

"Peace Through Understanding": How Science-Fiction Anime *Mobile Suit Gundam 00* Criticizes US Aggression and Japanese Passivity

William Ashbaugh

State University of New York at Oneonta, United States

Mizushima Shintarou

Kinki University, Osaka, Japan

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the recent television series and movie *Mobile Suit Gundam 00* (2007-2010) and its criticism of contemporary geopolitics. *Gundam 00* posits a post-petroleum world where three competing superpower blocs use access to solar power from space platforms to vie with each other for supremacy while smaller nations serve as pawns in the great game. A secret force known as "Celestial Being" decides to force the elimination of war by using its four super-high-technology Gundam combat machines to attack any bloc, nation, or group that attempts aggression. The creators thus use science fiction to challenge the United States and its "preventive war" against Iraq, as well as the passivity of Japan's population when it comes to global issues. The message - that attempts to end war through war are foolishly counter-productive - is received almost simultaneously in Japan and the US through the globalizing influence of anime.

INTRODUCTION

As acclaimed science fiction/fantasy writer Ursula K. Le Guin explains in a non-fiction introduction to her novel *Left Hand of Darkness* (Le Guin, 1969), science fiction is not about predicting the future, but about interpreting the present. What holds true for its print form is equally true of film and television, where strong visuals are often more powerful than writing in the formation of collective memory (Fujitani, White, & Yoneyama, 2001). Examples from film include the first *Gojira* movie (*Godzilla in America*), directed by Honda Ishirō in 1954, with the monster representing misuse of atomic power for nuclear weapons (Napier, 1993; Tsutsui, 2004); *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a Red Scare-era critique of conformity directed by Don Siegel in 1956 (Mann, 2004); and the original *Battlestar Galactica*, a 1978-1979 television series directed by Richard Colla (and 1978 film version of its pilot episode), which invoked 1970s conservative fear of a surprise Soviet nuclear attack after détente had sapped American resolve (Muir, 2008). Susan J. Napier (2001) has suggested that Japanese animation (anime) can provide an array of insights into contemporary issues through its "distinctive narrative and visual aesthetic" (p. 8). In fact, the first 30-minute, regularly-broadcast anime program in Japan was Tezuka Osamu's 1963 science-fiction show *Tetsuwan Atomu* (Mighty Atom, but marketed in the US as *Astro Boy*). It focused on the evils of discrimination, with additional themes of environmentalism and pacifism also apparent (Schodt, 2007).

This paper examines one of the newest iterations of Japan's popular science-fiction anime franchise *Kidou Senshi Gandamu* (*Mobile Suit Gundam*), through its two seasons on

*The material presented by the authors does not necessarily portray the viewpoint of the editors and the management of the Asia Association for Global Studies (AAGS).

Vol. 5, No. 2, 2012-13. PRINT ISSN 1884-0337, ONLINE ISSN 1884-0264.

© Asia Journal of Global Studies, c/o The Asia Association for Global Studies
143-11 Hirato-Ooaza, Hanno-shi, Saitama-ken 357-0211 JAPAN

television (2007-2009) as well as its concluding movie, *Mobile Suit Gundam 00* (2010). The show was created during the American occupation of Iraq, as a troop-surge led by Gen. David Petraeus seemed finally to cripple the insurgency (Allawi, 2007; Ricks, 2009; Woodward, 2008). *Gundam 00*'s underlying theme is that peace can only be achieved through understanding, not through war, or preparation for war. Violence and destruction do not bring safety, but only make more enemies. Over 50 episodes, the creators show the futility of war, sharply attacking US foreign policy in Iraq - and in particular, the idea of a preventive war - while simultaneously criticizing Japan's 21st century isolationism.

Nothing in Japanese science-fiction fandom, with the possible exception of *Gojira/Godzilla*, can compete with the overwhelming nature of the *Gundam* phenomena; its popularity has literally changed the landscape. Since 2009, *Gundam*'s 30th anniversary, three different "life-sized" (18-meter) statues of the eponymous "mobile suit" have been placed in parks in Tokyo and Shizuoka, usually for nine months at a time ("1/1-scale 'life-size' Gundam," 2011). The *Gundam* animated science-fiction franchise has proven to be a cross-media juggernaut for Namco Bandai Holdings, the fourth largest toy manufacturer in the world; it is its most valuable franchise, with *Gundam* sales for fiscal year 2011-2012 expected to be worth 45 billion yen (approximately US \$580 million) (Namco Bandai Holdings, 2012). By 2012, Bandai, the toy and anime distribution subsidiary of Namco Bandai Holdings (to confuse matters, the conglomerate is often referred to as "Bandai Namco" or simply "Bandai"), and its animation arm Sunrise had created a huge number of programs with *Gundam* in the title: 12 different "universes," 14 television series, 4 original movies, 13 compilation television or straight-to-video specials, 11 compilation films, 10 original straight-to-video (OVA) series, and a bevy of animated shorts for placement as DVDs inside model kits, on amusement park rides, and on the Internet. This is not counting the numerous model and toy kits, games, video games, posters, costumes, ephemera, novels, and comics released by Bandai and associated companies (Simmons, 2002). By the 30th anniversary of the 1st *Gundam* plastic model kits (March 2010), Bandai had sold 400 million units ("History of Namco Bandai Holdings," 2012). In fact, sales of model kits from the original program provided Bandai with the funds to purchase the animation company responsible for creating the show in the first place, Nippon Sunrise (later just Sunrise) (Simmons, 2002).

