prime time cartoons *The Flintstones* and *Where's Huddles?*), premiered *Godzilla*, which would air for two seasons (26 episodes in total). The cartoon used a formula similar to that employed in Hanna-Barbera's hit show *Jonny Quest*. A group of scientists on a research vessel (the *Calico*) would investigate various sea-based disturbances accompanied by the Scooby Doo-esque Godzooky, a small, harmless version of Godzilla. Whenever the team ran into trouble, they would call Godzilla for each episode's climactic fight.

The approach taken by Marvel and Hanna-Barbera to adapting Godzilla for a young American audience is a form of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation involves removing the subject from its cultural context. In this case, Marvel and Hanna-Barbera removed the character from its origins, where it emerged as a consequence of the atomic bomb. In contrast, "[Ishiro] Honda would always view the monsters primarily as symbols of war's horrors" (Criterion Collection 2019, p. 14). The atomic bombs and nuclear contamination, however, are not the sole interpretations of Godzilla. Sean Rhoads and Brooke McCorkle in *Japan's Green Monsters: Environmental Commentary in Kaiju Cinema* (Rhoads and McCorkle 2018) argue that the films are a metaphor for Japan's concerns regarding environmental catastrophe. The interpretation of Godzilla as an environmental metaphor is consistent with the evolution of the series. Director Yoshimitsu Banno saw an "opportunity for Godzilla to become an advocate for ecological causes" (Criterion Collection 2019, p. 26). The director was inspired by the "filth floating in the ocean and smelled noxious fumes" in the Yokkaichi district (p. 26). Thus, in *Godzilla v. Hedorah* (1971), the monster would be an alien monster that eats "industrial waste" (p. 26). In the United States, the film was released as *Godzilla v. The Smog Monster* (p. 26).

As the film series progressed, Godzilla's connection to the war and its environmental consequences began to wane. In *Ebirah, Horror of the Deep* (1966), director Jun Fukuda, taking over for Ishiro Honda, adopted a lighter approach (p. 18). Indeed, Fukuda "eschew[s]subtextual themes" present in the Honda films (p. 18). Originally intended as a vehicle for another Japanese King Kong film (*Operation Robinson Crusoe: King Kong v. Ebirah*), Fukuda changed the setting to a tropical island in the South Pacific (p. 18). The film has more in common with the spy films of this era (p. 18). The villains are a sinister group called the Red Bamboo, which are trying to make atomic weapons. Jun Fukuda would later return to Godzilla's atomic roots in *Godzilla v. Megalon* (1973). The film revolves around the undersea kingdom of Seatopia's fear of nuclear testing. The film is "a nod to the 1971 U.S. [nuclear] test at Amchitka Island in Alaska (p. 30).

Gojira is first a scourge of Japan and later its savior against invasion from cosmic forces and nefarious kaiju. Godzilla is changed into what is ultimately a sanitized version of imperial inventory. The properties of the 1970s Godzilla, however, were not wholly negative. Indeed, they laid the foundation for an American rediscovery of the original film *Gojira* and its sequels, which have been released in their original versions (see the Criterion Collection 2019). This article will examine how Marvel Comics and Hanna-Barbera cartoons culturally appropriated Godzilla for American, children but how Toho's development of Godzilla as a children's hero laid the foundation for this.

2. What Is Cultural Appropriation?

Cultural appropriation is the monetization of items and artifacts associated with a minority, politically marginalized, or indigenous group for commercial gain (Arya 2021). As Professor Rina Arya of the University of Hull writes, "Cultural appropriation takes many

forms, covers a range of types of action, and has many consequences" (p. 3). Appropriation may even extend to the transfer of intellectual property and concepts from one society to another. The key is that there exists an imbalance of power between the two groups that leads to the exploitation of the less powerful one through the commodification of its culture. The more powerful body is "taking from a culture that is not one's own" (p. 3). This transformation of appropriated cultural property into a commercial object for profit "distorts and misrepresents" people from whom it is taken (p. 1).

The appropriation of material and abstract cultural property is similar to classical imperial inventory, which also deals with the colonial and imperial exploitation of other cultures by the more powerful (Pandey 2021). The Romans celebrated their empire through the acquisition of property, tales, and even people from conquered lands (Pandey 2021). For example, an "aristocratic Roman woman's bedroom might put a Spanish lover, Greek hairdresser, Arabic perfumes, Levantine glassware, and Red Sea pearls at her command" (Pandey 2021). The Roman "Colosseum [was] a miniature replica of the globe" that showed off lions and elephants from Africa in the circus (Pandey 2021).

As Professor Nandini Pandey writes, the Romans admired the "[a]esthetics and value of diversity [but] with the subjection of individual experience to imperial power structures". Professor Pandey references the Roman poet Ovid, for example, who heaped "praise for the ethnic variety of Rome's women helps male readers pick out victims for assault. Petronius mocks the elite tendency to dine among exotic guests, slaves, and foods as . . . humiliating and dehumanizing others". Just a cultural appropriation takes from the less powerful, imperial inventory, as the acquisition of goods and people from conquered nations, became a "symbolic means of lording over Rome's near-infinite variety" of imperial holdings.

