

Looking towards the future:
Theme exploration and authorial intent in
Mobile Suit Gundam

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p><i>Mobile Suit Gundam</i> on vuonna 1979 julkaistu TV anime sarja, joka oli omana aikanaan erittäin vaikutusvaltainen ja joka jatkaa olemassaoloaan monissa eri muodoissa. Sarjaa on tutkittu ennenkin mutta tekijä Yoshiyuki Tomionon pääteemasta ei ole tehty merkittävää tutkimusta.</p> <p>Tässä tutkimuksessa analysoidaan Yoshiyuki Tomionon omin sanoin kuvaavaa teemaa; 'aikuiset ovat vihollisia.' Sarjan tarina sijoittuu sci-fi tulevaisuuteen, jossa ihmiset ovat rakentaneet siirtokuntia avaruuteen Maan ympärille. Tarinan konflikti kertoo sodasta joka on syttynyt avaruudessa ja Maassa asuvien ihmisten välillä.</p> <p>Tarinan suurin vaikutus omalla ajallaan oli näyttää todenmukaista sodankäyntiä, jossa kumpikaan osapuoli sodassa ei ollut hyvä eikä paha. Tarinan päähenkilöt koostuvat nuorista henkilöistä jotka joutuvat ottamaan osaa sotaan vastoin heidän tahtoaan.</p> <p>Käytän aineistolähtöistä analyysia tuodakseni esiin toistuvia teemoja tarinassa jotka voin koota nähtäväksi yhdessä paikassa.</p> <p>Analyysin päätavoitteena on tarkastella nuorien päähenkilöiden kanssakäymistä eri hahmojen kanssa jotka ovat heitä vanhempia ja tutkia ovatko tarkoitetut teemat löydettävissä tarinasta ja miten ne tuodaan esille katsojia varten.</p>	
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1. Introduction

Mobile Suit Gundam (MSG) is a televised anime series, produced and animated by Nippon Sunrise. Written and directed by Yoshiyuki Tomino in 1979 the original run of the show spanned 43 episodes. It was the very first MSG series, which has subsequently become a huge multimedia franchise that spawned numerous additions from sequels and prequels in the form of different television series as well as movies, novels, comic books, video games and completely separate stories made by new creative teams. For Japan its cultural significance is similar to the pop culture phenomenon of Star Wars. Just like the image of Darth Vader is recognizable to many people who have not even seen Star Wars, the same can be said in Japan of Char Aznable, the masked antagonist of MSG.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2019, the franchise is still running strong with original creator Tomino's novels being adapted into upcoming movies. Tomino, 78 years old at the time, even attended the Anime NYC convention in New York in celebration of the series' anniversary. The comments that he made in the interviews conducted at the event were partially responsible for sparking the interest in the creation of this paper. Research and analysis on the series has been conducted previously but mostly as part of a larger whole (Ashbaugh, 2010), whereas I will be focusing on a more singular point in the original series. In numerous interviews Tomino has stated that in his works and especially his entries in the Gundam franchise, the theme of "adults are the enemy" (Liu, 2009) is a recurring motif. As the series has been getting numerous new installments since its inception, which have expanded the scope of the narrative in more ways than one, how was the core theme of the massive franchise expressed all the way back in the series that started it all? In this paper I will examine the negative aspects that the adults of MSG display such as their passivity, self-centeredness and their glorification of warfare.

2. Background

Prior research by Ashbaugh (2010) provided a basis in prior research relating to the period of the show's creation and the research method of content-based qualitative analysis as described by Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2009) provided the method for analysis.

While analyzing MSG this idea of adults being the enemy is not verbalized by any of the characters. This means that discerning the meaning of various scenes requires one to look closer at the subtext of these scenarios. Subtext contains the truth beneath what is being said and done. Subtext is what the scene is really about (Ballon, 2005). From the perspective of this thesis the subtext of the story has been revealed to us from the start. The manner in which I have structured the analysis, gathering and elaborating on all these disparate moments creates a clear and concise framework of the theme's implementation.

