

Hand to God:  
*Neon Genesis Evangelion's* Gnostic Gospel of Deconstruction

by

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We, the thesis committee for the above candidate for the  
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acceptance of this thesis.

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# ***I. God's in His Heaven, All's Right with The World: Eva's Contested Relationship to Religion***

*Neon Genesis Evangelion (Eva)* is an anime produced by Gainax studios. As can be seen by the title alone, there is a suggested connection between the series and Biblical tradition, which has been highly contested and debated since the release of the original series. Some critics of the anime claim that the religious symbolism is just thrown in, and some of the people who worked on the show would even agree-- Kazuya Tsurumaki noted in an interview:

Because Christianity is an uncommon religion in Japan, we thought it would be mysterious. None of the staff who worked on *Eva* are Christians. There is no actual Christian meaning to the show, we just thought the visual symbols of Christianity looked cool (Thomas 2).

While I have no doubt that these statements are somewhat true, there is major reason to believe that the issue of religion as it relates to *Eva* is not as cut and dried as this. Just because none of the staff that worked on *Eva* were Christians does not preclude that the show may put itself in contact with Biblical tradition in some way. Furthermore, Tsurumaki only worked on four episodes of the original series, and while he did direct



*Fig. 1: Nerv's Logo*

the culminating movie *End of Evangelion* alongside creator Hideaki Anno, this still seems like enough ground to venture that Tsurumaki doesn't necessarily have a comprehensive idea of everything that went into *Eva*—not to mention critical arguments against the “intentional fallacy” has warned us about making hasty judgements about authorial intent, whether stated directly or not. The wording here is important as well— he is not saying there is no *Biblical*



Fig. 2: Lilith: progenitor of the human race in *Eva*'s world.

meaning, but that there isn't a Christian one. I would agree with the fact that, as Tsurumaki puts it, there is not an overtly "Christian" meaning to the show, in that it is not attempting to convey the kinds of messages that mainstream Christian media

highlights (e.g. various Christian rock groups, *The Passion of the Christ* or *Veggie Tales* for that matter). *Eva* is not attempting to perpetuate an overtly Christian message, this much is true, however, it would be tantamount to critical malpractice to suggest that the show has absolutely nothing to do with the Bible, or Biblical tradition. The image above is that of an ancient alien kept beneath the ground in the series, Lilith, and its presentation clearly evokes a visual connection to the crucifixion. The Biblical connections merely start there, and the more one looks at the connections, the more one uncovers.

Konstantin Rayhert, in his reading of *Eva* as a postmodern theological discourse, says that *Eva* "...is in line with religious [and] philosophical or even theosophical discourse, and is somewhat [reminiscent of]... a UFO religion... or a possible mythology for some religious beliefs and practices..." (165). Rayhert is one of the only researchers I have come across who attempts to delve into the theological side of *Eva*, and my goal here is to explore these ideas further, and to explain the intricacies of these Biblical connections. Rayhert's main argument is that, along with echoing Biblical words, *Eva* turns out to be a criticism of mankind's enthusiasm about science and technology, and the Japanese tendency towards collectivism (168). While this argument is headed in the right direction, there is much more to be said concerning *Eva* and the

complex connections it draws to Biblical and related post-Biblical tradition.

Apart from the statements from Tsurumaki, the comments by the staff about Christianity



Fig. 3: Appearance of the Kabbalah When the protagonist Shinji (middle) is surrounded by the Eva units designed to instigate “Human Instrumentality” (End of Evangelion).

and its relation to the work are few and far between, and so, largely, the series and its movies are left to speak for themselves. Throughout the series, there is much baked into the lore of the world to

suggest a very present connection with Biblical narrative—including

the “Evangelion” units, large biological beings made by the humans to protect Earth; the aliens known as “Angels,” who are attacking Earth; and the figures known as “Adam and Lilith,” who are beings responsible for spreading life throughout the galaxy in *Eva*’s lore.

Furthermore, the very structure of the show seems to be playing with the form and content of Biblical narrative and anime together



Fig. 4: The protagonist Shinji after he becomes the “reformed source of all souls”, the “Tree of Life” or God in the culminating film *End of Evangelion*

at the same time to make a large statement about the way we tell stories, and how that storytelling relates to the physical world.

While Anno is reported (by dubious sources at best), to have said that the show doesn’t

have anything to do with Kabbalistic tradition, the entire series is quite literally the tale of the main character (Shinji), and his path to becoming God, and connecting with all life, as seen in these two images above (Oizumi)<sup>1</sup>. By subverting both tropes of anime, and Judeo-Christian theology, *Eva* re-works various Biblical ideals and post-Biblical tradition for its own ends. The series is saturated in religious imagery which culminates with an apocalyptic moment of self-actualization and Divine unity, and then separation. This acts to reinforce *Eva*'s focus on individual will as opposed to Divine will, a large part of its revision of the forces integral to Biblical Narrative.

## ***II. Alpha and Omega: Tracing the Title through Beginnings and Endings***

While *Eva* is a product of despair for the state of anime, as Anno himself has stated, it is not a stretch to take this a bit further (“Creators' Conversation...”). *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is a product of a state of despair surrounding our entire current world— overrun by technology and misogyny. By naming his anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Anno is clearly putting his show in relation to Biblical tradition: at once referencing the creation myth from the Old Testament, and also the New Testament. While this is my reading, there is room for more varied understandings of what this title can mean. Dani Cavallaro breaks down the meaning of the title chosen in both Japanese and English in his book *Anime Intersections*:

The original title for the series, *Shinseiki Evangelion*, is composed of two parts: the Japanese compound *Shinseiki*, which means “new era” or “new generation,” and the Greek word *Evangelion*, which literally means “good news” (from *eu* = “good” +

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<sup>1</sup> A note on this source: Many entries on [wiki.evageeks.org](http://wiki.evageeks.org) provide outside sources that are, at best, translations from a direct source released by Gainax and Anno. I have attempted, where possible, to recover the original sources and to credit the translators, and to consider the level of reliability this translation holds. For example, the “Creators' Conversation” source was quoted on *EvaGeeks*, and I have been able to track down the actual issue of the magazine referenced. This isn't the case with this source, nevertheless I think I would be remiss to not include some of this information as it is presented for the audience of *Eva*.

angelein = “to announce”; cf. angelos = “messenger”) and has subsequently come to also mean “gospel.” The English title *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, originally chosen by Gainax, consists of the Greek words *neon*, the neuter form of the word *neos* (= “new” or “young”), *genesis* (= “origin,” “source” or “birth, race”) and *evangelion* (54).

What can be seen primarily from this parsing of the title is that the connection to both the New Testament and the book of Genesis is clearly being created in the English title. Also, each title clearly suggests a connection to a rebirth or recontextualization of the “good news,” as *Evangelion* is retained in both translations. This is probably principally due to the fact that the *Evangelion* Units—the giant mechanized beings used in this show—are a prominent feature of the plot, whereas the connection to Genesis is one that is less clear, and yet still seems to feature



Fig. 5: *End of Evangelion* movie poster

prominently in the DNA of the show. The most notable example, I would posit, is the image above (Fig. 5), which features two of the main characters, Shinji and Asuka, after a cataclysmic apocalyptic event at the end of the show. It is contested among interpretations of the show



Fig 6: (*End of Evangelion*  
1:24:07)

whether or not this apocalyptic event reduced Earth's population to *solely* Shinji and Asuka, or if others also survive, however the fact remains that this image—the male and female counterparts staring at a large white figurehead who lays dead—is clearly relating itself to the Edenic ideal, and, in a way, an undoing of that ideal. This image at once references the idea of the Genesis story, but also undoes it, due to the eschatological setting and dead god-like figure looming in the background. This image is taken from the final scene, also pictured above, which also seems to suggest blankness, and a return to a version of Edenic imagery, though it is far from the ideal. It is interesting to note that Anno chose the word “Genesis” for the English release— this word obviously has Biblical connotations in our language. Parsing both titles and this imagery alone would support the reading that the show is at once putting itself into contact with Biblical tradition, and also attempting to push those ideas further through this mixture of narrative forms. As Rayhert notes, *Eva* is not limited to the doctrine of origin of every living creature on earth, it also provides the doctrine of the end (165). *Eva*'s dual focus on origin and eschatology are heavily related to how *Eva* is putting itself into contact with Biblical narrative and setting itself up as a sort of postmodern mythos.

*Eva* has been seen as a deconstruction in many lights, most notably as a deconstruction of many “mech” tropes in anime (Suvilay). Past that, it uses this focus on deconstructing anime to further the ways it relates itself to Biblical narrative, and the progression of spirituality for people living in the trauma-filled world today, and the relation of that spiritual trauma to gender. Matt Greenfield, the director of the English dub of *Eva* had this to say about the title's English translation:

What [*Neon Genesis Evangelion*] means is not that it is a religious text per se...but I think that what Anno and Gainax were attempting to convey was the idea that this is serving



the purpose of a gospel, or to use the works of Joseph Campbell as a reference, it's a cultural myth that is designed to guide us down a specific path. (Greenfield).

I think that this reading of the title is provoking, and can add to my own—by looking at the title as a reference to the Old *and* New Testaments, and a sort of gospel in its own right we will see that *Eva* is deconstructing the narratives it appears to be embracing. An understanding of how this “new gospel” is trying to work will deepen an understanding of *Eva*, and what it is trying to say about Biblical tradition and gender, and the way that should continue in today's world. *Eva* is “good news” in its own right, and even though it is a depressing story filled with characters who are all struggling with loss in this traumatic world, it suggests hope despite this. Though Anno may not have thought about it in this light, he is majorly revising how it is possible for us to understand myth and legend, and our connections to the storytelling of the past, present, and future

### ***III. I am Myself: Shinji's Position as Path to Individuality***

The relationship that *Eva* has to Biblical tradition can also be seen in the way that instances of angelic annunciation are inverted in *Eva*. This is represented throughout the Bible, namely by the way the angel Gabriel speaks about Jesus to Mary: ““And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne...”” and (later on): “...nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:31-2, 37). In an interestingly parallel scene, Shinji overhears a past conversation between his mother and father which represents a contemporary equivalent to this idea:

“*Gendo*: The Second Impact has occurred. Must he live in this hell?

*Yui*: Anywhere can be heaven, as long as you have the will to live. And because he is

alive, for as long as he lives he will have a chance to attain happiness.

*Gendo*: Of course. You're right." During this conversation, the frame stays still on what looks to be a charcoal drawing of Shinji breastfeeding ("Weaving a Story 2: Oral Stage" 17:58).

These passages share certain thematic similarities, and yet marked differences. *Eva* is attempting to chart this idea of achieving union with "God" in a contemporary way— a way that actively eschews rhetoric of death, martyrdom, and sacrifice of the self. The example from Luke shows the angel Gabriel prophesying the birth of Jesus, son of God, to Mary, whereas the passage from *Eva* contains Yui (Shinji's mother) prophesying a vision of life on earth as an equivalent to heaven. The differences here are important— while Gabriel speaks to Mary, who is "much perplexed," and reassures her of God's favor, Yui speaks to Gendo, who is concerned about their son growing up in the aftermath of the Second Impact, a world changing cataclysmic event. Here, the Biblical is being inverted, but also embraced to create a new vision of what this type of "belief" can do.

