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*“PLEASE DON’T STOP BEING MY MOTHER!”: ATTACHMENT THEORY AND IDENTITY
FORMATION IN KURT VONNEGUT’S *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE* AND HIDEAKI
ANNO’S *NEON GENESIS EVANGELION**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

“PLEASE DON’T STOP BEING MY MOTHER:” ATTACHMENT THEORY AND
IDENTITY FORMATION IN KURT VONNEGUT’S *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE* AND
HIDEAKI ANNO’S *NEON GENESIS EVANGELION*

BY: FRANCISCO REYES

This thesis includes an exploration of science fiction through the psychoanalytic lens of attachment theory: a postulation regarding mother-child relationships and how they form the foundation of a child’s identity. Referencing two texts, Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Hideaki Anno’s *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, this thesis analyzes tropes of science fiction, such as Mecha Robots and Tralfamadorian aliens, to describe the texts as commentaries regarding human relationships. In the context of World War II and the technological race between nations to reach socio-economic superiority, these texts pose important questions regarding how individuals adapt to social expectations and the impact of interpersonal relationships on identity formation. Then, the paper draws connections between the narrative/mental coherence of the protagonists, Billy Pilgrim and Shinji Ikari, and emotional trauma in relation to their attachment styles. Scenes of trauma, emotional absence, neglect by attachment figures, and abusive mothers will be examined to make sense of the need for attachment, and how individual attachment styles change over time. The first section of this thesis explicates attachment theory and writings of Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby, presenting the central questions of the protagonists: “Who am I, Why am I here, What is the extent of my free will, and What is trauma’s role in my plight?” The second and third sections will analyze Kurt Vonnegut’s insecurely attached Billy Pilgrim, and Hideaki Anno’s existentially lonely Shinji Ikari. This thesis aims to highlight tropes of science

fiction and relate them to each text, as well as presenting how attachment functions in literary representations.

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*I'd also like to note my intention of choosing such topics as science fiction and attachment theory, which have fascinated me since I was a young boy. As is the case for many poets and writers, they use their academic or creative space to work out their own issues. I wanted to use this thesis as a means of working out my own insecure attachment and reconciling my past with the present. As I read and wrote alongside Kurt Vonnegut and Hideaki Anno, I worked out my own conceptions of attachment and regressive behaviors. In *Billy Pilgrim* I recognized myself, and the behaviors that could save me from the same fate he suffered. From *Shinji Ikari* I learned the importance of learning to “take care of yourself” and embracing self-love. Thank you to Hideaki Anno and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. for your limitless imaginations and providing me with the canvas in which I painted my love and analysis of your works.*

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Section One: Attachment in Contemporary Literature and Abstract Representations

Detachment is a pedestrian psychological process for humans— instances range from platonic relationships to impulsive romances—though, it is also arguably one of the most difficult processes of the human condition. Everyone has a general understanding of the art of detachment, as we learn that the quality of being too “clingy” or attached is undesirable. It begins in infancy, when an individual learns through their mother both that they are separate beings and that they will be reliant on human relationships throughout the entirety of their lives. From our mother, or closest guardian, we discover the intricacies of the human touch and the necessity for affection; from the same parent we also learn the excruciating nature of absence and neglect. If a child’s mother does not provide adequate emotional support, they develop an insecure attachment style, and, in turn, never truly overcome the trauma of childhood (manifesting in the form of life-long attachment issues). What happens when parental figures are emotionally truant, and children resort to employing the art of detachment without knowing otherwise? This dilemma is explored in late twentieth century science-fiction; this era of science-fiction focuses primarily on the human psyche by capturing the essence of attachment issues and the trauma caused by the pressing historical context of World War II; psychological developments and the technological revolution of modern countries fostered this genre of literature and its portrayal of dystopian narratives.

This introduction, with an analysis and explication of attachment theory and the importance of identity formation, guides literary interpretation through the lens of psychoanalytic theory in relation to attachment. I reference two key psychoanalytic theorists, Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby, to explain the fundamentals of the theory and lay the groundwork for interpreting object relations and identity-formation through an individual’s relationship with their

mother. From there I shift my attention to two specific texts that address attachment issues and depict war as psychologically ravaging— encompassing elements of dystopian science fiction that more-or-less convey the idea that children are the most damaged products of war. Vonnegut asserts that World War II is most accurately described as “a Children’s Crusade, an event that caused the most casualties of young men and the trauma of the “Silent Generation” — a sentiment shared by Vonnegut and Anno. These texts are products of the age of technological revolution and effective portrayals of the military-industrial complex of American and Asian nations, granting them the qualities of sociological criticism and offering a commentary on the vexed nature of attachment.

These narratives present their respective protagonist as struggling to uphold humanity and ensure their survival, creating this literal “fight to the death” which represents social and political strife in the midst of war and reconstruction of American and Japanese societies. Detachment is most notably found in the authors’ metaphorical and animated depictions of science fiction tropes— specifically the giant-humanoid machines in Anno’s *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, and the Tralmafadorian aliens of Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Technology assumes the center stage, as nations grow dependent on machines and establish their superiority by presenting their most up-to-date equipment. It becomes more apparent through the texts that society’s obsession with machination and utilization of science-fiction elements are crucial to understanding each work; without these symbols of the future and development, these texts would no longer function as science or speculative-fiction. But what happens when the machines have terminated and the aliens have left? These works open broadly, taking a distant look at the future of society, then conclude with a removal from technology and apply a philosophical approach towards understanding the self. When these elements of dystopian fiction become no

longer relevant to the central narrative, Vonnegut and Anno begin exploring character interiority and motivation to explain psychological trauma.

Focusing more specifically on cognitive narratology and the nature of intrinsic loneliness, I subsequently examine the central protagonists of these texts and how they go about answering the following questions: “Who am I, Why am I here, What is the extent of my free will, and What is trauma’s role in my plight?” Kurt Vonnegut and Hideaki Anno include in their works young adults born into a world of misery and familiarized with trauma. In this thesis I analyze how time functions in their works, paying particular attention to the mechanics of narration and the cognitive capacities of the protagonists of the three works. In many ways these texts may be seen as bildungsromans, following young adults on their journey to maturity and reaching a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of their imperfect world. They follow similar literary tropes and plot structure to dystopian narratives that were commonplace in literature following the conclusion of WWII in 1945. While there is a cultural difference between Vonnegut’s American novel and the works of Japanese author Anno, I ultimately argue that the similar sentiments between them portray a universality in attachment issues and the desire to be free from a life that has stripped them of their autonomy. *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, both depict protagonists dealing with attachment issues in the midst of a global catastrophe, utilizing the voice of the youth to convey the extent to which they have been robbed of their adolescence.

Shifting away from the primary texts and gesturing to the central conceit of this thesis: attachment styles, beginning in infancy, leave lasting impacts on romantic and platonic relationships. Attachment begins in infancy, according to psychologists Mary Ainsworth and John Bowlby, who constructed an experiment intended to gauge attachment style titled “The

Strange Situation” which was coined in the 1970’s to test exactly how children react to the absence of their mothers and unknown stimuli (including toys never seen previously, and a complete stranger to the infant)¹. The experiment includes various stages of interaction intended to illuminate a child’s psychological state and assess their ability (or inability) to cope with the absence of their mother. It begins with the child and the mother in a room, allowing the child time to explore the room and the various objects placed within it. After some time, a stranger enters and the child witnesses a dialogue based interaction between the mother and the stranger. Subsequently, the mother leaves and the child is left alone with the stranger who speaks and plays with the child, then the mother returns for the first time; afterwards, the child is left entirely alone. After a few minutes of solitude, the mother reunites and comforts the child, only for the process to be repeated again, with the stranger finally leaving after the second interaction with the child without the parent present.² After the experiment concludes and the mother leaves with the child, those involved in the study utilize psychoanalysis to highlight the main takeaways from the procedure, specifically the child’s ability to confidently explore the room, their reaction to their parent leaving, the anxiety of the child in the presence of the stranger (if any), and the child’s response to the return of their mother.

Based on the outcome and results of the experiment, psychologists are able to predict early attachment and its effects on personality characteristics that develop when children are able to safely understand themselves as separate from their mothers (a topic that will soon be revisited). Ainsworth, after countless experiments, decided upon three central attachment styles:

¹ John Bowlby, *A Secure Base, Parent-Child attachment and Healthy Human Development: “The Origins of Attachment Theory”* (1988)

² Peter Fonagy, *Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis* (2001)

secure, insecure (subdivided into anxious-avoidant and anxious-ambivalent), and disorganized. It was hypothesized that securely attached children are equipped with the skills necessary to cope with the absence of their mother, even if only for short periods of time. These children do not fear exploration of the room while in the presence of their mother, and interact with the stranger without hesitation, though once the mother is requested to leave the room, the child cries and awaits the return of the parent, losing all interest in the “strange” environment (Fonagy 22). Upon the return of the mother, the child is able to be calmed and quickly returns to playing with the toys and forgets about the brief absence of their parent. These children are able to use their mother as a *secure base* and are easily distracted from their brief outburst of anxiety; secure-attachment signals a child able to quickly adapt to their environment and receive comfort from the return of their mother, as the child recognizes that they are able to depend on the mother’s return without feelings of abandonment or anger at the mother for leaving. Secure attachment allows the child to adapt to their environment and utilize the skills of reassurance and the “secure base” throughout their adulthood.

However, the focus of this thesis will not be on secure attachment, as the texts studied both include protagonists that utilize detachment as a means of coping with the unrelenting world they inhabit. The protagonists, more-or-less are insecurely attached, with the exception of Billy Pilgrim in Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In turn, insecure attachment, specifically anxious-avoidant, is characterized by a sense of apathy towards both the departure and reunification with the child’s mother. These children are unable to use their mothers as secure bases, meaning that while they may be upset by the departure of the mother (slight crying and irritability signaled by a child’s facial features or actions), they are not comforted by their mother’s return. It is odd, considering that these children were upset in the first place by the

departure of their mother, but upon returning these children remain solemn and do not accept affection from their parents (Bowlby 124). In simulated environments these children do not even reciprocate emotional or physical “warmth,” remaining entirely detached from their mother, likely a result of anxious-avoidant attachment. As Peter Fonagy states in his text *Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis* regarding the importance of a mother’s intentionality, “We believe that the parent’s capacity to adopt the intentional stance towards a not-yet-intentional infant, to think about the infant in terms of thoughts, feelings, and desire in the infant’s mind and his or her mental state, is the key mediator of the transmission of attachment and accounts for classical observations concerning the influence of caregiver sensitivity” (27). Fonagy argues that, in theory, anxious-avoidant attachment stems from caregiver (in)sensitivity, and their (in)ability to appeal to the psychological needs and development of their child. This notion of the “intentional stance” is taught indirectly from parent to child, as it occurs organically in interpersonal relationships and aids in cultural understanding. This idea is best described as the pedestrian process of explicating psychological attitudes and behaviors through the examination of morality, beliefs, and the capacity for rational thinking. It is believed that this stance, if taught well by the parent and successfully emulated by the child, is a life-long skill used to assess the causes of character defects and learn how to turn introspectively to identify flaws in rationality.

But, what happens when this “intentional stance” is not taught or the mother is not around to accurately transmit it to their child? In many cases this deficiency leads to anxious-ambivalent (insecure) or disorganized attachment. Beginning with the explanation of anxious-ambivalent attachment, children who are believed to be ambivalent have a difficult time regulating their own emotions, and garnering the affection of their mothers. These children are unsure of how to receive attention from their parents, as these parents typically prove themselves to be present

only some of the time, and emotionally absent most of the time. Anxious-ambivalent attachment is characterized by a feeling of purgatory, defined by psychological needs being partially met by the caregiver and a sense of insecurity caused by the mother's difficulty with her own attachment style (Bowlby 32). Those with ambivalent attachment are oftentimes used by parents as a means of emotional support, meaning that the mother mostly shows affection when she is in a psychological disposition and fails to comfort her while they suffer from issues of anxiety and abandonment. Parents who foster an anxious-ambivalent style of attachment are sometimes ignorant regarding the importance of the mother-child relationship and mainly focus on the appearance of being a "good" parent, with little regard for the emotional state and needs of their children. These parents, however, are not completely absent, leading to an odd relationship in which the child is aware of their parents' presence, but does not see intrinsic value in their interactions. The parent, as mentioned, likely also struggles with anxious-ambivalent attachment, leading them away from their children and in search of a relationship that fulfills the romantic and existential void. As a result, ambivalent children carry a sentiment of hatred towards their caregiver, but also experience deep-rooted worry about the wellbeing of their caregiver and a "clingy" nature. These children are unable to rely on their secure base in moments of crisis and are not well-equipped with coping mechanisms necessary to deal with an avoidant parent.

Disorganized attachment is the most uncommon of the attachment styles; in clinical settings disorganized attachment is a result of prolonged abuse or trauma, and is brought about by anxiety. This form of insecure attachment occurs when a child's secure basis becomes a source of fear. Mothers who foster a disorganized attachment often suffer from emotional or psychological issues, causing the child to witness stark rises and debilitating lows in their mother's parenting/affection and lose security in the parent's ability to fulfill their child's basic

needs. Disorganized attachment, in most cases, reflects the erratic and haphazard behavior of their parents, as those with this particular attachment style are unable to gauge when it is acceptable to showcase emotion and affection. Fonagy in *Attachment Theory* argues:

Disorganized/disoriented attachment is marked in the strange situation by displays of contradictory behavior patterns sequentially or simultaneously, undirected, incomplete or interrupted movements, stereotypes, anomalous postures, freezing, apprehension regarding the parent or disoriented wanderings... [Attachment theorists] Main and Hesse's (1990) now classical contribution linked disorganized attachment behavior to the frightened or frightening caregiving: infants who could not find a solution to the paradox of fearing the figures who they wished to approach for comfort in times of distress. (36)

As the excerpt suggests, there is a crucial dilemma that a young child with a disorganized attachment style faces consistently: attempt to garner attention from a mostly absent parent or be further subjected to disapproval and neglect from them. The child, later in adolescence, will similarly question their romantic and interpersonal relationships in the same manner—constantly seeking affection from intimate partners or friends, though unsure of whether or not their love is meaningful. This attachment style differs from anxious or ambivalent attachment in the manner that children with disorganized attachment showcase dysfunctional behaviors. The movements of these children, as Fonagy asserts, reflect the possibility of a mentally scattered individual, including unnatural pauses and behaviors that may completely contradict each other. These characteristics carry on into adulthood and manifest in odd attachment behaviors and cognitive impairments/issues that may be indicative of a mental disorder.

The final concept to be explained regarding attachment theory is the distinction between the True and False Self. The theory of the True and False Self is a psychological concept

formulated by psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott. Winnicott, being another foundational attachment theorist, asserts that there are two distinct divisions of self: the False Self, which is formulated and shaped by socio-cultural expectations as well as the mother. And the true self, the human consciousness that proceeds attachment.³ He was adamant in his clear division of the two, as the False Self, is who we are instinctually more attuned with— considering that people are shaped by their socio-environmental conditions even prior to birth. The True Self is inherently detached from others and represents innate characteristics and behavioral traits without regard for acclimating to social conditions. In Winnicott’s understanding, he argued that this “True Self” manifests as all the typical forms of infant expression and understanding, including crying, aggression, and anger. It is far removed from the emotions of others and does not take into account social expectations. In theory, the True Self begins when an individual fails to adhere to the norms and feelings of loved ones, instead forcing others to give into their needs. It is believed that through the mother-child relationship the False Self develops, and children begin to understand how to empathize with others and recognize themselves as separate in form. Winnicott believed that the False Self derives from mother-child interactions, in which children lash out, perform socially unacceptable acts, and physically or emotionally harm others. The mother functions to correct their children’s behavior. It is from this relationship and interactions with the mother that children learn that which is permissible and behaviors that prove to be socially acceptable.

The False Self is built on the foundation of overcoming adversity, both experiencing it firsthand and watching from a distance our mothers’ interactions to later mimic and develop our

³ Donald Winnicott. *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*, pg. 147

understanding of others from them. In turn, we learn the ability to recover and adapt as well from our mother. A mother that fosters secure-attachment and is present for their child consistently instills a stable False Self, and these children garner the coping mechanism of distinguishing between True and False conceptions of Self. However, children who are never met with the resistance of a parent necessary to teach social skills often face difficulties reconciling the self and their positions within society. As Winnicott states, “The mother who is not good enough is not able to implement the infant's omnipotence, and so she repeatedly fails to meet the infant gesture; instead she substitutes her own gesture which is to be given sense by the compliance of the infant. This compliance on the part of the infant is the earliest stage of the False Self, and belongs to the mother's inability to sense her infant's needs” (144). The False Self in securely-attached children is stable and is met with the resistance of a mother necessary to foster proper social adaptation. However, in the case of insecurely-attached children, they may never properly develop a distinction between True and False self. The “not good enough” mother, or the deceased mother in the case of *Neon Genesis*, fails to deter a child’s “omnipotence,” or the quality of having unrestrained power. As mentioned, the mother’s role is to implement an understanding of self as removed from others, and placing the foundation of identity that later blooms through social interactions and relationships. A mother that is incapable of transmitting the knowledge regarding self in relation to others, also typically fails to teach socially acceptable behaviors and the formation of identity utilizing the criticism of others.

