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Wrestling with Godzilla: Intertextuality, Childish Spectatorship, and the National Body

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IN GODZILLA'S® FOOTSTEPS

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yushutsu," *Asahi Sōken Ripōto* 132 (June 1998), p. 129; "Supplemental Notes by Shane Ballmann," in Morrero, *Godzilla*, p. 23.

28. *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1959; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 19, 1961.
29. Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture*, pp. 30–31, 41–42, 91.
30. *New York Times*, October 12, 1958, October 12, 1965, September 11, 1966; March 27, 1967; Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture*, pp. 79, 103.
31. Takahashi Toshio, "Gojira, watashitachi o tōitsuzukeru daikaijū," *Shinefuronto* 23:7 (July 1998), p. 11.
32. Sakamoto Hiroshi, "1950-nendai ni okeru taishū goraku zasshi no jūyō keii," *The Kyoto Journal of Sociology* 9 (2001), pp. 191–217.
33. *New York Times*, June 27, 1963; *Christian Science Monitor*, July 6, 1963; *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1963.
34. *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 1964, January 11, 1965, March 11 and June 19, 1966, July 22, 1967, September 6, 1968; *New York Times*, November 26, December 6 and 13, 1964, December 16, 1965, December 14, 1970; *Chicago Tribune*, October 19, 1969.

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WRESTLING WITH GODZILLA: INTERTEXTUALITY, CHILDISH SPECTATORSHIP, AND THE NATIONAL BODY

Aaron Gerow

Godzilla certainly is an intertextual beast. Especially with the 2004 release in the United States of the uncut 1954 original, viewers must be reminded of how that film intersected with many contemporary issues and texts, ranging from the H-bomb testing in the Pacific to *King Kong*, thereby formulating a popular cultural reaction to the atomic bomb, America, World War II, and the cold war. Recalling such original intertexts, however, should not serve to corral and restrict readings of the film and its subsequent series. As a monster stomping over the years through a variety of cultural, political, and social contexts, Godzilla has been intertextual precisely because it has always broken free of attempts to enclose its semiotic wanderings in a single text (or to confine it on Monster Island, for that matter). There have always been other contexts that problematize efforts to fix Godzilla's meaning, and which therefore point to complicated forms of spectatorship that might not only create alternative meanings for the giant lizard, but also celebrate this wandering textuality. Godzilla can offer one window onto what we could call the dual monsters of textuality and spectatorship in Japanese film history, offering an example of the historical struggles over what movies mean and who determines that.

Consider, for instance, the second Godzilla film, *Gojira no gyakushū* (1955), sometimes known in English as *Godzilla Raids Again*. A spiky rendition of Ankylosaurus, Angilas makes his way ashore in Osaka to engage with Godzilla. What ensures is a knockdown dragout with dirt flying and buildings tumbling, but the text that this battle most clearly references, with its handholds and throws, is none other than pro-wrestling. Some cite this work as the beginning of what would be called *kaijū puroresu* (monster pro-wrestling), even though it was the third film, *Kingu Kongu tai Gojira*

(King Kong vs. Godzilla, 1962), that more consciously rendered Godzilla's bouts as an inflated version of a ring battle. This insertion of monster rasslin' into the series may have been part of an effort to elongate the franchise by borrowing the success of pro-wrestling, a sport that, under the deft promotional strategies of the star wrestler Rikidōzan, was one of the most popular media phenomena in Japan from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s. This increased relationship with pro-wrestling is often said to typify 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. In tracing a relationship between Godzilla and social reality, many see the work of the 1960s as marking the end of the darker, more troubled and critical cultural milieu of the 1950s, still burdened by memories of the war and the bomb, and the commencement of a lighter, more confident and conservative worldview of a nation enjoying high economic growth. Although fans or scholars describing this shift may admit to finding certain pleasures in the campy implausibilities of the films of the 1960s and 1970s, the rhetoric has mostly made light of these works—and their relationship to pro-wrestling—through such words as "juvenile,"[1] "mere child's play,"[2] "B-movie morass,"[3] or "banalization."[4]

But what is involved in asserting a text "juvenile" or that it is "mere child's play" (*kodomo damashi*)? What assumptions about spectatorship and textuality does it make? While I do not necessarily reject these historical or even aesthetic accounts, I would utilize a reconsideration of Godzilla's relationship to pro-wrestling as a means of complicating their assumptions, especially with regard to the aesthetics of realism versus children's entertainment, all in hopes of sketching an alternative account of the viewer's engagement with the monstrous body. If this sketch does not provide some respect for the oft-denigrated work of the 1960s and 1970s, postulating a joyously physical way of watching Godzilla, I hope it at least forces us to rethink the oppositions between serious and nonserious, realistic and fake that have dominated not only contemporary Godzilla scholarship, but also Japanese film critical discourse since the 1910s and how it has sought to corral spectator behavior. If this discourse has long attempted to contain the monsters of textuality and spectatorship in a project of revitalizing the Japanese national, maybe we can let Godzilla romp around a little more.

