

Chapter 7

Dawn of the East Asian Metropole

“Song is the highest achievement of Lillim culture.” – Kaoru Nagisa speaking to Shinji Ikari, after humming the Chorale of Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*, “Evangelion 24”.

Our first clue that the bodies of the Evas are not quite what they seem is Rei’s spine-tingling vision of Eva 1’s head during her dream-sequence in “Evangelion 14”: a giant green eye peers from a bizarre skull which is not quite a series of flesh-grafts, but not really a molded plastic or metal shell, either. In the back of the skull are coils of circuitry and mechanical plates, while a tyrannosaurus-sized lower jaw studded with primeval teeth juts below. While the jaw and the circuitry are fairly explicit references to the 1960s Godzilla spectacular and the 1980s cyborg thriller, respectively, the giant green eye cites one of the most subversive video tropes of them all: namely, the flashing green electronic eye of No. 1 in the mind-blowing finale of McGoochan’s *The Prisoner*. But where McGoochan located No. 1’s eye in the armature of the Cold War symbol of the rocket booster, Anno situates the machinery of video in the post-Cold War technology of the entry plug (several close shots of the entry plugs even make them look like rocket boosters, a clever homage to McGoochan). We have already been told that Eva 2 is actually the first mass-produced Evangelion; given that Rei’s entry plug is marked “Prototype” (in English), while Shinji’s entry plug is marked “Test type” (also in English), this strongly suggests an informatic division of labor, wherein Eva 0 symbolizes

the space of the R & D lab; Eva 1, the leading-edge information commodity; and Eva 2, the affordable or mass-produced spin-off of such. Each of these spaces will be subsequently set in motion towards a scandalously multinational content. Rei thus becomes a key figure of the Instrumentality project and the global technology of genetic engineering; Shinji will project the dissident micropolitics of Japan's post-Bubble generation; while Asuka herself will be centrally associated with the geopolitical space of the European Union.

Probably the single most impressive symbol of this multinational content is the external design of the Evas. Traditionally the mecha consisted of stacks of mechanical boxes and tubes which approximate a human figure, creating the profile of the robot samurai or cybernetic sumo wrestler. By contrast, the Evas look and move like quasi-living creatures, thanks to extensible necks, tapered waists (very similar to anime characters themselves), gracefully elongated arms and legs, and unusually thin shoulder-guards. The effect is to streamline the baroque complexities of the battle-mecha in much the same way that Tokyo-3's luminous buildings, airy vistas and half-deserted streets negate the tenebrous, supercrowded cities typical of 1980s anime: less turns out to be more. It's worth noting this didn't occur all at once. Rather, just as Anno greatly revised and expanded the script during the course of *Evangelion*, so too did Yamashita and Anno gradually refine their mecha designs. For example, at the beginning of the series, Eva 0's armor is a dull orange, in what was perhaps meant to be the logical inversion of Eva 1's purple armor; later episodes, however, show Eva 0 is blue with a white trim, the polar opposite of Eva 2's bright red exterior and orange trim (red plus blue equals purple, nicely correlating with Shinji's intermediate position between the irreconcilable

antipodes of Rei and Asuka). Anno injects an additional layer of complexity to this color-scheme by means of the plug-suits of the pilots: Rei's suit is white; Shinji's suit matches Eva 0's external armor, i.e. blue body with white trim; while Asuka is dressed in a red suit with green trim (Eva 1's armor has an identical green trim). This does seem to tally with our previous identification of Rei as the avatar of a blank neo-national interiority and Asuka as the locus of an outrageous multinational exteriority.

There are intriguing parallels between Anno's strategy and that other great document of multinational culture, namely Kieslowski's 1993-1994 *Three Colors* trilogy, which set the geopolitical spaces of Poland (*White*), France (*Blue*) and Switzerland (*Red*) in motion towards the technological infrastructures of the Central European metropole. Arguably, Anno pushes this logic in the opposite direction, by setting the multinational technologies of the East Asian region in motion towards their corresponding geopolitics. One of the first great examples of this is encoded in the facial features of the Evas: Eva 0 has one central eye, glowing redly like James Cameron's Terminator, as well as an empty or nonfunctional eye-socket in the top of its head. Eva 1 has two silhouetted eyes, criss-crossed with lines which give it a more than slightly daemonic look, and framed by a prominent lower jaw and a horn vaguely reminiscent of a unicorn. Eva 2 has four green eyes (two on each side of its face) and a doubled mouth, with jagged white bands in lieu of teeth. Once again, Anno subtly quotes one of the key symbols of *The Prisoner*, namely Rover's technologies of surveillance and control, via the decorative white circle on Eva 0's faceplate. In retrospect, Rei's white plug-suit, eerily blank personality, and attachment to Gendou's reflective glasses all begin to make sense as tropes of recorded media. Eva 1, on the other hand, radiates a video Ur-subjectivity which can no longer be

recontained in the neo-national forms of the Godzilla and space mecha narratives, signaling the arrival of a genuinely East Asian identity-politics. Eva 2's doubled eyes and doubled mouth suggest, in turn, some sort of multinational object or infrastructure somehow equidistant from the spaces of the electronic recording and East Asian micropolitics alike.

This, however, is to anticipate themes better dealt with in the framework of *Evangelion's* awe-inspiring finale. For now, we need to specify the precise coordinates of those recordings and identities. "Evangelion 15" gives us an important hint by negating the mediatic cliché of the family snapshot and the sci-fi cliché of the mad scientist, in a scene when Shinji visits his mother's grave with his father:

Shots of graves stretching into the distance, marked by obelisks with rounded tops.

Gendou: "It's been three years since the last time we came here together."

Shinji: "I ran away then, and haven't been back since. My mother is resting here... I don't really believe that. I don't even remember her face."

Gendou: "People survive by forgetting their memories. But there are some things you should never forget. Yui taught me about the irreplaceable things. I come here to confirm that."

Shinji: "You have no pictures of her?"

Gendou: "There are none. This grave is merely a decoration, too. There are no remains."

Shinji: "So the teacher was right. You threw them away."

Gendou: “I keep everything in my heart. That is enough.” *Silence. Roar of a hovercraft; Gendou turns to depart. “It’s time. I’m leaving now.” Shinji glimpses Rei in a window of the craft.*

Shinji: *suddenly*: “Father!.. Well... I’m glad... we could talk today.”

Gendou: *pause*: “Indeed.” *Gendou and Rei roar off in craft, as Shinji watches from ground.*

Shinji’s precocious insight into his father’s motivations is matched by Gendou’s tacit acknowledgement to his son that the wounds of the past still afflict him; one senses, suddenly, how alike they are, and on some level they must realize it too, because their village stand-off has now become a tentative truce. It’s no accident that “Evangelion 15” (whose English title, appropriately, is “Those women longed for the touch of others’ lips and thus invited their kisses”) marks the moment that romances suddenly begin to blossom between the various characters – a serious one in the case of Misato and Kaji, who renew their old affair, and a teenage one between Shinji and Asuka. At one intriguing moment, we hear Shinji playing what looks like a cello, the first time we have seen him in the role of a cultural producer, greatly impressing Asuka; later, she manages to goad him into kissing her, a scene played for great comic effect when Pen-pen (that unlikely Cupid) wanders into the background. When Kaji and Misato renew their affair, the background in question is a gentle piano version of *Fly Me to the Moon*. Anno gives us another hint when Hikari begins to angle for Touji, of all people; Hikari’s older and younger sisters are named Kodama and Nozomi, respectively – a clever reference to the

bullet train lines linking Tokyo to Osaka (the Kodama line is the slowest, Hikari is faster, and Nozomi is the ultra-high-speed line).

In fact, *Evangelion* practically overflows with references to trains, train stations and maglevs or magnetic levitation carriages, ranging from the surface lines of Tokyo-3 to the catapult system which launches the Evas to the surface. All this will be highlighted during the battle with the next angel in “Evangelion 16”, which is less a physical antagonist than a conceptual one. At first the creature seems to be a strange moire-patterned sphere floating above Tokyo-3; suddenly, Eva 1 is swallowed up by a vast circular shadow on the ground, the angel’s nanometer-thin “body” which is really a hyperdimensional Dirac sea (the moire-globe is, explains Ritsuko, merely its three-dimensional shadow). This is a reference to one of the oldest computer tropes of them all, namely the graphics programs of the very first home computers; in fact, *Neuromancer* makes use of moire patterns in a remarkable scene where Case is trying to break free from a neural trap set by one of the AIs.¹ Similar to Case, Shinji’s real struggle is not with the angel, but with the reflections and refractions of his own mind:

Fish-eye view of train window. Sound of train. Fish-eye view of Shinji seated in train, illuminated by setting sun.

Shinji: white vertical tone-band against black background: “Who’s that?” The chimes which signal arriving or departing stations at Japanese train-stations resound, then doppler-shift away. “Who’s there?” Haunting score, the same as in Rei’s dream-sequence in “Evangelion 14”.