Contemporary cultural appropriation, however, is less drastic than Roman imperial inventory. The appropriation may not be intended as a means of exploiting another culture. The process of globalization and technical advances with communication has "increased access to other cultures" through "permeability between boundaries" (Arya 2021, p. 2). It changes the way consumers interact with the marginalized. The items are viewed as "exotic" and their underlying significance is abstracted for Western consumption. The items taken from the marginalized group may also be "political symbols of oppression". The commodification often leads to an "inversion of values". For example, the 1990s fashion trend "Asian chic" dominated the runways in the United Kingdom. Asian chic transformed cultural traditional and symbols into trendy clothing. In this instance, tradition Asian garb is oversimplified and loses its cultural significance.

The commodification of intellectual property is another contemporary means of exploitation and altering cultural symbols. Godzilla can be seen as a form of soft cultural appropriation because the underlying intellectual property was never taken by the United States, but, rather, willingly sold by Toho Studios, the rights holders. In the introduction to *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation* (Ziff and Rao 1997), Bruce Ziff and Pratima Rao argue that cultural appropriation is a form of cultural exchange that lacks consent. In this respect, cultural appropriation is arguably not applicable. Godzilla was acquired by Marvel and Hanna-Barbera through licensing agreements. While the two did remove references to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the idea of Godzilla as a hero for children was already established by Toho. The sale, and later licensing, to American toy, animation, and comic companies was performed without restrictions. It appears that, because Toho licensed on a monster-by-monster basis, the American companies licensed Godzilla and created their own knockoffs of his adversaries. This was the case with both Marvel and Hanna-Barbera.

To make Godzilla palatable for American audiences, its cultural references and shared societal trauma from the outcome of World War II were excised, turning Godzilla into

another B-movie about an oversized mutated creature. The producers of *Godzilla: King of the Monsters!* accomplished this be cutting around 30 min of film and replacing it with Canadian actor Raymond Burr, who played an American.

Professor James O. Young of the University of Victoria "does not think it is ethically wrong to appropriate motifs, styles or subjects from other cultures, provided acknowledgement is given" (cited in Arya 2021, p. 3). Lionel Shriver, an American–British author, also disagrees with the view that all cultural appropriation is exploitive. According to Shriver, "we would not have the great works of fiction we do if writers had not borrowed from other cultures" (cited in Arya 2021, p. 3). The sustained worldwide popularity of the Godzilla franchise and *kaiju* films for decades supports this view.

3. Godzilla and the Pizza Effect

Godzilla illustrates a form of cultural exploitation called "The Pizza Effect". As Professor Rina Arya writes, the Pizza Effect sees an item monetized (see Arya 2021), placed into the commercial market, and ultimately sold to the country of origin in its new, imperially tinged form. As the name implies, the term is derived from the cultural experience with pizza. Pizza is a simple dish from Naples, Italy. In its current form, pizza originated in the United States from Nepalese immigrants who altered the crust and added a greater variety of toppings to suit the American palette. After World War I, the United States began exporting its version of pizza to Italy.

A similar exchange between the United States and Japan occurred in 1998 with the Roland Emmerich film *Godzilla*. *Godzilla* was released in the United States on 20 May 1998. It was a much-hyped production as Emmerich had enjoyed success with the alien invasion genre with his 1996 film, *Independence Day*. Emmerich's film starred Matthew Broderick as a naive scientist, who was accompanied by a French intelligence officer played by Jean Reno.

The 1998 *Godzilla* film is the most extreme example of an abstracted version of the Japanese original. The filmmakers went beyond 1956's *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* In this version, Godzilla is not even Japanese. Rather than the creation of radiation from the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Godzilla is a mutated lizard from French Polynesia, the product of French nuclear tests in Atoll Mururoa and Atoll Fangataufa in the South Pacific. In the film, one of the survivors calls the monster "Gojira", which is mistranslated to "Godzilla". In 1995–1996, France conducted the last of its test of nuclear weapons. The French nuclear tests were controversial. New Zealand brought a case against France in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which the ICJ dismissed on 22 September 1995.

Against this then-contemporary backdrop, Godzilla is a mutated iguana as opposed to a revised ancient dinosaur. The setting moves from Tokyo to Manhattan, where the creature nests in Madison Square Garden. From there, the film devolves into a *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg 1993) knockoff, with the protagonists chased by hundreds of giant baby iguanas. Indeed, the aggregate of these changes make Emmerich's *Godzilla* more of a remake of *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953). Despite its box-office success, grossing USD 379 million, Godzilla received negative reviews and was deemed a disappointment (Holden 1998). One of the places where this version of Godzilla saw a theatrical run was Japan. Toho released the US film in Japanese theaters on 11 July 1998. Unlike pizza, it was poorly received by the country of origin.