In insecurely-attached children this detachment causes the inability to differentiate between the social values of the False Self and the idiosyncratic impulses of the True Self. The False Self is crucial to maintaining interpersonal relationships and learning attachment, though it is consistently in contrast with The True Self, which theoretically manifests as our most

self-indulgent and depraved actions (Winnicott 149). By the conclusion, the central issue of the *Neon Genesis* becomes, the reconciliation between True and False self, as well as the formation of one's own identity without regard for the thoughts of others. Hideaki Anno addresses a profound question in utilizing these keywords in Attachment Theory, most notably pondering where the True Self ends and the False Self begins. While Vonnegut does not directly address the separation of True and False Self, both authors ask the fundamental question regarding the intrinsic purpose of the mother and her place in the formation of human identities. Through their works Vonnegut and Anno illuminate the importance of attachment in the human condition, as well as defining purpose and value in a modern, complex society.

Section Two: Slaughterhouse-Five and Mental Cognition through Lens of Attachment

2.1 Introducing Vonnegut's Style and Features of Narrative

Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* deals specifically with overcoming trauma and understanding the impact of childhood and adolescence on the processes of cognitive development. The novel is a portrayal of World War II from the perspective of a young American male named Billy Pilgrim, and Vonnegut uses the literary form as a method of resistance against the "Children's Crusade" and anti-war sentiments, which are complicated by the structure of narrative. The novel is a particularly fascinating example of cognitive narratology, which can be defined as the elements of storytelling that are concerned with functioning of the mind and how structure of narrative may be indicative of mental stability or the lack thereof.⁴ It gives insight into cognitive processes and how they ultimately form speech and thoughts. As previously mentioned, Billy Pilgrim as the protagonist of the novel travels across Europe as an indentured servant captured by the German army during an attack on a territory acquired through German military occupation. From this point in the text, Billy Pilgrim's tale is convoluted by quick shifts in narrative focus from the present to random points in Billy's lifetime, which is told mostly from the third-person point of view. Billy's perception is skewed by his understanding of the different tenses of time that all occur simultaneously (this concept will be returned to in subsequent analysis of Vonnegut's prose). The novel is concerned with Billy's journey towards comprehending the effects of war and post-traumatic stress. Along the way to the conclusion, in which Billy miraculously survives the bombing of Dresden, there are unconventional pauses in

⁴ David Herman, "Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind: Cognitive Narratology, Discursive Psychology, and Narratives in Face-to Face Interaction, *Narrative*, pg. 307

narrative and the purposeful failure of following the story through— features which signify detachment from his reality and interpersonal attachments that transfigure Billy's understanding of narrative conventions and temporality.

These deviations from progressive storytelling are based around the novel's conventions of science fiction, and clarify Billy's attachment to speculative fiction, specifically through depictions of technology and extraterrestrial intervention. This attachment to science fiction begins during his time as a patient in a psych ward, in which he reads the literature of a fictional author that allows him to escape the frightening reality he inhabits. However, the problem is that this vexed attachment to science fiction, as a victim of post traumatic stress, conflates with the delicate memories he has of his past and experiences that seemingly prove indistinguishable to Billy. For example, the narrator of the text reveals to the reader that the fictional character in the psychward that introduced Billy to science fiction was more-or-less a figment of his imagination and he more accurately discovered this science fiction genre amongst the various books that his local pornography shop had for sale (201). In addition, Billy recognizes a novel he previously read by this aforementioned author that provides an exact description of his experiences on Tralfamadore, suggesting that his extraterrestrial experiences were entirely adapted from the science fiction he read as an inpatient at the psych ward. This brings about the following questions: Does his lack of memory and derealization, in this instance, indicate Billy as an entirely unreliable narrator? How does his attachment to literature and detachment from reality significantly impact the narrative form? There is a direct connection between trauma and Billy's perception of time and mortality, which causes derealization and disorganized attachment. There are many instances where Billy displays psychophysiological responses such as freezing and unnatural pauses that support this disorganized attachment style as a cause of his distorted

understanding of these abstract concepts. This psychoanalysis of a mentally-ill individual withdrawn from romance and conventions of everyday functioning illuminates the novel as a broader depiction of the impacts of war on children and how the technological race of the 1940-1960's significantly shaped society's understanding of reality and existential purpose.

Vonnegut utilizes these instances of discontinuity and metafictional detachment from reality to present a case of post-traumatic stress or schizophrenic tendencies, which functionally includes features ranging from delusions to narrative incoherency. The central conceit of the novel is to tell a well-crafted story about Billy Pilgrim's experience in the bombing of Dresden, but Billy's personal failures often take the forefront of the text. In order to avoid associating the author explicitly with the protagonist of the text, the entirety of the cohesive novel is a semi-factual representation of the travesties of war Vonnegut witnessed. The first chapter of the novel is told from the first-person perspective, notably the only chapter to be told from this point of view, and provides a commentary on the style of the text that strays away from the elements of science fiction and focuses on genuine human suffering. The narrator of the first chapter begins: "All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true. One guy I knew really *was shot* In Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his. Another guy I knew really did threaten to have his personal enemies killed by hired hitmen gunmen after the war. And so on. I've changed all the names" (1). The use of "I" in this section of the novel is never elaborated on or returned to, causing readers to conclude that this use of the pronoun directly refers to the author of the text, Kurt Vonnegut. The pronoun, "I", is important in a rhetorical sense because it functions as an emotional appeal, revealing to the reader that the factual consequences of war that Billy's cognitive perspective is emblematic of are everyday realities for victims of war, specifically children, as both the author and the protagonist were mere teenagers when they were

drafted into the military. The first chapter is the only section of the text that is told from an entirely coherent perspective, each subsequent chapter is complicated by changes in temporality and sequential order. In effect, chapter one is the sole semblance of sanity found in the entirety of the novel, though we are left to question this first-person perspective, determining whether or not it may be connected to Billy.

Many Vonnegut scholars assert that Billy's fatalist qualities and inability to socially function are indicative of an underlying condition that trauma either contributes to or initially triggers, elaborating on literary speculation arguing Billy suffers from schizophrenia. In Lawrence Broer's collection of essays *Sanity Plea: Schizophrenia in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut*, he constructs a coherent argument around the issues of attachment and scattered thinking in the novel. In his essay titled "*Slaughterhouse-Five: Pilgrim's Progress*," Broer speculates:

From *Player Piano* to *Slaughterhouse-Five* Vonnegut describes the "collisions" of people and machinery without apparent resolution, an expression of the author's own state of mind as he attempts to work out the schizophrenic dilemma of his major characters. In *Breakfast of Champions* (1973) Vonnegut tells us that the idea of schizophrenia had fascinated him for years. "I did not and do not know for certain that I have that disease," [Vonnegut] says. "I was sick for awhile, though. I am better now. Word of honor-I am better now" (85).

He provides insight into the psychoanalytic lens of literary criticism that diagnoses Billy with the mental illness of Schizophrenia that explains Billy's erratic behaviors. Broer extends beyond the semi-autobiographical boundary constructed by Vonnegut, and pursues this angle of mental illness as an extension of the author's personal traumas and an examination of the role of technology in the modern age. Broer, in his analysis of Vonnegut's literature and style, introduces

schizophrenia as a recurring thematic choice that Billy Pilgrim embodies. The direct quote of Vonnegut reveals an angle of interiority that further blurs the line between autobiographical experience and fiction constructed through representations of mental incoherence. While it is difficult to examine this brief quote as a true indication of mental illness on the author's part, it is a fantastic point to delve deeper into Vonnegut's intent of composing an effective narrative. The conventions of this novel specifically includes the difficulty the protagonist has with differentiating between memories and narratives adapted from the science fiction he studies. In addition, this "collision" of people and machinery that Broer mentions becomes a recurring theme of Post-1945 speculative fiction. The symbolic struggle between machinations and humanity develops the theme of existential purpose in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and ties in the element of adolescence in times of socio-industrial turbulence.

2.2 Tralfamadorians, Machination, and Attachment to Science Fiction

I argue that Billy Pilgrim, while presenting schizophrenic tendencies, is an individual suffering from derealization and Vonnegut's specific portrayal of the Tralfamadorian aliens is an extension of his anxiety. The Tralfamadorians are beings that are able to render existence through the fourth dimension, blurring the lines between past, present, and future. In their explanation of the fourth dimension they state: "Earthlings are the great explainers, explaining why this event is structured as it is, telling how other events may be achieved or avoided. I am a Tralfamadorian, seeing all time as you might see a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply *is*" (86). The aliens argue to Billy that the illusion of free will has dictated humanity from its conception, yet all other dimensional beings recognize that their actions have been determined long before they were conceived. They are not able to distinguish tenses of time, but they attempt to explain to Billy

that his consciousness does not allow him to see the construct of “time” as it is intended in the fourth dimension. As mentioned this extension of internalized anxiety and derealization dictate the progression of the narrative, allowing Billy an understanding of reality that is more well suited for the true nature of time. If we are to deconstruct the components of this particular scene though, and frame it in the terms of mental illness, this interaction can more sensibly be read as an internal dialogue between Billy and his fragmented consciousness. The Tralfamadorians, if seen as projections of anxiety or vivid hallucinations, represent Billy assuring himself that he is stable and his delusions are indeed accurate representations of reality. The indirect reference to freewill in the aforementioned quote solidifies Billy’s belief that his existence will merely happen and he will perpetually relive the trauma of his youth and disjointed flashbacks that become more frequent in his old age. The Tralfamadorians also note that amongst the countless civilizations they have come across in their intergalactic travels, humans are the only species to *foolishly* fall victim to the illusion of choice. Humans inevitably believe that they have autonomy because they are unable to see the fourth dimensional reality, in which time is merely a facade. Aliens are able to witness their beginning, middle, and end simultaneously, understanding that their consciousness is merely following along the conventions of reality— eliminating the false notions of hope or alternate possibilities. This idea is implanted into the mind of Billy and the reader by the aliens early in the text, laying the groundwork for understanding the purpose of their interactions and the Tralfamadorian philosophy corrupting Billy’s sanity.

During his time with the Tralfamadorian aliens, Billy was placed up for display along with a popular American pornography actress, Montana Wildhack, where they are forced to simulate the lifetime of an average human. This includes features of human existence, specifically eating for biological necessity, defecation, urination, and sexual habits, transforming Billy’s solitary act

in front of the aliens into a performance, in which Billy's success is dictated by the amount of aliens that visit the zoo to study the abnormalities of humans. Tralfamadorians have a poor outlook on humans, viewing them as spectacles of uncivilized nations plagued by war and the useless pursuit of power. However, in the exploration of Billy's experiences and mind they fail to mention topics such as genocide and unjustified murder. When Billy is introduced to the Tralfamadorians, he initially views them as savior figure, hoping that they would rescue Billy from the vexed nature of Earth and his own fragmented mind. As the narrator states:

The subject of war never came up... Billy replied "How the inhabitants of a whole planet can live in peace! As you know, I am from a planet that has been in senseless slaughter since the beginning of school. I myself have seen the bodies of schoolgirls who were boiled alive in a water tower by my own countrymen, who were proud of fighting pure evil at the time... Earthlings must be the terrors of the universe! If other planets aren't now in danger from Earth, they soon will be. So tell me the secret so I can take it back to Earth and save us all: How can a planet live at peace?"

Billy felt he had spoken soaringly. He was baffled when he saw the Tralfamadorians close their little hands on their eyes. He knew from past experience what this meant: He was being stupid. (116)

Billy asks a profound question of the aliens, essentially begging them for the secret to world peace, but is met with the equivalent of laughter. The notion that Billy could alter the path of humanity or save his people from their inevitable doom is impossible, and the aliens laugh because they recognize that his inconsequential action of "changing the world" would go unnoticed and unheard. His speech, as heartfelt and genuine as it is, is filled with logical fallacies, namely the notion that the outcome of an event can be changed or revisited. All time

occurs simultaneously, meaning that in the exact moment that Billy is explaining the need for a solution of global turmoil, his audience is witnessing the destruction of his entire universe many years in the future. He cannot possibly see it, but the Tralfamadorians are capable of witnessing the extinction of his entire species, causing them to ridicule Billy for his poor idea that he could potentially alter the outcome of humanity.

In the Tralfamadorian explanation of Billy's misconceptions about the universe and the nature of time, they reveal that Earth's universe is accidentally evaporated by the explosion of a Tralfamadorian ship, which is the most potent representation of the absence of autonomy. In casual terms, the aliens reveal to Billy that the universe, as he knows it, will be obliterated and there will not be a single remnant of humanity. As they state, "We blow [the Universe] up, experimenting with new fuels for flying saucers. A Tralfamadorian test pilot presses a starter button and the whole Universe disappears... He has *always* pressed the button, and he always *will*. We *always* let him and we *will* always let him. The moment is *structured* that way" (117). The statement on behalf of the Tralfamadorians is formulated in a manner that parallels the reality Billy exists in. The idea that they *will* and *always will* allow the destruction of Earth is strengthened by the rhetorical strategy of modeling language based on the topic. The sentence structure of reiterating "always" and "will" twice in this brief excerpt of the novel is geared towards creating a sense of absolute certainty, and leaving no doubt in Billy's mind. Instead of providing Billy the knowledge necessary to alter the world for the better, they prove to him that his attempts are in vain. Regardless of whether or not Billy obtains the information necessary to save humanity from itself, his knowledge will not deter his people from the elements of war and power struggle that accompany human history. The downfall of humanity and the destruction of the universe at the hands of the Tralfamadorians are merely events waiting to happen, or

arguably occurring simultaneously, which pushes Billy past his psychological limits. If this passage is read as an inner dialogue, as done earlier, this may be interpreted as an admittance of personal regret and his subconscious revealing to him that his turmoil is entirely internal. These aliens, as projections of his mental illness, argue to Billy that his demise will be entirely self-inflicted and the human reaction of anxiety about the future is futile.

To elaborate on Billy's intergalactic experiences, the protagonist is tasked with "performing" sex in front of the Tralfamadorians and eventually develops a family with porn star Montana Wildhack. The theme of performativity takes center stage as Billy finds himself in space where he feels appreciated and, ironically, accompanied by others. There is an instance prior to the introduction of Montana, in which he reveals that he is more content on Tralfamadore because the aliens who examine him do not recognize the extent of his physical and psychological flaws. In a brief interrogation of Billy, the aliens gather around his confined exhibit and ask him the fundamental question, "*Are you happy?*" to which Billy responds, "'About as happy as I was on Earth,' which was true" (114). This is a saddening reality, in which Billy finds relief from social conventions and the trauma of WWII. Without the presence of humans Billy is able to collect his thoughts and reflect on his own mental states, but when Montana is forced into his cage he finds solace in knowing that he can now begin the family he has always conventionally wanted. Billy is unable to recollect the memories of his children's youth and never loved his wife, which causes him to feel stripped of large portions of his life. The moments in which he is able to find happiness are fleeting, and every instance of poetic justice is met with equal amounts of devastation in the form of flashbacks and repressed memories. In this vein, Billy begins the family he had always yearned for with Montana, the highly revered fictional pornography actress who decides that he is an appropriate lover. The

narrator says “In time, Montana came to love and trust Billy Pilgrim. He did not touch her until she made it clear that she wanted him to. After she had been on Tralfamadore for what would have been an Earthing week, she asked him shyly if he wouldn’t sleep with her. Which he did. It was heavenly” (133). This intentionally vague development of their romantic relationship makes it incredibly difficult to believe these scenes of sex and intimacy are real, and not figments of Billy’s imagination. Their relationship is never fully explored and, as quickly as they are revealed, they are removed from the narrative, and Billy is forced back to Earth. This is the last section in which his fictional family is mentioned, and Billy is tasked with letting go of his false dreamlike reality and recognizing that he is merely unfulfilled with the life he has lived. Most of his memories across the universe are corrupted by his derealization and are likely projections of his own mental illness, their imagined romance is even unfulfilled in the manner that it is explained— this is why most of his memories are interspersed with aliens and mechanical representations.

The issue of machination in *Slaughterhouse-Five* becomes a large portion of his adult fears and trauma, as the guns and revolutionary machinery used in the war showcase the proportions of the thematic battle between machination and human existence. Towards the end of the novel, in a flashforward to boarding a flight, Billy makes an assertion regarding individuals and presents a Tralfamadorian theory that blurs the line between humanity and machinery. The narrator states, “[Valencia’s father] was a machine. Tralfamadorians, of course, say that every creature and plant in the Universe is a machine. It amuses them that so many Earthlings are offended by the idea of being machines... Outside the plane, the machine named Valencia Merble Pilgrim was eating a Peter Paul Mound Bar and waving bye-bye” (154). The narrator of the text utilizes techniques of derealization and dehumanization to create an extended metaphor,

comparing programmed computers to humans that lack the free will to escape their variables set forth by the universe. The fatalist philosophy derived from the anagram “FATAL DREAM” (“TRALFAMADORE”)⁵, asserts that every action in the conceivable universe has been contrived long before it has organically occurred. Billy Pilgrim *was* always and *will* always be slated to develop attachment issues, partake in violence, relive trauma from the war, and fulfill his individual purpose, however miniscule it may be. In this regard, Billy’s actions can be compared to computer programming and the machinations that derive their purpose from the instructions of a higher being. Free will, in this metaphorical simulation, is non-existent and other illusions such as hope and religion, are merely products of these machines’ inability to accept their predetermined purpose. In many ways this is a direct result of the twentieth century scare regarding machinery and its capacity to rebuild networks or destroy entire civilizations.