Younger Shinji: white horizontal tone-band against black background: “Shinji Ikari.”

Shinji: *vertical band*: “That’s me.”

Younger Shinji: *horizontal band*: “I’m you. Everyone has another self inside them. The self consists of two selves.”

Shinji: *vertical band*: “Two?”

Younger Shinji: *horizontal band*: “The self which exists for others, and the self which you see in yourself. The Shinji Ikari in your own mind. The Shinji Ikari in Misato Katsuragi. The Shinji Ikari in Asuka Souryu. The Shinji Ikari in Rei Ayanami. The Shinji Ikari in Gendou Ikari. All these Shinjis are different from one another, and yet every single one of them is the true Shinji Ikari. You are afraid of these other Shinjis.”

Shinji: *vertical band*: “I’m afraid of being hated.”

Younger Shinji: *horizontal band*: “You’re afraid of being hurt.”

Shinji: *fish-eye close-up*: “Who is bad? Father is.” *Horizontal band*: “The father who left me.” *Hospital close-up*: “I can’t do anything.”

Flashbacks with close-ups of speakers:

Asuka: “You’re always saying you’re worthless! You’re just punishing yourself.”

Shinji: “Damn it, I can’t do anything.”

Misato: “Or do you just think you can’t do anything?”

Rei: *slapping him*: “You don’t trust your father?”

Shinji: *half-turned*: “I hate my father. But now I’m not sure...”

Tone-band forming a jagged line which moves down, then right, then down, at right angles.

Gendou: “Good work, Shinji.”

Shinji: *image of father's shadow, Shinji at phone*: "Father called my name." *Shinji remembering praise of "Evangelion 12"*: "He praised me."

Flashbacks end. Scene returns to inside of train as before.

Younger Shinji: "Will you spend your life regurgitating and redigesting those few pleasant memories?"

Shinji: "Damn it, as long as I have these few words, then I can go on living."

Younger Shinji: "Aren't you lying to yourself?" *Cut to medium shot inside train, younger Shinji seated to left silhouetted by sun, older Shinji to right.*

Shinji: "But everyone does it, right? Lie to themselves in order to live."

Younger Shinji: "You can't go on living any more, if you think you can't change yourself."

Shinji: "This world is too painful for me."

Younger Shinji: "You can't swim, for example?"

Shinji: *protesting*: "Human beings aren't made to float."

Younger Shinji: "You are deceiving yourself."

Shinji: "I don't care what you call it."

Younger Shinji: "You've closed your eyes and ears to what you don't want to know."

Second series of flashbacks.

Kensuke: *when Touji punches Shinji*: "Sorry, but your little sister was..." *Brief shot of Eva I's skull without faceplate.*

Misato: *silhouetted*: "It's not your job to take care of others!"

A simultaneous vertical and horizontal tone-band, crossing in upper left of screen, then close shot of Shinji to left of screen.

Gendou: *direct shot of his face, angrily: "Go home!" Very rapid burst of images: an angel, a hand-drawing suggesting tangled threads, Shinji wandering in forest, Rei in bandages, false-color image of city, Shinji's bulging eye. End of flashbacks, return to train as before.*

Shinji: "No... I don't want to hear that."

Younger Shinji: "So you're already running away again. Noone can live by stringing together one pleasant experience after another like beads. And especially not me."

Shinji: *voice rising along with background of railway chime, ending in a scream: "I've found something that I can do to feel good. Something I want to do! What's wrong with that?!"*

This sequence simply pulverizes the mold of any animated feature ever made in the 20th century. Anno ingeniously transforms the public space of the train into a kind of video theater, wherein Shinji's dialogue with what seems to be a future self runs counterpoint to a complex set of flashbacks, garnished with luminous halos and dreamlike reverb-effects. Each of the four flashbacks in "Evangelion 16" mobilizes a slightly different set of images: the first cycles through faces, while the second quotes antagonistic or hostile images (Touji, his father, an angel, Rei in bandages) tied to the space of Tokyo-3. The third zeroes in on newspaper headlines dealing with the mysterious accident which apparently killed his mother, as well as a curious set of frames which enclose the receding silhouettes of his father and Misato, very much like receding windows or snapshots. The fourth displays a dazzling childhood memory of Shinji's mother. The

tone-bands, on the other hand, suggest a crude electronic recording technology, like a cross between early videotape and an analog oscilloscope.

“Evangelion 16” also contains the series’ last explicit reference to the Cold War, namely Ritsuko’s desperate scheme to airdrop the planet’s entire stock of N2 mines simultaneously to try to blast the angel apart (we even see the jet-trails of the bombers gathering in the sky). This hare-brained scheme is forestalled by Eva 1, which senses that Shinji’s onboard life-support systems are failing and takes matters into its own hands. The shadowy surface of the angel shudders, roils and then erupts, as the Eva rips apart the creature from the inside, throwing spectacular gouts of blood and angel-flesh in all directions. This is the shocking birth of a whole new geopolitical subject, as unexpected as the fall of the Berlin Wall or the emergence of the European Union out of a supposedly washed-up collection of semi-peripheral social democracies and derelict Eastern bloc economies. But where Kieslowski’s *Red* followed Valentine’s trajectory from fashion-plate model to avatar of the Eurostate, mediated by the agency of the global news service, Eva 1’s rebirth signals the arrival of a genuinely East Asian subjectivity, red in export-platform tooth and silicon claw, its eyes glowing with the daemonic industrial energies of the Pacific Rim.

Later, while Nerv personnel rinse down Eva 1 in its docking station, Ritsuko nervously asks Gendou whether the Evas are really on humanity’s side; the latter remains noncommittal. The reason is that Seele has become extremely worried about the direction of the Eva project, to the point of applying pressure on various members of Nerv for inside information, for reasons which are not yet clear. It cannot be an accident, however, that Anno chooses this moment to highlight one of the fundamental economic shifts of

the late 20th century, namely the irresistible decline of the US industrial base, and the corresponding rise of Japan and the EU to twin workshops of the world. This is subtly relayed by the catastrophe of Second Branch of Nerv, located at a secret base in the US state of Nevada, which is completely wiped out by a Dirac sea during a test experiment. This moment is strikingly reminiscent of the breathtaking post-Cold War scenario of *Half Life* (1998), unquestionably the single greatest PC videogame of the 1990s, which portrays a similar catastrophe at a mythical Black Mesa Research Facility somewhere in Arizona (the game designers even pay subtle homage to the mecha, in the form of Gordon Freeman's signature hazard suit). But where *Half Life* concentrated on the post-Cold War character trope of Gordon Freeman's information guerilla, *Evangelion* shines a spotlight on the social geography of the post-Cold War era, by revealing that the catastrophe occurred during the installation of a mysterious "S2 engine", designed and manufactured in Germany. This mobilizes the geopolitical reality of the supercharged East Asian and EU machine-tools industries directly against the speculative ideology of the Wall Street rentiers.² This in turn may explain one of the stranger aspects of the angel of "Evangelion 16", namely the fact that it physically swallowed up some of the skyscrapers of Tokyo-3, a suggestive gloss of the real life deflation of Japan's overpriced real estate market after the post-1990 collapse of the Bubble economy.

This triple denunciation of the Wall Street rentiers, the US military-industrial complex, and Japan's bubble-financiers is the flip side of an equally stinging critique of East Asia's indigenous industrialism. Probably the greatest single example of this is the "dummy plug" system shown in "Evangelion 17", a digitized personality construct which serves as a crude automatic pilot for the Evas. What seems at first to be a failsafe or

backup technology reveals a much more ominous dimension, however, when we glimpse Rei floating in an LCL capsule amidst a vast assemblage of quasi-biological tubes and wiring, extending deep into the Magi system; eerie mechanical breathing issues from the sound-track. The room is dark, backlit only by two glowing lines of symbols in neon green: these are actually strings of the English letters G, C, A and T, the symbols for the base pairs of nucleotides which form DNA. This is the logical antipode of a hair-raising scene late in “Evangelion 15”, when Kaji showed Misato a secret chamber in the deepest recesses of Nerv’s headquarters, containing a lifeless angel nailed to a cross and pierced by a curious lance. The lower half of the angel’s body is missing; its face, however, is identical with Seele’s symbol (i.e. seven eyes set against an inverted pyramid). Strangest of all, what at first glance seem to be internal organs hanging from its midriff are not entrails at all, but rather *human legs* – almost as if the creature were comprised of multiple beings fused into a single organism. Kaji calls the creature “Adam”, suggesting it is the mature form of the embryo he delivered in “Evangelion 8”; significantly, the angel seems to be bleeding some sort of fluid, hinting that it functions as a kind of biochemical factory.

This terrifying vision sets all our alarm bells ringing about Seele’s real agenda. Unexpectedly, Anno takes this opportunity to emphasize that Gendou is *not* the stereotypical mad scientist or Bond-style techno-villain of yore. In fact, Fuyutski’s conversation with Gendou on the subject of Tokyo-3 reveals an unexpected vein of humanity in Shinji’s father:

Fuyutski and Gendou are seated to the left and right in a subway car, watching the urban panorama of Tokyo-3's surface buildings, glowing in the red sunset, passing by.