4. The First Cultural Appropriation—*Godzilla, King of the Monsters!*

4.1. Gojira (1954)

On 3 November 1954, Toho Studies, up to that point known for its propaganda and war movies, released the giant monster (or *kaiju*) film *Gojira* in Japanese cinemas (Ryfle 2019). Gojira launched what is referred to as the Showa Era of Godzilla films. This is called the

Showa Era because the initial run of films from 1954–1975 was released during the reign of Emperor Hirohito (1926–1989). The producer Tomoyuki Tanaka was inspired by *King* Kong (1933) and *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953). Director Ishiro Honda was antiwar, and *Gojira* became his "lament for the nuclear age" (Ryfle 2019, p. 3).

As American film historian Steve Ryfle writes, *Gojira* "resonated with Japanese audiences . . . still haunted by the atomic bombings and the war" (Ryfle 2019). The film was also preceded by and references an international incident with the United States involving the *Dai-go Fukuryu Maru* (the ship *Lucky Dragon*), a fishing vessel. On November 6 1952, the *Fukuryu Maru* was fishing too close to the Bikini Atoll when the United States tested a hydrogen bomb. The test also affected 28 military personnel and 239 Marshall Islanders. The fishermen suffered from radiation sickness and died. The Japanese public "likened [it] to a third nuclear strike on Japan" (Ryfle 2019, p. 3).

Gojira opens with a fishing vessel encountering the monster, highlighting the Japanese "'invisible fear'" of nuclear war (Ryfle 2019, p. 3). References to Hiroshima and Nagasaki also pervade the film. Godzilla himself is a product of the bombs. The Japan Self-Defense Force takes up arms against Godzilla without any reference to the United States post-occupation military presence in Japan (the occupation ended in 1952). In addition to the monster's origins being rooted in the atomic bombs, so is Godzilla's destruction. Dr. Daisuke Serizawa destroys Godzilla with a device more powerful than nuclear weapons. The weapon removes the oxygen from water, dissolving every living creature in its vicinity. To prevent an escalation in the arms race, Dr. Serizawa destroys his notes and sacrifices himself in the water with Godzilla.

4.2. Godzilla: King of the Monsters! (1956)

A common theme in the Americanization of the Godzilla mythology is the passive role of Toho studios, the property's creators. It was Toho that looked to turn an extra profit on the sale of the rights without creative restrictions to a foreign distributor. Toho was complicit in the first instance of the cultural appropriation of Godzilla by Embassy Pictures. Embassy Pictures paid Toho $25,000 for the unrestricted rights to *Gojira* (1954). As access was unrestricted, Embassy had the right to recut the film at their discretion, and recut it they did (Dower 1999, p. 24). It was this decision to license Godzilla to Embassy Pictures without restrictions that prevented this from being a mere cultural exchange. The underlying Japanese cultural references and historical experience, i.e., the "culture", was excised. Executive producer Joseph Levine, producers Harold Ross and Richard Kay, and writer/director Terry Morse removed 30 min of footage referencing Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the *Lucky Dragon* incident, and cultural references, replacing them with a new storyline involving an American journalist played by Raymond Burr (Guthrie-Shimizu 2006). The adaptation of *Gojira* into the Americanized *King of the Monsters!* (*KOTM*) demonstrated that "[i]t was perhaps easier for Americans to project their own nuclear fears onto another culture and thereby transfer these fears to an imaginary scenario" (p. 53).

Godzilla, King of the Monsters! was advertised to American teen audiences as a "gore-ridden creature film" (Guthrie-Shimizu 2006, p. 53). The reedited and partially reshot *Godzilla: King of the Monsters!* altered Gojira's tragic allegory of the consequences of dropping the atomic bombs on Japan to the "evidence of foreign victory" (Pandey 2021). According to Professor Rina Arya, taking a shared experience that formed a collective identity, like the aftereffects of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is a violation of fundamental rights (Arya 2021). The producers of *Godzilla: KOTM* removed the film's anti-nuclear message and its significant representation of Japanese postwar trauma to commodify *Gojira* into a low-grade drive-in B-movie intended for an *American* teen audience, one that

was more concerned with commercialism and entertainment than reflecting on the moral consequences of Fat Man and Little Boy.

As Professor Roger Dingman of the University of Southern California observes, Japanese people were also finding radiation in tuna, leading to the development of a collective environmental consciousness and food insecurity (Dingman 1990). The ending of *KOTM* is less clear. In *Gojira*, Dr. Daisuke Serizawa creates the "Oxygen Destroyer", which removes oxygen from water, killing all living things nearby. Dr. Serizawa reluctantly agrees to use the Oxygen Destroyer on Godzilla. Serizawa, however, outmaneuvers the authorities. He first destroys all of his notes so that the Oxygen Destroyer cannot be recreated. Finally, he enters the water to die beside Godzilla. Thus, all knowledge of the Oxygen Destroyer is eliminated with its creator. In *Godzilla: KOTM*, the Oxygen Destroyer is merely used to kill Godzilla and Dr. Serizawa's screen time is reduced in favor of Raymond Burr in order to appeal to American audiences.