According to Ballon (2005) there are three types of narrative conflict: Man against Himself, Man against Nature and Man against Man. Man against Himself includes stories where the central conflict is an internal problem within a character such as alcoholism. Man against Nature includes larger scale obstacles such as the iceberg in Titanic or an alien invasion. Man against Man is the most common one and includes most action focused stories including spy thrillers and more importantly for this thesis, war stories. In the case of MSG the conflict is between humans on opposing sides of the war and there are key personnel opposing the main characters whose defeat or death will have an effect on the overall war effort.

Ballon (2005) also explains how every single scene must have a purpose and by focusing on this purpose it becomes possible to better understand what is going on in the scenes beyond their surface details. Tying this with the earlier explanation of subtext, every scene that I have chosen from the show is there to show and reinforce the theme of adults being the enemy.

MSG stands in contrast to much of Japanese media of the time by critiquing Japanese post war myths such as nationalistic wartime heroics and the victimhood of Japan by associating the Principality of Zeon as a stand in for the Axis powers during World War II (Ashbaugh 2010: 345). If the fascistic overtones of the Principality didn't already make this clear Zeon even has an asteroid base named Axis. Ashbaugh (2010) points out direct parallels between two of the largest science-fiction anime of the time, MSG and *Space Battleship Yamato*. Both were created in the 1970s by creators who were both children during the end of the war. *Space Battleship Yamato*'s representation of the conflict leans more towards glorifying Japanese soldiers and the military as well as the overall victimhood of the nation whereas the opposing faction is portrayed more

villainously. This is in stark contrast with Gundam which does not glorify either side of the war and instead advocates for pacifism by showing the horrors of the war. The effects of the war are shown both on a larger scale as well as on a personal level with the different relationships between characters getting affected by the war.

3. Materials and methods

In this section I talk about MSG, as the main source of the analysis on a general level. I introduce the setting of the story in order to grasp the basics of the plot.

The story of MSG takes place in the year 0079 of the Universal Century calendar. The calendar began when the project for constructing space colonies first started. Half a century has passed since the Earth Federation started shipping its overbearing population to orbiting space colonies. The collective human population has passed over 12 billion of which over 9 billion are living in space with the wealthiest elite staying on Earth, while political dissidents and poor people were the first to be sent off to live in the space colonies. Nine months prior to where the first episode of the series begins, the cluster of colonies farthest from Earth declared itself the Principality of Zeon and began waging a war of independence against the Earth Federation.

At the start of the show the war, which saw half of the total human population die during the first month of the conflict, has seemingly been at a stalemate for 8 months. The new technologically advanced Earth Federation warship, White Base docks at a neutral space colony in order to receive the Federation's newest and greatest weapon, the titular Gundam mobile suit.

Unbeknownst to any of the people onboard they are being followed by enemy forces led by the Zeon ace pilot and future rival of the protagonist, Char Aznable. As fighting breaks out, the protagonist of the story, 15-year-old civilian boy Amuro Ray, tries to protect his home from the Zeon soldiers. The colony is heavily damaged and the civilian refugees, many of whom have now become orphans, board the White Base and take part in the war and try to survive. For the rest of the series the characters on board the White Base must deal with the Zeon soldiers hunting them down as well as with an uncaring Earth Federation military command.

The analysis method that I have chosen for this paper is qualitative content-based analysis. Content-based analysis aims to create a theoretical whole out of the research material. In a sense content analysis can be applied to any form of text be it books, speeches, drawings or in this case a television series. For content analysis there are two methods for conducting the research; inductive and deductive. Inductive analysis aims to find new results with no preconceived notions from the data being analyzed whereas deductive analysis is more focused on answering specific pre-planned research questions (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009). This paper focuses on the latter method.

In content analysis the research material describes the phenomenon being studied and the purpose of the analysis is to create a clear description of the phenomenon being studied. Content analysis aims to organize the material in a concise and clear format without losing the information it contains. The purpose of analyzing qualitative data is to increase the value of information, since the aim is to create meaningful, clear and uniform information about the phenomenon being studied from dispersed data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009).

This is achieved by combing through the research material, picking out the relevant findings, which tie together depending on the research question, reducing them to a concise form and then grouping these findings together in order to create a cohesive framework of the analyzed data in order to convey this information in an optimal manner. Through this process it is possible to come to broader conclusions about the researched materials (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009).