Vonnegut’s representations of machination are indicative of the socio-psychological effects that war had on the youth primarily leading it. Many teenagers were drafted into the war and their actions mimic the machinery they use to wreak havoc— they are devoid of choice and conditioned or *programmed* to support the war effort. There are two phrases in the novel that embody the mechanical regime of soldiers serving as indentured servants: “Everything was Beautiful and Nothing Hurt” and “Please leave this latrine as tidy as you found it!” (Figures 1 and 2). The first saying is found on a tombstone that the soldiers admire, and the second is found in the dingy bathroom designated for Americans during German occupation. Lawrence Broer grapples with these ideas, stating:

⁵ Martin Coleman, “The Meaninglessness of Coming Unstuck in Time.” *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society*. Vol, 44, No. 4. pp. 681-698

This form of hopeless programming includes illusions of peace and harmony of people like Billy's wife and mother, who are blind to the more sordid and desperate aspects of existence, and the awkward sentimentality and automatic loyalty to God and country of Edgar Derby. All are fully automated boobs, ready to conform to the most convenient mold, whether in the mistaken interests of survival or friendliness or out of the lack of imagination to do anything better; thus, they become the ready slaves of whatever anonymous bureaucracies, computers, or authoritarian institutions take hold of their minds. (91)

Broer situates the actions of the characters and their functions in the novel quite well: Billy Pilgrim and those close to him are merely pawns watching their lives unfold, completely unaware that in the fourth dimension their future has already been determined. The mechanical world that Billy exists in has disillusioned him, scarring him with the power of socio-environmental devastation and dissolves the little imagination that separated Billy from the machines used in war. Billy perpetually returns to the point of his death and relives the sensation of being assassinated, leaving the question: can we really blame him for simplifying the experience as “a violet light and a hum?” (43). The existential trauma that occurs after reliving his death renders the overwhelming sensation as a sort of mechanical sound and a bright, violet light—excluding sensations and thoughts. Regardless of where Billy is in his narrative, either in the midst of chaos in Dresden or watching his obese and idiotic wife enjoy another chocolate mound bar, it is the ultimately the juxtaposition of the happy American, nuclear family he has and the atrocities of war that live on in his memories that disturbs his delicate consciousness, rendering him as a machination of his former self.

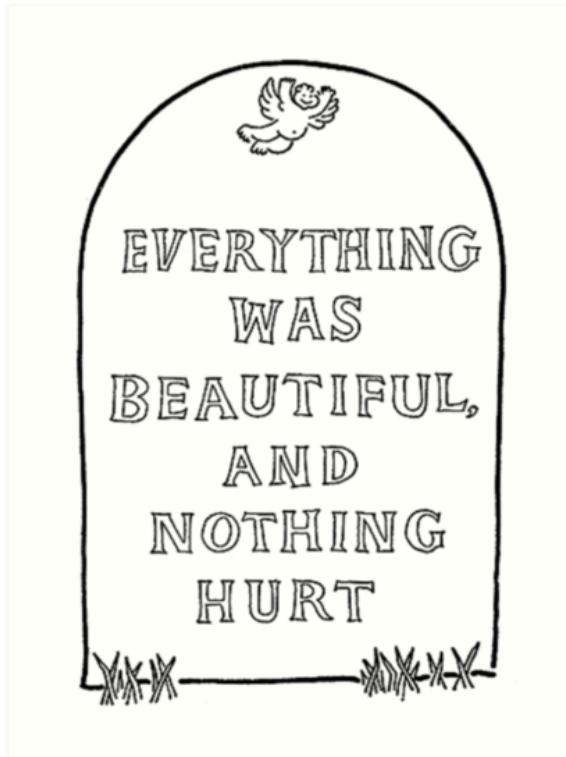
More-or-less, the central characters can be portrayed as “slaves,” as Broer puts it, struggling through their pathetic existences and unsure if they will ever reach salvation or release

from the metaphorical chains of the fatalist universe. The two commands or maxims of the text are each shown in chapter five and appear as the only two images provided in the novel. The first image (“Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt”) is a satirical juxtaposition of death and the examination of life as a work of art. This becomes poignant to Billy because he recognizes that if he is able to repress the memories of war, he can also purposefully misconstrue the fatalist universe as a form of poetic justice. This tombstone pays homage to Edgar Derby, a close friend of Billy’s who fought alongside him in war, which further creates a dichotomy between the sentiment of *beauty* and the death of Edgar as a literary figure. Edgar Derby was a high school teacher and murdered by firing squad for stealing a teapot from the rubble of Dresden. The irony continues as Billy, along with the few soldiers left, are forced to dig the grave for his friend’s corpse. This instant in time is central to the formation of Billy’s identity as he finally understands the gravity of war and had it personally devastate those close to him— after Edgar’s death Billy becomes entirely detached from the war effort and refuses to continue forward. Edgar’s tombstone, symbolic of the fall of humanity and comradeship, becomes Billy’s sole means of grounding himself when he becomes *unstuck in time* and the programming code that allows Billy to cope with his loss. Without the reassurance that reality has the potential to be *beautiful*, Billy is unable to see the world’s worth— the maxim guarantees that despite the vile nature of humanity, reality will not harm him. The second phrase (“Please leave this latrine as tidy as you found it!”) is emblematic of the power struggle between the German soldiers and captured Americans because it creates a false image that the bathrooms— as disgusting as they are, given the living conditions in concentration camps— were ever clean to begin with. Even when the floors have been cleaned and the toilets have been scrubbed, the bathrooms are figuratively stained by the blood of countless men who have died within the confines of that particular camp.

This command, if viewed as a programming code, grants Billy the ability to reflect on his real life circumstances and arrive at the conclusion that if he merely goes along with the flow of cosmic energy, he will not disturb his simulation. When he internalizes this philosophy, Billy does not fret against the various jumps in time and visits from the mentally projected aliens because he recognizes that this is merely how the moment was structured by the Universe.



Figure 1: "Please leave this latrine as tidy as you found it!" sign in *Slaughterhouse-Five*.



(Figure 2): “Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt” gravestone illustration in *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

2.3 Self Psychology and Understanding Childhood Trauma

Now I will depart my analysis from a strictly science-fiction lens and answer the question: *Now that we have covered tropes of machinery and aliens, what is the significance of Billy Pilgrim’s childhood in relation to how he forms interpersonal relationships and his own identity?* The elements of attachment theory that are interwoven in *Slaughterhouse Five* are minor components of the text as a whole, but present a lens for analysis that explains Billy’s growth into a man who never developed the capacity to feel for others. I believe that an appropriate place to start with case study analysis, specifically in relation to attachment, is Billy’s relationship with his parents. Attachment theory often explains bonds between the child and mother, but Billy’s attachment issues are predominantly with his father, who had an undeniable

impact on Billy's professional development as an optometrist by offering his son a position at his optometry office. In many ways their relationship can be seen as an Oedipus complex, appealing primarily to the idea that Billy feels aggression towards his father and possesses an underlying sexual desire towards his mother. Freudian scholars and psychologists often debate the validity and extent of the Oedipus complex and how it may carefully interweave with a child's attachment to their mother. The North American psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut presents a fascinating school of thought coined Self Psychology which asserts that "as a result of accurate mirroring, a child develops a sense of ambition and enthusiasm for life. As a result of being able to idealize parents and draw strength and comfort from that idealization, a child develops self-direction and an ability to set challenging but realistic goals."⁶ From this ideology we can fathom why Billy followed the exact footsteps of his father, studying optometry from the university his father attended and practicing at his clinic. It is from his projections of functional relationships and the romance of his parents that he is able to set goals for himself and understand the idea of attachment. Billy's existential drives and understanding of interpersonal relationships are adopted from his parents' relationship, though we quickly learn that their relationship was not indicative of the attachment style that they passed down to their children. While we are expected to see Billy's family as the typical Nuclear, American unit, the third-person narrator reveals that Billy's family unit is a facade because at a young age he was ostracized by his parents and kept emotionally distant from them.

⁶ Baker, Howard S., and Margaret N. Baker. "Heinz Kohut's Self Psychology: An Overview." *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 144, no. 1, Jan. 1987, pp. 1-9.

Heinz Kohut in his definition of attachment and Self Psychology argues that we develop our definition of self through our relationships with our parents. He also asserts that along with our existential drives and understanding of self, we adopt our sexual and aggressive drives from the interactions witnessed between parents. The Oedipal complex in this regard is modeled after Billy's underlying aggression towards his father, encompassing a desire to outperform and replace the dominant figure of the patriarchy, as well as a subconscious sexual attraction towards Billy's mother. For various reasons Billy has had a difficult time loving his father, but he repeatedly returns to an instance in his youth, in which Billy's father throws him into a body of water, arguing that he would instinctively know how to swim— then, Billy nearly drowns and carries resentment towards his father for the rest of his life. As it appears in the text, Vonnegut writes: "It was like an execution. Billy was numb as his father carried him from the shower room to the pool. His eyes were closed. When he opened his eyes, he was on the bottom of the pool, and there was beautiful music everywhere. He lost consciousness, but the music went on. He dimly sensed that somebody was rescuing him. Billy resented that" (44). We may read this quote as a father metaphorically letting go and disapproving of his child, Billy. In Billy's father's defense, he argues that he was certain Billy would be capable of swimming if his life were put in danger, but he fails to recognize that even at a young age Billy found bliss in the prospect of death. As a child, Billy nearly drowns and witnesses a cacophony of sounds that are reminiscent of the hum and violet light at Billy's death, though never a sense of anxiety or fear—he was already accepting his death. This is not the case, however, as Billy survives and internalizes this interaction as a threat towards Billy's own masculinity and questions his father's intent as a parent. The last line of this quote reveals that he is not grateful or appreciative of this deus-ex-machina occurrence, feeling instead hatred towards his father for preventing Billy's

death. This scene occurs at the Y.M.C.A., where Billy is learning to swim for the first time, and while it is meant to teach Billy the valuable lesson of swimming, Billy recognizes instead that he values death much more than he does his existence— Billy argues that his death would ultimately solve his condition of being “unstuck in time.”

The dilemma of choosing to remember such a traumatic incident, such as Billy’s father’s “attempted murder,” his father, becomes a recurrent motif throughout as well, representing trauma and how it corrupts human memory. When we examine Billy’s condition, especially after we remove aliens and machinery from the question: How much of it is mental illness and how much of it is simply the human desire to forget? As Vonnegut puts it in the first chapter:

When I got home from the Second World War twenty-three years ago, I thought it would be easy for me to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do is report what I had seen. And I thought, too, that it would be a masterpiece or at least make me a lot of money, since the subject was so big.

But not many words about Dresden came from my mind then— not enough of them to make a book, anyway. And not many words come now, either, when I have become an old fart with his memories and his Pall Malls, with his sons full grown. (2)

Vonnegut grapples with this question quite often, even considering Billy’s adaptation of science fiction to fit his narrative regarding Tralfamadore and the porn star he would much rather be with than his wife. These few memories that Billy does have of the past and the future are contrived, if not entirely false representations of the events that actually happened. Billy is not simply an unreliable narrator— he does not aim to lie to his audience or hide his trauma— but his memories are filled with inaccuracies that render his recollections useless in the scheme of his narrative. Billy does not truthfully understand how it feels to *complete* or *end* any of his stories,

which is mimicked by the style of the novel and Billy's repeated decision to forgo one thought in order to explore an entirely unrelated one. An unreliable narrator is often conscious of their flaws and errors, at least in literary terms, but Billy is entirely oblivious to the fact that his memories are entirely fabricated. Even in reliving his lifetime perpetually, he is left unable to learn from or change his actions of the past— meaning he merely becomes a spectator in the story he is actively participating in. To this effect, in telling the story of his father's symbolic detachment and action of drowning him, Billy divulges his thoughts as an individual of feeling or understanding these sentiments, instead he clinically describes the event. As painful as this memory is to recollect, Billy recognizes that this event is a particularly major act that signaled the metaphorical detachment of his father from Billy— while he cannot piece together all the fragments of the memory, it is one of the few he can recall in detail.

There is only one other notable encounter between Billy's father and Billy, in which Billy becomes unstuck in time and remembers a trip to the Grand Canyon— which reminds him of his mortality as a speck in the cosmic universe and alludes to sexual maturation through symbolism. Vonnegut writes:

He was twelve years old, quaking as he stood with his mother and father on Bright Angel Point, at the rim of Grand Canyon [*sic.*]. The little human family was staring at the floor of the canyon, one mile straight down.

'Well,' said Billy's father, manfully kicking a pebble into space, 'there it *is.*' They had come to this famous place by automobile. They had had several blowouts on the way.

'It was worth the trip,' said Billy's mother raptly. 'Oh, God was it ever *worth* it.'

Billy hated the canyon. He was sure that he was going to fall in. His mother touched him, and he wet his pants. (89)

This quote, considering Vonnegut's snide and satirical style, reveals Billy to be a product of his parents' failures— even to the extent that Billy cannot help but piss himself, despite being twelve years old. The representation of urine and human touch mimics that of a young child, which purposefully causes the reader to question his psychological stability. It is not odd to be morbidly afraid of heights, the peculiar element of the passage is the simple act of urination. In terms of psychology, soiling oneself past infancy is often indicative of a mental disorder, often signaling anxiety and depression.⁷ Some would go as far as to say that urinary incontinence, the fancy term coined by psychoanalysts, in people under the age of 60 is almost entirely caused by stress and the repression of deeper anxieties that relate to mortality. The first portion of this excerpt dealing with the father depicts him as an insensitive individual. He disregards Billy's terrible anxiety and metaphorically asserts his dominance by showing Billy that, at the end of the day, he is still a feeble human being susceptible to death. Billy is terrified by the sheer amount of space there is in relation to his small body, but he cannot accurately describe his feelings, urinating in place of a valid response to his mother— another simple act of discontinuity that prevails well into his adulthood. Until the end of the novel, Billy has an underlying hatred towards his father— mostly for his toxic masculine characteristics that inspired him to throw Billy into the pool to learn how to swim and expose Billy to heights, one of his deathly fears. While I view this to be the father's cruel attempt at showcasing dominance, at the very least it may be seen as a form of neglect. Billy's father continually makes decisions that ostracize his son, making him feel less masculine and absurdly weak, which develops into a cowardly complex that costs the lives of three American soldiers during the war. Billy's father never truly asked Billy about his aspirations or

⁷Heymen, Steve "Psychological and cognitive variables affecting treatment outcomes for urinary and fecal incontinence." *Gastroenterology Journal*. (2004).

desire for the future, instead he forces his own choices onto his child, thus explaining Billy's boring career as an optometrist and the mediocre marriage he has to his obese wife.

Billy's act of peeing himself symbolically alludes to the Oedipus complex and the importance of his mother's touch suggests a deep-rooted mistrust Billy has towards his secure base. Throughout the text there is a notable disconnect between Billy's immediate family and himself, both as a child and as an adult. The fictional narrative that chronicles Billy's life includes two childhood memories, but Vonnegut makes a poignant argument by omitting fragments of Billy's trauma. Billy's life, as told in the short novel, is defined by the cyclical nature of reliving every moment of his existence without regard for temporality— perpetually forcing him to bear witness to his own mortality. However, in Billy's retelling of the story he can fathom two events from his childhood, the final remnants of a past long forgotten, suggesting that there is a correlation between memory and becoming "unstuck in time." Otherwise, Billy would retell more of his childhood, but he is limited to the two memories he can consciously draw from. This further corroborates the argument that Billy's plight is entirely internal and the notion of becoming unstuck more generally refers to painful memories that Billy explains. So, what this memory really signifies— in the grand scheme of the fatalist universe and his assassination— Billy has never successfully processed his mother's emotional absence and while her touch should be hypothetically the most comforting, becomes the most detached gesture of the entire novel. Billy, even at the age of 12, is terrified of the Grand Canyon and its implications as a symbol of mortality, but his mother's failure to comfort Billy reveals disorganized attachment in the form of not being able to control his own bladder. Insecure attachment, if we refer back to John Bowlby's *A Secure Base*, occurs when a mother fails to open up about her own issues and experiences. In turn, never allowing her child to learn from the mistakes of her past or

create a mutual understanding between mother and child of reality, which causes a deficiency in personality development.⁸ Without the various mechanisms our mothers teach us, in regards to knowledge, feeling, sexuality, and object permanence, we inevitably become like Billy— a warped individual who feels underlying hatred towards his father and hostility towards his mother’s absence. While it is not reasonable for us to assume that Billy’s mother was physically absent, Billy’s various thoughts and feelings suggest that she was emotionally detached from his childhood. In terms of attachment, an emotionally detached mother is arguably worse than a physically absent parent because, in the presence of distant parents, children often ponder “Why am I not good enough for my mother’s attention?” However, in light of Billy’s other traumatic experiences abroad in Germany, he is able to relinquish the animosity he closely held onto growing up about his parents’ failure to provide him with the attention he needed and the affection necessary to forge meaningful relationships in Billy’s adulthood.

2.4 Manifestations of Attachment in Adulthood and the Pleasure/Death Drives

Billy’s inability to find comfort in his mother and his inappropriate response showcase him as a perfect example of insecure attachment and Freud’s theoretical approach towards the two fundamental human drives. Freud, in his explanation of human drive, divides purpose and intent into two separate categories: Eros and Thanatos. Eros is the human drive for success, in terms of psychological and physical success, as well as reproduction, which is inherently portrayed as one of the most important elements of human existence.⁹ According to Freud, sexuality drives everything and it inevitably becomes a structural element of Postmodern

⁸ John Bowlby’s *A Secure Base- Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*: “The role of attachment in personality development,” pg 133.