*   *   *

Though there seem to be only a few overt echoes between Godzilla and pro-wrestling in *Gojira no gyakushū*, and none in the original Godzilla, there are several texts from the period that specifically make the connection, long before the more obvious *Kingu Kongu tai Gojira*. The first is the two adaptations of the two initial Godzilla films drawn by the manga artist Sugiura Shigeru.[5] Godzilla was a multimedia phenomenon from the start, and especially novelizations and manga versions were published soon after the first

Figure 5.1 Sugiura's wrestler without an opponent: "I'm the strongest in the world!" Sugiura Shigeru, *Sugiura Shigeru mangakan*, vol. 3, *Shōnen SF, ijigen tsuā* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

films appeared. Like Yukawa Hisao's illustrated version of *Gojira no gyakushū*, which appeared in *Shōnen Kurabu* soon after the second film was released, most were rendered with a strongly realist touch. Sugiura's versions, which appeared in March and June 1955, are quite different both in their degree of caricature and in their emphasis on *kaijū puroresu*. The first version is presented as if Godzilla were a wrestler determined to be number one but without an opponent, taking his frustrations out on Tokyo instead (figure 5.1). "Ōabare Tokyo" is pro-wrestling from beginning to end, as the monsters even call their battles matches. Godzilla throws Angilas with a "H-Bomb Throw" and bashes Gyottosu—one of Sugiura's fanciful creations—on the head with a karate chop (figure 5.2).

The karate chop helps us segue to another text connecting Godzilla and pro-wrestling, *Rikidōzan no tetsuwan kyojin*, a film directed by Namiki Kyotarō and released by Shintōhō on December 13, 1954, about five weeks after the first Godzilla film. Rikidōzan was famous for his karate chop, and this is the first of several fiction films in which he starred. His main role is that of a Tarzan-like caveman without command of language who heads off to Tokyo with a boy Tarō in search of a gang that killed his scientist friend and stole a terrible death ray. After he and the boy are thrown into the sea in a train wreck caused by the villainous mob, the film switches to a fish market where we can see not only the catch being unloaded onto the docks, but also a man checking it with a Geiger counter (figure 5.3). Such checks actually occurred in 1954 after the fishing vessel *Daigo Fukuryū Maru (Lucky Dragon No. 5)* was irradiated by an H-bomb test and fears spread of radioactive tuna—an incident also referenced in *Gojira*. When another load is then lifted

Figure 5.2 Godzilla's karate chop! Sugiura Shigeru, *Sugiura Shigeru mangakan*, vol. 3, *Shōnen SF, ijigen tsuā* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

out of the hold of a boat, only to reveal Rikidōzan and the boy in the net (figure 5.4), everyone on the dock scurries for safety when the Geiger counter goes off the scale. Soon the radio is full of reports of a radioactive "monster" (*kaibutsu*) loose in Tokyo.

If Sugiura likens Godzilla to Rikidōzan, *Tetsuwan kyojin* equates Rikidōzan with Godzilla. While it is unlikely, given the short time between their release dates, that *Tetsuwan kyojin* was consciously citing Honda Ishirō's film, the fortuitous textual networks of nuclear discourse in 1954 had Rikidōzan be the "kaibutsu" repeating Godzilla's entry into the metropolis. And make no mistake, an angry Rikidōzan can topple a building if he wants to, as he nearly does to police headquarters when he literally shakes the foundations to get out of jail later in the film. Most likely many in the audience would have enjoyed the parallels drawn between Japan's new pro-wrestling hero and the atomic beast that destroyed Tokyo, but the irreverence may seem disturbing to some. Only months after the *Lucky Dragon* incident, which resulted in the death of one crewman and a massive surge in the Japanese antinuclear movement,[6] the
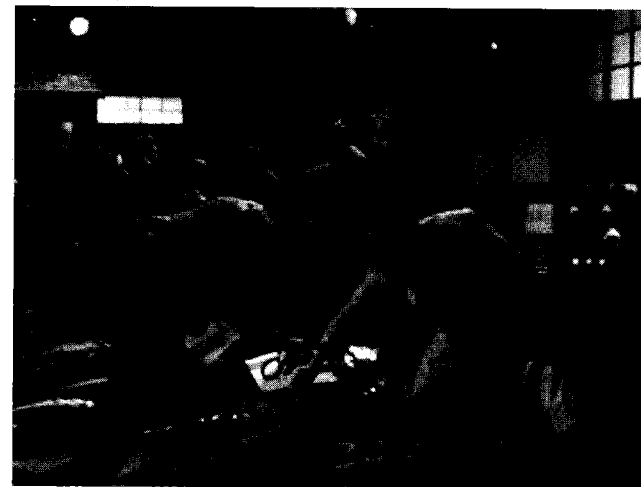
Figure 5.3 Checking for things radioactive. *Rikidōzan no tetsuwan kyojin* (1954).

Figure 5.4 Another radioactive monster arrives in Tokyo. *Rikidōzan no tetsuwan kyojin* (1954).

nuclear threat is being reduced to a pro-wrestler in a loincloth and a fake beard. The original *Gojira* seemingly dealt with these issues in a much more serious fashion, which is probably one basis for why it, and not *Tetsuwan kyojin*, remains well known.

One reason for the unserious demeanor of these texts, and thus of the connection between Godzilla and pro-wrestling, is likely its audience of children. Sugiura published almost exclusively in children's magazines like *Shōnen Kurabu* and *Omoshiro Bukku*, and *Tetsuwan kyojin* even constructs its story around a child spectator. All the scenes of Rikidōzan the radioactive

caveman are narratively the fantasy of a partially paralyzed boy—the boy Tarō—who dreams of becoming friends with his hero, Rikidōzan. This structure of course parallels the most childish of Godzilla films, *Gojira-Minira-Gabara: Ōru kaijū daishingeki* (Godzilla's Revenge, 1969), in which a young boy fantasizes going to Monster Island in order to escape his dreary, bullied existence. Prepubescent involvement is also central to Sugiura's narratives, as it is a child who takes the Oxygen Destroyer to Godzilla—and, of course, does not die—and it is children who best the mob of monsters invading Tokyo in "Ōabare Gojira."

