

## Chapter 6

### Neon Genesis Evangelion

It seems to be East Asia's unique historical destiny to be the exception to late capitalism which nevertheless proves the rule. Caught between the hammer of US corporate competition and the anvil of Communist insurrection, East Asia broke every rule in the neoliberal playbook to become one of the titans of the world economy, but the price of its success has been its ever-increasing entanglement in the world-market it so fiercely (and effectively) resisted. Economic analysts such as Alice Amsden, Michael Gerlach and Robert Wade have described in vivid detail how East Asia's canny developmental states and feisty corporate networks (Japan's keiretsu, South Korea's chaebol, and China's business groups) transformed war-blasted societies wrecked by imperialism, WW II and bloody civil wars into thriving high-tech economies.<sup>1</sup> What has not yet been written, however, is the cultural side of this story: how some of the oldest cultures on the planet innovated some of the newest technology; how rigidly hierarchical societies developed astonishingly free-wheeling business cultures; and most of all, how anime films and karaoke clubs, Hong Kong epics and Nintendo videogames erupted out of East Asia in the 1970s and 1980s like the incandescent plasma of some vast rift nebula, overturning all our star-charts and cultural cosmologies.

East Asia offers far more, however, than just another belated variation on processes of mediatization and consumerism long taken for granted in the US and the

EU. Above all, the region is a geopolitical scandal, whose very existence is proof that Wall Street reigns, but no longer rules, over the world economy.<sup>2</sup> As late as 1970, US firms were broadly hegemonic in almost every economic sector one could name; by the 1990s, EU and East Asian firms caught up with and in certain cases even surpassed their US competitors in industries ranging from automobiles to electronics, banking to telecommunications. While Wall Street has continued to wage the Cold War with other means, deploying IMF and World Bank sado-monetarism in lieu of the direct military interventions of the past, the EU and Japan have quietly seized the high ground in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world-economy, by bailing out their Eastern European and Southeast Asian semi-peripheries, the former via the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the latter via the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).<sup>3</sup>

East Asian culture thus emerged at the site of a unique double contradiction: not only did it have to answer for the historical erasure or displacement of the nation-state (i.e. a politically subaltern Japan, the two Koreas, the two Vietnams, and the three Chinas), but it also had to fend off the deprivations of neoliberalism and neocolonialism without the heavy artillery of the EU's powerful social democratic states, thriving Euroculture and common currency. Put another way, even though East Asia has a world-class production base equal to that of Central Europe, its geopolitical status is more like that of post-Soviet, semi-peripheral Eastern Europe. But where Eastern Europe was forced to hitch its cart to the nascent Eurostate, East Asia is in the enviable position of having the financial, economic and technological resources to bail *itself* out. The contradiction is probably most obvious in the long-running Japanese banking crisis, where the world's largest creditor nation, sitting on vast trade surpluses and a trillion euro

mountain of rock-solid liquidity, took almost a decade to muster the political will to write off the bad debts of the 1980s Bubble economy. In a nutshell, East Asia has the economic muscle of a superpower, but is just beginning to develop cultural and political superstructures characteristic of such.

As we shall see, these contradictions go to the heart of Hideaki Anno's *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, a weekly animated series which ran on Tokyo television from October 1995 to April 1996 and became a smash hit, inspiring two spin-off movies, countless fan clubs, and endless Web shrines, while raising Anno himself to the level of a superstar. It's important to note the field of anime (pronounced "ah-nee-may"; the word comes from the French term for animation) did not emerge in Japan until the 1960s, when Americanization, the Ikeda economic boom, and rising levels of TV ownership spurred the creation of television shows based on Japanese "manga" or printed comic books. Even today, anime borrow extensively from the typographical and literary conventions of manga, in much the same way that Hollywood continues to borrow tropes and narrative conventions patented by the pulp sci-fi and comic strip periodicals of the 1930s.

What distinguishes *Evangelion* from the run-of-the-mill mecha or giant robot cartoon is not simply its ground-breaking animation, sparkling editing, and world-class action sequences; rather, Anno sublated the mecha as a form, transforming the latter into the basis for a new kind of multinational aesthetics, in much the same way that McGoochan's *The Prisoner* created the basic vocabulary of video out of the 1960s spy thriller and 1950s theatrical modernism, or indeed that Kieslowski's *Decalogue* transformed Western European auteur cinema and Eastern European theatrical and musical forms into the field of Eurovideo. By cutting and splicing narrative forms

ranging from the Godzilla movies and the American sci-fi blockbuster to John Woo's Hong Kong action thrillers, as well as artfully borrowing from the rich traditions of Japanese anime itself (especially Akira Toriyama's *Dragonball Z*), Anno created a 13-hour masterpiece with the narrative heft and density of a triple-decker Victorian novel, the epic sweep of a Hollywood blockbuster, and the breakneck visual energy of the 3D videogame.<sup>4</sup>

Strange as it sounds, there is a curious sense in which *Evangelion's* closest narrative predecessor is not a recent work of art, but the serialized novel of Victorian Britain. Like the latter, the anime is a highly commercialized form of art, written for a metropolitan audience, and tied to a sophisticated set of written and social conventions. The vast majority of anime are domestic comedies, a genre which, at its best, playfully mocks Japanese social conventions with slapstick humor, kinetic comic action sequences, and guerilla street theater in much the same way that the US sitcom satirizes the no less ritualistic social conventions of US consumerism. In Rumiko Takashi's uproarious *Ranma 1/2* series, for example, the characters are magically cursed to change gender, shape or form in certain conditions, resulting in episodes of truly priceless pandemonium. Just as the sheer length and prolixity of the Victorian novel was the unintentional result of a literary marketplace where authors were paid by the word, so too are many of the most characteristic features of manga and anime – exaggerated, saucer-shaped eyes, the use of typographical symbols to connote surprise or shame, the creative use of framing and visual counterpoint, and of course wildly multicolored hair – merely the logical response of artists to the commercial limitations of the form, i.e. the necessity to convey complex social situations using a medium which does not have live actors at its disposal.

What *Evangelion* did which was truly new, however, was to combine world-class mecha designs and action sequences with cinema-level scriptwriting and scorching emotional conflicts worthy of one of John Woo's Hong Kong blockbusters. The Achilles heel of the mecha was always its lack of character development, which was admittedly not a problem when the point was to portray giant robots crashing into each other. The characters of *Evangelion*, however, are the furthest thing from cardboard cutouts imaginable, and Anno will utterly demolish the stereotypes of the mecha jock and the kimono bimbo alike in favor of sensitive, complex male characters, and a series of powerful and self-aware women without precedent in the history of anime. This is actually the culmination of a tendency which began in the mid-1980s, when anime such as *Bubble Gum Crisis* (1987) and *Dirty Pair* (1985) introduced strong female characters capable of taking on state-of-the-art action roles. Whereas *Dirty Pair* sparkled with irreverent dialogue and shotgun one-liners between fellow police agents Yuri and Kei (pronounced "Kay"), *Bubble Gum* engaged in some fairly racy gender-bending of a cast of characters borrowed wholesale from Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (e.g. Priss, the leader of the Knight Sabers, is cast in the mold of the butch biker; Leon, the macho police officer, is not only pushed to the margins of the story by the all-girl Knight Sabers, but has an openly gay sidekick, Daley).<sup>5</sup> That said, neither series departed significantly from the deeply patriarchal gender roles of 1980s Japan; *Bubble Gum*'s Nene, supposedly a computer hacker, still acts very much like a glorified OL, the Japanese neologism for "office lady" or low-level clerical staff.

By contrast, *Evangelion*'s female characters are powerful, self-motivated professionals who have no truck with medieval-era gender roles or the men who believe

in them. As we shall see, this gender revolution is matched by a host of other micropolitical transformations, all tied to East Asia's irresistible rise to the economic coeval of the US and the EU. Arguably, where Melville rewrote the Victorian ocean-faring swashbuckler into *Moby Dick*, that adventurous summit of a progressive 19<sup>th</sup> century American nationalism, *Evangelion* rewrites the mecha narrative into the *Moby Dick* of the Information Age, with the crucial difference that whereas the allegorical crew of the Pequod quested for the White Whale, the no less allegorical inhabitants of Tokyo-3 battle a mysterious alien species (called "angels") from another dimension.

The reference to a third Tokyo is less futuristic than one might think. The reason is that Japan's capital city was levelled by the horrific Kanto earthquake in 1923, painstakingly rebuilt, and then incinerated by US bombing raids during 1944-45. There is a similar transcription of the past into the future in the basic storyline of *Evangelion*, which takes place in the year 2015, fifteen years after a giant asteroid supposedly crashes into Antarctica, creating massive floods and sparking terrible wars, until the survivors finally band together to rebuild – an event christened the "Second Impact" (the English words are used). Such apocalyptic scenarios are a standard feature in the anime genre, where the atomic flash-photos of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are frequently cited next to baroque fantasies of sprawling super-metropolises and technological subsystems (these latter, in turn, regularly spawn demonic or cybernetic life-forms, as well as *Blade Runner*-style agencies designed to police or control those life-forms). Given that the Second Impact is a fairly transparent cover fiction for the destruction and territorial dismemberment of the Japanese Empire during WW II, one could be forgiven for immediately suspecting *Evangelion* to be just another deeply reactionary and politically

obnoxious tale of mecha jocks *qua* kamikaze pilots who, in the infamous words of Rambo, finally get to win.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Anno quotes national culture not to praise it but to bury it, by systematically hacking into, hijacking and disrupting almost every single proto-national and neo-national mediation available in the field of anime. In fact, *Evangelion* will provide the crucial bridge between the best anime productions of the 1980s and the 1990s, by setting the pacifist and theological registers of Hiroyuki Yamaga's sterling space drama, *Wings of Honneamise* (1987), in motion towards the progressive micropolitics and ecological insurgencies of Hayao Miyazaki's magnificent *Princess Mononoke* (1997). One of the little-known historical developments which made this possible was the rise of independent studios for Japanese TV and video markets in the 1980s; both *Honneamise* and *Evangelion*, for example, were produced by Gainax Studios, while *Mononoke* was produced under the aegis of Ghibli Studios. These studios had relatively few ties to the existing production houses, entertainment conglomerates or auteur traditions of national cinema, but powerful and enduring links to Japanese manga, US science fiction and early video culture. These studios become veritable hothouses of aesthetic innovation, transforming anime into a truly global art-form in much the same way that small-scale producers powered the rise of early hip hop music and home computer software in the US, or indeed the way that McGoochan and Kieslowki both assembled teams of extraordinarily talented scriptwriters, cinematographers and actors for their respective video masterpieces.