The original *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979-1980) became a popular Japanese classic, and set the stage for a long line of sequels and then new programs using the *Gundam* name. The anime deserves to be considered science fiction rather than merely science fantasy: the original idea of high-tech, powered armor (or to look at it another way, human-piloted "robots") came from Robert A. Heinlein's science-fiction novel *Starship Troopers* (Tatsumi, 2005). *Gundam* is credited for helping push other Japanese creators into making more realistic science-fiction anime. Like other popular intellectual properties (such as Mickey Mouse or Star Wars), *Gundam* is often tied to marketing campaigns for various products, including Pepsi and Cup Noodle. It has even been featured directly in Japanese television commercials: voice tracks for two scenes from the original show were re-edited to advertise instant soup ("*Gundam* sells noodles," 2007). Sagamiya Foods has recently released packages of tofu colored and shaped like the head of the Zaku armor used by the show's antagonists ("MS-06 Zaku tofu," 2012). Nearly all Japanese have heard of the franchise, and most people under 50 have seen at least a few minutes of one of the shows, with many having watched a whole series or more. The three original movies have been declared the second-greatest anime ever released ("30 Greatest Anime Films," 2006). Popular comedians have even made careers out of laughing with, or at, *Gundam* and its fans (Tsuchida, 2009; Wakai, 2008). Finally, in a stunning news item that demonstrates *Gundam*'s adult fan-base, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries had to reprimand six of its employees for editing Wikipedia while at work, with one fan creating or making changes to over two hundred *Gundam* entries ("Ministry officials," 2007).

What distinguishes *Gundam* from other giant-robot anime? First of all, a *Gundam* show must feature manned, humanoid war machines, usually about 20 meters tall, with the *Gundam* model(s) being the most powerful. The conflict takes place several centuries

in the future, on earth and/or in space, near colonies orbiting the earth or moon (often referred to as the Earth Sphere). The pilots are usually teenagers lacking formal military training. Any given *Gundam* program will take place during or after destructive wars which have ravaged humanity. The *Gundam* programs thus constitute a turn away from the goofy super-robots common in Japanese space-fantasy anime, into the realm of science fiction through a "realistic approach to giant robot" animation (Wright, 2002, p. 5). The *Gundam* programs highlight respect for the environment (Solomon, 2011), a strong anti-war message (Ashbaugh, 2010; Hawkes, 2010; Vernal, 1995), a coming-of-age story, and a plea for better communication between people, sometimes shown through the evolution of humans into beings with telepathic or at least empathic abilities as they colonize outer space (Simmons, 2002).

GUNDAM 00

Mobile Suit Gundam 00 was broadcast in Japan from 6 October 2007 to 29 March 2009. For the first time in *Gundam* series history, the show aired with a six-month delay between two separate seasons. Bandai Entertainment, Bandai's US subsidiary, dubbed the show into English and aired it on the Sci-Fi Channel (later renamed the SyFy Channel) on US basic cable at the end of 2008. This was a good fit for *Gundam 00*, as the network had already aired the first three and a half seasons of 2004's re-imagined *Battle star Galactica* (*BSG*). *BSG* is a work of science fiction depicting the post-9/11 world, specifically the war on terror and the consequences of the invasion of Iraq (Ott, 2008); as we shall see, *Gundam 00* addresses similar world problems. The film *Mobile Suit Gundam 00 the Movie: A Wakening [sic] of the Trailblazer* continued and concluded the story. Opening in theaters across Japan on 18 September 2010, it was quickly followed by a subtitled version that premiered 10 October of that same year in New York City, then by global DVD releases of the television show and film. In this way, director Mizushima Seiji and writer Kuroda Yousuke exposed Japanese and American audiences almost simultaneously to the message of pacifism and criticism of contemporary geopolitics driving the series.

