INSIDE THE BOY INSIDE THE ROBOT: *MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM*

AND INTERIORITY

by

JOHN D. MOORE

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Student: John D. Moore

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Alisa Freedman	Chair
Glynne Walley	Member

and

Sara D. Hodges	Interim Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

John D. Moore

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Mobile Suit Gundam (1979-1980) is an iconic series in the genre of
television anime featuring giant fighting robots, embedded in a system of
conventions developed across decades of media aimed at boys that emphasizes
action and combat. In this thesis, I argue that *Gundam* foregrounds the interiority
of its main character Amuro, challenging conventions governing the boy
protagonist. Using Peter Verstraten's principles of film narratology and Thomas
Lamarre's theory of limited animation, I find in *Gundam*'s narrative strategies
sophisticated techniques developed to portray his inner life. These techniques of
interiority generate ironic tensions with the traditionally exterior orientation of
combat narratives. These tensions connect to a larger discourse of Japanese
postwar media built into the very lines that draw characters and robots, leading
Gundam to a spectacular confrontation with its own genre's legacy of
mechaphilia.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: John D. Moore

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah
Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan
Salt Lake Community College, Salt Lake City, Utah
Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, East Asian Languages and Literature, 2017, University of
Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Japanese Language & Literature and Asian Studies, 2014,
University of Utah
Associate of Science, General Studies, 2011, Salt Lake Community College

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Japanese Animation
Japanese Popular Culture
Modern Japanese Literature

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Teaching Assistant, Department of East Asian Languages & Literatures,
University of Oregon, Eugene, 2014-2017

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Center for Asian and Pacific Studies Small Professional Grant,
Presentation of "Documentary Animation and Referentiality in
Fukushima Gainax's *Letters to the Future*" at the 2016 Association of
Japanese Literary Studies Conference, University of Oregon, 2016

Foreign Languages Area Studies Fellowship (summer), University of
    Oregon, 2015

Foreign Languages Area Studies Fellowship (academic year), University
    of Oregon, 2014-2015

Summa cum laude, University of Utah, 2014

Foreign Languages Area Studies Fellowship (academic year), University
    of Utah, 2012-2013

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, University of Utah, 2012

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nearly four decades since its inception, the *Gundam* franchise remains a visible and influential force in popular culture, particularly in its country of origin, Japan. At the foundation of this media behemoth is *Mobile Suit Gundam* (*Kidō senshi gandamu*), a television anime series produced by the animation studio Nippon Sunrise that originally aired forty-three episodes in Japan over the course of ten months between 1979 and 1980. Central to this series is its titular "mobile suit" (*mobiru sūtsu*), the Gundam, a, hulking humanoid machine piloted by a human for combat in a space-set civil war. Seated in the cockpit—the very heart of the machine, as it were—of this towering titan of metal limbs, expressionless yellow eyes, and deadly armaments, is a boy. This boy with a voice that quivers and large, black eyes that shimmer, is the protagonist of *Mobile Suit Gundam*. He is Amuro Ray, a fifteen-year-old, Earth-born resident of the near future space colony Side 7, and it is what lies in his heart that is the subject of this thesis.

In this thesis, I argue that *Gundam* foregrounds the interiority of its main character Amuro, challenging conventions governing the boy protagonist. I find in *Gundam*'s narrative strategies a sophisticated set of techniques employed to portray Amuro's inner life. This foregrounding of Amuro's interiority critically intervenes in the traditions of its genre and even the industrial structures that make the genre possible. In order to understand *Gundam*'s intervention, it will be

1

necessary to ground the series in its generic context, its gendered media categorization, and the concept of interiority as it pertains to *Gundam*.

The Genre of Robot Anime

Gundam debuted in 1979 as the newest production by the animation studio Nippon Sunrise, which had by that point established itself as a leading producer of original series in the genre of robot anime, often with two titles on the air at the same time. While the genre has its roots in the early 1960s, the early 1970s experienced a "giant robot anime boom," kicked off by 1972's *Mazinger Z (Majingā zetto*, 1972-1974*)* and characterized by a flurry of television anime series (Hikawa 2013, 11). The most significant identifying characteristic of a robot anime is the presence of a gigantic humanoid mechanical figure that is used in combat and either controlled or piloted by humans. The centrality of this figure speaks to an inherent mechaphilia in the genre,   that is "a variety of technophilia directed toward the mechanical" (Lamarre 2009, 212) and associated with stereotypes about the interests of boys as well as with militarism.

It is popularly understood that *Gundam* signaled a bifurcation of the robot anime genre into two separate subgenres: "super robot" (*sūpā robotto*) and "real robot" (*riaru robotto*), most prominently distinguishable by the characterization of their central robots (Hikawa 2013, 26). While super robots are typically piloted or controlled by humans, the robots themselves are presented as nearly invincible dispensers of justice—and even portrayed as heroes equivalent to or surpassing

the heroism of their human pilots.[1] Real robots, on the other hand, are presented more as machines of war: massively powerful, but destructible and morally neutral tools. *Gundam* is commonly referred to as the first "real robot" series (Hikawa 2013, 29).

Despite its immense impact and decades of fame, *Gundam* was not initially terribly popular, and was even cancelled early. The original series, initially intended to complete a full-year order of fifty-two episodes for its Saturday evening timeslot, had its episode order reduced by nine, ending its planned run early by two months, forcing the creative staff to rework the ending of the series hastily; it failed both to attract significant viewership and to sell a satisfying number of toys for its primary sponsor, Clover (Condry 2013, 124-125). However, the series performed much better in weekday re-airings beginning in February and November of 1980, attracting audiences much larger than the initial airing (Inomata 170-171). Combined with new plastic model kits that sold beyond all expectations and a trilogy of film compilations reworking material from the television anime series released in 1980 and 1981, there was a *Gundam* boom (*gandamu būmu*) in the early 1980s (Hikawa 2013, 36).[2] From this, the real robot genre quickly and consciously expanded with new productions; a flurry of real

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[1] Indeed, many of the theme songs for these series explicitly figure the robot as much more than machine. For example, in *Gigantor,* the titular robot is referred to as an "ally of justice" (*seigi no mikata*), while in *Invincible Steel Man Zambot 3* figures its robot as a "companion" (*nakama*).

[2] The series has gone on to spawn numerous official successors, beginning with 1985's direct sequel *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam* (*Kidō senshi zēta gandamu)* and leading to more sequel series and films, television and OVA (original video animation) series set in alternate universes, and more varieties of other types of media and merchandise than I could hope to recount here.

robot anime series followed, beginning in the autumn of 1981—just over a year

after *Gundam* ceased its initial broadcast—when Sunrise itself debuted *Fang of the*

Sun Dougram (*Taiyō no ha daguramu*), the first series specifically planned as a real

robot genre entry by its producers (Hikawa 2013, 29).

While its impact and influence attest to *Gundam*'s cultural significance,

this thesis focuses on the first series itself. Thus, the most urgent generic

considerations are the robot anime that preceded it. The history of the robot

anime genre locates it in a broader media and generic context, classified as *shōnen*.

Shōnen Media and the *Shōnen*

Throughout *Gundam*, Amuro is referred to as a "*shōnen*," a Japanese term

that, roughly translated, means "boy." He is called a *shōnen* by allies, enemies,

and a nameless voiceover narrator. *Shōnen* is not merely what Amuro is, though.

The term also refers to an industrial and cultural practice of segregating media

by target demographics, which folds *Gundam* into a broader generic discourse of

shōnen media—media aimed at boys. The term *shōnen* conjures up its female

counterpart, *shōjo*, or "girl." This demarcation along gender lines dates back to

Japanese magazines of the 1930s containing fiction, essays, and manga, targeting

young readers at the same time "'adolescence' as a specific stage in human

development was first recognized and exploited" (Orbaugh 2003, 207). The

development of youth-oriented media in Japan is such that the magazines of the

1930s led to postwar magazines that followed the same basic patterns, eventually

giving rise to a *shōnen-shōjo* split that continues to organize the production,

consumption, and reception of writing, manga, and anime even up to today.

Thomas Lamarre (2009) sagely warns against the tendency among some commentators "to capitulate to marketing categories such as *shōnen* and *shōjo*, to act as if fundamental differences between boys and girls organized the entire field of manga, and could thus serve as a satisfactory framework for understanding manga" (290). I highlight such divisions here not to reinforce the essentialist assumptions that Lamarre criticizes, but rather to underscore the conventional assumptions that inform texts, including *Gundam*. To grasp what is at stake in these categories, it is instructive to look at how the producers conceive of them. The production of *shōnen* and *shōjo* in this context is predicated on longstanding stereotypes of gendered desires. In interviews with anthropologist Jennifer Prough (2011), editors of *shōjo* manga magazines typically define *shōnen* manga in opposition to their own genre, suggesting that while "boys like adventure and violence" or "fast-paced action," "girls like plots driven by human relations and romance" with an emphasis on "interiority, intimacy, and emotions" (2011, 3). Of major concern is the emotional experience of human relationships (*ningen kankei*) (2-3). While Prough's (2011) fieldwork was done in the early 2000s, Sharalyn Orbaugh (2003) finds analogous principles organizing the magazines of the 1930s: "Unlike girls, boys and young men were expected to be preparing for their eventual leadership roles in society. The narratives in *shōnen manga* therefore featured heroism, practicality, and adventure rather than the dreamy, nonteleological narratives of *shōjo* fiction" (204); given the political

atmosphere of the Japanese state in the 1930s, these interests overlap with the militarism and nationalism of the era. *Shōjo* texts are thus conventionally characterized by an inward orientation, with a heavy emphasis on psychological and emotional interiority. *Shōnen* texts are, conversely, characterized by an outward orientation, concerned with exteriorities such as fighting, adventure, and material success. In Chapter II, I will return to issues of genre situating *Gundam* in its *shōnen* and robot anime discourse and analyzing its critical stance on genre conventions, particularly in regards to the *shōnen* protagonist.

Interiority

The *shōnen* protagonist Amuro is the character whose interiority *Gundam*'s narrative is most interested in representing. Techniques of interiority are techniques of representation, and they narrate the internal conflicts and feelings of characters. The approach to interiority exhibited in *Gundam* echoes developments in other forms across modern media, including in its Japanese context. Literary scholars such as Karatani Kōjin (1993) have observed that the origins of modern Japanese literature in the Meiji Period (1868-1912) are located in an ideology and language that led to the "discovery" of interiority (61). In the early 1970s, *shōjo* manga transformatively developed visual and narrative techniques for exploring themes of characters' interiority, which critic Ōtsuka Eiji has paralleled to the innovations in Meiji Period fiction (Prough 2011, 2-3). *Gundam*'s techniques, as I will explore later, borrow from or converge with some of what is found in these *shōjo* texts. I raise these as parallels not to flatten these

6

innovations in different media and genres but to highlight how transformative and important such innovations are in medium and generic contexts.

By highlighting *Gundam*'s interest in interiority, I do not mean to marginalize or dismiss that significant portion of its story occupied by combat sequences and acts of violence, but wish to highlight that the coexistence of an external battle scenario complements and ironically contrasts with the interest in the *shōnen* protagonist's interiority. This contrast between the interior and exterior generates tensions that I unpack throughout the thesis.

Further, it is important to note that while I find this in *Gundam*, I do not mean to insinuate there are not earlier developments that foreshadow, echo, or even might have inspired what came later in *Gundam*. To say that *Gundam*'s foregrounding of interiority with its representational narrative strategies is transformative for the genre is not to say that robot or *shōnen* anime prior to it lacked any concept of characters' inner lives. Instead, my position is that *Gundam,* in narrating its particular story, represents an innovative and transformative development in its local generic context. It is a rich text that demands the attentive analysis I aim to pay it.

Methodology

My argument is supported by close, attentive readings across the forty-three episodes of the series by the lenses of film and media theory. Specifically, I draw on the theory of film narratology explored by Peter Verstraten (2009), which builds on the work of literary theorists Gérard Genette (1980) and Mieke

7

Bal (1985). While *Gundam* is not cinema, I find the narratological principles set out by Verstraten for narrative film are entirely compatible with television anime, both being narrative screen media with simultaneously running visual and auditive tracks. Anime is an audiovisual medium, but as in Verstraten's (2009) own study, I primarily concern myself with the visual aspects of narration. Under this lens, I illuminate *Gundam*'s foregrounding of interiority through narrative strategies. This is the primary focus of Chapter III.

The interior orientation of the themes of Amuro's inner life and the exterior orientation of the mechaphilia of the robots and the battle narrative generate ironic tensions that are expressed in the drawn lines of animation. These tensions also culminate in the introduction late in the series' narrative of the Newtype, a figure which is associated with a special visual flourish I term the "Newtype effect." In Chapter IV, I turn toward a close reading of the animation itself, relying on the theoretical work of Lamarre (2009; 2011), Ōtsuka (2008; 2013), and Sergei Eisenstein (2011) to theorize the cartoon line. Lamarre and Ōtsuka see in postwar manga and anime a discourse of cartoon lines that echoes the thematic tensions in *Gundam*, pitting so-called plastic animated characters against the mechaphilia of the scientific realism that draws machines of war. It is in this discourse that *Gundam* intervenes.

A Sketch of *Gundam*'s Narrative

It is important to read *Gundam* in its proper generic and cultural context. Further, for the discussion that follows, it is important to understand *Gudam*

8

within its own narrative context. Here I sketch a brief outline of the first thirty or so episodes of the series. More detail will be provided as necessary for specific portions of my analysis, including the ending, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter IV.

Gundam begins in the year 0079 in the calendar system Universal Century, which began with the migration of humans to new space colonies in orbit around the Earth. At the beginning of 0079, a colony known as Side 3—now known as the Principality of Zeon –declared its independence, initiating a civil war with the Earth Federation, the unified government organization presiding over both Earth and the colonies. The first six months of the conflict have been devastating, with each side losing half its population. Despite Zeon's small size, it has waged a competitive battle largely thanks to its mobile suit technology. The Gundam is the first war-ready mobile suit the Federation develops, masterminded by Amuro's father Tem. In Episode 1, the Gundam, is brought to the colony Side 7, where Amuro lives, for testing. When the colony is attacked by Zeon forces, Amuro boards the Gundam and pilots it to thwart the damage by Zeon mobile suits, ultimately escaping the colony with a group of other civilians on the experimental Federation spacecraft White Base. The young civilians—all teenagers—use this new military technology as they descend to Earth, become officially inducted into the Earth Federation military, and return to space for escalating battles that see the war's end. From his first battle, Amuro initiates a rivalry with Commander Char Aznable, the crimson-clad ace pilot of Zeon. Char

is quietly carrying out a plot of revenge against the ruling Zabi family, taking advantage of his esteemed position to arrange the deaths of its members. Throughout their journeys on space and Earth, Amuro and the White Base crew are pursued by Char.

Analyzing *Gundam*

Gundam has been the subject of much critical and fan writing around the world, including anime historian and critic Hikawa Ryūsuke's (2002) book-length analysis of the series' first seven episodes, Suzuki Doitsu's (2003) commentary on the parallels between *Gundam*'s war and World War II, and countless essays in academic and fan publications. Ōtsuka (2010), Marc Steinberg (2012), Ian Condry (2013), and Rayna Denison (2015) have all highlighted aspects of *Gundam*'s contributions to genre and industry, and Condry (2013, 124) has noted that *Gundam*'s move toward realism is both mechanical and narrative, pointing to the complexities of its characters' relationships as developed over a long serialization. William Ashbaugh (2010), a historian of postwar Japan and not a media scholar or anthropologist like the above-mentioned scholars, has contributed the most significant study of *Gundam*'s themes in English to date in a chapter contrasting the first compilation film adapted from the series, *Mobile Suit Gundam I* (1981), with the first *Space Battleship Yamato* film (*Uchū senkan yamato*, 1977), reading the former as a pacifist reaction to the latter's ideology of Japanese war memory and nationalistic militarism. Ashbaugh's thematic work on the military allegory of *Gundam*'s war narrative is a vital contribution. *Gundam*'s

engagement with war, peace, and history is an important theme and I agree with Ashbaugh's analysis. Indeed, my focus on the themes of interiority in *Gundam* enhances the themes of war's cruelties identified by Ashbaugh. *Gundam* recovers the inner life of the young soldier in combat, and perhaps hopes to recover the soldier from combat.

In this thesis, I situate my reading of *Gundam* in its intertextual context and specifically in a robot anime genre that, up to the point of *Gundam*'s debut, had been decidedly marked by an overriding interest in exterior themes: the thrills of robots and combat. While these still make up a great deal of *Gundam*'s story, I argue that by means of a sophisticated set of narrative and visual techniques, it foregrounds the interiority of its protagonist. For *Gundam*, the conflicts within Amuro become as urgent as those outside him, leading to a rethinking of the very figure of the boy protagonist in the robot and in the robot anime text.