The history of Gainax, Anno's own production firm, is especially revealing in this regard. The origins of the company go back to 1981, when Anno, Hiroyuki Yamaga, and

Takami Akai were all film students at the same Osaka art college, and decided to plunge, willy-nilly, into the world of anime. Their breakthrough project was the opening animation for Osaka's DAICON 4 science-fiction convention in 1983, which bowled over the audience and earned them the commercial support they needed to produce *Honneamise* (Gainax was officially founded in December of 1984, in order to produce the film). While Anno worked as an animator on a number of anime projects, most notably the theatrical films of *Macross* and *Nausicaa: Valley of the Wind* as well as on *Honneamise* itself, his first stint as a director came in 1989 in the form of an above-average mecha called *Gunbuster: Aim for the Top!*. Though fairly conventional in terms of its aliens-vs.-space-soldiers plot, *Gunbuster* offered impressive visual designs, effective action sequences and even cast a young girl in the role of the heroic mecha pilot. The following year, Anno directed *Nadia: Secret of the Blue Waters*, a fast-paced, witty and occasionally quite moving adventure serial loosely based on Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*.<sup>6</sup> Not only was *Nadia* Gainax's first major commercial success, but many of its artists would make crucial contributions to *Evangelion*, most notably character designer Yoshiyuki Sadamoto (who worked on *Honneamise* and *Nadia*), and mechanical designer Ikuto Yamashita (whose previous credits included *Gunbuster* and *Nadia*).

Nothing in Anno's track record quite prepared viewers, though, for the supernova of *Evangelion*. One of the reasons is that Anno and his coworkers wrote the story as they went along, resulting in an unusually complex and subtle script. Indeed, it is not until we are midway through the series that we begin to realize that almost everything we assumed about the storyline is drastically wrong, i.e. that the Second Impact was no accident after

all; that the angels are not really the demonic creatures they seem to be; that Nerv is not quite the heroic defender of humanity it advertises itself as being, etc. Most of all, Anno concluded the series with a mind-bending finale which sparked a genuine national scandal, very much as the final episode of McGooohan's *The Prisoner* instigated a near-riot at BBC headquarters almost three decades earlier. Visually speaking, the Gainax production team set new standards for animation, shot design and editing, deftly integrating CGI (computer-generated imagery) with hand-drawn cel animation, while employing a wealth of framing techniques equal to anything in the canon of Kieslowski's *Decalogue* or *Trois Couleurs*. In narrative terms, the series exhibits an almost nanometric formal precision: there are no extraneous details or gratuitous images; each episode flows irresistibly into the next; and even the most minute visual, aural and scripted details turn out to represent vast, glittering constellations, which coil and uncoil like shifting bands of neon DNA. Even the sound-track, often the least developed element of the anime genre, is positively riveting, thanks to excellent voice acting and Shiroh Sagisu's inventive and stylish musical score. The action scenes frequently cite the horn-and-drum sequence of the helicopter battle in the 1967 Bond thriller *You Only Live Twice*, for example, the first Bond movie to be set in Japan (which makes sense, considering that Blofeldt's underground base is very much the model for Nerv's geofront). More subtly, the song which accompanies the credits after each episode – Bart Howard's *Fly Me To the Moon* – is not only repeated in at least fifteen recognizably different 1990s musical styles over the course of the series, ranging from Japan-pop and techno to jungle, but contains a clever karaoke reference: most of the versions are sung by British pop singer Claire (she goes by

her first name only) while a few versions are done by various other voice actors of the series (e.g. the end of episodes 5 and 6, as well as 24, 25 and 26).

We get our first taste of this complexity in the opening credits or tag of the series. Whereas *The Prisoner*'s tag parodied the Bond thriller, and whereas the opening sequences of the *Decalogue* sampled and pastiched a wide variety of mediatic forms (e.g. the Solidarity thriller in "Decalogue 1"; the Christmas movie in "Decalogue 3"; the courtroom melodrama in "Decalogue 5"; the late 1970s music video in "Decalogue 10"), *Evangelion*'s tag will cycle through an intriguing admixture of sci-fi, fantasy and action-adventure motifs. We first see a tiny pulse of light at the center of the screen, which expands into a globular shockwave. Next, a red nebula materializes in the background, while a strange medieval glyph (vaguely reminiscent of a coiled dragon) gleams fitfully in the distance, to be replaced by the logo of the Gainax Studio. Finally, this latter dissolves into the familiar sci-fi trope of a forwards zoom through neon-blue stars, while a glowing blue close-up of a magical diagram (the Systema Sepharoticum, penned in 1653 by a German priest named Athanasius Kirchner, and loosely based on the Kabbalah) scrolls downwards, before fading into a flickering blue fire, like the reflection of a flame in a pool of water. This mysterious array of cosmological and mystical images then fades to the title sequence proper, which displays the Japanese characters for "shinseiki" (literally, "new century") against the English-language word "Evangelion" (from the Greek term for gospel). The title literally means "New Century Evangelion" or "Gospel for a New Century", but Gainax had an explicitly secular target in mind: the English title they chose was "Neon Genesis: Evangelion". This is an explicit reference to one of the greatest lines of William Burroughs' 1964 *Nova Express* ("Explosive bio

advance out of space to neon...”), suggesting that the gospel of the information age is at stake.<sup>7</sup>

Needless to say, all this is a shocking contrast to all previous anime tags, which generally featured action footage, close-ups of the characters, and video tropes tied to recording devices or simple consumer electronics; the classic example is the opening tag of *Dirty Pair*, which concludes with the blinking red recording light of a futuristic videocamera. *Evangelion*'s tag proceeds to a video pan of Shinji Ikari, the youthful protagonist of the story, his hair blowing realistically in the wind, framed against the backdrop of a blue sky dotted with cumulus clouds. A shot of his lightless silhouette appears to the right; later, this fades away, and his face is then framed by the shadowy silhouettes of two female bodies, which scroll vertically to either side of the screen (slow-motion replay reveals them to be two of the other mecha pilots, Asuka Langley and Rei Ayanami, to the left and right, respectively). Next, we see a luminous orange-yellow sky, and a close-up of someone's outstretched hand, silhouetted against another shot of the intertwining branches of the Sephiroicum, scrolling upwards across the screen. The hand belongs to Misato Katsuragi, operations director of the Nerv organisation, and we are treated here to a gorgeous multiple juxtaposition of Misato's face in the foreground, then her silhouette backlit by a dazzling sun, and then a close-up of Shinji's face to the upper right (one superimposed image cycles in just as another cycles out).

It requires a number of viewings to properly appreciate the extraordinary compositional subtlety of the sequence. Not only does every single moving object or frame offset an object or frame moving in a different direction, but these frames are counterpointed by extraordinarily precise color combinations and shot pacing. Thus the

glyph of the Sephirothicum moves down, while a later version moves up; the precisely-balanced vertical silhouettes of Asuka (pronounced “ah-ska”) and Rei (pronounced “ray”) move up and down across the same screen, before acceding to the counterpoised horizontal silhouettes of Misato; shadows are framed against light-sources, panes of light against shadows, etc. This aesthetics of framing or windowing is explicitly named by a medium shot of Rei standing behind a window, followed by an ultra-close shot of her eye (so realistically drawn that we glimpse the multiple refractions of light in her pupil). This extreme close-up of the eye, one of the most frequently-cited tropes of the series, performs much the same function as the extreme close-ups of eyes in Kieslowski’s *Blue*. Whereas the latter served as the index of Julie’s video subjectivity, finally able to see itself in the eyes of another (Olivier), *Evangelion* sets this subjectivity in motion towards the giant robots who suddenly look up at us with almost human intelligence. Meanwhile the next shot of Shinji shows him piloting the mecha with his eyes closed, almost as if he were *listening* to the theme song of the series (*The Cruel Angel’s Thesis*, a surprisingly winning Japan-pop tune which manages to avoid most of the cliches of the genre by beginning and ending in a minor key and avoiding cliched choruses).

The last and most crucial innovation of the tag, however, are the brief cut-scenes of capitalized words or terms in English (e.g. “Test type”, “EVA-01”, “Angels”, “Tokyo-3” and so forth). English neologisms are an enduring feature of Japanese consumer culture, and Japanese ads frequently cite wildly incongruous English catch-phrases with the same carefree abandon that luxury fashion goods quote French and Italian terms. Anno, however, will confront viewers with an ocean of non-Japanese scientific, technological and conceptual terms, some drawn from the marketing and information

culture of North America and others from the scientific and engineering culture of the European Union. The introductory titles for each episode, for example, alternate between Japanese and English, and the meanings often subtly differ (e.g. “Evangelion 18”’s Japanese title is “The Judgement of Life”, while the English is simply, “Ambivalence”). We also glimpse handmade pencil drawings or sketches of various characters, the mass mediatic equivalent of the artisan’s signature, whose true significance will not be revealed until the very end of the series. For now, it’s sufficient to note that the tag links Shinji directly to the subjective body of the mecha, while Misato, Asuka and Ritsuko are linked to the objective registers of visual frames and corporeal tactilities appended to this body.

