

KONSHUU

Fantasy

vol. 54 #6

Kaiiste

Ganyu

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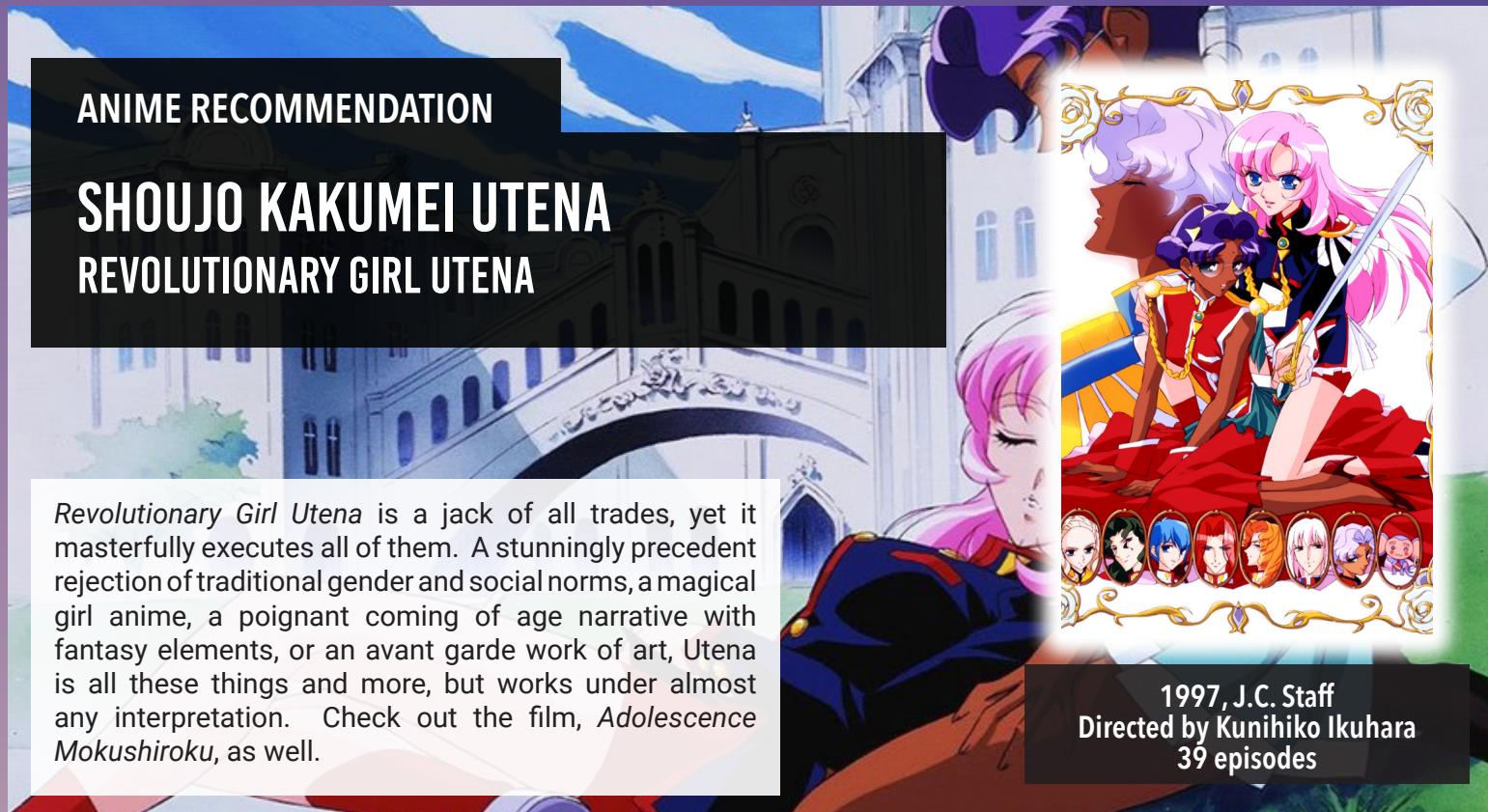


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THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED SERIES!