CHAPTER II

ROBOT ANIME AND *MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM*

In this chapter, I argue that *Gundam* engages critically with the set of generic conventions developed by the body of genre texts that preceded it. *Gundam*'s interventions in the robot anime genre and the *shōnen* protagonist are situated in a media and generic discourse that spans the postwar era of Japanese entertainment media. The system of conventions that make up the robot anime genre also touches the broader system of the *shōnen* genre, as robot anime has its roots in *shōnen* manga. To understand the particular interventions *Gundam* makes, it is necessary to understand the historical process of the robot anime genre that this series responds to. Throughout, I concentrate on the figure in the center of it all, the *shōnen* protagonist who controls the robot in each series. It is my contention that the rethinking of the *shōnen* protagonist is vital to *Gundam*'s relationship to its genre and a key to its transformative aspects. Amuro's characterization and motivations distinguish him from the conventional robot anime *shōnen* protagonist. In order to support this reading of Amuro, it is necessary to place him in his proper context, so here I sketch a brief the history of medium and genre.

The development of the *shōnen* protagonist occurs alongside the development of the genre. *Gundam* takes up and plays with the genre conventions of not only the *shōnen* protagonist, but also his world, the characters around him, and the structure of the narrative he is folded into. The first half of

this chapter will trace this development of genre. The latter part of this chapter takes up some of these major generic conventions, including the place of the patriarchal figure and the systems of verisimilitude that put the "real" in real robot.

Reading Genre

In order to work through how *Gundam* engages critically with its genre, it is necessary to understand how genre functions. Stephen Neale (2003), a film scholar and one of the most influential theorists in the field of film genre studies, puts forward a model of genre as process that goes beyond merely genre film texts.[3] The process of genre, for Neale (2003), consists of texts, a system of expectations forged by experiences of these texts, and relays between producers and consumers (161). That is, the process of genre develops a repertoire of conventions available to the genre text, a system of expectations on the part of the viewing audience based on the collective experience of previous genre texts, and an industrial feedback loop that shapes the production and presentation of new genre texts in response to audience reception. These systems of expectation help render genre texts "intelligible and, therefore, explicable" (Neale 2003, 161). Neale (2003) takes issue with analyses of genre that suggest genre texts merely rehearse established conventions, fulfilling a sort of ritual function, as in John Cawelti's analysis of the American western novel which valorizes a small

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[3] While Neale specifically theorizes genre in the context of film, I find no challenge in applying his theories to television anime series. Indeed, Neale himself works transmedially, evaluating and integrating the work of literary scholars like John Cawelti and Tzvetan Todorov.

handful of genre-defining texts and writes off their genre-mates as rote exercises,
however cathartic (178-179). Instead, he contends that active production in a
genre has a great deal of creative potential, since "each new genre film tends to
extend this repertoire [of conventions for its particular genre], either by adding a
new element or transgressing one of the old ones. . . the elements and
conventions of a genre are always *in* play rather than being simply *re*played"
(Neale 2003, 171). In selectively and strategically deploying certain conventions,
the new genre text thus reserves the capacity to rethink and comment critically
on the set of generic conventions laid out by its predecessors. Too, the
transgression and blending that occurs as genres expand through new textual
production are not necessarily neutral or for the sheer sake of novelty, but rather
retain the capacity for a contextual reflection on and critique of generic traditions.

Under this model, we can see how *Gundam* interacts with the repertoire of
conventions belonging to the robot anime genre. It must be read historically and
intertextually. Even while *Gundam* arguably signals the birth of a new
subgenre—the real robot—its production is dependent on a decades-long process
of genre production, a cultivation of audience expectations, and planning by
producers and sponsors. When *Gundam* is approached as a text in the genre of
robot anime, it can be seen to participate in an entire system founded upon a
history of texts and experiences of viewing those texts. And when this genre is
read historically, its position as a subgenre of *shōnen* anime is revealed and the
system of expectations is broadened further.

For the purposes of sketching a history of robot anime, I will primarily focus on three of *Gundam*'s generic predecessors, *Gigantor (Tetsujin ni-jū-hachi-gō, 1963-1966)*, *Mazinger Z*, and *Invincible Superman Zambot 3 (Muteki chōjin zanbotto surī, 1977-1978)*, interweaving with them an inquiry into the robot anime protagonist character in particular. *Gigantor* is both the very first anime of its kind and a vital link to the genre's origins in *shōnen* manga; I connect it to popular conventions of the *shōnen* protagonist. *Mazinger Z* is the second robot anime series, and through it s immense popularity and blending with other *shōnen* genres built on conventions established by *Gigantor*, provides a reserve of conventions later put into play by its successors. Coming a few years later, *Zambot 3* is one of these successors and is a demonstration of a critical implementation of robot anime conventions, without taking the steps toward interiority that *Gundam* would take—under the same director and character designer—two years later.

Robot Anime as *Shōnen* Anime

Gigantor is the very first robot anime and is nearly as old as television anime itself, debuting later in the same year as Tezuka Osamu's immensely popular and massively influential *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu*, 1963-1966), the first half-hour animated series created in Japan for domestic consumption. *Gigantor,* like *Astro Boy* and most of the titles in its 1963 cohort, was an adaptation of a long-running *shōnen* story contemporarily running in a *shōnen* magazine. The manga series of the same title, written by Yokoyama Mitsuteru,

had begun its serialization in 1956 in the magazine *Shōnen* (Yokoyama 1996, 252).[4] The next robot anime series, *Mazinger Z*, would not come for nearly a decade, so *Gigantor* is somewhat distant from the genre that would emerge. The robot itself, Gigantor, is operated by a ten-year-old boy detective named Kaneda Shōtarō via remote control. This earliest of giant robots in manga and anime looks different from its generic successors, too: only a few times taller than an average human, Gigantor has eyes containing pupils, and its head's design is reminiscent of a European knight's helmet. However, it is recognized as "the ancestor of all giant robot anime shows" (Hikawa 2013, 6), and the conventions in the genre's repertoire that are initiated here, alongside the invention of television anime, would evolve along with the process of genre development.

Gigantor's origins are in the pages of *shōnen* manga magazines and so, then, are those of the robot anime genre. Neale writes that many film genres "either originated in forms and institutions of entertainment other than the cinema or were (and are) circulated additionally by them" (Neale 2003, 176). Such is the case with not just robot anime, but the whole of television anime; most of the series in the first year of Japanese television anime were adapted from a narrative style of *shōnen* manga known as story manga. The story manga form built on the "longer manga stories that emerged in the 1930s, linking shorter manga formats and the dynamic narrative styles of novels" (Prough 2011, 34). Story manga,

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[4] Yokoyama wrote another giant robot manga, *Giant Robo*, featuring another evil-thwarting giant robot controlled remotely by a shōnen protagonist, though this was not adapted into an anime series until the early 1990s (Clements and McCarthy 2015, 298).

including *Astro Boy* and *Gigantor*, were first serialized in the sorts of *shōnen* magazines described in the introduction, and *shōjo* story manga followed.

Shōnen and *shōjo* are marketing terminology for publishing categories putatively aimed at different demographics, but effectively they produce *shōnen* and *shōjo* as genres themselves. As Fujiki Hideaki (2013) notes in his discussion of Tezuka's *seinen* (aimed at young men) manga, the "mode of address does not necessarily conform to the mode of reception," so that such a publishing and marketing category as *shōnen* or *shōjo* "constructs an implied readership," regardless of what audiences or individuals ultimately consume it (196). This is part of the producer-consumer relay described by Neale and an important part of the genre process. Thus, these modes of address form a system of generic expectations. Even though the settings and other types of narrative content of the series within the pages of a magazine may vary significantly from title to title, each title worked to establish the generic quality of the individual magazine and the entire publishing category—*shōnen* or *shōjo*.

Notably, *shōnen* manga, despite its gendering as male, has historically been read and consumed much more broadly and considered more mainstream than its *shōjo* counterpart. This perhaps accounts for the preponderance of early anime series being *shōnen* titles. Deborah Shamoon (2012) notes that while *shōnen* manga enjoyed a wider readership, *shōjo* manga "was allowed to develop in relative obscurity," leading to the creative flourishing and aesthetic experimentation that would define *shōjo* manga of the early 1970s (99). Anime

17

may lack such explicit genre markers in its packaging as manga's publishing

venues provide, but by means of generic genealogies consisting of narrative and

aesthetic conventions, texts such as *Gundam* can be approached with the system

of expectations developed by the *shōnen* genre.

Shōnen **Protagonists**

Among the conventions in the *shōnen* genre's repertoire is the

characterization of the *shōnen* protagonist. Protagonists of *shōnen* manga and

anime—especially prior to the 1990s—have overwhelmingly been male

(Orbaugh 2003, 213).[5] These protagonists tend to be boys or young men,

mirroring the target demographic, offering the intended reader a character

readily prepared for him to identify with. This was pronouncedly the case in the

1960s and—the period I am presently concerned with—the 1970s. *Shōnen* manga

and anime of the period tend to be "driven by plot"—an exterior orientation—

rather than being driven by the inner, emotional lives of characters as in

contemporary *shōjo* manga (Orbaugh 2003, 213). I argue that in Amuro, *Gundam*

engages critically with the conventions of the *shōnen* protagonist. To grapple

with this, an understanding of this character is necessary.

An instructive example of a *shōnen* protagonist of this era is found in a

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[5] A *shōnen* title does not necessarily imply a *shōnen* protagonist. For example, Nagai Gō's *Cutie Honey* (*Kyūtī hanī*, 1973) features a transforming female android, but its manga incarnation was published in a *shōnen* magazine, its intense sexualization of its protagonist panders to a stereotypically male gaze, and its narrative format is reminiscent of the stories being told in other *shōnen* series, such as Nagai's own robot anime *Mazinger Z*. However, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, *shōnen* manga tend to feature *shōnen* protagonists, and the availability of the *shōnen* protagonist as an agent of identification for the real-world *shōnen* reader is significant.

politically charged and much discussed manga from the mid-1970s, Nakazawa

Kenji's *Barefoot Gen* (*Hadashi no Gen*, 1973-1987), a fictional account based on the

author's boyhood experience of the atomic bomb and its aftermath in Hiroshima.

The series originated in the pages of special supplements to the immensely

popular *shōnen* manga magazine *Weekly Shōnen Jump* (*Shūkan shōnen janpu)* at the

prompting of editors in response to Nakazawa's earlier atomic bomb-themed

work. After its tenure in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, it would later move to political

magazines and educational journals, but in its initial serialized format, it was

encountered by its readers alongside its anthologized neighbors, including a

number of popular sports manga and the manga version of *Mazinger Z*. Though

Gen is remarkable in its grappling with a traumatic historical event, Itō Yū and

Omote Tomoyuki (2006) contend that *Gen* "was first a boys' manga which fell in

line with others of its kind in the 1970s; considering the storyline—overcoming

difficult circumstances with new friends—it is safe to say that it was not unusual"

(29). The narrative structure, many of the series' themes, and the protagonist all

draw on popular conventions within the *shōnen* manga genre that help render

the text explicable to its audience.

Lamarre (2011) notes that *Gen* "does not strive to break with the

conventions of boys' manga or *shōnen* manga but follows them faithfully" (192).

Itō and Omote (2006) observe that *Gen* unambiguously resembles other *shōnen*

works of the era in "the striking prevalence of depictions of violence" and "the

main characters' resolute fighting for their beliefs" (28). The *shōnen* protagonist

Gen embodies these values, both championing a vision of justice with his anti-oppression, anti-war stance, and being quick to fight for this justice by means of direct, physical action, including violence in the name of defense of self and others. It is in the figure of this protagonist that the three-word mission statement of *Jump* – "friendship, hard work, and success" — is realized. Throughout the many installments of the series Gen is quick to defend himself and friends — both old and new — with fists, teeth, and weapons supplementing his moral monologues. Still, Gen is not a mere replica of prior *shōnen* protagonists, simply regurgitating previous qualities. His particular qualities — including his specific narrative and historical context and his specific brand of justice — offer the expansion of the generic repertoire conventions described by Neale, illustrating the process of genre in action.

As the protagonist of a *shōnen* manga text that keeps in play many of the recognizable conventions of the genre in play, Gen exemplifies the early 1970s *shōnen* manga protagonist, inheriting a tradition of *shōnen* manga protagonists that itself includes *Gigantor*'s Shōtarō while simultaneously expanding that very generic repertoire through his own particular incarnation. Indeed, Shōtarō as a character is largely cut from the same cloth as Gen despite a radically different narrative context. Quick in both wits and action, he wields strong convictions that lead him to unflinchingly fight evil where he encounters it, using his giant robot to the ends of justice and peace. Yokoyama's series belongs to the *shōnen* genre, and as the ancestor of robot anime and founder of its conventions, folds

the coming robot genre into the discourse of *shōnen* anime.

Robot Anime Becomes a Genre

The next robot anime title would come nearly a decade later in the form of 1972's *Mazinger Z*, which established the super robot conventions that its immediate successors would build on in forming the robot anime genre, drawing direct inspiration from Yokoyama's *Gigantor*. Series creator Nagai Gō claims that he sought to create his own distinct take on the giant robots he read about in Yokoyama's manga as a child (Nagai 2015, 46), and the narratives of the two series indeed have many parallels. *Mazinger Z* also draws on the conventions of the contemporarily popular *tokusatsu* (a contraction of *tokubetsu eisatsu*, meaning "special effect photography") series, which were then programmed in network timeslots interchangeably with anime under the broad heading of "TV manga" (*terebi manga*) (Hikawa 2013, 10-11). *Tokusatsu* is a g-enre of live-action, special effects-laden hero shows. The early 1970s saw a rise in transforming (*henshin*) heroes in *tokusatsu* series, in which in a moment of visual and narrative spectacle, the protagonist would change into a super-powered hero form, often "grotesque" in design (Katsuno, forthcoming). *Mazinger Z* combines aspects of the *Gigantor* as well as the conventions of the *tokusatsu* hero genre, both in design and narrative.

Mazinger Z represents a shift in how anime for television was created, shrinking the industry's reliance on manga adaptation—though manga adaptations remained common—in favor of new properties developed specifically for television and launched in multiple formats. Nagai created the

21

concept of the *Mazinger Z* series and wrote a manga that was serialized

concurrently in *Weekly Shōnen Jump.* His work on the manga version provided

inspiration and guidance for the television show's staff (Clements & McCarthy

2015). This was a practice that had been established in the production of *tokusatsu*

series as well, as in the case of prolific manga author Ishinomori Shōtarō, who

concurrently penned a manga iteration and created the television version of, for

example, his *tokusatsu* series *Kamen Rider* (*Kāmen raidā*, 1971-1973) and *Android

Kikaider* (*Jinzō ningen kikaidā*, 1972-1973).

The protagonist of *Mazinger Z*, Kabuto Kōji, is older than *Gigantor*'s

Shōtarō, but is similarly an exemplary *shōnen* protagonist—though at sixteen he

is a bit older than the boy detective. Driven by a passion for justice, he

relentlessly combats the forces of evil in the Mazinger Z. The super robot itself

was, from a design standpoint, a marked departure from Yokoyama's rounder

robot. Its method of control would be copied by nearly all future robot anime:

Kōji pilots the robot directly rather than by remote control. Flying in a small

aircraft, Kōji docks his plane in its head and pilots the robot directly, from within

its own body. Hikawa (2013) credits this innovation, "the union of man and

machine," along with "dropping the black pupils" in the eyes of the giant robot

as creating a new kind of robot hero that responded to the popularity of

transforming *tokusatsu* heroes whose grotesque hero forms likewise lacked

pupils (15). When Kōji inevitably docks in the Mazinger Z in each episode, it is a

narrative and visual high point—the spectacular animation for the sequence is

reused from episode to episode, a kind of transformation sequence akin to that of *tokusatsu* heroes.

Mazinger Z also takes inspiration from the formulaic narrative structures of its *tokusatsu* cousins, which would likewise be emulated by later robot anime. *Kikaider* is a fine example of a *tokusatsu* series with a predictable rhythm to its individual episodic narratives, even as larger serialized narratives unfold. In *Kikaider*'s case, this includes the moments when the untransformed hero first fights his foe, the barrier he inevitably faces in being able to transform into his hero form, and the moment of transformation that leads to the vanquishing of that week's opponent in his Kikaider form with a signature finishing attack, the name of which he shouts aloud (Katsuno, forthcoming).

Similarly, the basic narrative flow of episodes in *Mazinger Z* follows a fairly predictable formula. Near the beginning of most episodes, the evil Dr. Hell or one of his minions dispatches a new monster to attack some area of Japan or the Mazinger Z itself. While Dr. Hell is ultimately human, he seeks to destroy the world by means of his Underground Empire and, with his warped purple skin and wicked-looking yellow eyes, has a decidedly demonic appearance and sets himself apart from and against mankind. Running alongside the battle-oriented narrative, some bystander—often a character who appears for just one episode–or friend of Kōji, gets involved and must be protected. An initial fight tends to end in a draw, minor defeat, or minor victory, though a rematch at the end of the episode finds Kōji victorious, destroying the enemy. As the serial narrative

23

progresses, the scope of the fights escalates until Kōji proves victorious over Dr.

Hell in the final episodes. As he fights, Kōji shouts out the name of the Mazinger

Z's signature attacks, with the most powerful and most spectacular of these

being saved for the finishing blow. The giant robot, a massive mechanical

weapon, is presented heroically in its full deployment, an uncomplicated

medium for the protagonist's sense of justice.