Instead of representing a belief in God and Jesus, *Eva* affirms the role of the individual in creating their own world and happiness. Similarly to the Bible, *Eva* has a message of love, but *Eva*'s goal is to refocus our idea of love from one centered around martyrdom, to one centered around self-actualization. The New Testament consistently reaffirms a rhetoric of martyrdom, most obviously in the story of Jesus Christ being sacrificed in the name of sins committed by others. John writes that "[God] loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10). *Eva*'s story, which shows Gendo sending Shinji to sacrifice himself for *his* sins can be seen as an inversion and deconstruction of this traditional sacrificial rhetoric. This sacrificial rhetoric is present all through the Bible and can be seen when Jesus says: "This is my

commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends'" (John 15:12-14). *Eva* is quite clearly attempting to dive deeper into these ideas of sacrificing yourself in the name of love, and what that kind of "love" is. This is, of course, complicated by the various ways the show attempts to focus on the beginning and end of the world, and how that relates directly to the wills of Father and Son. Gendo's love is markedly *absent* from Shinji's life, and so he must form a love for himself, and his own position. Whereas Jesus acts as a path to God and love, Shinji and his tale work similarly but conversely as a path to and embracing of separation from others apart from a divine unifying patriarchal being, and loving others and more importantly *yourself* despite this separation. There is a great deal to be said of *Eva*'s connection to its Buddhist, and more broadly, its Japanese contexts. Cassandra N. Vaughan writes of *Eva* in relation to these contexts in *The Buddhist Worldview of Neon Genesis Evangelion: Positioning Neon Genesis Evangelion in a Japanese Cultural Context*. Vaughan's analysis is extensive, and as a master's thesis in Art History, it extensively discusses the art style of *Eva* in ways that relate it and plot to Buddhist practices and teachings. Shinji's journey certainly embraces suffering and separation in a radical way, and this acceptance does seem to be an integral part of his journey.

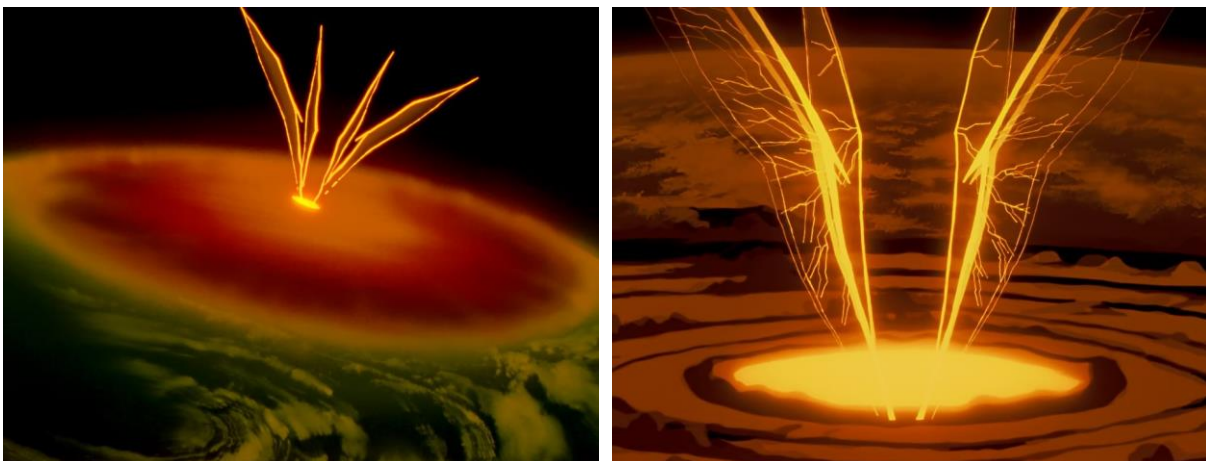
Shinji's role exemplifies an individual who struggles with the reasons for his actions—this enables our contemporary hero-saving-the-world story to map concretely onto contemporary issues of isolation and also ancient issues of gender, death, and the lack of faith. Tsang writes in "Beyond 2015: Nihilism and Existential Rhetoric in *NGE*" that *Eva* renews the way of interpreting the power of personal autonomy in coping with the frustrations of the past and present (38). It does this mainly through the lens of Shinji who, Tsang says, has "bad faith." This bad faith comprises Shinji's feelings towards piloting the Evangelion unit. He does it mainly for

his father's approval, and for the hope of recognition (41). *Eva* breaks along its own fault lines and bursts at the psychological seams by providing us with a main character who is plagued by an eschatological burden, and also at odds with his own personal freewill. Shinji's connection to his father can be seen as a deconstruction of the Biblical primacy of sacrifice.

The show further deconstructs this relationship to the Bible by introducing complications into the plot of the anime which are designed simultaneously to affirm, and also to complicate our conceptions of Biblical narrative and popular narrative today, specifically tropes of anime. Biblical narrative is challenged by this position that sees Shinji as a path to individual acceptance apart from any type of sacrifice. By doing this, *Eva* is performing a deconstruction of our relationship to narrativity in itself—that is to say the show is a deconstruction which works on multiple levels and layers to produce a narrative which actively makes use of, and *at the same time* puts into question the toolbox of both Biblical narrativity and the narrative tropes of anime, and by extension current modes of hero-story telling.

#### ***IV. [Un]weaving a Story: The Origins of Eva's World***

*Eva*, released in 1995, takes place in an imagined future. The year is 2015, and much of the Earth's population has been killed in an apocalyptic event fifteen years prior—The Second Impact. Few in the world of *Eva* know the truth surrounding The Second Impact, and it is



*Fig. 7 & 8: The Second Impact*

shrouded in lies and deceit. Ballús and Torrents write that the Second Impact relates to these ideas of a deconstruction of origin in more ways than one: first, “In the fictional universe of *Evangelion*, this very structure [of receding origin] is represented symbolically by the...event known as the Second Impact— one of the quasi- mythological elements...” of the show (290). The truth surrounding this event— which changed the course of human history—is unknown, and the whole truth isn’t even divulged in the main series itself. The fact that the details surrounding this event are so elusive, even to viewers of the show, exemplifies how *Eva* is attempting to hide its origins and conceal them from the very beginning. Ballús and Torrents go on to say that:

Even more significant, the Second Impact hints at the presence of a First Impact that is never narrated, described, or directly referred to in the series. Both we and the characters know it only through this vague reminiscence, a repetition in which we do not know exactly what is new and what is properly repeated. The relation of the Second Impact (and its projected echoes) to an unknown yet always present First Impact is one possible key to unpacking the complex notion of origin or genesis presented in *Evangelion* (291).

*Eva* goes to great lengths to hide the “truth” from its viewers, and this is because it is attempting to deconstruct the position of the viewer and “reader” of a text. *Eva* eventually reveals our role as spectators and forces us to take responsibility for the meanings we produce from texts (292). This argument goes to great lengths to see the underbelly of the deconstruction present in *Eva*, and here I aim to take this further to relate these deconstructed ideas of origin and the position of the reader to larger ideas of narrativity, and how we, as readers, make meaning out of the texts we consume. It only seems natural that, if, as Ballús and Torrents argue, *Eva* is a deconstruction of our position as meaning makers, that it is also a deconstruction of the narrative forms we use

to make meaning.

The truth of the Second Impact is that a secret organization known as Seele, with unprecedented amounts of control over government agencies, orchestrated this event with the aims of retrieving an ancient “Seed of Life”<sup>2</sup> known as Adam. Unbeknownst to Dr. Katsuragi, the leader of the expedition, Seele did not care about his research and only cared about getting their hands on Adam, a step in their “Human Instrumentality Project”—a plan designed to place the consciousnesses of the rich and powerful members of Seele into a God-like being so that they may live forever. All of the members of the Katsuragi Expedition die save for Gendo Ikari (because he was working for Seele) and Misato Katsuragi, Dr. Katsuragi’s daughter, who was there in a bring-your-daughter-to-work-day type situation, gone terribly wrong. Contact of human life with Adam causes tsunamis, which raise sea levels, and cause a drastic shift in weather patterns, a shortage of resources and an excess of refugees. This starts massive wars all over the globe, which ends a year later with the global population halved. The general population has been told that this was the result of a meteor slamming into Earth.

All this deceit sets the background for the main storyline of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. From the beginning it is clear that the notion of origin is being purposefully upended from the very beginning of the show. Obviously, this information is not normally available to a new viewer, however this narrative is one which starts us off—in 2015—with a lot of trauma to deal with already. From the first episode, we follow fourteen-year-old Shinji Ikari, Gendo’s estranged son, as he returns to his father’s organization because he has been summoned there for an unknown reason. Shinji and the audience quickly meet Misato, Dr. Katsuragi’s daughter. She is now a Major at Nerv, an organization bankrolled by Seele whose aims are still Human

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<sup>2</sup> Similar seeds were spread all through the universe by the “First Ancestral Race,” and these seeds are responsible for all life in the universe.

Instrumentality, except Gendo's goals running Nerv do not totally align with Seele's: he aims to instigate Human Instrumentality for himself so that he can reunite with his deceased wife, Yui.

Shinji, their son, is labeled the "Third Child," which means he is the third child identified to pilot the Evangelion units—gigantic beings which are derived from Adam, the first angel found during the Second Impact. They are large, terrifying creatures who are capable of fighting the Angels when nothing else can. The Angels are impenetrable due to their A.T. (Absolute Terror) Fields, and the Eva units are able to rip through these protective fields with their bare hands. This is directly related to the idea of Human Instrumentality, for we learn that A.T. Fields are the force that keeps all beings separated. Through this terror and fear can be seen as influences that



*Fig. 9: The Eva Unit ripping through an Angel's A.T. field with its hands*

*separate*, but as we will see the reality of this fear is an integral part of the human experience for *Eva*. The Evas are created by Nerv are fitted in armor that is designed to restrain their power as much as protect them, and the pilots' relationships to the Evangelion Units are integral to understanding how this narrative relates to an idea of motherhood and the protective power that can become exploited, but which will nonetheless prevail.

Shinji is cohorts with two others: female Evangelion pilots, both his age. They are The First Child, Rei Ayanami, and The Second Child, Asuka Langley Soryu. Shinji's relationships to these women, and Misato are integral to an understanding of the ways *Eva* is attempting to relate itself to an undoing of the ideal of uniting with others without separations. The First Child, Rei, is a mysterious individual who, as we will come to see, sits at the center of this narrative. While

she is first introduced to the audience as a typical and even codifying example of the quiet and submissive archetype, it becomes clear that Rei Ayanami is a much more complex character. We eventually find out that she is a clone of Yui, and she is a vessel for the soul of Lilith—this is why she is so emotionless, and uncaring. Further, her body can be easily replaced, as there are duplicates, and it is (covertly, even to the audience) at least three times. Rei was created by Gendo in efforts to reunite with Yui, and when that did not work, he moved on to attempting the plan that comprises the diegesis of *Eva*. This plan ultimately backfires, however, and leaves Gendo, the orchestrator of the plan, left out of the culminating Instrumentality event, an upending of expectation which in effect disavows patriarchal rule and objectification.

#### ***V. Why do You Hate Your Father?: Eva's deconstruction of the Biblical Father/Son relationship***

One main way *Eva* works to deconstruct Biblical narrative is within the relationship of the father to the son. In the New Testament, the link between father and son is the highest bond, and this can be seen throughout Biblical tradition. *Eva* is directly opposed in this way—Shinji's relationship with his father, who has been absent for most of his life, is complex to say the least. In the climactic scene of the first episode Shinji's father, the leader of Nerv, descends from above as Shinji is told he is expected to get into the giant mechanized being and fight. Shinji asks why his father sent for him now, and his father says, "Because I have a use for you." and "Because there is no one else who can" ("Angel Attack" 15:10-15:20). He also coldly intones "If you're going to do it, do it now. If not, then leave" (15:37-15:43). Thirteen-year-old Shinji is being placed in the position of being the only one who can fight these Angels who are threatening humanity. This is placed in stark contrast to the relationship of Christ to the Lord in the New Testament, and more broadly the emphasis on the importance of the father/son relationship throughout all Biblical tradition. Gendo does not love the world so much that he is



sacrificing his only son—Gendo has no love to give, not even to Shinji.

Shinji's complex relationship with his father can be seen further in Episode 20, "Form of the Mind, Form of the Man/Weaving a Story 2: Oral Stage." In this episode, Shinji becomes psychologically lost within and physically absorbed into the Evangelion unit due to an encounter with an Angel, the result of which is an episode which eddies back and forth between Shinji in representational psychological spaces, and the other characters in physical reality attempting to recover Shinji. While Shinji is in this state, he has many revelations which will be useful to my main argument, including a confrontation with his idea of his father. This confrontation exemplifies the reversal that *Eva* attempts of Biblical tradition which places so much emphasis on the sacred nature of the relationship between father and son. Shinji thinks about his enemies, the Angels:

A hostile image? That's right, the enemy! ...Our enemies are something called 'Angels.' They have the names of the angels too...All are my enemies. That which threatens us is the enemy. Of course, how can I be faulted for protecting my own life and those of others? Enemy, enemy, enemy, *my enemy*," (8:00-9:30).