Childishness thus takes away the horrors of nuclear fallout and the tragedy of Godzilla's demise, leading these texts, perhaps, into banalization. But my research on the history of discourses on film spectatorship in Japan makes me suspicious naturalizing certain narrative tones and structures to a child viewership. This was a common tactic in the Pure Film Movement in the 1910s, which complained of the premodernity of Japanese cinema—in particular, the do-good stories of Onoe Matsunosuke and other Nikkatsu films—by in part asserting that it was pandering to a child audience. This was not really a true assertion—Gonda Yasunosuke's audience surveys in the late 1910s show few theaters with a majority adolescent audience[7]—and it was colored by the fact that it also pinned the blame for poor cinema on poor working men and women. The ascription of childishness was less of a description of fact than an effort to naturalize forms of cinema and the interventions necessary to realize them. By tying certain films to spectators considered physically, mentally, and socially immature, reformers not only elevated their own, class-based modernized cinema as mature, but they also marked the cinema of a lower stratum of society as backward in a cinematic teleology, one that then needed benevolent interventions by powerful figures in order to grow up.[8] In researching how child spectators were constructed in order "to produce and place the audience in a certain way," Richard deCordova asks

> What does it mean for us (adults) to understand the child and the moving pictures, to produce a particular image of him or her? In what complex ways and through what processes . . . is that image linked to adult identity? What, in short, is at stake in the system of differences through which our society attempts to constitute a boundary between child and adult?[9]

At least in the case of Japan during much of its cinema history, discourse on child audiences and childlike films was an aesthetic based in class and culture politics, differentiating a culturally acceptable cinema from one that was not. This was a definition of film textuality and reception that was deeply involved in the continued struggle in the prewar—and, I would contend, postwar—years over controlling spectatorship by both children and adults, trying to channel film reception into nationally acceptable forms.

We can turn the tables on this and see Sugiura's manga not as childish renditions of the Godzilla stories, but as strategic efforts to reappropriate the childish by offering a different model of reading these texts. These are, in a
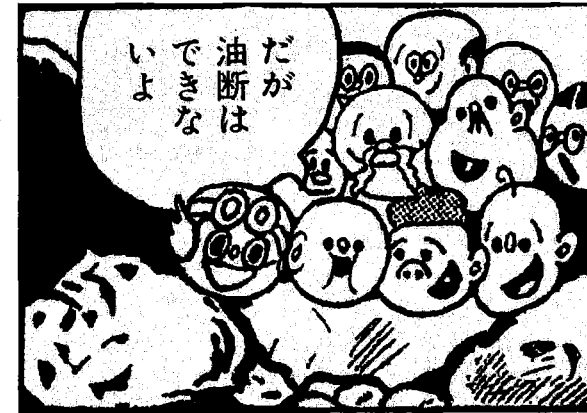
Figure 5.5 They won't let down their guard—or their smiles. Sugiura Shigeru, *Sugiura Shigeru mangakan*, vol. 3, *Shōnen SF, ijigen tsuā* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

sense, an alternative interpretation of Godzilla. It is interesting to note the differences between the originals and Sugiura's manga. The first manga is relatively true to the story surrounding Godzilla, though it drops the love triangle and leaves Dr Serizawa alive at the end. What is most different is the tone of the work. No matter what tragedy seems to be unfolding, Sugiura's characters are not only cheerful, but are also having a great time (figure 5.5). There can be a gleeful anarchy to this cheer, especially when the boys show us wide grins as they exclaim upon seeing Godzilla turn Tokyo into a sea of fire, "Is this the end of Japan?" (figure 5.6). This desire to pursue merriment in any situation spreads to the monsters and literally breaks down the narrative of *Gojira no gyakushū*, making only a few frames of "Ōabare Gojira" resemble its source. The philosophy, if you can call it that, is of *yukai*, pleasure and amusement, pursuing the path as far from seriousness as possible. This can involve not only the abdication of responsibility and the pursuit of infantile consumption—taking advantage of evacuations, for instance, to eat everything in the local bakery—but it can also have a critical edge, with some panels commenting on the ridiculousness of Godzilla attacking Japan when it was America that dropped the bomb, or noting the immediate commodification of this supposedly antiwar beast.

The praxis of *yukai* is essentially the body in free motion, and Sugiura's characters are defined by an excess of movement (figure 5.7). The point is not that they are moving fast or are excessively violent, but that much of their movement is often meaningless and without motivation. Sugiura's characters frequently take poses, lifting their legs and arms, creating signs with their hands that signify nothing, except perhaps that this is a Sugiura manga (figure 5.8). Even Godzilla gets in on the act (figure 5.9). Akatsuka Fujio, Japan's most inventive gag manga artist and a self-acknowledged descendant of Sugiura, inherited this use of poses especially with the "Shē" stance that

Figure 5.6 Grinning at a Japan turned into a sea of fire. Sugiura Shigeru, *Sugiura Shigeru mangakan*, vol. 3, *Shōnen SF, ijigen tsuā* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

Figure 5.7 Sugiura's body in motion: "0 ningen" (1958). Sugiura Shigeru, *Sugiura Shigeru mangakan*, vol. 3, *Shōnen SF, ijigen tsuā* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

Figure 5.8 The hand gesture: "Gojira" (1955). Sugiura Shigeru, *Sugiura Shigeru mangakan*, vol. 3, *Shōnen SF, ijigen tsuā* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

Figure 5.9 Godzilla repeats the gesture: "Ōabare Tokyo" (1955). Sugiura Shigeru, *Sugiura Shigeru mangakan*, vol. 3, *Shōnen SF, ijigen tsuā* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

Iyami started in *Osomatsu-kun*. In our network of texts, it's significant that the movie Godzilla himself assumes this pose later on in *Kaiju daisensō* (Godzilla vs. Monster Zero, 1965).