I WANT YOU TO READ HELCK



BLAKE M.

2nd Year, Intended English and Japanese

Yes Helck, I too do not like humans.

Writer

deceive them, but what's really going on here? Suffice it to say that it won't be what you expect.



If you're reading this, you probably know how in most fantasy stories the main character is some chosen hero or part of a group of chosen heroes who go on to defeat some evil force made up of demons and monsters and whatnot. You've probably also thought at least once that "Without these overpowered heroes, the humans would be f*cked," and yeah, they would be. Or maybe you've wondered "How come these heroes are so overpowered to begin with?" And it's usually explained away with gods and goddesses and holy destiny blah blah blah. Overpowered heroes aren't a fantasy only trope, however, and they're especially prevalent in almost all genres of anime and manga. People like to call *One Punch Man* the holy grail of a manga parodying the overpowered hero thing, but I've got one better for you: *Helck*, the fantasy manga about a chosen hero who defeats the demons and the credits roll... Except that's actually where the manga starts. Let me set the stage for you.

Helck starts from the perspective of the demons. Yeah, that's right, demons, the guys you farm for experience points in JRPGs and who cackle as they burn the protagonist's town down, except the demons in this world don't seem to do that comically evil stuff at all. In fact, it's the humans who have taken the offensive. In the first chapter we learn that one of the demon kings has recently been killed by a human hero and that the demons are holding a tournament to decide his successor. The tournament has come under the oversight of Vamirio, a stern and hot-tempered member of the Four Heavenly Kings, which are basically the demon empire's highest authorities second only to the emperor himself. But Vamirio notices something strange about the tournament. The favourite to win is this absurdly muscular guy who defeats all his opponents with a single punch, but he's not a demon, he's a human hero named Helck! And yet the demons love the guy. "I don't like humans! Let's destroy the humans!" Helck says with a glare that opens up into a big dumb grin on his giant face. The demon people eat this up, but Vamirio doesn't buy it. A demon king has just been killed by a human hero, human heroes are an existence that appear very rarely, and now a human hero is competing in the tournament to replace said demon king? Something's up here, and, as Vamirio sees it, the worst case scenario is that Helck is the hero from before and has infiltrated the tournament to wreak more havoc. She thinks that he's merely claiming he doesn't like humans to

One of *Helck*'s major themes is seeing beyond deceptive appearances and one's prejudices to understand the "other." Because fantasy stories have this weird tendency to make the "other" an irredeemably evil presence the heroes must fight against, *Helck* feels like a whirlwind of fresh air. In *Helck*, the comically evil demons you see in so many fantasy stories just don't exist, although that's how most of the humans perceive them. The demons in this world have a fully fledged civilization and culture more advanced than that of the humans in many ways. This theme of deceptive appearances also carries over into the narrative structure. *Helck* may be the manga's namesake, but we see the story through Vamirio's perspective. Despite her harsh exterior, she is caring, warm-hearted, and has a deep sense of responsibility for her people. Helck is also not what he seems. Despite his happy-go-lucky attitude, he has more than a few skeletons in his closet. *Helck* also features a candid depiction of how a medieval human society would treat the existence of overpowered heroes. I've always found it odd how the hero in so many fantasy stories isn't part of the nobility, and yet the nobility heaps praise and privileges upon them. It makes me wonder: "How would a nepotistic aristocracy actually react to a hero commoner upstart?" *Helck* gives us a dark answer to this question that is more true to how tyrannical medieval monarchies really are than the idealized view of them so many fantasy stories take for granted. *Helck* also masterfully balances comedy and drama; if you get invested in it, it's likely that it'll make you cry tears of laughter and sorrow. I could go on until my paragraphs reach the sheer breadth of *Helck*'s pecs, but the best way to understand the appeal of *Helck* is just to read it for yourself. You won't regret it.