While Shinji repeats "enemy," the Angels flash across the screen in a seizure inducing manner, and they quickly get replaced with images of Gendo. For Shinji, the Angel attacks and the violence they cause, both to the city and to Shinji personally, are clearly strongly connected to his father. This montage culminates with Shinji shouting "*my enemy!*" while the camera pans up the image below (*Fig. 17*). Shinji's relationship with his father is one that is fraught with difficulty and misunderstanding, and this is inseparable from how Shinji feels about his current burden of piloting the Evangelion. This is clearly seen by the quick succession of angels turning into Gendo, not to mention Gendo's alien-like quality in the preceding image. Gendo seems

otherworldly, and almost Angel-like, and as the camera pans upward along this image, the feeling of Gendo's looming presence is palpable. *Eva* seems to put this complex position of the relationship between father and son at the center of its diegesis in order to perform this deconstruction of the father/son relationship and



*Fig. 17: Shinji faces his idea of his father while lost*

refocus on a connection to a relationship with the more feminine aspects of god.

#### ***VI: I Already Knew Eva: Eva's Deconstruction of Origin, and its relation to the mother***

Perhaps the largest evidence for *Eva* performing deconstruction within its own narrative that of the receding of origin in the show. In fact, Ballús and Torrents main argument in “*Evangelion as Second Impact: Forever Changing That Which Never Was*,” is very similar to this point: they say that post structuralist thinking corresponds to *Eva's* structure, development and impact, and thus its ability to produce meaning (286). They write:

This idea of a sort of “unfounded” foundational gesture— an ever- distant origin that holds at its very core a passing of time that separates it from itself— permeates the conception of origin presented in *Evangelion*... (290).

This concept of an ever-receding origin is one that will be familiar to those who have studied deconstruction before. By providing us with an origin point that is so separated from the core narrative, and yet so integral to an understanding of what is going on in the current diegesis we are viewing, *Eva* enables the ideal setting to avoid a jump to “core” of the story, which

intentionally keeps the audience in the dark and fosters the ability for the text to perform the myriad of deconstructions that it does.

By making the person who is put in this sacrificial role a *realistic* thirteen-year-old, *Eva* effectively deconstructs the anime trope of successful children piloting complex machinery perfectly. Shinji is not a run-of-the-mill successful middle schooler who will pilot the mech perfectly his first time in it. In anime, it is common to have a group of middle schoolers piloting giant robots successfully, especially the first time. Shinji is far from this ideal character. In fact, the first time he pilots the *Eva*, he fails miserably. In Episode 2: “The Beast,” Shinji faces the Second Angel (the first being Adam), and he immediately trips, and is mutilated by the Angel. The audience watches here, as the visceral nature of the Evangelion units is displayed. Shinji can feel *everything* that happens to the Evangelion, which is not the norm in mech animes (e.g. *Mobile Suit Gundam*, *Code Geass*, etc.). The Evangelion unit is damaged, and blood spurts out of its head. The next scene is Shinji waking up in the hospital (“The Beast” 2:00-3-24). This initial scene inverts all the things you would initially expect out of a typical mecha anime. The main character fails at their task almost immediately, even though the maximum amount of pressure is placed upon him. What’s more, the audience is kept in the dark about *how* Shinji and everyone else is alive until much later in the episode. The way these first episodes are constructed purposefully keep the audience wanting an exciting mecha fight. This in itself deconstructs our position as the viewer because we are forced to recognize the fact that we are waiting for violence, while that violence is also embraced.

When we finally *do* see what happened during the fight, it is anything but the mechanical fight we have come to expect from these types of narratives. The Evangelion reactivates itself and tears apart the Angel in an animalistic



*Fig. 23: The Eva rips violently apart the first Angel*

display of strength, pictured above (“18:30-20:00”). This display of violence is only complicated when we learn the reason why there is only Shinji who can pilot the Evangelion. When Nerv was creating the Evangelion, Yui’s body merged with the Eva and was forever lost. Her soul resides in the Eva, and this is the reason that it reactivates itself—to protect Shinji from mortal danger. With this fact, we can see how Shinji’s complex relationship with his father, discussed a few sections ago, is further complicated by the reality of the Evangelion units. Gendo is, in effect, utilizing Yui’s motherly protection and love as a weapon to his own selfish ends. Along with this, he is also using Shinji, and his desire to connect and return to a state of one-ness for his own gain. As Nicole Veneto writes in “Mother is the First Order: Subjectivity as Derived from the Mother in NGE:” “The Father...cuts the child off from the flow of unconditional love and affection provided by the Mother, whose loss instills in the child the motivation desire to be loved, wanted, and needed by others” (36). In order to receive the love he so desperately wants, Shinji pilots the Eva for recognition. The primacy and selflessness of martyrdom is also being upended here, as all of this lurks behind Shinji’s actions. As Veneto states, mothers both “real”

and symbolic are essential to *Eva*, their physical absence is juxtaposed by their metaphorical importance (36). Indeed, there are many “symbolic” mothers in the show: The Magi computer is based on the mind of Ritsuko Akagi’s mother, both scientists at Nerv, and she refers to it as “mother,” a few times in the series; The Eva is, as was mentioned, fused with Yui’s soul, and Asuka’s Eva is also believed to contain the soul of her mother; Rei is, essentially, a clone of Yui who acts as a vessel for the soul of Lilith—the progenitor of the human race, another “Seed of Life,” along with Adam, encapsulating two motherly figures in one. NGE is obsessed with this question of origin, and this relates to its tandem exploration of parental figures both real and symbolic, including its representations of the Biblical father/son relationship. *Eva* can be seen as attempting to deconstruct this relationship to reinstate an emphasis on the feminine, and ultimately, the motherly.

These representations are complicated by deconstructions of sexuality and fanservice the show provides as well. In Episode 20, while Shinji is (still) lost within the Eva unit, another montage occurs, this time focused on each of the women in his life in a sexual manner. Each of them appears on the screen, topless, leaning over the frame (*Fig 24*). They each ask Shinji “Do you want to become one with me? To become one mind, body, and soul?” It is important to note here that these images are markedly *not* sexualized despite obviously referencing sexual acts. The lack of physical detail on the bodies of Misato, Rei, and Asuka is key here— an anime focused on simplistic fanservice would take this opportunity to ramp up the sexuality, but *Eva*



*Fig. 24: Episode 20 13:45-14:35*

downplays it here. The edges of the image are actually blurred, so as to obscure a clear picture, and none of the women have detail beyond shape and shadow. This culminates with their images and voices merging and blurring together into a mess of bodies which leers over the camera,



*Fig. 25: Shinji sees these women blurred together*

which suggests that Shinji sees all of these women similarly. Shinji has a desire for connection

for many reasons, and this connection becomes misdirected in misogynistic ways.

Shinji's fear of being separated is being related to an obsession with a desire for sexual connection and attention with the women that surround him. This is heavily related to the absence of Shinji's mother, and his desire for external approval. This road to external approval is *not* what *Eva* sees as the answer, and this is made extremely clear through the sexualization of the major characters, and the disavowal of sacrificing yourself for others. For *Eva*, the ultimate salvation lies in living for yourself, and continuing to possess the will to live. This sequence of Shinji becoming lost in the Eva ends

with Shinji being almost reborn outside of it, after being asked by the three women, and one obscured figure

"What do you want, Shinji?" (Episode 20 16:18). Pictured below is an

alternate subtitled translation, "What do you wish?" Both translations

maintain the focus on the individual,

and specifically the individuals will to live. Additionally, the obscured figure and voice actress used suggests that this may be an early memory of Yui. Shinji comes back from within the Eva in this episode due to his desire to become one with others, after he has the vision of his mother speaking with his father referenced in section III. This desire, however, is linked to a separation, in this case Shinji from the Eva unit he's trapped inside of, and by extension a visceral connection with his mother. This becomes a precursor to Shinji's final decision to undo Human Instrumentality once he has completed it.



*Fig. 26: Presumably, an early memory of Shinji's mother Yui*

## ***VII. I Promise There'll Be Lots of Fanservice!: Eva's Deconstruction of Fanservice***

This tension is complicated by the presentation of sexuality in *Eva*, and the way that the show is also attempting to deconstruct a lot of problematic masculinity and misogyny connected to the ways fanservice is used to engage the audience. Part of *Eva*'s goal is to show how that relation of Humankind to God works in our modern age, and how antiqued issues of sexism<sup>3</sup> are complicated by modern ideas of technology. The world of *Eva* uses technology to control the ways women are represented, and indeed representations of women are inseparable from their machine counterparts. Yui's soul is *inside* Shinji's Eva quite literally, the same for Asuka; Ritsuko's mother programmed the Magi computers to represent the three sides of her as a person. As Savoy details in her paper "The Artificial Restoration of Agency through Sex and Technology in *NGE*," the world of *Eva* depends upon this technology to fight the Angels (3). This dual dependency and objectification off technology and women enables *Eva* and its creators to engage in a discussion of how representations of this control affects the fates of women in particular, and also to provide a meditation on fanservice which actively attempts to get the viewer to look beyond sexually gratifying images that anime-fans so normally laud.

Examples of the deconstruction of problematic misogynistic tropes are to be found all throughout the series—the anime constantly challenges anime tropes such as "fanservice" and the Harem genre of anime. Fanservice is material that is added to anime that is intended to please the audience which is assumed to be male by an overwhelming majority. It is usually sexual in nature, and therefore heavily focused on unrealistic and sexist portrayals of women. The Harem genre, similarly, is a genre of anime wherein a single male is in a situation with three (or more) available women. *Eva* features both fanservice and a harem-like situation, however the ways it

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest that sexism is an issue long gone, but to suggest that it is a long-standing issue in our society which dates back at least to representations in the Bible, and almost certainly before that.



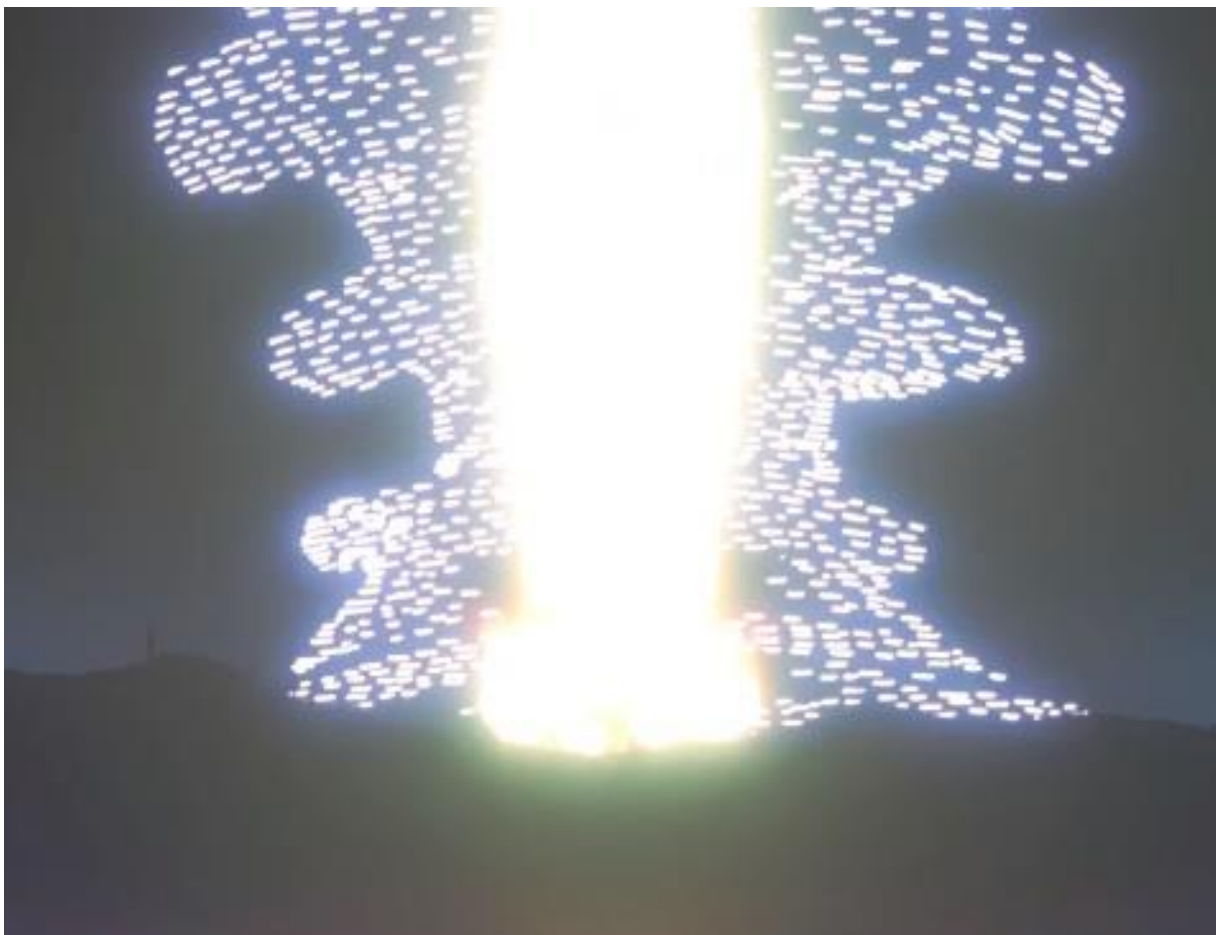
plays with these tropes can be seen to actively question the tropes themselves. The women in *Eva* are no doubt sexualized, but this sexualization is by no means simple fanservice. Katherine Savoy provides an amazing context through which to think about the sexualization of the characters, however she states that “...the camera follows them as not much more than simple fanservice” (3). While Savoy’s analysis provides crucial support for my reading of gender in *Eva*, a big portion of my argument lies in disagreeing with this statement. The fanservice, while no doubt sexual, is by no means simple, and furthers the ability for the show to make a