Intriguingly, our first glimpse of this body is not the Evangelions (hereafter referred to as “Evas”) themselves, but the bodies of their mysterious antagonists, the angels. The first of these is a strangely abstract, gilled creature, embossed with a sigil vaguely reminiscent of a skull. Like some a neo-Expressionistic Godzilla, the angel rises out of the sea to assail Tokyo-3, its carapace invulnerable to the UN’s most advanced conventional weapons, including the apocalyptic fury of an N2 mine, a kind of super-hydrogen bomb. But where the Godzilla movies tapped into the social history of the American monster film and the natural history of the komodo dragons indigenous to the South Pacific, respectively, *Evangelion* will draw upon two rather different sources of narrative material. The first is relayed by the airborne shot from a helicopter skimming the surface of ocean, gleaming with gorgeous, computer-enhanced reflections: the space of multinational or informatic forms. The second is the cancelled-out space of neo-national or monopoly-national forms, subtly rendered by the blocky, abandoned office

towers of a largely submerged Tokyo-2 (and more obviously, by the UN's obsolescent military technology).<sup>8</sup>

The humming factories and modular office towers of Tokyo-3, by contrast, are tied to multinational categories of image-production and consumption: thus when Misato drives off to pick up Shinji, she has his classified security photo in her hand, counterpointing her *own* autographed color snapshot, which he holds in his hand (the first in a series of video stills). Probably the single most striking expression of this is the central viewing-screen at the heart of Nerv's intercept center, its vast central view-screen superimposing sliding yellow grids, green radarscopes and orange 3D terrain maps. One perspective even frames the command center from *behind* this wall screen, contrasting the luminous maps in the foreground against the smooth, metallic surfaces of the conning towers to the left and right, and the central command station to the center. The effect is a teeming density of video images, which fill in the abstract data-space first glimpsed by Fredric Jameson in the dizzying reaches of the Bonaventura Hotel with informatic content.

Nerv is the acronym for the elite scientific research unit of Tokyo-3 charged with defending humanity against the angels; it is also the first of several significant German puns in the series (the word means "nerve"). Headed by Gendou Ikari, Shinji's distant, mysterious father, Nerv is nominally under the control of the UN, but in reality answers only to an ultra-secret committee of global power-brokers known only as Seele (German for "soul"). This immediately suggests that Nerv and Seele are the executive management and power-elites of yet another Japanese state-industrial body or juridical apparatus, a suspicion which seems to be confirmed when we learn that Ikari is the head of another

project, running concurrently with Nerv but carefully separated and hidden away from the latter, called the Human Development Project (“jinrui hokan keikaku”, with the connotation of perfection or completion) or, more simply, Instrumentality.

However, things are more complicated than this, mostly because the bodies of the Evas are not really the neo-national symbols of robot samurai they seem to be. One of the most intriguing features of *Evangelion* is its steadfast and honorable stance of non-participation vis-à-vis Japan’s one-party state and entrenched keiretsu elites. By rubbing the immanent registers of the former against the transcendental grain of the latter, Anno scandalously contradicts the single most prevalent form of identity-politics of East Asian monopoly capitalism, namely an export-platform industrialism keyed to a heavily American-accented multinational consumerism. Anno will satirize this global industrialism with a planetary range of mythological references and theological quotations, ranging from the Sepharoticum and the Marduk Institute (referring to the Kabbalah and the Babylonian pantheon) to the Lance of Longinus (the mythical spear a Roman centurion dipped in the blood of Christ), and from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Egyptian pyramids. Intriguingly, while the Evas themselves are referred to with the English word, “evangelions”, the angels are referred as “shito”, which means “apostle” (i.e. the apostles of Christ, with the additional connotation of faithful servants; “angel” does, however, convey the necessary subtext of being a messenger or avatar of some higher power).

This heady brew of mythopoetic and theological signifiers is tied to a range of multinational and geopolitical tropes, all related to Tokyo-3’s status as a new kind of global city or multinational urban space. Even Nerv’s eye-catching logo – a red fig leaf

outlined by a tongue-in-cheek quote from Robert Browning (“God’s In His Heaven, All’s Right With The World”) – is a complex geopolitical pun, combining a British poet, a red leaf somehow reminiscent of the Canadian maple-leaf, and a German noun.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the city’s surface buildings are for the most part camouflage and delivery-systems for the vast underground cavern of Nerv’s “geofront” (yet another English neologism, referring to an underground living space). Shinji’s first view of the geofront through the window of a bullet train is awe-inspiring: washed in golden light from some artificial light-source, Tokyo-3’s retractable skyscrapers hang down from the ceiling like vast roots, while a vast lake shimmers below (a sonorous trumpet even echoes in the background, very much like the opening tag of the *Deep Space 9* TV series). Nerv’s central facility is located at the bottom of the geofront, and consists of a curious kind of double pyramid: a vast depression, shaped like an inverted pyramid, directly adjacent to a smaller, raised pyramid. Finally, there is a giant raised structure to the far right, suggesting nothing so much as an outdoor drive-in movie screen or the base of an early 1990s cellphone.

Over and over again, Anno will strike just the right balance between Yamashita’s people-moving platforms, giant conveyor belts and Eva-related equipment, and Sadamoto’s crisp, emotive character designs. During an early scene of “Evangelion 1”, for example, Ritsuko (the head of Nerv’s science team), Misato and Shinji are silhouetted in an elevator against a glowing pink background, gloomily discussing the near-impossibility of ever getting the Eva to work properly; suddenly the vast humanoid hand of Eva 1 materializes in the storage tank behind them. A similar technique is used when Shinji first confronts the gaze of Eva 1, whose segmented, eyeless face glares like a stylized demon out of Japan’s storied theatrical tradition: distant objects look near, and

near objects look distant. All this culminates in the moment when Shinji is asked to pilot the Eva by his father, Gendou Ikari, who he has not seen for three years: Gendou's face is shot against serried banks of video monitors, displaying multiple images of Shinji (ingeniously echoed by a close shot of Gendou's semi-transparent glasses, which reflect these video images; these glasses will be a recurrent symbol throughout the series).

It is here that Anno transgresses against one of the fundamental features of the mecha narrative, by disrupting both its patriarchal gender codes and crude technological determinism. Unlike so many other anime, where the point is to show the son or daughter of the genius inventor dutifully carrying on the family lineage, Shinji actually *thinks* about his decision, and starts shaking with rage at the thought of being treated as cannon fodder for an untried, experimental technology. Though Misato remonstrates with him, saying "You must confront your father, and you must confront yourself," he cannot bring himself to pilot the Eva. Finally Gendou has to call on Rei to pilot the mecha; she is wheeled in on a stretcher, still badly wounded from a previous testing accident, accompanied by a haunting piano theme which will reappear at key moments later in the series. At this point one of the angel's power-bolts tears loose debris from the roof of Tokyo-3, but just as a detached section of the roof threatens to crush Shinji, Eva 1 lifts up its massive armored hand *by itself* to protect him, batting the debris away in the direction of Gendou Ikari – who smiles grimly behind a shockproof glass wall, as if he had expected this turn of events all along. When Shinji finally agrees to pilot the Eva, it is out of compassion for Rei, who is obviously in bad shape, and not his father's wishes.

This is nothing, however, compared to the scandalous transposition of the battle sequence from the very beginning of "Evangelion 2" to the closing moments of the

episode: we see the angel fighting with the Eva, and apparently getting the upper hand by crushing the latter's left arm, when suddenly Anno cuts to Shinji waking up in the hospital. We only very gradually figure out he somehow won the battle, though at terrible cost. This transgresses against a general feature of East Asian media culture in the 1980s, namely the video-boasted glorification of the physical bravery, dexterity or athleticism of the martial arts hero or mecha pilot; something usually conjoined to the repressive micropolitics of the national police force, mythic warrior code or state-developmental bureaucracy charged with battling comic book gangsters, rogue samurai or corporate thugs. The battles with the angels are not contests of physical strength, however, but subjective and psychological tests of concentration and willpower. Eventually, they will become a kind of objective recorder or seismographic sensor, by which Anno will map out the fault-lines of a post-Bubble Japan, slowly and painfully coming to grips with its past and present traumas.<sup>10</sup>

One of the most significant of these traumas is Japan's epic transformation from a predominantly agrarian society to an urbanized and industrial one. Whereas Britain took over a century to become an urban society, and where the US and Western Europe accomplished the same feat in about seventy years, Japan did so in less than thirty years (1945-75). This tremendous achievement came at the price of enormous cultural dislocation, intergenerational conflict and psychological stress, as ordinary Japanese had to cope with not just one or two but several cultural revolutions, all at once. It's no accident that the two leading cultural exports of Japanese cinema in the 1950s and 1960s – the Godzilla movies and the Kurosawa films – both put their finger on this precise contradiction. Toho's wildly successful monster epics deftly set the trauma of WW II and

the utopia of Americanization in motion towards the monsters of humanity's thermonuclear Id, while Kurosawa's samurai thrillers and detective dramas did something similar with the antinomies of rapid urbanization and upwards class mobility. At their outer limit, each paved the way for the multinational East Asian media culture of the future, in much the same way that the social tensions and conflicts of Japan's postwar boom anticipated those of other rapidly modernizing East Asian nations, most notably Taiwan and South Korea in the 1970s, and coastal China since the late 1980s; certainly, one could argue that John Woo's Hong Kong blockbusters are the postmodern synthesis of the visual energies of the Godzilla spectacular and the scripting innovations of the Kurosawa film.