As an embodiment of *yukai*, this excess of body movement expresses the pure pleasure of kinesis and physicality, celebrating a body unfettered by significance or seriousness, if not physical laws themselves. The epitome of this bodily excess are the many ninja that Sugiura drew, whose movements extend to transforming the very shape of their bodies (figure 5.10). The monster here is not the other, but rather the ideal, the body that is deliriously destructive both because it is powerful and because it escapes the confines of everyday physical definition. It is not hard to understand the attraction *kaijū* held
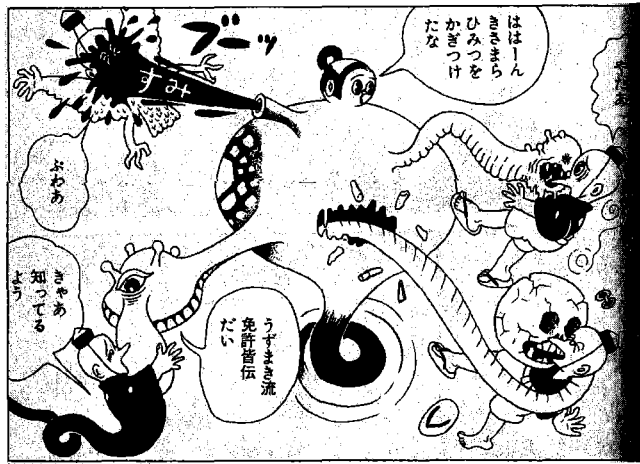
Figure 5.10 The hero's monstrous body: Sugiura Shigeru's "Doron Chibimaru" (1955–1957). *Gyagu manga kessakusen* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1988). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

for this mode of viewing. Narratively, what these ninja, and many other Sugiura characters and monsters do, is *abare*—go on a rampage, giving full expression to their body movements, no matter what destruction that might cause. *Abare* in Sugiura most often should not have a point, and so while Godzilla in "Ōabare Gojira" goes on a rampage ostensibly to revenge his younger brother's death, all the rest of the *kaijū* are destroying Tokyo merely for sport, as they themselves say.

One could argue that Sugiura sports with *Gojira* in the same way, rampaging around with the text. This interpretation of Godzilla, one that shifts into its own aesthetics, selectively reads and rewrites the text, eliminating the serious for the amusing, lifting the films out of whatever reality they had to enjoy the willful destruction of any such reality—just as his characters smile and yell out "Awesome!" (*Tende sugoi ya!*) upon seeing devastation. Chaos and disorder are the realms of pleasure, so just as Sugiura's manga rarely follow a linear narrative, often stopping the story for moments of ecstatic ruination, this reading envisions a *Gojira* in which only the scenes of battle and destruction matter, regardless of the narrative. If this sounds a lot like the late 1960s and early 1970s Godzilla films, then perhaps we can imagine some parallels, if not influences, between this mode of spectatorship and the texts themselves.

I would argue that this same form of pleasurable viewing was also used on pro-wrestling. Clearly Sugiura feels a strong attraction for pro-wrestling as *yukai*, not only turning Godzilla into a pro-wrestler, but also citing Rikidōzan in other works (figure 5.11) and even creating a character called Puroresunosuke. The narrative of pro-wrestling in Japan as elsewhere is essentially that of *abare*, as the order enforced by the referee breaks down, and the fight spills outside the ring. *Abare* was an essential element in Rikidōzan's films, as one can see in a later
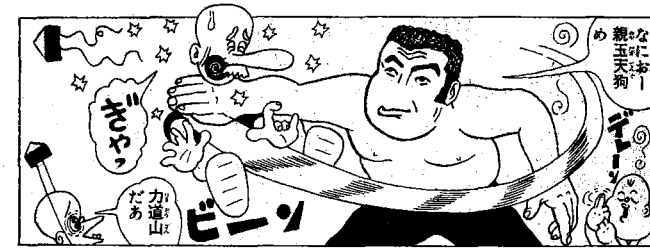
Figure 5.11 Rikidōzan fighting for the ninja: Sugiura Shigeru's "Doron Chibimaru" (1955–1957). *Gyagu manga kessakusen* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1988). © Sugiura Tsutomu.