Godzilla: KOTM also removed references to Japanese mythology, giving it a more Amero-centric feel. As Professor Rotter of Colgate University writes, survivors of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki described the event as "Buddhist Hell" (Rotter 2008, p. 231). The film's opening even removed references to the H-bomb test on Bikini Atoll that led to the radiation poisoning of the crew of the *Lucky Dragon No. 5*. On 6 November 1952, a hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific exposed 28 military personnel, 239 Marshall Islanders, and the crew of the Japanese fishing boat the *Fukuryu Maru* to unintended radiation. Some of the crew of the *Lucky Dragon* died shortly thereafter from radiation poisoning (Rotter 2008, p. 53). In its stead, *KOTM* opens with a destroyed Tokyo, accompanied by Raymond Burr's voiceover describing the events. From the first frame, American occupation is at the center of the film's story.

The "1950s monster. . . symbolised the punishing of humans for violating nature via technology" (Rotter 2008, p. 52). The interest in giant-sized monsters was initially stirred with the successful re-release of *King Kong* (Cooper and Schoedsack 1933) in 1952 (p. 51). The re-release grossed an estimated $2,500,000 (AFI 2024). To cash in on the popularity of the re-release, "the sacrifice of young women to Godzilla by Micronesian islanders [was] also added" (Rotter 2008, p. 55).

The giant monster genre was popular with the significantly large teenage market (Guthrie-Shimizu 2006). B-movies like *KOTM* were popular with drive-in movie theaters that preferred to show double bills and cartoons to attract families. A drive-in movie was cost-friendly for growing American families. Saturday matinees for children were another popular venue for such films. The popularity of the giant monster genre was established with the success of *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (Eugène Lourié 1953), an inspiration for *Gojira*. *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* was released in 1953, a year before *Gojira* hit Japanese theaters. In *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*, similar to *Gojira*, a prehistoric monster is awakened from its ancient sleep by nuclear testing. The Beast then goes on to stage an attack on New York City. As with other monsters of this era, *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*, a rhedosaurus frozen in an Arctic iceberg, was a "metaphor for nuclear weapons" (Low 1993, p. 49). *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* was succeeded in short time by other radioactivity-induced giant monsters. Other notable films include *Them!* (Gordon Douglas 1954), *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (Robert Gordon 1955), *Tarantula* (Jack Arnold 1955), *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (Roger Corman 1956), *The Monster That Challenged the World* (Arnold Laven 1957), and *The Giant Gila Monster* (Ray Kellogg 1959). In particular, *Them!*, which is about giant ants, helped to spark the "wave of movies about giant creatures created by radiation" (Rotter 2008, p. 50).

Gojira led to the "popularisation of science and mass culture in Japan" (Low 1993, p. 48). The film cast the Japanese as the victims of World War II as opposed to its perpetrators

(p. 48). Japan considered itself the victim of the atomic bombs (p. 55). Japan's defeat in World War II was viewed as a "victory of technology over spirit" (p. 56). *Gojira* is both an allegory and metaphor as "*Godzilla* and the Japanese monster movies represent an attempt by the Japanese to come to terms with nuclear history and its effects on Japanese society" (p. 53). Indeed, the entire *kaiju* film genre is a "metaphor. . . for both [atomic weapons] and the United States" (p. 53). The cultural appropriation by American producers eradicated those core elements. *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!*, with Raymond Burr edited in as a hero, became about American triumphalism.

5. The Second Cultural Appropriation—Godzilla in the 1970s

5.1. Godzilla Is for Children

Over the course of the Showa Era, "Godzilla. . . transformed . . . from powerful atomic allegory to children's superhero" (Ryfle 2019, p. 3). The transition began with *Son of Godzilla* (1967), directed by franchise newcomer Jon Fukuda. *Son* introduces the audience to a child-friendly progeny, Minilla, who Godzilla must save from another monster. The adventures of Minilla continued in *All Monsters Attack* (Ishiro Honda 1969). *All Monsters Attack*, retitled as *Godzilla's Revenge* in the US for its first release, was explicitly aimed at children (p. 5). The film premiered at the Toho Champion Festival for kids (Criterion Collection 2019, p. 24). Directed by Ishiro Honda, the film was touted as "Honda speak[ing] to children on their own level" (p. 24). Honda would again return to the franchise for the final film of the Showa Era, 1975's *Terror of Mechagodzilla*. The emphasis on a young audience took its toll, and the film failed at the box office. After the box office failure of *Terror of Mechagodzilla*, "Toho put Godzilla into hibernation for nearly a decade" (p. 34). With Toho no longer making Godzilla films, this naturally opened the door to licensing agreements. Marvel and Hanna-Barbara would be the beneficiaries, continuing to build on the 'Godzilla for children' theme.

From the initial release of *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!*, American critics understood the film as one strictly for children. In its review of *Godzilla: KOTM*, the *New York Times* described Godzilla as "a symbol of Japanese hate for the destruction that came out of nowhere and descended upon Hiroshima one pleasant August morn. But we assure you that the quality of the picture and childishness of the whole idea do not indicate such calculation" (Goldman 2017). The condescending description of Japanese popular culture and trauma as childish is a form of degrading imperial inventory.