P.S. The name Helck is the first half of the Japanese pronunciation/transliteration of Hercules, and the second half... Well, you'll just have to read the manga to find out about that.

WONDER EGG PRIORITY: LESSONS ON MORTALITY



KEV WANG

2nd Year, EECS

"Requiem aeternam dona ets, Domine, et lux
perpetua luceat ets." - Mozart, *Requiem in D Minor*

Writer

SPOILERS FOR WONDER EGG PRIORITY

Recently I had the pleasure to hear Mozart's *Requiem in D Minor*, performed by UC Berkeley's University Chorus. It's a beautiful piece that's considered one of his greatest works, but its fame and mystique comes more from its conception. It is said that Mozart composed the piece with the understanding that it would be played at his funeral, and poured the remaining life he had (quite literally, as working on it caused him to faint on multiple occasions) beautifully into this last work of his. Indeed, he passed away shortly after being commissioned the work, having only finished the first movement and a skeleton of the rest. Other composers eventually completed the work in his honor, but we will never know how it truly would have sounded like. Despite that, it is clear from the work that the recognition of his own mortality brought out the best of him.

Similarly, *Wonder Egg Priority* is a story about learning to embrace one's morality. Four teenage girls are united with one common goal: to revive someone who has taken their own life. To do this, they hatch other girls in a dreamscape, who they eventually find out have all died from suicide, from "wonder eggs" (hence the name of the show) and defend them from attacking monsters. Two beings, Acca and Ura-Acca, who have abandoned their bodies for mechanical dummy-like figures, promise that each successful defense brings them closer to saving their dead acquaintance.

Yet, all of this seems completely contradictory. An egg, from which beings are typically born from, instead hatches souls that have already departed from the world. Moreover, the promise of restoring a dead person is one that the characters take with much less hesitancy than they should have, especially considering that the dead people in question end their own life voluntarily, and therefore it would be even less plausible to simply put them back on their feet and tell them to continue living their life. The story takes on these contradictory stances to highlight them, to build up the idea, the hope that life can continue after death, and then crush it.

This is never more clear than when Neiru hatches an egg and finds her friend Kotobuki, who has been in a vegetative state and has been taken care of by Neiru ever since her final fatal experiment. Kotobuki convinces Neiru that it is futile to hold on to hope of her revival, and when Neiru wakes up, she goes and says goodbye to the brain-dead body of Kotobuki. Neiru is the first character to truly accept mortality, and thus, it is no surprise that she is the only one who does not seem affected by the results of finally succeeding and reviving her person, because she recognizes one fact: it is not actually possible to do so. When the other characters finally succeed in their own endeavors, they are met with a shock: the people they revive do not recognize them. Although Acca and Ura-Acca were miraculously able to deliver on their promise, they were unable to do the impossible: undo a person's own declaration of their own death. Instead, they bring back a different version of each person, one that has lived a different life which does not lead to suicide, which no includes the person who "saved" their previous self from death.

Even though each of the egg people disappears after their final boss is defeated, they still live on as memories in the minds of those they interacted with in the story, as well as the mind of you, the viewer. Just as Mozart passed on one last piece of music, they pass on one last memory before permanently departing. In that sense, the story is very self-aware. The characters and the plot, too, are really only alive during the brief time in which a viewer plays the show, yet, the memories and emotions from the show may live on beyond that.

Just like the *Requiem*, this show is beautiful and captivating. The animations are well done, the characters are lively, and it is enthralling to experience their interactions and slowly learn more about their personalities and their past. The concept is incredible and creative, offering so many possible avenues of exploration. But among its commonality with the *Requiem* it also shares its fundamental flaw: incompleteness. A rushed OVA episode, released months later, only serves to remind us of the potential this show had: it closed very few of the open threads in the story, and the ones that it did, I would have preferred my imagination over their conclusion. And if this story has taught us anything, it's that things can end at any time, but their impact, no matter good or bad, will continue on. *Wonder Egg Priority* lives on in my mind with some good memories, but overall, with a feeling of disappointment which will never be mended.

