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Momotaro Syndrome or the Politics of War in Japanese Animation: From Momotaro to Grave of Fireflies

As many post-war critics said, the Japanese war film did not ask "why should we fight?" but "how should we fight?" The image of "the other" or "the enemy" is almost absent. In addition, as Taihei Imamura (film critic) lamented, most of all film technology for the ideological weapon were dependent on US at that time. However, looking back the war-films produced in Japan, pre-war black & white shorts, post-war success colour features by Toei Animation Studio, and Studio Ghibli, we can see how the reality on war and representing " the other" has changed in relation to Asia and US. In this paper, I will examine the (dis)continuity on representing national boarder, comparing pre-war Momotaro's Sea Eagle (Seo Mitsuyo,1943) and Momotaro: Umi no Shinpei (Seo Mitsuyo,1945) with post-war animation, Grave of Fireflies (Takahata Isao, 1988).