American producers were not the only ones to view Godzilla as children's entertainment. As Professor Morris Low of the University of Queensland writes, "Godzilla's transition from allegory to children's idol can [also] be connected with the loss of the reality of destruction and concomitant end of the 'postwar' era for Japan" (Low 1993, p. 54). Toho Studios began to emphasize Godzilla's popularity with children, noting the sales of toys and other tangible goods (Tsutsui 2004, pp. 53–54). Toho executives intentionally chose to "cultivate a following among children" and move away from the original's darker themes of nuclear holocaust and war (Guthrie-Shimizu 2006).

Professor Morris Low describes the transition of Godzilla from Japanese nemesis to savior through the lens of three 1960s Showa Era films: *Mothra* (Honda 1961), *Mothra v. Godzilla* (Honda 1964), and *Ghidorah, The Three Headed Monster* (Honda 1964). In *Mothra*, H-bomb tests mutate a Micronesian caterpillar who goes to Japan to rescue its small one-foot female twins (the *Shobijin*). The twins call Mothra by singing a special song. It is the first *kaiju* film where the monster is the hero. *Mothra v. Godzilla* would pit the erstwhile heroic monster against the King of the Monsters. While Mothra dies of old age during the initial battle with Godzilla, her egg hatches, spawning twin caterpillars that ultimately defeat the monster. *Ghidorah* would complete Godzilla's transformation from villain into

hero. In between *Mothra*, *Mothra v. Godzilla*, and *Ghidorah*, one of the caterpillars has died, leaving the other Mothra to team up with Godzilla and Rodan to defeat King Ghidorah. King Ghidorah is controlled by UFOs who seek to conquer the earth. In the end, the team save the day.

Another facet of Godzilla's transition from symbol of postwar trauma into children's hero is the connection with pro wrestling. The concept of the monster battle royale began with *Godzilla Raids Again* (Motoyoshi Oda 1955). In *Godzilla Raids Again*, Godzilla fights an Anguirus. By the third Godzilla film, *King Kong v. Godzilla* (Honda 1963), the pro wrestling connection became more obvious. Godzilla jumps and claps triumphantly like a wrestler every time he beats King Kong. In "Wrestling with Godzilla: Intertextuality, Childish Spectatorship, and the National Body", Professor Aaron Gerow (2006, p. 64) of Yale University observed that Godzilla's evocation of the Japanese wrestler Rikidozan "typif[ied] the shift in the series away from a serious, though still contradictory effort to deal with traumatic memories of the war and the nuclear age, and toward lighter entertainment aimed at children, in which Godzilla shifts from being a frightening beast to a fatherly hero defending Japan". Ultimately, Godzilla pursued a young Japanese audience, and this approach would transfer to America.

5.2. Godzilla on UHF TV in the 1970s and Early 1980s

The film *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* became a fixture of American late night and weekend television (Guthrie-Shimizu 2006). The 1960s witnessed a rapid growth in local UHF television stations. These stations were in need of programming. Godzilla, with its appeal to "children and young teenagers [, became] its most reliable clientele" (Guthrie-Shimizu 2006, p. 58). These local TV stations showed edited and (poorly) dubbed Godzilla movies throughout the 1960s and 1970s, introducing them to a new generation of fans (Tsutsui 2004).

For the Romans to "appreciate people's diversity meant looking down on them" (Pandey 2021, p. 20). Toho's decision to license Godzilla to other companies in the 1970s saw a boom in the United States market, with soaring demand for cartoons, toys, and comic books (Guthrie-Shimizu 2006). However, the American market followed the Japanese by amplifying Godzilla's appeal to children while still stripping away its postwar symbolism. This cultural appropriation looked down on Godzilla as mere children's entertainment.

5.2.1. Hanna-Barbera

Even before the release of the child-friendly *All Monsters Attack*, Toho attempted to coproduce an international cartoon series (Criterion Collection 2019, p. 42). While that joint production never materialized, American cartoon juggernaut Hanna-Barbera licensed the property for a Saturday morning children's cartoon. In 1978, Hanna-Barbera's *Godzilla Power Hour* premiered on Saturday morning cartoons. The series ran for two seasons. Hanna-Barbera did not license other Toho properties, but the monster in episode 1, known as the Firebird, looks like Rodan. Like Rodan, the Firebird emerges from a mountain, only in the cartoon is it a volcano.

The show had the same producer, Doug Wildey, as the prime-time animated series *Jonny Quest*. Wildey took a similar approach, with the story following a group of scientists who would call on Godzilla whenever they ran into trouble, usually at the climax of the episode. Added to the crew was a child-friendly sidekick Godzooky, voiced by Don Messick, the same voice actor as Scooby-Doo. Godzooky also had the power to call Godzilla.