*Fig. 10: Misato shielding Shinji from an incoming N2 mine*

commentary on how personal trauma is connected to larger societal catastrophe. For example, one of the first examples of fanservice, from when Misato picks Shinji up at the beginning of the show can be seen above (*Fig. 10*). This image exemplifies the complex nature of fanservice in

the show. Misato is shielding Shinji in an almost mama-bear type-fashion, and in this moment, she is sexualized for the camera. I would argue that this instance of fanservice is far from simple and see it as evidence for the show's deconstruction of fanservice as a problematic trope. The use of fanservice is apparent, but within it is a complex interaction. It is difficult to parse this image as a simple sexualization, because of the surrounding context. While it cannot be denied that a sexualization of Misato is the focus of this frame, the context of the action points to a protective action. Misato is actively shielding Shinji from the blast of a massive bomb, and this makes it hard for the reader to ignore the protective instinct Misato has in this moment and simply sexualize Misato.



*Fig. 11: The huge explosion of the  $N^2$  mine*

Additionally, composition of the bomb explosion, perpetrated by the army provides additional proof for the claim that this fanservice is being tied to trauma, and that sexual violence is being directly related to a larger conception of trauma and violence. The image, left, of the “N<sup>2</sup> mine” going off is incredibly phallic, and this further deepens the effect of complicating the fanservice by tying the sexual representation to a large phallic destructive explosion. This large explosion, it turns out, for all its phallic grandeur is rendered impotent to defend the city from the Angel attacking. Anyone who *is* enjoying this for the mere fanservice is ignoring a huge portion of textual information being given to the viewer. While some may read this as simple fanservice, the show seems to consider its use of these sexual images much more carefully than most others. Considering the show’s focus on protective mothering figures, it is more than coincidence that the context of this image comes from Misato using her body as a shield over Shinji. The fact that the act of a protective instinct is what provides the opportunity for “fanservice,” is purposeful—the audience is meant to see this sexualization as problematic, and Misato as vulnerable when these emotions are displayed.

The fanservice is also undone in another major way in almost every episode: at the end of each episode, Misato gives a short preview attempting to draw the audience in next week. This is almost always followed by Misato promising she’ll “slip us a little extra” or “a little bonus,” and in the third episode she says outright that she’ll be “...doling out another helping of fanservice!” (23:19-23:21). The fourth episode, unsurprisingly, contains no fanservice at all, and there’s no promise for one at the conclusion. In fact, Kensuke and Suzahara, two of Shinji’s classmates, drool over Misato when they go to see her, but the camera does not view her as a sexual object in this episode. Evangelion is at once embracing and using fanservice, but also pointing to the *lack* of fanservice, and thus deconstructing our expectations as the audience.

This fanservice is actively tied to trauma in a very real and visceral way— especially for Misato. In the opening of Episode 12, “The Value of a Miracle/She said, ‘don’t make others suffer for your personal hatred,’” we see the sequence laid out below in static images (Fig 12-16).



*Fig. 12-16: Misato recalls the Second Impact in a vulnerable moment*

Misato stands and watches the Second Impact unfold, clutching her open wound. The screen fades to black, and then cuts to a medium close-up of Misato fashioning her bra, which pans up to follow her hands. Visible—arguably more than any actual cleavage or “simple fanservice—” is Misato’s scar from the Second Impact. The camera then cuts to a wide shot of Misato’s room, with Misato standing left, in front of the mirror. Then, a close-up of Misato’s face in the mirror, and the effect of a lightning strike, which transitions to the cross necklace on the table. This is a moment that would be ripe for gratuitous fanservice for any regular anime, and yet *Eva* takes this moment to subvert that, and connect this sexualization to trauma experienced at a large scale.

Rhetorically, this sequence of images is almost deconstructing itself, by taking apart the separate pieces of Misato and her trauma and laying them out for us. First we see the memory of the Second Impact, then its physical manifestation, then a frame which draws unique attention to the sexualization we are expecting as something of vulnerability and weakness— and Misato seems self-conscious of this in the next frame when she looks directly at us. The sequence then ends on the cross necklace, the object worn by Misato at the second impact, and given to her by her father, which strengthens the idea that this sequence is tied to trauma and vulnerability, both sexual and otherwise. Savoy draws unique attention to this idea of sexuality as a weakness, and points out as well that Misato, along with Asuka, are both aware of their sexuality as a weakness, and they are careful to create conscious identities which use this to their advantage (6). Both Asuka, Misato and Rei become powerful examples of sexuality being used to affirm and, at the same time, question the exploitation and use of sexuality. This sexuality is inevitably tied to a larger narrative of trauma in *Eva*, focusing our attention on the issues these violences create.

### ***VIII. Deconstructions All the Way Down...: How Eva Works as Gospel***

Through the use of Biblical imagery, and the recontextualization of Biblical narrative in contemporary spaces (e.g. anime), *Eva* attempts to do a host of meaningful things for its audience, however here we will focus on two: the way it recontextualizes the language of the Bible in a vibrant and contemporary context, and the way it uses this recontextualization to reform and deconstruct both Biblical tradition and contemporary tropes of anime to re-work problematic misogyny present in both. The ultimate goal of NGE is the focus on a more feminine presentation of the godhead, and to reconfigure the Biblical idea of a Godhead through whom all beings connect, and the various deconstructions at play all work to reinforce this presentation.

*Eva* does this through a host of deconstructions, some of which I have already discussed,

which work together to recontextualize and point out the stresses that exist within the various texts which envelop themselves into the world of *Eva*. *Eva* incorporates Biblical language and concepts and uses those to preform a deconstruction in itself of contemporary religion, and the ways that Biblical imagery and ideals become mapped onto contemporary spaces. Derrida says in a published interview with Walter Brogan that “Deconstruction is not a method or some tool that you apply to something from the outside. Deconstruction is something which happens and which happens inside; there is a deconstruction at work within Plato's work, for instance” (Caputo 8). This is certainly what is true with *Eva*, for its deconstructions of the conventions of anime, origin, and the Biblical father/son relationship that have already been discussed work together to point out “the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of something that has been given to us, and, at the same time,” work to produce a “...heterogeneity, something absolutely new, and a break,” which is aimed at guiding us down a path of deconstructing ourselves—the meanings that we impose upon older texts, and our position as the viewer (Caputo 5). We have the memory and preservation of religion, and a belief in the preservation and importance of stories, and yet the tension lies in *Eva*’s desire to produce a *new* kind of religious, or quasi-religious text. *Eva*’s ultimate aim is a host of deconstructions which become deeper and more personal as the narrative continues, going so far that not even the viewer is safe.

### ***IX. The Second Coming: Eva’s Recontextualization of Biblical Narrative***

From the beginning of the series, the relationship *Eva* carries to the New Testament can be easily seen, and it is clear that old and new forms of narrative are intertwining in complex ways to produce lasting effects. The intertwining of these forms of narrative are what give *Eva* its ability to be as effective as it is as an enduring piece of art, despite its age. With the newer iterations of *Eva* aside, the original anime is a psychological tour-de-force, and while this has

been extensively researched, what is less the focus of study is its relation to Biblical narrative. It is this relationship, however overlooked, that also gives this anime its power, and by overlooking this we do a grave disservice to Anno's narrative. This is not to say that a Biblical reading is the only one that ought to exist of *Eva*— a strictly Christian reading of it would be an equal travesty to ignoring the Biblical components completely—but an understanding of the anime's relationship to Biblical narrative enriches our ability to understand the text in a myriad of ways, and to overlook this would be to misunderstand a text which tries very hard to connect itself to the inner workings of the bible, it's narrative, and the way we use narrative as humans.

The first episode of the series, "Angel Attack," sees the main character, Shinji, as he is introduced to the Evangelion unit, and his role in the attack that is simultaneously happening. The role he has can be seen as a recontextualization of Jesus' role in the New Testament. For one, this situation is already related to Biblical narrative due to its structure— the son is summoned by the father to dutifully sacrifice himself so that he can save the human race. What's more, we know as well that Gendo has a large part in the cause of the Second Impact. Here, Shinji is literally being sent by his father to prevent a veritable "Third Impact," however we later learn that it is precisely Gendo's goal to *instigate* a Third Impact, which would provide the opportunity for Human Instrumentality, and being reunited with his wife. We can see the layered aspect of the deconstruction here— not only is the series deconstructing Biblical narrative by intertwining it with these contemporary contexts, but it is also deconstructing Gendo's position by forcing us to question it while also giving him absolute power in the narrative, for now. Indeed, as I will explore further in section VIII, Shinji must grapple with the manipulations that his father imposes upon him, and the entire world.

The positions of the different "Impacts" can also be functionally understood as a

recontextualization of the schema of Creation, Incarnation, and Eschaton in Christian mythos. The “First Impact” was Lilith’s egg hitting earth (which created the moon), which in effect propagated the human race. The “Second Impact” was orchestrated by SEELE, and more specifically by Gendo himself, and winds up killing half the human population. The “Third Impact” happens at Shinji’s behest, and is in effect an apocatastatic event. In this, the last two are reversed, for father is responsible for what occurs in the middle, while the son is responsible for bringing about the end, which winds up being a beginning. The creation event also becomes markedly more gendered towards the feminine, as Lilith’s egg is responsible for it.

Many shows have similar setups to *Eva*—for example *Code Geass*, which sees main character Lelouch piloting mechs perfectly on the first try and needing to defend himself from enemies. Few, however, are as overt as the way *Eva* is set up to reimagine Biblical narrative. The show puts the situation of the New Testament into a contemporary light by mixing it with our current conception of hero narratives. The anime seems to want to ask the question—what if the burden of Christ were placed upon a real fourteen-year-old with a slew of emotional and interpersonal issues. Relating the burden of piloting an oversized mech to the burden of Christ might seem like an overstatement, however the stakes really *are* that high for Shinji, and in the end of the narrative he is placed in a position where he is sacrificed by a group of individuals to serve their own ends of immortality. Shinji’s position makes use of Biblical tradition, and also actively questions it and asks its viewers to consider how narrativity as we know it today should affect these ideas of the stories we tell ourselves, and how that affects our image of ourselves in gendered and non-gendered ways.