Most of the elements of the series outlined here would become tried and

true genre conventions in robot anime. The Japanese location and teenaged

shōnen protagonist became standard. The unqualified and inhuman evil of Dr.

Hell would soon give way to mostly alien or demonic threats bent on human

eradication or subjugation. Subsequent giant robots were directly piloted and

fought in similar styles. *Mazinger* Z's episodic narrative formula would also be

largely followed by the robot anime series that followed in the coming boom.[6] Its

popularity not only led to the quick formation of narrative and aesthetic

conventions in the genre, but also impacted the material situation surrounding

anime's production and sponsorship.

The Robot Anime Boom and *Zambot 3*

While selling licensed toys based on anime properties had been an

important source of revenue for producers stretching back to Tezuka's 1963

production of *Astro Boy*, *Mazinger Z* reached a new level of success with its toys,

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[6] I would like to stress that formulaic plots do not preclude a series from being a compelling work of art, thematically interesting, or a valuable object of critical inquiry. For an excellent analysis of the complex work done by *Kikaider,* see Katsuno (forthcoming).

which would in turn impact both the situation of funding for television anime production and the marketing of series. Tezuka's model had been primarily dependent on the sale of stickers in Meiji brand chocolates, and this pattern of premiums remained dominant for about a decade (Steinberg 2013). Hikawa credits the conflation of the materiality of a Mazinger toy with a corresponding element in the series' narrative world—a fictional metal known as Japanium in the series, and a novel zinc alloy for the toy—with the toy's immense success, enriching the manufacturer that made it and furthering the popularity of the series across media forms (Hikawa 2013, 16). Such success stories led to the chief sponsorship position of new anime series of all kinds—including robot anime— to being toy companies (Hikawa 2013, 17).

The first robot anime planned in coordination with sponsors specifically for the purpose of selling toys was 1975's *Brave Raideen* (*Yūsha raidīn*, 1975-1976), produced by Tohoku Shinsha and animated by a new animation studio, Sunrise (Hikawa 2013, 17). The first half of this series was directed by future *Gundam* director Tomino, while the second half was directed by Nagahama Tadao. Sunrise, Tomino, and Nagahama would make a number of other robot anime series over the next several years. Each of these mid-seventies Sunrise series, like most of the robot anime produced in this era, centered on a Japanese *shōnen* protagonist who piloted a massive robot to defend Earth from an alien or otherwise inhuman threat.

Like many contemporary robot anime, *Zambot 3* features a small squadron

of young heroes, all cousins, each piloting their own machine. The machines have the ability to combine (*gattai*) to transform into the eponymous giant robot. This follows a trend in robot anime exemplified by Ishikawa Ken and Nagai's *Getter Robo* (*Gettā robo*, 1974-1975) in which three male pilots combine their machines into differing giant robot configurations. In *Zambot 3*, the team leader is the series' protagonist, twelve-year-old Jin Kappei. Kappei, in many ways, is the quintessential *shōnen* protagonist. Recalling Nakazawa's Gen, he is young, scrappy, big-hearted, quick to violence, and unflinchingly dedicated to the ideas of justice transmitted to him by his family.

Zambot 3 maintains the sort of episodic structure typical of the genre to this point. In each episode, the Zambot 3—the only piloted giant robot in the series—faces off against an autonomous mechanical creation called a Mechaboost issued by Killer the Butcher, a commander of the invading Gaizok alien force. Hikawa identifies this as the most direct predecessor of *Gundam* and the real robot subgenre not only because it was a collaboration between director Tomino and character designer Yasuhiko Yoshikazu, but because its later episodes take a markedly dark turn, exploring the harrowing aftermath of the Mechaboosts' destruction, making refugees of Japanese citizens, and witnessing the deaths of many core cast members—for Hikawa (2013), this marks Tomino's "drive to make it as realistic as possible" (23). Ultimately, every main character besides Kappei himself dies, while the supreme Gaizok leader asks him why he bothered to fight in the first place. This is something Kappei has not asked himself—it is

26

revealed near the end of the series that Kappei and his cousins have been

brainwashed in their sleep to pilot the Zambot 3 skillfully and without fear. This

late revelation and final encounter trouble the figure of the protagonist,

exhibiting a self-reflective stance toward generic convention that *Gundam* picks

up a couple years later.

The Advent of *Gundam*

While *Zambot 3* bears some movement toward a critical engagement with

generic convention, the series is a super robot show featuring a super robot, and

it is not until *Gundam*'s debut two years later that the concept of the "real robot"

was initiated. Tomino is the credited co-creator of *Gundam*, alongside Yatate

Hajime, a pseudonym used on a number of series to describe the creative

contributions of the entire Sunrise staff. In an interview three decades after

Gundam's debut, Tomino (2014) describes his desire to break away from the

generic constraints of the super robot series he had been working on, beginning

with the problem of the conspicuous figure of the robot:

> As I was thinking it through, it was in the moment when I thought
> "Isn't a giant robot a weapon?" that I thought "Even a robot anime
> becomes film. It can draw war, it can draw politics." And from that
> thought alone *Mobile Suit Gundam* took shape. (208)

For Tomino, here, "film" (*eiga*) clearly does not simply mean something

exhibited in the cinema, but instead points to some aesthetic ideal the

conventional framing of super robots prohibited. As "film" here does not point

to a distinction of medium, it suggests an ideal of a certain respectability and

quality, associated with higher artistic valuation than the stereotypical television anime. The foundations of this attempt lay in the robot itself, in an attempt to fit a rather fantastical, science-defying concept into a narrative that could grapple with the thorny depictions of war. Further inspiration is cited by Tatsumi Takayuki (2008) as inspired by a 1977 cover illustration for a translation of Robert A. Heinlein's science fiction novel *Starship Troopers* by Studio Nue, visualizing the "powered suits" from the world of that novel, a seemingly more grounded take on the robotic amplification of human fighting potential than had been found in robot anime (192). That Tomino felt so emboldened to pursue a new, convention-transgressing ideology of realism in robot anime speaks to both his frustrations as an artist and to the logic of the industry at the time. Studios were allowed a high degree of license, so long as they delivered satisfactory robot designs to make into toys, and to in turn sell as toys. It is an environment not entirely unlike that noted about the Japanese "pink" softcore pornographic industry in the 1960s and 1970s, in which as long as young directors delivered a certain mandated amount of sex scenes in their films, they granted "remarkable freedom" to explore radical political and aesthetic practices in a mainstream industry hostile to new talent "after the crash of the studio system" in the 1970s (Nornes 2014, 4-5). This exchange of satisfying corporate mandates for the sake of relative freedom in creativity and expression provides a tempting comparison for what the creative staff behind *Gundam* felt empowered to attempt. This was an original television anime production, funded by its sponsor to sell toys. Such a

situation, though, left everything in excess of this core mission of the production

open for interpretation.

While *Gundam* was serialized in print in both manga and prose forms

concurrently with its television broadcast, it was developed for television,

making the other iterations transmedia adaptations of *Gundam* the television

series as an original. Unlike *Mazinger Z*, *Gundam*'s key creative personnel—

general director and co-creator Tomino, character designer Yasuhiko Yos-hikazu,

mechanical designer Okawara Kunio, and art director Nakamura Mitsuki—were

not credited as writers or artists for the manga adaptation or the serialized

novelization that appeared concurrently with its broadcast.[7]

As the appellation "real robot" suggests, what many find immediately

striking about *Gundam* is its so-called "reality." This is a word *(riariti)* that

producer Ueda Masao uses in his interview with Ian Condry (2013) about the

Gundam production staff's mounting engrossment with the world of the series

they were fabricating: "We wanted to make a world that seemed like it could

really exist" (124). But what is "reality" for the genre of robot anime? What is its

realism? To answer this question from the perspective of genre analysis, it is

useful to turn to Neale's (2003) discussion of "verisimilitude," building on the

use of that term in the literary theory of Tzvetan Todorov (161). Todorov writes

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[7] Notably, though, Tomino wrote a trilogy of *Mobile Suit Gundam* novels after the series ended, with several significant narrative departures from the events depicted in the series and later film compilations. From 2001 to 2011, Yasuhiko serialized *Mobile Suit Gundam: The Origin* (*Kidō senshi gandamu: THE ORIGIN*), a manga retelling, slightly altering, and elaborating on the narrative of the original anime work.

of generic verisimilitude, which is compatible with Neale's own concept of the processlike system of genre expectations and conventions that renders texts legible. But it also speaks to a cultural verisimilitude that defines ideals of realism, "between discourse and what readers believe is true… [this] is not 'reality' but merely a further discourse, independent of the work" (cited in Neale 2003, 162). That is to say, there exists no literal "reality" in the "realism" of arts, but instead a shared ideal of what reality is that defines arts' realism. The difference between these verisimilitudes accounts for the borders between what is considered to be the non-genre film and the genre film, the wall between a dramatic film that apparently exists outside generic boundaries and, say, a science fiction picture or a musical. What *Gundam* strives for, then, in its move toward realism is to transgress the generic verisimilitude of robot anime by blending in codes of cultural verisimilitude, the fusion of two discursive systems. The verisimilitude aligned with cultural ideals of realism dovetails neatly with Tomino's usage of the term "film." In this particular case, "film" seems to be something that escapes the boundaries of strict generic verisimilitude, a desire to transgress what he determines are the constraining conventions of genre.

Cultural and Generic Verisimilitudes

Gundam's movement toward cultural verisimilitude nevertheless builds on its generic verisimilitude. Here, I wish to articulate aspects of *Gundam*'s relationship to the robot anime genre by exploring certain conventions the series tweaks or transgresses, demonstrating their critical stance toward established

genre practice. This discussion leads into the series' invocation of cultural

discourses about youth and generational friction

Tomino claims he began his thought process with a reduction of the robot

to a mere machine—that is, to a mobile suit. The word "robot" is not uttered a

single time throughout all of *Gundam*'s forty-three episodes. Giant robots on both

sides of the conflict are referred to as "mobile suits," including the Gundam, and

the mechanical functionality of the robots is highlighted with exposed ventilation

systems and joints. Supporting this is a system of science fiction technology that

explains the conceivably implausible use of giant humanoid weapons, including

the Minovsky particle, a technology of radar interference. Ships spread this

particle specifically to obscure their locations in combat situations, putting

fighter planes and similar spacecraft at a disadvantage. Mobile suits were

originally developed for the construction of space colonies, allowing human

builders to use the humanlike articulation of the mobile suit bodies for fine

maneuvering. With the outbreak of war and the use of Minovsky particles, these

mobile suits are further developed as weaponry, leveraging their mobility for

closer-range encounters ("Exposition" 1981, 2). In Episode 4,[8] Char remarks

"Now that technology has advanced so far, we're forced to revert fighting face to

face like in old times."[9] The Gundam is fittingly equipped with weapons it

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[8] Releases of *Gundam* outside of Japan typically omit the fifteenth episode, *Cucuruz Doan's Island* (*Kukuruzu doan no shima*), resulting in two separate counts. I use those from the Japanese release.

[9] Unless otherwise indicated, direct quotes from the series come from the official subtitles in Nozomi Entertainment's 2015 North American Blu-ray release of the series.

wields like a human combatant might, including a pair of beam sabers, a beam rifle, and a shield. Rather than relying solely on the generic verisimilitude based on the experience of prior genre texts, *Gundam* seeks a science fiction verisimilitude to render its mobile suits intelligible.

This pursuit of believable science fiction verisimilitude extends to the incorporation of concepts entertained by space researchers in the 1970s. Most conspicuous is the construction and placement of the colonies themselves. The creative staff did extensive research to incorporate the concept of the O'Neill Cylinder model of space colonization proposed by NASA scientist Gerard K. O'Neill, including its location of colonies at scientifically determined "Lagrangian" points ideal for orbit around the Earth (*Art of Gundam* 2014, 38).

Hikawa observes that one of the most compelling aspects of *Gundam*'s world-building is hinted at in the opening voiceover narration for the series. In it, the voiceover narrator notes that in the Universal Century, people did not simply move into space, but *were moved* (*sasete*) into space beginning more than a half-century before the series begins, suggesting a migration that was not wholly voluntary but compulsory (Hikawa 2002, 16-17). Such gestures toward a system of "power relations" add a historical texture to the war narrative playing out across the story of the series (Hikawa 2002, 16). This is one way that *Gundam* subtly suggests a depth of politics and history for this future world, even though most of it is decidedly beyond the experience and purview of the characters who find themselves caught up in it. The history of the fictional future between the

twentieth century and the Universal Century is unavailable within the text, but *Gundam* also moves the series away from the Japanese setting typical of the robot anime genre. While Amuro has a Japanese-sounding sort of name, it is revealed that his hometown is in North America. The crew of the White Base contains a multiethnic cast with names of decidedly Anglo, German, Hispanic, and Japanese origins. Characters' names are also referred to in a first name-last name order that departs from Japanese tradition and it is implied that while the dialogue on the audio track is spoken in Japanese the characters would likely be speaking English in the diegesis,[10] as one might find in an anime series produced in Japan for a Japanese audience but with non-Japanese settings, such the television anime series *Heidi, Girl of the Alps* (*Aurpusu no shōjo haiji*, 1974), based on the Swiss novel and maintaining the Swiss setting and characters.

The setting of the series is a war between different factions of humans. This is a major break from its generic predecessors, which typically tend toward indisputably evil and inhuman or non-human threats bent on destruction or domination of their human enemy, such as the invading Gaizok aliens in *Zambot 3* who dispatch Mechaboosts, gigantic and autonomous mechanical agents of destruction that frequently take on the appearance of grotesquely deformed hybrids of Earth's animals. In contrast, the mobile suits in *Gundam* are all piloted by humans. Amuro pilots the Gundam, but it is just one of many mobile suits

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[10] Many of the science fiction terms and neologisms are either loanwords from English or *wasei eigo*, or Japanese-constructed English words.

piloted by soldiers in war, his friends and foes alike. In locating humans in the cockpits of the mobile suits, Rather than characterizing characters on the other side of the conflict as the unqualified evil common to robot anime, these human characters—for there is no other type in *Gundam*—are given complex roles and characterizations with their own motivations and histories.

These elements account for a portion of the world-building adhering to verisimilitudinous cultural ideas of what the scientific and political future of humanity might look like. It is critical to note that the world *Gundam* imagines is one that extends directly from the contemporaneous real world to which it was released, and indeed invites a comparative reading of its world and our own with its calendar year setting: Universal Century 0079 is conspicuously similar to 1979, when *Gundam* debuted. The themes in *Gundam* also connect to hotly debated contemporary cultural issues of war memory and the friction between generations. An entry point into this discourse lies in the manner in which *Gundam* critiques the conventional role of patriarchal figures in robot and science fiction anime through the figure of Amuro's father.

The Convention of the Father Figure

Fathers and father figures occupy a special position in early robot anime. For the protagonists of many series, the robot itself is an inheritance from a patriarch, often recently passed away. Shōtarō of *Gigantor*, already a famous boy detective and a crusader for justice, inherits the robot from his father, a late weapons researcher who developed it in the closing days of World War II and

passes it on in order to keep it out of the hands of enemies of the peace. The titular robot in *Mazinger Z* is passed on to Kōji from his dying grandfather, who specifically constructed it out of a supernaturally strong "Super-Alloy Z" in order to stand against the forces of Doctor Hell, an evil maniac with whom the grandfather had become entangled. In both of these seminal series, the late patriarch passes on a heroic robot to fight the forces of evil as an uncomplicated embodiment of justice. In this way, the young male protagonists fulfill the older generation's sense of justice through their symbolic guidance.

Zambot 3 takes a somewhat different approach to this convention. The Zambot is a family heirloom of sorts, maintained by the Jin family. The Jin family to which Kappei belongs is actually descended from aliens who fled their destroyed home planet for Earth in order to stage resistance to the eventual invasion of the Gaizok aliens. As mentioned above, the three young Jin family pilots were trained in their sleep to pilot the robot and not fear death. In this somewhat fearsome revelation, *Zambot 3* expands the repertoire of the genre by highlighting the darkness of one of the genre's foundational conceits, a boy compelled to fight in a robot as commanded by his family.

In *Gundam,* Amuro's father Tem is the chief architect of the Gundam. The series thus puts this convention into play as well, but its execution subverts tradition. When Tem first appears, he comments to Bright Noa that he is concerned about reports that boys as young as his son Amuro have joined the war. It is Amuro's own decision to enter the Gundam and attempt to pilot it.

Later, when Amuro encounters his father on the neutral colony Side 6, he appears hopeful for a meaningful reunion and real human connection. However, he soon realizes his father now suffers from oxygen deprivation sickness and fails to understand the current situation, obsessing only over the mechanical might of the Gundam and the progress of the war. His father's mind now apparently only has time for his mechaphilia and an enthusiastic embrace of militarism, and is uninterested in Amuro's emotional life or his pain. He attempts to give Amuro a small device that he claims is an upgrade module for use in the Gundam, but Amuro recognizes it as junk, and cries as he discards it. His father is useless to help the situation that he helped create, let alone soothe his disturbed heart.