First Season

The first season of *Gundam 00* is set in a world three centuries from now, but eerily like our own time. Fossil fuels have run low, so humankind has turned to solar energy, and banned the use of polluting energy sources like oil and gas. Although nation-states continue to exist, three competing transnational groupings - the Union of Solar Energy and Free Nations ("the Union"), the Advanced European Union (AEU), and the Human Reform League (HRL) - each have access to solar power generated by gigantic orbital collectors. The United States is the main player in the Union, which includes most of North and South America, Australia, and New Zealand, while Japan (a "Special Economic Zone of the Union") supports it financially. The Union thus resembles the US bloc at the end of the 20th century. The major European powers (especially the leaders of Germany, Britain, and France) collaborate in running the AEU, which includes most of Europe up to the Urals, and controls much of Africa. The AEU represents a dynamic, independent European Union, willing to fight both the Union and the HRL. The HRL includes Asiatic Russia, China, and India, reflecting the rise of these regions to great-power status in the early twenty-first century. The few remaining non-aligned states consist of smaller, poorer countries which lack access to the cheap energy of the solar collectors, and serve as pawns in the zero-sum machinations of the three main powers. These independent states are given fanciful names that do not quite correspond to the world's current borders, although it is possible to guess at the inspirations behind them. Several are located in the Middle East which, at the dawn of the year 2307, has suffered 20 years of war and defeat while fighting to keep oil profits flowing, in defiance of a global ban on fossil fuels (imposed by the UN, which is controlled by the three blocs).

In the first episode, a secretive, private military force known as Celestial Being announces that it intends to end war and terrorism by deploying its four Gundam combat machines

- with weaponry more powerful than any state or group of states can muster - against any bloc, nation, or group that attempts aggression. The plotline is reminiscent of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), a classic film directed by Robert Wise in which an alien threatens world-wide destruction if humans continue to wage war (Booker, 2006). Although neither Kuroda nor Mizushima make any reference to Wise's film in interviews, they both acknowledge borrowing ideas from American and British science-fiction novels published in Japanese (Enomoto, 2009, p. 149). These include Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* (1951), in which a scientist able to forecast the future creates a plan to guide future galactic history; Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* (1953), involving first contact with aliens intent on helping humanity evolve into psychically-powerful beings capable of forming a group mind; and two books by James P. Hogan: *The Gentle Giants of Ganymede* (1978), which traces human origins to the remnants of a destructive extra-planetary war; and *Voyage from Yesteryear* (1982), about a cooperative, anarchistic society of human space colonists, transported to an exoplanet as embryos from an earth divided into three rival power blocs.

But how can one be sure that Kuroda and Mizushima have really used *Gundam 00* to comment about the present - just as Wise did half a century earlier - and are not simply out to sell more plastic model kits through another violent space fantasy? The fact that they borrowed heavily from science fiction novels argues against this, as do the words of producer Miyakawa Yasuo, who states that "Without a theme dealing with timely issues, it is not a *Gundam* program" (Ogawa, 2008, p. 15). The dialogue of key characters, artistic choices, plotlines touching on current-day geopolitical and environmental issues, and emphasis on the folly of pursuing peace through war - the key theme of *Gundam 00* - provide the strongest evidence that the fictional world of the early 24th century is meant to reflect the real world of the early 21st.

In one of the more telling exchanges in episode one, the Union president responds to the broadcast demands of Celestial Being for a global end to war and conflict as follows: "To end fighting through warfare, hmm? ... It seems as if this group is trying to act as a substitute for us. We have always been the ones who intervened in the world's conflicts in order to assure the safety of our citizens and to preserve our national interests. We were never inhumane." The irony in claiming that the US-dominated bloc was never inhumane cuts to the heart of international criticism of the United States, in marked contrast to what most Americans think of their government's actions abroad.

Secondly, certain characters bear a striking resemblance to national leaders active during the planning of the two seasons (early 2006 through late 2008). In the first few episodes (as the blocs respond to Celestial Being), two members of the AEU council - a woman with short blond hair and a man with short dark hair - look very much like a young German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy. In fact, to make the German connection even stronger, in episode 6 the former character (who is unnamed) approves an invasion, advising her colleagues to ignore "what happened three centuries ago" - a not-so-subtle reminder that Germany has been loath to send troops abroad for fear of stoking up old resentments caused by the Second World War. In episode 25, the new president of the Earth Sphere Federation strongly resembles President Barack Obama, while in episode 22, one of the main Union military commanders looks like former Secretary of State Colin Powell, down to the general's familiar glasses. A young, dashing version of Venezuelan President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías appears in episode 4, demanding an end to US control over the Union and its solar energy. This character is president of the fictional Taribian Republic; a map shown in the episode shows Taribia's borders, which encompass the territories of modern-day Columbia as well as Venezuela. At the end of season two, and in the movie (planning for which took place through mid-2010), the new president of the Earth Sphere Federation looks like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Besides the just-mentioned conflict between the United States and Taribia (Venezuela), *Gundam 00* mentions or depicts conflicts and organizations that were making headlines at the time of the creation of season one: the conflict between the Tamils and majority