#### ***X. Answer your Own Questions: Eva’s Deconstruction of Martyrdom***

*Eva* complicates Biblical tradition by challenging notions of martyrdom with alternative



ideas of self will. As we have already seen, *Eva* contains a heavy focus on self-will in many ways—Shinji must confront his will to pilot the *Eva* and to be alive numerous times in the series. Misato acts as a force of action throughout the entire plot, and as we have seen her the vulnerability of sexuality is tied to this concept of trauma and vulnerability about the past. As a particularly astute fan writes in a zine: “She is the only character whose relationship to the Second Impact is explicitly, and cruelly human” (Hillary 113). Misato is a strong character, and her protective instinct for Shinji, Rei, and Asuka is an incredible force throughout the show, however while she begins attempting to lessen pain for the children, she eventually becomes resigned to watching them endure the endless trauma of fighting the angels (113). Misato makes it clear for us that if it were not for trauma, the world as it is would not exist (113).

In the scene of Misato’s death, these ideas of sexualization, trauma, and will come into play and exemplify *Eva*’s final commentary on sacrifice and martyrdom. Shinji, as has been seen, struggles deeply with feeling as if he must sacrifice himself for the sake of others. Misato has just rescued Shinji from certain death, fighting the hired army of Seele, attacking Nerv headquarters to attempt to instigate Human Instrumentality without Gendo. In a triumphant display, Misato crashes in and, in another mama-bear fashion, violently and cold-bloodedly kills three men. She then grabs Shinji, and literally drags him to the *Eva* so that he can fight. At this point, Shinji is at the height of his trauma. He has endured psychological distress from what we have seen here, and much more piled upon that which it would take many pages to document. He has been done piloting the *Eva* and feels unworthy because of the pain he has caused others. Misato radically embraces this pain he causes and urges him to reckon with the decisions he has made while she is bleeding out and begging him to pilot the *Eva*:

From now on, you’re on your own. You’ll have to make your own decisions. No one can

do it for you... You hate yourself, don't you? That's why you hurt others. Deep down you know suffer more when you cause someone else pain, than if you'd just let yourself get hurt. But Shinji that was your decision, so it makes it a valid choice! That's what you wanted. So that makes it worthwhile. Stop lying to yourself and realize that you do have options. Then, accept the choices you've made... (*End of Evangelion* 30:00-31:31)

This rhetoric lies diametrically opposed to rhetoric of self-sacrifice and martyrdom as the impetus behind salvation. Misato is urging Shinji to save his *own* soul, and to look within to try to reclaim his lost self. She wants him to relate to himself in a way that takes responsibility for his decisions— whether or not those decisions have hurt people. She also wants him to take responsibility for his burdens. She does not want him to pilot for others, or because he feels he has to—she urges him to do it *for himself*. He does need to do it, but Misato wants him to take responsibility for that as opposed to pushing it on to others. Though he has been placed in this position through no choice of his own, his decisions in this moment are going to affect many people Shinji cares about. As opposed to a rhetoric of martyrdom, where Shinji is sacrificing himself for the good of others despite his personal will, *Eva* reinforces a rhetoric of self will, and acting for yourself. Shinji retorts that she must not know what it's like to be him, but Misato responds, connecting the cycle of trauma to this choice to keep going for yourself:

So fucking what if I'm not you?! That doesn't mean it's okay for you to give up! If you do, I'll never forgive you as long as I live. God knows I'm not perfect either. I've made tons of stupid mistakes and later I regretted them. And I've done it over and over again, thousands of times. A cycle of hollow joy and vicious self-hatred. But even so, every time I learned something about myself. Please Shinji. You've got to pilot Eva and settle this once and for all. For your own sake. Find out why you came here--why you exist at

all. Answer your own questions. And when you've found your answers, come back to me. I'll be waiting for you. (*End of Evangelion* 31:35-32:34)

Here, the cycle of trauma that Misato references is related to this idea of taking responsibility for your decisions. Misato relates her own regrets and cycles of self-hatred, and takes responsibility for them, saying that *she* has done it, and that *she* has learned something about herself every time. Her imperative for Shinji to "answer his own questions" and his own answers is crucial *Eva*. People cannot exist pretending that their decisions do not affect others, and they cannot blame others for their situations.

At the end of this sequence, Misato hands Shinji the cross that her father gave to her at the Second Impact, fifteen years ago. This object, which has become a symbol of the trauma Misato has endured, is passed along to Shinji saying, "Promise me." This cross, while it is markedly *not* a crucifix, is given from the dead to the living, and becomes a symbol of the trauma we have endured to get to where we are (Hillary 113). It also becomes a link between personal trauma to larger societal trauma. This becomes a moment ripe with deconstruction, for the text affirms the propagation and continuation of



*Fig. 27: Shinji, sobbing in the elevator*

these stories of trauma and pain, and yet is bursting at the seams, attempting to produce something explicitly novel in its place, which in effect aims to re-write that tradition.

This recognition of a cycle of trauma is enough, but unsurprisingly this moment becomes linked to a bit of forced fanservice, which acts as a further deconstruction piled onto this scene. After her monologue, Misato grabs Shinji and kisses him on the lips, in a surprisingly out of place moment. She says: "That was a grown-up kiss. We'll do the rest when you get back,

okay?” and she pushes Shinji in the elevator (32:40- 32:53). It is clear to the audience, and probably to Shinji at this point, that Misato is not going to make it much further. Misato’s decision to turn this moment into one of sexual promise and desire is a confusing one. Considering the connection that has been created throughout the series between sexuality, vulnerability, violence, and free-will, it seems an interesting choice for Misato to make in this moment. She does not *have* to encourage Shinji in this way, and in fact, it arguably doesn’t affect Shinji the way she had hoped, as he wipes blood from his mouth in the elevator, sobbing (33:45). The trauma proliferates here—Misato’s trauma being sexualized has led her to misjudge, and attempt to motivate Shinji in a way that ultimately winds up becoming more traumatizing. This moment of sexualization can also be seen as another instance of exploiting audience expectation surrounding fanservice. This scene seems like something out of a fanfiction—Shinji has, as we have seen, been yearning for this type of a connection from the very beginning of the show, and yet this is juxtaposed and thwarted by our knowledge of Misato’s impending death. The reality of the scene does not allow for us to remain in this fantasy, it almost does not even allow us to entertain it at all.

Evangelion purposefully does not want us to entertain this type of sexualization, nor does it want us to entertain the idea that death and sacrifice can create life. Early in *End of Evangelion*, one of the faceless members of Seele announces that “through the sacrament of death, God, humanity, and all living beings will be united and reborn as one,” to which Gendo responds, almost under his breath, “Death creates nothing” (5:25-5:34). This is a curious stance for *Eva* to take, however it makes complete sense when considering the ways we have seen *Eva* deconstructing many of the themes it seems to embrace. While many characters are sacrificed, and must grapple with sacrifice, *Eva* meaningfully disavows and deconstructs a rhetoric of

sacrifice, and reaffirms a rhetoric of will-to-live by exploring the tensions that exist between these themes.

***XI: Fly Me to The Moon: Eva's Shekhinah, and Human Instrumentality***

Together, the deconstruction of fanservice and the Biblical father/son relationship point towards a reconnection with the feminine aspects of God. This is most prominently seen in the sequence where Rei merges with Lilith to create a giant spiritual being, and the sequence which leads up to it. This merging creates a being strikingly similar to the “Shekhinah,” or the feminine aspect of God in Judeo-Christian mysticism.

As defeat becomes an inevitability for Nerv in the final movie, Gendo goes with Rei to the chamber that holds Lilith. Nerv is fighting the powers of Seele because it has become clear that Gendo is attempting to use the Evas for his own ends. It is noted that the humans that Nerv are fighting against are more brutal than the Angels. As Shinji gets into the Evangelion for the last time, inspired by Misato's words, Gendo is attempting to unite Lilith and Adam so that he



*Fig. 28*

can be reunited with Yui. Gendo urges Rei to commence the unification so he can see Yui again, and then reaches his hand to, and through, her breast inside of her body. As he does, he realizes that something is wrong. Rei looks up at him and says, “I will not be a puppet for you to control.” Gendo says “Rei, why!?” as he pulls his arm out, to which she responds, “Because I am not like you.” Gendo begs Rei to help him, but she floats up to Lilith and begins to merge with it. The result is a Rei of indescribable size, which rises through Nerv’s base, up to the clouds where Shinji is being held by Selee. Rei has realized her true form as Lilith, and as such she represents the feminine aspect of God (*Fig. 28*). Rei acts as the “Shekhinah” here in several ways, the first and most visually palpable of which is her gigantic size, and position as the being who will merge with Shinji to become a higher being. Here, even the names of these figures are subversive, and intentionally deconstruct our preconceived notions. In biblical tradition, Lilith is understood to be a demoness, and in some Kabbalistic material is understood to be formed the same as Adam, but from filth and impure sediment (Patai 300). Her representation here— as stark naked, white, and sexualized— complicates this and presents the final representation in which all the myriad deconstructions of the show reach their halt. The idea that this representation of Lilith represents is a *fantasy* of complete oneness with all things is being related to that sexuality, and the way Rei is literally *used* by Gendo. As God-Rei rises from the earth, one Nerv technician yells: “The anti-A.T. field from Lilith is expanding...soon individual entities will be unable to maintain their separate forms!” (*End of Evangelion 1:06:40-1:06:50*). Lilith, and Rei, have an *anti* Absolute Terror field, and can be seen as the manifestation of this ideal of living without fear which separates. The trauma is connected at not only a personal level, but also on a worldwide level; Rei is the being who literally perform the Third Impact, and though it is Shinji who decides to go forward with it, it is Rei/Lilith who carries it out. This is a

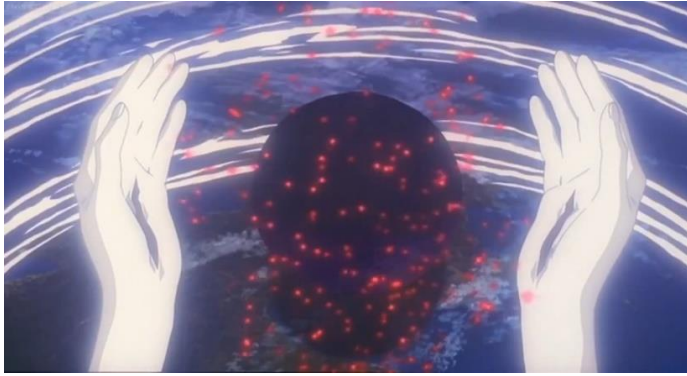


Fig. 29-32: Different perspectives of Human Instrumentality

Fig 32: Spirit Reis appear above people dead

fantasy which cannot be realized, and we are supposed to view this Third Impact as a sort of traumatic end, as well as a hopeful beginning. Once Shinji merges with Rei and performs Human Instrumentality, the Shekhinah Rei begins to suck the souls of all living things back to their primordial being (Fig 29-32). This results in the death of all living things, and a return to the primordial soup where life originated from—literally the “LCL” liquid which is used to fill the piloting tanks in the Eva units that Shinji becomes “lost” within in Episode 20. The sexualization of this holy-spirit-type-being is not unfounded in biblical tradition either—in fact, as Gershom Scholem writes in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, there is only *one* instance of a sexualization of Divinity—Moses and the Shekhinah have intercourse (286). This sexualization of God-spirit, and the ideal of becoming “one” with all is misdirected, in *Eva*’s eyes, and its goal is to lead us down a different path.