work entitled *Okore! Rikidōzan* (Get Mad Rikidōzan!), directed by Ozawa Shigehiro and released by Tōei on October 31, 1956, especially in the scene where Rikidōzan thrashes out in a nightclub at some gangsters working for a corrupt politician. Some would argue that this fight is more serious than Sugiura, if not more realistic; Rikidōzan in almost frightening fashion does seem to go wild here, throwing furniture and people as he curses in English. As some, including the novelist and *puroresu* fan Muramatsu Tomomi, argued, pro-wrestling was a serious business and had to be watched "with dead seriousness."[10] This was in part because of the ideological function pro-wrestling was asked to play in the 1950s. The narrative that Rikidōzan offered Japanese audiences was of a Japanese wrestler pummeled by larger American wrestlers, honorably enduring fouls and illegal moves until he finally became furious and defeated his opponent with a barrage of his patented karate chops. As Yoshikuni Igarashi argues, this narrative replicated wartime propaganda stories in a postwar context, offering a suffering body that could expose the operations of the other (America) and memories of the war, as well as exorcise them through a spectacle of violence. For such an ideological narrative to be effective, it had to be taken seriously, a stance that necessarily implies believing in the authenticity of the bouts, of the violence, and of Rikidōzan's Japaneseness[11]—this despite the fact that the matches were mostly rigged and Rikidōzan was actually Korean. What becomes crucial in these accounts of seriousness and belief are the media operations of believability that try to lead spectators away from discovering the falsity of the entire endeavor: a variety of textual and extra-textual devices, ranging from sponsorship by newspaper companies to the blood on Rikidōzan's body, that promised authenticity.[12] By some accounts, the majority of Japanese did in fact believe Rikidōzan's matches were for real.

I don't want to entirely question that assertion or the reality of the media strategies to control audience reception. But I do want to note some problems. First, by seemingly conceiving of spectators as having only a binary choice between believing and not believing, this conception of pro-wrestling's seriousness could end up ignoring alternative forms of reception. Second, focusing so much on the processes of deception could imply, in Frankfurt School fashion, that the reception of popular cultural texts is largely a matter of being fooled. Unfortunately, the fact that Rikidōzan himself targeted

children as a significant audience—one continually represented in his films—only seemed to lend evidence to the sense that all those who believed in Rikidōzan's narrative were similarly childlike regardless of their actual age. But in making this argument, those who stress media efforts to make audiences believe fail to focus sufficiently on how these efforts sought to control or eliminate other forms of spectator involvement as well.

Lee Thompson describes one view of pro-wrestling as rigged (*yaocho*) and as a media scholar analyzes the media devices through which such fakery could be concealed.[13] Following Erving Goffman's frame analysis, he offers one model of wrestling as a transformation of the primary framework of fighting, applying publicly accepted rules to what originally is without rules. Pro-wrestling, he argues, then could involve a further shift, adding an adjustment that only a few know about: the fixing. The model Thompson describes represents pro-wrestling defined as an either/or system of belief, but both the sociologist Kobayashi Masayuki and the philosopher Irifuji Motoyoshi say that it is fundamentally flawed, and not because either man argues that pro-wrestling is not fixed.[14] Rather, they both point out that what this describes is rigging in, say, Olympic wrestling, not pro-wrestling, because with the former one can easily conceive of the bout without the fakery. What, however, is pro-wrestling without the fixing? It is certainly not regular wrestling because that rarely involves bloodshed or fighting outside the ring. Moreover, as Irifuji notes, pro-wrestling includes many moves such as the back breaker, piledriver, or the backdrop that simply could not be done without the cooperation of the wrestler receiving that move—without such cooperation, we'd really have some necks and backs broken. Perhaps some spectators cannot understand such facts of physiology, but to argue that is again to contend that pro-wrestling fans, as believers, relate to the sport through ignorance or self-deception. To scholars like Kobayashi and Irifuji, reception of pro-wrestling is based on the full knowledge of such cooperation.

As Irifuji argues, Thompson's model is essentially realist. Irifuji is citing philosophical realism, but we can bring this into the realm of aesthetics. To analyze pro-wrestling through a true-false binary both valorizes the true and assumes that spectators would opt for the real if they had the choice. Even if we admit that Rikidōzan's pro-wrestling is a fictional performance, it is still presumed that it must use its resources to present a convincing illusion of the real. Thus, in the fiction film *Okore! Rikidōzan*, the fight in the nightclub is represented as realistic through such devices as long shots and the sounds of objects being broken. Placing pro-wrestling in a film, however—a performance within a performance, a text within a text—threatens to render ambiguous what the real is that spectators should opt for. The danger is that by presenting this fight, which any spectator would know is part of a fictional narrative, as realistic, an ontological quandary is created when one tries to distinguish this battle first from the match in the ring that concludes the film, and second, from the bouts that millions of Japanese saw on television. Without any visible difference between the match in the film and the match in reality, or between the fight outside the ring in the film (to which

pro-wrestling often moves as part of its realist aesthetic), and the bout outside the ring (frame) of the film, all three become equally real—and equally fictional.

Tetsuwan kyojin, in part by denying a realist aesthetic, emphasizes other, nonserious enjoyments divorced from belief in the real. Obviously, Rikidōzan's body in the movie is too excessive to be real, but its constructedness is not merely a matter of fact laid out for the audience to passively see. Rather, the film encourages spectator participation in its construction. Consider a brief series of shots where Rikidōzan and Tarō jump on to a train in which the villains are traveling to Tokyo: first there is an extreme long shot (actually a process shot) showing the two running up to the edge of a cliff overlooking the train seen below; then there is a cut to a long shot low angle of the two beginning to jump; the third shot is of them landing on the roof of the train. This is a classic montage effect: their leap is not shown in a single shot; rather, the cut from the second to the third shot prompts the spectator to make the spatial and narrative connection. This might be a case that turns Andre Bazin's famous discussion of the limitations of montage on its head. Bazin asserts that Charlie Chaplin in *The Circus* is funny because we see him caught in a lion's cage in one shot. Cutting between him and the lion would, through the power of montage to create associations, be sufficient to convey the narrative situation, but it would have no impact because no one would believe the two were in the same cage.[15] Such a reality of space, however, would not work in *Tetsuwan kyojin* because it would contradict the physical incredibility found elsewhere. If Bazin faulted a montage option where the spatial relation between the lion and Charlie would only be mentally constructed, and not visibly evident in one shot, we can say that *Tetsuwan kyojin* opts for the fictional imagining of space because it did not mind acknowledging its fakery. Narratively, this might be justified by the fact that this action is the product of the imagination of a child, but that in some ways is the point. Irifuji argues that in its essence, pro-wrestling is less a transformation of a real fight than a performance that allows the complex imagination of the ultimate—and thus impossible in reality—free-for-all. Based on the firm awareness that it is not a real fight, such imagination—not the actuality of the wrestler's pain—is at the core of pro-wrestling, and this implies that pro-wrestling is fundamentally a product of the spectator's processes of reading and imagination. The narrative frame of *Tetsuwan kyojin* only underlines that.