Sinhalese in Sri Lanka (episode 2); the Real Irish Republican Army (episode 4), the problems caused by private military corporations (episode 6), the fear generated by coordinated terror bombings throughout the major cities of the world (episodes 7 and 8), and inter-religious conflict (the Conservatives versus the Reformers) in what appears to be Iraq (the fictional country of Azadistan which, according to a map shown in episode 12, appears to be the geographic combination of Iraq and Iran). Two of the four *Gundam* pilots joined Celestial Being after having their lives torn apart by real-world 21st century problems. Lockon Stratos (a codename) lost his parents and sister in a bombing by Middle Eastern terrorists. Setsuna F. Seiei (again a codename) was a guerilla child-soldier of the fictional Krugis Republic, which translates to the real-world region of Iraqi Kurdistan. As a child, Setsuna was brainwashed through religion into joining the terrorist guerilla group KPSA (the acronym is never explained). He was forced by the leader of the group, Ali Al-Saachez, to shoot and kill his parents, calling to mind events that were making headlines during the planning stage of production, albeit in northern Uganda; the Lord's Resistance Army forced children to kill their parents and then become child-soldiers (Ehrenreich, 1998; Finnström, 2006; Thernstrom, 2005). Child-soldiers have fought, and continue to fight, throughout the world in the post-Cold War era, especially in Africa and the Middle-East (Singer, 2005). Finally, the three blocs spend the majority of the first season desperately trying to develop weapons of war equal to Celestial Being's Gundams, with their powerful Gundam Nucleus (GN) drives, the harnessing of photons through a complicated, expensive, and secret solar reactor) - something that suggests the frantic quest for atomic weapons and long-range missiles by Iran and North Korea in the days following the US invasion of Iraq.

Protecting the environment is a minor theme of *Gundam 00*. By the start of the 24th century, strong prohibitions on exporting fossil fuels have eliminated all but a tiny petroleum industry. Instead, solar energy powers the industrialized world. This move away from polluting fossil fuels shows an attempt to limit the effects of anthropogenic climate change by cutting carbon dioxide levels. Yet over 50 episodes, the environment receives only a couple of brief mentions, in stark contrast to the sustained emphasis on war and peace. The creators' silence on global warming or climate change was not for fear of bringing up a divisive issue; rather, since wide agreement exists in Japan on the need to save the environment through changes to industrial practices, discussion of the issue was deemed unnecessary. The Kyoto Protocol (agreed to in 1997, and in effect internationally as of 2005) was signed in Japan's historic capital and religious center (Holroyd, 2011; Togo, 2010).

Gundam 00 mainly focuses on the foreign policy problems facing the world as planning and development for the two seasons took place (i.e., 2006-2008) - specifically the issues of war, terrorism, "preventive war," and peace. Like most Japanese, the creators of *Gundam 00* express profound distaste for the United States and its preventive war against Iraq; by October 2004, 71 percent of Japanese viewed the war in Iraq as a mistake (Midford, 2011, p. 128). In fact, celebrated anime director Miyazaki Hayao confessed in 2009 that the reason he had avoided traveling to the United States for the 2003 Academy Awards was his disapproval of the American invasion of Iraq (Pham, 2009). In order to criticize the US policy of preemptive war and the war on terror, during the show's first season, Mizushima and Kuroda created Celestial Being, the secret private military organization of *Gundam 00*. Its avowed goal of ending war through military interventions and the threat of war stands for US military posturing, although the American-led Union would have been a more obvious choice. The creators even lead the audience to sympathize with the show's young heroes, the *Gundam* pilots! Yet because Celestial Being is a small, secretive organization founded with assets of a rich, bearded man (Aeolia Schenberg), that attacks military bases worldwide, some might mistake it for a futuristic Al-Qaeda. The evidence that it is an allegorical link to post-9/11 US foreign policy rather than Al-Qaeda has to do with a few key factors. First, the show goes to great pains to indicate that Celestial Being was founded over two hundred years earlier, just like the USA. Its *Gundam* mobile suits are invisible to radar, and are vastly technologically superior to any other weapons. Even

masses of military equipment are no match for the Gundams, at least not until all three power blocs begin working together. The same overwhelming military power (at least on the technological level) describes 21st century US military forces. Celestial Being also has seemingly unlimited funds to pour into its weapons and campaigns; although the United States has taken on huge debt in the real world, its military spending still exceeds that of the next 15 nations put together, for 43 percent of the world total, or six times that of the second most profligate country (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2011). In episode 4, the Union president accuses Celestial Being of acting like a global police force, a role both friends and foes sometimes attribute to the United States. Finally, the name "Celestial Being," together with references to the Gundams as angels, suggests that God is on the side of the Gundam pilots. Claiming to be favored by God is also familiar from American public discourse on war ("General who roared," 2003; Weinstein & Seay, 2006), among other issues. The *Gundam 00* story contains much more religious subtext, ironically just as there was in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Booker, 2006). There is much to say about religion in terms of the plot (a critique of organized religion), personal beliefs of the characters, and imagery (many of the mobile suits are named after angels and other religious motifs); unfortunately, the topic must be left for future exploration.