⁹ Harry Slochower, “Eros and the Trauma of Death.” *American Imago*. Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 11-22

literature. We can look at popular examples of 1950's and 1960's Postmodern science-fiction, such as Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and recognize that sex is often satirized and often becomes performative in literature. In Burgess' novel rape culture is rampant and Huxley's uses the infamous "orgy porgy," a large sexual gathering of genetically manufactured clones, to drive home the point about the importance of sexuality to the human condition. Many of these texts are infamous for showing sex as an art form and psychological catharsis, Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* similarly uses obscure depictions of sex to provide its commentary about the Oedipus Complex and corroborating sexuality as an innate necessity for human affection. I believe some notable examples include Billy's constant visits to sex shop and the rambunctious sex he had with the porn star while on Tralfamadore. Vonnegut's satirical twist draws on mythical beings to forge the allusion to Greek mythology, which typically depicts eros as an embodiment of incest. The mythical creation of "eros" derives from Narcissus, a hunter who was driven by self-absorption and died entirely alone because he could not fall in love with anyone but his own reflection in the water (14). The incestual undertones come from Narcissus' inability to love, and his asexual tendencies that represent a larger issue of incest among Greek gods and their children. Billy fits into this dynamic because he develops the complex that Freud derives his "pleasure principle" from and the inherent desire for a male child to have sex with their mothers. While Billy was never sexually violated by his mother, there is an intentional distance between mother and child that accentuates sexuality and Billy's repressed desire to overcome his mother and die himself—leading into the second drive, thanatos.

Thanatos, in psychoanalytic terms, is the second human drive that dictates psychic discourse and understanding the psyche— according to Freud, it is the death drive, and Billy

often mentions this concept in passing. Thanatos embodies self-destructive behaviors and general abstention from reality.¹⁰ To quote Maria Kli, a North American psychoanalyst, “Freud assumed the existence of an urge tending toward destruction or the dissolution of life, and he perceived this to be an expression of a force of entropy in human beings, which aims at a return to the primordial undifferentiated condition of nonarising and nonceasing” (70). We definitely see these destructive behaviors and the underlying primordial desire to return to nothingness in Billy, and the various times he simply gives up or attempts to. During the war there were two instances where Billy begged that his comrades leave him to die or put him out of his misery themselves—which is an unsettling and fatalistic outlook on the death drive. Billy, especially in times of stress and almost certain death, derealizes and enters this “death drive” with the intent of ending his misery. However, as much contempt Billy has for his own life, he refuses suicide. He is assassinated by a fellow soldier in his late adulthood and, during his time abroad studying the Tralfamadorians, learns that there is no use attempting to escape his predetermined fate. Suicide is not an option, as savior figures and actions defy the logic of the universe as depicted by the aliens. Unless individuals are slated to kill themselves, they will merely fall victim to another ailment or possibly murder. In this sense, Billy cannot possibly challenge his fate, so he must patiently wait for the moment he becomes unstuck and experiences his death at the hands of another. Regardless of Billy’s inability to combat fate and commit suicide, this does not prevent him from experiencing thanatos as a form of existential crisis and an unconscious reaction to repressed trauma. When we skip forward a decade in Billy’s linear narrative, after the war has

¹⁰ Maria Kli, “Eros and Thanatos: A Nondualistic Interpretation: The Dynamic of Drives in Personal and Civilizational Development From Freud to Marcuse.” *The Psychoanalytic Review*, pp. 66-77

ended and before he has officially been visited by Tralfamadorians, the reader finds Billy trapped in a psych ward where he is forced to reconcile the trauma from his childhood and from his young adulthood in Europe. In this regard, he is forced to balance his eros, the drive for life associated with youth, and thanatos, the desire for death he quickly developed after witnessing the mutilation of countless corpses. The narrator in *Slaughterhouse-Five* states, “She upset Billy simply by being his mother. She made him feel embarrassed and ungrateful and weak because she had gone to so much trouble to give him life, and to keep that life going, and Billy didn’t really like life at all” (102). This brief description of Billy’s feeling of contempt for his mother is symbolic of this internal struggle of the Freudian Pleasure Principle. His mother, representative of false comfort and appearances, represents fertility and the sexual drive of eros, while Billy’s mental illness causes him to falsely accept thanatos as the tragic flaw that will bring about his demise. Billy’s sentiments of “embarrassment” and “ungratefulness” showcase the hostility towards his mother that persists in the modern day, and how she becomes a symbol of human sexuality and affection that Billy never became securely attached to.

After the elements of science fiction are stripped from the narrative and Billy’s character has been deconstructed, we ultimately learn that the trauma of World War II pales in comparison to the effect that his emotionally negligent mother had on his psychological development. The psychiatrists who assess Billy’s condition subsequently conclude that his insanity and derealization stems entirely from the pain of childhood. Vonnegut writes:

Nobody else suspected that [Billy] was going crazy. Everybody else thought he looked fine and was acting fine. Now he was in the hospital. The doctors agreed: He *was* going crazy.

[The psychiatrists] didn't think it had anything to do with the war. They were sure Billy was going to pieces because his father had thrown him into the deep end of the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool when he was a little boy, and had then taken him to the rim of the Grand Canyon. (100)

While it is the traumatic experience of the Dresden bombing that pushes Billy's fragile sanity over the edge, these two aforementioned memories of his childhood possess an even more profound impact on his formation of identity. Vonnegut implies that Billy, a product of World War II and machination, is psychologically stunted by these memories that Billy fails to accept and warps his perspective of time.¹¹ The psychiatrists' conclusion that it is Billy's ill-formed relationship with his parents that causes his strife in his adulthood is ultimately a Bowlbian and fatalistic outlook on psychological development. The notion that Billy's life has not been vexed strictly by the predetermined nature of the universe, but also from the attachment style Billy inherited from his mother is provocative. I believe Vonnegut, while slightly satirizing attachment theorists and Freudian perspectives, utilizes the knowledge he possesses regarding attachment to illuminate Billy as a product of failed parenting—specifically the tropes of abuse, abandonment, and apathy. To this extent, we may take a look at Billy directly and examine how closely he resembles his own detached mother and the notion that insecure attachment is inherited as a result of intergenerational trauma and lackluster parenting. Billy's "life drive," or eros, is hindered by his own childhood memories, causing him to internalize the parenting mechanics of his mother and father, and remain at a distance from his own children. In addition to issues with

¹¹ Cacicedo, Alberto. "'You Must Remember This': Trauma and Memory in *Catch-22* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 46, no. 4, Aug. 2005, pp. 357–368.

parenting, the relationship Billy has with Valencia is built entirely on a false premise— Billy hates his wife, repeatedly calling her intellectually challenged and “fat.” It is with the death of his wife and the relief he experiences from it when our assumptions are corroborated regarding his contempt for his wife, which is likely a manifestation of repressed anger towards women who assume the matriarchal position. Valencia, after learning about a plane crash that Billy survived, drives to his hospital as fast as possible and gets into a nearly devastating car crash. Both drivers sustain minor injuries, but Valencia is able to make it to the parking lot of the hospital where she quite ironically dies of carbon monoxide poisoning. This occurs at the conclusion of the novel, towards the end of Billy’s functional years and career as an optometrist, and signals the demise of secure bases and superficial romantic relationships— leaving Billy Pilgrim entirely alone.

In many ways Billy’s plight as an individual unstuck in time is modeled directly after the nature of perpetuating attachment issues and negligent parenting that causes the absence of expression and affection in children. Billy, in his exploration of the psyche and memory, does not recount the joys of parenting or the importance that his own children had on his life. The narrator’s perspective disregards entire decades, during this time Billy has a son and daughter, but their upbringing is never mentioned. He excludes his own parenting style, and how he unconsciously transmitted the pain caused by disorganized attachment, but we are left to assume that Valencia’s ideal matriarchal qualities suffice in place of Billy’s emotional presence for their children. Billy unfortunately becomes the negligent parent that he once had contempt for, and his children do not truly possess any affection for their father— they care for him in his old age because he did the same for them in their youth. In the final chapter of the novel, to summarize the philosophy he has adopted, Billy reasons, “We will all love forever, no matter how dead we may sometimes seem to be, I am not overjoyed. Still— if I am going to spend eternity visiting

this moment and that, I'm grateful that many of those moments are nice" (211). His rationalization for being a negligent parent and experiencing these moments of being unstuck in time communicates that he can not help his own actions, therefore there is no reason to attempt. He concludes the novel not with a better understanding of self or a particularly elucidating account of Dresden, instead he ends where he began— alone in his primordial existence. He accepts his fate as a man incapable of mortality, but concludes that the joyful sections of his life will likely outweigh his trauma. As a reflection of mental illness and insecure-disorganized attachment, this is Billy accepting the condition that has been passed down to him and finding beauty disguised in the throes of trauma. He is successful in recognizing his struggle, but does not appear any closer to curing his illness by the conclusion. As I see it, Vonnegut frames Billy as a tragic figure, doomed entirely by poor luck and fatalism. He was unluckily birthed into an unloving family, drafted in the second world war, and nearly died in a plane crash. Billy, despite how we see him as the reader, is a moral individual when we disregard his inability to successfully father his children and the various failures in his lifetime. More than anything else, Billy is a product of his war-torn environment and parents that were unable to provide him with the affection necessary to facilitate healthy growth. Billy finds no purpose in changing his conditions or escaping the curse of being unstuck in time, instead he recognizes that, as the Tralfamadorians teach him, his condition is how his life was intended to unravel— there is no free will or autonomy, we must merely accept our fate for what it is.

Section Three: *Neon Genesis Evangelion*: The End of Consciousness and Start of Forever

3.1 Contextualizing Eva(s) and the New Gospel

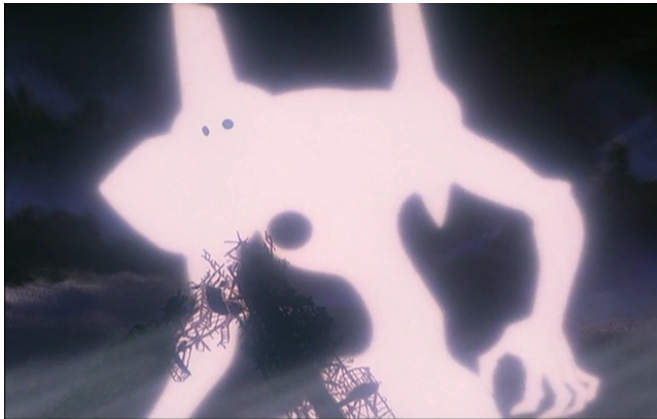
Hideaki Anno's 1997 *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is a cult classic work of science fiction, mainly for its tendency to transcend the realm of mecha anime and craft a narrative regarding the deconstruction of the human psyche. Mecha anime in Japanese culture and fiction is based around the concept of mechanization, as the title suggests, and the further development of technology following World War II. Animators forged a genre that plays on the typical tropes of the military-industrial complex and comments on the social tendency to construct ground-breaking technology for the purpose of devastating other countries or proving economic superiority. Hideaki Anno's work functions in the same manner by crafting a story that conveys the psychological turmoil that accompanies being born in societies that have since been irreversibly damaged by their nation's desire to prove dominance, especially considering nuclear devastation of Japanese cities. Narrowing in on the specifics of *Evangelion*, there are three central protagonists: Shinji Ikari, First Child, Asuka Langley Soryu, Second Child, and Rei Ayanami, Third Child. They are brought together by their exceptional promise to control the mecha robot humanoids, specifically manufactured to destroy the Angels that threaten to cause the Third Impact—which will end humanity and return us back to the Primordial Soup, symbolized by LCL or the blood of Lilith, a seed of human creation. Notably, what brings these children together is the damage they have suffered as results of poor parenting, devastating attachment issues, and the central issue of overcoming the existential void that loneliness creates. This section will briefly address Episodes 1-21, while the rest of this essay will present an episodic analysis of the series. The first 21 episodes function, more or less, to appeal to the

mecha anime genre, but the last 5 episodes present an entirely unique narrative on human consciousness and what follows its conclusion.

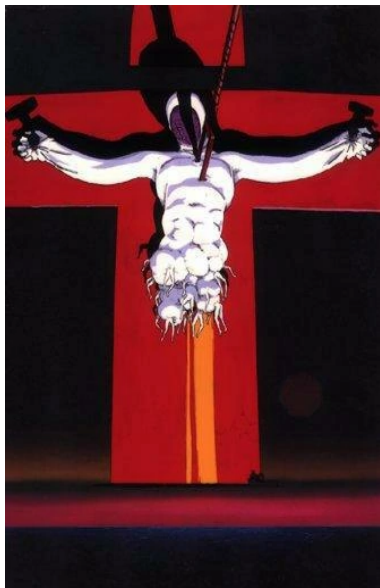
Unlike *Slaughterhouse Five*, Anno's anime dives entirely into the realm of science fiction, interweaving the human condition with the progression of technology. The narrative begins long before the birth of the protagonists, extending as far back as Feudal Japan, to explain existential and religious phenomena. In this manner, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* becomes a contemporary rendition of the Christian and Jewish Biblical Genesis. Periods of human history are divided by the Japanese officials in a manner similar to how we situate B.C.E. and C.E. in terms of years, except they refer to two specific events that have devastated the world and changed how they view religion: the First Impact and the Second Impact. We may view these as allusions to two fundamentally pivotal historical events. The First Impact may be equated to the birth and death of Jesus Christ¹², while the Second Impact more clearly symbolizes humanity's self-destructive qualities and the conclusion of World War II. In addition, Anno uses the First Impact and the lore that proceeds it to provide a commentary on the human condition, and a speculative look on religion and its false beginnings. The writer does not present to us a God, but rather omniscient beings titled the First Ancestral Race that planted the "seeds of life" that grew into Earth. These two seeds, or beings, are called Adam—"Fruit of Life"—and Lilith—"Fruit of Knowledge"—who create humanity from their genetic material (Figures 3 and 4). Lilith's arrival on Earth causes the First Impact, as this seed of life was never intended to land on Earth as Adam had already crashed into Antarctica. The First Ancestral race intended for only one seed to arrive

¹² Mariana Ortega: "My Father, He Killed Me; My Mother, She Ate Me: Self, Desire, Engendering, and the Mother in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*." *Mechademia*, vol. 2, 2007, pp. 216–232.

on each planet to ensure their species can live among as many planets as possible because these beings almost faced extinction themselves. This depiction of Lilith, as a terrifying blob-like entity dripping genetic material and missing the lower half of its body, is a direct commentary on the nature of religion and the form it assumes in the anime.



(Figure 3): Adam in his most liberated form.



(Figure 4): Lilith nailed to the cross and held in place by the Spear of Longinus found in Nerv basement.

Hideaki Anno derives his inspiration for the main antagonists of the anime series, Angels, from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The eighteen Angels that threaten to reach the embryonic Adam held at Nerv, Tokyo-3, were prophesied by the authors of the manuscripts in the true Jewish faith¹³. In this Japanese Mecha rendition of the Bible, the eighteen Angels do not pose as spiritual beings intended to aid humanity in its plight, instead they exist for the sole purpose of reaching Adam and causing the Third Impact. Lilith and Adam are the first Angels to arrive on Earth, and their souls are detached from their bodies. Lilith's soul takes form as a teenage girl Rei Ayanami, an Eva Pilot, while Adam's soul manifests as Kawaru Nagisa— an Angel made by Seele—a United Nations technological company that works in tandem with Nerv to cause the Third Impact. The remaining sixteen Angels are fought against until the conclusion of the series, but possess poignant symbolic qualities in terms of religious significance. I believe that Anno, through his speculation of Jewish mythology and the roots of Christianity, depicts religion as a result of the human condition— us tirelessly pleading to the gods above that seemingly do not care about their people. He takes a critical approach, combining typical tropes of crucifixion, the Savior Complex, politics, and science fiction that were not previously in conversation with each other. By intertwining these topics of religion and mecha robots, there is a notable juxtaposition of the antiquated writings of the Scrolls and the technologically robust Evangelions that represent a Japanese society that has radically drifted away from religion.

¹³ In relation to the true Jewish faith, these scrolls are deemed crucial towards understanding Christianity and Judaism, including scripture and knowledge that helped illuminate the world during the time of Jesus Christ. Outside of the anime series, these scrolls are considered deeply important documents and one of the few remaining collections of prose and religious manuscripts dating back to approximately the third century C.E. In Judaism these scrolls are significant because of their philosophical purpose, and, in fact, do not mention Jesus Christ or Christianity— merely acting as words of prophets, visionaries, and those attempting to understand the world around them. The knowledge contained within the Dead Sea Scrolls debates mysticism and magic, lacking a definitive meaning and causing an existential debate regarding what the Israelites believed to be “Angels.”