After having watched all 43 episodes of the series I chose to focus on recurring elements throughout the entire run of episodes which contained different variations of the theme being analyzed. What I did then was write down all the thematically relevant plot details from these episodes and condensed them to a simpler and more focused view of the events while also leaving the irrelevant details of the episodes out.

Primary focus was given to recurring negative traits shown in the cast of adult characters and how they compare and contrast to the main cast of characters, who are children and adolescents working together in the battleship White Base.

The questions that I will answer are

- Does the theme of adults being the enemy apply to both sides of the conflict?

- If and when these instances are noticeable, are the events of a similar nature or does the theme present itself in different ways depending on the circumstance?
- How are the main villains of the show portrayed when compared to the rest of the adult cast?

4. Analysis

I have split this section into two parts. The first part consists of a general overview of the theme of adults being the enemy in its various manifestations. The main recurring negative aspects that I've focused on are the self-centeredness and short-sightedness of the adults. The passive nature of the adults as well as the glorification of war and soldiers. The second part continues the same idea while looking at how it relates to a central concept in the world of MSG known as Newtypes, which are an evolved subspecies of humans who have lived in space who possess both a heightened sense of consciousness and greater levels of empathy.

4.1. The world and the characters

The vast majority of enemy pilots faced by White Base are adults, but aside from this obvious element, the theme of adults being the enemy comes up in many different forms. These different expressions of the theme are not exclusive to either side of the war but rather appear not only within the Earth Federation and the Principality of Zeon's side but also with neutral parties such as normal civilians.

One of the many recurring elements in the story is the self-centered nature of much of the adult cast. This can even be seen in the foundations of the story's setting. Due to the self-serving and short-sighted nature of the Earth Federation bureaucrats, the planet's natural resources were exhausted and the burgeoning population had to be moved into space. All of the Earth's elite were able to stay on Earth while nearly 80 percent of the total population were made to live in space. However, the Federation has lived only for their own sake and ignored those living in space. Thus, the people who had been forced to migrate to space and who were now living as second-class citizens harbored resentment towards the Earth Federation. This continual lack of foresight on the Federation's part is then taken advantage of by politicians who have now lived in space for their entire lives.

This egotism is something that the leaders of both factions of the war display. At no point up until the very end of the conflict does either side believe that there is any chance of them losing the war. The moment which best exemplifies this is when Gihren Zabi, the dictator of the Principality is shot by his own sister after Gihren had had their father killed. The idea of his younger sister betraying him in a fit of emotion is not even a possibility in his mind.

This notion of rejecting reality and being unable to see the bigger picture is also noticeable in smaller and more intimate scenarios, such as in episode 13 "Coming Home", when Amuro finds his mother, Kamaria, working at a refugee camp on Earth after the two of them having been separated from each other for most of Amuro's life. Once Amuro is nearly found by patrolling Zeon soldiers, Amuro shoots them to his mother's horror. Kamaria can't believe that her son could shoot at someone and Amuro snaps back at her, saying that they're fighting a war and if he hadn't shot the soldier then they would have shot him. Kamaria tells him that she didn't raise him to be such a violent person and when he leaves she yells after him that she's ashamed to call

him her son. The same episode also shows Federation soldiers who have been left behind by their commanders taking refuge in the same town. However, they are now spending their time doing nothing but abusing their authority such as taking food from vendors without paying them and drunkenly trashing other people's homes. This juxtaposition of Amuro now wearing the same uniform as these people creates a commonality for his mother to compare her son to these soldiers. Not only that but she is working to help people who have been wounded in the war and Amuro has now created more victims of violence.

Her comments towards Amuro's behavior are almost universally misguided. Though no clear dates are given, when Amuro left to live in space with his father Amuro was maybe five years old. Her comments about not raising him to act like this and wanting him to go back to how he was when they were together are absurd, especially since she voluntarily stayed on Earth and it seems like there has been no contact between them ever since. Shaming her son without giving any thought to what he has already been through and dismissing the reality of their situation is definitely not shown in a positive light.