*Evangelion* records the generational aspect of this process in an unusually direct fashion: the "old men" of Seele represent the deeply conservative, immediate postwar generation; Gendou Ikari and Fuyutsuki hail from the technocratic generation of the 1970s; Misato and the other Nerv staffers represent the consumer-oriented 1980s; while the children themselves incarnate the informatic 1990s (only fourteen-year-old children have the neural flexibility to pilot the Evas, a canny reference to the ability of the Nintendo kids to meld with a given technology far faster than any adult). The clash of generations is also the crucial issue during Shinji's first face-to-face meeting with his father after the battle, when they run into each other in one of Nerv's elevators. A low-angle shot frames Gendou to the left of the screen and Shinji to the right; but neither can yet forgive the other, and after a tense moment of silence, like a stand-off in some rural village, the door closes without either one saying a word. Anno will show us a range of similar scenes in the elevators, bullet trains, and skywalks of Tokyo-3, often using excruciatingly long

shots to highlight the inner conflicts of the characters. Later, Misato takes Shinji to a scenic overlook, where they watch the skyscrapers of Tokyo-3 rise majestically from the ground at sunset, seconded by the same sweeping horn motifs which signaled Shinji's first glimpse of the geofront. The effect is like viewing a time-lapse photograph of postwar Tokyo, as one office tower after another rises up out of a sea of tenements and apartment buildings; Misato will complete the gesture, by taking Shinji to one such apartment building, a new flat on the outskirts of town, in order to give him a home he can call his own.

This domestic space will allow Anno to quote a number of anime conventions, ranging from the registers of slapstick and domestic comedy, to the institution of the “service shot” (still shots of anime characters in vaguely suggestive or risqué positions), all the way to the exaggeratedly kawaii (the Japanese word for “cute”) series mascot or pet animal. *Evangelion's* mascot is Pen-pen, a warm-water penguin with near-human intelligence which has its own living quarters and even reads the newspaper. The penguin has been a significant mass-cultural symbol since Opus in Berke Breathed's classic 1980s comic strip, *Bloom County*; in the 1990s, the penguin became the icon of Linus Torvald's freeware PC operating system, Linux. Most of all, Anno inverts the usual gender stereotypes here. Not only is Misato a complete slob, but she has a habit of yelling out a war-whoop after drinking a can of beer, i.e. is the completely antithesis of the docile Japanese housewife – in fact, Shinji ends up doing the cooking in the household. In “*Evangelion 2*”, the obligatory service shots of Misato are even matched by a service shot of Shinji about to take a bath, when he discovers Pen-pen in the bathroom and runs screaming to Misato, totally naked, a beer can on the table strategically placed between

our point of view and the lower part of his body; when Misato picks up the can of beer, a jar of toothpicks turns out to be in the way.

What does not quite ring true is Misato's latent aggression towards Shinji; in fact, later on in the series, Misato will become much more of a guardian-figure, while Asuka will take on the role of the provocative, in-your-face tomboy. Interestingly, it is only in the solitude and quiet of his new home that Shinji begins to recall the shocking details of the battle sequence. After an extremely realistic close-up of Shinji's eye, brimming with multiple reflections on the cornea, Anno deploys a series of extremely fast cuts, each keyed to a crashing sound, which culminate in a full-scale flashback of the battle. The pilots of the Eva are enclosed in a shockproof "entry plug" (yet another English neologism) which looks like a guided missile, inserted manually into the Eva. This is the first in a series of quotations from William Gibson's sci-fi classic *Neuromancer*; the entry-plug is very much the fusion of the "coffin" hotel Case stays at in Tokyo (the actual term is "capsule hotels", and though they really are the size of a coffin, many have built-in TVs and alarm clocks), with the cyberspace deck (the Eva pilots wear trodes which enable them to synch their brainwaves to the Eva).

The action scenes are superbly animated, conveying a sense of thermonuclear-strength battles with world-class editing, sound-effects and tracking shots. Anno not only borrows many of the stunt techniques of the Hong Kong thrillers, but intersperses close shots of the awed faces of Nerv personnel, watching the action from their video monitors. After taking a terrible pounding, the Eva seems to sense the danger to Shinji's life and miraculously springs into action, howling like some primeval monster. The angel broadcasts an "AT field" or force-field of mental energy to block it (keynoted by a high

ringing chime, a standard anime sound-effect connoting surprise or shock), but the Eva proceeds to regenerate its own arm and neutralize the angel's AT field with its own field, before closing in for the kill. After the battle, Shinji is looking outside at the Eva's blank, featureless eye-socket, when suddenly, tissue around the socket boils into existence, and a giant green eye slides into view. Shinji's blue-grey eye freezes, as he realizes the Eva is *looking at him*: he screams in horror, as the screen fades to black (a quotation of one the first great video tropes, namely the close shots of Sally's quivering eye in Tobe Hooper's 1973 horror classic, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*).

What sharply distinguishes the Evas from the cyborgs, androids, and genetically engineered bodies endemic to the anime genre, however, is the fact that they are not really autonomous entities or a separate species. Rather, like Stanislaw Lem's biologized aliens, the vanished Krell of *Forbidden Planet*, or Gibson's curiously splintered AIs, they constitute the borderline or boundary between the human and the non-human, or put more concretely still, between the realms of social history and natural history. In the earliest episodes of *Evangelion*, the social and natural history in question is clearly that of postwar Japan: thus in "Evangelion 3" Shinji experiences the joys and sorrows of notoriety when his high school classmates discover he is an Eva pilot; in "Evangelion 4" we see the bullet trains, half-empty streets and gorgeous natural scenery around Tokyo-3; in "Evangelion 5" the spaces in question are the grey-in-grey concrete wasteland of postwar housing projects (identified with Rei) and the high-tech laboratory (identified with Ritsuko); "Evangelion 6" illustrates the Japanese national power-grid via a satellite shot of Japan from outer space; while "Evangelion 7" satirizes the arrogance of Japan's nuclear power lobby and keiretsu business elites. Anno never allows these objective

spaces to overshadow the human drama of the characters involved; rather, the specific tropes of the former are used to highlight the irreplaceable individuality of the latter.

The very first of these dramas is Shinji's slow, painful process of adjustment to his new home, well worth describing in detail. While Shinji's classmates, Hikari, Touji and Kensuke, are modeled on the duty-conscious class monitor, the well-meaning but impulse student athlete, and the bespectacled science geek, all are complex, rounded characters in their own right.<sup>11</sup> In "Evangelion 3", for example, Touji punches Shinji to the ground in revenge for his sister, who was critically injured in the battle with the angel (an act Touji will later regret terribly, when Shinji saves both him and Kensuke from the attack of the second angel). After being chewed out by Misato for disobeying orders, Shinji runs away from his new home, riding the rails of Tokyo-3, sleeping on benches and in a movie theater (ironically playing a grade-B sci-fi movie based on the Second Impact), and dispiritedly wandering through the countryside, oblivious to the lush green fields, blue skies, terraced hills and fog-shrouded valleys on every side. At last Shinji accidentally runs into Kensuke, who is camping out in the wilds in full camouflage gear and acting out the parts of the heroic, wounded captain and loyal lieutenant in a hackneyed war movie.<sup>12</sup> Shinji gradually warms to Kensuke when the latter reveals that he lost his mother at a young age, too, and they strike up a friendship.

The next day, Nerv security agents take him in, and present him with an ultimatum, to either resign or return to full-time duty as a pilot. He opts to resign, in just one of several references to *The Prisoner* (there is even a McGoohanesque shot of his Nerv ID card with his photo, stamped "resigned"). But before he leaves, Kensuke and Touji arrive, and Touji not only formally apologizes to Shinji, but insists that the latter

has to punch him back to make sure they're even. After Shinji does so, they are reconciled, and they both praise him for his courage in piloting the Eva. This kindness completely unnerves Shinji, who is already deeply ambivalent about his status as a pilot and beginning to realize he will be leaving behind his newfound friends. At roughly the same time, Misato realizes that Shinji's flight is not a thought-out decision, it's the only way he knows of reaching out to others. This is capped by a significant scene at the railway station, when Misato roars up in her car, thinking she just missed him, before realizing he is still at the station. They stare at each other in silence, while the announcements of arriving and departing trains echo in background, in a static shot lasting a full 48 seconds ("I... I'm home," says Shinji at last; Misato smiles, and says, "Welcome home").

After this wealth of character development, the next episode proceeds to introduce Shinji's first key counter-player, fellow pilot Rei Ayanami. Rei lives in a nondescript row of cement apartments, in a room overflowing with bandages and assorted junk; in fact, her only real personal possession is a broken pair of Gendou's glasses, still in their original case. Interestingly, Shinji's first visit to Rei is an explicit parody of the service shot: not realizing Rei is home, Shinji puts on the glasses, and is surprised by Rei, who emerges stark naked from the shower. Embarrassed, he tries to explain, while she unexpectedly reaches for the glasses, causing them to inadvertently fall on top of each other. If this was a normal service shot, Shinji would be physically slapped or otherwise called to account for his temerity; here, however, Rei simply says quietly, "Will you get off" and gets dressed. Rei's general air of unearthliness is highlighted by her trademark blue hair, hardly an unusual sight in an anime series, but a color which certainly meshes

with the deeply introverted tenor of her personality. Rei is, however, capable of powerful emotional reactions, most notably in a later conversation with Shinji, when the latter angrily denounces his father; Rei steps forwards and slaps him, telling him he should have faith in his father.