THE END OF T



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

Beginning to realize I just like films more than television.

Writer

By all accounts, I should hate *Tenchi Muyo*. The characters are trope-laden archetypes with surface level depth and inconsequential backstories, the narrative is similarly dull and poorly scripted, and for all the praise the series receives from "90s kids" who claim it deserves to be known as a classic, it does not feel too dissimilar from any typical generic mid-2000s harem romantic comedy. The characters themselves have very few reasons as to their roles in the overall group, as well as their interpersonal interactions. As a whole, the series is simply immature, and reads as something written by a horny 13 year old. All of these signs and more indicate that *Tenchi Muyo* would be not just uninteresting, but perhaps even abhorrent to me.

And yeah. I do hate *Tenchi Muyo* for all the reasons listed above. It is my personal opinion that, in spite of the interesting world - mixing a fantastical setting with science fiction elements - *Tenchi Muyo* is simply... boring. Most aspects of the franchise were better done in later series, which themselves are not incredibly interesting works for me either. None of this even mentions the horribly complex continuities of *Tenchi Muyo*, as the series has, to my estimation, around 3 or 4, all of which generally tell the same harem-esque story with the same characters, leading me to the same level of boredom. The sole exception, the mag-



ical girl spinoff *Magical Girl Pretty Sammy* similarly predates an equally annoying trend of spinning off a side character into their own magical girl spinoff. This practice, later seen in series like *Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha* and *Fate/Kaleid Liner Prisma Illya*, serves as yet another precedent created by the *Tenchi Muyo* franchise which I do not appreciate. Aside from the absolutely amazing second opening to *Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki*, "I'm a Pioneer", most of my thoughts on *Tenchi Muyo* are rather negative.

Just like my sentiments on *Urusei Yatsura* (and frankly, most of the negative articles I write), there's a positive spin somewhere in here. In the case of *Tenchi Muyo*, two of the franchise's films are of interest to me. *Tenchi Muyo! In Love* intrigues me as a time travel love story that is, at times, rather messy and illogical, but contains a decent amount of scripting to remain engaging. Particularly, the main relationship between the protagonist's parents in the past is what fascinates me the most. Nestled within a confusing and, frankly, poorly done time travel story with cartoonish characters, this aspect of the film honestly carries it. *Tenchi Muyo! In Love* does not transcend its series' DNA; it ultimately still features a dull, drawn out harem story cast in a by-the-books narrative about love and family. Yet, by featuring some semblance of maturity and substance inside a mess of a plot, *Tenchi Muyo! In Love* was an ultimately enjoyable popcorn film for me.

It, however, pales in comparison to its sequel, which is, confusingly, the third *Tenchi Muyo* film: *Tenchi Muyo! in Love 2: Haruka Naru Omoi*. Beyond having an existence which likely confus-



TENCHI MUYO

es anyone who skimmed my earlier ramblings about how the series's numerous different incarnations bother me, In Love 2 manages to utilize the *Tenchi Muyo* franchise's elements in a creative way which genuinely worked for me. Though my sentiment towards this film is similar to my sentiments towards *Urusei Yatsura Movie 2: Beautiful Dreamer* wherein I dislike the main series, but adore a tangentially related series film, *Haruka Naru Omoi* may arguably be more subversively interesting to me. *Beautiful Dreamer* is a film which took existing surface level elements of a generic romantic comedy series and developed a

refusal to move past a point in chronology. The rest of the main cast also manage to show hidden levels of depth previously unseen, in spite of being relegated to side roles.