Across the span of billions of years Lilith's blood transforms into organismal life. Near 2000 C.E. Japan forms a government entity titled Nerv on the basis that they have discovered the "God" Lilith, in Tokyo-3. They suspect that there is an intrinsic link between humanity and Lilith, who they seize and keep prisoner in their base to use her blood as LCL, or Linking Cable Liquid.¹⁴ The agency, Nerv, travels to Antarctica after noticing a foreign object has crashed into it; they have reason to suspect it is Adam and they go to research its purpose and role in the formation of humanity. Nerv, in their pursuit of power, experiments with Adam once discovered and combines human DNA with Adam found in its embryonic state. This combination of genes causes the Second Impact, a cataclysmic explosion that decimates half the globe's population and melts the Antarctic ice caps, in turn devastating the environment. In addition to half of the global population lost in the Impact, ensuing tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, and the shift in the Earth's axis devastates many nations that were not initially touched by the explosion. In the following few years there are large political reforms and Japan takes the lead as a socio-economic and technological global super power. In response to the Second Impact, Nerv takes inspiration from the form of Adam and creates Evangelion units or Evas (Figure 5). These are the titular iron-clad mecha robot humanoids that are later utilized by the protagonists of the series. These Evas are designed and constructed by Dr. Gendo Ikari, father to the main character Shinji Ikari, and other scientists who survived the Second Impact during the Katsuragi Expedition to retrieve Adam. In their trial run of Evangelion use, Dr. Ikari and Shinji proudly watch Yui Ikari, Shinji's mother, step into Eva Unit 02. After the experiment begins, Shinji watches his mother revert to LCL and be absorbed into the Eva Unit—a source of trauma he does not acknowledge until many years

¹⁴ This oxygenated fluid is used in the cockpit of the Evas to initiate psychobiological connection between the Pilot and the internal computer or mind of the mecha robot.

later. The failed experiment leaves Shinji entirely alone, as his father dives deeper into his scientific research and leaves him with Yui's immediate family.



(Figure 5): Shinji's Eva Unit 01, built in the likeness of Adam.

The central issue, when the Angels have been cleared and the Evas destroyed beyond recognition, becomes the United Nations' hidden attempts to revert the world to LCL, or the primordial soup. This project is set forth by men of power; these individuals who govern the United Nations argue that human suffering can easily be remedied by dissolving the A.T. Fields humans possess that hold their ego and bodily form. Nerv and Seele share the intention of causing the Third Impact and the return to the existential void that precedes consciousness, though Dr. Gendo Ikari possesses a motive detached from the privileged men of Seele. Gendo throughout the series has been a man devoid of emotion, unforgivably distant from his sole child, but we do learn that he begins the Project strictly to reunite with Yui Ikari. While his childhood is not entirely explored or his patterns of attachment, the distance created between parent and child becomes the overwhelming frame of the series. We see Yui Ikari, the typical mother capable of fostering secure and emotional attachment lost inside the body of Eva Unit 01, while Gendo Ikhari immediately gives up on parenting Shinji. The overwhelming preoccupation of Gendo's

throughout the series becomes joining consciousnesses with his deceased wife through the form of the Third Impact. While we believe that Gendo's intentions are to save humanity from the wrath of the Angels, it becomes clear that his sole purpose is to end the loneliness he feels. In this regard the Human Instrumentality Project symbolizes the human need for affection, attachment to loved ones, and the fear of mortality. Gendo Ikari, in his acquisition of Nerv and Lilith, manifests Lilith's soul into the body of Rei Ayanami— a pilot and soul fragment of Yui that Gendo cherishes more than his own child. The entirety of the anime's conflict derives not from the Angels or the Seeds of Life, but from the human desire to evade loneliness.

Gendo Ikari, in his experimentation with the sources of Adam and Lilith, is able to extract the soul from Lilith's corpse held in the basement of the Nerv Headquarters nailed to a cross, and manifest her in the form of Rei Ayanami. Rei, or The First Child, is produced as a result of a failed attempt to retrieve Yui Ikari from her LCL form in the Eva, successfully replicating a portion of Yui and granting her the soul of Lilith. The First Child is taken care of and raised by Gendo, creating a false daughter-father dynamic that Shinji grows to resent later on in the series. Rei Ayanami throughout the series is notoriously lonely, evading interactions with other students, and talking minimally outside the presence of Gendo. She views her reality in terms of existential queries, often relating to what it means to be lonely and questioning the exact method of achieving happiness. She does not allow herself to find happiness or contentment in the presence of others, which is a negative behavior that Gendo reinforces. Gendo Ikari plays the role of an overprotective father, and causes Rei to strictly find contentment in his presence— explaining her desire to forgo her relationships with Shinji and Asuka to remain close to Gendo. Rei does not function as a major figure of attachment, as she is merely an Angel, a sentient being sometimes incapable of emotion, but does play a central role in inciting the Third Impact. The

Third Impact is prophesied to occur when Adam and Lilith intertwine, meaning that at the conclusion of the series, Rei will be central to the insurrection of the Project. She will be tasked with deciding who she shall grant the final decision regarding the Project, whether it be Gendo or his son, Shinji.

3.2 Ep.22- 23 Asuka Addresses Arael: “Please Don’t Stop Being My Mother!”

The Second Child, Asuka Langley Soryu was born from an elitist mother, Arael, with sperm donated by a “genetically superior” German man, symbolically rendering her as a literal product of greatness. This quickly becomes one of the few ways she is able to reaffirm herself of her worth and contributions to the world as an Eva pilot. Because her father was a sperm donor, Asuka never was able to foster a relationship with him and her mother’s insanity led her to be taken from her custody. Prior to the conclusion of the series, in Ep. 23 of *Evangelion*, there is an important moment for psychoanalysis that occurs during a brutal conflict between Asuka and the Angels, in which she is “mindraped”¹⁵ and the viewer is able to delve into the root of her attachment issues. In this moment of analepsis, Asuka returns to her youth, prior to the death of her mother, in which she intensely cries to garner the attention of Arael. Throughout the series there are brief glimpses into Asuka’s psychological condition, revealing her superiority complex, desire to outperform the other pilots, and self-hatred, but in this scene the Angel directly attacks her psyche. At the beginning of this scene, we see Asuka as a young child holding a stuffed animal, which may be classified as a transitional object— something, usually a toy, that children

¹⁵ The word “mindrape” is used because Japanese-to-English translators assert that this is the best possible verb to describe the amount of psychological damage the Angel has done onto Asuka while remaining true to the Japanese language.

utilize to learn dependence from their mothers.¹⁶ Asuka intensely clings onto her stuffed animal, the last remaining memento of her mother's affection, while she cries increasingly louder, as Arael remains distant and fails to pay attention to her. This represents Asuka at her most vulnerable state, without human affection or the positive reinforcement necessary to form an identity separate from her childhood trauma. Underneath the facade of the mecha robot and her capacity to slaughter Angels without hesitation, she is merely a frightened child irreversibly damaged by a mother who failed to provide her with the attention necessary to facilitate a secure attachment.

The scene transitions into Asuka as a teenager refusing a stuffed animal from an unknown man, arguing that she no longer needs a transitional object for assurance because she was forced to mature far quicker than those around her. Her memories of trauma began in her youth when her mother's sanity deteriorated, and Arael quickly grew to resent Asuka for not being a product of a loving relationship, and merely a sperm donation. Arael towards the end of her life did not accept her daughter, leaving Asuka in a constant state of self-hatred and doubt. It becomes evident throughout the series that Asuka often questions her worth, her knowledge, and her capacity to handle relationships. Without the secure base that a mother typically provides, Asuka is unable to accept affection from others or forge positive romantic relationships, explaining her affection for older men that fit the father figure trope. This is made evident through Arael's inability to distinguish between her daughter and a plush doll that resembles Asuka. The scene depicts Arael tenderly caring for this plush doll in the psych ward while Asuka

¹⁶ Carole J. Litt, "Theories of Transitional Object Attachment: An Overview." *International Journal of Behavioral Development*. Vol. 9, no. 3. Sept. 1986.

tears up with rage and envy. Asuka screams, “Please look at me! I’m begging you, Momma. Please don’t stop being my mother... I’m not momma’s doll, I’ll think for myself, and I’ll live for myself.”¹⁷ These lines are told by Asuka, now presenting the voice of a child, creating a stark contrast between the open sadness of Asuka as a child, and her failure in her teenage years to accurately convey her emotions. She screams “I’ll think for myself, and I’ll live for myself,” which turns out to be a complete farce. From this young child we hear the voice of pain and frailty, promising herself that when she “grows up” she will determine her own free will and purpose—an idea that she disproves later. Throughout the anime we get constant reminders from Asuka that her prowess/fine mechanical skills as a pilot is the sole semblance of purpose that she can find in her own life. She convinces herself that she has a choice over defending the planet and piloting the Eva, but as the viewer we recognize that she was forced to emigrate from Germany to Japan to pilot, and the battles against the Angels are gradually deteriorating her sanity.

As this particular scene progresses in Ep. 22, the traumatic memories become more intense and the extent of her attachment issues is revealed: Arael had committed suicide in Asuka’s youth, and her daughter was left to discover the corpse of her neglectful mother. This episode begins a stylistic element of narrative that Anno uses throughout the last four episodes, specifically the deconstruction of scenes, including flashing images and Japanese symbols in conjunction with existential questions that appear across the screen in intimate scenes of

¹⁷ “Asuka Confronts Arael.” Uploaded by Robinheathen. YouTube, originally from Hideaki Anno’s *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Ep. 22. Director’s Cut. July 2007,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJ0doO3VFjc&t=98s>

character interiority. This notably occurs as the Human Instrumentality Project begins and Anno creates the effect of uniting consciousnesses of characters by presenting a monologue by a particular character in question and distant responses that appear in the form of questions and answers amongst the other central characters. For example, this episode utilizes the attachment figure, Arael, to probe Asuka's consciousness and the mother's comments act as the main indicators of Asuka's character flaws. For example, Arael poses two specific questions to Asuka: "Please, Asuka, [will] you die with me?" and "Mama? Who are *you*?" To accentuate the issue of childhood trauma and parenting failures, Anno places a frame of the small doll that Arael believes to be Asuka hanging from a noose overlaying the haunting vocal words of her mother (Figure 6). The questions are fundamental to examining Asuka as a product of insecure, anxious attachment and Post-World War II campaigns for power. In response to Arael's question of dying with her Asuka cries, "If that's what you want. I'll die with you. Just please don't stop being my mother," leading into the second question ("Who are you?"). This response is indicative of insecure attachment because Asuka reverts to her childhood voice and decides that death is worth more than living if she may finally receive the validation she has been deprived of growing up.



(Figure 6): Arael's doll, representative of Asuka, hanging from a noose.

In response to these questions Asuka's consciousness presents five fragments of earlier episodes that reveal the exact constituents of her troubled mind, taking the form of distinct phrases and scenes. For exactly one minute and six seconds we watch these fragments repeat approximately six times. In their respective order Asuka screams "I'm Asuka. Asuka Langley Soryu. Charmed, huh?", "What are you, stupid?", "Now's my chance.", "Look at me, damn it, look at me!" and, "No, none of this is the real me." The selection of scenes and phrases depicts Asuka as self-absorbed, unable to express her emotions, and deeply affected by the amount of attention she receives. The most important line "Look at me, damn it, look at me!" is a fragment from Ep. 15 in which she attempts to garner attention from a man, approximately thirty years older than her, by ripping open her shirt and revealing her breasts. He responds to Asuka: "Oh, Asuka, you're still a child." She internalizes this rejection and, as a result of her absent attachment figures, is unable to redefine her worth and accept that love often goes unreciprocated. However, the most notable aspect of this interaction is her immediate resortment to showing her breasts as means of earning the affection of men. This action reveals a deeper layer of psychological turmoil and absence that Asuka believes sexual intimacy will compensate for. "None of this is the real me" refers to the three clips that precede it, and presents Asuka as ultimately rejecting herself and the forms in which her trauma has manifested. Her rejection of attachment figures and her inability to properly live with Shiji and the Nerv official, Mitsato Katsuragi, is apparent. To an extent her desire for affection and attention, as presented in these fragments of memory, hinders her psychological capacity to control her Eva Unit, and she loses all sense of purpose. As previously stated, Asuka derives her value from her performance as an Eva Pilot, and as the series progresses her trauma becomes increasingly evident, ending her ability to pilot altogether. It is important to note that all of these fragments and visions of Asuka's

past are brought about by her mental “rape” by an Angel. She had refused throughout the series to discuss her childhood or her parents, but after the Angel manipulates her mind, it is able to attack Asuka where it hurts the most— her memories and emotions. The Angel manages to extract the repressed memories of the subconscious, and uses them against Asuka instead of conducting a physical battle with the mecha robot, which is an interesting deviation from the conventions of Mecha anime. Hideaki Anno in this particular scene displays Asuka’s character flaws, not in the simple manner of providing a flashback or memory in the form of dialogue. The Angel invades Asuka’s mind and finds the roots of her trauma, and we discover that one of her central issues is the fear that she will always be romantically alone.

The conclusion of this psychoanalytic sequence displays Asuka being visibly overwhelmed, stumbling through crowds of cloaked individuals representing her emotional baggage, and encountering Shinji— the final insight into her trauma. The cloaked individuals flood through her vision, until she encounters one close up and is forced to look directly into the transparent face of the apparition. This action of looking into a translucent surface imitates the quality of introspection, or symbolically looking into a mirror to judge one’s own appearance. I view this scene as exactly that, Asuka being trapped by herself and forced to look directly into the face of her frustrations, which proves to be Shinji. In response to viewing Shinji in her montage of memories Asuka screams, “Why are *you* there!? Damn you! You don’t do anything for me! You won’t help me! You won’t even hold me! You’re no one! No one! No one! [In the child voice of Asuka from earlier in the scene] Why won’t you look at me?!” This scene is the climax of internal struggle and the rejection of self, as we see two sides of Asuka arguing over the significance of Shinji and combating her own misunderstanding of romance. Throughout the series Asuka purposefully remains distant from Shinji and mocks him for showcasing affection

towards her, causing a miscommunication between the two that manifests into an internalized hatred. She is confused by her own emotions, unsure of the conventions of romance and displaying affection that are typically acquired through interactions with our attachment figures. She fails to recognize that her own feelings towards Shinji are based on romantic interests, and her inability to pilot her Eva Unit derives from her acquisition of trauma and never effectively learning to cope with the weight of baggage. The final question (“Why won’t you look at me?”) is her psyche reverting back to the need of intimacy and affection that is typically associated with infants. This question is posed to both Shinji and Arael, as they parallel each other in their failure to provide Asuka with the affection necessary to facilitate healthy attachments. Hearing this question from the voice of a young child evokes a deep sentiment of sadness that is acquired in the early stages of infant attachment, when we learn the concept of absence and object permanence, and how this separation anxiety pervades into our adulthoods— depicting Asuka as vexed by an insecure attachment style.

Immediately following, we see the head of the transitional object, the teddy bear, falling off the body of the doll and her childhood self approaching Asuka in the present, naked on the floor of a playground. The child poses the crucial question to Asuka: “Are you lonely?” This gestures back to the series being a large metaphor for humans overcoming loneliness, in that the scene not only depicts the issue of attachment, but also questions the intrinsic loneliness of the human condition. Asuka immediately denies this accusation of being lonely, and the child disintegrates into stuffing, rendering her as a doll. The last thirty seconds of this particular scene is then composed entirely of digitally altered still-frames from throughout the series that plays over Asuka having her final monologue. These frames appear to invert the color of originally animated scenes, and inserted within these frames are Japanese symbols that serve to further

dissect the narrative. The most notable of these symbols and phrases includes: “Father (父),” “Mother (母),” “Attachment behavior (愛着行動),” and “I am not a doll! (人形にはなりたくない)” Over these seemingly disjointed visuals, there is a dialogue in the form of question and answer between Asuka and her younger self. This interaction concludes with Asuka screaming, “I don’t really love anyone! I can live on my own!” To begin unpacking, the symbolism of destroying a transitional object can be viewed as the metaphorical detachment from the mother, as these objects function as placeholders for infants’ mothers while the children learn about separation and discovering self apart from our connection to our mothers.

The decapitation of such a sacred object to a child is an effective representation of Asuka learning to let go of the trauma caused by her mother’s suicide and absence. The inversion of colors and the discontinuity that occurs at the level of visual coherence symbolizes Asuka’s fall from grace as an Eva Pilot and the effect of narrative fragmentation that occurs psychologically in response to episodes of trauma. On the note of the conventions of Japanese language, all of these frames include kanji, while the singular line “I am not a doll” is written in hiragana.¹⁸ The conscious choice of representing such a weighted phrase in the most elementary alphabet reverts Asuka to the voice of a child in a visual sense. This is Asuka promising to herself that she will begin living for herself, and end her constant chase for recognition, but even this turns out to be a

¹⁸ Note: In translation, Hiragana literally means “Simple.” It is the most elementary alphabet of the Japanese lettering system. Hiragana is typically taught to children in elementary schools prior to learning Katakana and Kanji (more complex and advanced alphabets) in junior high school. As a reminder, Asuka is a graduated university student at the age of 14, making it particularly emblematic of behavioral regression.

false assertion of self. The Third Child never consciously overcomes her trauma, and instead it manifests itself to the point of mental exhaustion and Asuka can no longer pilot Eva Unit 02.