Rei's appearance also coincides with the first explicit citation of neo-national or Cold War technological tropes, ranging from the positronic rifle Nerv requisitions from the weapons labs of Japan's Self-Defense Forces, to the alloy hull of a space shuttle Ritsuko uses as an improvised heat-shield (Gendou's broken glasses also return in one crucial shot, showing the glistening white screens of four computers piled up Rei's room, an intriguing reference to information technology). The enemy angel itself is a mirror-like hypercube with an irresistible particle-weapon beam, which knocks Eva 1 out of action with a single shot and begins drilling past the geofront's armor shields. Faced with an enemy which cannot be attacked directly, Misato improvises the clever strategy of downing the angel with a sniper shot, and Nerv proceeds to mobilize the entire national power grid of Japan to power the rifle. The sniper sequence begins with a magnificent series of shots of Tokyo-3 going dark, and then a vertical shot of Pen-pen staring into the night sky, followed by a satellite image of the entire Japanese archipelago blacking out, framed by the glowing arc of the Korean peninsula and coastal China. This geopolitical reference to East Asia accedes to a conversation between Shinji and Rei, highlighted by a brilliant sequence of frames:

Shinji: *framed against eye of Eva 1*: "Ayanami, just why do you pilot this thing?"

Rei: *framed against her own Eva, thinks for a moment*: “Because I’m bonded to it.”

Shinji: “You’re bonded to it?”

Rei: “Yes. It’s a bond.”

Shinji: “You mean, to my father?”

Rei: “To all people.” *Slow pan from Shinji to Rei against the darkened valley, stars in background.*

Shinji: “You’re very strong, Rei.”

Rei: “I have nothing else.”

Shinji: *framed against Rei*: “What do you mean, you have nothing else?”

Rei: *getting up*: “It’s time. Let’s go.” *She is silhouetted against an enormous close-up of the full moon.* “Goodbye, Shinji.”

Powered by the entire energy-grid of Japan, Shinji prepares to fire, but the angel senses their presence and launches its own energy-pulse, throwing the shot off-course; Rei then holds up the improvised heat-shield against the withering blast of the angel, her Eva sustaining terrible damage in the process, until his second shot finally hits home. Afterwards, he wrests open the superheated entry plug of her battered Eva with his own hands, echoing a previous scene when his father opened Rei’s superheated plug in the test chamber with his bare hands, badly burning himself:

Shinji: *crying tears of relief*: “Don’t ever say that. Just don’t say that you have nothing else. Just don’t say that. And don’t say goodbye when we launch. It’s just too sad.” *Cut to*

*shot of half-melted entry plug in half-melted hand of Eva-01; medium shot of the two Evas reclining, their skins battered and seared by the angel's assault, almost as if they are talking.*

Rei: "Why are you crying... I'm sorry... I'm sorry, I don't know what to feel at times like this."

Shinji: "Just smile." *Close shot of her eyes, Shinji's reflection in her pupils; suddenly she draws in her breath, struck by his resemblance to Gendou Ikari. Slowly, hesitantly, she smiles.*

This is just the first of many such extraordinary moments, where eye-popping visuals and gargantuan battles artfully embellish, rather than overwhelm, the subtlest of character interactions. Though Rei's inverted, rotating silhouette is the central motif of the series' closing tag, this is the first time she is explicitly identified with an extreme close-up of the moon, whose glowing circle is curiously replicated by the banks of outdoor floodlights which accompany several scenes in "Evangelion 4".

It's interesting that the last moment of the traditional mecha narrative ("Evangelion 7") marks Anno's first open critique of Japan's nuclear power lobby and keiretsu business elites. Misato and Ritsuko are called to attend a demonstration of an Eva-style robot by the Japan Heavy Chemical Industrial Cooperative – the difference being that this robot has its own internal nuclear power supply and is piloted by an onboard computer, not by a human pilot. Meanwhile the corporate stooge in charge of the demonstration insults Nerv and its science team in the most obnoxious and sexist terms

(“It’s [the Eva] like a hysterical woman, completely out of control”). Predictably, the supposedly failsafe robot goes haywire during its activation test and threatens to melt down in a populated region, forcing Misato to launch an emergency mission to stop it. There is one priceless scene of a corporate executive out on a golf course, trying to weasel out of responsibility for handing over the robot’s password (“hope”, a three-character kanji in Japanese) to Nerv. Though Shinji manages to catch up to the robot amidst the rubble of Tokyo-2, Misato finds that the password doesn’t work. In desperation she starts pushing in the neutron-absorbing safety rods manually, but at the last second the program finally activates, shutting down the reactor. This accident was, in short, no accident at all: in a later scene, Ritsuko reports to Gendou, saying everything went according to plan, except for Captain Katsuragi’s operation – strongly hinting they either aided or abetted the sabotage.

This pungent satire of the legendary turf battles between Japan’s developmental state and its fiercely-competitive corporations highlights one of the key weaknesses of the robot narrative and cybernetic technologies generally, namely its reliance on electronic control and communications subsystems, a.k.a. software. As befitting its status as an industrial semi-periphery, Japanese firms specialized for decades in medium-technology electronics and automotive goods, and did not start diversifying into high-end software, services and broadcasting markets until the late 1980s (Sony’s trajectory from a purveyor of cheap radios, to high-quality stereo and video equipment, and finally to videogame platforms and media content is emblematic in this respect). The software industry is also marked by a quite striking multinational division of labor, such that the US leads the

world in PC software, the EU excels in enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, while Japan exports vast quantities of videogame-related software.

Two new characters – the third pilot, Asuka Langley, and the intelligence operative, Kaji Ryouji – will mark the arrival of explicitly multinational and informatic signifiers in “Evangelion 8”, by means of that oldest narrative of globalization of them all, the sea-faring adventure. Not only does this episode manage to pastiche all the classic ocean adventures from *Moby Dick* up to *Jaws*, it slyly alludes to Anno’s own previous sea-faring tale, *Nadia* (in the form of the crusty admiral, the spitting image of Captain Nemo). The bulk of the episode takes place on a supercarrier of the UN Pacific fleet, mobilized to protect the third Evangelion unit on its journey from Germany to Japan, a seemingly unlikely backdrop for the riotous physical comedy associated with Asuka, and the emotional complications signaled by the smooth, suave Kaji (Misato’s long-lost ex-boyfriend). Despite years of separation, Kaji still knows how to get Misato’s goat: in one dinner scene, he playfully asks Shinji if Misato is still wild in bed, causing the children to gasp in shock and Misato to turn purple. What makes this especially funny is the incidental sound-track of a B-grade, lurid soap opera running on the TV in the background, a technique Anno will repeat a number of times in the future.

In contrast to the self-abnegating Rei, Asuka is self-assertive, capricious, and that rarest of all things in anime, a female character with genuine emotional depth. She is also of mixed German and Japanese descent, frequently using choice German phrases in crisis situations, but displays a thoroughly Americanized individualism when piloting her Eva. When a sea-based angel suddenly attacks, sending ship after ship to the bottom of the sea with the unremitting fury of the White Whale itself, Asuka drags Shinji off to the cockpit

of Eva 2 and launches without Misato's authorization. In one gorgeous sequence, Eva 2 leaps from ship to ship like so many stepping stones, before landing on the deck of the supercarrier as if it were a giant surfboard. Though they successfully repulse the attack of the angel, the beast traps Eva 2 in its maw and drags them out to sea, reeling out the Eva's power-cable behind it. This gives Misato the sudden inspiration to use the reel as a weapon, by sinking two battleships and using them as giant depth charges to blow up the angel from within; after fighting like cats and dogs, Asuka and Shinji manage to work together to make the plan succeed.

No episode of *Evangelion* would be complete without a devious plot twist to send a chill down our spine, and "Evangelion 8" does not disappoint: after the battle Kaji delivers a mysterious package to Gendou back at Nerv. It is an embryonic life-form of some kind, encased in plastic, which Gendou calls Adam, "the first human being", the keynote of the mysterious Instrumentality project, and most likely the real provocation for the angel attack. This is actually the culmination of two earlier scenes: in "Evangelion 5", Ritsuko tells Misato and Shinji that the energy-patterns of the angels are a 99.89% match to human DNA, while in "Evangelion 7" she reveals additional details of the Second Impact, saying that the catastrophe was caused not by an asteroid, but by human contact with an angel.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that the Second and (potential) Third Impact are not really metaphors for WW II and a potential thermonuclear WW III, but refer to something specific to the post-Cold War era, which we still need to identify.

The fundamental innovation Asuka brings to the storyline is the element of subjective initiative and contingency, both in terms of her role as the popular foreign exchange girl, overwhelmed with attention from her classmates, as well as her status as a

true psychological counter-player for Shinji, i.e. someone who motivates him to break out of his Rei-like introversion. Put another way, Asuka's arrival marks the point at which the adults of *Evangelion* start acting like adults, and the children start acting like children – or more accurately, the moment when we begin to see how childlike adults can be, and how children wrestle with adult issues. One of the real achievements of Anno's scriptwriting here is its ability to balance Asuka's tempestuous friendship with Shinji – equal parts competition, friction, and growing empathy – with Misato's own stormy relationship with Kaji. There is one great moment, for instance, when Asuka is sleepwalking and almost kisses Shinji; he leans forwards, but she says “Mama” in her sleep and he turns away, embarrassed; elsewhere in Tokyo-3, Kaji is kissing Misato, as their old romance flares up again despite her protests to the contrary – “Which should I trust, your lips or your words?” he asks, devilish as ever. The upshot of all this is to add fresh layers of complexity to the various character interrelationships, most notably between Misato and Ritsuko (e.g. hanging out in a Tokyo-3 bar one night, Ritsuko suddenly asks, “So... still in love, huh?” as only an old friend can, causing Misato to choke on her coffee). “Evangelion 9” is also the most explicit comic parody of the mecha, reveling in the chaos which erupts when Asuka and Shinji face off against what can best be described as the angel of karaoke, i.e. a creature which can replicate itself indefinitely, and which can only be defeated by precisely-timed choreography between Evas 1 and 2. Shinji and Asuka eventually learn to set aside their differences and cooperate, but not before treating us to their very own music video – a gorgeously choreographed one-minute videorecording of the battle, which manages to float

effortlessly above the mecha genre, by citing the shot techniques of the televised sports event and Olympic gymnastics routine.