Hanna-Barbera's *Godzilla* provided no origin for the creature. All the audience knew was that Godzilla lived under the sea. The sea-based nature of the monster was consistent with Toho's portrayal of Godzilla. In the Showa Era films, Godzilla would often be shown

rising from the depths of the ocean before wreaking havoc on Tokyo or some other misfortunate city or village. By maintaining the ambiguity of Godzilla's origins, Hanna-Barbera's young audience, familiar with the Toho films on American independent television stations, could connect the character with the Toho films without reference to the atomic bombs.

The cultural appropriation of Godzilla by Hanna-Barbera is seen with the repudiation of Godzilla's nuclear origins. As with the 1954 film, Godzilla is stripped of the uniquely Japanese cultural and historical significance and symbolism for an American audience. In this case, children watching Saturday morning cartoons thirty years after the end of World War II were raised with a different narrative of the war's end. This is best illustrated by Hanna-Barbera's representation of Godzilla's powers.

In the Hanna-Barbera cartoon, Godzilla breathes fire like a dragon. He does not have radioactive breath like in *Gojira* and the other Japanese films that followed. Indeed, this is even emphasized in the lyrics to the show's opening theme, "breathing fire, he stands in the sky". Moreover, Godzilla also shoots lasers from his eyes like Superman. This characterization of the monster makes him more of a superhero that appeals to small children, much like Toho's decisions with the later Showa Era films.

Godzilla follows the adventures of the crew of the *Calico*, a sea exploration hydrofoil. Godzilla uses the tropes of a typical Hanna-Barbera cartoon. As with other Hanna-Barbera cartoons, the main regular cast is composed of a small group of people. In Godzilla the crew includes Captain Carl Majors, Pete Darian, a child, Dr. Quinn Darian, Pete's aunt, and Brock. Filling in for the non-human mascot (Scooby-Doo, Speed Buggy, etc.) is Godzooky. Godzooky is a baby Godzilla. Unlike Minilla from *Son of Godzilla* and *All Monsters Attack*, Godzooky looks more like a small dragon. He breathes puffs of smoke as opposed to fire and, unlike Godzilla, can fly. Godzooky mainly interacts with Pete Darian in a way like Scooby and Shaggy. Godzooky bears some resemblance to Scrappy-Doo in that he is often attempting to fight the bad guys. Godzooky also often leads Pete Darlin into trouble by wanting to assist the crew of the *Calico*. Like *Scooby Doo: Where Are You!*, the crew of the *Calico* roam from place to place solving mysteries.

The crew of the *Calico* conduct scientific research as they travel the oceans. Dr. Quinn Darian explains her interest in scientific discovery to Brock while exploring an underwater air bubble in 'The Megavolt Monster' (episode 4). Their travels take them to "exotic locales". In 'Attack of the Stone Creature' (episode 3), the crew find themselves in Egypt trying to solve the mystery surrounding the discovery of an ancient pyramid said to be protected by stone creatures. Some of the monsters encountered by the *Calico* were based on Greek mythology, namely, the cyclops ('The Colossus of Atlantis', episode 7) and the sirens ('The Horror of Forgotten Island', episode 8). These monsters constituted cheap alternatives to licensing the Toho-owned properties. The monsters were also a way to Westernize Godzilla more by relating back to Greek mythology.

Captain Carl Majors has a device attached to his belt that emits a high-frequency sound that only Godzilla can hear. Twice each episode, Captain Majors uses the device to call Godzilla to rescue the *Calico* from a life-threatening situation. In the first episode, Godzilla saves the *Calico* from a tsunami by lifting the hydrofoil in his hands and withstanding the large wave. The second time is the climax of the episode, where Godzilla fights the giant monster(s) of the week.

The *Godzilla Power Hour* went to even greater lengths in terms of cultural appropriation than the original US edit of *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* In other words, it entailed the excising of Godzilla as symbol of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The *Power Hour* completely removed Godzilla's nuclear origins and all references to Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and World War II. The *Power Hour* further diminished the original *Gojira*'s reference to the *Lucky Dragon* incident, demonstrating the harmful impact of

radiation on the environment by dropping any reference whatsoever to the environmental impact of the *Calico*'s interaction with archeological finds and native (albeit large and dangerous) species (which is ironic because Hanna-Barbera's *Yogi's Gang* sought to teach children about environmental awareness). In many ways, Hanna-Barbera tried to further Westernize the character with mythological foes from Greek mythology and references to ancient Egypt. Overall, Godzilla's origins were ambiguous. All the audience knows is that Godzilla lives underwater and has some relationship to the comical sidekick Godzooky.