Another major factor which comes up in the adult cast of characters is a notion of passivity and resignation. This can be seen as early as the first episode as the space colony where the main characters live is being attacked. The adults run and hide into shelters and do nothing else. The task of going around and trying to help anyone who is in need of assistance is left to the teenagers who end up becoming the crew of the White Base. In particular, when Amuro leaves the shelter to go look for other survivors, the adults in the shelter only meekly ask him to stay there. They do not take any sort of action either in going with Amuro to help others or forcing Amuro to stay in the shelter. A similar setup occurs within the White Base as the adults within the refugees are nothing but a nuisance. While the teenagers like Amuro and others step into the mobile suits and fight with their lives on the line to protect the White Base the adults do nothing but complain about their situation without contributing anything for the group. This is contrasted well with even the youngest of the war orphans doing whatever they can such as cleaning the halls and delivering food to the officers on board the ship.

The self-centeredness and short-sightedness of the refugees becomes even clearer when supplies on the White Base start to run out the adults start to steal more of the food for themselves. In one scene an elderly man even steals from the plate of a child when they are not paying attention. The situation with the refugees comes to a head when they arrive on Earth. The refugees take some of the children hostage in order to force the White Base crew to let them out of the ship.

Even though they are on enemy territory the refugees are only interested in getting out of the ship which is going through battle after battle. Despite them having never set foot on Earth, the refugees can only think about their current situation and how it is not convenient for them.

The passiveness of the adults can also be seen in the soldiers of both sides. In episode 14 “Time Be Still”, a similar situation can be seen on the Zeon side as a small group of disgruntled Zeon soldiers seem to have resigned themselves to the conflict. They form a plan to set bombs on the Gundam as they do not have any better equipment. At the end of the episode when the White Base crew work together to get rid of the time bombs, the Zeon soldiers dressed in civilian clothes drive past Amuro and the others while not being particularly affected one way or another that their plan of blowing them up didn’t succeed. It was just something to do as they have to hold their positions far away from their homes in space. Their lack of care for human life is also contrasted in Amuro, who at the beginning of the episode was still having difficulties killing his enemies even knowing that his opponents don’t feel the same way towards him. He hasn’t resigned himself to the role of an Earth Federation soldier whose only purpose is blindly following orders and killing Zeon soldiers.

The final example of the passiveness that I want to highlight is in episode 30 “A Wish of War Orphans”, where the White Base has arrived at the headquarters of the Earth Federation military in Jaburo. There the youngest members of the crew; Kikka, Letz and Katz, aged 4, 6 and 8 respectively, are taken to a Federation childcare center. There, the trio are confronted by many other war orphans. Even though the place is colorful and full of toys, all the children there are very passive as if the influence of the heart of the Federation has affected these children as well. There are no people taking care of them there. The only thing resembling a caretaker is a human shaped robot which dispenses juice and ice cream at the children’s request. Real human connection is replaced by things that money can buy. While these children have enjoyed relative peace and safety at the care center whereas the trio have been aboard a warship, the loving makeshift family of the White Base crew has allowed these children to keep on living their lives even though they have lost their original families. In the same episode, Kikka, Katz and Letz are also instrumental in saving the base as they assist in disabling bombs that Zeon soldiers had set inside Jaburo. Seeing how their friends had removed the bombs in “Time, Be Still” shows how the actions of the main White Base crew has made the trio more active and capable as opposed to the children living in the care center who haven’t taken any steps to living their own lives and moving on from their losses.

The lack of human connection seen at the childcare center can also be seen within the military leaders at Jaburo. As the White Base arrives the Federation officers greet them and dryly give the crew promotions and give the deceased members of the crew a two-rank promotion. This infuriates Amuro as they aren't willing to say even a word of thanks to them or their deceased comrades. The people on board the White Base are civilians so even in normal circumstances these ranks are meaningless but the amount of soldiers who have died in the war means that ranks and promotions hold barely any value any more.

The limited perspective among the adults is apparent in the way that the Earth Federation military treats the crew of the White Base. On their way to Earth, a Federation outpost imprisons them for coming in contact with top secret Federation assets. The White Base crew has to argue with the Federation officers to not court martial them as they are fighting on their side and have kept the White Base and the Gundam from falling into the hands of the enemy. Even while the outpost comes under attack from Zeon forces the stance of the officers is so strictly tied to their orders that they follow them almost blindly, whereas the people on the White Base have had to make do with what they have. Time and time again during the course of the story the Federation leaders only leave the White Base to fend for themselves in order to use it as bait for the Zeon forces.