“Evangelion 10”, on the other hand, is concerned not with the space of extended cultural consumption but with the space of production, relayed here by an embryonic angel found floating in the lava of a Japanese volcano. Though the volcano is one of the oldest metaphors for industrialization around, Anno manages to impart a fresh spin on the idea, by showing Nerv’s attempt to capture the angel intact, in what amounts to the rewriting of J.R.R. Tolkien’s military-industrial Mount Doom in a biological turn. Anno also subtly weaves the corporeal register of diving and the scientific one of thermodynamics into the story: thus the high school class goes on a diving trip; Asuka shops for a swimsuit and goes diving in a pool at one point; the defeat of the angel is made possible by a creative application of a basic lesson of thermodynamics; while the episode ends with an appropriately comic moment at a volcanic hot springs (on cue, Pen-pen shows up by package delivery). All this is overshadowed by an unsettling moment, when Asuka and Misato are sitting by the hot springs and watching the sun set; Asuka notices Misato’s scar, a legacy of the Second Impact, and correctly surmises that Misato knows all about her past (“It’s my job”, Misato reminds her gently).

The motif of the fading sun is not an accident. This moment of relative equilibrium, where the various registers of comedy and tragedy, childhood and adulthood, society and technology all seem to coexist in relative harmony, will slowly disintegrate in future episodes, as *Evangelion* moves decisively beyond the mecha as a form and probes deeper and deeper into the terrible traumas of the past, not out of any desire to humiliate or punish its characters, but as the deepest and most necessary sort of

healing. In the process, the neo-national or Japanese motifs of the earlier episodes will gradually be rewritten into multinational and East Asian ones. Anno's first step is to mobilize the radical discontents of a post-Cold War generation deeply dissatisfied with the asphyxiating monotony of the LDP one-party state, its xenophobic micropolitics, and its repressive gender roles, but unable, as yet, to formulate a coherent political or social project of resistance. This is signaled by "Evangelion 11", whose English subtitle, *The Day Tokyo-3 Stood Still*, refers to the touchstone sci-fi movie of dissent from the Cold War, *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. Here, it is not the urban centers of the Earth but the multinational urban space of Tokyo-3 which has been immobilized, only not by inimical aliens, but by human beings themselves ("I can't believe the first havoc wreaked upon our headquarters wasn't caused by some angel, but by another member of our own species," frets Fuyutski, and Gendou responds philosophically, "Humanity is its own worst enemy.")

The airing of the dirty laundry of the developmental state begins, appropriately enough, at a futuristic laundromat, where several Nerv staffers are picking up their laundry on their way to work. Hopping aboard the train, they meet their boss, Fuyutski, who is reading the morning newspaper:

Ritsuko: "You're quite early today."

Fuyutski: "Well, I have to go uptown as Ikari's representative."

Ritsuko: "I see, isn't today the City Council's regular meeting?"

Fuyutski: "It's a boring job. He always forces the most tedious work on me. Without the Magi's help, I couldn't do it."

Ritsuko: “Speaking of which, election day is coming up, isn’t it?”

Fuyutski: “The City Council has no authority at all. Actually, the Magi run everything now.”

Maya: “The Magi? You mean the three supercomputers?”

Fuyutski: “Government by the majority decision of three different computers. It’s a sort of democratic system.”

Maya: “And the council just obeys their decisions?”

Fuyutski: *ironic*: “It’s a most effective form of government.”

Maya: *wide-eyed*: “This truly is a City of Science. We’re lucky to live in an era when Science reigns supreme.”

Shigeru: *rolls eyes to himself*: “That’s so old-fashioned.”

Maya’s comment is less outdated than one might think; simply substitute “Bill Gates, Larry Ellison, Andy Grove” for the three Magi and “Silicon Valley” for the City of Science and one could easily imagine some young US tech professional of the Bubble 1990s, dazzled by their inflated stock options, voicing the same opinion. What is interesting, though, is that Shigeru is not immediately identified with his most obvious US counterpart, namely the hippie programmer or freeware guru. This is not, as one might assume, due to the belated development of the PC market in Japan (in fact, one of Gainax’ main product lines in the early 1990s was made-for-PC software), but is meant to highlight the fact that Nerv is a kind of global frontier zone of free spirits, innovators

and visionaries, who would never fit into a buttoned-down corporate research program or official Government lab.

More importantly, “Evangelion 11” shows Rei, Asuka and Shinji interacting with one another for the first time. Finding that their subway cards have ceased functioning thanks to the blackout, Asuka leads them in the general direction of Nerv headquarters, only to end up practically running into the new angel in the process (a giant spider with a central, acidic eye). The angel’s form is no accident, but perfectly complements a jaw-dropping shot involving the mechanical eye of a subway card reader: we see a huge blob trailing across the screen, which turns out to be Asuka’s thumb rubbing the scanner, as if filmed from the perspective of a spider located behind the scanner-plate! The angel’s crawling method of locomotion is also replicated by the children, who have to crawl through underground service ducts to get to their Evangelions, and then crawl through yet more ducts to get to the scene of the battle. Along the way, Asuka and Rei repeatedly clash, displaying a mutual antagonism which makes Asuka’s run-ins with Shinji look like purest harmony, if not indeed a romantically-tinged jealousy (Asuka whispers to Shinji, in a true case of the pot calling the kettle black: “This First Child [Rei] isn’t someone to mess with. She’ll do anything to accomplish her objectives. She’s a real self-righteous bitch.”) Working for the first time as a trio of equals, they finally defeat the angel, leading to this intriguing post-battle meditation:

*They stare up into the Milky Way, the night sky perfectly clear thanks to the blackout.*

Shinji: “It’s ironic... without electricity and artificial light, the sky can look so beautiful.”

Asuka: “But without the lights, it’s as if there weren’t any people there.” *Lights come back on in city, block by block.* “See? I feel so much better this way.”

Rei: *poetically*: “Human beings fear the Darkness, and drive it away with Flame, in order to survive.”

Asuka: *dismissively*: “Philosophy!”

Shinji: “Is that what makes humankind a special species? Is that why the angels keep attacking us?”

Asuka: “What are you, stupid? Who knows what they think?”

Here at last Evan-gelion finds the ultimate narrative synthesis between Rei’s lyric neo-national interiority and Asuka’s pragmatic multinational exteriority: this is the global frame of Shinji’s explicitly aesthetic cognition. The extraordinary power of this move will become apparent only in “Evan-gelion 12”, when Anno begins to provide this global frame with content. The episode begins with a flashback to the year 2000; we see the blue marble of the Earth rise above the cratered surface of the moon, and then a bright light flashes near the South Pole. The next shot is of the blasted ruins and howling winds of the Second Impact, punctuated by a brief shot of the very first angel (Adam) radiating in the background like thermal pulse of an A-bomb; Misato’s father, badly wounded, is carrying his unconscious daughter to a safety capsule (an interesting early version of the entry plug). She awakens briefly when a drop of his blood falls on her cheek, saying “father” just as the capsule closes. Safely out at sea, Misato’s capsule opens and she stares at the Apocalypse: a high, electronic sound resounds, like the whinny of an angel, whilst a

terrible pair of stylized double wings rises far off, as some unknown energy-source blasts Antarctica into nothingness. The scene cuts to 2015, when Misato is getting dressed, and we finally see a frontal shot of the scar across her chest. This is more than just the negation of the sexist service shot; it is also the savage repudiation of that Cold War sex symbol par excellence, the *bikini* (named after Bikini Atoll, the Pacific reef vaporized by an H-bomb), as well as the ingenious rewriting of the signature atomic mushroom cloud into a planetary or ecological register.

As if to second this, Fuyutski and Gendou Ikari carry on the following quasi-theological conversation during a secret mission at the tip of the South Pole, on board an aircraft carrier making its way through a poisoned, radioactive sea, sprinkled with residual ice or rock formations poking out of the luminous pink water:

Fuyutski: “Nothing alive can exist in this world of death, Antarctica... or should we just call it Hell?”

Gendou: “And yet we human beings stand here, as living beings.”

Fuyutski: “Because we’re protected by science.”

Gendou: “Science is the power of humanity.”

Fuyutski: “That arrogance caused the tragedy of the Second Impact 15 years ago. This is the result. The punishment is too harsh, considering what we’ve done... It’s like the Dead Sea.”

Gendou: “And yet it’s a purified world, washed clean of sin.”

Fuyutski: “I prefer worlds where human beings can live, regardless of how steeped in sin.”

The next angel, a weirdly bulbous creature with a vast central eye, chooses this inopportune moment to attack. Satellite recon photos show its first two blasts landed harmlessly in the Pacific ocean, while the next hits land (it is unclear whether southern Japan, the Korean peninsula, or elsewhere in Southeast Asia). Whereas the satellite image in “Evangelion 6” conveyed a primordial East Asian form, via the identical power-grids of China, South Korea and Japan, these images hint at a nascent East Asian identity: that of fellow victims, as the A-bombs and atmospheric H-bomb tests uncannily converge with the airborne devastation of Korea and Vietnam during the Cold War. Misato’s off-the-cuff plan is for the children to literally catch the angel as it falls from the skies, using their AT fields like giant nets. She bluntly tells them their chances aren’t good, and even asks them if they want to write a will (“I have no intention of dying”, shoots back Asuka). The references to the era of the H-bomb continue to multiply when, at one point, she promises them a steak dinner if they succeed, and they pretend to jump for joy. Once she’s gone, Asuka delivers the great line: “Does she really think that children nowadays care about a steak dinner? Second Generation people are so *cheap*” and starts thumbing through a tourist guide, trying to find the most expensive steak house in town. Even more interesting is a moment when Shinji, waiting in Eva 1 to engage the angel, thinks back to his conversation the previous day with Misato. They were standing at the edge of Tokyo-3, watching the sun set behind the buildings, when suddenly she began to talk about her past:

Misato: “Shinji, yesterday you asked me why I joined Nerv. My father was a man who put everything into his research, into his dreams. I’ve never been able to forgive him for that, and in fact I even hated him.”