While many previous robot anime series had brought its protagonists into conflict with aliens from outer space, the action remained mostly earthbound. The premise of a crew of soldiers traveling across Earth and space had no generic antecedents, to my knowledge, though 1974's science fiction hit *Space Battleship Yamato* (*Uchū senkan yamato,* 1974-1975, 1978-1979, and 1980-1981 ; also known as *Star Blazers* in its English adaptation) shares a similar on-the-move setting, though *Yamato* is not a robot anime and its episodic narrative does not unfold alongside a complex war setting. In that series, a future Earth has become almost entirely inhospitable to life due to constant bombardment from a hostile life form on the other side of the galaxy. Upon receiving word from a friendly alien contact, a group of Japanese soldiers refit the sunken wreckage of the historical

World War II battleship *Yamato* with an engine capable of space travel and depart for Iscandar. While the majority of the cast is youthful, including the male protagonist, leading the crew is a wizened male captain, the gray-haired and gravelly-voiced Okita Jūzō. Throughout the series, the mostly young members of the crew depend on Okita's wisdom and guidance to see them through tribulations. At the end, when the crew returns to the newly safe Earth, Okita dies, having successfully guided the succeeding generation into the future.

Yamato was moderately successful as a television anime, but it is the 1977 theatrical film compilation, also titled *Space Battleship Yamato*, that had a major financial impact and broad cultural recognition (Hikawa 2013, 22). In his chapter on *Gundam* and the first film incarnation of *Yamato*, William Ashbaugh (2010) approaches *Gundam* as a war allegory that reacts to contemporary Japanese discourse about how to remember World War II. Specifically, he reads *Gundam* as "creator/director Tomino's counter-narrative to *Yamato*'s valorizing of the military and propagation of the master narratives of 'noble failure' and national victimhood" (Ashbaugh 2010, 345). To extend this, I would also argue that *Gundam* rejects the figure of the sage patriarchal figure who guides the new generation to a better future which himself can be a figure of nationalism and thus militarism.

As *Gundam* progresses, Amuro encounters various adult male figures that might figure as a surrogate for his absent and subsequently incompetent father. Ramba Ral, a Zeon commander Amuro happens to encounter during a brief

period of desertion in a Central Asian desert. However, many of these men fail

him—Ramba Ral betrays his trust and pursues him to divine the White Base's

location and many of the older Federation officers the White Base crew

encounters treat them poorly. Ashbaugh (2010) argues that Amuro's personal

trajectory is away from obeying the authority of the Federation and toward

"fight[ing] solely to protect his friends" (348). When the White Base enters the

decisive final battle of A Baoa Qu, the young crew mostly fends for themselves.

Infighting among Zeon's command—as a result of treachery and totalitarian

maneuvering—ends up being perhaps the most decisive factor in the

Federation's victory. That is to say, the young crew casts off its reliance on older

figures of authority to forge a future for themselves.

Reading *Gundam* intertextually clarifies its theme of generational tension.

While the youth of robot anime protagonists has been a long-established

convention, *Gundam* repeatedly calls attention to the youth of the protagonist

and his compatriots and thematizes the generation gap between them and the

adults who caused the war, engineered the weapons, and fail to provide suitable

leadership. The particularities of this disruption of established convention

parallel cultural discourses about youth in Japan in the 1970s.

Generational Tension and Cultural Verisimilitude

Gundam's themes of generational tension have echoes in the real-world

Japanese controversies about war memory, which inevitably link to questions of

transmission to a society's younger generation. Ashbaugh (2010) argues this

issue underpins both *Yamato* and *Gundam*. In the late 1960s and throughout the

1970s, Japan saw a rise in right-wing nationalism in Japan's ruling Liberal

Democratic Party and an attempt with multiple fronts to reclaim Japan's warrior

heritage, including the increasingly political issue of visits to Tokyo's Yasukuni

Shrine honoring Japan's war dead and the opening of a museum openly

valorizing Japan's kamikaze pilots (Ashbaugh 2010, 336). This conflict is perhaps

best represented in the question of how to teach Japan's colonial and wartime

history to the nation's youth, as litigated by the "series of lawsuits initiated by

Ienaga Saburō over state control of the contents of his history books," as the

Ministry of Education sought to suppress any hint of the Japanese Imperial's

wrongs (Ashbaugh 2010, 336). This is essentially an issue of generational legacy.

It is perhaps a universal principle in modern societies—if not all societies

throughout history—that the succession of generations tends toward to produce

a discourse of hand-wringing on the part of older members of society about

youth. Japan in this era is no exception. According to social scientist Sakurai

Tetsuo (2004),

> In the 1970s, the "indifferent generation" (*shirake sedai*) emerged…
> the "indifferent generation" came to harbor a sense of aversion
> toward any commitment to ideals. While becoming politically and
> socially passive, young people of this generation became
> increasingly active in media-making and consumption. The
> "*shinjinrui*" ("new species of human being" or "new breed")
> generation that emerged in the 1980s acutely expressed this
> tendency. Born into an environment flooded with media, they
> astounded adults with their ability to use various information
> apparatuses. (38)

These generational labels and the descriptions attached to them are naturally problematic and necessarily incomplete. What is important here is not necessarily the truth value of these statements, but that such a discourse had significant cultural presence, bringing its description into the discourse of culturally versimilitudinous realism.

The young audience in *Gundam*'s target audience would have straddled this divide, be they the older adolescents of the *shirake sedai* or the younger viewers who would grow up to find themselves grouped in with the much-debated *shinjinrui*. As Sakurai notes, these labels describe an intensification of the same tendencies across two generations.

In Amuro's first apperance in the series' diegesis, his eyes are obscured by a microscope, lost in a world of robotics and computers. His friend Fraw Bow appears and pleads with him to heed the evacuation sirens blaring throughout the space colony, but he has been too engrossed in his play to even eat. As the discourse around youth in those years straddling the shift of decade relied so much on the disappearance of youths into consumption and technology, the image of Amuro—with his eyes initially denied to the viewer, ignoring the calls of his friend, of society, and even his own body—echoes the cultural verisimilitude of the discourse on contemporary youth.

Conclusion

While it responds to such concerns about youth, *Gundam* does not present its characterization of Amuro as a forty-three episode exercise in hand-wringing

about the future of youth. Indeed, the series invites the audience to identify with Amuro as he navigates these problems. While a *shōnen* protagonist being readily available for identification to the target audience is nothing new, it is the internal conflict within Amuro and the narrative and visual techniques that I argue mark this as an active critique of the repertoire of convention in robot anime and a thematized reconsideration of the protagonist.

What drives the *shōnen* protagonist *Gundam* inherits as a convention is an unfailing sense of justice. Like Shōtarō, Kōji, and Kappei, he heroically pursues his ideals, externally enacting his justice in the world through the giant robot he controls. While Amuro finds himself piloting the Gundam, he lacks the absolute conviction and sense of justice of his intertextual predecessors. His voice trembles, he is wracked with self-doubt, and he cries. Such a shift moves the force of the narrative toward the interiority. The move *Gundam* makes in opening up the *shōnen*'s interiority through narrative techniques is a critical part of its transformative interaction with its genre.

CHAPTER III

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES OF INTERIORITY

In this chapter, I argue that *Gundam* employs a sophisticated set of
narrative and visual techniques to foreground its protagonist's interiority. Over
the course of the series, the interiorities of other characters are highlighted as
well, making the interiority of characters a major theme of the series and
complicating the place of Amuro as the site of audience identification. To
understand how *Gundam* explores this interiority, it is imperative to examine
closely how its narrative is told. I find how techniques of interiority and the
thematization of the interior of the *shōnen* arise from the specifics of narration by
analyzing the narrative strategies in the series, from the narrative structure of the
series' episodic serialization to specific cinematic techniques of scene
construction. I also engage with the medium of television anime itself, exploring
the techniques of character design that literally draw Amuro as a site of
identification, drawing the audience into him and his interiority.

In narratologically highlighting techniques of interiority, I do not intend to
dismiss or diminish the battle sequences that occupy a great amount of the series'
narrative time. Instead, it is the pervasive quality of this narrative interest in the
interiority of the characters, and Amuro in particular, that animates this robot
anime genre text. *Gundam* employs a filmic language for narrating interiority, but
it builds this on top of generic convention, even as it expands and—through its
story—critiques those conventions. *Gundam* is not a strictly iconoclastic rupture

42

in the genre, discarding all that came before it, but instead transgresses the

traditional execution of generic conventions in the robot anime genre's exterior

orientation—violence and victories—by permeating it with an interiority-

inflected visual and narrative language, in and out of battle scenes. For narrative

film, both the visual and the auditive are inherently narrative—the film is

narrated, thus what is in the film is narrative—so I make no attempt here to

forcibly separate notions of visual and other aesthetic techniques from narrative

techniques, as they work together.

Approaching *Gundam* Through Narratology

The lens of narratology—the study of narrative— provides a vital and

useful system for reading audiovisual texts. In his book *Film Narratology*, film

researcher Peter Verstraten (2009) proposes a set of theoretical concepts that

allow for a study of film narrative, building on pioneering narratological work

by literary theorists Gerard Genette (1980) and Mieke Bal (1985). Verstraten's

theory grounds all filmic techniques in a framework of narrative analysis to

enhance interpretation and close reading. Central to this model of narratology is

the concept of the "filmic narrator," the abstract governor of two subordinate

narrators, the visual narrator and the auditive narrator (Verstraten 2009, 130).

The visual narrator controls everything that appears on the visual track of the

film, from photographic images to onscreen text to cross-fading between shots.

The auditive narrator likewise controls everything appearing on the audio track,

from characters' voices to sound effects to music both diegetic and nondiegetic.

Most succinctly, Verstraten (2009) sums up the relationship as follows: "The function of the filmic narrator is to regulate the interaction between sound. . . and image. This interaction takes place on a sliding scale that runs from exact correlation between the auditive and visual tracks to the complete divergence of those tracks" (131). Even with a seemingly strong contradiction, if it appears on the screen or on the audio track, it is because the filmic narrator wills it so. Though these three are termed narrators, they are absolutely incorporeal and should not be confused with any actual person or character: the filmic, visual, and auditive narrators cannot be the director, the writer, a character, or even a disembodied voiceover narrator. Even when a story unfolds in a manner that appears to put it very close to a particular character's own subjective experience, this is an instance of focalization, not the conflation of character with narrator.

For example, there is a moment in Episode 13 in which Amuro visits his childhood home and his eyes land on a doll sitting on a dresser. This doll seems to trigger a memory in Amuro, as we see a flashback montage recounting his departure from the home when he as a younger boy, accompanied by dialogue between his parents. This moment in the story represents a choice made by the filmic narrator to narrate Amuro's memories—necessarily a part of the fablua. The particular way this narration is executed is a harmonious collaboration of efforts by the visual and auditive narrators. The particular shots used to frame the characters are narrational choices by the visual narrator, while the hazy filter applied to the moving images is a technique employed by the visual narrator to

signal that this is Amuro's flashback. The voices of his parents and the melancholy woodwind instrumental on the audio track work together with the visual narrator's narration. Significantly, Verstraten (2009) argues that neither visual or audio track are subordinate to one another in terms of authority of narration and, further, in truth-claims for the narrative, giving us the supreme authority of the filmic narrator; the filmic narrator may direct the visual narrator and auditive narrator to produce contradicting or discordant narrations, or to narrate a misconception, imagination, or a lie complicit with one of the characters (109-114). Such an example can be seen when Amuro encounters the fiancé of the late Captain Matilda Ajan and imagines a wedding scene that never has—and now can never–take place, presented on the visual track as a still image.

The choice of the filmic narrator to represent Amuro's flashback on both the visual and audio tracks is a result of Amuro being the subject of focalization. In this instance, that is to say, Amuro is the focalizing character. Focalization is a narratological term meaning "focus of narration," a term Genette (1980) favors over the common "point of view" with its "too specifically visual connotations" (189). Even Verstraten (2009), in dealing with a visual medium, avoids "point of view" outside of specific cases of true subjective shots in which the visual narrator narrates from the position of the character's actual vantage point, allowing the image to represent what is before their eyes. The latter is "internal focalization," when the visual narrator offers an image fully aligned with. Otherwise, film tends toward external focalization, in which the visual narrator

offers views from outside any characters' subjective position. However, when a shot is informed by the character's subjective position but does not align with their vision, this is internal focalization embedded within external focalization (Verstraten 2009, 103). This embedded focalization is a major technique of the visual narrator. Such embedded focalization tends to be paired with a reverse shot that establishes which character's focalization is embedded. Embedded or internal focalization puts the text's narration in alignment with a character's specific subjectivity, even if only temporarily or transitorily. Such alignment contributes to the identification of the viewer with the focalizing subject.

Narrative Flow of the Series

This set of narratological terms helps us inquire into what drives the series. Each episode in *Gundam*'s run necessarily incorporates at least one battle sequence, as per the industrial conventions of the robot anime-producing corner of the anime industry and, specifically, the dictates of Clover, the toy manufacturer and primary sponsor of the series (Tomino 2014, 208). Amuro, his companions, and most of the supporting characters are actors in the war and have clear military affiliation. The period of narrative time covered in the series' narration covers the last several months of the conflict, beginning with Amuro and the White Base crew's entrance into the war and culminating in a decisive battle at the asteroid base A Baoa Qu. The narrative, like the White Base itself, is constantly on the move.

This is in contrast to the episodic conventions set by *Gundam*'s forebears in

the robot anime genre. As explored before, most of these series had overarching

plots that slowly developed over time, but relatively self-contained narratives

that followed predictable formulas in each episode. Television series can broadly

be described as existing on a continuum between the "serial" and the "series"

(Allrath et al. 2005, 5). The "serial" denies high levels of closure in its episodic

installments while the "series" offers self-contained narratives that end with a

firm sense of narrative closure. However, such strict categorizations are

problematic and most narrative television programs are a hybrid form (Allrath et.

al 2005, 6). As described previously, mid-seventies shows such as *Mazinger Z* and

Zambot 3 tend toward predictably scripted rhythms for an episode's action with a

high degree of closure, bringing them closer to the "series" end of the continuum.

Serialized content in the form of long-running plot threads are developed

through these episodic narratives, leading to closure in the final episodes, but

individual episodes are typically characterized by individual, comprehensible,

and formulaic plots that introduce a villainous plots and single-appearance

enemies and dispose of them in the same half hour. A viewer might miss a week

or two of episodes to find that nothing too significant has changed about the

characters' world and their fight for justice.

Gundam breaks this expected pattern for robot anime, leaning heavily

toward the extreme "serial" end of the continuum. The stories in *Gundam*'s

episodes frequently start directly where previous episodes left off. The White

Base, ever on the move, would change course, and as Amuro's journey continues,

his position, goals, and attitudes change. For example, Episode 17 begins with Amuro working on the Gundam, episode eighteen begins with Amuro as deserter eating a can of beans, and Episode 20 begins with Amuro detained in solitary confinement. In order to make sense of this kind of complex, ever-evolving narrative, a viewer needed to exhibit a different level of attentive and engaged viewing than its generic predecessors had demanded. Ueda, describing his time with the series, mentions that this complexity vexed the sponsor: "The show was too complex, too confusing. It was too dark. Children couldn't follow what was going on" (Condry 2013, 124). Having transgressed the formulaic narrative conventions of the robot anime genre, *Gundam* exhibits a narrative complexity that decoupled the narrative organization of episodes from particular patterns and rhythms of escalating threats. The major battle sequence of an episode might only take place in the first act, kick off the beginning of the second act while ending significantly before it, or lead directly to the ending of the episode, to name a few examples. The episodic battle narrative is not *Gundam*'s chief narrative concern.

So, then, what is it that drives the narration in *Gundam*? All episodes feature extensive combat sequences, with Amuro and companions fighting for approximately one third to one half of the running time. The war marches on, but is the progress of the war the principal concern of the narrative? It is undeniably a crucial part of the setting, and the battles the White Base crew participate in impact every part of what unfolds. Yet the White Base's journey is

for the most part not along the front lines; over the course of the series, Amuro

and company only participate in three major battles between Federation and

Zeon forces,[11] which together make up less than an eighth of the episodes.

Mostly, they face off against small forces or are pursued by Zeon's ace pilot Char

in small-scale skirmishes as they endeavor onward toward their next destination,

understaffed and undersupplied. It is useful here to consider the narratological

terms fabula and story, a two-level model for understanding narrative. The

fabula "offers a straightforward and chronological representation of the events

related" in the story (Verstraten 2009, 31). A synopsis of *Gundam*'s events as a

series from the first episode that relates Amuro's involvement to the end of the

war in the final episode would be a rough but limited sketch of the series' fabula,

as the fabula is inclusive of all information available about the world of the series,

the various casualties in individual skirmishes, the content of Amuro's

conversations with his crewmates, and so on. The story is the particular ordering

and expression of those events, including the particular way these things are

narrated. The entire trajectory of the war is a critical part of the fabula, but it is

with an attentive analysis to the actual telling of the story—the particulars of

how this war narrative is narrated—that we can see an overriding concern with

Amuro as the primary focalizing character and a narrative strategy that tends to

tie the rhythm of the plots of individual episodes and the overall progression of

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[11] These are The Battle of Odessa, a conflict that occurs in Episode 25, the Battle for Solomon in Episodes 34 and 35, and the Battle of A Baoa Qu, which extends across Episodes 42 and 43, marking the ending of the war and *Gundam*'s story.

the series narrative to his interior experience.