I could perhaps liken *Haruka Naru Omoi* as a whole to the final scene of the 1967 American romantic comedy *The Graduate*. In said sequence, after making a hugely romantic gesture in objecting to a wedding and riding off with the would-be bride, Dustin Hoffman and Katharine Ross's characters have enthusiastic smiles which slowly fade as they contemplate on what exactly they have done. The implication which every film viewer likely takes away is a shattering of sorts of a traditional *Romeo and Juliet* esque narrative. If this sequence in of itself demonstrates a slightly self aware version of a romantic comedy, then *Haruka Naru Omoi* as a whole shows that same cognizance towards its own source material. While *Tenchi Muyo* treated concepts of sexual encounters and relationships with a great deal of levity and hand waving, In Love 2 actively explores those concepts in a manner which is not gratuitous or shallow, but genuinely evocative. In spite of the series being mostly filled with gags and general enthusiasm, the tone and atmosphere of *Haruka Naru Omoi* is generally serene. As such, this one film, in the midst of a franchise which has little to no worth to me, manages to justify the mediocrity of what came before by taking a more level headed and downplayed approach. *Tenchi Muyo* did not end with this film, as it continues to receive entries to this very day. Nostalgic fans from the 90's continue to support new entries despite being the exact same material they liked in said time period recycled constantly. This film's message of moving on from such frivolous, meaningless material seems to have had little to no impact. Such is the fate of anything which truly tries to say something unique, I guess.



wholly unique and interesting film using, but not imitating those elements. In Love 2 instead manages to take what *Tenchi Muyo* is known for - being what has now become a generic style of harem romantic comedy - and twisting it ever so slightly to evoke a more unique atmosphere.

Tenchi Muyou! in Love 2: Haruka Naru Omoi could, in many ways, be viewed as a film wherein the series' trappings finally mature. None of the wacky elements of the main series truly recede in this film, yet they play second fiddle to a far more self-effacing, introspective version of *Tenchi Muyo*. Though it features the entire main cast to some extent, *Haruka Naru Omoi* focuses heavily on protagonist Masaki Tenchi and his inner thoughts outside the hijinks normally surrounding the series. Living with an ageless woman from his alien grandfather's past, Tenchi receives development demonstrating a level of depth unlike later harem protagonists, particularly in his attempts to express himself via art. Said ageless woman, whilst ostensibly the film's villain, shows an equal amount of depth in her loneliness and



RILU RILU FAIRILU DIVVIED LIMELIGHT



MAX R.

3rd Year, Japanese

I wish you luck in trying to watch this thing.

Writer

MINOR SPOILERS FOR RILU RILU FAIRILU

The time has come to finally begin talking about more unsubbed anime. In attempts to practice Japanese listening comprehension, I watched *Rilu Rilu Fairilu* raw, feeling that it would be simple enough to understand while browsing Sanrio's catalogue of work (the company responsible for *Unico*, *Onegai My Melody*, *Jewelpet*, *Mewkledreamy* among other things) and continuing my seemingly endless dive down the children's anime rabbit hole. The franchise consists of two longer seasons, *Yousei no Door* (59 eps) and *Mahou no Kagami* (51 eps) followed by a shorter spinoff (26 eps) seemingly disconnected from the other two, though is unfortunately challenging to access with everything barring a handful of the first season's episodes remaining completely unsubbed.

Leisurely-paced and rather tranquil, the series is certainly something one has to be in the mood for, not particularly anything profound so much as something just relaxing to sit through, revolving around lives of the titular Fairilus (namely Lip), small fairy-esque beings representative of various flowers, insects, and other natural entities; in slice of life fashion, their daily lives are showcased within the parallel dimension of Little Fairilu; many jumps between it and the human world are made, the Fairilus gradually growing immersed in said human world and vice versa. With this comes some cultural disparity, Little Fairilu upholding its own traditions and customs in what would be for Fairilus, basic everyday activities in flight training, magic or sports like Shaborilu, alongside special events such as the Birth Festival or even variations on traditional holidays such as Christmas. The fact that Fairilus aren't supposed to be seen by humans forces them to sneak around, resulting in most people being skeptical as to whether they exist at all, their existence being something that the initial human protagonist attempts to prove. Much of the series is dedicated to episodic adventures and exploration of these elements through various parts of its fantastical world of locations ranging between villages, islands, forests and seas among other places. There's still continuity and progression as the cast does gradually grow and change, though I do find it difficult to be invested in parts of the larger overarching plot on occasions, particularly the serious world-threatening conflicts



that ensue later, the series being better off steering clear of heavier drama.