The basic plot of the first season centers on various military interventions by Celestial Being in its quest to end war through war, even though the main characters (the Gundam pilots) understand and periodically discuss the implied paradox. By episode 14 (or four months after the first intervention), the characters note that although there has been a marked decline in conflict, and in the manufacture of military weapons, due to fear of the Gundams, Celestial Being's actions have prodded the three blocs to work together to try to defeat the technologically-superior upstart. In addition, a sinister force within Celestial Being abandons Schenberg's mysterious plan and, in an attempt to control the world, gives the blocs 30 pseudo-GN drives capable of challenging the super-powerful Gundams. At the end of the first season, Celestial Being seems defeated by the Earth Sphere Federation (the newly-combined forces of the Union, AEU, and HRL). Former Celestial Being agent Ribbons Almark is manipulating the Federation, ruling behind the scenes for his own personal benefit. But instead of a victory over Celestial Being, and the creation of a world government leading to universal peace, the Federation uses force to compel individual countries to submit to authoritarian rule.

Second Season

The second season began broadcasting six months after the last episode of season one; in the universe of *Gundam 00*, four years have passed. The dictatorial Federation has established a group of Autonomous Peacekeepers called the A-LAWS. Their job in 2312 is to keep the peace, but they also use military force (sometimes causing tremendous destruction) against smaller countries in order to persuade them to give up independence. Anyone who opposes the A-LAWS or the Federation is deemed a terrorist, recalling the words of George W. Bush on 21 September 2001: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (Bush, 2001). War is all the more deadly and sorrowful for civilians caught up in the indiscriminate use of force by the A-LAWS. Rising to challenge the Federation is a group called Katharon, essentially a world-wide terror organization. Abandoning Schenberg's lost plan, Celestial Being also reappears with a new mission: destroy the A-LAWS. Here the creators have turned the story upside down. Now the A-LAWS represent the United States in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere; the animators even draw the leader of the Federation to look like Barack Obama, no doubt reasoning that the policies of the United States did not really change with the election of a new president. This clever twist is similar to the events of the third season of Sci-Fi Channel's *Battlestar Galactica*, when the humans stopped being the victims of terrorism and instead resembled the Iraqi insurgents (Ott, 2008). By the end of the second season Celestial Being, Katharon, and rebellious troops of the Federation are working together to end the inhumanity and indiscriminate killing committed by the A-LAWS - including the use of space-based laser cannon as weapons of mass destruction, and the destruction of an orbital solar collector.

Two Binary Relationships

As a child-soldier of the KPSA, Setsuna experienced the horrors of war defending his homeland, the Krugis Republic (a Kurdistan pastiche), against an invasion by Azadistan (an allegorical stand-in for Iraq). Turning to Celestial Being, he fought with vigor throughout the first dozen episodes of season one. A chance meeting with Azadistan's head of state, Princess Marina Ismail, eventually had a major impact on his thinking. At first contemptuous of her views - not only because she was from Azadistan, but also because she kept telling him that Celestial Being's interventions were foolhardy - he slowly began to admire Marina, and ask probing questions about war and politics: "Why was the world so twisted?" Setsuna asks the princess rhetorically (episode 14). Princess Marina criticizes Celestial Being's attempt to stop the war through violence, or the threat of violence: "[Celestial Being is] a group of fanatics thinking they can stop war with force," she argues in episode 8. "Sure, war isn't right, but the reality is that [civilians] are losing their lives in these unilateral interventions. Countries have had their economies ruined. I wonder, do those people believe that they're God?" Conflict cannot be stopped by violence, she claims, only through understanding. Rather than automatically resorting to violence as a form of persuasion, Marina hopes that Celestial Being will try to find peaceful solutions through dialogue. As the second season progresses, this clash of opinions is slowly won by Marina, as a song she sings with war orphans becomes more and more popular. Her views show the audience the wrong-headedness of American preventive war. It is also part of the binary logic of opposites: the masculine tactics (war) favored by Setsuna versus the feminine tactics (dialogue) favored by Marina - which, according to recent feminist ethical writings about war and terrorism, some men might categorize as non-action (Cohn & Riddick, 2004). By the end of the second season, Setsuna has come to agree with the logic of peace through understanding. After the episodes aired, one of the creators weighed in: "I think that people will change by thinking," Kuroda explains. "Setsuna was changed because he acted after considering what he had learned. So, you should change by thinking, correct your incorrect beliefs, and go forward, something like that" (Enomoto, 2009, p. 150).

