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# Thematic Tension between Trauma and Triumph in Hideaki Anno's Neon Genesis Evangelion

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**Thematic Tension between Trauma and Triumph  
in Hideaki Anno's *Neon Genesis Evangelion***

by

Vanna Dejeu

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for Graduation from the  
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the commentary on humanity that is described throughout Hideaki Anno's *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Close examination of the patterns of behavior, speech, and respective traumas of the main characters in the series was utilized to decipher the regenerative themes presented through each character's ongoing struggle to overcome their psychological wounds. This thesis introduces ideas about what it means to be human and how one can bear the weight of such an existence. It is my greatest hope that this work influences individuals to reflect on their own experiences in an effort to become more at peace with themselves. By extension, I hope to increase the level of interest in Japanese animation by depicting the degree of intricacy of which this medium is capable.

## HISTORY OF ANIME

Japanese animation, or anime, is the product of combining the elements that govern centuries of different traditional Japanese art forms. The aesthetic and stylistic features that appear in anime can be identified in the artwork and theater of early Japan. Thus, anime is interpreted as the natural evolution in Japanese art that "...[draws] on all of Japan's historical, religious, and artistic traditions to create something uniquely suited to expressing the mood of late twentieth-century Japan" (Levi 20).

The Japanese art aesthetic found in modern anime can be traced back to the twelfth century. *Emakimono*, or simply *e-maki*, is horizontal picture scrolls that combined text and images to depict "...court life or historical events" (Odell 51). Drawn or painted onto hand scrolls made of paper or silk, the *e-maki* form of storytelling is some of the first examples of caricatured and expressive visuals. After a time of unrest caused by civil war and political strife, a secularized society emerged during the Edo period (1600-1868). Frederick Harris, a prolific artist and long-time Japan resident, stated that the urbanization of society that occurred during the late sixteenth century was due to a decline in the "...influence of the warrior samurai class and the rise of a class of merchants and artisans" (Harris 11). This period of peace led to the popularization of an alternate art form: *ukiyo-e*.

Translating to 'pictures of the floating world,' *ukiyo-e* images are carved into woodblocks, inked, and then stamped onto cloth or paper. While *ukiyo-e* originally functioned as poster advertisements, the paintings soon portrayed "...portraits of popular actors and beautiful women" among other depictions of the Edo lifestyle (Harris 14). The beauty of the prints combined with the ease of reproduction made this form of artwork

incredibly popular. Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc, British film critics and avid fans of anime, state that the design aesthetic of *ukiyo-e*: the colorful images, preference of symbolism over realism, and the "...distinct lack of perspective or shadow...with the main focus of the image off-centre" is sustained in modern day anime (Odell 66).

The Japanese theatrical aesthetic emerged in the sixteenth century alongside *ukiyo-e* paintings. *Kabuki*, a classical dance drama and *bunraku*, puppet theater, "...offered a wealth of stories from which live animated performances, accompanied by narrators and/or musicians [could be] created" (Odell 101). Much like the *ukiyo-e* prints, historians believe that the aesthetic of the Japanese theater influenced that of modern anime; the act of creating a performance using "Intricate costumes, elegant movements, powerful music, and scripts rich in imagery" is reworked in anime, as the medium "...also creates extraordinary visual and aural effects that are particular to its form" (Suan 34).

The combination of art and theater elements brought forth the closest relative of modern anime: *utsushi-e* or 'reflected pictures.' In the nineteenth century, the projector was introduced into Japanese culture where it was used to project images onto transparent paper. The rise of the *utsushi-e* "...as a precursor to true cartoons" and the introduction of Western animation into Japanese cinemas in 1909 is believed to have influenced the Japanese to transform their traditional art aesthetics into a new form (Clements 20). Intrigued by the cartoon films of their childhood, aspiring animators began scribbling their own ideas onto chalkboards. Due to the lack of funding, inadequate number of animators, and insufficient equipment, animation remained a hobby for many and individuals resorted to creating their films single-handedly.

Most artifacts of early Japanese animation were lost in the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 and the fire bombings of World War II; what survived is difficult to accurately date. The first professional animation is considered to be *The Story of Concierge Mukuzo Imokawa* by Shimokawa Oten in 1917, due to its theatrical screening. Animators Kitayama Seitaro and Kochi Junichi followed in suit by creating their own animated films, and the former established “...the first animation studio, Kitayama Eiga Seisakujo, in 1921” (Odell 119).

Expansion of the animation industry slowed in the 1930s and 1940s as Japan entered a period of war. The medium underwent a brief restructuring. Animation was no longer viewed as the task of a single individual, and it reemerged as an industrialized process. The refinement of equipment and the division of labor “...took animation from a painstaking, labor-intensive hobby to a business that could turn a profit” (Clements 38). However, the Japanese government tightened their grip on media, and the majority of anime produced during this period “...depicted heroes striving to accomplish tasks with honor and virtue” (Odell 137). The most notable work of the time was an animated propaganda film titled *Momotarou’s Sea Eagles*. Funded by the Japanese Naval Ministry, the film depicted a human Momotarou joining forces with various anthropomorphic animals, indicative of the Far Eastern races working together to fight against a common enemy. Modern day anime still depict characters “...facing off against wicked tyrants or evil space aliens—i.e. symbolically refighting World War II, only in a situation where Japan finally gets to be on the winning side” (Redmond 185).

The ‘god of manga,’ Osamu Tezuka, is “...largely responsible for the Japanese boom in comics after World War II, and the growth of the television industry” (McCarthy



8). There was a slight resurgence in the animation industry in the 1950s when Toei Doga, an animation studio formed in the previous decade, began producing animated films to combat the popularity of Disney and television series to accommodate the need for content on the million TV sets that were being used across Japan. However, it was not until Tezuka established Mushi Productions that the medium experienced significant growth.

Tezuka employed Mushi Productions to adapt his 1952 manga *Astro Boy*. The adaptation was a success, but Mushi Productions was soon plagued with financial difficulties. The studio followed a dangerous business model and was "...forced to invest vast amounts in advance for a product that was only sold piece-meal" (Clements 127). To cut down on production costs, the studio began stressing the integrity of the story over the animation quality and even turned to the adult industry to make ends meet, but the poor performance of their films turned little profit. Mushi Productions filed for bankruptcy in 1973, and though the studio collapsed, key members formed their own production companies of Sunrise and Madhouse, who would later "...produce some of the most popular and acclaimed anime of all time" (Odell 174).