Narrative Rhythm and Emotional Cliffhangers

A popular convention in television serials, broadly, is the use of the so-called cliffhanger, when an episode ends at a moment of high tension, building "lasting suspense" and "instill[ing] intense curiosity" in part to encourage the viewer to return for the next installment (Allrath et al 2005, 23). Examining what notes the narration in *Gundam* chooses to end its episodes on will prove illuminating to what the filmic narrator deems to be generative of intrigue. While Zeon commanders like Char are frequently seen scheming about their pursuit of the White Base, setting up the next conflict, episodes frequently close on scenes set on White Base, returning to Amuro. Especially in the first half of the series, Amuro, a reluctant pilot and newly a boy soldier, is unsure of himself, his position in the war, and his role on the ship, and this emotional uncertainty is important.

The closing scene of Episode 2 finds Amuro returning from his first sortie in space and his first encounter with Char. Despite his inexperience, he has succeeded in felling an enemy Zaku belonging to one of Char's underlings. Amuro, still in civilian clothes, has been awestruck, with a touch of fear, by the amount of destructive power held by the mobile suit he pilots. As he enters the White Base's bridge for the first time beside fellow pilot Ryu Jose, he finds the scene somber. The construction of the scene alternates between externally focalized close-ups of Amuro from various angles that indicate the direction of

his gaze, an internally focalized shot that pans across the bridge apparently from his viewing position, and external shots over his shoulder that contain embedded focalization, visualizing what Amuro sees. Bright walks up to Amuro, takes a moment to look him up and down, and then dispassionately reprimands the boy for inefficiently draining the Gundam's power during battle and that he must be more careful in future skirmishes. Bright is the object of this external shot with Amuro's embedded focalization. The next cut[12] is an extreme close-up of Amuro's face as his eyes quiver with shock, as he stammers out an utterance of disbelief—rather than being greeted warmly or sympathetically for the risks he took or his accomplishment, he find himself an unwitting soldier being scolded by a man barely older than himself. This intense display of emotion is the subject of the shot, which apparently not focalized by Bright, since his demeanor indicates an indifference to Amuro's emotional state. Rather, the visual narrator conjures up an externally focalized shot that carries over the narrational concern with Amuro's emotional reaction. This is the note the filmic narrator chooses to end the episode on. With eyes distressed, betrayed, and hurt, Amuro watches Bright walk away. What governs the suspense of this open ending are the ominous, open-ended narrative questions of Amuros' interpersonal and emotional life. Questions of war and justice are not nearly as prevalent onscreen as his emotional experience.

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[12] The term "cut" (*katto*) is used within the production system of Japanese anime to refer to what in live action films is typically referred to as a shot. That is, a cut also refers to the length of film that occurs between two edits. I use these terms more or less interchangeably throughout this thesis, selecting whichever term seems to grant the most clarity.

Another striking early example of the emotionally-tinged cliffhanger occurs at the end of Episode 6, connected to an earlier action sequence that itself foregrounds Amuro's interior experience of battle. In the middle of the episode, an exhausted and despairing Amuro is deployed to defend the White Base. After nearly fainting, he launches into a white-hot rage, savagely destroying multiple Zeon mobile suits in a matter of minutes. At the end of this rage, the Gundam is seen repeatedly, senselessly stabbing at a fallen mobile suit. Finally, the Gundam strikes the ground and drops to its knees as if exhausted. Inside the Gundam, we see a close-up of Amuro as he breathes heavily and then looks up. The next cut is a long pan of the desert in which he has been fighting. The shot is an over-the-shoulder of the Gundam, making the scenery the object of Amuro's embedded focalization, thus figuring the body of the mobile suit as a symbol of Amuro himself. This shot is accompanied on the auditive track by silence, punctuated by distant, abstract rumblings. The shot lasts ten seconds, a noticeably extended length for a cut. The effect is one of intense solitude and despair, a striking juxtaposition with the white-hot rage just witnessed. This is an exemplary—but by no means isolated—example of *Gundam*'s narration of its action sequences being shot through or counterbalanced with an interior interest.

A few scenes later, when we next see Amuro, he has docked the Gundam and passes by several people who have greeted him to celebrate his victory. With his head down, he walks back to his room on the White Base. Amuro's reaction surprises the others. When he arrives at the door to his room, a piece of music

52

with tense strings begins playing on the soundtrack, connoting an unsettled feeling. Suddenly, a group of three young children arrive, claiming they have baked a pie to celebrate. Their youthful enthusiasm contrasts starkly both with Amuro's emotional state and the background music selected to narrate the scene by the auditive narrator. Amuro casts his eyes down to the floor and quietly says "Just leave me alone, all right?" before entering his room and shutting the door, to the irritation of the children. The next cut shows the inside of his room as Amuro throws himself onto a bed while still wearing his pilot suit. While in this episode his shipmates have commented on his tiredness, he turns onto his back and looks up at the ceiling with his eyes open. The disturbing music continues on the soundtrack as the next cut slowly pans up his body from his legs to his head. He turns over onto his side, covering his head with his arms. The next shot finds him in his bed, his head obscured by his arms, as it slowly zooms out. The silence and the long panning shot in this scene link it to the previous scene with Amuro, alone on the battlefield, the despair of the desert pressing in on him.

After another short scene away from Amuro, the final shot of the episode returns us to Amuro in bed, now possibly sleeping. The lights off, he is in an undershirt and partially under a blanket. He has his arms wrapped around himself in an embrace. The angle of the shot and the slow zoom out rhyme with the previous shot described. Again, an ominously dark piece of music plays on the soundtrack. Amuro's solitude is unmistakable, and the effect is one of emotional disturbance. This is the image that the episode ends on. The episode

ends with both visual and auditive narrators underscoring Amuro's inner

turmoil and despair. The swelling of the strings on the soundtrack suggest all the

open-ended intensity of a cliffhanger, but this is a cliffhanger of a decidedly

emotional character.

This is one major pattern of narrative interest that demonstrates *Gundam*'s

foregrounding of interiority. Such patterns are not absolute rules. In its forty-

three episodes, *Gundam* weaves together many large and small narratives, and

these narratives, unsurprisingly, do not relentlessly comport to prescribed

patterns. There is some variation to be found. However, in looking at these

general tendencies, we find the core narrative strategies that represent patterns of

decisions made by the filmic narrator. The first and last runs of episodes, in

particular, focus strongly on Amuro as the primary focalizor. This is critical to

understanding the series and its foregrounding of the *shōnen*'s interiority.

Away from Amuro: Others' Interiorities as Foils

Still, it is important to note that there are certain whole episodes in which

the filmic narrator cedes the position of the subject of focalization to another

character or characters who will, for the duration of those episodes, fill the role of

primary focalizor or focalizors. While this moves the series away from Amuro

temporarily, such variation emphasizes the series' foregrounding of interiority.

An excellent example of this is found in Episodes 27 and 28, a sort of duology of

episodes that focus on White Base crewmember Kai Shiden's brief friendship and

romance with a young woman named Miharu who covertly works as a spy for

Zeon in order to support her younger siblings. She befriends Kai and sneaks aboard the White Base, who feels compelled to return, but ultimately loses her life attempting to defend Kai while supporting him in battle. The initial scenes of these episodes' first acts isolate Kai and Miharu from other narrative action. Kai is an eighteen-year-old civilian forced to pilot the Guncannon mobile suit following the White Base's flight from Side 7. However, from his introduction, Kai has exhibited a tendency to look down on his fellow crew members, comment sardonically and morbidly on the unfairness of their position, and resist identification with the White Base or the military. At the beginning of Episode 27, while the White Base is docked in Belfast, Ireland, Kai deserts. Miharu thus appears for the first time in Episode 27 as an accessory to or symptom of the narrative problem posed in Kai's disaffection and irresoluteness with his continued participation in the war. While the ongoing narrative of the war continues over the course of these episodes and there are two battle sequences in which Amuro pilots the Gundam against the enemy, he takes a narrative backseat Amuro's position as predominant focalizing character is ceded to Kai and Miharu, in alternation, by the filmic narrator.

The final sequence of Episode 28, after Miharu is discovered to have been lost in action, visually isolates Kai as he cries on the floor, gazing vacantly into his lap. The other crew members fade from view. A montage follows onscreen, as if to provide an answer to the question of what Kai is looking at within himself, a sort of reverse shot. The White Base flies through a blue sky, overlaid with

translucent, moving memories of Miharu and Kai's meetings. Next, Kai and Miharu walk across a green field with the White Base hovering overhead. This is followed by a cut in which Miharu's visage looms over him, crouched on the floor in an abstract space. Over this montage, the auditive narrator plays previously unheard dialogue spoken by Miharu in which she expresses gratitude for having met Kai, assures him that her siblings will be safe, and prays that their actions will secure a better world for her siblings. The exact nature of what we hear Miharu say is ambiguous, as it is unknown whether it is memory, imagination, or even possibly a contact with Miharu's spirit. Finally, returned from Kai's interior psychological space, Kai stands up and cries out "Why did you have to die?" The visual narrator cuts to an image of the White Base hovering in the air, echoing the shot from the montage, the image fades to black, and the episode ends. Note that while the roles Kai and Miharu play are defined by their roles in the war, these are the only episodes that shift the role of primary focalizor to Kai, and the narrator structures these small narratives around his interiority. This is a prime example of *Gundam* exploiting techniques cultivated for interrogating the protagonist's interiority to explore supporting characters; their interiorities function in the broader narrative of the series as foils for Amuro. This pervasive interest serves to elevate this concern with interiority as one of *Gundam*'s themes.

Ultimately, the narration positions Amuro as the chief focalizing subject and ties his inner experiences closely to the structure of the story. Through these

techniques, the filmic narrator brings his interiority to the fore. This story is located in the context of a war, the history of which is ever-evolving in the main story surrounding Amuro, but also on the fringes and in the background. So far in this chapter, my analysis of *Gundam*'s narrative techniques has concerned the story of the episodes that takes place between an episode's title card and its ending, the more or less linear unfolding of *Gundam*'s story through scenes linked in a more or less classical cinematic narrative structure. However, to orient the viewer and situate the story in a broader fictional historical context, there is a disembodied male voiceover narrator—distinct from the filmic or auditive narrators—that exists at the borders of the series. His concerns are with the unfolding of this chronicle of war, more or less indifferent to the interior experience of the characters involved. It is a fundamentally exterior orientation, and this produces an ironic tension with the major interior interests of the filmic narration.

Compartmentalization and Ironic Tension in Voiceover Narration

After the opening credits and before the title card of each episode save for the forty-third, a short prologue plays, typically about half a minute long. This prologue has a variety of functions, but essentially serves to situate the viewer in the world of the series, either by revealing aspects of the show's diegetic world that are apparently known to its characters, or by recapping events from previous episodes. This is accomplished by a montage of images accompanied by music and a mature male voice, who speaks slowly and deliberately. The first

eleven episodes of *Gundam* feature a repeated sequence with some minor variations. It briefly explains the world up to the beginning point of the series, noting the history of space colonization, Zeon's declaration of independence, the massive death toll, and a stalemate between forces. Notably, no human figures are represented in this particular sequence. Beginning with Episode 12, the content of these prologues tends more toward summarizing previously seen events, recycling animation from previous episodes with new voiceover synposes. The voiceover narrator does not appear only in the prologues, though his appearance is extremely limited outside of the prologue. Most typically, the voiceover narrator will interject over n establishing shot to explain something about a heretofore unseen location, or explain something about the world to the viewer that would be known to the characters.

It is critical that the voiceover narrator not be confused with the filmic narrator or either of its subordinates. In fact, the presence of the voiceover narrator produces a significant ironic tension. Typically, the narrator is only interested with chronicling the broad details of the world and the progress of White Base and its military successes, as if relating a historical record of the war. He is not entirely indifferent to persons, naming key figures in the particular corner of the war narrative he relates, including Amuro, though he tends to refer more to the mobile suits and the leaders and crafts they command. His voice seems to have no particular access to or interest in the internal lives of Amuro and company. Nor is he identified with any character in the series' diegesis. The

quality of the voiceover narrator's voice is low in pitch and seemingly impartial in its delivery, untouched by emotionality. He intones his words with a steady cadence.

The auditive narrator grants him presence on the auditive track, and the visual narrator typically provides images that correspond simply with the voiceover narrator's speech. However, there are some moments that suggest an ironic separation of this sober historical interest and the emotional experience of the characters previously narrated. A prime example occurs in the prologue to Episode 25, which recaps the battle in which Matilda perished. Amuro had developed a crush on Matilda and even feels responsible for his death. In Episode 24, the ending of the episode finds the crew of the White Base salutes their fallen allies. Deeply sorrowful, Amuro screams her name internally. The last line of the episode is Amuro crying "Ms. Matilda!" (*Matilda-san!*).

As the voiceover narrator recaps the developments in this battle, the visual narrator replays brief, borrowed cuts from the previous episode's battle scenes: Zeon squadrons on the move, the Gundam destroying mobile suits, a downed aircraft. These only show the exterior of the weapons, and unproblematically complement the voiceover narrator's account. The penultimate image in this montage, though, is a close-up of Amuro's face as he salutes, his hair blowing in the wind and his eyes closed with a sorrowful brow, again replayed and condensed from the previous episode's closing scene, as described in the above paragraph. In its original context, this cut was matched

with Amuro's internal mournful narration. Now, in this prologue, the narrator intones, "In helping the White Base to return to the front lines, many among Matilda's crew made the ultimate sacrifice, beginning with Matilda herself." This is a factually true statement about the fabula and the casualties we have seen, but the return to it here in the story on the auditive track strips the emotionally dense narration from the previous episode. The voiceover narrator accounts for no emotion. What is being narrated by the voiceover narrator is a fundamentally different view of the same scene. However, when the visual narrator—again, coordinated by the filmic narrator, who controls all material audio and visual in the series—supplies this image of Amuro, familiar to the viewer and pregnant with emotion in its original narration, the emotive character of the narration drops is suppressed, and an ironic gap opens up between what is heard and what is seen. The exterior view of history that the voiceover narrator is concerned with—the understanding of war as a series of wins and losses, feats of valor, and deaths—is suggested by the filmic narrator's coordination of image and sound to be incomplete and perhaps even cruel when measured against another narration, also present and more dominant within the series, that values the interior.

The voiceover narrator often returns at the end of the episode to perform a similar function, as seen at the end of Episode 10. After the death of the Zabi family's youngest son, the final, vocally narrated scene finds Degwin Sodo Zabi, the elder dictator of Zeon, being informed of the casualty. The voiceover narrator

describes that this news has reached Zeon's capital colony over an establishing shot of the Zabis' fortress. The next cut is a medium shot of Degwin standing, looking down, his eyes expressing sadness. This is followed by a close-up cut of his cane falling from his hand, followed by another cut showing the cane landing beside the Zeon soldier who has apparently brought this news. "On this occasion, Degwin Zabi, the Sovereign of the Principality of Zeon and the father of Garma, dropped his cane before the messenger,"[13] intones the narrator after the cane falls. This repetition of what has plainly happened on screen, now rendered as a past tense verbal statement, further allies the narrator with the position of the historian. The words spoken are similar to what one might find in a history book, coloring an event with a short anecdote.

What is this voiceover narrator, then? His role exists within the system of generic expectations a viewer brings to *Gundam*, akin to voiceover narrators found in other *shōnen* and robot anime. Previous Nippon Sunrise robot anime series such as *Voltes V (Chōdenji mashīn borutesu faibu*, 1977-1978) and other series including *Space Battleship Yamato* feature a voiceover narrator that often introduces episodes with a similar sort of prologue, explaining to the viewer the setting of the episode and the current progress of the crew. A most interesting example of a voiceover narrator predecessor with a similarly deep, sober voice is to be found in Tatsunoko Production's *Animentary: Decision* (*Animentarī: ketsudan*,

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[13] *Toki ni, join kōkoku no kōō, sunawachi garuma no chichi deign zabi wa shisha no mae de sono tsue o otoshita*. I have provided my own original translation as the official translation ends by saying Degwin "couldn't help dropping his cane before his messenger," an implication of lack of control not present in the Japanese dialogue.

1971-1972). This is a distinctive nonfiction television anime series. Each episode chronicles a real-life battle from World War II and the military commanders' decisions that decided its outcome. Each episode is fully narrated by its voiceover narrator, with scenes of dialogue between officers and soldiers, animated battle sequences, and maps and occasionally photographs that supplement the voiceover narrator's dialogue on the visual track. Notably, both *Yamato* and *Decision* are series with an explicitly military setting, like *Gundam*.