The other important binary relationship concerns Saji Crossroad, a young college student studying to become a space engineer. The first dozen episodes show his comfortable life in Japan, attending college with his foreign girlfriend. Saji's easy life is turned upside-down when his sister - a top reporter for the Japanese News Network - ends up learning too much about the shadowy figures trying to use Celestial Being to gain personal power, and is murdered (episode 20). His girlfriend loses a hand in an attack by a rogue Gundam, and ultimately pushes Saji away, breaking his heart (episodes 18 through 20). In this way Saji begins to experience the suffering common to the rest of the world. In the second season, he accidentally gets caught up in the struggle with the A-LAWS. By refusing to act, or by acting selfishly, Saji dooms hundreds of men to death when he reveals the secret location of a Katharon base (episode 2.5). He is then confronted by Tieria, one of the most steadfast Gundam pilots, who blames Saji's foolish actions for the lives lost. "It has nothing to do with me," Saji protests (in episode 2.6). "It's all happening in a different world." To which Tieria furiously responds: "Turning away from reality like that is just a kind of inadvertent malice!" Saji vows to make amends, but struggles to find a role for himself on the Gundam team, since he does not believe in war, and blames Celestial Being (unfairly, as it turns out) for his painful losses. Eventually he makes a distinction between helping, and actually fighting, and becomes an engineer responsible for repairing the Gundams, only venturing out with the Gundam pilots later, in order to save his ex-girlfriend. As Mizushima explains, as a student in Japan, Saji had an almost perfect life, and could ignore the horrific events occurring around the world, such as famine, war, and terrorism (Enomoto, 2009). Saji thus represents Japan as a nation, and Japanese youth in particular. For the past decade, Japanese young people have faced inward, refusing to study or travel abroad in the same numbers as the previous generation; life in Japan is simply too comfortable. They maintain little interest in the world outside of Japan (Ota, 2011). More than simply a typical Japanese, Saji and his actions (or lack thereof) are a metaphor for 21st century Japan. This second binary relationship is related to the first: if waging war

to make peace is doomed to failure, doing nothing is just as morally wrong, as ignoring problems in the rest of the world contributes to the horror. What kind of actions can make the world a better place? Saji's strange family name hints that Japan is at a crossroad, or at least was in 2006-2008. In 2004, the Japanese government sent Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to Iraq. The Japanese public quickly became upset over these deployments, leading to their withdrawal in 2006. Attempts to send the SDF to help reconstruct Afghanistan in 2007 were thwarted by a burst of public opposition, the so-called "Iraq Syndrome." Some observers point to this as an example of Japan refusing to honor its international obligations (Midford, 2011). Mizushima and Kuroda, through the fiction of *Gundam 00*, tried to prevent Japan from behaving like a turtle going back into its shell on the international stage. The consequences of non-action can be as destructive as war itself, as Saji learns to his horror during the second season. Japanese foreign-policy expert Paul Midford explains that Japanese skittishness arose more out of a reluctance to place the military under US control; peaceful missions under the sole authority of the United Nations would meet with public approval (Midford, 2011).

Film: *A Wakening of the Trailblazer*

The 2010 film *A Wakening of the Trailblazer* was created to conclude the *Gundam 00* story. In the film, Earth Sphere Federation has been turned into a truly representative and peaceful body. Problems still exist, such as mistreatment of people based on race or ethnicity, and greed leading to large-scale murder, so Celestial Being remains to watch over Earth's fragile peace. Schenberg's plan turns out to have been larger in scope than previously guessed. Ending war was only the first step in a larger three-part plan. The goal was to unify the Earth so that when humanity met its first alien life-forms, it could peacefully "dialogue" with them. Part of this dialogue would involve new humans called "innovators" who, through science or natural selection, would develop the ability to communicate through telepathy, live longer lives, and adapt their bodies for space travel to distant worlds. Much sooner than Schenberg predicted, an alien life-force called an ELS (Extraterrestrial Living-metal Shape shifter) erupts from Jupiter, encounters remnants of humans in space, and heads toward Earth. This unimaginable threat forces the Federation and Celestial Being to work together to save humanity, as the ELS's attempts to communicate seem like attacks. In the end, the many exciting battles waged by the desperate humans turn out to have been pointless. Their "victory" in the film occurs only when Setsuna, the first true innovator, decides to communicate with the alien force instead of fighting it. In the achievement of mutual understanding between humans and aliens, Marina's ideals prove correct. The film ends with a quote from Albert Einstein: "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding."

CONCLUSION

Anime directors and scenario writers are usually loath to explain the meaning behind their shows, and are more willing to discuss the "hows" of their animation than the "whys." By contrast, Mizushima has clearly stated some of his intentions with respect to *Gundam 00*. "When I was approached on this project, I pitched [to Sunrise] the idea of the war between a space monster and Gundam," he explained (Enomoto, 2008, p. 119). The idea for the movie thus preceded the series. Apparently sensing that the Sunrise executives were not very interested in his initial ideas, he reflected on the meaning of *Gundam*. "[A] *Gundam* series should be the story of war ... [and therefore] creators needed to think about what war really is. More than that, looking at war through winner and loser paradigms had been represented already through previous *Gundam* series. Then I thought I should defy convention in order to represent various modern wars, including terrorism and [other] ongoing conflicts" (Enomoto, 2008, p. 119). Clearly, Mizushima has followed the conceptual framework established by Tomino Yoshiyuki in the original series. The pacifism promoted by *Gundam 00*'s director and writer have led some critics to charge the show with being preachy, and with having a simplistic notion of how world peace might be attained. Mizushima agrees in part. "I do not think that I can come up with answers to such subjects

as the elimination of warfare, or how human beings can learn to understand each other. If I could, I would be able to win the Nobel Peace Prize!" he exclaimed. "What I want to represent in 00 is not the answers to such difficult questions, but the attitude of thinking deeply about these themes" (Enomoto, 2009, p. 146).