Episode 23 showcases Asuka's total mental decline and her perceived failure, which assumes the form of teenage angst, including running away from home, rejecting school activities, and playing video games to cope with the weight of "letting down" the world. From the perspective of the audience, we slowly watch her wasting away, as her already skinny features become grim and emaciated. Asuka falls victim to the central issues of the anime, specifically loneliness and learning to accept the human condition for what it is as an imperfect social construct. At the beginning of the episode, we witness Asuka playing video games, while her friend anxiously takes care of her, annoyed by her clinginess and refusal to go home with Shinji, yet also concerned by her poor health. Her friend resigns to allow Asuka to sleep over, but prior to falling asleep Asuka symbolically assumes the fetal position and reveals to her friend, "When I didn't win with my Eva I lost whatever value I might've had. I hate everything. And I hate myself the most. I don't care about anything anymore, there's no point" (03:00). As I've mentioned a few times, Asuka's character derives her own value from her importance and prowess as an Eva Pilot— even from a young age she has possessed an incredible promise for piloting. Her main issue is not that she cannot perform well, but instead she fails to reconcile her expectations of self with social expectations learned at a young age. She rebukes her successful fights against the Angels and her countless achievements and instead obsesses over this singular moment in which she was psychologically ravaged by the Angel in Ep. 22. Then, Asuka receives encouragement and praise from her close friend, but this validation is insufficient to replace the validation from her mother that she is ultimately lacking. Considering Arael's suicide and her attempts to kill Asuka along with her, Asuka additionally has a difficult time accepting affection

from others, likely caused by a form of separation anxiety or trauma caused by the passing of her mother.

In the present, Arael's absence has created an interpersonal dynamic between Asuka and those around her, in which she refuses to attach herself to others, fearful that the end of a relationship will mimic the same pain she felt when her mother died. The significance of the fetal position in this first scene of Ep. 23 derives from the issues of attachment and relationships to mother that symbolize issues of infancy and adolescence. The fetal position in Freudian psychology, in terms of anxiety attacks and psychological disorders, represents a form of psychological regression, an unconscious coping mechanism in which individuals revert back to an earlier stage of psychological development. In an article titled "Regression: Diagnosis, Evaluation, and Management" by psychoanalysts Hermioni N. Lokko and Theodore A. Stern, they assert:

Regressive behavior can be a manifestation of inadequate or maladaptive coping; some patients employ immature defense mechanisms to manage the stress of illness. A patient who is overwhelmed by a diagnosis might automatically exhibit 1 or many regressive behaviors. In addition to communicating one's level of distress, regressive behaviors usually provoke others to provide them more attention, which reinforces the regressive behavior.

As Lokko and Stern note, maladaptive coping strategies often draw the attention of others, and peoples' expression of frustration through these negative mechanisms accentuates an underlying issue of mental illness. While I do not venture as far as to say Asuka has a mental disorder, she exhibits features of derealization and narrative discontinuity that are similar to those possessed by Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. That is to say that trauma causes issues across cultures

related to interpersonal relationships and, in fact, reinforces mental illness through the impact of repetition. Referring to Asuka's attempted murder by Arael and her failure to fight off the Angels, these fragments of memory repeat perpetually in a cyclical manner that ultimately leads to her demise. The aforementioned scene in Ep. 22 where she repeats key phrases from earlier episodes captures this extremely well, visualizing and representing trauma through violent flashbacks. There is likely a portion of Asuka that reveals this to her friend because she genuinely has no one to confide in, but the other fragmented pieces of her psyche long for the attention she never received from her mother. In this regard, Asuka refuses to attach herself to others— she refuses affection from Shinji and denies romantic feelings, despite her constant inquisition of his sexuality and does not address Rei Ayanami. Fundamentally, Asuka lacks the Pleasure Drive necessary to carry forward and this inevitably causes her demise in Ep. 23, in which she loses all usefulness and wastes away. Her regressive behaviors, including ceasing all function, losing her temper, and crying out to her dead mother in moments of stress, inhibit her Pleasure Drive, and render her in the same image she possesses on screen— as a fearful child in the fetal position.

The following scene depicts Asuka as unable to sync with her Eva Unit, signaling psychological distress, and proving useless to defeat Angel 17. Rei assumes battle position and is severely damaged by the Angel, and when Asuka is called to protect Unit 00 she is unable to move the Eva. In the midst of the chaos she screams to herself, “Am I even linked to this thing anymore? Even if I go I'll just be a burden to others... I just don't care anymore... It just won't move. It won't move!” (05:44-08:05). The visual along with the audio showcases Asuka with her head face downwards, in an obvious expression of defeat and child-like frustration (Figure 7). This symbolic gesture of defeat signifies the fragmentation of her pride and ego, as well as

regression into fits of tantrums and derealization, which further damage her psyche and perpetuates a cycle of instability. She becomes entirely detached from her sense of purpose, which stems from the Eva Unit, and, in turn, accepts death as her sole outcome. Even her statement is a signal of defeat, admitting to herself that she is apathetic towards the idea of death and piloting serves strictly as a means of reaffirming whatever value she gathers for herself. Asuka could not possibly care less for the safety of humanity or the Third Impact, after she loses her potential, she recognizes that she piloted for strictly selfish reasons— namely the recognition, attention, and praise Asuka received as the best Eva Pilot. Now that she no longer has the praise she always sought, Asuka falls into a steep decline and her attachment issues manifest into self-destructive qualities— resulting in her failure as a pilot, a person seeking emotional intimacy, and an individual seeking autonomy.



(Figure 7): Asuka accepts defeat, symbolically in the womb of Eva Unit 02.

3.3 Ep. 24-25 Shinji Ikari, Kawaru Nagisa (“I’m Saying I Love You”), and Fragmentation

Shinji Ikari is a product of attachment issues, losing his mother at a young age and facing rejection from his father. Throughout the anime he often has bouts of regressive episodes similar to those of Asuka, giving into complete anxiety attacks, fits of derealization, childlike trauma, and the Death Drive. This is the case for most of Shinji’s relationships and encounters, he collapses easily underneath the expectations of others and fails to put aside his egocentric desires for the purpose of preserving humanity. More or less, Shinji lacks a Pleasure Drive altogether; unlike Asuka, who found solace in being a Pilot and receiving notoriety, Shinji does not receive joy or a sense of existence from his role as an Eva Pilot— he merely fulfills the script set by his father in hopes that he may receive the appraisal Gendo failed to give Shinji in his adolescence. This psychological burden of Shinji’s rejection by his sole attachment figure weighs heavily on the protagonist well into his teenage years and similarly creates the fear of initiating platonic or romantic relationships as a result of previous separation anxiety. Ep. 24 introduces the first character that Shinji relays sensitive information to and develops feelings towards: Kawaru Nagisa, the Fifth Child. Kawaru is designated the Fifth Child by Seele who ultimately sends the young man to initiate the Third Impact; Kawaru is the final Angel, an incarnation of Adam. This narrative is complicated by the odd dynamic formed between Shinji and Kawaru, in Ep. 24 as they come across each other sitting in the rubble of destroyed Tokyo-3. The episode quickly shifts to the scene following Kawaru’s synchronization tests with the other pilots, in which Shinji finally receives affirmation of love and worth from Kawaru. This same-sex relationship is Shinji’s first venture into romance, leaving a substantial void in his absence and teaching the protagonist the process of detachment from romantic relationships.

This scene occurs in the showers, in which Shinji and Kawaru discuss the fundamental nature of human loneliness, sitting a couple feet apart with a peculiar tension; this scene functions as Shinji's segue into understanding himself through his interactions with others. Kawaru immediately presents an interest in Shinji that is obvious, but confirmed by his confession of romance to Shinji in the shower room. The frame focuses on Shinji and Kawaru facing a wall in the communal shower and after a long stretch of silence Kawaru states:

You are extremely afraid of any kind of initial contact, aren't you? Are you *that* afraid of other people? I know that by keeping others at a distance you avoid a betrayal of your trust. Thereby you may not be hurt that way, you mustn't forget that you must endure the loneliness. Man can never completely erase the sadness because all men are fundamentally alone [Grasps Shinji's hand]... Pain is something that man must endure in his heart. And since the heart feels pain so easily some believe life is pain. You are delicate like glass, that is your heart is. This is worth earning my empathy. I'm saying *I love you*. (08:34-09:40)

Almost paradoxically, Kawaru, a protagonist whose history is not explored and an Angel produced from Adam, is able to express romantic sentiments without hesitation and learn to divulge feelings in confidence to those he trusts. He immediately recognizes that the emotions that he feels towards Shinji are genuine to the extent that a post-human being can fathom the complexities of such human sentiments, such as trust and love. In addition to recognizing these human traits, he is able to identify loneliness and explain how intricately it is interweaved in the human condition— Kawaru argues that sadness exists as a result of absence and detachment from those capable of providing us the support we need in times of distress. Also, in the same regard that Kawaru is an individual without parents and a product of the Second Impact, he is

able to comprehend that Shinji's loneliness assumes the form of pain. Shinji and many other characters of the anime seemingly convert these feelings of absence and lack of attachment into aforementioned regressive behaviors. These prove to be central to the plot of Ep. 25 towards the conclusion and equate to an existential void that cannot be filled. This relationship between the pilots complicates the narrative tremendously as Kawaru is the first character of the series apart from Shinji's parents, to provide the protagonist with the affection necessary to allow him to learn to love himself. This scene, in which they hold each others' hands and sit in close proximity to each other, is symbolic of Shinji learning to let go of his fear of attachment and abandonment that have plagued him since infancy. Hideaki Anno adds a further dimension of loneliness by utilizing Kawaru, the artificial humanoid, to educate Shinji about the true nature of humanity and romance. This choice develops the sentiment of solitariness that forces Shinji to learn life's more pressing lessons through the lens of a post-human being designed for the sole purpose of ending humanity.

These sentiments of love continue into the middle section of Ep. 24, in which Shinji and Kawaru spend a night together at the Nerv Headquarters, this scene develops Shinji's knowledge of components of healthy interpersonal relationships. The scene in question is entirely shown from the above perspective, facing downwards on Kawaru, sleeping on his bed, and Shinji, sleeping on the floor (Figure 8). The visual component illuminates the purpose of this scene, and accentuates the intention of framing an entire scene from a top-down: the vulnerability associated with the laying position allows individuals the most evocative responses and emotions. In this regard we may draw parallels between psychoanalysis and the intention of Hideaki Anno to present the human condition and analysis of attachment issues in the most vulnerable form possible. In this scene, Shinji confides in Kawaru the emotional baggage he

carries after the death of his mother and the contempt towards his absent father, a feeling that Shinji had never vocalized prior to this scene. The next frame focuses specifically on Shinji as he thinks: “Why am I telling all this to Kawaru?” In response to Shinji’s pain and trauma that he’s encountered as a pilot, Kawaru longingly responds to him saying: “I think I may have been born just to meet you, Shinji Ikari” (11:30-12:10). As Kawaru states this he passionately looks into Shinji’s eyes and the episode transitions to the tragic conclusion. However, at this moment, Shinji feels a degree of human intimacy, whether or not it is explicitly sexual. In this brief moment in which their gazes align, Shinji recognizes romance and in later retrospection goes on to admit that he did, in fact, love Kawaru. Relating these concepts back to the choice of angle by Hideaki Anno, the lying position depicts Shinji as the most comfortable sharing his past with a stranger he has ever been. There is also an added complexity by the sexual tension between the characters, likely driven by the same Freudian principle that lying down elicits the most poignant emotions. The sole person he has ever formed concrete feelings towards is Kawaru, giving a significant weight to the line “I think I may have been born just to meet you.” In terms of literary devices, this is subtle foreshadowing, as Kawaru was genuinely formed to acquire Eva Unit 02, combat Shinji, and collide with Adam to begin the Third Impact. Immediately after this intimate line, the scene ends and the battle against the Fifth Child/Final Angel must begin.



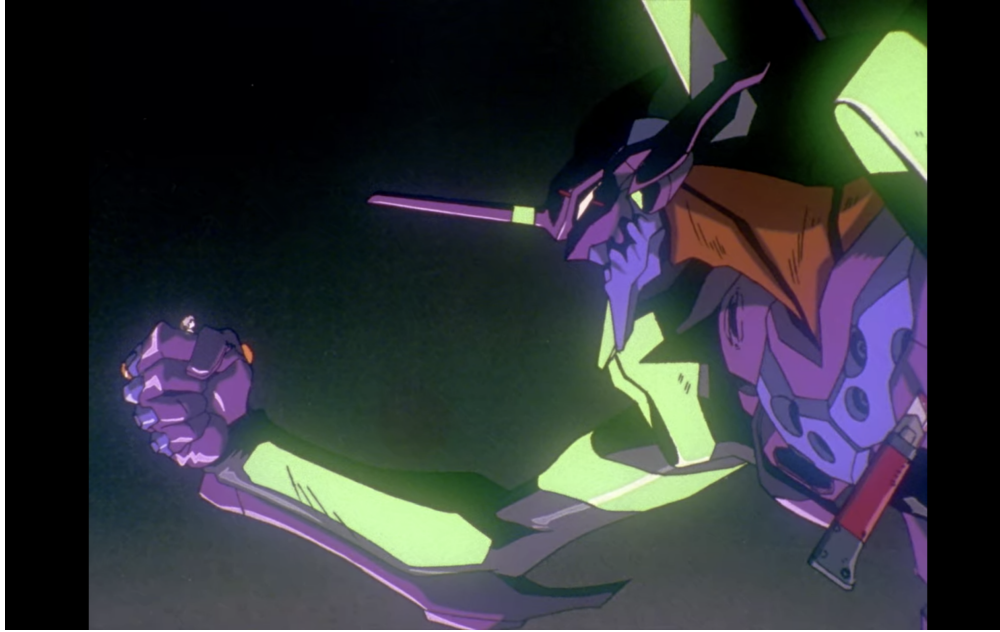
(Figure 8): Episode 24, Shinji and Kawaru laying in psychologically vulnerable positions.

The final, epic battle that we have been anticipating throughout the entire series ends up being entirely the opposite and all depictions of violence are lost, providing a lackluster closure and a false sense of self to Shinji. The battle is short-lived, as Kawaru decides that he will not give into the fate that has been set before him and instead falls victim to the Death Drive by sacrificing his own existence to save that of Shinji. In his final words to Shinji, Kawaru states:

It is my destiny to live forever, though my survival will bring final destruction to the human race. However, it is possible for me to be killed, and whether I live or die makes no great difference. In truth, death may be the only absolute freedom there is... This is my wish, please destroy me. Otherwise you will be destroyed, only one life form can be chosen to evade the destruction and cease the future... and you are not the existence which should die. You need the future, it is what you live for... Thank you, Shinji, my life was meaningful because of you.” (18:40-19:45).

All things considered, these actions are representative features of vexed attachment, which implies further implications of mental trauma on Shinji and learning to process the death of a

loved one at his own hands. Shinji carries this baggage and sense of regret for the remaining two episodes, signifying that Kawaru's passing holds a profound effect on Shinji because the Angel is essentially his first venture into romance and learning to become vulnerable to others. His insecure-anxious attachment develops into features of derealization, disassociation, and regressive behaviors, such as reverting to the voice of a child and calling out for his mother well into his teenage years. Kawaru's Death Drive parallels Shinji's Pleasure Drive, and consequently calls back to a statement quoted earlier: "Man can never completely erase the sadness because all men are fundamentally alone... Pain is something that man must endure in his heart. And since the heart feels pain so easily some believe life is pain." He uses his method of asserting autonomy to spare Shinji's life and give him the push necessary to want to live—it is from this sacrifice, and virtue of love, that Kawaru expresses how meaningfully Shinji had impacted his own life. He forces Shinji to kill him, as a final act of love, in which he may finally learn the ability to accept himself and the pain that is inherent in the human condition. In the gut-wrenching minute-long frame in which Kawaru sits idly in Eva Unit 01's hand, prior to his decapitation, Shinji finally realizes the extent of human anguish and how commonly individuals are the cause of their own demise (Figure 9). It is from this interaction that Shinji learns to appreciate his own life, but is still ultimately burdened by the inability to care for himself emotionally. This death marks the conclusion of Ep. 24 and the end of individuality as the Human Instrumentality Project begins, and the boundaries of human consciousness are completely disintegrated.



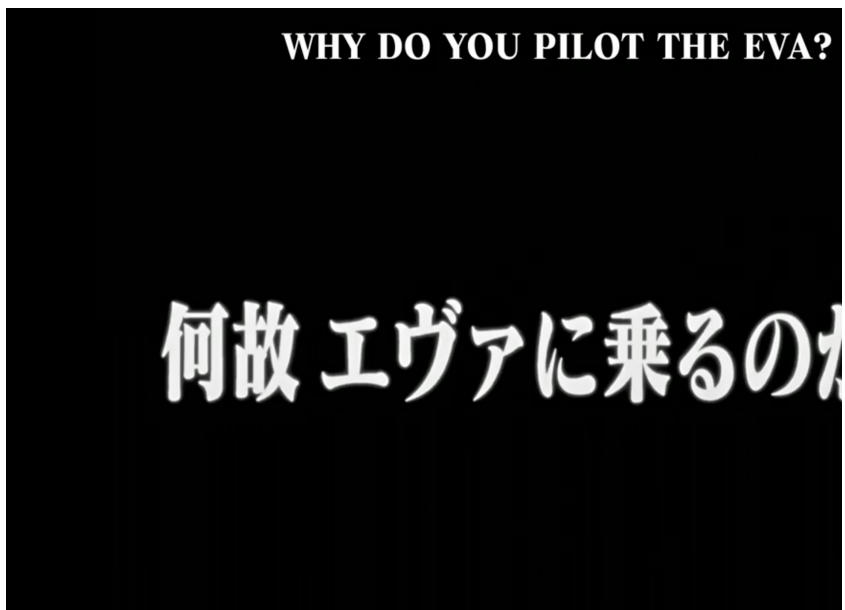
(Figure 9: Minute long frame of Shinji holding Kawaru prior to his decapitation.)