Shinji: “Just like my father.”

Misato: “He never took care of me, my mother or the family. People said he was very sensitive and delicate, but the truth was that he was just a weak person who didn’t want to face reality, the reality called his family. He was like a little kid... so I agreed with my mother when she decided to divorce him, because she was always crying. He was depressed about it, but I laughed at him because he deserved what he got.” *Close shot of the cross hanging from her neck.* “But he sacrificed himself to save my life during the Second Impact. I didn’t know whether I hated him or loved him. The only thing that was clear to me was that I wanted to destroy the angels who had caused the Second Impact. That’s why I joined Nerv. It could be I’m trying to take revenge for my father, in order to finally become free of him.” *Montage in Shinji’s mind of childhood themes of abandonment, news headlines, Eva-1, finally the thought: I mustn’t run away, I mustn’t run away, I mustn’t run away. He returns to consciousness in the entry plug of Eva-1.*

Shinji: *to himself*: “I must *not* run away.”

In yet another eye-popping sequence, scored to a Spanish aria reminiscent of Leone’s spaghetti Westerns, Shinji manages to intercept the angel with his own AT field, thus enabling Asuka and Rei to arrive just in time to neutralize the angel’s AT field and knock out its core. Misato’s powerful meditation on gender, the first moment of a revolutionary

micropolitics, is seconded by the post-battle briefing, when Ikari praises his son in front of the others for the first time (an unusual moment in a culture which, even today, tends to recognize group achievement rather than individual merit).

It is only now that a genuinely informatic politics will take wing, as Anno decisively moves away from the cybernetic and nuclear tropes of the Cold War era and towards the biological and silicon tropes of the Information Age. The plot of “Evangelion 13” turns on the invasion of the informatic space of the Magi system, rather than the physical invasion of Tokyo-3 and the geofront; one early scene shows banks of computer screens, and various semi-transparent computer screens projected onto the windows of the water-filled test chamber. This is perhaps the place to emphasize the extraordinary aesthetic beauty of Nerv’s instrument panels, which exhibit an inexhaustible wealth of richly-detailed graphical displays, warning decals, logos and symbols, each with its own subtle visual stylization and sound-effect. The invading angel is not a Godzilla-sized monster but a kind of biological microprocessor or nanomachine, which at first appears to be some harmless corrosion near a “protein wall”, which quickly spreads to the vicinity of the test chamber and then eats into the “Pribnow box” surrounding headquarters, before hacking into the Magi directly. All these terms are drawn, by the way, from real life genetics research (the Pribnow box, for example, is a DNA sequence which repeats in a certain way), and one could argue that “Evangelion 13” is to that extent the biological reappropriation of silicon cleanroom technology. The scene where Nerv plots its counter-strategy is surely one of the transcendental moments of late 20<sup>th</sup> century science fiction, perfectly balancing the objective discourses of nanotechnology, programming, ecological niches and evolution against the subjective motivations of its characters:

Ritsuko: “This angel must be composed of ‘micro-machines’ [in English], each the size of viruses. In a very short period of time, they have exponentially evolved to form a sophisticated intelligence circuit.”

Fuyutsuki: “Evolved!”

Ritsuko: “Exactly. They’re continuously changing to form the best system to cope with any environment.”

Fuyutsuki: “It’s this angel’s survival mechanism.”

Misato: *determinedly*: “Against an enemy that constantly evolves to overcome its weaknesses, the only effective countermeasure is to eliminate the host and let the parasite die with it. The only option is to order the Magi to self-destruct. I propose the physical elimination of the Magi.”

Ritsuko: *parries*: “Impossible. Destroying the Magi means destroying headquarters itself.”

Misato: *heatedly*: “Then I’m officially requesting it on behalf of the Operations Division.”

Ritsuko: “Rejected. This situation is the responsibility of the Technology Department.”

Misato: “Why are you being so mule-headed?”

Ritsuko: “This situation is the result of my carelessness.”

Misato: “Why do you always have to be like this? You’re always taking all the responsibility on your own shoulders to avoid depending on anyone else.”

Ritsuko: *thinking furiously*: “As long as this angel keeps evolving, we still have a chance.”

Ikari: *with sudden insight*: “Expedite its evolution?”

Ritsuko: “Yes, sir.”

Ikari: “The end of evolution is self-destruction: death itself.”

Fuyutsuki: “Thus we just need to accelerate its evolution.”

Ritsuko: “If the angel considers it the only practical means of survival, it may choose to coexist with the Magi system.”

Makoto: “But how do we do that?”

Ritsuko: “If the angel is a computer itself, we can do a reverse hack by connecting Caspar to the angel and upload a self-destruct program. However...”

Maya: *finishes thought*: “...at the same time we’ll be turning off the barrier to the angel.”

Ikari: “So either Caspar or the angel, whichever is faster, will win.”

Ritsuko: “Yes.”

Misato: “Can this program be ready in time? If Caspar is taken over, it’ll be all over.”

Ritsuko: *glances at her, looks away*: “I keep my promises.”

Ritsuko’s stubbornness is not due to any technocratic arrogance, but to her deeply ambivalent relationship to her mother, the late Naoko Akagi, a brilliant scientist who created the Magi years ago and wrote its basic programming. The interior of the Magi system turns out to be a massive cube of tightly coiled, bulbous data-pipes, looking eerily like biological organs. Deep in an access hatch, they discover the scrawled developers’ notes left by Naoko and the original Magi team (one even says “Ikari, you idiot!”), which will enable them to utilize the Magi’s backdoor systems to launch their counterattack.

When the faceplate of the Magi system is removed, we see the folds of what looks like a human brain, but which is really an electronic recording mechanism: the core of the Magi system, as Ritsuko explains to Misato while she works, is a personality transplant operating system similar to the one which powers the Evas. The three Magi are each semi-autonomous AIs, constantly battling for dominance, each one based on the three aspects of her personality as a scientist, as a mother, and as a woman – a clever gender-bend of the patriarchal trinity of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost. Ritsuko eventually succeeds in launching the program, and with one second to spare they defeat the angel. In the aftermath, Ritsuko finally reveals her feelings about her mother to Misato, “As a scientist I respected her. As a woman, I hated her.” Though she omits the precise reason for that hatred, we do learn that Caspar was the AI implanted with the program of her as a woman; it was this AI which resisted the angel to the bitter end (“How totally like my mother,” concludes Ritsuko).

It’s no accident that many of the themes of “Evangelion 13” are borrowed wholesale from *Neuromancer*, ranging from recorded personality constructs (e.g. the Dixie Flatline) and AIs all the way to Naoko herself, who is clearly modeled after *Neuromancer’s* Marie Tessier-Ashpool. Marie was the enigmatic programmer who created the AIs, only to be murdered by her megalomaniac husband, Ashpool, in an internal power-struggle within the Tessier-Ashpool corporation; we will see later how Anno ingeniously rewrites Gibson’s straightforward allegory of global rentiers usurping the rule of developmental engineers into the much more disturbing set of circumstances surrounding Naoko’s tragic death in “Evangelion 21”.

The multinational subjectivities of “Evangelion 12” and the informatino society of “Evangelion 13” finally converge in “Evangelion 14”, the narrative hinge and turning-point of the series, wherein *Evangelion* finally breaks free from its neo-national moorings and floats, ever so gently, into the multinational reaches of cyberspace. This is signaled by Gendou’s secret report to Seele recapitulating each of the battles to date, which creates an uproar when he baldly states that the invasion of the informatic angel never happened. The committee threatens and blusters, but since they cannot afford to do without Gendou as head of the project, they have little choice but to accept his version of events for the time being. At the same time, an subsequent activation test with Rei radically departs from any Eva sequence we have heretofore seen, suggesting that not only is Nerv growing restive under the thumb of Seele, but that the Evas are beginning to develop a mind of their own, too. When Rei pilots Shinji’s Eva, Unit 1, for the first time, feedback from the Eva suddenly filters into Rei’s consciousness. The result is an astonishingly beautiful dream-sequence, scored to a haunting sound-track halfway between a vocal chorale and a string instrumental, which rewrites all the known rules of video in the course in two minutes. Due to the extreme complexity of the sequence, Rei’s musings are collected in the left-hand column, while the images cycling through the dialogue are on the right:

Voiceover

Image

Mountains. Heavy are the mountains.

*Misty mountain ravine.*

Things that change over time.

Sky. Blue sky. Which your eyes  
can't see.

Which your eyes can see.

Sun. That which is only one.

Water. That which is comforting.

Commander Ikari?

Flowers. So many are alike.

So many are useless.

Sky. Red, red sky.

The color red. I don't like red.

Flowing water.

Blood.

The smell of blood. A woman who  
never bleeds. Human beings are  
created from the red earth. Human  
beings are created by man and woman.

City. A human creation.

Eva, a human creation as well.

What are humans? A creation of  
God. A human creation. The things

*Blue summer sky,*

*framed by two clouds.*

*Green ricefields in the sun.*

*Shot of valley, then blinding shot into  
sun.*

*Lake illuminated by sunlight.*

*Field of radiant sunflowers, against  
a glowing, yellow sky.*

*Purple sky turns red.*

*Vertical pan of Eva 1 in bright pink  
storage fluid.*

*Glass beaker.*

*Hand smeared with blood.*

*Field of red neon stars  
rushes past us.*

*Tokyo-3 at night.*

*Close shot of Eva Unit 1's faceplate.*

*Enormous moon, rendered  
in photographic detail,*

I have are my life and soul.

'Entry Plug' [in English], the  
throne of a soul.

Who is that? That's me.

Who is this me? What am I?

What am I? What am I...