The link between *Gundam* and *Decision* is potentially further underscored by a very similar line sung in *Gundam*'s ending theme song and *Decision*'s opening theme song. In *Decision*, eight years before *Gundam*, a chorus of male voices sings: "*Otoko namida wa misenu mono*" (man's tears are things to not to be shown). While in *Gundam*, the lyric, sung by the adult male voice of Ikeda Kō is: "*Otoko wa namida wo misenu mono misenu mono*" (A man is he who will not show his tears, he who will not show his tears).[14] The language in Japanese is nearly identical. The link between these suggests a similar function between the singers in both series as well as their voiceover narrators.

In *Gundam, t*he performer of the voiceover narration, Nagai Ichirō, is not the singer of the ending theme song. However, through their shared categorization as disembodied, extra-diegetic adult male presences on the audio track, they have a certain alliance. With the interest in war and the ideology of

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[14] This is my original translation. The official translation reads: "A man must hide his tears, hide his tears."

masculinity espoused by the singer, these two adult male voices exhibit a compatible and conventional set of ideas about masculinity, closely allied with militarism. In this, they form an intertextual and intratextual bond with the generic issue of the male authority figure or father described in the previous chapter, who is similarly characterized by a stereotypically masculine interest in exterior actions.

The claim *Gundam*'s ending theme song lyrics make about tears being things men must not show is at odds with and undercut by the numerous instances in which tears are seen to fill Amuro's eyes. Lest this be mistaken for a sign that the song conveys some final message about maturation in *Gundam* — that, perhaps, this familiar description of masculinity is the ideal that Amuro will one day fill — please observe that in the joyous moment of the series' conclusion, Amuro is openly crying as he reunites with his friends aboard White Base. The final image we see of our protagonist, triumphant not in battle but in his emotional world, is one with tears flowing freely, a notable counterpoint to the web of signifiers that occupy the margins of what the filmic narrator grants space for in its narration.

Having analyzed major techniques in the patterns of narration that foreground and thematize interiority, I now turn to specific techniques the visual narrator employs to express these in the series' animation. *Gundam,* as a wholly animated text, is not produced by photographically recording profilmic bodies as images played back in quick succession, but instead by photographing hand-

drawn and hand-painted cels composited over painted backdrops. In animation, certain the visual narrator has access to particular techniques. These include visual effects that enhance and heighten the visceral presentation of characters' subjective emotions and character design.

Seeing Inside the *Shōnen*: Visualizing Interiority

At many points over the course of the series, the background behind Amuro or another character in close-up will fade away, being replaced by an abstract pattern of colors. The color of the cel will often also appear to shift, creating a somewhat surreal, distorted appearance. An early usage of this technique occurs in Episode 4, and the subject is actually Amuro's rival, Char. Despite his status as an antagonist, Char is psychologically complex ad frequently allowed to focalize. In the first episode, during the altercation on Side 7, the masked Zeon pilot Char—who is secretly Casval Rem Deikun, the son of the murdered founder of Zeon, which is revealed—briefly encountered his sister, Sayla Mass—real name Artesia. Char looks out into space as the frame slowly zooms in on him. A shot is inserted of a cel from the first episode in which Sayla pointed a gun at Char. However the background behind the cel has been replaced with a swirling blue field. A more close-up variation on this cut is inserted again after returning to the previous shot of Char. Fully zoomed into a close-up on Char's face, now, we hear Char's internal, unspoken narration as he wonders if it was in fact his sister Artesia, separated the past ten years, supposing that the young woman he encountered was "too brave" to be his sister.

Next, the shots fades to a replay of a sequence of their encounter, in which Char reveals his face and kicks the gun out of her hand. The flashback is tinted yellow, as if to signal that this is memory. When Artesia recoils, the frame freezes and zooms in on Artesia, unlike how the scene played out previously, suggesting the subject of this shot is Char's attempt to analyze his memory and discern whether this is in fact his sister.

The blue field against which Char and the audience see Sayla is an example of what I will refer to as the emotive background, and it is used frequently throughout the series, with a number of focalizing characters. This is hardly a technique exclusive to *Gundam*, and it has many precedents or analogues across genre and even medium. Comics artist and theorist Scott McCloud (1993) observes that similar techniques for the expressionistic rendering of psychological effects of comics characters through the abstraction or distortion of their backgrounds has developed in comics genres around the world, and that "such *internal effects* are, of course, best suited to stories about *internal matters*" (132). He highlights *shōjo* comics—and Ikeda Riyoko's early 1970s *shōjo* manga masterpiece *The Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaiyu no bara*, 1972-1973) in particular—as an example of a field in which a particular emotional language of the emotive background has developed (McCloud 1993, 132-133). Indeed, the techniques of exploring interiority that defined the narratives and aesthetics of the creatively flourishing *shōjo* manga genre in the early l970s is epitomized by the work of the young generation of female manga artists like Ikeda (Shamoon

2012, 101-102). The color tinting described above serves a similar effect, a comment by the visual narrator that even when we see a replay of a scene shown to us in some previous episode, it has been put back into play as the duly subjective experience of the character remembering it. In both of these techniques, the filmic narrator suspends the typically synchronous relationship between the fabula and the story to narrate internal experience.

The emotive background bears a strong visual similarity to the abstract splashes of color found in some of *Gundam*'s most intense action sequences. This is a technique found across a wide variety of television anime featuring action sequences going back to *Astro Boy*. In such a cut, the backdrop is replaced with an abstract field of color and shapes, often in speedy motion as it slides in a looping animation across the frame. It has a strong visceral effect, both visually isolating the objects or characters involved from their surroundings and filling the visual frame with motion, enhancing the frenzied feeling of the action. Even a still background with various shades or tints of colors can add to the visual cacophony, amplifying the visual impact of the action. The emotive background can likewise mark intense moments of emotional focalization, giving them a similarly spectacular visual presentation.

From an examination of the backgrounds, I now turn to the bodies that are drawn, animated, and composited over them. Amuro's animated body serves expressive narrative functions that also draw the viewer into his interiority. For this segment of my analysis, I begin with an examination of the status of the

character in television anime.

Drawing Amuro's Eyes: The Soulful Body and Character Design

In his analysis of anime and its place in Japan's media environment, Steinberg highlights the centrality of the character to what he terms "anime's media mix" (2012). The character anchors a complex network of media production, and the lines that draw the character have a particular capacity for travel between a diverse array of commoditized forms, especially manga and toys. The character produced by television anime arises from the particular media conditions of television anime. Under these conditions, Lamarre (2009) identifies a tendency toward drawing a certain type of animated body that he terms the "soulful body" (201). I have argued above that Amuro's interiority is explored through conventional cinematic narrative techniques, but it is also inscribed in the very lines that draw him.

The aesthetic of television anime is known as "limited animation" (*rimiteddo animēshon*), pioneered in Japan by Tezuka's *Astro Boy,* which initiated many long-lasting industrial and aesthetic standards (Steinberg 2013). Limited animation tends to be animated "on threes," that is, with a new drawing—or positioning of drawings—every three frames (Lamarre 2009, 187). Techniques of limited animation were quickly developed and codified to work with this , such as an emphasis on storyboarding layouts that reduces the amount of bodily motion required to be animated. Limited animation is counterposed to so-called "full animation" (*furu animōshon*), an ideological practice that tends toward a

higher number of drawings per second, typically "on twos" for every other frame, typically investing the characters with much more potential motion (Lamarre 2009, 187).[15] The full animation standard is associated with the American cartoons of Walt Disney, Tōei studio's "*manga eiga*" films of the 1950s and 1960s, and Miyazaki Hayao, Takahata Isao, and their Studio Ghibli. In his theorization of animation, Lamarre (2009) identifies full animation with what he calls "cinematism," a movement into depth allied with the ballistic logic of the camera in live-action cinema (9), while limited animation is associated with animetism, associated the lateral motion in the "multiplanar image," compositing planes in the movement of animation cels and backgrounds across the surface of the image (6). *Gundam* is firmly located in the tradition of animetism and limited animation—Tomino and much of the other staff at Sunrise were alumni of Tezuka's production houses, having learned to storyboard and direct on series such as *Astro Boy*. *Gundam* makes extensive use of compositing animation techniques: cels sliding across backgrounds, backgrounds shifting behind cels, and limited character movement for dialogue sequences, to name a few.

Vitally, Lamarre (2009) rejects the notion that limited animation is characterized by stillness, instead arguing for the dynamism of the limited animation image. Animetism's compositing produces what he terms the

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[15] These terms refer to full cinematic movement at twenty-four frames per second, the standard projection speed of live action animated film.

"animetic interval," which suggests the extended interval between unique images each second, but primarily refers to the "movement between planes of the image" (7). The result of this is that "limited animation tends toward the production of 'soulful bodies,' that is, bodies where spiritual, emotional, or psychological qualities appear inscribed on the surface" (Lamarre 2009, 201). The force of these qualities that are more likely to be expressed through the effect of more frequently changing drawings in full animation gets redirected into an internal dynamism that gives the character life. While characters in limited animation will not be as physically expressive in movement as their full animation counterparts might be, they have inscribed in the very lines that make up their bodies that physical expressiveness.

The lines that draw each instance of the character are modeled on established character designs. Ian Condry (2013) has detailed the integral role of character designers in the conceiving of a series (35-40). A great deal of an anime series is expressed through how characters appear, so the bodies of the characters do a lot of visual work, and this is certainly true of Yasuhiko Yoshikazu's designs for *Gundam*. The hectic pace of seeing a year's worth of animated television episodes from conception to airing may stretch the staff's faculties thin, leaving to occasional moments in the series in which characters and machines appear to diverge from their designs, or character movement is especially limited or awkward. However, following the logic of the animetic interval and the soulful body, "character design becomes all important, taking precedent over character

animation" (Lamarre 2009, 201). One of anime's tendencies—not absolute, but a prevailing pattern—is the expression of a character's interiority on his or her very surface. I contend that the principles of *Gundam*'s character designs are prime examples of these soulful bodies. Yasuhiko's lines, particularly for Amuro, are invested with a certain sensuality; every aspect of Amuro's design is drawn with flowing yet taut lines that express a reserved vulnerability, reflecting his interiority.

Of particular note are Amuro's eyes. It is these eyes through which Amuro looks and the visual narrator allows him to focalize. In numerous instances, the series draws attention to Amuro's eyes. When Lalah Sune first meets Amuro in Side 6, she comments on his beautiful eyes. Notably, in the ending credits sequence for each episode, accompanied by the song "Forever Amuro," the very first image is of Earth, which then fades into an extreme close-up of a finely detailed illustration of Amuro's left eye. Amuro's eye fills the entire frame, inviting the viewer to study and appreciate its elaborate detail. It slowly zooms out to reveal more of his face. As the vocalist, Ikeda Kō, sings "Amuro, do not look back" (*Amuro furimakanaide*), the viewer has ample time to take in the delicate lines that bound his round eyes, the pretty curl of his eyelashes on both his eyelids and around the side of his eyes, and the ambiguously emotional tilt of his eyebrows. Their raised arc suggests concentration and the slight furrowing might suggest a guardedness, while the wide openness of his eyes and the intricate highlights in the irises and pupils

70

imply both curiosity and innocence. These features of his eyes are

evident to one degree or another in the many official character art drawings and

in a great many of the frames of animation throughout the series. The gentle,

flowing quality of the lines that make up Amuro's eyes in this cut is contiguous

with the gentle curves and curls of his hair and his nose.

The eye is a key component of a character's design,[16] and in *Gundam*,

Amuro has the most distinctive and elaborate of all. Amuro's eyes, as part of the

design of the soulful body, express his interiority, but also enhance the filmic

narrator's techniques of identification. In anime's close print media relative,

manga, a visual language of the eye had been developed in the pages of *shōjo*

magazines, as Shamoon (2012) analyzes:

> The shape and size of the eye in *shōjo* manga distinguishes male
> and female characters, with the larger eye as a marker of femininity.
> The largest eye serves to identify the main character and
> encourages the reader to identify with him or her. As the
> exploration of emotion is the dominant mode in *shōjo* manga, the
> large eyes are a key expressive feature. (99)

These visual innovations are inextricably tied to the deep exploration of

shōjo characters' interiority. *Gundam* is robot anime—*shōnen* anime—and not *shōjo*

manga. However, I contend that *Gundam* builds its interventions in the robot

anime genre from a range of generic systems and aesthetic sources, including

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[16] To illustrate how much of the character's soulful body is bound up in his or her eyes, in a 2015
museum exhibition entitled The Art of Gundam at Tokyo's Mori Arts Center, a hall showcasing
Yasuhiko's animation keyframes hung cutouts of numerous characters' eyes from the ceiling,
evincing how distinctive and essential the eye is to a character's realization.

shōjo manga.[17] *Gundam*'s character designs do not differentiate between the sizes of male and female characters' eyes along gender lines, but Amuro has large, lucidly drawn pupils, perhaps larger than any other character in terms of physical dimension, and decidedly so in terms of visual detail. Indeed, as described above, Amuro's eyes are wide and delicately elaborated. In his official character design illustrations and in the majority of animation cels in which his face is visible, he has three large white highlights. Often, in times of emotional distress, they shimmer from frame to frame, the only bit of movement on screen.

This elaboration of the animated eye is resonant with the identification function at work in *shōjo* manga's eyes. As the chief focalizing character, it is most commonly Amuro's focalization that is realized onscreen. Compatibly, the viewer is drawn into the eye itself, asked to identify with Amuro, by virtue of the both the narrative language of cinema and the animetic principle of character design. The soulful body of Amuro emotes an expressive world that the viewer is, in turn, invited to identify with.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored many of the series' narrative strategies, finding in them a keen interest in the interiority of the *shōnen* that raises it to the level of theme. Most of my examples and closely read moments up to this point have been drawn from the first two-thirds of the series. As such, we can see that

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[17] While Yasuhiko's work as a manga author has been serialized in *shōnen* venues, he has shown a keen interest in *shōjo* manga, exemplified by his role as director on an anime adaptation (1987) of Takemiya Keiko's *shōjo* classic *Kaze to ki no uta* (1976-1984).

the techniques used to represent Amuro's interiority in the story are well-established by the time we reach Episode 34, "A Fateful Encounter" (*Shukumei no deai*), in which Amuro meets Lalah and the series enters its final major narrative movement. The war accelerates to a close in these episodes, but most fatefully, through this meeting, the interpenetration of the interiorities of two individuals is realized in the new figure of the Newtype.

CHAPTER IV

ANIMATED BODIES AND INTERPENETRATING INTERIORITIES

Through the narrative interest in *shōnen* interiority developed through

Gundam's serialization, the series elevates it to the level of a major thematic

interest. This theme intensifies in the last ten episodes of the series, as it hurries

toward its conclusion with the introduction of the Newtype. The Newtype is a

new evolution of humanity with seemingly superhuman powers, and Amuro is

discovered to be one. This fantastic concept reaches its climax in Episode 41 with

the spectacular visualization of the full meeting of interiorities of two individuals,

as Amuro and the Newtype Lalah Sune are able to achieve a complete mutual

understanding, a complete, joyous, and empathic interpenetration of their

interiorities. In this same moment, though, Lalah tragically dies. This is a result

of the other potential in the Newtype. The Newtype interacts with mechanical

technologies of war with superhuman fidelity, making this evolution into a

potentially unparalleled killing machine. This ironic contradiction presents a

future for Amuro that is seemingly torn between these two potentials as a

Newtype. This is perhaps a surprisingly fantastic development in a narrative

world invested with versimilitudinous realism. But at the level of theme, it

amplifies the ongoing tension between interiority and exteriority in play from the

beginning of the series. Can the interiority of Amuro the *shōnen* exist

harmoniously with the exteriority of the battle narrative?

The narrative interest in interiority generates strong ironic tensions with

the conventional mechaphilia in the robot anime genre. These elements are both

amply present in *Gundam*. These ironic tensions are a part of the broader system

of representation in Japan's postwar manga and anime, with different types of

lines that describe the bodies of machines like the Gundam and those of

characters like Amuro. Through the figure of the Newtype, its associated visual

motifs, and established techniques of interiority, *Gundam* seeks a resolution of

these tensions.

Encountering the Newtype

The series introduces the concept of the Newtype late into its run, and the

word follows even later. In Episode 37, while a Zeon commander fights with

Amuro's Gundam, he marvels at his opponent's incredible combat instinct and

exclaims to himself "Perhaps he's one of those 'new types' [*atarashī taipu*] I've

heard about!" This is a different term the Newtype (*nyūtaipu*), as it uses the

Japanese adjective for "new" and affixes it to the borrowed English word "type."

The neologism Newtype is first spoken in the following episode, when Char—in

the middle of combat with Amuro—remarks to himself "This is worse than I

imagined. The Gundam's pilot is a Newtype as well." Though the viewer will

not have heard the word "Newtype" before, it is immediately clear what this "as

well" refers to: his companion Lalah Sune, who must be this Newtype. Lalah is a

girl about Amuro's age, whom Amuro meets in Episode 34 while taking shelter

from the rain on the neutral colony Side 6. Soon after their first encounter,

Amuro discovers that she is a protégé of sorts of Char's. Lalah believes she owes

Char a debt for saving her life—from what she was saved is never explicitly stated in the series—and she is being trained to operate advanced new weaponry. It is understood that this relationship and the concept of the Newtype have been developing off screen, but have been withheld from the story by the filmic narrator.