Ep. 25 immediately follows the events after the death of Kawaru, and depicts the unification of consciousness, principally in the form of dialogue and visual messages. This episode marks the beginning of the Human Instrumentality Project, and stylistically it is unlike any before it. This episode has the same quality as Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* features of discontinuity, presenting fragments of memory, consciousness, and trauma, allowing the viewer to make sense of the jagged pieces of plot that culminate into a broader commentary on attachment and its effects on the human psyche. There are three important questions that Anno poses through Japanese symbols, which serve as the starting point of analyzing Shinji as an individual: "Why did you kill Kawaru?", "Why do you pilot the Eva?", and "So, you pilot the Eva for everybody, for others?" (Figures 10, 11, and 12). Shinji responds to these questions in an emotional manner, convincing himself that Kawaru's death was a means of preserving humanity and that he is, in fact, piloting for the benefit of others rather than seeking the approval from his father and validation of those around him. In spite of this, we recognize these claims of

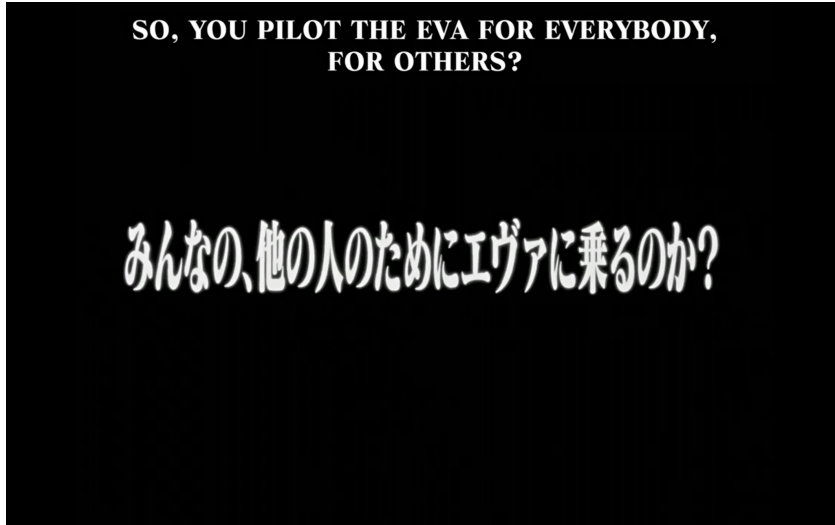
autonomy and piloting for any reason but for himself are entirely false— and the unnamed voice that poses these questions helps clarify that Shinji's claims are built on false assumptions of self. Shinji does not have a clear grasp on his own identity, and the questions asked of him become more complicated by the background presence of all of those around him. These people are humans returned to the form of LCL, who surround Shinji examining his own psychological state. It is revealed, additionally, that the Human Instrumentality Project began when Rei ignored Gendo's wishes and granted Shinji the choice of deciding the fate of human consciousness— which he is consequently working through in the concluding two episodes. These questions are the initial proddings of his mental stability, identifying his existential purpose, and learning to form his own identity. The Japanese characters are presented as separate questions, which in itself symbolizes frantic thinking and the realization that the person providing these questions is a collection of human consciousness on planet Earth that quickly halts to examine Shinji's attachment anxiety. Despite the presence of all those people that exist within his own consciousness, he is still animated as entirely alone, sitting at a solitary chair, and facing downwards in a fit of depression (Figure 12). This further corroborates Kawaru's earlier statement regarding loneliness being inherent to the human condition, as we watch Shinji argue with himself for about ten minutes surrounded by a border of black that focuses the middle portion of the frame on his solitary circle.



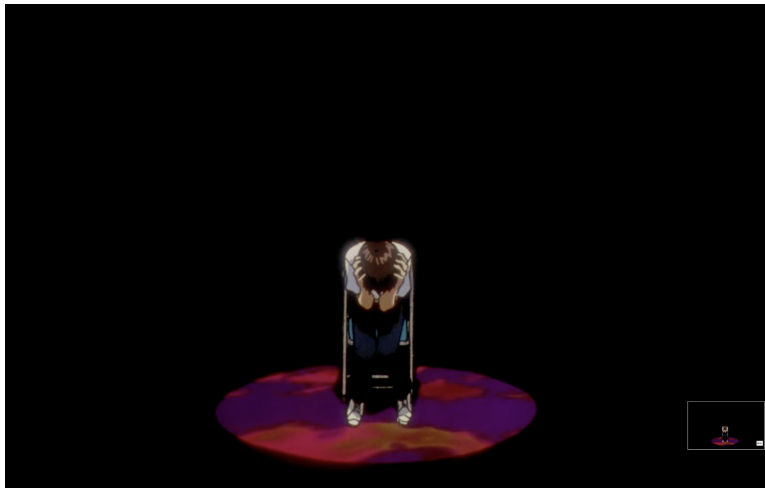
(Figure 10): “Why did you kill him?” in Japanese Kanji.



(Figure 11): “Why do you pilot the Eva?” in Japanese Kanji.



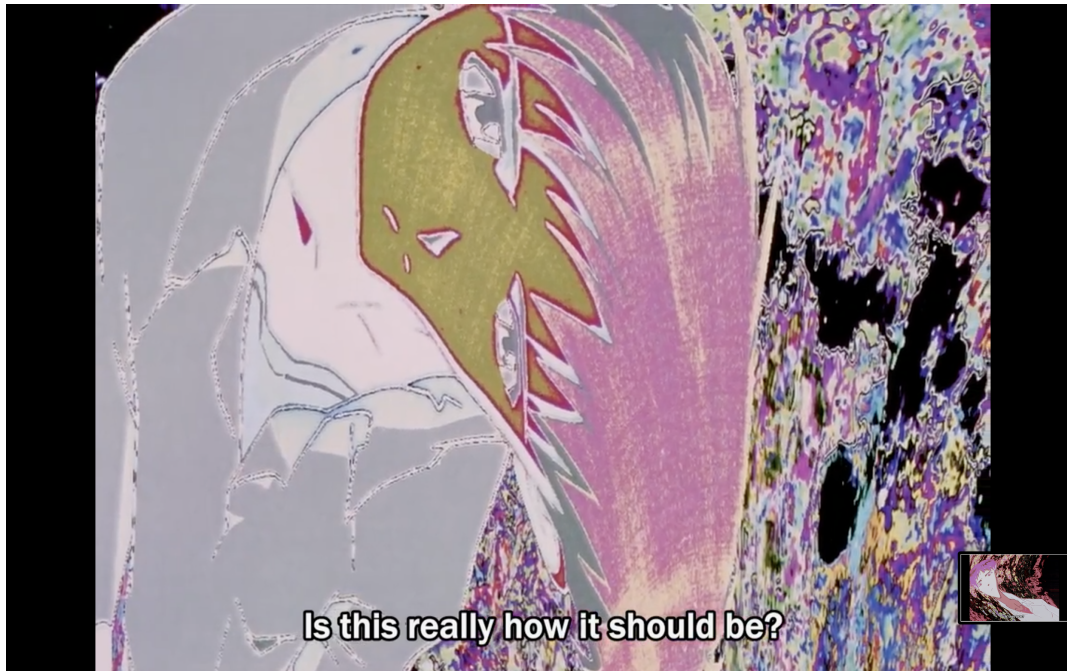
(Figure 12): “So, you pilot the Eva for everybody, for others?” in Japanese Kanji.



(Figure 13): Shinji sitting in a chair, seemingly in a world entirely alone.

Interspersed with these visual signals, Hideaki Anno also showcases fragments of the consciousness of others, allowing Asuka and Rei to interact with his conceived loneliness and understand the depth of his psychological pain. In Ep. 25 Anno uses subtitles that refer to each character as a “Case Study,” presenting portions of memory and trauma that prove to be universal across generations and cultures. The main focus of the series is Shinji, but Anno

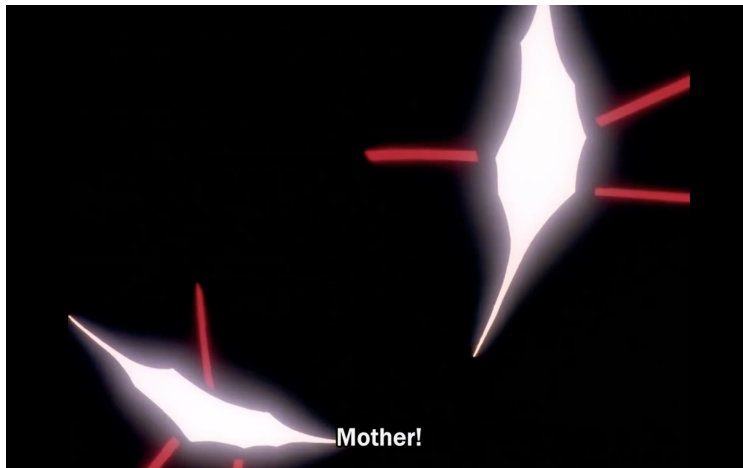
includes memories from Asuka as a German child and their caregiver, Mitsuko, who suffered the trauma of the Second Impact. In the brief look into Mitsuko's memories, we see her having sex with a man she loved that had died earlier in the series at the hands of Nerv after his attempts to reveal the secrets of the Instrumentality Project. Then, when examining Asuka's perspective on Shinji and her remarks on Shinji's character flaws, Rei mysteriously enters the dark room and points out that Asuka is as damaged as Shinji, if not more than. We then enter Asuka's memories examining her flaws and her propensity to seek validation from others. Bizarrely this cyclical narrative is repeated throughout the episode, making shifts in central perspective from each character of the series that creates the effect of both fragmentation and unification, suggesting a liminal space between consciousness and its conclusion as the Instrumentality Project begins. An interesting marker of transition and altered perception in the episode is the still frames presented of each protagonist during internal discourse that appear to be inverted and manipulated in color. For example, we see an image of Shinji that is visibly distorted and an auditory question that accompanies the frame: "Is this really how it should be?" (Figure 13). Referring back to the idea of a liminal space, Shinji finds himself at an intersection between caring for others and remaining apathetic towards the end of the world. Above all, now that the human form no longer exists and no one has a choice except Shinji, the protagonist is forced to decide for himself whether or not the burden of humanity is worth living. He no longer has the ability to turn to attachment figures or close friends for help deciding how he feels, and instead is tasked with unifying human consciousness—reuniting himself with his mother and everyone lost throughout the anime— or returning to the agony that is associated with the human condition.



(Figure 14): Shinji’s perception of self fragmentation in form of visual manipulation and inversion of color.

The closing scene of Ep. 25 fully develops the Eva Units as mecha representations of attachment issues and the mother-child complex that occurs visually as Pilots enter the “womb” and LCL of the Eva Units. In the discourse of the episode and framing the incident in which Yui Ikari is lost in the Eva Unit, we learn that her death was, in fact, purposeful; her soul was trapped in the body of Eva Unit 02, and this was an action she carried out bearing in mind the future of humanity foretold by the Angels and the Dead Sea Scrolls. She feared the Third Impact and the eventual loss of her son, Shinji, meaning that she sacrificed her own life to ensure that he would live on and save humanity from its demise. From the inception of the Eva Units, Shinji was always intended to be an Eva Pilot, capturing him as another tragic hero condemned by his “fate,” such as our friend, Billy Pilgrim. This mother-child, Eva-pilot complex is not unique to Shinji, as attachment issues and trauma are indeed what caused Asuka to synchronize incredibly well with her Eva—Unit 02 bore the soul of Arael. This also answers the question as to why

children were the most well-suited to participate in war— their attachment issues and fear of failure fueled the souls of the Evas. Referring to Figures 14 and 15, we see Shinji calling out to his Eva Unit, who he now consciously refers to as mother and directly expects a response from. In this peculiar state of post-human consciousness, is the liminal space between reality and the implementation of the Human Instrumentality Project, allowing him to talk to his deceased mother. Their dialogue is not immediately revealed to the viewer, but the viewer slowly pieces together from this seemingly one-sided dialogue that Yui has guided Shinji along the entire series— reassuring him that even in death, he is never alone. Then, the scene in which Shinji is held in the hand of Eva Unit 01, dissolves into a room with Shinji sitting in a chair, surrounded by all of those that were meaningful to him— he must now choose the fate of human consciousness.



(Figure 15) Shinji identifies his mother inside of Eva Unit 01.



(Figure 16) Shinji calls out to his Eva Unit, now representing his mother.

3.4 Ep. 26 Take care of yourself, Shinji... “To all the children: Congratulations!”

The final episode of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* throws all conventions of anime completely out of the window. This disregard for continuity completes the imagery of liminal spaces and leaves Shinji in a world entirely devoid of obstacles and human limitations of form. In this episode, Shinji is interrogated by those closest to him, namely Asuka, Rei, and Misato, as they pressure him to finally recognize his existential purpose outside the confines of their reality. Now that these arbitrary boundaries of social chaos that previously devastated Shinji are entirely behind him, he is given the first choice in the entire series ironically at the conclusion. Shinji is allotted the choice of reuniting with his mother and never dealing consciously again with the burdens of humanity that were left behind on Earth, yet he is hesitant. He is entirely unsure of himself and there are two distinct scenes that function principally to define his purpose. The first is the abstract, following Shinji through the stages of attachment and identity formation, in which he identifies his mother and realizes that his own identity is largely constructed by the conceptions of others. The second scene may be identified as the concrete because the characters

return to a space similar to Earth where individuals reassume the human form, and Shinji decides that, above all, he can love himself and his life is certainly worth living— regardless of the agony and issues of mortality. The series concludes and we are left with a single message “Thank you, father. Goodbye, mother. And to all the children, congratulations!” These scenes create a powerful juxtaposition of the abstract nature of the Human Instrumentality Project and the concreteness that follows, once Shinji learns to love himself and he is able to thank his attachment figures for the unforgettable lesson they have taught him— finally learning to take care of himself.

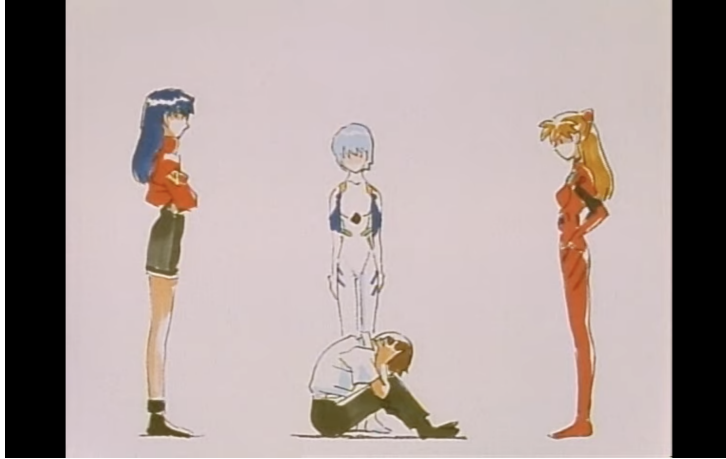
The first scene deals principally with consciousness and identifying the elements that construct our cognitive capacities, namely attachment styles, object relations, and being to identify the self lost amongst the collective consciousness of the LCL. The scene begins with the question: “What is it that you wish for? You’re very insecure, aren’t you?” In response, Shinji states, “To become secure I have to have... value. I want to be worth something. I want to be worth enough to attract the attention of others.”¹⁹ This scene is vivid in the manner that it handles the narrative progression of details, following the steps of infancy into adulthood that occurs as we identify ourselves as independent of our mothers and discover individual, intrinsic value. As Shinji puts it, infants and young children forming attachments and ideas of self need value to validate their existence, which gestures to regressive behaviors and how our protagonists employ them to garner the attention of others that normally would not care. Shinji’s word choice of being

¹⁹ “*Neon Genesis Evangelion- Take care of yourself.*” YouTube, uploaded by Amanda Scott.

Originally Ep. 26 (08:57-14:16) by Hideaki Anno. Nov. 2010,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TISVubPMem&ab_channel=AmandaScott

“worth enough to attract the attention of others” is indicative of insecure attachment, as Shinji is incapable of gauging his self worth independent from criticism and cruel words said by others. Being that he cannot determine his value, he continually turns to others for answers and reassurances of importance, but he recognizes this is not indicative of healthy attachment and he must delve into himself to find a purpose now that the machines have terminated. Shinji screams “Nobody understands me!” Then, Misato and Rei deliver the line that leads Shinji into a final paradigm shift: “The only one who can take care of you and understand you is you, yourself, so you must take care of yourself” (Figure 17). However, he still does not comprehend and asks, “I still don’t understand what makes me myself! How do I love myself?” While Shinji is unable to explain his existential relationship with self and others, the central concern of learning to take care of oneself emotionally is conveyed quite clearly through the words of Misato and Rei. In addition, the blank background and elementary coloring of Figure 17 function as a total deconstruction of narrative and human consciousness. In this empty space in which the world no longer exists, Shinji is left with no choice but to confront the pressing issues of identity he has avoided throughout the entire series. This idea of learning to love himself causes Shinji grief because no one around him may solve the answer for him— he must be able to identify what exactly constitutes the human condition and whether or not the flawed reality of modern capitalist societies is worth returning to.