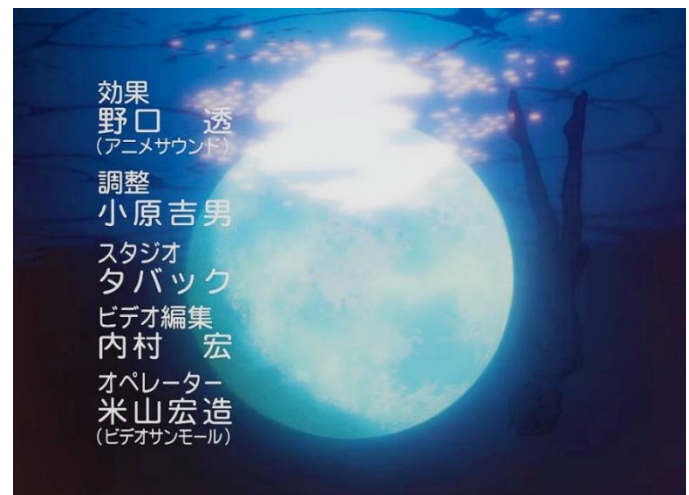
Alan Unterman speaks of the Shekhinah in his *Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend*,



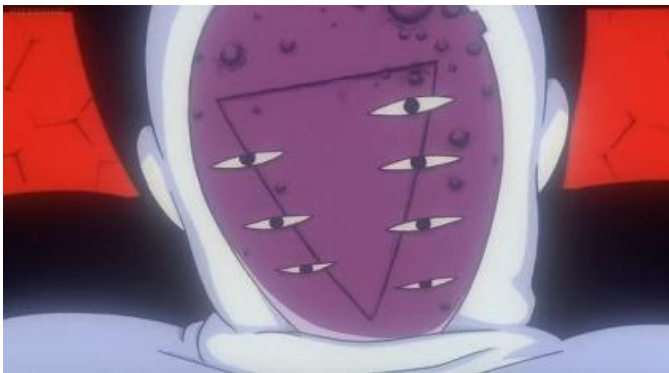
and says that it “...was regarded by some Jewish philosophers as a separate entity, a created being of light, with which man comes into contact” (576). The thematic connections here are already profound—Unterman’s definition seems to apply directly to this representation of Lilith. Not only does Shinji come into contact with this God Rei/Lilith being, but each individual comes into contact with a representation of Rei directly before they die and join the primordial soup of human instrumentality. This also seems to reflect the idea that the Shekhinah is identical with the Holy Spirit (Scholem 156). Rei also seems to be glowing here—created of light, and there is a lot to suggest this connection visually in the show. In fact, Rei is quite often associated with the moon visually in the series (examples below). This connection is reinforced at the end



*Fig. 33: Rei in the series opening sequence*



*Fig. 34: Rei’s silhouette in the closing credits during “Fly me to the Moon”*



*Fig. 35: A close up of Lilith’s moon-cratered face*



*Fig. 36: Rei/Lilith in front of the moon, as she is presented post-Human Instrumentality in the primordial sea of LCL.*



of every episode, when varying renditions of “Fly Me to the Moon” play over the credits while Rei’s body floats in a sea next to the moon. As the famous Count Basie hit says, “...in other words, I love you.” As is well known, Love is the main message of the Bible, as John proclaims that “...Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8). *Eva* is clearly trying to move this focus on love to a focus on feminine love, and move away from patriarchal love, and the representation of Rei is key to understanding the Biblical aspects at play in this series. Later, when Shinji asks Rei “What are...you within my heart?” Rei responds that she “...is the hope that people will one day be able to understand each other. And we are the words ‘I love you’” (*End of Evangelion* 1:18:00-1:18:16). Rei is meant to represent a pure idea of love, one that accepts the selfish and destructive truth of it, as well as the creative power. This leads to a celebration of self-love, and of ephemeral love which may, realistically, end in abandonment. This mirrors the idea of God as love from the Bible, and yet curiously attempts to break through a naïve love which eschews the importance of self-love, and the reality of loss.

### ***XII: Then What Is Your Hand For?: Embracing Love as Destructive and Creative***

The biggest proof of *Eva*’s focus embracing separation is Shinji’s final decision to undo Human Instrumentality. He does this because when he is within Human Instrumentality—a sea of LCL—there is no difference between him and nothing. In Episode 26, when Shinji is in the LCL fluid<sup>4</sup> he says, “Because there are others, I can perceive myself as an individual. If I am alone, I will be the same without others, for if this world is only of me then there will be no difference between me and nothing!” (Episode 26 13:30-13:53). Once Shinji realizes what he has wished for this entire time, he also realizes that it isn’t what he desires. This connection—while

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<sup>4</sup> Though this is not seen in Episode 26 and only in *End of Evangelion*, it is understood that Episodes 25 and 26 are the internal representation of what went on, also limited by broadcast TV limitations of scheduling, while the movie *End of Evangelion* is a portrayal of the same events as they happened in physical space.

it has gotten rid of the terror which separates people—erases individuality in every sense of the word. When that connection exists, there is no room for an individual entity. This ideal is further deconstructed, as the place that Shinji goes during Human Instrumentality is not free of pain by any means. He is confronted by the problematic representations of the women around him in his head, and there is a great deal of pain. In the culminating moment of Instrumentality, Shinji is having a fight with Asuka in this liminal space. He says that he needs help, and that she is the only one who can help him. This echoes the beginning of *End of Evangelion*, when Shinji is in the hospital room begging an unconscious Asuka to help him. He pulls her shoulder repeatedly, until her body turns over, and her bare chest is revealed. What follows is silence, save for



Fig. 37: "I'm so fucked up," Shinji says

hospital beeps, and slow panning shots of the hospital background, and locked door. Shinji is panting, and then the screen cuts to the following image:

This is shocking to the audience—Shinji has just violated Asuka for his own personal pleasure in place of human connection. This image of Shinji's hand represents all of the different aspects that *Eva* is attempting to deconstruct—the power of the will of the individual, sexual trauma, and that trauma's connection to feeling isolated and alone. Shinji's choice here to touch himself to Asuka in a vulnerable state is a source of personal guilt for him, and this is related to images of sexual trauma and vulnerability that have been deconstructed throughout the series. Shinji's want

for human connection has led to this violation; they are necessarily linked.

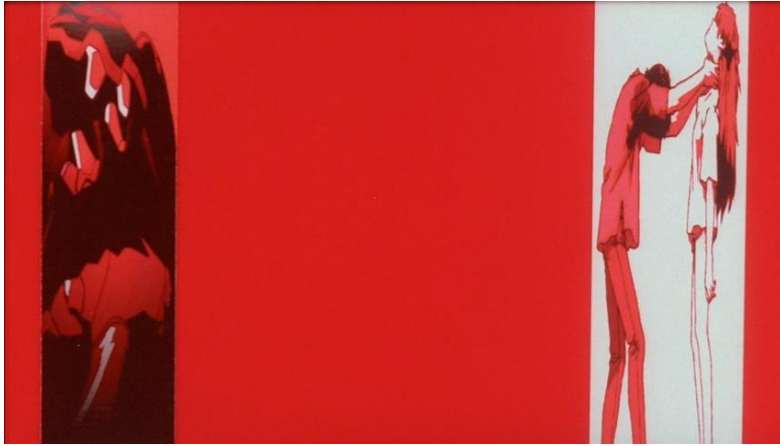
Hands as a representation of will and action become a powerful motif throughout the series. Understanding the way they work to suggest the destructive and creative power of love is key to understanding *Eva*'s recontextualization and focus on the power of individual creation rather than divine creation. Asuka responds, back in Human Instrumentality by yelling at him that he is a liar, and that anyone will do to help him—he is merely running to her to keep from getting hurt. She calls him pathetic and pushes him to the ground. Shinji gets up, slowly, and throws around the table and chairs, begging “Please help me, somebody help me! Don’t leave me alone! Don’t abandon me! Please don’t kill me!” (*End of Evangelion* 59:48- 1:00:14). Asuka responds with “No,” to which Shinji responds by grabbing Asuka’s neck, and choking her.



*Fig. 38: Shinji chokes Asuka*

This interaction during Human Instrumentality proves to Shinji that being unified with everyone won’t solve his problems—the only thing that will do that is facing the others in his life and facing the separation that exists head on.

After Shinji chokes Asuka, the screen flashes with images of Shinji’s enraged face, to one that directly relates the image of the choking to the violence of the Eva unit, seen below (*Fig 39*). This image puts these two instances of violence next to each other and relate this sexual violence



*Fig. 39: The Eva, screaming placed next to Shinji choking Asuka*

to the larger threads of trauma woven throughout the text, namely Shinji's violation of Asuka in the beginning of the film, but beyond that as well. Indeed, as we have we have seen in more than one aspect, the

individual trauma in *Eva* is necessarily linked to larger catastrophic trauma and violence. This is related to gendered representations in both scenarios, as Eva Unit-01's rage is the protective rage of the mother.

Next, the screen shifts to different children's drawings. It is not clear exactly what these drawings are meant to convey to the audience, but there is something suggested of violence and/or captivity in each one. The bold change in animation styles is also to be admired: the images move from childlike, to more complex, seen in the examples above, suggesting a



*Fig. 40-43: The children's drawings that appear during Instrumentality*

progression of this violence through created and imagined images. Here, we can see the core of *Eva* at work: the destruction that love causes is being recognized here, as well as the childish and

violent nature which fueled Shinji's desire to be "one" with all things. The link between fantasy, imagination, and reality here is what is most crucial. This can be seen as an active critique of self-sacrificing ideals, and the path to becoming one with God. Both of these ideals—a type of self-sacrificing love, and a desire to become one with all living things— are being deconstructed for the contemporary moment in a world filled with widespread trauma and pain, the levels of which only seem to have gotten worse since 1995. Also, the hand-drawn nature of these images is suggestive of the power one has to create their own images and that progression. During Instrumentality, Rei says that "new images will change [people's] hearts and forms. The power of imagination is the ability to create your own future, and the power to create your own flow of time" (1:15:10-12). The creative power of the individual is being explored and given primary importance in *Eva's* narrative.

Shinji is angry, even in this state of mystical one-ness because even here other thoughts and opinions are not gone—in fact, they are readily available to him and he must confront them.



*Fig. 44: Shinji's hand*



*Fig. 45: Shinji's hand making a fist*

Shinji, still frustrated, says "Nobody wants me, so they can all just die," and Rei responds, "Then what is your hand for?" during this, images of hands flash across the screen *without black borderlines*



*Fig. 46: Shinji's hand holding the phone from Episode 1*



(01:01:09-01:01:15). Shinji sees these images without the lines which normally comprise the borders of an animated world, and this no doubt relates to the disappearance of psychological boundaries between people in this world. These images without borders also reflect the idea that perception creates reality, for these images appear almost painted and impressionistic without their boundary lines. The particular images that are chosen reflect this focus on separation and the connection that has to trauma—the first is a relatable image of self-reflection, looking at the hand, while the second image is Shinji’s hand making a determined fist, while the third is an image of Shinji holding the phone, which comes from the first time we meet Shinji while he is



*Fig. 47: “This is dumb, I shouldn’t have come here, “ says Shinji*

trying—and failing—to reach anyone on the phone to pick him up at the train station. This is where we are introduced to Shinji, in a moment of struggling to connect, and failing. It is telling that this is where we meet Shinji, and it is meaningful that we get the opposite shot without lines, as a visual answer to the question “Then what are your hands for?” Shinji is defined by his

feelings of isolation—they are what create his reality. Hands act as a symbol of action throughout the whole series<sup>5</sup>, and this moment of hands cycling through the screen connects this visual metaphor directly to Shinji's longing to connect, and the violence and trauma that arises from that.