Anime established a firm foothold in the 1970s. Independent media scholar, Dennis Redmond, claims that it was in this decade that "...anime [began] to develop its own unique array of forms" (183). In addition to the martial arts comedy and novel adaptations, most notable was the expansion of the science fiction genre due in part to "...the patently American automotive symbolism of the *Speed Racer* series of the late 1960s" (Redmond 184). The genre soon was filled with giant robot or 'mecha' series revolving around a protagonist piloting a giant robot to fight an enemy. Series within this

genre such as *Mazinger Z*, *Mobile Suit Gundam*, and *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* have become some “...of the most well-known anime both within Japan and internationally” (Suan 22). As the science fiction genre developed a huge fan following, it also gave way to the establishment of a particular studio in the mid-1980s that would go onto produce a very unique mecha series of their own.

## HISTORY OF GAINAX AND *NEON GENESIS EVANGELION*

Daicon Films, or what would later become the full-fledged studio of Gainax, started as a collection of “youthful fans who found work in the anime world” (Clements 172). University students Hideaki Anno, Takami Akai, Hiroyuki Yamaga, and Toshio Okada bonded over their interest in the science-fiction genre after fellow student Yasuhiro Takeda proposed the group create the opening animation sequence for a convention. Although the group had little experience with cell animation and no funds to procure proper equipment, a five and a half minute film was presented at Daicon III, the annual Japanese Science Fiction Convention in 1981. It revolved around a young school girl tasked to revive a wilted daikon radish, but to do this, she must evade attacks from aliens, giant robots, and mutant creatures, all of whom are staples in the science fiction genre.

Although rough in its production, the film was well received. Public demand persuaded Daicon Films to sell videos of the film with complementary illustrations and storyboards. Profits were invested into their return to the convention stage in 1983 for Daicon IV. This new animation featured the same girl as the prior iteration (although aged up and donning a costume reminiscent of the Playboy bunny, an early form of fanservice that panders to a sexually charged audience) as she transverses the galaxy combating several popular science fiction villains. Nods to Western entertainment such as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* were included alongside references to prominent Japanese series such as *Mobile Suit Gundam*, *Space Battleship Yamato*, and *Super Dimension Fortress*.

Soon after Daicon IV, several members of Daicon Films “[set] their sights on professional animation production” (Takeda 89). With two new recruits, Yoshiyuki

Sadamoto and Shinji Higuchi, Daicon Films renamed themselves Gainax and became an official animation studio on December 24, 1984. The studio's name was formed by adding an x to the end of the term *gaina* (translating to 'big' in Yonago dialect of the Tottori prefecture). Takeda stated the x was added "...to make the name look more like the name of an anime robot" (91).

In 1987, Gainax teamed up with Bandai, a Japanese toy and video game company, to create their first legitimate production: a film titled *Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honneamise*. The film documents the trials of a young astronaut as he participates in a controversial space program. While considered a classic, it achieved little commercial success. Despite being rendered virtually bankrupt after *Honneamise*, Gainax started production in 1988 on a six episode original video animation titled *Gunbuster!* The series focused on a young girl who enrolls in a space training academy after the Earth is targeted by insect-like aliens. The series performed well and the studio was able to expand. Gainax then began work on *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water*, a series based on the novel *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne. *Nadia* helped Gainax become a household name in Japan, though it was not until 1995 that the studio would gain its current reputation.

Hideaki Anno, a key animator and mechanical designer at Gainax, served as the director for both *Gunbuster!* and *Nadia*. Following the completion of both series, Anno ended up wasting his days due to "...his inability to mentally distance himself from the *Nadia* series even after the broadcast had ended" ("Personal Biography"). Anno attempted to work on several projects during the hiatus but nothing came to fruition. In 1993, Anno was approached by King Records representative Toshimichi Otsuki to

produce a television anime series about “something, anything” (“Personal Biography”). The seasoned director fell back on his science-fiction roots to create *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.

Takeda recalls that “Anno had been running on empty ever since *Nadia* finished, but *Evangelion* seemed to be just the thing to get him up and running again” (165). Anno channeled the frustration he felt while directing *Nadia* into his new series. Thus, the series functioned as response to the fans of *Nadia* whose “...intense erotic attachment to the character of Nadia, and the demand to stretch out the series” disgusted Anno (LaMarre 180). Anno created a series that strayed far from the expectation as it teased apart the common tropes of the mecha genre and critiqued fan behavior. What resulted from his efforts became “...one of the most highly acclaimed and controversial anime series of all time” as it examined the ugliness harbored in the human condition (Odell 737-753).

*Neon Genesis Evangelion* is a 26 episode, science-fiction mecha series set in a post-apocalyptic world. Prior to the start of the series, the world incurred a global catastrophe referred to as The Second Impact. Official documentation states that The Second Impact was the result of a meteorite crashing into the Earth. With the death of nearly two million individuals, the world plunged into a state of chaos; disputes arose between the nations over food and resource shortages, followed by civil wars and ethnic conflicts. However, humans demonstrated their resilience and started rebuilding society. With the improvement of technology and expansion of the scientific field, the effects of the catastrophe were almost entirely reversed after a mere 15 years.

The story takes place in Tokyo-3, where a fourteen year old Shinji Ikari is summoned to return to his father's side after being abandoned so many years ago. Shinji learns that while the world has almost been entirely restored, it is under the constant threat of angels. Angels are large creatures, differing in appearance and abilities, but united in wanting the destruction of mankind. Hidden from the public, the angels were the true cause behind The Second Impact, but reasons for their actions, much like where they originated from, are unknown. Shinji's father, Gendo Ikari, is the commander of NERV, a government facility whose mission is to defend the city from the angel attacks. The only means to combat the threats are Evangelion units: large anthropomorphic robots that can only be piloted by 14-year-old children. Under the direction of Major Misato Katsuragi, Shinji and the two other pilots: the quiet Rei Ayanami and the fiery Asuka Langley Soryu, must pilot the Evangelion units to protect the world from the angel's rampage.

The series initially proceeded on a "monster of the week" basis, where a new angel is presented and the children go through the process of discovering the means to defeat it by the episode's end. But the series drastically changed once it passed the halfway point. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* became noticeably darker as it revealed the stained pasts of the main characters. The lighthearted tone was stripped bare to expose the real intentions of the creator, intentions that have intrigued viewers ever since its television debut.