Fuyutski: "The city, a paradise made by the hands of human beings."

Gendou: "Driven from paradise, humanity fled into the world, on the edge of death. Created by the frailest of all beings, created from the sapience garnered from that weakness, we created our own paradise."

Fuyutski: "This paradise was created to protect ourselves from the fear of death, to satiate us with happiness." *Close-up of buildings scrolling by.* "This city is truly a paradise, outfitted with weapons to protect us."

Gendou: "A city for cowards, who flee from the world outside, filled with enemies."

Window goes dark, as subway enters geofront.

Fuyutski: "Cowards live longer. That's one good thing."

Gendou has the crucial insight that if humanity is to have any future at all, it must be one *without* fortresses, weapons and enemies, and that Tokyo-3 is merely a stepping-stone in that direction. This is part and parcel of a significant recasting of the gender roles in the story, such that Kaji begins to take on a fatherly role vis-à-vis Shinji, at the same time that Shinji and Asuka draw closer together (during one school recess, when Shinji forgets to make Asuka lunch and they go at each other with hammer and tongs, Touji's apt comment is, "The husband and wife are fighting!"). Still later, Kaji shows Shinji his secret garden in the geofront, where he grows watermelons, a crucial clue that the

geofront is not merely an underground living-space, it is also the symbolic global ecology of Tokyo-3's multinational city. That night, Shinji asks Kaji about Shinji's father:

Kaji: "The fact is that people don't understand themselves, let alone each other. Understanding one hundred percent of anything is impossible. That's why we spend so much time trying to understand our own motivations and those of others. That's what makes life so interesting."

Shinji: *innocently*: "Does that mean you can't understand Misato either?"

Kaji: *a bit taken aback by Shinji's quick-wittedness*: "The kanji that we use for the word 'she' literally means 'a woman far away'. No matter how hard we try, women will always be on the distant shore of a great gulf of misunderstanding. The current that separates men and women is broader and deeper than the ocean itself."

Shinji: "I don't understand what it's like to be an adult."

One of the grimmest realities of adulthood, namely market competition against one's peers, will become an issue when the US air-ships an experimental Eva to Japan for testing. Misato doesn't have the heart to tell Shinji about the pilot selected for the new Eva, who turns out to be Touji, of all people; the latter expresses no great enthusiasm for the task, agreeing to be a pilot only if Nerv's hospital takes special care of his injured sister. Alas, the Eva goes haywire during the activation test, when an angel somehow takes it over from within. Though the bestial roar, prominent backbone and earthquake-like tread of this angel are unmistakable references to Godzilla, the creature's hide (dark

with white flanges) is modeled after Touji's trademark dark sweatshirt with white stripes; the angel is also framed against a setting sun reminiscent of the Japanese flag, suggesting a multinational constellation of the global sports or sports apparel industries, the Japanese monster film and the Pacific Rim export-platform economy. This is a dead ringer for John Woo's Hong Kong thrillers, and the conclusion will subtly quote Woo's trademark theme of warring brothers or battling doubles: Shinji realizes he is fighting another Eva, piloted by a child just like himself, and refuses to fight back. Faced with the imminent loss of Eva 1, Gendou orders Shinji's nerve connection terminated and the dummy plug system put into operation. It works only too well: Eva 1 springs to life, throttling the angel and gruesomely ripping it apart, spattering gore in all directions a la *The Killer*, while Shinji can only watch in horror.

Miraculously, Touji survives, albeit badly wounded, but Shinji is crushed by his father's psychological double-cross and once again resigns from Nerv, bound and determined never to pilot an Eva ever again. But before he can depart from the train station, Tokyo-3 is assailed by the most powerful angel yet. This time around, though, Eva 1 displays a mind of its own, refusing to synchronize with Rei or with the dummy plug. On the battlefield, Asuka and Rei prove to be no match for the angel, which rips apart their Evas in short order and blasts its way into the heart of Nerv's headquarters. In the midst of the battle, Shinji runs into Kaji in the geofront, who reveals that if the angel comes into contact with the body of the deceased angel buried deep beneath the geofront, Third Impact will occur, destroying the entire human race. More importantly, he says the crucial words that Gendou cannot bring himself to say: "Shinji, the only thing I can do is stand here and water. But you, you have something that you can do. That only you can

do. Nobody is forcing you. Think for yourself and make the decision by yourself.” Only a freely-chosen subjectivity, the Ur-form of solidarity, can answer for the catastrophe of unbridled market competition. Shinji returns to confront his father (framed by banks of video monitors, exactly as in “Evangelion 1”) and for the first time in the series, lays claim to an explicit identity: “I... I... I am the pilot of Evangelion Unit 1! I am Shinji Ikari!”

As if to underline the double-edged micropolitical connotations of this moment, the angel crashes straight through Nerv’s central viewscreen, before Eva 1 arrives in the nick of time to repulse the creature. The angel strikes back, severing the Eva’s left arm, but Shinji gamely wrestles the angel to a nearby catapult which launches them both to the surface of the geofront. Just when it looks as though Eva 1 might be getting the upper hand, though, its damaged battery-pack suddenly runs out of power, and the angel closes in for the kill, pounding on a strange, luminous red core in Eva 1’s belly with its metallic arms. Trapped in the entry plug, Shinji desperately hits against the controls, imploring the Eva to move, his voice rising to a scream in a tremendous piece of voice acting by Megumi Okata. At the last possible moment, a heartbeat pulses: roaring like some preternatural beast, the Eva awakens at last. With a single blow it shreds the angel’s arms, and uses the mangled tissue as a graft to regenerate its left arm (a double-jointed reference to Luke Skywalker’s cybernetic arm in the *Star Wars* trilogy, as well as to the machining and cutting implements of the global machine-tools industry), before smashing its opponent senseless. Science fiction posthistory suddenly converges with primeval prehistory, as the Eva begins to *feed* on the still-twitching corpse, ingesting the angel’s power-core (what we later learn is the S2 engine) with a suddenly-bared set of

white teeth. Framed against the thick forests on the floor of the geofront, the Eva suddenly stands up, its faceplate a dead ringer for Darth Vader's ominous mask, its swelling muscles bursting its armor. Even more shocking is Ritsuko's awed revelation to the others that this armor is not what it appears to be: "Those are restraints that allow us to control the Eva's power. But now the Eva is removing the web that binds it to our will." Eva 1, the colossal incarnation of the East Asian metropole – Asiazilla in the flesh – defeats the Angel of Export-Platform Industrialization and arrives on the stage of world-history at last.

While Nerv hastily reconstructs its headquarters, Nerv's science team discovers the terrible blood-price of this transformation: Shinji has been physically absorbed into the Eva. All that remains is his empty plugsuit, floating in the entry plug, forcing Ritsuko and the others to scramble over the next few weeks to try to find Shinji's wave-pattern within the Eva and return it to physical form. "Evangelion 20" features two extraordinary shots of Eva 1 swathed in bloodied white bandages, grinning like some gigantic mummy which has finally reclaimed its jeweled treasure (the iridescent red orb of the S2 engine, glistening from its belly). The first shot frames Misato and Makoto against the background of a frontal shot of the Eva's bandaged face, its vast right eye staring sightlessly at us, sporting two rows of realistic white teeth. The second silhouettes Ritsuko, Maya and Misato against a side shot of Eva 1, its green eye still staring straight at us, the scene ingeniously framed by three gleaming spotlights in the upper right corner; clearly, the Eva is now watching *us*.

Somewhere within the Eva, Shinji experiences four dream-sequences during his struggle to free himself, each of which differs in subtle but significant ways from the four

flashbacks of “Evangelion 16”. The shot pacing of the first sequence, for example, is dramatically accelerated, and images cycle in against a luminous white background, creating a vibrant visual rhythm which matches the subtle techno loop of the sound-track. At the same time, the national tropes of the national train system and newspaper headlines are replaced by the global ones of the seashore, and by written kanji characters in various fonts, captioned on each image (service shots, if you will, of the angels themselves):

Shinji: his empty bodysuit floats in the LCL-filled interior: “What’s that? Where am I? The entry plug of Unit 1? There’s nobody here. Not even myself.” Several rapid shots of waves lapping at a seashore, only with bizarre, false-color images suggesting outer space scenes where one would expect to see sand: “What is this? What is this? What is this?” Waves accede to rapid close-ups of everyone in the series, their faces cycling in and out, while a faint techno beat loops from the sound-track. “I don’t understand. These people... yes, they’re people I know. People who know me. I understand now. This is my world.” Scene shifts to an underwater perspective. “What’s this? I don’t know this, but it’s part of my world. An image from outside. A hostile image? That’s right. An enemy.” Close-ups of angels cycle just as quickly as the faces of the characters did, interspersed with white-and-black shots of various kanji fonts of the word for ‘enemy’. “Enemy, enemy, enemy, enemy... Our enemies are something called angels, they have the names of the angels, too. They are the targets of Nerv and the Evas.” Close-up of Shinji as a young boy: “This is our revenge for the death of Misato’s father. Why do I fight? Despite all the pain and suffering?”