[question reverberates]

This physical body is me. This  
is the form which creates me.  
Yet it feels as if this is not  
myself.

Strange... I feel as if my body  
is melting.

I can no longer see myself. My  
shape is fading. I feel the  
presence of someone who is not  
me.

Who is there, beyond me here?

Shinji?

I know this person. She is  
Captain Katsuragi.

*over surface of water.*

*Close-up of Rei's eye, which blinks.*

*Long pan across a long*

*line of identical images*

*of Rei, extending into a*

*night sky filled with stars.*

*Orange sky, Rei's*

*inverted silhouette*

*scrolls downwards.*

*Sun shines from behind*

*silhouette.*

*Another close-up of her eye.*

*Blurred shot resolves into close-up  
of Shinji.*

*Blur-and-resolve on*

*Misato.*

Doctor Akagi.	<i>Normal close-up of Ritsuko.</i>
Other people.	<i>Close-up of Kensuke and Touji.</i>
Classmates.	<i>Close-up of Hikari.</i>
The pilot of Unit 2.	<i>Close-up of Asuka.</i>
Commander Ikari?	<i>Close-up of Ikari's glasses.</i>
Who are you?	<i>Shot of Rei herself.</i>
Who are you?	<i>Eva with faceplate removed, one of its green eyes staring at us.</i>
Who are you?	<i>Close-up of Eva's eye.</i>
Who are you?	<i>False-color image of a human eye.</i>

“Who is No. 1” was the refrain of *The Prisoner*, and “Who am I” is the key line of Heiner Müller’s magnificent 1973 play, *Germania Death in Berlin*, which chronicled the irresistible decay of the Eastern bloc nomenklatura into just another Eurobourgeoisie; here, though, Rei asks the objective “What am I”, followed by the subtly plural “who are you”.<sup>14</sup> The multiple images of Rei are certainly reminiscent of the clones and androids endemic to 1970s sci-fi, while the entry plug is called the throne of the soul, the ironic negation of the soulless machinations of Seele. The images suggest a spectrum from classic East Asian mythology, i.e. the creation of Monkey in *Journey to the West* by the union of Heaven and Earth (sky and mountains), to a series of photographic and painted surfaces (the sun, rippling reflections in the water, a field of flowers radiating Van Gogh-like intensity), and thence to tropes of bodily circulation (red sky, red earth, water and

blood), and finally spaces of corporeal production (the human creations of cities, Evas and of course the children themselves).

Although Rei seems capable of interfacing with Eva 1 to some degree, Shinji is not compatible with Unit 0, and the attempt to interface between the two causes Eva 0 to run amok, forcing an immediate shut-down. We already know Asuka and Rei are diametric opposites, but it's interesting that Anno deftly avoids the logical third possibility here, i.e. what might happen when Asuka and Shinji switch Evas? That, of course, is precisely what will happen at the conclusion of *Evangelion*, but to understand why this is so, we first need to look more closely at the Evas and their relation to a certain micropolitics of the body.

## Footnotes to Chapter 6

1. Alice Amsden. *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization*. New York: Oxford UP, 1989. Robert Wade. *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990. Michael Gerlach, *Alliance Capitalism*. UC Berkeley Press: Berkeley, 1992. The classic text on Japan's developmental state is: Chalmers Johnson's *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: the Growth of Japanese Industrial Policy 1925-75*. Stanford UP: 1982. For an excellent restatement and critique of the developmental state thesis, see: Meredith Woo-Cumings, ed. *The Developmental State*. Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1999.

2. Federal Reserve statistics show that the United States has become the biggest debtor country in the world, is running vast trade and current account deficits (i.e. must import capital from abroad to finance its economy), and consequently owes Japan and Europe \$2 trillion on its net international investment account.

3. Here are the figures for Japan's total financial assistance to southeast Asia from July of 1997 through the end of 1998, the worst period of the Asian crisis, courtesy of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (at an exchange rate of 110 yen = \$1 US):

<u>Country</u>	<u>Total Assistance</u>	<u>Assistance as % of country GDP</u>
Thailand	\$10.2 billion	6.2%

South Korea	\$6.01 billion	1.3%
Indonesia	\$5.89 billion	3.2%
Malaysia	\$2.90 billion	3.6%
Philippines	\$2.73 billion	4.9%
Singapore	\$1.67 billion	2.1%

4. Note that one should not confuse the *Evangelion* TV series itself with the theatrical films by the same name (*End of Evangelion* and *Evangelion: Death and Rebirth*) produced after the series. The films are visually stunning but aesthetically deficient works, which Gainax created mostly as a way of cashing in on *Evangelion's* runaway success (this is somewhat comparable to the two full-length films Kieslowski created based on episodes five and six of *The Decalogue*, which were also not quite as good as the originals).

5. Note that these are the original versions of the series, not the later, less interesting sequels of such (e.g. *Dirty Pair: Flash* and *Bubble Gum Crash*). Currently the best English-language source of anime information, links and analyses on the Web is the Anime Web Turnpike at <<http://www.anipike.com>>.

6. Though fairly conventional in terms of its plot – it is essentially a sea-based version of the American TV show *Wild, Wild West*, featuring a late 19<sup>th</sup> century setting saturated with improbably advanced technology – the visual designs of *Nadia* do show intriguing hints of what was to come. For one thing, Nadia herself is a moody, complex character,

who looks and acts distinctively Southeast Asian, pointing to a powerful undercurrent of multi-culturalism. She is also the spitting image of Misato Katsuragi; likewise, her compatriot, Jean, will later reappear as *Evangelion's* tech geek, Kensuke; the vain, supercilious Grandis is clearly a protomorphic Asuka; and the curiously reserved First Officer of the Nautilus, Electra, is an embryonic Ritsuko. *Nadia* also features wonderfully literate scriptwriting, e.g. the America ship which hunts the Nautilus is named Abraham (as in Lincoln) while its captain is Meville (in reference to Herman Melville). One could also point to the scenes of the underground Atlantis midway through the series as the prescient model for the Nerv geofront.

7. William S. Burroughs. *Nova Express*. Grove Press: NY 1964 (132).

8. In fact, the opening sequence is constructed almost completely from extended quotations of the Godzilla movies: the more noteworthy examples include Shinji's instantaneous, dreamlike vision of Rei in the distance (reminiscent of the miniature twin sisters from Monster Island); the white flash of an explosion annihilating a streetcar (a Hiroshima trope); the explicit destruction of UN tanks and helicopters (read: US military forces) by the angel; and of course the spectacular atomic shockwave of the N2 mine.

9. The quote is from Robert Browning's *Pippa Passes*, a poetic drama written in 1841. At one point Pippa, the main character, sings the following song:

The year's at the spring

And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew-pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world!

Robert Browning. "Pippa Passes", Part I. In: *Complete Works of Robert Browning*. NY: AMS Press, 1966 (114).

10. Shinji's painful struggle to grow up will reprise one of the most fundamental tropes of Japanese aesthetic modernism, as evinced by this extraordinary passage from Natsume Soseki, which set the modernist anti-hero in motion towards an alien mass-culture all the way back in the 1910s: "Ichizo's disposition is one that coils inwardly whenever he comes in contact with the world. Whenever he receives an impulse, it turns round and round, driving itself in more and more deeply and carving itself more and more finely into the recesses of his mind. And it distresses him that this encroachment upon his mind continues, knowing no bounds. He's so worried about it that he prays for any escape whatever from this inner activity, but he's dragged on by it as though it were a curse beyond his power to drive out. The time is going to come when he'll inevitably collapse, totally alone, under his own mental exertion. He's going to come to dread that moment. When it happens, he'll be exhausted, like a madman. This is the great misfortune lying at

the very core of his life. In order to turn it into a blessing, there's no other way except to reverse the direction of his life and to make it uncoil outward. We must get him to use his eyes so that instead of carrying outside things into his head, he can look with his mind at things as they exist outside. He should find one thing under heaven – and a single thing is enough – which is so great or beautiful or gentle that it will engross his entire being. In a word, he has to become frivolous.” Natsume Soseki. *To the Spring Equinox and Beyond*. Trans. By Kingo Ochiai and Sanford Goldstein. Charles Tuttle: Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo, Japan © 1985.

11. Unlike US high schools, where at the end of each class each student goes to a different class, in Japan it is the individual teachers who typically walk from classroom to classroom, while the students remain together as a group for most of the day. The Japanese school year is also longer than its US equivalent, resulting in a much deeper sense of class camaraderie. The class monitor typically has the task of calling for order at the beginning of each class, taking attendance, and organizing after-school clean-up activities. The notorious “exam hell” many Japanese students endure is not a product of high school per se, but is the result of after-school cram schools and the entrance examination system for universities. The high schools themselves have done a commendable job of creating one of the most literate and highly skilled workforces in the world, thanks to plentiful funding, a deep-seated cultural respect for learning and education of all kinds, and highly trained, capable and motivated teachers.

12. It should be noted that this has nothing to do with any lingering militarism in Japanese culture, but is part of a general tendency in postwar Japan to reproduce certain aspects of US culture in extremely precise detail, ranging from baseball to Hollywood movies, and from country-and-western bars to pop songs.

13. Ritsuko: “Fifteen years ago, in Antarctica, humanity discovered the being known as the first angel. In the middle of the investigation, however, for unknown reasons, the angel exploded.” *Blast of air ruffles Misato’s hair.* “This is the real truth behind the Second Impact.”

Shinji: “Then the things we’re doing here are to...”

Ritsuko: “To prevent a probable Third Impact from happening. That is the purpose of Nerv and the Evangelions.” [“Evangelion 7”]

14. One minor point: ADV’s subtitled version of this sequence slightly skews part of Rei’s dialogue, i.e. at one point the titles don’t quite match up to the Japanese words being spoken. The above transcript is the correct, original version, i.e. the images on the left appear precisely when the dialogue on the right is being uttered.