*Evangelion* "...became an overnight sensation, triggering a tsunami of Web shrines, fan clubs and commentary across the entire planet" (Redmond 184). The unique plot filled with a wide variety of character types, combined with the intense

psychological themes continues to captivate audiences years after the original Japanese television broadcast. Nick Verboon, columnist at *Unreality Magazine*, explains that *Neon Genesis Evangelion* “...has one of the most enduring worldwide cult franchises and passionate fanbases in all of geekdom...the most celebrated cast in anime ... [and] poster boy/protagonist Shinji is one of the most nuanced, popular, and relatable characters in anime history.” The personality of the main cast also created models that have been constantly refashioned into other characters. The stoic and obedient nature of Rei Ayanami can be seen in characters such as Yuki Nagato from *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* and Yin from *Darker than Black*.

Even today, *Evangelion* is still a prominent “...merchandise industry with hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. Images of its biomechanical Eva robots are on everything from coffee mugs to smartphones and even airplane wraps” (Hornyak). Two companion films were created following the end of the original series broadcast: *Death and Rebirth* and *The End of Evangelion*. While *Death and Rebirth* merely recapped the events of the series, *The End of Evangelion* sought to answer any of the lingering questions left by the end of the series. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* has also outlived its expiration date by reinventing itself into numerous spinoff manga series and video games. Anno and his new studio, Khara, are currently working on the final installment of the *Rebuild of Evangelion*, a tetralogy film series that is a reworking of the original story.

## IN THE CASE OF SHINJI IKARI

The Japanese youth Shinji Ikari serves as the main character of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. The series chronicles his successes and failures at maintaining the “future of mankind,” but Shinji is an atypical hero. He is devoid of any true desire to protect humanity; the action of playing the martyr and having someone depend on him merely “...satisfies [his] twisted little mind.”

Son of Gendo and Yui Ikari, Shinji lived out his days as a toddler in a disturbed household. His familial situation was a slight variation on the now common trope of an absentee father and sickly mother, a character background prevalent in Japanese animation. His father, Gendo, was a highly ranked official at Gehirn, a research organization funded by the United Nations to develop combat synthetic biomachines. The construction of these machines, referred to as Evangelions, was handled by his mother, Yui, an established bioengineer.

There was no father-son relationship to speak of. Throughout Shinji’s childhood, Gendo was aloof, a consequence of his awkward and maladjusted personality. Yui, on the other hand, cared deeply for her child “...as a benign Madonna” in the “...barely formed memory in Shinji’s mind” (Ortega 224). But this happiness was short-lived. Shinji witnessed the death of his mother during the construction of an Evangelion unit. Gendo, already unable to open his heart to his child, widened the gap between them by sending Shinji off to live with a teacher.

Director Hideaki Anno describes Shinji as a young boy who has, “...convinced himself that he is a completely unnecessary person, so much so that he cannot even commit suicide” (Burke and Morimoto). At the age of 3, Shinji lost his mother. His father



abandoned him the following year. A sense of guilt washed over him, and he blamed all of his misfortunes on his own worthlessness. It soon became synonymous with his very being. Self-depreciating commentary slipped into his every day conversations, and he spoke them with a light smile on his lips to signify his acceptance.

But instead of working to reshape his self-esteem, his hyper-awareness of how others perceive him pushes him into a state of paranoia. He started to crumble under its weight, living in fear of "...the Shinji Ikaris who exist in the minds of others"—namely the Shinjis who are considered burdens. To remedy this, he attempts to mold the Shinji others perceive. Blind obedience, as Shinji has come to believe, is the gateway into garnering the respect he needs to temporarily mask his feelings of worthlessness. As long as he can become someone others approve of, being treated kindly is enough of a "...justification for [his] continuing existence."

From as early as 5 years old, Shinji adopted a new personality. He started playing the cello, after a suggestion from his teacher. Shinji shows no apparent passion for the instrument, claiming to only have continued practicing because no one told him to stop. His obedient nature seeped into all aspects of life, identified by the small favors he does for all of the characters. On top of cooking and cleaning for his housemates, he jumps when someone asks for a beer or to make a small delivery.

But most interestingly is how far Shinji will go to meet the expectations of others. Shinji has never been timid about voicing his distaste for his father, stating flatly that his father betrayed him and he would never be able to trust him again. Yet when Gendo calls for Shinji after being separated for nearly 11 years, the boy returns without much hesitation aside from a few grumbles. While being escorted to the Evangelion docking

site, Shinji inquires of his escort if he will get to see his father; he then backtracks, stating, “What am I saying? He wouldn’t have sent me a letter unless he needed me for something,” vocalizing his disappointment that Gendo values what physical results Shinji can produce rather than the emotional support he can provide.

When Shinji learns that his duty is to pilot a machine and protect the city from angel threats, he is thrown aback. He argues that it is impossible even with instruction. Gendo dismisses him, but Shinji retracts his refusal when he realizes the replacement pilot, a teenage girl, is in no shape to fight. Despite resenting his father, Shinji assumes the exact role he was intended to fill. He assumes this role repeatedly and becomes a key component in every battle against the angels. Having only known Shinji for a short time, Ritsuko Akagi, the chief scientist at NERV, notices that Shinji “...simply does what he’s told to do.”

His commitment to piloting takes an extreme turn when it drives him to near suicide. In an early battle of the series, Shinji’s initial orders were to neutralize the angel. Misato, however, withdraws her commands when she realizes that civilian lives are compromised: two of Shinji’s classmates escaped from the underground shelter onto the battlefield, hoping to catch a glimpse of the monster in person. Defying NERV protocol, Misato orders Shinji to allow his friends to enter the cockpit and then immediately leave the premises. Shinji allows his friends to enter, but charges towards the angel instead, mimicking the actions of the kamikaze pilots of World War II who rammed their planes into enemy ships out of “...a complex mixture of the times they lived in, Japan’s ancient warrior tradition, societal pressure, economic necessity, and sheer desperation” (Powers).