Gojira-Minira-Gabara: Ōru kaijū daishingeki shows that the Godzilla films of the 1960s and 1970s largely pursued the same spectatorship. The shift toward *kaijū puroresu* is also an aesthetic turn away from realism in conjunction with that spectatorship. This is reflected in not only the move from black and white to color and low- to high-key lighting, but also in a shift in camera angles. The early—and especially the recent—Godzilla movies utilize lower angle shots of the monster in an effort to place spectators in the diegesis, as if they might also be under threat. Those low angles are less evident in the middle-era films as the battles become less of an incident imposing itself on

one, than a show to be watched. To borrow Andre Gaudreault's term used for early cinema, this is quite literally a case of monstration, of showing, not narrating, and spectators are encouraged to play with their imaginative reading of the scene.

These issues of style and viewership are not just confined to cinema. Sugiura's manga also offered an aesthetic that was less concerned with realism, one that pursued a different notion of time and space and of textuality itself. As Yomota Inuhiko stresses, Sugiura Shigeru picked up what postwar manga, led by Tezuka Osamu, largely abandoned.[16] In another name to add to our network, Tezuka, three years before *Gojira*, himself told a story of a monster island that, affected by fallout from nuclear tests, produced its own mutated creatures that threatened the human race. *Kitarubeki sekai*, or *Nextworld* as it is known in English, is more like the first *Gojira* in offering a serious story, one of the most narratively complex manga Tezuka ever produced.[17] It was one of the best of his efforts to legitimize the manga medium in the face of continued claims by educators and parents that it corrupted young children. This quest to give manga authority, it should be noted, was coupled with a dual-pronged strategy of consolidating narrative realism in the medium. The form of Tezuka's characters was not necessarily realistic, but in a work like *Tsumi to batsu* (*Crime and Punishment*, 1953), he famously tried, in these elongated panels depicting the murder of the pawnbroker amidst several contiguous spaces (figure 5.12), to create an integrity of space that not only lent realism to the action, but also contributed to Tezuka's fundamental project: the subordination of manga devices to narrative. Crucial to this was centering narrative in character and thus psychology: much within the frame, from the human body to the inanimate background, worked to evoke the complex emotions of the characters. As a basic principle, then, every line was narratively motivated.

This was an aesthetics that Sugiura resolutely resisted. If Tezuka aimed for a depth of space, Sugiura frequently compressed and flattened it, overlapping his characters as if they were just sheets of paper. If Tezuka aimed for the narrativization of a realistic space, Sugiura warped and played with it, inserting unmotivated movements or poses and sometimes even teasing with panel borders by having characters exceed the frame only to go behind that of another panel (figure 5.13). Exposed as a mere flat drawing, space was rendered a realm that could sometimes bear little rhyme or reason. This overt textuality proliferated beyond the frame of Sugiura's manga as he copiously kept scrapbooks, using them to continuously quote, alter, and adapt many popular cultural images and icons. It was his surrealism that helped prompt a revival in interest in Sugiura in the 1970s and 1980s among the alternative manga press. In certain ways, his "childish" manga had significant links with the avant-garde.[18]

*   *   *

If these texts and their viewers are so playful, what then happens to textual narrations of the nation, such as those offered by Rikidōzan? What is clear is
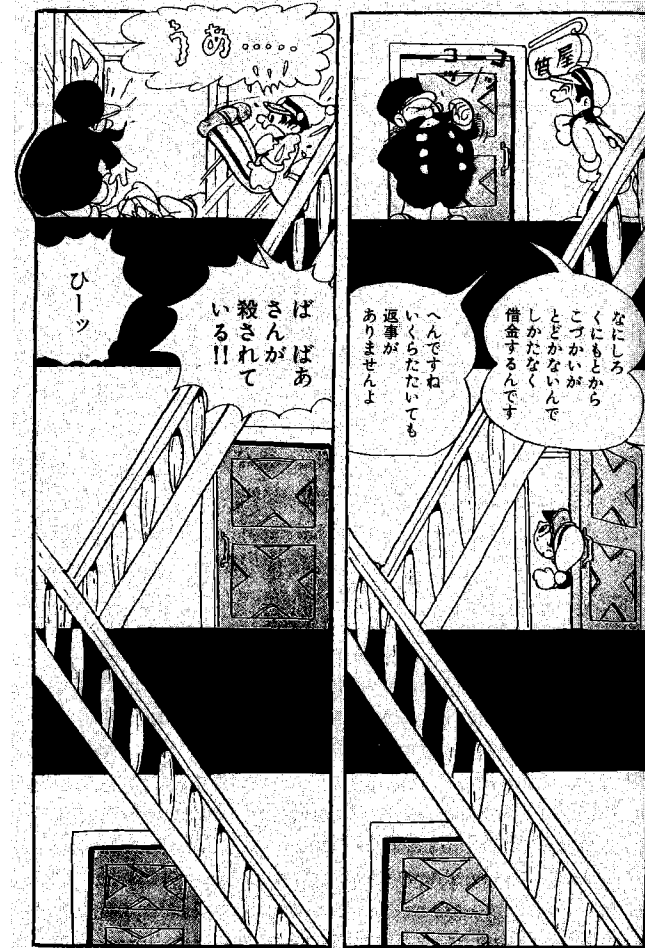
Figure 5.12   Tezuka's spatiallyl integral, narratively motivated manga. Tezuka Osamu, *Tsumi to batsu* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1955). © Tezuka Productions.