(Figure 17: Animation style that strips the scene of depth; Shinji surrounded by attachment figures.)

The episode then transitions into the final attachment principle of the series, which is the idea of the True and False Self, a psychological theory formulated by psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott. To briefly recapitulate, The True Self is based on idiosyncratic desires and impulsive behavior occurring in childhood. This True Self then transitions into the False Self, in which we learn the ability to adapt to social difficulties, mimic our mother's communicative behaviors, and begin developing a sense of self (Winnicott 144). At the age of three Shinji witnessed the absorption of his mother into the Eva, and his father's absence never granted Shinji the ability to develop a False Self based on secure attachment. In addition, Shinji is unable to differentiate between the two, which is portrayed visually in the scene. Hideaki Anno's animation style, as previously mentioned, is no longer marked by vivid and illustrious frames, instead presenting to the audience still frames portraying childlike sketches of the characters entirely devoid of color and providing a visual representation of the False Self (Figure 18). The scene depicts Shinji in black-and-white lying against an entirely blank background, questioning where exactly he is in relation to his own mind and his perception of himself. The interaction goes as follows:

VARIOUS VOICES. The thing that forms your shape is your mind and its interactions with the world around you. You can do anything here. This is *your* world. This is the shape of your reality.

SHINJI. What is this? An empty space? An empty world? A world where nothing exists but myself? But, with only myself, I have nothing to interact with. It's as if I'm here, but not here at all. It's as if I'm slowly fading out of existence...

VARIOUS VOICES. Because only you *are* here. Without others to interact with, you cannot truly recognize your own image... In the act of observing others you may find and recognize yourself. Your self image is restrained by having to observe the barriers between yourself and others. And yet, you cannot see yourself without the presence of others. (12:47-13:43).

This interaction occurs within the single consciousness initiated by the Human Instrumentality Project, and Shinji is left alone with the various voices that guide him through his mental anguish. These closing scenes corroborate the fundamental separation of True and False self, in addition to the effect that insecure-attachment possesses on identity formation. In Figure 18, we see Shinji stuck in a liminal state between the True and False Self. The lack of color and background, while often cited as a result of budgetary constraints, is more likely a result of narrative detachment caused by the fusion of humanity. Shinji begins to understand that his identity is, in fact, dependent on the perceptions of others and how those around him essentially function to reflect back the human condition. In this liminal space he can no longer communicate with anyone outside the immediate cast of the series and immediately recognizes he does not *exist* without the presence of others.



(Figure 18: Shinji in a liminal space between the True and False Self.)

The dialogue continues between Shinji and the omnipresent voices when he finally reaches an understanding of the True and False Self, recognizing that his individuality is a byproduct of interpersonal communication. Without the presence of others, Shinji would remain in the state of the True Self that recognizes itself as omnipotent, though he believes that the False Self is necessary to facilitate healthy relationships and become securely attached. The scene continues as follows:

SHINJI. Because there are others, I can perceive myself as an individual. If I am alone then 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!

VARIOUS VOICES. By recognizing the differences between yourself and others you establish your identity as yourself. The very first other person is your mother. Your mother is a different individual. (13:44-14:10)

This interaction is a paradigm shift in Shinji's characterization. He finally becomes confident regarding the separation of True and False Self. Previously in the series and even within this scene, Shinji was incapable of differentiating between his idiosyncratic impulses of self pity and detachment, and the False Self built upon his meaningful interactions with others. In his exploration of self in this rudimentary world of "perfect freedom," as they refer to it as in the anime, he actually grasps the basics of attachment theory. He discovers that from his mother he would have gained the necessary skills to form an identity, and, now that his mother is deceased, he must learn to find the necessary skills to cope with intrinsic loneliness. After functioning as a puppet for Nerv, the United Nations, and his father more directly, Shinji is left to find value in himself beneath the existential dread and emotional baggage. He is left without anyone to turn to or help solve his questions. In this final scene, Shinji must reach deep into his consciousness and bring to light the values that will essentially save him from himself, and to reverse the effects of the Instrumentality Project.

As previously mentioned, the closing sequence of Ep. 26 is modeled after the progression of infant developmental psychology, displaying to us Shinji as first incapable of fathoming the complexity of finding self-value, and now able to understand “truth” as an entirely subjective experience. Those around him explain to him reality as he experiences it, citing truth as so incredibly “simple” that we read too far into ourselves and misinterpret fundamentally who we are. This hints at Shinji’s central issue of self loathing and determining worth, suggesting them as misinterpretations of truth and imposing self criticism over the true feelings of others. As the dialogue goes:

VARIOUS VOICES. Your truth can be changed simply by the way you accept it... That’s how fragile the truth for a human is. A person’s truth is so simple that most ignore it and concentrate on what they think are deeper truths. You, for example, are simply unused to what it is to be liked by others. You’ve never learned how to deal with fearing what others feel about you, and so you avoid it.

SHINJI. But, don’t the others hate me?

ASUKA. What are you stupid? Haven’t you realized it’s all in your imagination, you mega dork.

SHINJI. But, I hate myself.

REI. One who truly hates himself, cannot love, he cannot place his trust in another.
(20:05-20:45)

The choice of referring to truth as “delicate,” is an accurate personification and description of truth as a guiding principle within the series. Our perceptions of the truth and the True and False Self are entirely subjective, and susceptible to socio-environmental influences. In turn, the fragility of “truth” is often impacted by emotional reasoning and how willing we are to accept it. As the above excerpt from the script of Ep. 26 explains, truth, however objective we would like it to be, is subject to humans imposing their own memories, feelings, and attachments to realities that more-or-less seem unarguable. In relation to *Neon Genesis*, we are asked to think of “truth” from Shinji’s perspective— a young man worn down by social expectations and self-consciousness caused by insecure-attachment. After experiencing this world of “perfect

freedom,” he reassures himself that he does not need to succumb to his father’s selfish desires, and makes the astute observation that, even without the Evas and Nerv, he has value and deserves to live in this world amongst everyone else.

The final minute of *Neon Genesis* is the culmination of Shinji’s efforts and the most ideal assertion of the False Self over the idiosyncratic desires of the True Self. In his moment of epiphany he acknowledges that the hatred he believed others had for him was merely a manifestation of his insecure-attachment and the difficulty to reconcile the differences between The True and False Self. When he comes to his final realization that, in order to understand his “True Self,” or more psychologically accurate the False Self built on interactions with others, he must push aside the others’ assessments of his character. In these final seconds we witness the completion of Shinji’s character arc:

SHINJI. I’m a coward, I’m cowardly. Sneaky and Weak...

MISATO. No, only if you think you are. But, if you know yourself, you can take care of yourself.

SHINJI. 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!*²⁰

VARIOUS VOICES. [Applause and cheering] Congratulations! (Repeated 13 times)

GENDO AND YUI IKARI. Congratulations!

SHINJI. [Visible shock] Thank you all! (20:46-21:53)

These final thirty seconds capture an epiphany, and finally adapting the skills necessary to take care of oneself. It becomes evident to Shinji that no one perceives him as “sneaky and weak,” instead they admire him for the difficult decision he made to conclude the Instrumentality Project. Shinji in his dialogue fathoms that fundamentally he will not be happy, even if granted

²⁰ “(Evangelion) Congratulations! (Eng. Dub Version).” Uploaded by ttb618, YouTube.

Originally from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Ep. 26. April 2018,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un4p-6lzIpI>

the love and affection of those he wants it the most from, if he cannot learn to find value in himself apart from his trauma and success as an Eva Pilot. Shinji tunes out the voices of others and glass symbolically shatters in front of him, acting as the plot device that liberates the protagonist from the weight of social expectations and allows him to finally say the goodbye necessary to let go of his insecure attachment. The final “Congratulations” of the series most importantly comes from Shinji’s father and mother who witness the fulfillment of the Bildungsroman that *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is built on. Hearing this “congratulations” from his father who never provided Shinji with the approval and reassurance that is necessary to facilitate healthy interpersonal relationships and his deceased mother, is the closure Shinji needs to move on and take advantage of the individual, yet collective, existence he has restored to humanity. At the conclusion Shinji finds contentment in himself, noting the emotional baggage and abuse he witnessed, as well as the fact that he no longer requires recognition from others—he has found value in himself, and learned to love his entirely flawed self, ending the series with the concrete formation of his identity.

The final few frames of the series goes as follows: “[In Japanese] Thank you, father (父に、ありがとう)! Goodbye, mother (母に、さようなら)! And, to all the Children (チルドレンそして、全ての子供達に)... Congratulations (おめでとう)!” These lines are representations of Shinji’s thoughts— thanking his father for the lesson necessary to detach and find value in himself, finally saying goodbye to his mother who is now lost after the termination of the machines, and congratulating the Children for their efforts. I include these lines because they are essentially the conclusion we need, as Hideaki Anno does not provide for us any idea of what comes next after Tokyo-III has been destroyed and countless lives have been lost in the process of the Instrumentality Project. The capability of Shinji to “thank” his father, push aside the emotional

neglect and provide a conclusive farewell to his mother are the indicators of the protagonist's growth. We began the series with Shinji constantly contemptful towards his father, and unable to let his mother go, but now we see the protagonist as a man who is no longer held down by the emotional baggage he held onto. The congratulations to the Children, who we may assume to be Rei and Asuka, is a direct reflection of their work as Eva Pilots and how interweaved they were in Shinji's narrative— he is thanking them and commending them for the efforts they have put forward to love and accept Shinji. Lastly, we may also view this "to all the Children" as a direct address to us, the audience. Hideaki Anno is directly gesturing to the childlike nature within all of us, including the trauma we witnessed as children and all the wonderful imaginations we left behind. He is congratulating us for following Shinji along on his path, and hopefully learning along the way about our own attachments and misconceptions of the "True" Self— hoping that we learned from Shinji the characteristics of fallibility and courage necessary to carry forward in spite of our vexed attachment styles.

Conclusion: Tropes & What's Next In Theory and Science Fiction?

Despite Science Fiction and Attachment being quite niche realms of literary theory and criticism, I believe that there is a lot to be said about the genre and encompassing more contemporary literary forms to have a meaningful conversation regarding attachment in the modern day. I chose these particular works because I wanted to push the boundaries regarding what constitutes substantial literary merit, especially considering attachment has never previously been discussed in Vonnegut's novel and anime remains quite an unexplored academic area of Japanese art forms. Science fiction is often a genre that is met with criticism or academic rebuke, as many do not find value in many works in the genre, instead labeling it as speculative and not capable of deeper commentary. Of course, this is changing quite quickly as I write now; a lot of academic attention has recently been drawn to incredible works of science fiction, such as Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* or Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One*. More and more academic discourse has been brought about regarding speculative fiction and I appreciate the road that academia is taking in expanding the scope of what is "canonical" or "worthy of literary examination." In turn, I wanted to bring into the conversation both a theoretical lens and a notable work of Japanese art that has gone unexplored in the past few decades. *Slaughterhouse Five* has been recognized as a fundamental Postmodernist text and an amazing example of Vonnegut's literary genius, causing me no reservations in examining the work. But, conversely, *Neon Genesis* was a difficult work for me to call upon, because of the scarcity of academic discourse regarding the anime and the idea that anime is a juvenile art form. In examining these works, I recognize the literary value of both of these texts, and encourage these steps following my brief contribution: draw upon more anime, web sources, internet discourse, and incorporate more works that were previously unaccounted for in academia.

Secondly, while it is always quite difficult to track the movements of literary criticism and psychological theory, the most prominent issue with this paper will be whether or not it aligns with future psychoanalytic schools of thought. As many of Freud's earlier monumental psychological texts were deemed inaccurate and obsolete, the test of time will likely do the same to this paper. Attachment theory has always been contentious; while its fundamental argument and structure of theory is widely accepted as accurate information about developmental psychology, many facets of the initial theory have long been disregarded or viewed as reductive. The future will likely cast doubt on attachment theory and attribute childhood trauma to some other intricacy of adolescence, which could dispel the theory— though not the importance of these individual literary texts. This frame of thought will remain to be a critical lens to approach these works and contribute an abundance of meaning to them as a whole, even with the uncertainty of the future of psychoanalysis. However, there will always be room to adapt thought and literary theory, which could bring an entirely new understanding of these works to the academic conversation. From here academics may be able to resume the conversation by analyzing concepts that do not relate to attachment at all, including the aforementioned manipulation of time that can be attributed to the school of thought regarding continuity and discontinuity in literature. To any readers: take this one dimension used to analyze *Neon Genesis* and *Slaughterhouse*, and find other intersections that may explain more pressing issues, such as feminism, gender performativity, and the conflation between interracial/intercultural barriers. For the time being, though, attachment remains a huge issue in contemporary society and the relevancy of the theory has grown across literature and psychosocial communities. We are becoming increasingly aware of developmental psychology and the importance of parent-child

relationships, which leads me to believe that attachment theory has a basis that we will always draw upon.

While I recognize that the sample selection of Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* and Vonnegut's *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is an incredibly small pool, the observations of this thesis apply to many more works of science fiction. This suggests that attachment is a motif or theme that authors of science fiction incorporate, not consciously or explicitly, but because attachment styles are a universal aspect of the human condition. We may look at a more notable work of science fiction that is acclaimed as one of the most influential films of all time, Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), and see the exact motifs of attachment and character paradigm shifts found within *Neon Genesis* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*. We may take a look at Deckard, a retired Blade Runner, who is tasked with saving humanity from rogue replicants that have returned to Earth from the space colonies to seek extended lifetimes. Deckard, as the protagonist, is a seemingly detached figure as well, far removed from the replicants he "retires" or terminates. In his journey to retire five replicants, however, he develops feelings for one named Rachel. Through the course of the film we witness character growth, progression, and learn that these replicants, specifically manufactured to exist only four years, are capable of developing complex emotions. We also discover that Deckard is a replicant, and along his journey towards saving the world, he learns the significance of attachment. We are left to assume that he suffers from the same issues of attachment that these replicants face, caused by artificial memories and the absence of true parent figures. Regardless, we see the same exact archetype of a person undergoing personal revelations in relation to romance and relationships, learning to socially adapt without the presence of a mother figure. Or, we may take a look at a slew of other titles and films, including *Brave New World*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Hunger Games*, *Akira*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, etc., that all

take a unique look at attachment. Whether it be the artificially produced children in *Brave New World* or an emotionally absent mother in *The Hunger Games*, they all get at the essential question of what it means to be attached.

Returning to *Blade Runner*, as a work that is essentially in conversation with the science fiction that proceeds and follows it in the timeline of literary criticism, we may see the archetypal structure of a protagonist struggling, regaining composure, and obtaining a satisfying character arc. The director's cut of the 1982 film reveals to us that Deckard, as a replicant, was merely another pawn in the social scheme, forced to retire his own kind. Deckard is trapped within the confines of his pre-determined fate, bound to die within the following four years, and programmed to execute the other replicants. Throughout the entire narrative, Deckard is not given a choice, even being told at the beginning that his decision to rejoin the task force to assassinate the rogue replicants is merely trivial. Regardless of whether or not Deckard accepted the position, he would be forced to carry out this final task— not only did his life depend on it, but the existence of humanity as he knew it. We see a male forced into a position he does not actively desire, tasked with saving humanity through means of artifice/murder, and learning to accept affection. This description, however, is not unique to *Blade Runner*; it also applies to both *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*. This is a recurring structure used throughout the genre of science fiction, and I use this cyberpunk example because it is a well-known story that encapsulates commentary regarding turbulent social conditions and depicts the growth of the protagonist. Science fiction, as a genre, is slowly becoming more encompassing, including subsections such as Afro-Futurism and Resistant Feminist literature. A genre that was once deemed simplistic and overly reductive has blossomed into a literary field of study that consistently grapples with the essence of humanity and its inevitable demise.

To conclude, I would like to briefly return to my initial question posed in the introduction of this thesis: “What happens when parental figures are emotionally truant, and children resort to employing the art of detachment without knowing otherwise?” As I have explained and grappled with, an absent or abusive mother often leaves their child emotionally damaged and searching for a way out of their own juvenile and regressive behaviors. In *Billy Pilgrim* we witness a young man burdened by the emotional distance of his mother and the profound effects of war, a resonating theme within science fiction. This is also true for *Shinji Ikari*, which suggests that these protagonists, following the tropes of attachment and extraterrestrial beings, are fundamentally alone in their plight. By the time the Evas have been destroyed and Billy returns home to his fat wife, all that remains is the fragments of a child hiding beneath the facade of a fully formed adult. Beyond the Tralfamadorians and the Angels, anxiety is driven by social expectation and how willing our protagonists are to challenge their identity initially characterized by insecure-attachment and inability to reconcile True and False Self. These marvels of scientific inquiry and manifestations of technological advancement following WWII are truly no more than extensions of our childlike imaginations. It only makes sense for authors, in turn, to engage with our wonder and amazement at technology and aliens that seem centuries away from our current society. We are meant to engage and relate with *Billy Pilgrim* and *Shinji Ikari*, granting us the knowledge and capability necessary to “take care of ourselves.” While these works may seem like whimsical tales too far removed from the novels of literary merit, they reflect back to us essentially what it means to be human. From these works of mystery and hyper-technological realities, we are granted insight into our vexed notions of attachment, as well as the knowledge necessary to save us from ourselves—in the sense of preserving our place in the world and loving who we have become.

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