Back at headquarters, Misato reprimands the young boy for being so reckless, asking why he felt it was necessary to defy her orders. Shinji responds with a despondent, “We won, didn’t we? Isn’t that enough?” Misato yells back at him, saying that while it may be easy to just go along with what others want, piloting an Evangelion with such an attitude only results in death. With eyes blank and a crazed smile on his lips, he sighs, “You know, I just don’t care anymore.” Through this, Shinji suggests that suicide is preferred to living with the shame he would incur by retreating, aligning with the Bushido code, a code that “...emphasized honor, courage, loyalty, self-sacrifice, unquestionable reverence for the emperor, and contempt for defeat” (Forquer).

According to Susan Napier, professor of the Japanese program at Tufts University, “What Shinji fears most turns out not to be the impersonal threat of the Angels but rather the disturbing workings of his own psyche and his dysfunctional family background” (426). To Shinji, confronting the angels is a far easier task than confronting the consequences of his childhood. The feelings of worthlessness derived from that period are rooted so deeply in his heart that nursing the wound with the kind words of others is the only solution. He stakes his security on how others interpret him, and he works to become someone who is valuable, someone who is “...worth enough to attract the attention of others.”

Shinji states that piloting is not “...something that comes naturally to him.” Piloting is some dangerous, foreign activity to him. He suffers whenever he enters the machine, whimpers whenever he has been asked to fight. Protecting the entirety of mankind is not something he wants to carry on his shoulders. He protests yet continues to pilot. “They respect me when I pilot the Eva,” he states, “They respect this totally

worthless being.” Shinji gets into the robot repeatedly not only because he believes it is the only means of gaining the good graces of others, but because he “...acknowledges that he feels ‘worthless’ unless joined with the Eva” (Napier 426). He returns for the sake of the words that are enough to convince him to continue living, even if it means becoming the pilot of Evangelion Unit 01.

## IN THE CASE OF REI AYANAMI

Rei Ayanami is one of Shinji's colleagues, a girl with pale skin, blue hair, and red eyes. Her personality bears some resemblance to Shinji's, but her beliefs about life and her place within the system stem from different circumstances.

Rei walks along a path of nihilism because, unlike her comrades, she is not truly human. She is a creation of Gendo Ikari, a replaceable puppet, cloned from the remains of his deceased wife. Interpreting her multiplicity as proof that she was only ever meant to be temporary, Rei relinquishes anything unrelated to her immediate responsibilities. She propels herself through life floating from one order to the next, admitting that she pilots simply "...because I'm bonded to it. I have nothing else." Director Anno describes Rei as a "very sad girl," who does not value herself very highly; she hurts herself and denies herself even the smallest human comforts (Burke and Morimoto).

To Rei, home is a partially demolished apartment complex. Though her room is left intact, her living quarters are horribly rundown. The walls are bare, the lighting is dim, and the scuffed up floors are covered with trash and used bandages. Blood stains cover the furniture. Her dresser is filled with white undergarments, but her school uniform is the only outfit to her name. She has only one personal possession of her own, a pair of broken glasses that once belonged to Gendo. The door to her apartment is left unlocked.

In comparison to the other child pilots, Rei has an almost robotic personality. Unless spoken to, she rarely engages in her own conversations, responding to questions with automated brevity. Her emotions are hidden underneath an apathetic expression. To demonstrate just how far Rei is displaced from her emotions, (though it is an equally

cheap attempt to sexually gratify the audience), Shinji pays a visit to her apartment just as she steps out of the shower. Absurdity ensues as Shinji stumbles on both an apology for intruding and on top of Rei. Against Shinji's flustered reaction, Rei is unnervingly calm, simply asking, "Would you get off?" She gets up from the floor as if nothing happened, silently dresses, and leaves while Shinji stammers through another apology.

The relationships that Rei has with others are born out of necessity. Rei is forced to interact with NERV personnel because of her status as a pilot, but the technicians hardly have much to say about her aside from "She's a nice girl." She attends school for appearance's sake but makes no effort to interact with people her age. Instead Rei distances herself from others physically or by burying her nose in a book. Her classmates have deemed her unapproachable, describing her personality as "lousy". When someone does extend a hand of friendship, she brushes the offer aside with "If I am ordered to, I will do it."

Rei's nihilism pushes her to disregard her own wellbeing. Because no two angels are identical, defending the city from their attacks is difficult. In most circumstances, the proposed means of attack only has a small success rate. But even with only one in one thousandth chance, Rei steps into the cockpit without reservation. She subjects herself to the most hazardous situations and without consideration for her health. When Gendo orders that Rei must pilot in Shinji's stead after his initial refusal, she rises from her hospital bed without objection. When Shinji is left defenseless in battle, she jumps in front of his unit to act as his physical shield. Death possesses little meaning to her because even if she dies, "There is another," alluding to the universal and tragic sense of the disposable soldier.

Christophe Thouny, professor at The University of Tokyo, describes Rei as "...an enigmatic character, embodying the two polarities of the modern social subject: the isolated, fragmented, and artificial self...and the all-encompassing, whole, and natural self" (120). Rei is a replaceable clone made from the remains of Gendo's wife. Because of this, she interprets her human appearance as merely that: a vehicle that allows her to carry out Gendo's orders without raising suspicion. As she says about herself, "You are an empty shell with a false soul...just an object pretending to be human."

Rei therefore believes she has no business indulging human concerns because her humanity is a disguise. Ensuring her wellbeing or cultivating relationships are elements of life that Rei cannot value. Her ostensible existence is expected to be short-lived, so making her life even the slightest bit more bearable is unnecessary. She thinks of herself as cannon fodder, merely expendable material for the battles against the angels. Her nihilistic viewpoint fosters a desire "...to return to nothing," causing her to actively pray for the day when Gendo will find her useless and abandon her.

Towards the end of the series, a colleague yells to Rei, "You are [a doll]! You do anything you're ordered to, don't you?! You'd kill yourself if your commander told you to, wouldn't you?!" She simply replies with "Of course."

## IN THE CASE OF ASUKA LANGLEY SORYU

The final pilot is Asuka Langley Soryu, a spirited girl of German, American, and Japanese heritage. She suffered from circumstances almost identical to Shinji but serves as his complete foil. Her mother, Kyoko, was a researcher and helped with the development of Evangelion units in Germany. Kyoko became mentally unstable after an accident with the unit, and she was forcibly institutionalized.