At the point in the history of the fictional world the series' fabula covers, the Newtype is not fully understood, though it is being theorized by those who encounter or inhabit it. The Newtype's superhuman reaction time and facility with weaponry has been leveraged by Zeon technicians to create Lalah's specialized mobile suit the Elmeth, allowing her to remotely operate small cannons with her mind. But the potential of the Newtype has an apparent second domain—the capacity to sense and enter another human being's mind.

Significantly, in this same stretch of episodes, more of Char and Sayla's background is revealed to the viewer in the form of a flashback narrated by Char. Lord Zeon, the father of Char and Sayla, was assassinated by Degwin Zabi, and Char has risen in the ranks of the Zeon military specifically in order to get close to and take revenge on the dictator and his family. Perhaps even more significantly, though, Char establishes that the pretext for the establishment of the Principality of Zeon as a distinct governing entity was his father's belief that "the future of mankind was to be reborn as Newtypes" (Episode 38). Jennifer Hayward notes (2009) that this sort of revelation is characteristic of serial narrative across media: "Dramatic plot reversals retrospectively rewrite months

of narrative, forcing audiences to acknowledge that all perspectives are partial, colored by place and context, and that we must seek knowledge of all points of view before making judgments"(4). Char and Sayla's revelation places the emergence of Newtypes—predicted by Lord Zeon years before their emergence—as a root cause underwriting the war and brings a seemingly late-arriving concept to the very center of not just the world and themes of the final ten episodes, but retroactively across the whole series.

The entrance of the Newtype has been foreshadowed earlier in the series' story, though it had been primarily associated with fighting ability. In Episode 9, when Matilda visits the White Base, she informs Bright that the Federation is interested in analyzing his juvenile pilots' combat data—particularly Amuro's—as it is hypothesized that they might exhibit psychic abilities. Bright responds in disbelief and Matilda confirms his skepticism. In Episode 20, Ryu Jose briefly refers back to this suggestion, but it otherwise remains in the background until near the end of the series. In Episode 23, one episode before the encounter with Lalah, many on White Base take notice of a dramatic enhancement of Amuro's fighting ability. Amuro is already clearly the finest mobile suit pilot on the ship, routinely outfighting veteran Zeon pilots, but in this episode, Amuro singlehandedly defeats nine Zeon mobile suits in space combat in under three minutes. The sense that Amuro is something different is explicitly stated by both Fraw Bow and a Federation commandant at different points in Episode 35, when they say "He's different from us." By Episode 40, Amuro's reaction time and

ability have exceeded the Gundam's abilities; so Amuro can fight efficiently, it is overhauled to keep up with Amuro's superhuman reaction time.

Whenever a Newtype is seen to be utilizing his or her abilities—for example, interacting psychically with another or sensing the presence of another person—a hyperactive animated line appears to shoot out of his or her head. This line is white or yellow, and its shape and position change with every frame, dancing like lightning, a burst of constantly moving, hyperactive motion on the surface of the image in limited animation. We are never given any indication that the line is itself visible to the characters within the diegetic world. Rather, it appears to be a device of the visual narrator that facilitates a graphic representation of these abilities onscreen. I will call this dynamic, unbound electric line the "Newtype effect."

This Newtype effect becomes particularly meaningful when read in juxtaposition with the other animated lines in the frame. Ōtsuka (2008; 2013) has argued the cartoon lines in Japan's postwar manga and anime into two competing representational systems, existing in tension with one another within the same frames. One is the voluptuous, plastic lines that bound the bodies of cartoon characters, while the other is the geometrically realistic line that describes the contours of machinery. *Gundam* follows these regimes, as well. I must stress that the Newtype effect is not a line in the same sense that the lines that represent the bound physical spaces of character bodies and the physical structure of mechanical bodies are lines. Those describe bound space according

78

to different representational systems. The Newtype effect is instead metaphysical, linked unbound energy and potential, touching the interior of the Newtype.

Cartoon Characters and Machines: A Postwar Discourse of the Animated Line

Both Ōtsuka (2013) and Lamarre (2009; 2011) draw on the work of Soviet filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein in their analyses of cartoon lines. Eisenstein was a great admirer of Walt Disney's cartoons of the 1930s and wrote extensively about them, leaving an unfinished manuscript at his death (2011). A pioneer in the Soviet cinema and in the theorization of cinematic montage, Eisenstein was fascinated by the flights of imagination expressed in Disney's cartoons and the plasticity of the line that draws the cartoon body. Lamarre (2011) summarizes Eisenstein's discussion as follows:

> Drawing a cartoon line is very different from drawing a line between two points, or a structural line. The continuous amoeba-like contour creates the sense of a center of motion within it. It makes for an animate center, as if there were a point within the contour that at once grounded and provided the impetus for mobility and elasticity of the line on either side of it. (200)

The line that draws the body of the cartoon character, then, is different from other techniques of drawing in that the cartoon line bounds space on the page or cel, creating a body that is imbued with the spirit of animation — one might even describe this as soulfulness. This is the same "Disney-esque expression" that Ōtsuka (2008) identifies with Tezuka's manga characters (115). The plasticity of these cartoon bodies expresses itself quite literally in Disney and other Hollywood cartoon characters that "are physically 'tough to kill'" or even

"deathless" (Ōtuska 2008, 118). A cartoon character like Disney's Mickey Mouse might have a piano dropped on his head or fall from a great height, but will typically—quite literally—bounce back to form, a spectacular exhibition of his plasticity. For Ōtsuka, this influence in Tezuka's early manga, adapting a system borrowed from Hollywood, remains embedded in the system of representation in manga and anime even up to the present.

However, the plastic cartoon body may traumatically encounter a different form of line—the mechanical line—and it is precisely this meeting that Ōtsuka (2008) reads as a "symbolic turning point in terms of how [postwar manga] will depict 'life' and 'death' and 'sex.'" (121). He writes this in his discussion of a wartime manga by a young Tezuka, "Till the Day of Victory" (*Shōri no hi made*) in which a cartoonishly drawn boy is killed by Mickey Mouse in an American fighter plane. The bullets pierce his chest and he bleeds. While the boy is rendered with lines characteristic of the plastic cartoon body, the lines that draw the warplane are more like "structural lines," renderings of machinery that obey rules of scientific perspective. This type of rendering, Ōtsuka (2008) explains, is derived from the scientifically developed techniques of "'true sketching' (*shinsha*) or 'realism'" first used in Japan "at the demand of the Army and Navy as a drafting technique," a "scientific realism" marked by its militaristic origins (120).[18] Lamarre (2009) identifies the scientific basis for this

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[18] Ōtsuka (2013) notes that depicting machinery in this style is not inevitable in cartoons. Many Disney cartoons and even some of Tezuka's own manga render vehicles with plastic cartoon lines (122)

realism as Cartesian perspectivalism, in which planes and points seek a scientifically determined representation on a three-dimensional grid from a monocular viewing perspective (212). That is, this perspectival technique of rendering machinery and weaponry is a verisimilitudinous system of representation provided for by modern cultural institutions of science and military.

Ōtsuka (2013) writes that "In imparting a flesh-and-blood body to a character deriving from the Disney style, Tezuka determines the nature of postwar manga" (275). The turning point he reads in "Till the Day of Victory" extends beyond to the succeeding decades of media production, binding the intratextual and systemic tension in manga and anime texts to an ideological conflict steeped in militarism, Americanism, and the issues of rearmament and nationalism that saturated political discourse during Japan's postwar period. With its flesh-and-blood human cartoon bodies, *Gundam* inherits and participates in this discursive system, with the plastic qualities of its human character designs and the scientific realism used to draw its ships, tanks, and the bodies of its mobile suits.

The Gundam itself represents a generic break from previous giant robots not only in terms of its narrative purpose but in its design. Okawara Kunio's design emphasizes the mechanical nature of the robot. Exhaust vents are prominently featured on its chest, the round joints at its elbows and knees are plainly articulated on the exterior, and while it has a pair of pupil-less eyes that

light up, it does not have a fully exposed humanoid face with nose and mouth, as many of its predecessors do. The other human-piloted mobile suits on both sides of the conflict share similar design details. The Zeon mobile suits have shared traits among their designs, including a unified monocular design that gives the form an even less humanoid appearance and a system of tubes that apparently serve a circulatory function. Super robot designs predating *Gundam*, in accordance with the genre convention that finds their role in their narratives as more hero character than mere weapon, tend toward more exaggeration reminiscent of the design trends in *tokusatsu* series of the day. For example, the Zambot 3 from the eponymous series, also an Okawara design, minimizes the external exposure of its mechanical workings features more spectacular design flourishes, including an enormous crescent moon-shaped emblem on its forehead reminiscent of the helmet associated with the Date clan in Japan's Warring States era. Like a *tokusatsu* hero, the Zambot 3 is associated with a signature finishing attack and pose, as its *shōnen* pilot Kappei shouts "Zambot Moon Attack!" and a beam of light shoots out from the crescent moon emblem, obliterating his enemy. The Gundam has no such signature attack, or poses, instead winning its battles by making use of a powerful but standard limited arsenal of built-in and accessory weapons. Both in its mechanical design and its patterns of animation eschews the hero-like traditions of robot design.

Still, the lines that draw Okawara's designs in both series follow the representational conventions of scientific realism, of Cartesianism, contrasting

82

with the plastic bodies of their pilots. In particular, this is an issue in *shōnen*

texts—manga and anime, and especially robot and war genres—which exhibit

"mechaphilia," which Ōtsuka implies "literally draws boys into militarism"

(cited in Lamarre 2009, 212). This is perhaps no better visualized than the

disappearance of the *shōnen* pilot into a robot built for war. We may return here

to the very first image of Amuro in the series, his beautiful eyes obscured by the

microscope, a machine drawn with the same kind of fidelity to scientific realism

that renders the series' weaponry. As a Newtype, Amuro's proficiency with

mechanical technologies of death like the Gundam is unprecedented. But this is

just one aspect of this potential. Will he be too be irretrievably drawn into

militarism?

The Newtype Effect

As explained earlier, a foundational aesthetic and production technique of

the system of limited animation within which *Gundam* works is a minimization

of unique animation frames, often creating the appearance of motion not by

changing drawings but by means of the animetic interval, sliding images across

the planes of the frame. Lamarre (2009) argues that this brings the force of

animation to the surface of the static image, suppressing the need for drawings

that change as often as they do in full animation. It is striking, then, that the

appearance of the lines that draw the Newtype effect are anything but static.

They are more like lightning. For each new animation frame, the constituent

lines of the Newtype effect change in shape, unable to be so contained as the

83

bodies of characters.

The first apparent appearance of the Newtype effect occurs in Episode 24, in the midst of a tense battle. In this battle, Amuro is fighting against three of Zeon's most elite pilots, a group known as the Black Tri-Stars, each piloting a mobile suit called a Dom, who have specifically been called in to take on the Gundam. Improbably, Amuro defeats them by himself. The visual narrator slows down the action as the Gundam lunges at a Dom, only to find itself in point blank range for another Dom's beam rifle. This cut is focalized externally, allowing for a bird's eye view of all three mobile suits. The next cut is a close-up shot of Amuro from the inside of the cockpit. His face twitches with a fearsome intensity, alternating between two subtly different cel drawings each frame. The Newtype effect emerges from Amuro's eyes. It occurs in a fraction of a second, lasting only five frames, but the visual effect is stunning. In the first of these frames, over this repetitive cycling of animation cels, a semi-transparent, four-pronged white star appears over each of Amuro's eyes. In the next frame, his eyes fill with this white color. In the third frame, the white fields combine and create a jagged, abstract line. In the fourth and fifth frames this white burst dissipates across the frame. From this, the next cut shows Amuro dodging the point blank rifle shot, quickly maneuvering underneath it, and slashing at the rifle, destroying it with his beam saber. It is an exceptionally skillful combat move, and its execution is subtly highlighted by this heretofore unseen visual flourish. The viewer seeing this for the first time will not know to associate this

84

with the concept of the Newtype, though the developing skillfulness of Amuro's fighting has been commented on repeatedly at this point and the suggestion by Matilda that he might possess psychic abilities connected to his combat potential might linger in the viewer's mind.

The Newtype effect returns in Episode 33 in a similarly intense battle sequence, the same one described above in which he defeats nine enemy mobile suits in under three minutes. Immediately after felling the eighth mobile suit, a similar-looking flash, the Newtype effect appears briefly over his left eye and he throws his head back, as if following its guidance. As if by instinct, he extends his beam saber up and behind him—toward the direction of where the effect dispersed—and the Gundam intercepts an incoming mobile suit, running it through. Beginning with this episode and until the series' ending, this becomes a routine visual element of battle sequences, and it appears when Amuro almost effortlessly divines and attacks the location of an enemy. The nature of this new motif remains obscure to the viewer who has thus far only seen it in battle, but it is in the next episode that it is dramatically recontextualized along a different axis: the interpersonal. It moves from the exteriority of battle to a radical association with the interiors of characters.

In Episode 34, Amuro takes refuge from a rainstorm under the eaves of a cabin on the colony Side 6. Looking into the rainy sky, he takes note of a bird. Suddenly, the Newtype effect appears—this time yellow and a bit smaller in aspect—again flashing over the span of five frames. It begins in Amuro's eyes,

converges between them, and then explodes outward. In slow motion, his head turns to his left. He walks in this direction around the side of the cabin to find a girl sitting on the covered porch in front of the cabin. This is Lalah Sune, though he does not yet find out his name. With this phenomenon, the two contrasting aspects of the Newtype's ability — as yet unnamed in the story — have been linked in their connection to the appearance of the Newtype effect. The duration of the cuts in this sequence is extended and deliberate, emphasizing the strangeness of this encounter. Lalah says to Amuro, "Poor thing," and he turns to look back at the swan. In slow motion, it falls from the sky, apparently dead. Amuro asks her how she could have sensed its impending death, and in his voice and physical expression he seems to be asking how it is he had been able to sense her presence himself. Their first encounter ends abruptly when the rain clears, she compliments his beautiful eyes, and she runs away.

This strange encounter appears at the beginning of the episode. In the middle of the episode, right before the episode's act break, Amuro internally recognizes his rival Char in person on Side 6 without having ever laid eyes on him; he wonders how he spontaneously understood who he was. In the action sequence that closes the episode, in an internally focalized shot showing a ghost image of his enemies, Amuro declares to his own astonishment "I can see… how they'll move." The Newtype effect reappears here in this sequence, its lines extending from within Amuro's mind outward, a visual representation of his dawning ability. The beginning and ending of the episode hold the two

86

potentials for the Newtype in contrast.

The next two episodes' stories develop the concept of the Newtype further; Newtype effects continue to appear in combat and Amuro's combat abilities continue to grow. It is in Episode 37 that a dramatic new aspect is revealed. Lalah seems to sense Amuro's presence when he arrives in the abandoned space colony she and Char are temporarily staying in. She calls the presence she senses "someone like me." In the last scene of the episode, Amuro fights a Zeon commander. Lalah is removed some distance from the duel, observing from a distant hilltop. She clearly continues to sense Amuro, and the strangeness of this experience is highlighted by the auditive narrator as it deploys a discordant, atonal track instead of one of the series' stock battle themes. As Amuro is about to destroy his opponent, cinching the cockpit of his mobile suit with two beam sabers, there is an abrupt cut to Lalah, still, wearing a horrified expression on her face with a distorted background behind her. The screen flashes white and then a close-up of her face appears. A pulsing Newtype effect dances electrically before her eyes. The coloring of Lalah's close-up is distorted, bathed in orange, a technique thus far developed to illustrate a subjective, internally subjective. Her mouth does not move as her voice appears on the soundtrack: "Stop already! It's over!" Immediately following this is a cut to Amuro inside the cockpit, as if what we as viewers just saw was his internal subjective experience. Panicked he exclaims "What?" Lalah has apparently entered Amuro's mind, and the connection to what drew Amuro to Lalah on

Side 6 and Amuro's enhanced combat ability becomes clear. Her warning comes too late to stop Amuro, and his opponent dies. In the aftermath of the battle, we see Amuro in close-up, disturbed and distressed, and he ponders aloud "What is this?" The cel of Amuro slides rightward across the surface of the image as his close-up cross-fades into a close-up drawing of Lalah, likewise sliding rightwards, as she asks the same question, her eyes quivering. As if in answer to Lalah's question, Amuro appears in the middle of the frame, viewed from a distance, set against a cacophonous emotive background with bright colors rotating. The visual narrator is showing Lalah's subjective perception and its object is a boy whom she has only briefly met and whose name she does not know. Lalah's close-up returns and she sounds out his name slowly. Back in his cockpit, Amuro turns his eyes upward and slowly says Lalah's name, also previously unknown to him. The next cut, and the final image of the episode, sees the Gundam from behind, straightening itself and looking toward the hill Lalah is on. After a moment, he powers off the blades of his beam sabers. The Newtype—which will at last be given its name in the following episode—has transgressed and expanded *Gundam*'s techniques of interiority.