Through a powerful plot, amazing visuals, and war machines (mobile suits) recreated through fabulous model kits, Mizushima hopes that his not-so-hidden messages have been digested by his Japanese audience. In fact, Kuroda explains that Mizushima wanted to inform his audience about "what is going on in the real world - not through television news, but through fiction" (Nakamura, 2009, p. 237). Both Kuroda and Mizushima had a number of their anime programs exported, so it is possible that Mizushima also wanted overseas viewers to consider his critique of US foreign policy. Their ideas in *Gundam 00* no doubt found a ready audience in Americans tired of endless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the show illustrates, war creates more enemies than it eliminates, making attempts to end war through war quixotic at best, and foolishly destructive and counter-productive at worst. On the other hand, Japanese inaction on the international stage is also a mistake; one must be part of the world, not apart from it.

REFERENCES

- 1/1-scale 'life-size' Gundam to rise again in Tokyo. (2011, November 24). *Anime News Network*. Retrieved March 31, 2012, from <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/interest/2011-11-24/1/1-scale-life-size-gundam-to-rise-again-in-tokyo>
- 30 greatest anime films. (2006, December) *CUT*. Retrieved March 4, 2007, from <http://rocknet.jp/cut/next.html>
- Allawi, A. A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ashbaugh, W. B. (2010). Contesting traumatic war narratives: *Space Battleship Yamato* and *Mobile Suit Gundam*. In William, M. & Stahl, D. (Eds.), *Imag(in)ing the war in Japan: Representing and responding to trauma in postwar literature and film* (pp. 327-353). Leiden, N.L., & Boston: Brill.
- Asimov, I. (1951). *Foundation*. New York: Gnome Press.
- Booker, M. K. (2006). *Alternate Americas: Science fiction film and American culture*. Westport, CT and London: Praeger.
- Bush, G. W. (2001, September 20). Address to a joint session of Congress and the American people. The White House Press Releases. Retrieved April 15, 2012, from <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>
- Cohn, C., & Ruddick, S. (2004). A feminist ethical perspective on weapons of mass destruction. In S. H. Hashimi & S. P. Lee (Eds.), *Ethics and weapons of mass destruction: Religious and secular perspectives* (pp. 405-435). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Clarke, A. C. (1953). *Childhood's end*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Crawford, N. C. (2003, March). Just war theory and the U.S. counterterror war. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1(1), 5-25.
- Ehrenreich, R. (1998, January-March). The stories we must tell: Ugandan children and the atrocities of the Lord's Resistance Army. *Africa Today*, 45(1), 79-102.
- Enomoto, I. (Ed.). (2009). *Kidou Senshi Gandamu 00: Mission complete 2307-2312* [*Mobile Suit Gundam 00 Mission complete 2307-2312*]. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.
- Enomoto, I. (Ed.). (2008). *Kidou Senshi Gandamu 00: Waarudo repooto* [*Mobile Suit Gundam 00: World report*]. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.
- Finnström, S. (2006). Wars of the past and war in the present: The Lord's Resistance Movement/Army in Uganda. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 76(2), 200-220.
- Fujitani, T., White, G. M., & Yoneyama, L. (Eds.). (2001). *Perilous memories: The Asia-Pacific war(s)*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- General who roared. (2003, October 22). *New York Times*, p. A22.
- Gundam sells noodles. (2007). Retrieved December 15, 2007, from <http://donbei.jp/gundam/>
- Hawkes, G. (2010). Showing the world the right path: *Gundam Wing*. In J. Steiff & A. Barkman (Eds.), *Manga and philosophy* (pp. 229-240). Chicago and LaSalle, IL: Open Court.
- History of Namco Bandai Holdings. (2012). Retrieved April 15, 2012, from http://www.bandainamco.co.jp/en/about/history/#link_07
- Hogan, J. P. (1978). *The gentle giants of Ganymede*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Hogan, J. P. (1982). *Voyage from yester year*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Holroyd, C. (2011). National mobilization and global engagement: Understanding Japan's response to global climate change initiatives. In C. Holroyd & K. Coates (Eds.), *Japan in the age of globalization* (pp. 185-203). London and New York: Routledge.
- Le Guin, U. K. (1969). *Left hand of darkness*. New York: Ace Books.
- Mann, K. (2004, Autumn). "You're next!": Postwar hegemony besieged in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. *Cinema Journal*, 44(1), 49-68.
- Midford, P. (2011). *Rethinking Japanese public opinion: From pacifism to realism?* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Ministry officials found editing Wikipedia at work. (2007, October 4). *Yomiuri On-line*. Retrieved October 4, 2007 from <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/national/news/20071006TDY02302.htm>
- MS-06 Zaku tofu. (2012). Retrieved April 15, 2012, from <http://sagamiyakk.co.jp/zaku/detaile.html>
- Muir, J. K. (2008). SALTed popcorn: The original Battle star *Galactica* in historical context. In J. Steiff & T. D. Tamplin (Eds.), *Battle star Galactica and philosophy: Mission accomplished or mission frakked up?* (pp. 233-245). LaSalle, IL: Open Court.
- Nakamura, S. (Ed.). (2009). *Kidou Senshi Gandamu 00 kuronoroji [Mobile Suit Gundam 00 chronology]*. Tokyo: Takeshobou.
- Namco Bandai Holdings, Inc. (2012, February 10). Financial highlights for the third quarter of the fiscal year ending March 2012. Retrieved March 31, 2012, from http://www.bandainamco.co.jp/files/2011203QE6B1BAE7AE9720E8A39CE8B6B3E8B387E69699EFBC_2.pdf
- Napier, S. J. (1993, Summer). Panic sites: The Japanese imagination of disaster from *Godzilla to Akira*. *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 19, 327-351.
- Napier, S. J. (2001). *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing contemporary Japanese animation*. New York: Palgrave.
- Ogawa, H. (Ed.). (2008). *Otona no Gandamu: Kanzenban Gundam [Gundam for adults: Perfect Gundam]*. Tokyo: Nikkei Business Publications, Inc.
- Ota, H. (2011, January). Naze kaigairyuugaku banare wa okotteirunoka [Why is alienation from study abroad happening?]. *Kyouiku to Igaku [Education and Medical Science]*, 59(1), 68-76.
- Ott, B. L. (2008). (Re)Framing fear: Equipment for living in a post-9/11 world. In T. Potter & C. W. Marshall (Eds.), *Cylons in America: Critical studies in Battle star Galactica* (pp. 13-26). New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc.
- Pham, A. (2009, July 25). Miyazaki breaks his silent protest of America. *Los Angeles Times Hero Complex*. Retrieved January 31, 2012, from <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2009/07/25/comiccon-miyazaki-breaks-his-boycott-of-us/>
- Ricks, T. E. (2009). *The gamble: General David Petraeus and the American military adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Schodt, F. L. (2007). *The Astro Boy essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, and the manga/anime revolution*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press.
- Simmons, M. (2002). *Gundam official guide*. San Francisco: Animerica, Viz Communications.
- Singer, P. W. (2005). *Children at war*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Solomon, C. (2011, November 7) "Gundam": Three decades of a signature force in anime. *Los Angeles Times Hero Complex*. Retrieved January 31, 2012, from <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2011/11/05/gundam-three-decades-of-a-signature-force-in-anime/>