Asuka watched her father abandon her mother for another woman. She watched her mother fall victim to her loneliness and progressively lose touch with reality. Kyoko was allowed to have a doll by her bedside, but she soon began to mistake the stuffed companion for her daughter. Kyoko constantly cooed into the doll, “Your papa hates your mama. He doesn’t need me anymore...so let’s die together, because he doesn’t want us. He didn’t need me at all and he doesn’t want you either, Asuka.” Asuka walked in one day and found that her mother had committed suicide, her limp body hanging beside the doll.

The image of her mother’s double suicide with the doll continues to haunt Asuka, lending to her feelings of worthlessness. Asuka believed if she were to become as unnecessary as her mother, she would face abandonment from her peers and later death. In order to evade the fate she so feared, Asuka validates her ongoing existence by directing the attention of others to her. Her authoritative and outspoken personality functions as a means to tout her superiority and convince others of her value.

Seconds into her introduction, Asuka reveals that she is the center of attention and is not shy about using the opportunity to her advantage. While greeting Misato, Asuka makes sure that aside from her accomplishments she mentions that she’s “...not only



getting taller, [her] figure's filled out as well." She then leaves with Shinji in tow, intending to introduce him to her Evangelion unit. Standing atop the machine with a smirk on her face, she gloats, "Unit 00 and Unit 01 were the prototypes and test type respectively...However, Unit 02 is a little different. My Unit 02 is the world's first real Evangelion created for actual combat conditions. It's the final product model," making it known that even her possessions are a notch above the rest.

Although her beauty and possessions invoke some feelings of superiority within Asuka, it is not enough to guarantee the integrity of her life. She turns to piloting to assert her value and "...turns out to be even more needy than Shinji in terms of her relationship with the EVA" (Napier 426). Asuka does not want to be seen as just another pilot. Unlike Rei, Asuka constantly fights against the idea of the disposable soldier. She uses her accomplishments and battle prowess to convince the world that her life is one worth sustaining.

Asuka walks onto the battlefield with her Evangelion boasting, "Get ready for an amazing display of piloting!" Asuka has little reservation about stepping into the pilot seat. She takes the lead role in missions, voicing her disapproval whenever her superiors refuse to let her "...handle it solo." In one episode, NERV headquarters suffers a massive power outage just as an angel arrives in the city. The three pilots must find a way to infiltrate the facility and defeat the angel with limited assistance from NERV personnel. Because she has the "best qualifications," Asuka declares herself the group leader. She takes charge in guiding the trio through headquarters and in the angel fight. In her daring plan to defeat the angel, Asuka assumes the position with the most risk. When Shinji asks

how she could do something so dangerous, she smirks as she says, “That’s why I’m doing it.”

Throughout the narrative, Asuka is quick to insult others. She berates colleagues for their behavior, yelling at Shinji for being spineless and overly apologetic, and running down Rei for her emotionless and robotic demeanor. Moreover, she readily diminishes the efforts of others, even more so if they rival her own. In preparing for a duel mission with Shinji, she claims that the reason training is not going well is because she “...could never sink down to the level this animated turnip lives at!”

Her dependence on the attention of others becomes detrimental when it causes her to become overly critical of her performance. Whenever Asuka is proven to be incapable, she lashes out. During a synchronization test with the Evangelion units, Shinji was the most compatible with his unit. She exerts her frustration by kicking in a locker door and screaming to Rei, “It’s not just that I lost. It’s that he beat us so easily!” While this semblance of a competition does motivate Asuka in the beginning, it wears down on her when others are shown to be more competent pilots. By the end of the series, Asuka falls completely off her pedestal, screaming, “But most of all, I hate myself! I hate this! I can’t take it anymore! Why do I have to do this?! Why me?!”

When Shinji asks Asuka why she pilots, she immediately replies with, “To show the world how great I am, of course.” Shinji presses on, wondering if she uses it as a platform to prove she exists, and Asuka agrees that it is something along those lines. Because of what took place in her childhood, Asuka was convinced that unless she could prove her worth, death was the consequence. This brought forth her most identifiable trait: her inflated sense of self. Whether commenting on her popularity at school or

competence as a pilot, Asuka ensures that she makes her importance known, drowning her insecurities underneath a thin veil of confidence.

## IN THE CASE OF MISATO KATSURAGI

The 29-year-old NERV major, Misato Katsuragi, carries herself as a free spirit—late to meetings, stealing car batteries to restart her own, and getting hopelessly lost in her workplace—she defies what is expected of a high ranking military officer. She is crude, her jokes are vulgar, and she uses her sexuality for politically and physically satisfying ends. Shinji describes her as lazy and sloppy, with a strict instant food diet and a fridge full of nothing but “...ice, snacks, and 50 gallons of beer.” Yet no character in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* has a greater dedication to saving mankind; she proposes even the riskiest of plans to defeat the angels because, as she says, “Miracles aren’t something that just happen. They’re something that people make happen.”

Deeper insight into her character, however, comes from her initial conversation with Shinji. While escorting Shinji to NERV headquarters, the two engage in small talk. Shinji vocalizes his dissatisfaction when the topic of Gendo arises to which Misato rather inappropriately responds, “Sounds like you don’t get along with your dad. Ah, you sound just like me.”

Misato lived out her childhood unable to understand her father, Dr. Katsuragi, an established researcher. He was dedicated to his work, adhering to the Japanese societal expectations “...that a man will devote himself very whole-heartedly to his job and...not go just nine-to-five” (Bestor and Hardacre). Because of this lifestyle, his family soon became an inconvenience. His frequent absence led to the dissolution of his marriage, and Misato took comfort in the fact that her parent’s pitiful relationship was coming to an end. But for whatever the reason, Misato left open a means of communication with her father, joining him on an expedition to Antarctica when she was 12 years old. The

expedition team walked head-first into The Second Impact, the gigantic explosion that drove humanity to near extinction. Misato was the only survivor, as her wounded father carried her to an escape pod. She awoke in time to watch her father get swept away by the blast.

Although Misato considered her father a coward who sought refuge in his work because he could not handle his family, he saved her life. Having the man she despised sacrifice his life for her own left Misato confused and with a heart seething for revenge against the angels. Misato became convinced that men always "...escape to their jobs, their own world, and leave me behind. They always leave me behind."