In a story which focuses on war, a multifaceted aspect which appears within many characters is the glorification of warfare. In the first episode when the Zeon scouts infiltrate the colony they are only supposed to be on a reconnaissance mission but one of the soldiers, Gene, is fixated on propping himself up just like his younger commanding officer, Char Aznable, the ace pilot of the Zeon military. Because of this the neutral colony suffers massive damages and by the end of the episode Gene dies as Amuro boards the Gundam and fights back.

Related to the Gundam mobile suit is its creator and Amuro's father, Tem Ray. Exemplifying many of the shortcomings that have been covered thus far, Tem Ray is fixated on his work on the Gundam, resulting in him leaving his wife on Earth to go work in space and at the same time neglecting Amuro. Once Amuro meets up with him again in episode 33 "Farewell in Side 6", Tem is only interested in asking his son about how the Gundam is functioning. Later, when a battle outside of the colony is broadcasted to the televisions inside, Tem is watching the battle as if he were watching a sports game, disregarding the fact that his son could be killed at any moment. This is contrasted with some other characters such as Char Aznable who tells his subordinate Lalah Sune to watch the fight commenting on how a real battle isn't thrilling, like a

TV show. In an ironic twist, after the battle is over, Tem is frantically celebrating the capabilities of the Gundam and in a stupor falls down a flight of stairs, dying on the spot without anyone noticing.

Where the glorification of war heroes comes to its peak is when the White Base fights and defeats Dozle Zabi, the second oldest son of the Zabi royal family. This is the second time that the White Base engages in battle with the leaders of the Principality. In episode 10 “Garma’s Fate”, the youngest son of the Zabi family, the titular Garma Zabi, dies in battle against the White Base at the age of 20. The death of Dozle Zabi is very distinct compared to everything else in the series. At the end of the battle as Amuro has dealt major damage to Dozle's mobile armor, Dozle climbs out of the cockpit and starts shooting the Gundam with a machine gun in a completely futile effort. However, as Amuro is looking at this lone soldier he has a vision of some kind of specter of death emanating from behind Dozle which quickly vanishes as the mobile armor explodes along with Dozle. What makes this scene stand out aside from the fact that this sort of visual is not seen before or after this moment, is the person who gives off this sinister aura. By all accounts Dozle seems to be a relatively stand-up person who just happens to have been born on the wrong side. He is always fighting on the front lines along with his men and his men in turn respect Dozle's bravery and accomplishments. But in this case it could be inferred that the reverence for Dozle as a war hero is exactly the reason for Amuro's vision. The glorification of wartime accomplishments and the effect it has on others to follow in these supposed heroes' footsteps is a major force beyond just an individual person.

Due to the layered reasons behind the One Year War neither the Federation or the Principality is ever portrayed as being good or bad. However, the unambiguous villains of the story are the leaders of the Principality of Zeon, the Zabi royal family. Including the aforementioned Dozle the different members of the Zabi family embody all of the negative aspects discussed thus far.

The elderly patriarch of the Zabi family, Degwin, is the supposed leader of the Principality, but in truth the power belongs to Gihren, his oldest son, who has taken control of the nation away from his father. Degwin only acts as figurehead to keep up appearances and to sign orders that Gihren himself has concocted. Degwin admonishes his son's actions but doesn't take any steps into bettering the situation and has become passive. Garma's death is what ultimately makes Degwin move towards forming a peace treaty with the Federation and bringing the war to a close, as opposed to the billions of people who have died on both sides in the past year. The

prolonged passivity of Degwin has left Gihren more than enough time to stop his father from making the treaty a possibility.

Once the war is reaching its conclusion Gihren develops a new weapon of mass destruction. Degwin is the only one in the family who is against the construction of this weapon, yet he still signs off on it. After this, Degwin asks Gihren if he is familiar with a man named Adolf Hitler. Gihren seems to know the name as just some leader who lived during the 'Middle Ages.' After Degwin tells his son that he is currently following in Hitler's footsteps, Gihren seems to take his comment as a compliment. Once more the adults are shown not learning about the mistakes of the past and that they only keep on repeating them. But as the scale of the war has increased many times over compared to the ones waged in the past, these same mistakes become more and more devastating.