Interpenetrating Interiorities: The Consummation of Newtypes

Lalah and Amuro never again have an in-person meeting, but they meet each other twice more in battle. It is in their final combat encounter in Episode 41—which costs Lalah her life—that *Gundam*'s Newtype effect, the thematics of interiority, and the problematics of mechaphilia come into open conflict..

88

The basic sequence of events is as follows: Amuro and Lalah engage in combat. Amuro deftly destroys the rapidly moving auxiliary cannons that Lalah commands with her mind. Throughout this fight, they telepathically communicate, the method of their communication signaled by the change in cel tinting that has marked internal dialogue. As they fight and speak, Newtype effects spring from their heads. Lalah accuses Amuro of having no reason to fight because he has nothing to protect, "no family (*kazoku*) and no home (*furusato*) inside your heart." Amuro asks why this matters. After the act break, Amuro and Lalah continue their psychic conversation, now visually represented with their two bodies appearing floating against a fast-moving emotive background. They wonder if their meeting is fate. A montage of metaphorical imagery involving stars and waves succeeds this. Lalah's body appears in the center of a starry field. The boundaries of her body suddenly extend outward in an expansive movement like the electricity of the Newtype effect, as this expanding field takes on the character of ocean waves. In this cut, Lalah's bound plastic body becomes unbounded, flowing outward. Then an outline of Lalah's face fills the frame, her eyes closed, and she lets out a nonverbal exclamation. A white Newtype effect dances over the image, running from the top to the bottom of the frame. Amuro's face, also in outline but with open green eyes, fades into the image as the Newtype effect continues to dance Amuro's voice exclaims as if in response. Something major has clearly happened, as the characters have seemingly converged, the images of their interiorities fused with the Newtype effect.

89

The montage is abruptly interrupted by both Char and Sayla's entrance into the fight, each joining their military ally, and we quickly return to the external diegesis of the battlefield. Char nearly delivers a felling stab to his sister Sayla's Core Fighter plane, but is telepathically warned by Lalah to stop. Char stays his blade and is relieved to see he did not kill her, but Amuro takes advantage of this opening and slices off Char's mobile suit's arm with his beam saber. As Amuro prepares to finish Char, Lalah intercepts the Gundam's attack with her Elmeth. Amuro pierces the cockpit, and the glass on the face of her protective spacesuit explodes. An enormous number of white lines, jagged like those seen in the Newtype effect shoot out upward from her head, signaling a transition to an interior representation.

And so we see Amuro and Lalah again represented bodily over an abstracted, emotive background where they talk about the future of humanity. They decide that people are becoming like them—like Newtypes. Amuro says he believes this because they were "awakened and understood one another" *(kimi to okoshite wakariaidatta kara)*.[19] Amuro even believes that one day humanity will be able to control time. Lalah responds—with her final words, imparted to Amuro in this interior space—that she can see time (*toki ga mieru*). Then a song entitled "Now Good Night" (*Ima wa oyasumi*) begins playing on the soundtrack, a sort of reprise of the ending theme song, "Forever Amuro," but in a more upbeat key,

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[19] While the official English subtitle translation reads "able to understand one another each other." I translate this as "awakened" (*okoshite*), which is important for understanding the scene.

with substantially different lyrics and a female singer's voice. This song accompanies another montage of lyrical imagery. A field of stars shines, dancing onscreen. A pastoral scene sits suspended in space against a starry backdrop; two distant, anonymous figures run carefree across this field, dazzling light white shining in their tracks. Combined with the dramatic major key on the soundtrack, this montage has a decidedly positive narrative character. The final image in the montage is a strange image of glowing white sperm descending on and apparently fertilizing a glowing yellow egg against an emotive background. They glow like yellow and white Newtype effects. After each sperm attaches to the egg, a Newtype effect sparks from the center of the egg, expanding to fill the screen, and the scene cuts back to the external diegetic world; Amuro withdraws his beam saber from the Elmeth, a crude return from this abstracted interior world to the world of machines and war. Lalah's weapon explodes in front of the Gundam. Inside the cockpit, Amuro cries with tears streaming down his face: "La… .Lalah. I've done something terrible. I've done something I can never take back."The filmic narrator gives this moment ample screen time to allow the audience to take in Amuro's tearful eyes and feel his sorrow.

In the cut leading into the final montage, Amuro and Lalah's profiles transparently overlap. Drawn with abstract visualization techniques heretofore cultivated to express the internal focalization of one character, this sequence is the filmic narrator offering a joint internal focalization between Amuro and Lalah. The montage, with its strange, lyrical, and obscure images, is celebratory

91

and even euphoric. This is the "awakening and understanding" that Amuro and Lalah have achieved at this tragically late moment. The final, shining image of sexual reproduction is suggestive of humanity's future. The glowing shapes of the sperm and egg are linked to the glowing white and yellow of the Newtype effects seen over the last several episodes. And they appear against the exact same rotating, brightly colored emotive background against which Amuro first appeared in Lalah's interior space in Episode 37. This is a consummation of the interpersonal potential of the Newtype, and it is presented as beautiful. The meanings of the images in the montage remain necessarily obscure because, for *Gundam*, such a miraculous achievement as the complete understanding of another person can only be suggested, not fully articulated.

The song that scores the final montage serves as a sort of counterpart and rebuttal to the ending theme song. As discussed in Chapter III, "Amuro Forever" is sung by an adult male voice whom we can align with the military-historical interests of the voiceover narrator. This further aligns him with the Cartesianism and mechaphilia of the mechanical line that draws the mobile suits these two youths pilot. In "Amuro Forever," the vocalist implores Amuro to not look back toward his childhood and steel himself as a man, never showing tears. Instead, the lyrics sung by Toda Keiko are highly emotional in quality, beginning with "I'll spread my wings and embrace you/I wonder if you'll be lonely tomorrow/We do not feel such things/So please sleep now, Amuro." The lyrics and the musical mood of the original song's melody have been transformed into

a highly emotive, comforting lullaby, though tinged by a mature sadness.

Amuro and Lalah's fateful final battle features two different types of penetration: mechanical and interior, reflecting the two potentials of the Newtype. This tension is poignantly captured in the harsh juxtaposition that transitions from the montage back to the externally focalized battlefield. The lines that draw Amuro and Lalah's weapons are not the plastic, soulful lines of the human cartoon character's body nor are they the electric, expansive, and unbounded lines of the empathic Newtype. Rather, the mobile suits' bodies are drawn with the un-plastic, mechanical lines, adhering to the "heartless geometrizing" (Eisenstein 2011, 35) of Cartesian perspectivalism, and linked to the legacy of militarism in *shōnen* anime. The interpenetration of Amuro and Lalah's interiorities is a mutually euphoric experience and is suggested to be regenerative of humanity, while the penetration of their exterior robot bodies is destructive and tragic. It arouses deep sorrow and suffering—the war machine is a path of death. As Amuro cries in his cockpit, we see he feels the crushing weight of taking a human life that now seems all the more valuable for the potential he now sees is lost to war and the machine of death he pilots.

Conclusion

This is not yet the end of the series. The story ends in Episode 43 with a decisive battle at the Zeon asteroid base A Baoa Qu, but I contend that in this spectacularly narrated moment of complete mutual understanding between Amuro and Lalah, *Gundam* reaches a certain climax. Thus the Newtype effect in

Gundam, definitively linked to the series' narrational foregrounding of interiority, proves a visual intervention in the problematic of the postwar manga and anime systems of visual representation. Of the two Newtype potentials, the one associated with machines, mechaphilia, and masculine militarism has been grimly and sorrowfully narrated, while that associated with the ability to communicate with and understand other humans has been held up by the filmic narrator as its promising opposite. The return to the battlefield, to the world of war and weaponry, is jarring but that which was experienced in that mysterious internal place, suspended in time, between the intimate inner lives of people rings out across the series as a whole.

The term Newtype bears a striking resemblance to the generational term *shinjinrui*—the new breed—though the term would not be coined until the early 1980s. Nonetheless, it draws on a generational discourse that was active and intensifying through the late 1970s, with its concerns of youth being lost to technology and consumerism. This is a danger for the Newtype as well, with Amuro at risk of being drawn into machinery. Note, too, that the Newtype is a generational phenomenon, appearing among the teenaged characters in Gundam. The Newtype has an additional potential and a promise, connected to a future that might dispose of machines and forge a path without war. The promise of the Newtype is animated by an interpersonal concern for the interiority of others and a radical empathic understanding.

CHAPTER V

EPILOGUE

In this thesis, I have argued that with its narrative strategies and visual techniques, *Gundam* foregrounds its *shōnen* protagonist Amuro's interiority. Such a narrative concern with the character's inner life transgresses the conventions of the robot anime genre, placing the series into a complexly critical relationship to the very narrative conventions and industrial systems that make the series possible. The exterior themes and mechaphilia of the conventions of giant battling robot conventions exist in tension with this thematized interiority, manifesting in the narration of the series and its animated lines. In the narrative, this culminates in the introduction of the Newtype, through which the stakes of this tension are embodied. Through Amuro's empathic abilities as a Newtype and the destruction of the titular giant robot, *Gundam* symbolically moves to release this tension by destroying the Gundam, leaving the series with an open-ended promise that attempts to reject mechaphilia in favor of a radical empathy. This resonates with cultural discourses of war and peace and anxieties about the generation of real world young people of approximately the same age as Amuro.

With a text as complex and influential as *Gundam*, there are many aspects left to interrogate, even in consideration of all the critical work that has come before this thesis, and it is my hope that future research will take up some of these open ends. While here I have dealt with the interiority of the *shōnen* and alluded to the series' intergeneric brushes with *shōjo* media and its problematic

relationship with masculinity, I have not taken up the issues of chauvinism in the *shōnen* genre and in this particular text. A vocal sexism is even explicitly espoused by Amuro early in the series. The masculinity this thesis has concerned itself with is one rooted in the *shōnen* media of the 1930s and firmly allied with the nationalistic and militaristic interest in cultivating boys to fulfill leadership roles and serve the patriarchs of the nation-state. Analyzing finer discourses on gender and the particular depictions of female characters as complements, foils, and symptoms of *shōnen* interiority would be one possible and productive direction future scholarship on *Gundam* might take.

To close this thesis, I now turn to another avenue, the future of *Gundam* as a franchise and the sequelization of its narrative interest and themes. The last two episodes of *Gundam* see Amuro espousing an increasing reluctance to kill founded on his experience with understanding Lalah—both he and Char survive their final battle. He states that he believes everyone on the White Base might be or be becoming Newtypes. At the end of the series, the Gundam's body is destroyed and Amuro ejects from its cockpit to be reunited with his companions, whom he has guided to safety by touching their minds with his Newtype abilities. The last time we see Amuro speak, he has tears in his eyes and he vocally answers Lalah's accusation that he has no family and no home: "I have a place to go back to," he says as if to her, "Nothing feels as good as this." This young man has no need or desire to hide his tears, and one senses that the encounter with Lalah has transformed his connections to all others. He is no

longer the boy in the cockpit of the mobile suit. He has symbolically discarded the mechanical and war-waging potential of the Newtype for the competing potential of a joyous connection with others. Embracing the latter suggests revolution and a renewal of humanity.

In the end, though, this revolutionary potential of the Newtype is still mysterious. Amuro and Lalah's Newtype moment of total mutual understanding is abstract, symbolic, and suggestive. *Gundam* may be able to draw war and politics—as Tomino has claimed was his desire—and offer a critique, but the series concludes shortly after the potential in that moment has been revealed and does not offer a further look at what this sort of Newtype future might look like. This promise remains ambiguous.

As previously noted, after its initial, truncated airing, *Gundam* gained a great deal of popularity. This was partly buoyed by the interest in Japan's growing anime fan scene, cultivated in conventions and in the pages of anime fan magazines. The first of these magazines was *Animage*, debuting in 1978, partly in response to the growing fan enthusiasm following the 1977 success of the *Space Battleship Yamato* film (Hikawa 2013, 23). During *Gundam*'s run, the series was featured on the cover of the magazine twice—in September and December of 1979—and with a retrospective cover following the series' cancellation in March of 1980. These features in these magazines highlighted official art and reproductions of animation cels from the series alongside interviews with and articles written by key series personnel like Tomino and

Yasuhiko, represented photographically alongside their animated creations. Hayward notes that serial narratives foster this kind of collaborative reading community, enabling fans to participate in "an economy of information and interpretation" that increases audience engagement and cultivates a shared identity around the text and even the broader genre (Hayward 2009, 153-154). First *Yamato* and then *Gundam* contributed significantly to the formation of this anime and manga fan culture that would come to be known as "otaku" in the early 1980s (Lam 234-235). But it is important to stress that *Gundam* was and is a mass culture phenomenon among young people. While the series participates in a *shōnen* genre, it resonated with a growing audience that encompassed young men and women alike.

As mentioned in the introduction, beginning about a year after the television series' conclusion, Tomino directed a trilogy of films adapting and reusing material from the series, telling mostly the same story in a more condensed form and with much of the same animation. The film trilogy reworks some thematic material to place a stronger emphasis on the Newtype, introducing the concept in the first film. The final film further intensifies the generational discourse, adding a bold new statement to the ending. After Amuro reunites with his companions, the last image of the film is an English-language title card seemingly addressed to an audience of young people around Amuro's age: "And now in anticipation of your insight into the future." In this direct address by the visual narrator, the metaphor for *Gundam's* generational themes,

expressed through Amuro, is explicitly underscored.

Contributing to the broader *Gundam* boom after the series' first broadcast was the launch of a line of plastic models of the series' mobile suits that came to be known as GunPla (*ganpura,* short for "*Gundam* plastic models") by the toy maker Bandai. While Clover, the series' primary sponsor, did poorly with its *Gundam*-related sales, the military model-like scale (1:144) and attention to detail on *Gundam*'s real robots built off an existing mechaphilic enthusiasm for plastic model construction and the series' main mobile suits sold out faster than Bandai could produce them (Hikawa 2013, 26). The versimilitudinous nature of Okawara's mechanical designs found a ready and receptive audience. While *Gundam* finds its resolution in an overcoming of mechaphilia, its popularity was in no small part informed by a mechaphilia in its audience.

While *Gundam* became the seminal text in the real robot genre, the *Gundam* moniker has served as a generic label unto itself as it has spun elaborated into franchise, beginning with a 1985 sequel series directed by Tomino entitled *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam,* and launching its first alternate universe spin-off *Mobile Fighter G Gundam* (*Kidō butōden jī gandamu*, 1994) directed by Imagawa Yasuhiro. Beginning with *Zeta,* the *Gundam* sequel series directed by Tomino[20] hold the promise of the Newtype in suspense, including Amuro's awakening. The demands of the robot anime genre and now the *Gundam* series as a sort of

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[20] The most recent of these is *Gundam Reconguista in G* (*Gandamu Jī no Recongisuta*, 2014-2015), a very distant future sequel to *Gundam*, millennia after humanity has obliterated itself, that reintroduces the concept of the Newtype late in the series.

subgenre find a narrative again returning to the same tensions that animated

Gundam. Picking up eight years after the conclusion of *Gundam* and set during a

new conflict between new postwar factions, *Zeta*'s narrative bears strong

structural resemblance to its predecessor, following the involvement in the

conflict of a young male Newtype named Kamille Bidan who pilots a new

Gundam-type mobile suit. A few episodes into the series, Kamille meets Amuro,

who is living a lonely life under house arrest in Wyoming due to the Federation's

distrust of Newtypes. This Amuro—whose design has been updated by

Yasuhiko—expresses on his soulful body a new kind of sorrow apparently

linked to the arrested promise of the revolutionary potential he and Lalah

exchanged in his youth. For the viewer whose last glimpse of Amuro was his

tearfully happy reunion with his companions, this will appear a cruel subversion

of *Gundam*'s ending. The Newtype potential embraced by Amuro has apparently

been thwarted by the diegetic systems of politics and war, aligned with a

mechaphilia that also sells and animates the scientific realism of the mobile suits

outside of his narrative world. *Zeta*'s serial narrative is not Amuro's story,

though, and the *shōnen* protagonist Kamille primarily focalizes the narration;

Amuro, now a generation removed from this young pilot, returns home before

the end of the series. *Zeta* continues to employ and build on the narrative

strategies and techniques of interiority exploited in *Gundam*, including the return

of the Newtype effect. Over the course of the series, Kamille comes to know and

care for many characters who, like Lalah, die in battle. It is explicitly drawn that

they have been folded into his interiority when the bodies of his lost companions appear superimposed on the screen as Kamille's mobile suit delivers the killing blow to his final opponent. Kamille is empowered by the interpersonal connections he has forged in part with his Newtype abilities. But is it perhaps it the engine of mechaphilia—the one that drives the very existence of *Gundam* and the real robot genre—that leaves Kamille in a vegetative state after he wins this battle, his interiority apparently annihilated? As the genre and the *Gundam* series continue to proliferate, can the revolutionary promise of the Newtype ever be fulfilled—in the Universal Century or in ours—so long as the heartless geometries of its mobile suits still seek their bounded space in the Cartesian grid?

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