She therefore shies away from commitment and intimacy, becoming a woman who "...lives life so lightly as to barely allow the possibility of a human touch. She protects herself by having surface level relationships, and running away" (Anno, Burke, and Morimoto). Her cheerful personality serves as an interactive disguise and a source of protection, a direct depiction of the Japanese societal tendency to form "...sort of a shell" to interact with those on the inside in one manner and those on the outside "...in a more formal, more distant, perhaps more hierarchical way" (Bestor and Hardacre). Misato prevents herself from falling into the trappings of her childhood by building the most superficial relationships. She purposefully forms an alternate version of herself that she recognizes is not the real her, but merely "...the 'me' who's performing a role in order to be appreciated."

While attending college, Misato was involved with a man named Ryoji Kaji. Kaji was a handsome man, although a bit sloppy, and infatuation between the two arose instantaneously. Their relationship quickly became physical; Misato missed a number of

lectures because she "...spent the whole week having sex with her boyfriend." But Misato always maintained a delicate distance from Kaji. Family names were the only way they referred to each other. The time they spent together was focused on the bedroom. Misato soon ended the relationship on the grounds that she saw too much of her father in her lover.

Misato is forced to come to terms with her feelings for Kaji when he reintroduces himself into her life at NERV. Still interested, Kaji tries to reconnect with Misato. She tells Kaji, "There's nothing between us anymore," though he sees longing in her eyes. Despite loving him, Misato's past renders her emotionally stunted. Opening up herself to another individual is too difficult a task, so she represses her emotions. As Kaji explained, "No reason was required to begin our love, but you needed a reason for ending it." Misato recalled she was so afraid of her love for Kaji even though it was a source of happiness; she admits, "That's why I hated it. That's why I left. That's why I ran away."

Misato also sustains half-hearted relationships with the young pilots. The respect Misato has towards life forces her to ensure their safety even when her colleagues have abandoned them. Her actions consistently place the wellbeing of the pilots ahead of the mission, contradicting the belief Japanese soldiers must "...win, die by the hands of the enemy, or commit suicide" (Forquer). Outside of NERV, Misato fully intends on becoming a confidant and mother figure to Shinji and Asuka. She welcomes both into her home, stressing that they should take advantage of everything in it. Misato spends her mornings with Shinji and Asuka at the kitchen table. She playfully teases them, relies on them for little favors, and rewards them for their hard work with the Evangelions. But her dedication to these children ends there.

The NERV officer is unable to bridge the gap between fun guardian and supportive mother figure. Her remedies for coping with traumatic events are to bury them, something that she forces Shinji to do several times over. After Shinji's traumatic first experience in the Evangelion, she immediately averts his attention to his living situation. Misato lightens the mood by giving him a warm welcome into her home. The topic of his experiences does not arise, because Misato is fearful of how much of herself she would disclose in the few moments it would take to sincerely inquire how the young pilot is doing. Her words are for appearance's sake. She merely tells Shinji that he should be proud of his piloting because he is doing "...something very good and very noble" but makes no attempt to calm his inner turmoil.

Any attempt she does make to console Shinji resorts to her preferred method of comfort. Rei seemingly sacrifices herself for Shinji's sake in one of the final angel missions, after which Shinji becomes morbidly depressed. Retreating to his room for days on end, Misato enters and sits on the bed with him, reaching out to hold his hand. Although it was sanitized for the English dub, Misato frightens Shinji in the original Japanese when she says, "This is just about all I can do for you" implying her intention to sleep with him. A similar situation occurs during the *The End of Evangelion* where Misato motivates a despondent Shinji to continue living with a kiss, whispering afterwards, "That was a grown-up kiss. We'll do the rest when you get back, okay?" Through this, Misato simultaneously illustrates her dependence on physical intimacy and how little of her emotional side she is willing to divulge.

The inclusion of Misato, an adult, into the narrative serves two purposes. As she is still living with the consequences of her childhood trauma, she shows that time cannot

heal all wounds. Compared to the children, Misato depicts a lifestyle unlike what was already seen. Whereas Shinji and Asuka staked their lives on emotional support, Misato rejects such support in favor of physical. She builds the most fragile connections with others, automatically assuming relationships can only end in the same way it had with her father. She avoids the situations that can render her vulnerable, hiding behind a cheerful façade. “I just turned tail and ran,” she admitted, acknowledging that her actions are “...just an escape from the real world and my father.”



## IN THE CASE OF GENDO IKARI

Gendo Ikari, the ruthless commander of the semi-militaristic NERV (restructured from the remains of Gehirn), was once known as the lowly scientist, Gendo Rokubungi. Scientific circles were less than pleased with his involvement in the community, and his ill-behaved personality made him the target of the most unsavory rumors. Troublesome enough to engage in drunken bar fights and tactless enough to wear his injuries with pride, Gendo was viewed as nothing more than “a rogue bull on a short tether.”

Despite his transgressions against the scientific community, the young researcher Yui Ikari took an interest in the wild man. The two started dating, and Yui silenced all preconceived notions of Gendo stating, “He’s really very nice. It’s just that nobody really knows him quite the way I do,” urging others to try and do the same. Gendo assumed Yui’s name when they married, and worked in their respective fields at Gehirn while raising their newborn son.

When Yui died, Gendo lost his only source of love. For so much of his life, Gendo’s unsettling personality only fostered resentment in others. Uncharacteristically, Gendo grieved for an entire week after his wife’s passing, and he returned to Gehirn as someone who had “changed completely.” The contemptuous, untamed Gendo became a thing of the past and what remained was a man who closed off his entire heart to others.

Gruff and unfriendly are two words that immediately come to mind when thinking of Gendo. He maintains distant from others, because his intimidating physicality is enough to prevent most from approaching. A noticeable scowl is permanently etched onto his face. Behind the glare of his glasses, his eyes are cast in the same downwards manner. His unzipped jacket hints of disrespect towards his superiors, but his outfit is

notably that of a military commander. Gendo's words are unnecessarily blunt and he often speaks without the slightest hint of sympathy. He refers to his pilots as "spares," and claims that they can fight so long as they're "...not dead yet."

The warped relationships Gendo sustains with his peers is disconcerting. In a profession that is so dependent on interacting with others, Gendo's emotionally distant personality only serves to hurt. When the organization still operated under the name Gehirn, one of the major bioengineers was Naoko Akagi. She was attracted to her superior officer but never acted on her desires because of his marriage to Yui. But after Yui's death, Naoko pursued Gendo and he made no effort to reject her advances. Gendo, however, had no genuine feelings for the engineer, viewing her as nothing more than a colleague who could be used to do his bidding. When Rei reveals to her that Gendo thought of her as an old hag who outlived her usefulness, she assaults the young girl and then commits suicide.