that these monstrous stories do complicate any self-evident national division of self and other. As Thompson and others have argued, media discourse on Rikidōzan usually distinguished between his humanity, founded in a strong sense of right and justice, and the monstrous, animal-like foreign wrestlers. As we have seen, however, Rikidōzan in *Tetsuwan kyojin* was also Godzilla, an atomic beast invading Japan from the sea possessing distinct *animal* associations. Igarashi has already noted Rikidōzan's hybrid status, defending Japan, but through American-style wrestling that rejected traditional Japanese martial arts. Rikidōzan as Godzilla had a strong American facet to his persona—recall how he cursed in English as he beat up the gang in *Okore! Rikidōzan*. Igarashi interestingly argues that such hybridity could actually work to suture conflicting terms in postwar memory, allowing for
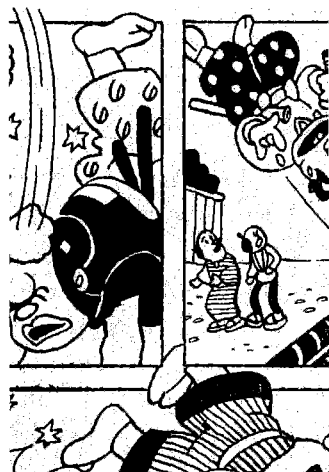
Figure 5.13 Feet in and out and behind the frame: Sugiura Shigeru's "Sarutobi Sasuke" (1954–1955). *Natsukashi no hīrō manga daizenshū* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1987), © Sugiura Tsutomu.

consolidation of the nation. This aligns with the work of Kang Sang-Jung, Jennifer Robertson, and others, who argue that the modern Japanese national body (*kokutai*) is less exclusionary than exhibiting a flexibility of borders that can efficiently absorb others, precisely because the boundaries between self and other are so vague.[19]

It is my argument that this sutured national body could often be knowingly fictional. As Michael Raine has argued, the late 1950s exhibited a fascination with the body as a new basis for emerging forms of cultural identity.[20] We can cite sumō and pro-wrestling as two major factors in this focus on the body, and certainly pleasure in viewing powerful flesh—even if it was just a rubber suit—helps explain the popularity of Godzilla. But one of the main bodies Raine discusses is that of Ishihara Yujirō, brother of Shintarō and arguably the most important male star in the postwar. With long legs—and Japanese often lamented their short legs at the time—his body represented a hope for a new subjectivity founded in physicality. Such a body found a home generically in Nikkatsu Action, which in the years around 1960 offered the imagination of a free, roaming body, an individual agent beholden to no one. The space it roamed, however, was *mukokuseki*, nationless, as it seemed that this new free body could only exist as long as this was not Japan or, more precisely, was a fictional Japan.[21] It is significant that subsequent to this, the two major icons of the nation in Japanese film of the 1960s and 1970s were Tōei's chivalric yakuza and Shōchiku's Tora-san, both outsiders, and both impossible anachronisms.

Especially with our reservations against realism, we can argue that the nationality of Rikidōzan—or of Godzilla, for that matter—was consumed in part because it was fictional. Following Kinoshita Naoyuki's argument that

postwar Japan saw a revival in a culture that could enjoy the fake as the fake, after a period in which modern Japanese culture after the Sino-Japanese war no longer allowed such pleasures, Kawamura Taku argues both that the enjoyment of Rikidōzan was based on a cognizance of his constructed performance, and that his status as epitomizing ideal Japaneseness was thus only possible through the fictionality of his nationality.[22] Intense audience interest in Rikidōzan's narrative was fully evident by all accounts, but even if in some cases this involved serious expressions of belief, it was equally likely that this was pleasurable involvement in what was a good story brought to physical presence. If we are to think about the reception of narrations of the nation, we must consider aesthetic models of their narration—realist or not— and how much the suspension of disbelief allows the vicarious experience of the nation without necessarily believing or being interpellated by it.