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). (2011, April 11). Background paper on SIPRI military expenditure data, 2010. Retrieved January 31, 2012, from <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/factsheet2010>
- Tatsumi, T. (2005). Japanoido aato no mirai [The future of Japan aoid art]. In Y. Sugawa, R. Hattori, & T. Azumaya, *Gundam generating futures: Kitarubeki mirai no tame ni* [For the future that should come] (pp. 102-103). (Tokyo: Soutsuu).
- Thernstrom, M. (2005, May 8). Charlotte, Grace, Janet and Caroline come home. *New York Times*, p. G34.
- Togo, K. (2010). *Japan's foreign policy, 1945-2009: The quest for a proactive policy* (3rd ed.). Leiden, N.L. & Boston: Brill.
- Tsuchida, T. (2009). *Tsuchida Teruyuki no Gandamu ni monomousu* [Tsuchida Teruyuki speaks to *Gundam*]. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.
- Tsutsui, W. M. (2004). *Godzilla on my mind: Fifty years of the king of monsters*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vernal, D. (1995, Fall). War and peace in Japanese science fiction animation: An examination of *Mobile Suit Gundam* and *Mobile Police Patlabor*. *Animation Journal*, 4, 56-84.
- Wakai, O. (2008) *Ikinobiro! Wakai Osamu no Kidou Senshi Gandamu meigenshu* [Survive! Wakai Osamu's *Mobile Suit Gundam* analects]. Tokyo: Futabasha.
- Weinstein, M. L., & Seay, D. (2006). *With God on our side: One man's war against an evangelical coup in America's military*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books.
- Woodward, B. (2008). *The war within: A secret White House history 2006-2008*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Wright, B. (2002). "Production history." In M. Simmons (Ed.), *Gundam official guide* (pp. 5-16). San Francisco: Animerica, Viz Communications.