Asuka: “What are you, stupid? An unknown enemy is attacking us, of course we have to fight them!”

Shinji: “Am I odd to try to find a reason to fight? Am I not supposed to think about it?”

Scene shifts to quick zoom shots of angels, which cycle as rapidly as before. Shot of Tokyo-3 at sunset: “Enemy. Enemy. Enemy... All are my enemies! Us... that which threatens us is the enemy.” Cut to Eva launching from its service-tunnel. “Of course, how can I be faulted for protecting my own life and those of others?” Scenes of angels now interspersed with shots of Gendou Ikari. “Enemy... enemy...” Sound of metal door slamming shut, shot of Shinji facing his father: “Damn it, damn it, damn it... you injured Touji and killed mother! Father!” He screams, shot of Eva 1 lunging with progressive knife. Silence. Sudden flashback to conversation with Rei on escalator.

Rei: “Why don’t you like your father?”

Shinji: “Noone could get along with a father like that!”

Rei: “Don’t you understand your father?”

Shinji: “Of course not. I’ve hardly ever seen him.”

Rei: “And that’s why you don’t like him?”

Shinji: “Yes. Father doesn’t need me, he abandoned me.”

Rei: “And am I his substitute?”

Shinji: *in bodysuit, framed by silhouette of father on the left: “Exactly. That’s what it must be! He left me because of Rei!”*

Silhouette of father fades to close-up shot of Shinji’s face, while his previous image is replaced by Rei, shown here as a young child:

Rei: “As if you didn’t run away all by yourself.”

Rei is evidently taking on the role of Shinji's internalized conscience, the arbiter of a complex set of Oedipal conflicts and psychological ambivalences. The seashore will return late in the second dream sequence, which briefly cites the hallucinogenic train and tone-band themes of "Evangelion 16", before quoting a genre quite specific to the manga tradition, namely "hentai" (the word literally means "perverted", but refers to explicitly erotic manga as well as unauthorized, underground versions of official anime and manga characters):

Shot of seashore, this time we see the sand. All subsequent shots shine with dreamy light.

Misato: over multiple tape loops of her naked, approaching Shinji as if leaning over him, each loop repeating after each sentence: "I'm nice to you. Tell me, Shinji, do you want to become one with me? To be of one body and mind? It could be so nice. Ask me anytime. I'm ready."

Asuka: over similar tape loops: "Hey, Shinji, you blockhead! Don't you want to become one with me? To become of one mind and body? It could be very, very nice. You ought to appreciate your good fortune. Come on!"

Rei: over similar tape loops: "Ikari... do you want to become one with me? To become of one mind and body? It could be very, very nice. Ikari..."

Misato: single loop: "Do you want to become one with me?"

Asuka: single loop: "To become of one mind and body?"

Rei: single loop: "It could be so pleasant." They merge into a single blurred image.

Misato/Asuka/Rei: “Relax and release your soul.” *Fade to black, single drop of water falls in darkness.*

It should be emphasized that Misato, Asuka and Rei are not really informatic Norns or weavers of temporal destiny, so much as three distinct corporealities which coexist within a single temporality. Misato’s role is evidently that of the motherly provider, while Rei addresses Shinji by his last name, Ikari, a formal reference to the realm of family ties or bonds. Only Asuka is genuinely seductive, airily tossing her hair, flashing her eyes, and urging him to actually *do* something instead of bemoaning his fate.

The third dream-sequence consists mostly of glowing, multicolored kanji of the names of the characters cycling in the darkness, serenaded by the distorted voices of the characters calling out “Shinji”, suggesting a synthesis of the angel-captions and dream-faces into a series of neon scripts. During the fourth and last dream-sequence, the key scene is a subtle rewriting of Shinji’s farewell to Misato at the train station, just before the angel’s attack. In his dream, Misato tells him that only he can decide his future, i.e. he finally grasps what Misato really said: that she would always care about him, regardless of whether he was a pilot or not. The next shot is a simple pencil sketch of a child at mother’s breast, accompanied by the imaginary voices of Gendou and Yui, Shinji’s mother. Gendou is fretting about raising a child in the aftermath of the Second Impact, but Yui says simply, “Anywhere can be heaven if you try to live” (possibly a reference to Kurosawa’s classic 1956 *Ikiru*, which means “to live”). They decide to name the child either Shinji or Rei, depending on its gender. This suggests, in turn, that Rei incarnates the space of an interiorized micropolitics, in the same way that Asuka represents the

realm of an externalized geopolitics.³ This is followed by a brief quotation of the opening tag, contrasting bluish watery reflections and a blue star-field against red reflections and a red star-field, until the light-pulse of the opening tag orchestrates the utopian merger of the two. Just as the Eva was reborn from the nonspace of the angel, so too is Shinji reborn from the Eva's S2 engine: Kieslowski's children of the euro are matched by the children of Asiazilla.

Seele is now thoroughly frightened, confirming what we already suspected, i.e. that the Eva's unexpected absorption of the S2 engine has given it godlike powers of autonomy. During "Evangelion 21" they go so far as to kidnap and interrogate Fuyutski, trying to determine whether Gendou will try to subvert their plan. Instead of the committee members we saw before, Seele now appears as a circle of faceless black obelisks, their voices electronically obscured, like a cross between *2001* and Stonehenge. Sitting in the semi-darkness, memories of Nerv's earliest days flood over Fuyutski, as he recalls the moment when he ran into Yui Ikari, a brilliant young biologist, and Yui's future husband, Gendou Nokubungi (he would later take his wife's last name). Yui's tragedy is recounted, ironically enough, from the perspective of Ritsuko's mother, Naoko Akagi, via a letter she is writing to her daughter. One day Yui brought her son Shinji, at that time a little boy of four or five, to watch an experiment at the UN artificial evolution laboratory, when catastrophe struck. In Naoko's words: "A freak accident wiped her from this existence, just as I had hoped it would. What a disgusting woman I am. Ritsuko, after that day, Commander Ikari completely changed."

Now, at last, we can begin to understand the dream-image of Shinji's younger yet somehow older self in "Evangelion 16", as well as Ritsuko's antagonism toward her

mother (she accidentally glimpses Naoko embracing Gendou). What is not quite clear is why Fuyutsuki accepted Gendou's Mephistophelean offer to join the Evangelion project, though we are given the significant clue that the geofront is a natural creation, not a human one. This is not the last tragedy associated with the birth of Nerv, however; the project's original name was "Gehirn" (the German word for "brain") and changed to "Nerv" following a dreadful incident in 2010 involving Naoko and Rei. Naoko is already deeply suspicious of Rei, due to the latter's uncanny resemblance to Yui, her romantic rival; late one night, just as she is preparing to leave the Magi installation, Naoko spots Rei watching her from a corner. But not only does Rei coldly rebuff her friendly overtures, she repeats, dronelike, that Naoko is an "old hag". Furious, Naoko tells her Gendou will hear about her behavior, whereupon Rei reveals that she is simply repeating what she heard Gendou constantly saying about her ("The old hag is stubborn, we don't need the old hag anymore"). In a fit of rage and jealousy, she strangles Rei, crying out, "You little bitch! Don't you know you're replaceable too, Rei? Replaceable just like me..." Suddenly realizing what she has done, she leaps from the balcony, killing herself.

If Rei was strangled in 2010, then the Rei of 2015 is clearly some sort of copy or clone, hinting that the secret of Instrumentality is some sort of applied genetic engineering. It's no accident that each of Nerv's technological advances is paid for by some form of corporeal sacrifice: Asuka's mother in the case of Eva 2; Yui in the case of Eva 1; and Naoko and the first Rei, in the case of the Magi system and Eva 0. Alas, the Evangelion project will claim one more victim in this episode, when Kaji arrives and frees Fuyutsuki without Seele's authorization, in exchange for the secret of the Evangelion project. Shortly afterwards, Kaji is indeed gunned down by an unknown

assailant (mostly likely, one of Seele's goons). This leads to one of the most heartbreaking scenes of the entire series, which deftly employs the humble answering machine in much the same way that Kieslowski employed the telephone: Misato hesitantly presses the play button and listens, eyes quivering, to Kaji's final message. "If I ever see you again, I'll say the words that I couldn't say eight years ago," concludes Kaji, in a sparkling piece of voice acting by Yamadera Koichi; in the background, we see a pencil sketch of Kaji slowly fade away. Sobbing, Misato falls to her knees, her tears spilling on the table, as slow, mournful piano music traces out the theme from *Fly Me to the Moon*. In his room, Shinji cradles his head in his arms, trying not to listen.