I am also torn over the human cast as, albeit having some significant conflict towards the end as well as the original notion to prove the Fairilus' existence, Nozomu is a thoroughly boring protagonist for the majority of both seasons. Faring better however, is his hospitalized younger sister, Karen, debuting as a more interesting human protagonist in *Mahou no Kagami*, her chemistry with Rin, the Fairilu deuteragonist of the season, being enjoyable to witness, Karen in some cases even coming to Little Fairilu herself. I do have to applaud the series for probably its most immediate draw, the balancing act of screen time between a massive cast of over seventy named characters, mostly composed of myriad Fairilu, with some semblance of focus, be it multiple episodes or parts of one, dedicated to the vast majority, if not all at some point, showcasing an array of personal conflicts, episodes generally formulaic and divided into halves, each usually standalone to follow a particular species, shining light upon various roles each fulfills within their universe. In some regard, lack of combat aside, it resembles *Pocket Monsters* in how it goes about exploring and introducing varying species; characters who aren't necessarily the focus of a given episode still continually appear in the background filling space to produce environmental atmospheres that feel lived in, and the series taking time to share the spotlight between everyone is precisely what assists in Fairilus feeling conceptually realized as fictional beings. Overall, these aspects account for the franchise's greatest strengths, making it one of the more enjoyable recent Sanrio shows.

キャラクター原案
蒼樹うめ

A DECONSTRUCTIONIST MASTERPIECE



JOSÉ CUEVAS

5th Year, Intended EECS and Theatre

Why can't *Neon Genesis* fanboys just admit that *Madoka* is better?

Guest

Since it was released in 2011, Studio Shaft's *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* has been shocking audiences in the level of deconstruction it provides to the subgenre of *magical girls*, nay, the entire genre of anime as a whole. Its auteur directing and fascinating narrative, particularly in the third film, *Rebellion*, have allowed it to remain a staple amongst not just Japanese otakus, but Western anime enjoyers as well. As a whole, *Madoka* stands as the pinnacle of deconstructionist anime which dissect the very narratives and character archetypes of the genres which they represent. When I was watching it with my friends, after consoling them over the golden three episode rule wherein three episodes are required before dropping a series, they were amazed at all the twists and turns which the series takes. In hindsight, that was indicative of how deconstructively brilliant, structurally unprecedented, and thematically rich *Magica* truly was.

Prior to *Puella Magi*, no *magical girl* series had ever ventured into tackling dark subject material, such as depression. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* was deconstructing similar topics, but doing so in a more boring way, with uninteresting camera angles, poor scripting, and rather unengaging characters. This fails to mention the fact that *Evangelion* drew heavy inspiration from previous works, clearly evident in the high amount of Christian imagery and symbolism. Still, *Neon Genesis* is in the mecha subgenre, which has seen its share of ups and downs in recent years, but historically has had some darker shows like *Darling in the Franxx*. *Madoka*, as a *magical girl* series, stands in a much more unique zone as being in a subgenre of anime which often not only are not dark, but are not allowed to be dark due to studio meddling and interference. Only because the highly talented staff at Studio Shaft, such as Akiyuki Shinbo, created the ever beloved *Bakemonogatari* franchise, did this series get greenlit.