The only daughter of the family, Kycilia, recognizes the possibility of the Newtypes being used as an effective military asset whereas Gihren twists the Newtype theory into a kind master race propaganda with which to further motivate the Zeon citizens. This manipulation of ideas is a core aspect of Gihren's character as the blight of the people living in space is real, but this war for independence is only orchestrated by Gihren in order to set up a Zabi family dictatorship to rule over all of humanity. This lack of empathy also comes back to haunt Gihren as he assumes that her sister would not be bothered by Gihren killing their father which leads to Gihren's own death at the hands of his sister.

As the war nears its conclusion each member of the Zabi family is only thinking of their own gain while trying to sabotage each other. The end result of embodying all the negative aspects of the adults that the show has demonstrated is shown with the Zabi family ultimately destroying itself.

4.2 Newtypes

During the interview that was conducted at the Anime NYC convention, Tomino was asked a question about which of Gundam's various themes mean the most to him. His reply was; "That we all must aim to become Newtypes" (Rattray, 2019)

This section talks about the concept of Newtypes in the world of MSG. The people who are living in space are slowly becoming evolutionary divergent from the people living on Earth and these evolved humans are known as Newtypes. In an interview (Barder, 2017) Tomino explained

that “Speaking in modern terms, the first cognitive evolution occurred when Homo sapiens crossed the ocean and I wanted to depict the second cognitive revolution by going into space.” So in a sense the adults who cling to the Earth such as the corrupt Earth Federation leadership and people like Amuro’s mother aren’t able to see the bigger picture, or evolve and become better people.

At this point in the Universal Century Newtypes are extremely rare but three major characters in the plot awaken their Newtype potential: the protagonist Amuro Ray, the antagonist/rival ace pilot Char Aznable, who is 20 years old, and his 17-year old subordinate/lover Lalah Sune. Like Amuro, Lalah was also a civilian who wasn’t part of the Zeon military but because her Newtype powers had been discovered by Zeon scientists she had been placed under the care of Char, who would then train her to be a pilot. Out of the three of them, Char’s Newtype capabilities are by far the weakest.

Newtypes are people with higher levels of consciousness. They are capable of total mutual understanding; being able to understand another person’s beliefs, their histories as well as their intentions and emotions through a sort of empathic psychic link. Because of this their intuition is so strong that they are practically able to predict the actions of other people which grants them greater situational awareness on a battlefield.

Newtypes represent a possibility for the end of all wars and human conflict through total mutual understanding. In theory if all of humanity were to migrate to space then in time everyone would become a Newtype. But this isn’t what happens. Because Newtypes are able to predict the actions of other people and because their intuition is so great they are instead used as weapons of war by both the Principality of Zeon as well as the Earth Federation. The military authorities interpreted the idealistic nature of Newtypes as superhuman soldiers. In the aforementioned Anime NYC interview (Wood, 2020), Tomino also spoke about how things created in times of peace are transformed for use in warfare instead, like dynamite which was originally designed for help in mining operations.

During a large-scale battle involving Amuro, Char, Lalah and many others, Amuro and Lalah are able to form a Newtype connection which allows the two soldiers on opposing sides of the conflict to come to a complete understanding of one another. The greatest tragedy of the series comes during the battle when Amuro is about to deliver a lethal blow to Char, Lalah interposes herself between the two and Amuro accidentally ends up killing Lalah instead. For the rest of the show and the sequels neither Amuro nor Char is ever able to fully get over this event. Though

the series has shown casualties on both sides of the conflict, this moment is more important than any other because it represents the first time that two people had been able to surpass any idea of friend or enemy and could comprehend each other without misunderstanding but because of the war this connection was erased as soon as it was formed.

As the name Newtype suggests the people who aren't Newtypes are referred to as Oldtypes. This concept can be read as an allegory for newer generations taking over the previous generation and the ensuing conflicts between these generations. One way that this can be seen after the war ends and the plutocratic Earth Federation, who are afraid of space, rewrite history by declaring the Newtype theory to be the ramblings of crazed Zeon philosophers even while they themselves are trying to artificially create more artificial Newtype soldiers by doing human experimentation on the orphans who were left without a home after the war. The squandering of younger generations for the sake of the older ones fits right in with the self-centered nature that the Federation has displayed even during and prior to the events of the story.