This relationship between creation, destruction, love, trauma, and violence—both physical and sexual, and both large-scale and small— all come to a head in the moment Shinji realizes that this Human Instrumentality isn't the right decision. The state of Instrumentality is



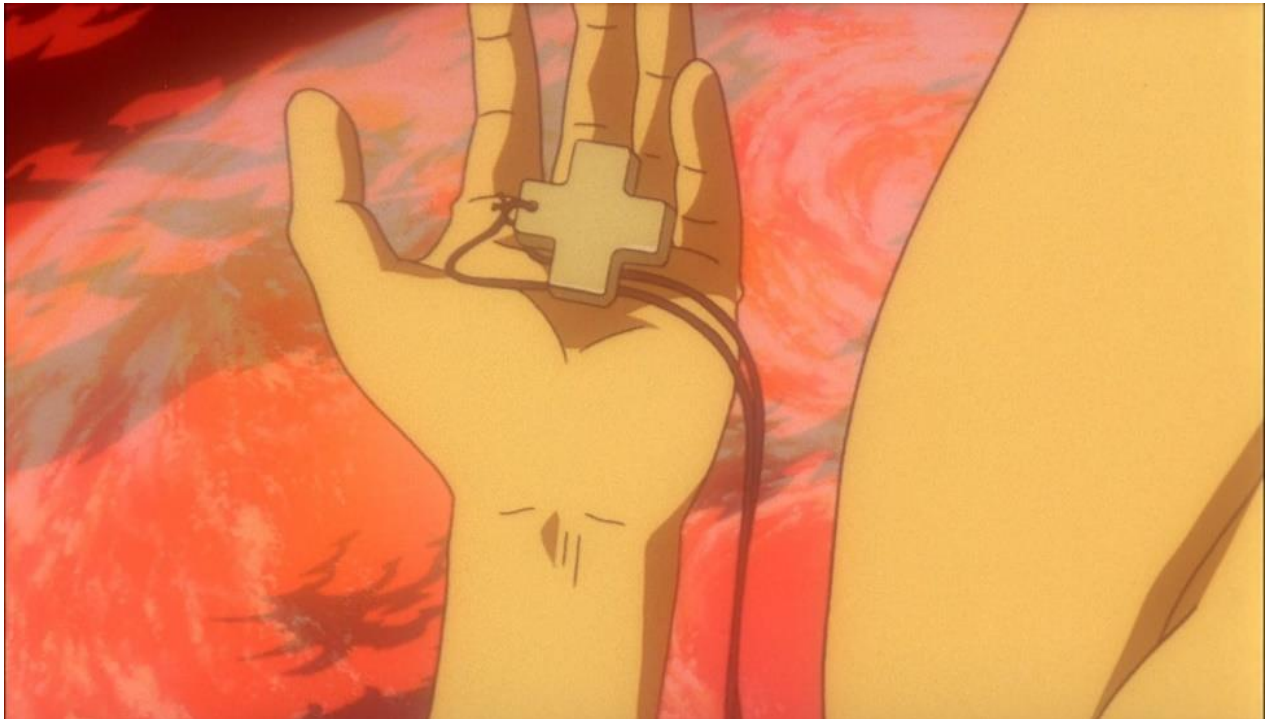
*Fig. 48: Shinji and Rei as they are represented in the “Sea of LCL”*

represented on the screen as an orange sea of LCL, and Shinji and Rei are at the center, naked with Rei straddling Shinji's waist. They appear to be physically joined in all the areas they touch, and her hands, curiously, are lodged within Shinji's chest. This is especially interesting when considering how prevalent hand imagery is—this might suggest to us that Rei has little control in

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<sup>5</sup> For those interested, more examples of these I felt it important to include but could not justify spending time analyzing are included in the Appendix A. Needless to say they all involve this idea of creation, and the creative and destructive power love has.

this situation. Shinji asks her if this is death, and she says “Not quite, this is a world where we are all one. This is the world you wished for. Your world” (1:12:02 -11). Shinji has created this world out of his own will, and in this moment he realizes that this feels wrong. He looks at his hand and releases the cross that Misato gave him before she passed away (1:12:13). It is in this moment that Shinji decides that others should once again be separate. Hilary writes that “...it is the memory not of her sacrifice, but of her survival as a fellow experiencer of trauma, a fellow Human and subject of the trauma cosmos, that leads him to salvation” (114). Shinji does not sacrifice himself, nor does the text allow us to think that sacrifice is a viable option. It is made clear that if Shinji is going to do anything, he needs to do it for himself, and the power to take



*Fig. 49: Shinji's hand with Misato's cross as he decides against Human Instrumentality*

this control comes in facing the reality of the complex ways these violences are attached to love, and a want for human connection. This control comes at the cost of separating people with fear, but also maintains the possibility for connection through trauma. For himself, for possibly the first time, Shinji makes a decision to undo Human Instrumentality. The undoing of this ideal—a



re-imagining of the Second Coming of sorts, where all become one with God —is clearly apparent. Shinji taking Reis arms, and pulling them out of his chest himself, willingly separating himself from others, reinforces this reading.

***XIII: The Dream as Continuation of Reality as a Continuation of the Dream as Continuation of Reality as a Continuation of...: Eva's Deconstruction of the Viewer***

The largest level at which this deconstruction works is the deconstruction of the audience's position as a viewer. During the climax of the culminating movie *End of Evangelion*, Shinji achieves human instrumentality and brings all beings together into one. When he does



*Fig. 18-20: When Shinji initiates Human Instrumentality, the barriers of the fiction begin to break down* this, the animation breaks down, and the film changes to live action. The live action is even edited, as in the picture on the right, to resemble the buildings in the world of Eva. Despite this, the imagery here is disruptive, diegetically (Crosthwait 5). As George Crosthwait notes in his



*Fig. 21: Audiences superimposed on one another*

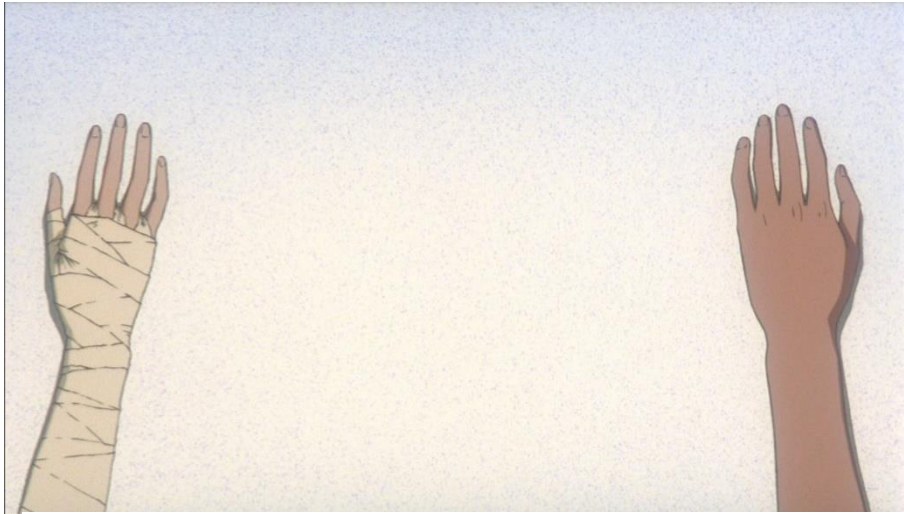
presentation materials  
*Cinematic Individuation in End of Evangelion*, these shots of the real-world force us as the audience to consider our roles, and our relationship to the fiction itself. This becomes even



Fig. 22: *Eva's question directly to us*

more readily apparent when the content of the montage shifts to representing people in a theatre superimposed over more footage of the same. The result is calming and almost meditative, and yet highly disruptive. The distinction between the subject and the object, as it has been set up in this narrative, disappears. The audience is forced to occupy *both positions*, there is a dual movement of attraction and rejection from the audience. The film then asks us a blanket question: “Does it feel good?” which we are left to decipher on our own. *Eva* is clearly attempting to undo our conceptions of our connection to the narrative and urges us to consider the ways in which we relate to the fiction, and how that impacts our real lives. This goes so far as to actively relate our own viewing experience to the “hand” that we have in the creation of our own worlds. We as the audience are urged to take control of our interpretations, and responsibility for them as well.

***XIV: You Can [not] Conclude: One More Final: I need you.***



*Fig. 50: Asuka's hand, left, wounded. Shinji's right.*

The result of this veritable Third Impact is a ravaged and scarred world which reinforces these complex ideas of human connection, separation, and violence. Shinji wakes

to the sound of the waves next to Asuka, shown in Fig. 5. Specifically, a shot of their hands next to each other fills the screen, reinforcing this connection of creation to personal will, and the separation between individuals. We also see a shot of the cross Misato gave to Shinji, nailed to a post. This image places the ideal of continuing to live and love in the face of painful separation and trauma at the heart of the narrative nailed to a pillar in the new world, a symbol of the trauma that Humans continually endure.

Shinji and Asuka's final actions in the diegesis come as a surprise, and by viewing them as a brave reformation of antiquated ideals, it is clear that *Eva* is trying to undo our expectations, and our



*Fig. 51: Misato's cross nailed to a post*





*Fig. 52 & 53: Shinji chokes Asuka*

understanding of popular narrative. Shinji begins to choke Asuka again on the beach. Shinji tightens his grip, and instead of fighting back Asuka slowly raises her arm, and tenderly touches Shinji on the cheek in a moment of radical acceptance. Shinji looks absolutely shocked, starts crying, and stops choking her immediately. He collapses in sobs, and Asuka whispers “How disgusting”. The screen then cuts to black (1:20:24-1:21:59). This violence and the embrace that follows come as a surprise to the audience, and this hand-on-the-cheek moment is meant to be an embrace. When Shinji fulfills the separation of living beings, there is a moment of separation from his mother, in which she places her hand on his cheek in a similar fashion. Here, Asuka’s embrace of Shinji’s violent action becomes the connection that he was in search of, and this leaves the question open to whether or not Shinji has actually learned anything. This juxtaposition is incredibly powerful—these two moments are opposed in content, one is a literal separation from the mother Shinji never knew, and as such this moment is incredibly meaningful to him. While the other is a recognition of the separation within togetherness, Asuka placing her hand on Shinji’s cheek is an acceptance of Shinji, and it forces him to realize that it is still



*Fig. 54-58: Yui's hand caressing Shinji's cheek as they separate at the end of Human Instrumentality (above)  
Asuka's hand as Shinji chokes her (below)*

possible to feel connection despite this separation. Shinji is shocked by this realization and by Asuka's embrace, and it brings him to tears. It reminds him of his mother's final embrace, and this forces him to break down. Despite going through a radical journey of self-love and actualization, Shinji is still plagued by these violent tendencies due to his complex feelings of isolation. He must face himself and take responsibility for the decisions he has made that have hurt himself and others.

This affirmation is not unlike Derrida's discussion of the affirmation, which, he states the deconstruction *is*, in itself: ...deconstruction is "yes," is linked to the "yes," is an affirmation...I say "yes" as a starting point. But when you say "yes," you imply that in the next moment you will have to confirm the "yes" by a second "yes." In this moment, Shinji must say "yes," to himself, and Asuka does the act of continuing this "yes," by embracing him. This affirmation in the face of violence is extremely radical, and deconstructs our ideas of love as infinite, or

intangible. It also recognizes the darkness within love, and separation which makes love possible. David Newheiser details this separation that Derrida speaks of in his article “Eckhart, Derrida and the Gift of Love,” saying that Derrida,

goes so far as to suggest that the separation between oneself and another constitutes the possibility of a relational bond; he [Derrida] reflects, 'Why would love be only the ardent force of an attraction tending towards fusion, union, and identification? Why would the infinite distance which opens respect up...not open love up as well? Because respect requires the recognition that the beloved is other, love must resist the impulse to consume its object. Derrida's comment at one point that 'love is narcissistic' acknowledges that we are never free from the impulse to appropriate... But love, as gift, may nonetheless come - this is the possibility Derrida describes in relation to the divided desire of God (4).

Derrida's conception of love and separation here seems almost exactly in-line with *Eva's* philosophy of destruction. Through *Eva's* narrative we see this separation first-hand and are forced to recognize that the impulse to consume and become one with the beloved is a part of love which acts against itself. Through this separation, and pain, love comes to Shinji and Asuka, and it is a love of respect, and distance. It is also a love of being *fully* accepted. Asuka likely now knows what Shinji has done that he is so ashamed of (Fig. 37). Her simultaneous acceptance and judgement, in her final words: “How disgusting,” reaffirm the reality of this separation and violence while also actively attempting to complicate how it is necessarily linked to love and acceptance.

There is something to be noted as well about the parallel structure between these two scenes visually. Rei leans over Shinji in Human Instrumentality just as Shinji is shown leaning over Asuka. This parallel is profound and important—the state of complete connection and unity

is being directly compared to a state of separation and violence through the motifs of sexual embrace and violent embrace, which, for *Eva*, is all centered around the hands, and the actions the characters take with them.

This entire narrative winds up, as I stated in the beginning, with a deconstruction of the Edenic image. This is accomplished through the myriad deconstructions at play in *Eva*, that we have seen act in effect to give its audience

a contemporary mythos to follow in response to religious and biblical rhetoric of self-sacrifice and an ideal of unifying love. *Eva*'s story seems to bring us back, through the needle's eye, in an attempt to trace back these problematic ideas, and provide realistic and practical responses to them. A rhetoric of self-actualization is a powerful message for the twenty-first century. The reinforcement of this in the face of a plethora of traumas becomes a powerful message for our contemporary moment plagued by rising fear and ignorance. *Eva* attempts to act as the "new gospel," and the Good News for the new generation in this case is a narrative focused on loving the self, and realizing the capacity of the individual to create and *decide* one's own future through taking responsibility for one's own choices, despite the pain of separation which only seems to be growing more and more apparent.