As I mentioned above, *Magica* is one of those anime which truly require the three episode rule. The first two episodes are rather dull and do little to demonstrate the tone of the series, whereas the third features an epic twist which thoroughly shocks any and all who view it, at least in my empirical experience. I could call this slow start a detriment to the series, but I realized that it is a very interesting turn of expectations, similar to what one might experience in, say, *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*. As I cannot recall any other *magical girl* show that has any main character

death, I have to say that this grimdark twist shattered my expectations of the show and informed the tone of the entire series.

In the later parts of *Madoka*, it is revealed that one of the characters, Homura, has been going through an repeated time loop all to save the titular Madoka from dying. This is perhaps derivative of *Steins;Gate*, another deconstructive masterpiece, in terms of continually looping, but in of itself serves to subvert what a *magical girl* even is. In all *magical girl* anime following *Sailor Moon*, the main characters are a team that turns into *magical fighters* in order to save the world. That is true here, but the characters in *Puella Magi* deconstruct the binary nature of good and bad because of how the villains themselves are former *magical girls*. While most animes would stop here and call it a day, scriptwriter Gen Urobuchi deconstructs this further in the final episode of *Madoka* and in the third film *Rebellion* by setting up Madoka as some sort of god and Homura as the equally opposite force - the devil, if you will. This thematically makes *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* the ultimate *magical girl* anime in not just addressing, but embodying monster of the week structure loops with Homura's loop, and the good/bad binary Madoka and Homura's eventual fates.

Madoka is one of the greatest anime I've ever seen. This is probably evident in the above analysis of the show's themes and deconstructions of classic *magical* tropes, but beyond that, the show's art and worldbuilding amazes me. Particularly, the witch fighting scenes interest me because they almost resemble real objects in their style and coloring, not the two dimensional anime style I've become accustomed to seeing in typical anime. It reminds me of real life, which is hard for anime to do. While I still greatly appreciate *Neon Genesis Evangelion* for having an unmasculine, sensitive protagonist unlike the majority of mecha anime, *Magica* just does so much more with its characters and with its animation. Beyond that, *Puella Magi* has excellent pacing, being a 13 episode anime that feels like it definitely could be 50. It may gloss over important details and character development, but I don't mind that - after all, most of those developments are implied by the nature of this show being a *magical girl* show. They could show those changes, but it's unneeded, because every viewer of this show has seen *magical girls* and thus nothing that is already implied by the genre needs to be explained, because we all understand the meta of these sorts of anime. I highly implore everyone to watch *Madoka*. It's an exciting deconstruction of *magical girls* that surpasses its predecessor, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, in how subversive and deconstructive newer animes can be, and beyond all that, it has a total banger of an opening.



Kokomi
Genshin Impact
Art By Sharrel Narsico



THE NEWTYPE PROBLEM



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

CGI mecha are inferior to hand drawn.

Writer

The impact of *Mobile Suit Gundam* and the eponymous franchise is unquestionable - even the most casual anime viewer will likely recognize the name at least. More debatable is the actual quality of each series, which, in my opinion, can vary wildly. Speaking strictly in terms of the original Universal Century, my thoughts are mostly positive. The 1979 series shows influences from older monster-of-the-week series, but strongly differentiates itself via an elaborate political backdrop in addition to featuring an interesting core rivalry. *Zeta Gundam*, then, completely embraces the series' internal politics with complicated tensions between multiple separate factions culminating in utter chaos. *ZZ* is a bizarre and unbalanced mix of drama and levity, likely as a counterbalance to *Zeta*, and *Char's Counterattack* concludes the series well enough, even if certain plot contrivances prevent it from being as truly climactic as intended. Beyond the main scope of those entries, *F91* and *Victory* both tell unique, though unconnected, narratives, and, ignoring certain inconsistencies, *The Origin* is well connected to the main story but, well... just read [this](#).