It would be easy to assume, given the scope of these devastating revelations, that *Evangelion* could not possibly surprise us anymore, and that the series will now wind down via the standard climactic battle with a super-powerful opponent, followed by a denouement which tidies up the remaining plot strands. But Anno not only refuses to slow down, he *accelerates* the series towards its revolutionary conclusion. Whereas the previous angels still exhibited latent associations with Cold War technologies or geopolitical events, the last three angels are the purest ciphers of the Information Age imaginable. "Evangelion 22", for instance, rewrites the space of the hospital and the childhood toy into Asuka's black-and-white memories of her mother, hospitalized after being driven insane by a contact experiment. A pair of doctors, a man and a woman, carry on a lugubrious conversation, the high point of which is the woman saying bitterly, "Human beings create dolls in their own image. If God exists, it's possible that we're all just dolls to Him." The trope of the doll will be cited incessantly in "Evangelion 22", ranging from Ritsuko's black-and-white figurines of cats to Asuka's scolding of Eva 2

(“You’re my doll, so move like I tell you to and don’t argue!”) all the way to Asuka’s fight in the elevator with Rei. This latter is a static shot which lasts an impressive 50 seconds, with Rei in the foreground left and to Asuka the right. When the tension has reached the boiling point, Rei says matter-of-factly, “If you don’t open your Mind [heart, soul] to her, your Eva won’t move.” Naturally Asuka explodes, and as she backs out of the elevator, she castigates Rei as a wind-up doll (“I am not a doll,” states Rei quietly, causing Asuka to slap her).

The real issue is that Asuka’s sync ratios are dropping disastrously, which means she is losing her ability to pilot Eva 2. Given her own doll-like appearance and overcompensating vanity, it’s difficult not to conclude that she is beginning to subconsciously rebel against her own internalized sexism, a.k.a. the noxious gender ideology of the mecha. This is confirmed when a new angel arrives from outer space, a luminous wing-like entity which overwhelms Asuka with some sort of mind-ray, gorgeously choreographed to the music of Handel’s *Messiah*. One of the many deliberate ironies of this episode is Anno’s insistence that beautiful images can be pure poison, while the ugliest of images can be a healing salve. Though Tokyo-3 is shadowed in pouring rain, the angel shines like a blistering sun, flooding the screen with light; similarly, the glorious sound-track signals a terrible violence, in the mold of Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange*. In Eva 2, Asuka screams over and over again, as heavily distorted kanji and stark white German words crash into her mind (the words are shown too quickly to be read at normal viewing speed, and consist of the Japanese and German words for “no”, “strangled”, “hatred”, “misery”, “shame”, and “death”). Later, during an extended dream-sequence, these word-images will be complemented by successive pans

through stylized doors in the darkness, which open up to reveal hallucinogenic, false-color backgrounds; the sound-track is a dialogue of Asuka battling the dream-memory of her mother (“I’m not Mama’s doll! I’ll think for myself, and I’ll live for myself!”). Whereas Shinji’s dream-sequence focused on his struggle to redefine himself in dialogue with a future self, Asuka seems to be wrestling with the fallout of her nightmarish past. To save Asuka, Gendou orders Rei to descend into Central Dogma and get the Lance of Longinus. Deep underground, Rei wrests the lance from the body of the crucified angel Misato discovered in “Evangelion 15”, a weirdly flexible double-stranded javelin, wrapped like a coil of DNA. This is the canny rewriting of the graphical map which displays the sync ratios of the Eva pilots to Nerv’s staffers, which looks very much like a two-dimensional outline of DNA; in effect, the subjectivity of the Eva pilots accedes to a new kind of object. Back on the surface, Rei grits her teeth, exhibiting the first moment of genuine rage we have ever seen; as the Messiah counts down to its finale, Eva 0 leaps forward, hurling the Lance into the heavens and smiting the angel from the sky.

This epochal moment is much, much more than just the savage denunciation of the unutterably vile sexism permeating so many anime series. Longinus was, according to medieval mythology, the Roman centurion who wounded Christ while on the cross; the Lance, also known as the Spear of Destiny, was supposedly one of the sacred treasures of the Knights Templar. But it is the location of the Lance – Central Dogma – which gives the game away here. “Central Dogma” is not a theological term, but a biological one: it is the cardinal theorem of genetics, namely the notion that DNA switches on RNA (a process called transcription) and that RNA in turn switches on proteins (a process called translation). In its original version, Central Dogma was very much a monopoly-capitalist

model of human biology (CEOs give orders to managers who give orders to line workers), but a vast amount of subsequent scientific research has shown that proteins reciprocally influence RNA and powerfully influence which DNA codes are activated and which are not.

Given that the Evas incarnate the social history of the East Asian region, this suggests that the angels embody its logical counterpart, namely natural history. The Lance of Longinus, anointed not in the blood of Christ but in the blood of the crucified angel (whose real identity will not be revealed until “Evangelion 24”), is therefore the Ur-symbol of an abstraction which controls or dominates nature: not technology per se, but the hegemonic commodity form of multinational capitalism, or what we call *information*. Rei’s act, in other words, marks the moment when micropolitics storms the Gates of Informatic Creation, and a revolutionary sisterhood smashes the patriarchal consumerism broadcast from the orbiting satellites of late capitalism. This is confirmed by a subsequent shot of the Lance drifting in outer space, its vertical form silhouetted against the horizontal curvature of the Earth: information wants to be free, but will settle for a lunar orbit.

This is also Seele’s ultimate nightmare scenario, i.e. the breaking of their monopoly over the Lance, which was probably not primarily designed to destroy angels, but was in all likelihood their trump card against the Evas. Before Seele can move to dismiss Gendou or otherwise retake control of Nerv, however, the next angel arrives in “Evangelion 23”. Appropriately enough, this creature is a gigantic, humming double helix of neon DNA, cycling continuously in mid-air. Uncoiling, the whiplike end of the angel lashes out with the speed of a bullet train, puncturing Rei’s AT-field and driving

into Eva 0's flesh. Even worse, the angel begins to bioassimilate Rei, transmitting cords of angel-flesh directly through her body. Alas, Asuka is still shell-shocked from the last battle and cannot pilot her Eva effectively, while the sheer speed of the angel seems to be too much even for Shinji. What saves them is Rei's quick-wittedness: during the process of bioassimilation, the angel makes mental contact with her. In a curious dream-sequence, Rei sees her own mirror-image (i.e. the angel) knee-deep in the same orange liquid we saw splashing at the base of the crucified angel, and seizes this chance to communicate her own subjectivity to the creature invading her. The more the angel becomes exactly like Rei, the more it absorbs her pain, loneliness and sorrow, until eventually it acts exactly as she would: it retreats within itself, temporarily releasing her consciousness. Rei awakens to find she is shedding the first tears she can every remember; she quickly seizes the opportunity to initiate the self-destruct sequence of Eva 0 and destroy the angel trapped inside her, at the price of leveling half of Tokyo-3 in the process (the whole scene recalls the tragic moment in *Moby Dick*, when Ahab's infinitely precious tear falls into the sea).⁴ In the hellish thermal pulse of the explosion, we glimpse Unit 0's torn midriff, ironically echoing the body of the crucified angel: the disasters of natural history are replicated by the catastrophes of social history.

How, then, could Rei have possibly survived the explosion? Misato discovers why when she employs Kaji's last gift, a chip containing the passcode to the ground floor of Central Dogma. Together with Shinji, she commandeers Ritsuko at gunpoint, determined to find out the truth (for reasons of her own, Ritsuko agrees to take them to Central Dogma). In one scintillating distance shot, the elevator slides downwards through a chassis consisting of a glowing, DNA-like double-coil, set against a background of

several such coils tilted diagonally. Ritsuko shows them the spartan room where Rei was raised, and then unveils the remains of early Eva test models, their skeletal bodies piled up in a vast antechamber like medieval hecatombs. Finally, at the very core of Central Dogma, Rei's secret is revealed:

Misato: "Is this the source of the dummy plug?"

Ritsuko: "Let me show you the truth." *Presses button, aquarium-like tanks fill with light; clones of Rei float inside. Sorrowful string music fills the sound-track.*

Shinji: *wide-eyed*: "Rei Ayanami?"

Misato: *horrified*: "Impossible! Eva's dummy plug is..."

Ritsuko: "Right, this is the production factory for the core of the dummy-plug."

Misato: "This is?"

Ritsuko: "These are all dummies. Nothing more than replacement parts for Rei. Humans found a god, and tried to obtain it. As a result, humanity was punished. That was 15 years ago. The god that they found vanished. However, humanity tried to create God anew and that's how Adam was born. From Adam, human beings created what resembles God, Itself. That is Eva."

Shinji: "So... they're human?"

Ritsuko: "Yes, they're human. We put supposedly mindless souls in Eva. All the souls were salvaged souls. Rei is the only container that can hold the souls. The souls are born only in Rei. The Room of Guaf is empty. These are merely empty containers. They have no souls." *Close-up on Ritsuko.* "So I want to destroy them, because I hate them."