Naoko's daughter, Ritsuko Akagi, also fell for Gendo and was used by him in the same manner as her mother. Towards the end of the series, she attempts to rebel against him to which Gendo imprisons her without hesitation. When Gendo inquires she acted against him, Ritsuko cries "I'm not happy anymore. Not even when you make love to me. Do whatever you want with me! It's never stopped you before. You had no hopes or expectations of me to start with! I was nothing!" Gendo merely says that she disappoints him and then quietly exits her jail cell. Gendo's willingness to use a mother and daughter in the same manner only exemplifies his cruelty; it illustrates that he has no sympathy for the daughter whose mother he drove to suicide and no respect for the mother with whom he was once involved.

Most disturbing is how Gendo treats his own son, Shinji. He is well aware of how Shinji feels about him and of how desperate his son is for acceptance. But the commander does not exhibit any sense of favoritism. Gendo merely keeps Shinji close, luring him in with the idea he is finally ready to accept his son back into his life. Although Shinji responds to his father's request to come to Tokyo-3, he asks Gendo for the exact reasons behind the invitation. Gendo tells Shinji that his reasons for calling him to the city are obvious. Gendo tells his son that it was because he finally found a use for him, reminiscent of the belief that the "...duties and obligations...go from father to son" (Bestor and Hardacre). He then gives Shinji the ultimatum to pilot or immediately leave the premises.

Even after submitting to his father's orders, Shinji makes attempts to rekindle their relationship. However Gendo does not allow Shinji to live with him in the city. He speaks to Shinji only out of necessity, either with orders or reprimanding him for his behavior. Gendo pays little mind to his son's social or academic life; when Shinji tried to invite Gendo to a school function, he responded, "I've delegated all of that to Katsuragi. Don't bother me with such nonsense anymore," and then orders the receptionist to stop forwarding calls.

Gendo's mistreatment intensifies whenever he forces Shinji into the Evangelion to pilot. Shinji has stated multiple times that he does not want to pilot, but his complaints fall on deaf ears. In one instance, Gendo forces Shinji to commit heinous acts while in the pilot seat. Towards the end of the series, one of the angels infects a test-type Evangelion unit. Gendo takes command of the battle and orders Shinji to annihilate the unit, pilot and all, but Shinji shouts his disapproval because another human is piloting on the other side.

He found his son's obstinance unacceptable, similar to the Japanese leaders during WWII who "...expected their soldiers...to perform to their absolute limits daily...[considering] anything short of total and unselfish dedication to the Emperor a disgrace" (Forquer).

Gendo orders that the control of Shinji's unit be switched to autopilot. Under this, Shinji's Evangelion reawakened and started brutally attacking the infected unit. Shinji's horrified screams filled NERV headquarters, begging his father to "Stop this goddamn thing for God's sake! Please, please, just stop it! Make it stop, dear God, make it stop!" Gendo was unflinching, watching the scene against the cries of his son.

Unlike the other characters of the series, Gendo's reason for his behavior is only explained in the companion film, *The End of Evangelion*. He speaks to an image of Yui that appears before him: "When Shinji is near me, all I ever do is cause him pain. I thought it was better when I did nothing at all...I didn't believe that anyone could love me. I never deserved to be loved." The loss of Yui further isolated Gendo from those considered his peers. He seldom engages himself with others, and what little interactions he does participate in only hurts others. In his early life, Gendo always stated, "I'm not used to being liked...but I'm quite familiar with hatred." But Yui was a curious existence for Gendo, because she loved him unconditionally. Yui's love for him was not something Gendo expected, and until her passing, he never realized how much he longed for it.

## CONCLUSION

The events of one's past influences an individual's self-perception, beliefs, and behavior. Hideaki Anno and his collaborators depicted this notion well throughout *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, a series where a cast of characters attempt to make peace with both themselves and a post-apocalyptic world.

Due to their respective trauma, the characters devised means to overcome the shortcomings they had come to believe they possessed. Shinji interpreted his familial situation as a result of his worthlessness, so he became dependent on the praises of others to continue living. Rei's perception of herself as a mere scientific achievement forced her to view the world in a nihilistic light, and she did nothing more than float on the orders of her superiors. After witnessing her mother's suicide, Asuka found value only in her superiority over others and hid her insecurities underneath an assertive personality. Misato became weary of relationships after falling out with her father, finding solace in superficial intimacy. Gendo viewed the death of his wife as a sign that he was unfit for love, and forcibly distanced himself from those around him, most notably, his son, Shinji.

Although the circumstances and methods were different, the series makes note that all were united in wanting others to fill and complete them. Ritsuko sums up this condition when she states that in humans, "There is an emptiness at the very core of our souls. A fundamental incompleteness that has haunted all beings since the very first thought... We have sought to escape from this void and the fear it causes, and all of man's accomplishments were made in the hopes of filling it." Humanity is comprised of individuals who have been harmed by their past and do whatever possible to seek an escape.

But *Neon Genesis Evangelion* did not justify the avenues the characters took to overcome their trauma, believing the coping mechanisms to be just another form of hatred towards oneself, just another way "...punish yourself further." The series instead explained that looking towards others for fulfillment is a temporary escape from ones troubles, a Band-Aid used to cover a festering wound. The amount of praise Shinji received never overtook the harm that came to his ego from his piloting duties and the aggressive personalities of his comrades. Rei believed her existence had no meaning, and thus illustrated the danger associated with living a nihilistic lifestyle. Asuka had her confidence shaken whenever she attempted to display her superiority, and slowly realized she could never measure up to her fellow pilots. Misato's intimacy issues prevented her from truly becoming the mother the pilots needed and caused her to lose the love of her life. Gendo ironically did the same damage to his son by pushing him away as he believed he would have by bringing him close.

Humans are capable of hurting each other much more deeply when they are brought closer together, and "...part of growing up means finding a way to interact with others while distancing pain." The myriad of methods used to overcome their trauma all lead to the character's downfall. This harkens back to a statement made by Shinji's subconscious as it tells him, "No one can justify their existence by linking their happiest moments into a kind of rosary." In a world where everyone is trying to repair themselves, other humans cannot provide one with the salvation they desire.