In the paragraph above, it might be notable that I omitted mentions of *Igloo*, *Unicorn*, and short side stories like *War in the Pocket*, *Stardust Memory*, *08th MS Team*, and *Thunderbolt*. I also failed to include *Gundam Narrative*, because I want to forget it, and *Hathaway's Flash*, as it has yet to conclude at the time of this first draft. With *Igloo* mostly being a series of separate vignettes all over Universal Century continuity, and the side stories being ancillary to the main series, I believe *Unicorn* is one of the more interesting *Gundam* series in how it illustrates all the central issues with Universal Century *Gundam*'s greatest issue, the concept of Newtypes.

In the concept's initial introduction in the original *Gundam* series, Newtypes are described as something of a new evolution of human beings, correlated with but not caused by the in-universe movement of humans into space. Generally, the characters with Newtype abilities can perform a random assortment of psychic feats, most commonly telepathy. While this in of itself is fine, and comparable (almost certainly on purpose) to *Star Wars'* introduction of The Force as a fantastical element in an otherwise sterile science fiction setting, Newtypes are controversial in how they trivialize the series' space politics. Notably, later in the franchise, such as *Zeta* and *ZZ*, Newtypes are able to shoot psychic energy blasts to psychologically cripple opponents.

The major issue in this comes not with the concept, but the execution. As a series which, again, mostly focuses on political tensions with gi-

ant robots as war tools, Newtypes create a disconnect between the grounded, human, narrative. This is not dissimilar to the aforementioned original *Star Wars* trilogy's implementation of The Force as a concept, but *Universal Century Gundam* is a far more complex universe with conflicts dealing less with individual physical action, and more with shaping diplomatic and intra-governmental relations. Newtype abilities in *Gundam* effectively allow one individual, or a very small group of people, to dictate the trajectory of humanity, in a series which generally deemphasizes that concept as a core part of its appeal in depicting a militaristic understanding of mecha.

Returning to the topic of *Gundam Unicorn*, I believe its largely positive critical reception is due to its reliance on a sort of boy-meets-girl narrative similar to something like *Castle in the Sky* or *Future Boy Conan*, within the greater scope of the Universal Century's hopelessly complex web of intra-faction conflicts. Frankly, this conceit is something I'm rather ambivalent towards. What makes *Unicorn* rather dull in my view is the need to emphasize spectacle, which the series enables by making Newtype abilities so ridiculously powerful to where it underplays the rich history which is ostensibly *Unicorn*'s background. Emphasizing this are an array of visual effects which are dazzling, but ephemeral and unsubstantial. Notably, the titular *Unicorn Gundam* literally transforms in a "Destroy Mode" with glowing red beams in response to the protagonist's Newtype powers. This may be why newcomers often start with *Unicorn*, but it tonally clashes with everything else in the Universal Century, and suffers in that light. It's a shiny new toy that many modern anime viewers pick up and passively enjoy, but don't really consider on any greater level. *Unicorn* is narratively tied to the Universal Century in a litany of ways, but in execution, it retains very little of the politics, military action, and mature writing that the majority of Universal Century *Gundam* series has.

Newtype powers are not inherently awful in that they contrast the otherwise bleak and depressing *Gundam* series (sans *ZZ*). They provide an interesting background narrative to match the overall plot of *Gundam*, in that Newtype dynamics are very interpersonal, whereas *Gundam* narratives are fairly grand in scope. The issue comes with the overemphasis that many, if not most *Gundam* series have with this concept, utilizing it not as a storyline in of itself, but as a tool to expedite certain narrative advancements. Fantasy can work in *Gundam*, but only sparingly. In a sense, Newtype powers are basically my only non-insignificant gripe with the majority of the Universal Century series. The lone exception wherein I believe it becomes almost unbearable is *Unicorn*. Bafflingly bereft of any of the logic and intrigue of a *Gundam* series, *Unicorn* seems to favor pure spectacle over the typical healthy mix of spectacle and politics. This may endear it to newer fans who genuinely only watch *Gundam* for robots, but both the presentation of *Unicorn*, along with the way the universe and Newtypes are written, are frankly nauseating in the greater context of the Universal Century.

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