Presses self-destruct and the clones dissolve into fluid, crying out feebly; tanks turn purple, as if filling with blood.

Misato: *gun raised*: “Do you know what the hell you’re doing?!”

Ritsuko: “Yes, I do. I’m destroying them. They’re not human beings. They’re things with human form. But I lost to these dolls! I couldn’t win him!” *More and more emotional*: “I could stand any humiliation for him. I didn’t care how wretched I became! But... but he had chosen... he chose. I knew this, but...” *Breaks down completely*: “I’m such an idiot. Both mother and daughter are idiots. Shoot me if you want to. I’d rather die.”

Misato: *lowers gun*: “That won’t release you from your agony.” *Ritsuko collapses to floor, sobbing*. *Misato thinks to herself*: “The tragedy of the Eva Project is its people.” *Narrows her eyes*: “But I’m one of them, too.”

The Room of Guaf is the mythical chamber where the souls of the unborn await their earthly bodies. Rei is indeed replaceable, just as Naoko said, but the logical consequence of the extended reproduction of bodies in late capitalism is that everyone becomes as exchangeable as Rei, i.e. mere accessories of blind, uncontrolled accumulation. The terrible truth shining from the wreckage of German porcelain dolls, American fashion mannequins, and Japanese robots piling up before us like the Storm of Progress in Walter Benjamin’s parable of the Angel of History, is that *everyone* is victimized by late capitalism.⁵

The often overlooked corollary of this grim state of affairs is that everyone is a potential source of resistance to the total system, irregardless of whether they are aware

of this potential or not. “Evangelion 22” thus transcends the noxious consumerism of the global mass media by means of the solidarities of a global feminism; while “Evangelion 23” turns the android and cyborg narratives of the 1980s against themselves, uncovering the grisly realities of the informatic factory. “Evangelion 24” will push both insights still further, by setting Asiazilla (the mutated Eva 1) in motion towards its leading geopolitical counter-players, namely Wall Street neoliberalism and Euroindustrialism. It’s no accident that the English title of “Evangelion 24” is *The Beginning and the End or, Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door*, in homage to a memorable Bob Dylan song, while the Japanese title, “saigo no shisha” (literally, “the final messenger”), deliberately puns the word “shisha”, which can mean a sacrifice or casualty as well as a messenger or courier. The sacrifice in question is that of transience or temporality, something underlined by Asuka’s dream-sequence at the beginning of the episode, which reveals what lay behind the endless doors we glimpsed in “Evangelion 22”: the corpse of her mother, hanging from the ceiling. Sunk into a suicidal depression, unable to pilot her Eva anymore, Asuka languishes in Hikari’s abandoned apartment in the ruins of Tokyo-3, while Shinji meditates gloomily next to the artificial lake created by the implosion of Eva 0.

At this point, Shinji hears someone humming the Chorale from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony (the *Ode to Joy*). A young boy calling himself Kaoru Nagisa (another pun: his name means “Kaoru of the Seashore”) introduces himself as the fifth Eva pilot to Shinji, and delivers the immortal line, “Song is the highest achievement of Lillim culture, don’t you think?” Performances of the so-called Dakei or “Big Nine”, as the Ninth Symphony is called, are a staple of New Year’s celebrations in Japan, but the reference to the Lillim is Anno’s own idiosyncratic rewriting of the medieval myth of Lilith (the most common

version is that Lilith was Adam's ex-wife who refused to put up with Adam's iron-fisted rule and ran off to mother broods of demons). The Lillim are, literally, the non-human children of Lilith, but Kaoru is using the term to describe the human race in general, hinting that he himself is not quite human. The effect is heightened when we learn that Kaoru has truly unearthly powers of synchronization vis-à-vis the Evas, making him the most proficient pilot of them all. Unlike the angels, however, Kaoru does not exhibit any overt signs of destructiveness, but seems genuinely compassionate towards others. After a long day of activation tests, Kaoru runs into Shinji outside the test chamber and they have the following conversation in the shower:

Giant viewscreen overhead cycles between a postcard snapshot of Mt. Fuji and Nerv's logo; steam fills the shower.

Kaoru: "You avoid any sort of direct contact with people. Are you afraid of reaching out to others? So long as you ignore others, you won't be betrayed or hurt. Yet you are never free of the feeling of loneliness. A person cannot remove sorrow forever. Everyone is alone. But human beings can forget, that is why they can live." *Shower stops.*

Shinji: "Uh... it's time."

Kaoru: "Already?"

Shinji: "We have to go to bed."

Kaoru: *innocently*: "With you?"

Shinji: *embarrassed*: "No... uh... they must've given you your own bed."

Kaoru: *innocent*: “Hmm... The hearts of human beings are full of pain. A heart can be wounded so easily, this makes life difficult. And your heart especially is as fragile as glass.”

Shinji: “Mine??”

Kaoru: “You deserve the empathy of others.”

Shinji: “Empathy?”

Kaoru: “I mean, I like you.”

The subtle apposition between the premier national pictorial symbol of Japan (Mt. Fuji) and Nerv’s multinational logo is matched by an equivalent oscillation of the registers of natural history and social history, relayed subtly by Kaoru’s alternating usage of the otherwise interchangeable terms “Lillim” and “human beings”. To make matters even more interesting, the term “like” is, if anything, even more ambiguous than its English counterpart, and could indicate almost any degree of affection one might name. In fact, Anno is quoting one of the most popular subgenres of manga culture, namely explicitly gay or gender-bending comics known as “yaoi”, which run the gamut from outright pornography to extremely stylized and aestheticized same-sex romances.⁶ The utopian homoeroticism invoked here, however, is the gentle corrective on the compulsory heteroeroticism of Shinji’s warming relationship with Asuka, and it’s worth pointing out that Asuka’s physical absence from “Evangelion 24” actually *increases* her structural importance to the story. The reason is that Seele is now plotting the total destruction of Tokyo-3, in order to ensure the fulfillment of its apocalyptic scenario: we learn that

Kaoru is indeed the very last angel, whose mission is to neutralize Eva 1, eliminate Gendou and forestall Nerv's impending rebellion against Seele. Instead of mutating into some tentacled monster, however, Kaoru merely steps into the air, levitating in place and synchronizing with Eva 2 from outside of the entry plug by sheer mental effort ("Come, Adam's alter ego and Lilith's minion!"). As the full-scale orchestral version of the *Ode to Joy* erupts from the sound-track, Kaoru uses Eva 2 as a battering ram to smash his way into the heart of the geofront, forcing Nerv to launch Eva 1 in a desperate bid to intercept him.

Anno's choice of music is truly an aesthetic masterstroke, comparable in its brilliance perhaps only to Beethoven's invention of the melodic theme of the Ode in the first place. The libretto is a poem by Schiller which celebrated the national revolutions of America and France with the striking phrase, "Alle Menschen werden Brüder/Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt" ("All people become brothers/ Underneath your gentle wing"). Anno takes care to counterpoint every single motif of Schiller's text with an antithetical content: divine joy with human sorrow; the daughters of Heaven with the angels of Seele; the highest reaches of Heaven with the deepest recesses of the geofront; and the joyous sparks of the gods ("Götterfunken") with the earth-shattering clash of the Evas. The reason is that the *Ode to Joy* is not merely the musical pinnacle of Beethoven's art, it is also – since 1995 – the official anthem of the European Union! With a thunderbolt of insight which makes the brain reel, the true significance of Asuka's German heritage, the S2 engine, the Third Branch of Nerv in Germany, and Kaoru's own comment on the sublimity of song flashes into view: the irrepressible beauty of song is that it is the most transient and fleeting of human creations. Eva 2 is not merely a multinational form, it has

a temporal content as well, and what we are witnessing is not the foundation of the nation-state, but the *beginning of its end*. The symbolic avatars of two mighty transnational armatures materialize before our astonished eyes: Eva 2, a.k.a. Euroeva, temporarily lacks a guiding will to survive and has been hijacked by Kaoru, while Eva 1, a.k.a. Asiazilla, has Shinji's desperate will to survive but not the sheer muscle to defeat Eva 2. The stakes of this battle, however, are not merely the survival of Tokyo-3, Japan or even East Asia, but the unimaginable destiny of humankind:

Kaoru: thoughtfully, while hovering out of reach of Eva 1: "Evas, made from Adam, creatures abhorrent to humankind. And yet the Lillim try to survive by employing them. I do not understand why."

Shinji: fighting in Eva 1 against Eva 2: "Kaoru, stop! I don't understand!"

Kaoru: "Eva is of the same tissue as I. For I am created of Adam as well. If the unit has no soul, then I can unite with it. And now that the soul of this unit is in hiding..." Shinji's mecha lunges at Kaoru with the progressive knife, but a force-field blocks him.

Shinji: stunned: "An AT-field!!"