The divide between Newtypes and Oldtypes means that adults are physically inferior to young people as they are not as cognitively advanced and thus cannot appreciate others on as deep a level as Newtypes. Furthermore, this divide suggests that adults in the show are by definition more antagonistic and enemy-like than the protagonist Amuro because he is capable of deeper empathy than the other characters. While this is true, it is made very clear that Newtypes are not gods or superheroes with answers to every problem. They are humans whose circumstances shape them into the people that they are just like everyone else.

As horrific as the war has been, the end of the story does have a hopeful ending thanks to Amuro and the youngest members of the White Base. In the final moments of the finale "Escape", Amuro uses his Newtype abilities not to fight and kill his enemies but by telepathically communicating with every one of his comrades and guiding them out of the gigantic Zeon space fortress that they are all currently fighting in. After they have all escaped the exploding fortress and Amuro is nowhere to be seen, the three war orphans, Kikka, Katz and Letz are still able to communicate with Amuro and are thus able to get him out of the fortress as well. The awakening of the young orphans' Newtype capabilities at the end of the story and their usage in order to save the life of their friend shows a new hope and possibility in the coming generations who may be able to use their gifts for saving others instead of harming them.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to analyze the events of the show MSG and whether its stated theme of adults being the enemy was indeed perceivable and if so how. Events from the beginning of the 43-episode series all the way to its finale were analyzed in order to identify and group together the ways in which the aforementioned theme was presented.

At the beginning I explained the basic setup for the world and characters of MSG: The One Year War waged between the Earth Federation and the Principality of Zeon and the civilian-turned-soldier crew of the battleship White Base. After this I set forth questions related to the theme exploration. These questions were related to how the thematic conflict represented itself on different sides of the war in the adult cast of characters and the setting in general. Special focus was also given to the main group of villains and how they were relevant in comprising many of the negative traits present in the rest of the series. In general the theme of adults being the enemy manifested itself in ways such as them glorifying war and soldiers as well as being self-centered and passive regardless of their affiliation or relation to the main cast of characters, as Tomino's own words implied. Adding to this representation of the adult characters was the introduction of the Newtypes which is shown with younger members of the cast. These Newtypes work both as condemning the adults who were responsible for making them soldiers in the first place but also

imply a brighter future with how they choose to use their abilities at the end of the story to save their comrades.

As I briefly mentioned the comparison between MSG and *Space Battleship Yamato*, while their different takes on the image of World War II in Japanese post-war media has been already studied, other elements of these two works could be expanded further. While the original *Mobile Suit Gundam* has been studied and analyzed it has mostly been as a mention within a larger piece of research rather than being the main focus of research, at least when it comes to research written in English. As such finding and referencing related studies proved difficult.

The limitations of this study are in its length and scope. Using the same questions in the analysis section could be expanded in many different avenues. The overarching nature of looking at the series in order to point out and group these disparate events means that careful examination is not possible here. In order to more thoroughly analyze the work in question could easily be done by giving more attention by carefully analyzing each episode separately and seeing how the subtext of the series may alter from a particular episode to another. Aside from that, another limitation apparent in this thesis and its format is the fact that only a single theme could be analyzed to a satisfying degree.

Other themes often found in war fiction such as the nature of masculinity could be another lens with which to examine MSG through. If further research were to be done while focusing on this same subject, Yoshiyuki Tomino has continued working on and off with the Gundam licence for the past 40 years now. It could be an interesting idea to compare and contrast his other works through the years to see if and how his ideas may have come through in different installments of the Gundam franchise. Works within the Gundam franchise have also been created by people other than Yoshiyuki Tomino. Analyzing how the Gundam framework is handled in the hands of other creators and how their worldviews affect the finished product could prove an interesting point of contrast, whether these series enforce or go against the ideas set forth in the original series. *Mobile Suit Gundam* holds a very special place in the world Japanese media and as such I hope that this thesis could be used as a basis for many different types of future research.

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