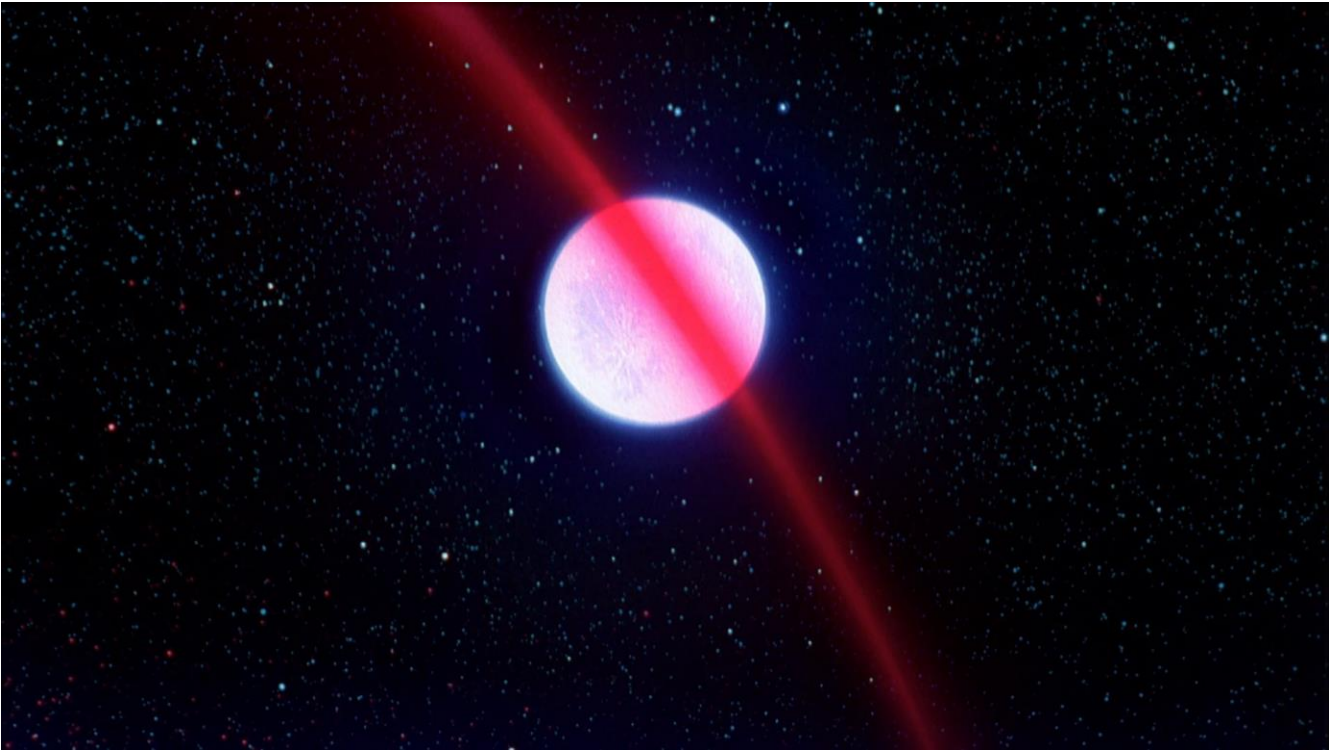


Fig. 59: Shinji's moments with Rei and Asuka

*Eva*'s ideas seem strangely prophetic and seem to preempt the current state of growing isolation, even prior to COVID-19 with the rapid increase of social media. *Eva*'s message for our age is one that radically and bravely attempts to upend, deconstruct, and recontextualize an understanding of Biblical narrative in a useful way. Shinji realizes he needs the separation as much as he needs others, and no amount of running away to a unified primordial state is going to solve that issue for him. *Eva* works to reaffirm the need for a spiritual connection, and yet traces this need along its faults to figure out what makes it tick and provide us with a reformed, gospel of deconstruction. This new gospel does not have as clear cut a message as "We love because He first loved us," but urges us to deconstruct this love, and get at the problematic and underrepresented parts of it, and to understand it more than we do (1 John 4:19). *Eva*'s strong and importantly brave position is not to presume that we simply *do* love, but to urge us *to* love, and to take responsibility for the learning. It is this gripping of responsibility with our own two hands that will change the world and make a difference for the future.

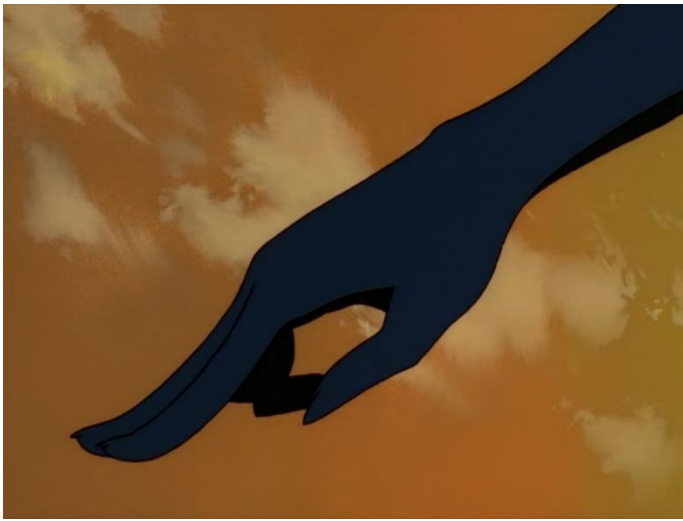
The moon is shown, shining on Shinji and Asuka in this last scene, and this is a final reminder of the love which acts to separate and traumatize, but which also provides the opportunity for such profound connection. *Eva* works to chart a message of Love that realistically reflects the destructive power it has. The message of *Eva* is a more complex love, but a love all the same, and the moon scarred red from the undoing of Human Instrumentality is something that will mark this separation forever. Shining on Shinji and Asuka it reminds us that they are both saying, "I love you" to each other here, in other words.





*Fig. 60: The moon stained red with blood sprayed from Shekinah/Rei's neck after the carnage of undoing Human Instrumentality*

*Appendix A. — Hand Imagery*



*Misato's hand from the opening sequence*



*Eva Unit-01's hand from the opening sequence*



*Shinji's head engulfed by the giant hand of an Eva in Episode 1*



*Close up (and extreme close up) of Shinji's hand pulling the trigger in the cockpit of Eva Unit-01, Episode 3*



*Eva Unit-01 wrestling with an Angel, Episode 3*



*Eva Unit-01's burned human-like hand, Episode 3*



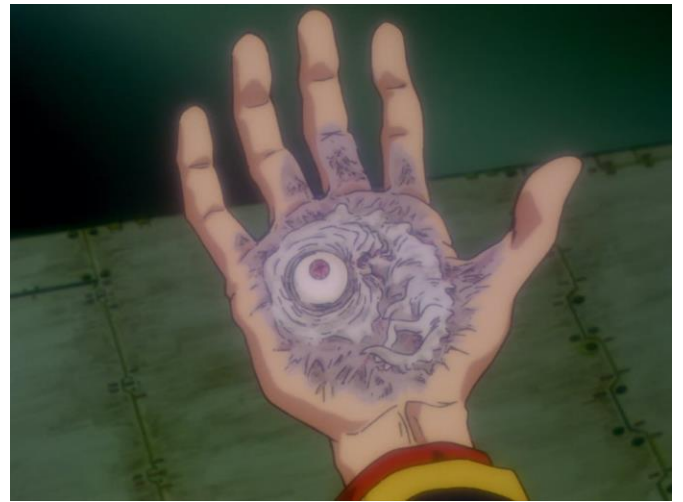
*Shinji's hands when he gives up piloting Eva in Episode 4*







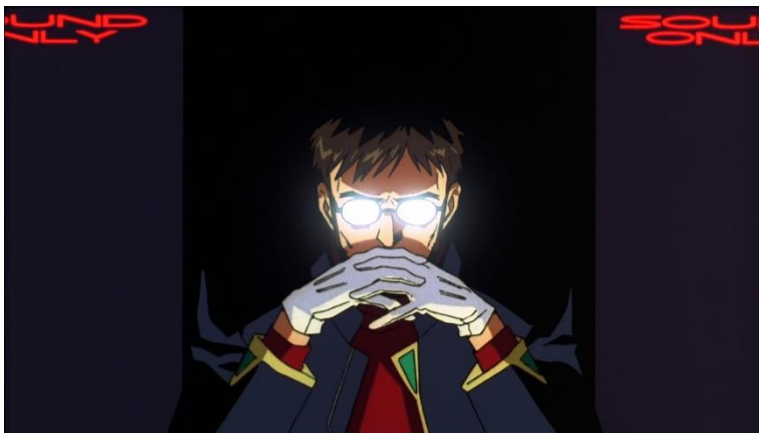
*Gendo's hand with glove off, possibly a symbol of vulnerability*



*Adam merged with Gendo's hand*



*Gendo's hand as he puts it inside Rei's chest*



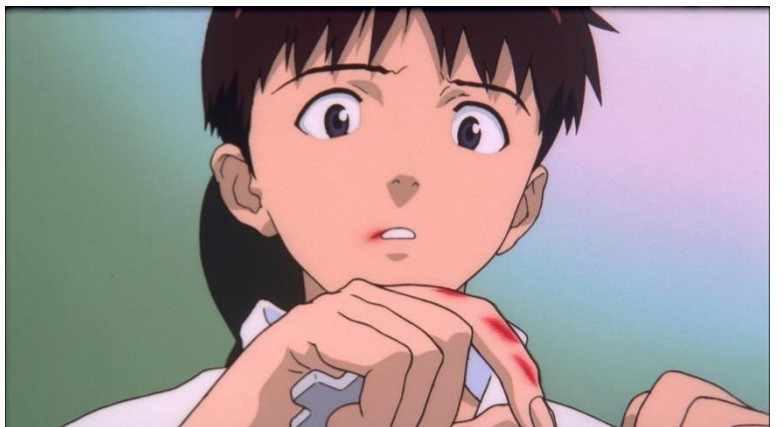
*Gendo's hands, often obscuring his mouth*



*Misato's hand on the phone when she rescues Shinji*



*Shinji looking at Misato's hands as she confronts him before Instrumentality*



*Shinji wipes blood from his mouth after Misato kisses him*



*"Thank You," Shinji says to Rei, as he disconnects from Instrumentality*



*Asuka reaches for survival and to fight back with one hand, while her Eva obeys, as she clutches her wound with the other hand.*



*. Shinji's Eva reaches out despite having no pilot within*



*Images of mutilated Eva hands (Asuka's), which cause Shinji to scream uncontrollably*

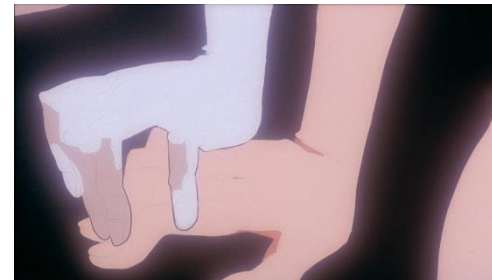




*An extreme close-up shot of Shinji's hands choking Asuka*



*The hand of the Eva reaches to protect Shinji (Though the ambiguity of this reach, and the perspective is interesting to note)*



*More images of hands from after Rei asks, "Then tell me, what is your heart for?" after asking about Shinji's hands. From left to right — Asuka's hands piloting the Eva, her passion; Misato's hands with a lover, and Shinji's hand being held by Kaworu's (a complex side character, who's representation is not unrelated to my aims in this paper, and yet for brevity's sake, have neglected to mention).*



*The Eva's hands punch an Angel's core*



*Asuka's hand clenches as Shinji chokes her on the beach*



*God-Rei's giant hand in the aftermath of Human Instrumentality*

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