Kaoru: "Yes, that's what you Lillim call it. That holy realm in which noone else may intrude. The Light of the Soul. You Lillim should know... you should know about the AT-field, the Armor of the Soul, which everyone has..."

Shinji: desperate: "I don't understand!! Kaoru!!!" Evas 1 and 2 continue to descend towards Terminal Dogma, locked into ferocious battle.

Everyone has an AT-field, i.e. is capable of resisting the assault of the angels and potentially piloting the Evas, an amazing insight into the plebian nature of global micropolitics. We already know the entry-plug of the Evas is the throne of the soul, but if everyone has an AT-field (i.e. engages in global micropolitics, whether conscious of the fact or no), then the Evas themselves must incarnate the geopolitical space of that micropolitics. Thus where *Asiazilla* symbolized the bursting of the symbolic fetters binding the East Asian developmental states to the dominion of the American Empire, *Euroeva's* subalternity is clearly an allegory of the Maastricht monetarism which hijacked the otherwise commendable project of European unification in the early 1990s for its own destructive ends.⁷ If this is so, then *Kaoru of the Seashore* can be nothing other than a cipher of neoliberalism, the Angel of Global Speculation.

Back at headquarters, Misato and Makoto are grimly preparing to self-destruct the entire geofront in order to prevent *Kaoru* from entering Terminal Dogma and setting off Third Impact (one clever self-referential scene shows a map of the complex behind the silhouettes of Makoto and Misato, displaying the battling Evas passing level number 24 – the exact number of the episode). Suddenly, *Kaoru* generates the most powerful AT-field ever measured, as the battling Evas crash spectacularly through Terminal Dogma's roof, falling into an icy field reminiscent of the poisoned ruins of Antarctica. "It is human fate," thinks *Kaoru* to himself. "The hope of humanity is hung with the thread of sorrow." Passing easily through the final safety lock, he approaches his final destination: the crucified angel of "Evangelion 15". But just when all seems lost, another AT-field shows up out of nowhere, blocking and then recontaining *Kaoru's* field. The savior in question turns out to be *Rei Ayanami*:

Kaoru: *approaches the crucified angel*: “Adam, our mother creator. One who is born from Adam must return to Adam. Although it could destroy all humanity? No! This is Lilith... I see now. I understand the Lillim!” *Eva 1 smashes Eva 2 to the ground, enters Terminal Dogma and grabs Kaoru with its mighty glove. Ode to Joy continues in background.*

Kaoru: “Thank you, Shinji.” *Shot of Eva 2, sprawled on ground.* “I wanted to give you Unit 2. Otherwise it would’ve lived on with her.”

Shinji: “Kaoru, why?”

Kaoru: “It was my destiny to live forever, even though it would bring destruction to humanity. I would prefer to die here. To be or not to be makes no difference for me. In my death is my ultimate freedom.”

Shinji: “What are you? I don’t understand what you’re talking about! Kaoru!!”

Kaoru: “My last words. Now, please destroy me. Otherwise you will be destroyed. Only one life form can evade the destruction and inherit the future. And you are not the existence that should die. You need the future.” *He looks up at Rei, and smiles. She gazes back, steely and unflappable. Kaoru turns back to Shinji.* “Thank you. I am glad to have met you.” *Static shot of Unit 1 holding Kaoru, as music swells in background, holding for sixty-four seconds. At last Shinji acts.*

Lilith is the symbol of an enchained natural history, not of an enchanted social history. Kaoru, Seele’s Angel of Global Speculation, is thus countermanded by Rei, Nerv’s

humanly-constructed Angel of History. The destructive potential of the former is precisely matched by the constructive energies of the latter; only Shinji, however, has the power to tip the balance one way or the other. He chooses the future, and monopoly-national temporality falls into global space. Kaoru relinquishes his strangehold over the machinery of the Eurostate, at the same time that Asiazilla sheds the mask of an unbridled East Asian industrialism. This is subtly relayed by the close-up of the unconscious Eva 2, its faceplate pierced by Eva 1's knife, and the final scene of Eva 1, Eva 2's knife still stuck in its body-armor: this is the symbolic negation of the multinational mask and Lilith's crucified corporeality alike in the form of Asiazilla's mighty hand. This is the classic symbol of laboring bodies, the repudiation of the invisible hand of the marketplace by the agency of a billions-strong East Asian proletariat.

This is indeed the Gospel of a New Century, only one not in the service of Wall Street neoliberalism, keiretsu corporatism or Euroindustrialism, but serving rather that global proletariat presently reinventing its own ideologies, organizational structures and modes of class struggle on a transnational scale. This is confirmed by a final shot of Eva 1 back in its storage chamber, where Gendou and Rei watch Nerv personnel wash Kaoru's blood from its hands, a subtle rewriting of the end of "Evangelion 16", when Ritsuko expressed her doubts to Gendou about the Frankenstein she helped to create. This is an explicit class alliance between rebellious high-tech professionals and Asiazilla, mediated by the Angel of History – the perfect symbol of the pro-democracy movements, feisty unions and powerful civic groups which rocked the military dictatorships and

repressive one-party regimes of East Asia to their very foundations in the 1980s and 1990s.

No gospel would be complete without a suitably mind-bending set of final revelations, and *Evangelion's* two-part denouement does not disappoint. "Evangelion 25" begins with a complex dream-sequence in which Shinji, Asuka and Rei relentlessly question themselves (and each other) about their choices and motivations, their individual comments interspersed by graphical quotes set in stark black and white. Their own individual self-destructive tendencies are subsequently linked with those of society as a whole, in the form of Gendou's apocalyptic vision of an Instrumentality which would definitively fill in humanity's existential void (i.e. Seele's agenda). This vision terminates, as one might suspect, in total destruction, drawing Misato's stinging rebuke: "And so you'll just crush everyone's minds together to fill the gaps? How dare you presume to make the entirety of human existence into an experiment to prove your theory?!"

More importantly, "Evangelion 25" draws extensively on theatrical tropes – spotlights, character monologues, and simple stage props – borrowed from East Asia's thriving theater culture.⁸ During Misato's own moment of self-reflection, for example, her childhood photograph is shown repeatedly, each time looking slightly more torn and frayed than before, creating the same jarring effect Heiner Müller employed in *Hamletmachine* (the stage directions call for a photograph of Müller himself to be torn up onstage, the critical self-reflection of the cultural superstar). Something similar applies to Misato's flashback of her affair with Kaji; Shinji silently watches them from *within* the flashback, accompanied by the steady rocking of a subway or train and the ringing

railway chime familiar from Shinji's previous dream-sequences in the Eva. We see shots of a whirring fan, and hear the sound of a crowd cheering, followed by an eerie synthesizer sound, like electronic breathing.⁹ Asuka's own self-reflection centers on the theatrical symbol of her childhood teddy-bear, which bursts open by itself at one point, its soft cotton contents eerily reminiscent of Lilith's proto-human entrails. Later, she transforms her childhood trauma into words for the first time: "Then, my momma was hanging from the ceiling. She looked so happy. But I hated how she looked." It is only by coming to terms with the past that we open the door to the future. With this realization, the stage-lights go on, and Shinji realizes he has been watching a series of performances (including his own).

"Evangelion 26" proceeds to fill in this theatrical space with a multinational content. The dialogue becomes densely polyphonic, featuring static shots of each of the characters asking Shinji simple yet profoundly subtle questions, e.g. am I happy, why do I feel pain, what value do I have as a person, and so forth (here is a sampling of one such sequence: Kensuke says, "You're not the only one who gets hurt, Shinji." Touji continues: "Everyone feels pain. You aren't the only one." Hikari concludes: "It's just easier for you to think that's true, isn't it?"). Much of this dialogue is scored to black-and-white photos of plastic chairs, cables, electrical equipment, and other assorted junk, while a techno loop pulses subtly in the background, recalling to mind the industrial noir of Shinya Tsukamoto's wild and woolly 1990 science-fiction film *Tetsuo* ("Iron Man"). This is followed by a terrific shot of Shinji drawn in black-and-white, set against a bright red background; his hand-drawn body is filled in with full-color images drawn from the entire series which cycle rapidly in place, creating the effect of a reverse silhouette.

This moment signals the emergence of Shinji's own critical reflexivity: "This is... a representation," he thinks, "Everything is merely a description, not my real self. Everything is simply a shape, a form, an identifier to let others recognize me as me. But then, what am I?" Still later, he sees his own hand-drawn image floating in a white void, backed by the angelic sound-track of the dream-sequences of "Evangelion 20". The world of unrestricted freedom is also a world of complete emptiness. It is not until Gendou says at one point, "Let me give you a restriction" and draws a horizontal line that Shinji can orient himself properly (he begins to walk, punctuated by the Nintendo-like beeping of an early video-game). Next, Shinji free-associates a series of stripped-down versions of the basic visual symbols of *Evangelion* (spirals, eggs, stars, planets, angels, a cross, fire, waves, and an eye) before envisioning a series of stick-figure images and outlines of human forms. Finally, we see a recursive visual loop of one human outline ceaselessly enclosing another. This is not the mythic repetition of the same, but a display of infinite complexity and variation, as one unique outline gives way to another.