Perhaps Sugiura can offer us an extreme test case of a virtually carniva-lesque disregard for the seriousness of nationality, overturning the national body with elastic ninja monsters that gleefully ignore the boundaries between bodies, if not self and other. I would argue that this active, playful, and self-consciously imaginative spectatorship/aesthetic has a long lineage in Japanese cinema, from Onoe Matsunosuke's 1910s period films to Itō Daisuke's wild camera movements in the late silent period, from Hayafusa Hideto's action films for Daito in the 1930s through to Tōei 1950s *jidaigaki* like the three-part *Shin shokoku monogatari: Fuefuki dōji* (New Tales of the Realm: The Boy with the Flute, dir. Hagiwara Ryō, 1954). Most have, in one form or another, suffered the appellation "childish" or "juvenile" by the arbiters of taste. Given that it was Tōei that ruled the box office during the 1950s, the so-called golden age of Japanese cinema, one can claim that this mode of cinematic experience presented a significant, historical force alongside the critically approved humanist realism of a Kurosawa or a Mizoguchi, but one subject to more discursive restrictions. It is precisely the chaotic nature of this reception that earned the ire of more Fordist concep-tions of cinema and spectatorship that especially used the realist model to confine reception to the dutiful understanding of the national truth. Realism has been the dominant discourse on film since the 1910s in both criticism and scholarship, and we should not forget that it has been the main reason Rikidōzan and Godzilla—especially the middle-era Godzilla films—have been second-rung cinematic citizens.

Perhaps because of this, the free body often gets contained. Sugiura's rampaging monsters are finally tamed and confined to a zoo-like structure at the end of "Ōabare Tokyo." And Tarō in *Tetsuwan kyojin* has a special ray-like device for eradicating radioactivity, given by the scientist, which he uses on the caveman. The threat of Rikidōzan the Godzilla—if not Rikidōzan the Korean—is removed and the loin-clothed man at the beginning is gradually transformed into a civilized Japanese, shaved, wearing a suit, and able to understand language. This is one of the charges brought against the late 1960s Godzilla: that it was being assimilated into the national fold by becom-ing banal. We should note, however, that unlike the Godzilla films, Rikidōzan

here, in a sense, is becoming more realistic. It can more often be realism than fantasy that serves to contain anarchic modes of alternative spectatorship, as much as it can promise social significance. We, as scholars, must be careful of where our spectatorship places us in the continuing struggle over control of the meaning of the text. We should be wary of which rays our methodological devices project, less we turn our *kaijū* into manageable objects and miss out on the deliriously unstable pleasure of wandering through the variety of intertexts and wrestling with monsters.

NOTES

This essay was first presented at "Global Fantasies: Godzilla in World Culture," held at Columbia University in December 2004. I would like to thank the organizers and the other participants for their support and suggestions.

1. Stuart Galbraith IV, *Monsters Are Attacking Tokyo!* (Venice, CA: Feral House, 1998), p. 32.
2. Satō Kenji, *Gojira to Yamato to bokura no minshū shugi* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1992), p. 8.
3. William M. Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 21.
4. Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 121.
5. Sugiura is one of Japan's unique manga artists. Trained as a painter but eventually finding work under Tagawa Suihō (*Norakuro*) in the 1930s, his humorously playful work into the 1950s, including the hit *Sarutobi Sasuke*, seemed to be "for children," as opposed to either the more serious themes of Tezuka Osamu or the adult violence and sex of *gekiga*.
6. For more on how this movement built up steam, see James Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).
7. See, for instance, Gonda Yasunosuke, *Minshū goraku mondai*, in *Gonda Yasunosuke chosakushu*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Bunwa Shobō, 1974).
8. Robert Sklar has found similar discourses in the United States. See his *Movie-Made America* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 122–140.
9. Richard deCordova, "Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees," *Camera Obscura* 23 (May 1990), p. 94.
10. Muramatsu Tomomi, *Watakushi puroresu no mikata desu* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994), quoted in Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, p. 122.
11. This is Lee Thompson's argument in "Rikidōzan to 'Nihonjin' no teiji," in *Rikidōzan to Nihonjin*, ed. Okamura Masashi (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2002), pp. 69–98.
12. See Lee Thompson, "Puroresu no furemu bunseki," in *Nihon puroresu-gaku sengen*, ed. Okamura Masashi (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 1991), pp. 27–60; and Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, pp. 128–129.
13. Thompson, "Puroresu no furemu bunseki."
14. See Irifuji Motoyoshi, " 'Hontō no honmono' no mondai toshite no puroresu," and Kobayashi Masayuki, "Puroresu shakaigaku e no shōtai," both printed in *Puroresu*, a special issue of *Gendai Shisō* 30:3 (February 2002).

15. Andre Bazin, "The Virtues and Limitations of Montage," in *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 41–52.
16. Yomota Inuhiko, "Kodomotachi no Rabure," in *Sugiura Shigeru, nanjara hoi no sekai ten*, ed. Tomita Tomoko (Mitaka: Mitaka-shi Bijutsu Gyarari, 2002), pp. 9–19.
17. For an analysis of this and other Tezuka manga, see Natsume Fusanosuke, *Tezuka Osamu no bōken* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1998).
18. One should note that Sakaki Maki, one of the most artistically radical manga artists of the 1960s, completely dissecting manga into its constituent elements of line and panels, eventually began illustrating children's books in a style that consciously cites Sugiura.
19. See Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), and Kang Sang-Jung, *Nashonarizumu* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001).
20. Michael Raine, "Ishihara Yujirō: Youth, Celebrity, and the Male Body in late-1950s Japan," in *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema*, ed. Dennis Washburn and Carole Cavanaugh (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 202–225.
21. For more on Nikkatsu Action, see Watanabe Takenobu, *Nikkatsu akushon no karei na sekai* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1981–1982).
22. Kawamura Taku, "Enjirareta 'Rikidōzan,' enjirareta 'Nihonjin,' " in *Rikidōzan to Nihonjin*, ed. Okamura Masashi (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2002), pp. 37–68. Kawamura refers to Kinoshita Naoyuki's *Yo no tochū kara kakusarete iru koto* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2002).