5.2.2. Marvel Comics

Marvel comics took a different approach than Hanna-Barbera to Godzilla's cultural appropriation. Marvel's Godzilla story arc mirrored that of the Showa Era films. Godzilla is first awakened from his Toho-specific induced hibernation and proceeds to destroy Seattle, San Francisco, and Las Vegas. During the latter incident, Godzilla breaches the Hoover Dam and washes away Las Vegas. As with *Gojira* and *Godzilla Raids Again*, the goal is to destroy the monster. Reminiscent of *Invasion of Astro Monster* (Honda 1965), Godzilla becomes a cosmic savior. In issues 12–14, Godzilla is transported to the moon by "a jagged gash of crackling energy!" (#12). There, Godzilla is recruited by the Betans for an endgame to their eons war with the Megans. The Megans want to conquer the Earth to use its resources to defeat the Betans. Ultimately, Godzilla and Red Ronin fight the Betan Mega-Monsters: Krollar, Rhiahn, and Triax. (#13). The Betans use their Energex-ray to supersize the Mega-monsters who, despite decapitating Red Ronin, are no match for Godzilla. (#14). Finally, Godzilla finishes as a children's hero.

Unlike Hanna-Barbera, Marvel included an origin story for Godzilla in its two-year run. Marvel set its origin story in familiar surroundings, but with culturally significant differences. In *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, Godzilla remains the by-product of the nuclear age. This is not surprising given that many of Marvel's superheroes gained their powers from nuclear technology or its derivatives (gamma rays, gamma bombs). Thus, like Hanna-Barbera, Marvel used an origin that would connect its young readers to the Toho franchise but without the context of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In the Marvel Universe, Godzilla is awakened and mutated by an underwater nuclear weapons test opposed by only a single scientist, Dr. Takiguchi. Dr. Takiguchi is also the lone survivor of the scientific team that awakened Godzilla. In issue 1, Godzilla is discovered frozen in an Arctic iceberg. Due to rising temperatures, Godzilla is able to free himself and proceeds on a rampage throughout North America, bringing him into conflict with the Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division (S.H.I.E.L.D.) and superheroes as well. For 24 issues, Godzilla would face the likes of The Champions, The Fantastic Four, The Avengers, and even a time-hopping encounter with Devil Dinosaur.

Dum Dum Dugan is tasked with finding and destroying Godzilla. Dum Dum does not welcome the participation of superheroes. For example, in issue 23, Dum Dum Dugan refers to The Avengers as "a whole flock of freaks costumed clowns". While Godzilla splits the Alaskan oil pipeline and levels Seattle, not all are convinced of the creature's malevolence. Gabe Jones, second in command of the Godzilla Squad, points out to Dum Dum that it was Godzilla who saved him from Dr. Demonicus.

The primary arc of Rob's and Godzilla's friendship is the heart of the Marvel comic. Evoking *All Monsters Attack*, Rob Takiguchi is a 12-year-old boy convinced of Godzilla's goodness and that the Americans displayed ineptitude in handling him. Rob Takiguchi and the Red Ronin set the Marvel comic apart from Hanna-Barbera. Hanna-Barbera was a lather, rinse, and repeat approach to Godzilla. Every episode followed the same formula, ending in a battle with a giant monster. Marvel, however, provided a 24-issue arc that explored Rob Takiguchi's innocent relationship with the creature. Godzilla's biggest advocate is Dr.

Takiguchi's young grandson, Robert, who describes Godzilla as a hero of Japan. Robert steals a weapon intended to kill Godzilla, namely, the giant mecha Red Ronin. Operating the Red Ronin, Robert fights by Godzilla's side.

Rob's mind imprints on the Red Ronin suit and no one else uses it thereafter. Despite the best efforts of S.H.I.E.L.D., including the Howard Hughes-inspired pilot Hugh Howards, Rob continually steals Red Ronin to help Godzilla. In issues 10 and 11, Red Ronin helps Godzilla fight the Yetrigar. The Yetrigar is a Yeti-type creature that, like Godzilla, is awaken from frozen hibernation by nuclear tests and mutates into a giant-sized monster. Ultimately, Rob reluctantly makes the choice to kill the Yetrigar to save Godzilla. As Rob thinks to himself, "We save Godzilla but we had to kill to do it". His final thoughts on the battle are, "maybe we should just keep flying Red Ronin and never stop".

After Red Ronin is beheaded in the battle with the Mega-Monster, Rob continues to aid Godzilla. In issue 14, Godzilla, shrunken by Henry Pym, finds himself King of the Sewers, where he battles a sewer rat. In the search for Godzilla, the creature responds to "a familiar voice" (#14). We read that "Yes, it is the familiar voice, the one Godzilla has come to know" (#14). It is Rob Takiguchi, who Godzilla sees as a friend. As Rob tells Godzilla, "There are a lot of people who think you're evil, who want to kill you. I'm not one of them. I just wanted to get you away from those people" (#15).

Finally, it is Rob who is able to resolve the central conflict with Godzilla via trust and friendship rather than violence. During the battle in New York City between The Avengers and Godzilla, "[i]n this one fateful instant of searing emotion, a 12-year old boy far from home gambles his life, the life of an entire city against the trust of a berserk monster" (#24). Iron Man even observes that "bringing this down to the level of one small child makes it even more terrifying than a dozen crushed buildings" (#24). Rob instructs Godzilla to proceed to the bay and leave forever. The series concludes with the sentiment that "there will be no harsh words for young Rob Takiguchi this night and he will not be alone. After all, he has led Them" (# 24).