Suddenly, Asuka shakes Shinji awake, and to our surprise, we see the perfectly ordinary bedroom of an ordinary Tokyo teenager in the humdrum year of 1995. What follows is an uproarious slice of domestic comedy, as the end of *Evangelion* – very much like the conclusion of *The Prisoner* and the finale of the *Trois Couleurs* – self-reflexively rewrites its own beginning. In this reality-based version of events, Yui, Shinji's mother, is alive and well and happily married to Gendou, who hides himself behind the morning newspaper just like any other father; Pen Pen is a plastic doll, not a real-life penguin; Asuka is Shinji's obstreperous girlfriend, just as we always suspected she was; while Rei is simply a new kid in the neighborhood, who Shinji accidentally crashes into on the way

to school. Even Misato briefly returns, this time in the role of the popular classroom teacher who introduces Rei as the new girl, sparking a hilarious shouting match between Asuka and Rei.

As the camera pans back, revealing color sketches and penciled-in editing directions, we see Shinji looking out at a model replica of Tokyo-3 (the vantage-point of Godzilla, recast as our own reflexive position as media consumers), realizing that this is one possible future among many. A piano version of the opening theme-song of *Evangelion* then begins to cycle in background, as the voices of the entire cast circulate around Shinji, telling him that there are as many truths as there are people, and that everyone has the power to define their own truth. At last Shinji draws the logical conclusion:

Shinji: *seated in mist*: “I’m cowardly, sneaky and weak.”

Misato: *close-up from dream-sequence of “Evangelion 20”*: “If you know yourself, you can be kind to others.”

Shinji: “I hate myself.” *Speaking together with the voices of Misato, Rei, and Asuka, all at once*: “But I maybe I could love myself.”

This collective voice is the key: the precondition for the genuine development of each individual is the full development of every other individual.⁹ True subjective freedom can only be realized objectively, that is to say, by a freely-chosen collective solidarity among individuals. Following this insight, the machinery of the stage tumbles to pieces all around him, revealing a graduation ceremony wherein each of the characters

congratulates Shinji (Anno's own scripted coda: "To my father... Farewell to my mother... To all the children: congratulations!").

Which version, then, is the real one, the domestic comedy of 1995 or the mecha tragedy of 2015? The irresistible conclusion is that *both* are true, and that the individual happiness of the former is the flip side of the collective praxis of the latter. In an era when an unfettered global marketplace enriches a tiny, unaccountable and self-interested elite while submerging billions in the cruelest poverty; in a world-system which promises boundless wealth while perpetuating the most agonizing misery; in a rapacious business culture where people are reduced to mere financial objects and financial abstractions are venerated as people, human beings have no choice but to pilot the Evangelions of multinational class-struggle against Seele's apostles of neoliberalism. If the Nintendo children dreamt worlds of East Asian socialism, then the children of Asiazilla, together with the children of the Euro, dream cosmologies of revolution; at no lesser stakes are *Evangelion's* video aesthetics to be understood.

Footnotes to Chapter 7

1. “There was a gray place, an impression of fine screens shifting, moire, degrees of half tone generated by a very simple graphics program. There was a long hold on a view through chainlink, gulls frozen above dark water. There were voices. There was a plain of black mirror, that tilted, and he was quicksilver, a bead of mercury, skittering down, striking the angles of an invisible maze, fragmenting, flowing together, sliding again...”

William Gibson. *Neuromancer*. Ace Books: NY, 1984 (244)

2. The year 2001 edition of the Gardner Report, a trade publication which tracks world machine-tool production, shows that in the year 2000 that Europe produced 47% of the world’s machine-tools by value, the East Asian region produced 38%, while the US produced a paltry 11% (<<http://www.gardnerweb.com/consump/produce.html>>). As a result, the US had to import almost 43% of all its machine-tools in the year 2000. This is important, because machine tools are the DNA of an economy, the machines which literally produce all other machines. One of the most important subsets of the overall machine-tools market is the robotics industry, and here, too, US market share has been largely stagnant while the EU has been catching up with Japan. Here are the total operational stock of industrial robots as percent of world stock in the world’s three major economic zones (East Asia equals Japan plus Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea; note that Germany makes up about 46% of the EU total, while Japan makes up 90% of East Asia’s total):

<i>Region</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1999</i>
EU	12.7%	14.2%	18.6%	23.7%
East Asia	55.1%	61.9%	67.1%	60.3%
US	11.3%	8.6%	10.8%	12.5%

Source: *World Robotics 2000*, Table A-3. United Nations/Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) and the International Federation of Robotics. New York and Geneva: 2000.

IFR statistics on yearly shipments of industrial robots as a percent of world robot production show a broadly similar trend (note that Germany makes up about 42% of the EU total, while Japan makes up 91% of East Asia's total):

<i>Region</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1999</i>
EU	13.8%	15.0%	21.2%	30.8%
East Asia	68.8%	76.6%	61.2%	48.2%
US	16.2%	5.3%	14.2%	18.5%

Source: *World Robotics 2000*, Table A-4.

3. This synthesis is matched by the appearance of two new multinational forms: the mass mediatic therapist or counselor, and the mature adult romance. The first appears when Misato and Ritsuko drive home shortly after Shinji's rebirth, when a talk show host on the car radio describes the stages of psychological development ("I know a lot of guys like that, and from your letter, you're just like them. I feel sorry for your girlfriend. She

can't be your mate and your mother"). This is followed by an explicitly sexual scene between Misato and Kaji, where they gently tease each other about their respective professional roles. In response to her queries, Kaji finally gives her a mysterious capsule, a gift which, he says gloomily, may be his last. This is not quite accurate; his last gift will be the message he leaves her shortly before he is killed, which motivates her to open the capsule.

4. "Slowly crossing the deck from the scuttle, Ahab leaned over the side and watched how his shadow in the water sank and sank to his gaze, the more and the more that he strove to pierce the profundity. But the lovely aromas in that enchanted air did at last seem to dispel, for a moment, the cankerous thing in his soul. That glad, happy air, that winsome sky, did at last stroke and caress him; the step-mother world, so long cruel – forbidding – now threw affectionate arms round his stubborn neck, and did seem to joyously sob over him, as if over one, that however wilful and erring, she could yet find it in her heart to save and to bless. From beneath his slouched hat Ahab dropped a tear into the sea; nor did all the Pacific contain such wealth as that one wee drop." Herman Melville. *Moby Dick*. Chapter 132, "The Symphony". W.W. Norton: New York, 1967 (443). Ahab's shadow, drifting away into the sea, is replicated by Rei's last moment of consciousness: a snapshot of Gendou, without his glasses, smiling warmly at her, fading away into the detonation which takes her life.

5. "There is a painting by Klee called *Angelus Novus*. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at.

His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where *we* see the appearance of a chain of events, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and tosses it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair [a reference to Goethe's Faust], to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress is *this* storm." (My translation). Walter Benjamin. *Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte*. [Theses on the Concept of History]. Gesammelten Schriften I:2. Suhrkamp Verlag. Frankfurt am Main, 1974 (IX).

6. The term is an abbreviation of the Japanese phrase "yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi", which literally means "no mountain [peak, climax], no point, no meaning". Gay-oriented manga are also known as "june" (pronounced jou-nay).

7. This is subtly confirmed by Asuka's plug-suit: flaming red with a prominent green stripe. This is a clear reference to the Red-Green political alliances which lead the resistance to Maastricht monetarism and the assault on the European welfare states, and swept to power in the EU in the late 1990s. *Evangelion* was completed in early 1996, at the cusp of the December 1995 strikes in France, i.e. before popular discontent turned

into active resistance to neoliberalism, but it's remarkable that Anno recognized the quintessential symbol of the multinational Left as early as he did.

8. Anno's inspiration here was probably Tokyo's so-called Little Theater boom during the mid-1970s, when avant-garde directors such as Hideki Noda created a lively theatrical postmodernism. In the late 1990s, Noda went on to create intriguing works such as *Aka-Oni* ("Red Demon"), a multi-cultural fable performed in Thai by Thai actors on the stage, but narrated in Japanese to a Japanese audience via headphones.

9. Note that the English-language dubbed version of *Evangelion* distributed by ADV inexplicably garnishes this scene with an almost pornographic sound-track. The point, however, is to emphasize emotional intimacy over sexuality per se, like a romantic encounter witnessed on a train or in the street.

10. Alas, ADV's dubbed version not only misses this crucial point, but compounds the original error by mistranslating Misato's words into "...now you can take care of yourself," when the Japanese original clearly states kindness to *others* (fortunately, the subtitled version gets it right). It should be noted that, all things considered, ADV's translators and English-language voice actors do a commendable job throughout the series; Tiffany Grant's voice-acting for Asuka, for example, is simply outstanding.