"If you want real happiness," Asuka's voice rings through Shinji's ears, "you've got to find it for yourself, not wait for someone to give it to you." Instead of allowing oneself to be defined by their past and crippled by the perceptions of others, *Neon*

*Genesis Evangelion* believes happiness must be taken into one's hands through a conscious effort to change one's point of view. Only by reinterpreting oneself can inner peace truly be achieved; using others to fill the holes within oneself is a hollow endeavor, because as the voice of Misato explains to Shinji, "The only one who can take care of you and understand you is you, yourself." It is purely wishful thinking to believe that someone else can both understand and know the remedy for another's pain.

To illustrate this, Anno and his collaborators ended the series in an unexpected manner. Instead of recounting the events following the death of the last angel, the two final episodes of the series take place entirely in psyches of the characters where "...both characters and viewers are left with no recourse but to confront their/our own flawed humanity in all its desperation and insecurities" (Napier 428). Shinji superimposes a different reality onto the original in a segment of the episode. This reality is devoid of angels, allowing Shinji to live his days as a normal middle school student. Shinji is reinvented into a slightly vulgar adolescent male. He lives with both his parents; his mother cooks breakfast as his father reads the newspaper at the dining room table. Asuka still maintains her fierce attitude, but is Shinji's childhood friend who has a not so subtle crush on the boy. Rei's personality is completely different, as she appears in Shinji's life as the lively transfer student. Misato plays the role of the beautiful, albeit unorthodox, homeroom teacher.

When the sequence comes to an end, Shinji says, "I see. So this is another possibility. Another possible reality. This current myself is the same way. It's not the true myself." In the alternate world, Shinji is a well-adjusted young boy who smiles from the

bottom of his heart. He has family and friends with whom he can be his genuine self, unlike in his original reality.

The scene then cuts to Shinji sitting in the center of a dimly lit auditorium, a metaphor for the depths of his subconscious. Figments of his fellow cast members take turns to explain how delicate the truth is. They tout the importance of perspective claiming, "...there's only one truth that is your truth. That's the one that's formed from whatever point of view that you chose to view it from." The characters explain that as easily as the rain can evoke feelings of sadness, a different perspective can allow the rain to bring joy. As one of the character echoes, "Your truth can be changed simply by the way you accept it. That's how fragile the truth for a human is."

*Neon Genesis Evangelion* teaches that "...value is something you have to find yourself." Throughout the series, the characters waited for others to bring them salvation. The characters wanted a sense of meaning in their life, and they believed it could only be achieved through the interactions they shared with others. This, however, only brought them to their demise. But if one takes the time to reshape their self-perception, it can deliver the peace they desire. The Shinji who believes himself to be cowardly and weak is only so, as Misato's voice tells him, "...only if you think you are, but if you know yourself, you can take care of yourself." When Shinji questions whether those around him hate him, Asuka cries, "What are you? Stupid? Haven't you realized it's all in your imagination, you mega dork."

As Shinji digests these words, he reasons, "I hate myself. But, maybe, maybe I could love myself. Maybe, my life can have a greater value. That's right! I am no more or less than myself. I am me! I want to be myself! I want to continue existing in this world!"



My life is worth living here!” The confined auditorium in which Shinji sat cracks with every word he speaks, signifying Shinji freeing himself from his narrow-minded views. When he agrees to continue living despite harboring animosity for himself, his surroundings are completely demolished by a small gust of wind. Shinji is then seen standing on top of a blue world while his friends, family, and colleagues applaud and congratulate him on his revelation. It may be difficult to convince oneself of their value, but it is the only solution *Neon Genesis Evangelion* deems worthy enough to solve the universal issue of overcoming the trauma of one’s past.

## REFLECTION

Critic opinion of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is divided. Some praise the series for its realistic depiction of adolescence, illustrating just how physically and psychologically scarring the action of piloting a gigantic robot for the sake of humanity can be. Others believe that the work does not quite measure up to its popularity, believing that only those who are same age as the pilots can truly resonate with the ideals presented, many of which have been better elaborated in subsequent works.

But reasons for my attachment are personal. It was the summer of 2012 when I first watched *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. In the sweltering heat, I lay in a pile on the floor and started up the series that I saw was still circulating the internet. I watched episode after episode, my heart crying out for the children that I wanted to adopt and the women in whom I saw myself. My heart was moved by this 26-episode series. I knew the ideas presented in the series were simple, almost obvious, but it was still not something my 18-year-old brain understood. For as intelligent as I believed myself to be, there was a mental immaturity I had not yet overcome.

*Evangelion* made me realize the degree to which my personality is a fabrication. Because of my childhood, a childhood where physical and emotional abuse was ever present, my toddler brain thought it was a result of me being a ‘bad girl.’ I grew up with the idea that I needed to become the kindest, smartest, and most selfless person; if I could prove myself to be a ‘good girl,’ there may be something good lying in wait in my future.

Completing high school would have been a testament of overcoming my past, but I ended up failing on several accounts. I was one grade shy of achieving valedictorian status. The university I would attend in the fall was not my first choice, nor my second.

Misunderstandings on my part forced me to distance myself from my friends, and most were more than happy to oblige. My family dissolved completely, and there was little incentive to salvage whatever remained. The intelligent, kind, and dedicated person I cultivated myself into was not good enough. My past had a grip on my destiny; I truly was undeserving of anything good.

Had I known that my expectations were born out of a desire for people to think of me as a good person, I would have not been so harsh on myself for my failures. Had I known that humans use whatever means to protect their hearts, I would have been more compassionate towards others and saved some of my friendships. And had I known that my past and my worth were unrelated, there would have been less self-hatred running through my veins. But these points are neither here nor there anymore.

*Neon Genesis Evangelion* is important to me because of how it opened my eyes. I became more forgiving of my own mistakes and became more understanding and compassionate towards others. I can still identify facets of my personality that have been changed by my past, but I can work on those areas to start living for my own satisfaction. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* gave me a sense of peace and let me see myself for what I really am: a human who is free from her past and capable of changing for the better.

As I enter another critical point in my life, I find myself coming back to the series for more guidance. I hope to you, the reader who might be suffering from similar experiences, that you found comfort in my writing and learned something new. And I hope that you search for something to alleviate your stress, however small it may be. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* may just be an anime series about a young boy piloting a robot, but anything that can induce a small change within yourself is worthwhile.

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