In Godzilla's Marvel origin, the monster initially attacked Japan, like in the Showa Era films, before being frozen in ice. The culturally significant difference is that all references to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the *Lucky Dragon No. 5* were exercised. World War II was referenced, but only from the American perspective. Godzilla Squad leader Dum Dum Dugan fought in World War II alongside Captain America as a member of the Howling Commandoes. Thus, Godzilla remains a Japanese *kaiju* familiar to American readers, but lacks the underlying symbolism and conscience of the original Toho property.

Stan Lee wanted a "lighter" tone to *Godzilla*, seeking "more fun" (Kalat 2010). Marvel licensed only the Godzilla property from Toho (Kalat 2010). Marvel did not wish to pay additional money for any other Toho properties. Instead, Godzilla fought Marvel-created *kaijū*, which were obvious rip-offs of the Toho characters. In issue 4, Godzilla fights Batragon (bat dragon), a mutated giant bat that looks like a one-headed King Ghidorah. In Issue 5, both Godzilla and S.H.I.E.L.D. take on Dr. Demonicus and his giant monsters that have been mutated by a radioactive meteor. One is a giant moth called Lepirax, a stand-in for Mothra. The other two are Ghilaron, a giant salamander, and Centipor, a giant centipede.

The interesting part of *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* is how Marvel seamlessly weaves the monster into its shared universe. Godzilla first fights The Champions in San Francisco. The Champions were a lesser 1970s team-up that included Black Widow, Hercules, Ghost Rider, Angel, and Iceman, the latter two of whom were formerly with the X-Men. Later, Hank Pym uses his pym particles to shrink Godzilla to a manageable size. But size does not matter for Godzilla, and the monster escapes into the New York sewers where he takes on a rat that is now the same size as him. The Avengers appear in the comic's penultimate issue, bringing about a showdown that seems inevitable from the first issue. Thus, Marvel's

cultural appropriation preserved much of Godzilla's origins while still removing references to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Ultimately, Marvel wove the creature into the existing Marvel Universe of superheroes rather than as a standalone licensed title like *Star Wars*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, or *Planet of the Apes*.

The licensing of Godzilla to Hanna-Barbera and Marvel by Toho in the 1970s continued a cultural appropriation of the property that began with *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* Marvel even used the title for the monthly comic book crowning Godzilla, "King of the Monsters". Taking different approaches, both companies removed the references to and underlying symbolism for the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, reducing Godzilla to mere children's entertainment.

6. Conclusions

The cultural appropriation of Godzilla in America reflected two phases. The giant monster imports of *Gojira* as *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* Replacing the post-nuclear trauma and symbolism of the original with American triumphalism in the 1956 edit. This was particularly evident in the decision to shoot new footage, with the Canadian actor Raymond Burr playing an American reporter in postwar Japan. Burr also conveniently provided the American producers with a means of changing the beginning of the film with the explicit reference to the *Lucky Dragon* incident. The second wave of Godzilla media in America was seen in the late 1970s in the form of toys, a Marvel comic series, and a Saturday morning cartoon. American animation producers Hanna-Barbera continued with the cultural appropriation of Godzilla, with a sterile backstory. Godzilla, a creature from the depths of the oceans, breathes fire and shoots lasers from his eyes, a far cry from radioactive breath. The approach of Marvel, on the other hand, was in some ways more akin to *King of the Monsters!* The title was even *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, but with no exclamation point. Like the 1956 *KOTM*, Marvel's cultural appropriation kept Godzilla's Japanese and nuclear origins, but removed the underlying symbolism.

Toho, however, was complicit in the appropriation of its character. Starting in the mid-1960s, Toho began to see the potential of Godzilla as a children's hero. The Godzilla portrayed in *All Monsters Attack* made its way across the Pacific to become a superhero to American children. Cultural appropriation, however, created a fanbase from children growing up in the 1970s and 1980s. In the last twenty years, there has been a reappraisal of the original Showa Era films that has coincided with a thirty-year emergence of manga and anime as worldwide cultural phenomena. Indeed, the Showa Era Godzilla shares many of the same themes as manga and anime. These themes include nuclear holocaust (*Hokuto No Ken*), environmentalism (*Space Cruiser Yamato*), and the conflict of the spirit against technology (*Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion*). Like Godzilla, anime first arrived in the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s as reedited syndicated television shows aimed at children (*Gatchaman* became *Battle of the Planets* and *Space Cruiser Yamato* became *Star Blazers*). This changed with the successful unaltered release of anime films by Streamline Pictures. In particular, the groundbreaking anime film *Akira* launched the genre's popularity with adult audiences.

In 2004, Godzilla was followed with the Criterion Collection release of the uncut *Gojira* for the first time in the United States. Criterion followed up in 2019 with the Showa Era box set of Godzilla films, presenting them uncut with the original Japanese dialogue, thus bringing the cultural appropriation of Godzilla full circle, with a reappraisal of the original's post-nuclear symbolism.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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