Sekai-kei as Existentialist Narrative:
Positioning Xenosaga within the Genre Framework.

THESIS

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Abstract

The term sekai-kei (“world-type”), a genre of subcultural narrative whose defining characteristic is the omission of a mediating social dimension between individual characters and an apocalyptic large-scale situation, has come to be used as a tool of cultural criticism pertaining to young adults of the mid-90s to the mid-2000s. Within this critical discourse, the exclusion of society in such works is frequently connected with the rise of problematic phenomena within Japan while the genre was at the height of its popularity, among them the increase in hikikomori (“shut-ins”) and youths not seeking careers or education. Critics claim in this context that sekai-kei narratives affirm social withdrawal and refusal of maturity, citing the postmodernist loss of a shared societal “grand narrative” as being evident in these works. In this study, I will examine the definitive sekai-kei narratives Saishū heiki kanojo (“Final weapon girlfriend”), Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu (“Iriya’s sky, summer of UFOs”), and Hoshi no koe (“Voice of a star/Star’s voice”) alongside the sekai-kei prototype Shin seiki evangerion (“Gospel of a new century”/Neon Genesis Evangelion), utilizing an existentialist hermeneutic approach, and demonstrate that these narratives unanimously reject withdrawal. Furthermore, I will present Xenosaga, a sekai-kei work explicitly making use of existentialist philosophical concepts, and illustrate the fact that a grand narrative, namely that of existentialist freedom being contingent on personal responsibility, can exist within the sekai-kei genre.
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Translation statement

For the purpose of this thesis, sources in English, Japanese, and German were utilized. Material from Japanese and German sources was translated by me, unless otherwise indicated in the bibliography; this includes Japanese lines from properties released in the United States with dual Japanese/English audio tracks.
Chapter 1: Introduction.

Among Japanese pop culture narratives, the so-called sekai-kei\(^1\) genre experienced a boom in the 2000s after the success of the animated series *Shin seiki evangerion*; narratives of this type have accordingly also been described as having been influenced by “Post-Evangelion Syndrome.”\(^2\) While the term sekai-kei, a neologism originally coined by the webmaster of an otaku\(^3\) website in October 2002, has since transitioned into critical discourse, the concept remains vague. In the introduction to the Liminal Novel Research Society’s (*genkai shōsetsu kenkyūkai*) collaborative book on the subject, *Shakai wa sonzai shinai: Sekai-kei bunkaron* (“Society does not exist: Sekai-kei cultural theory”), Kasai Kiyoshi attempts to organize the basic structure of such narratives into a textbook definition as follows:

A group of works in which the small, everyday life problem of the relationship (*kimi to boku*) of the protagonist (*boku*, i.e. a male) and the heroine in his thoughts (*kimi*), and an abstract, extraordinary large problem such as ‘a world crisis’ or ‘the end of the world,’ are simplistically connected directly without a (midway) interposition of a completely concrete (social) context.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Sekai-kei literally translates to “world-type.” In Japanese, sekai is typically written in katakana within this compound to indicate the abstraction of the world concept inherent in this narrative type, which includes the characters’ “inner world” as well as the outer world.


\(^3\) “Otaku” here is a term denoting members of the subculture surrounding anime, manga, and video games.

However, this definition is still under dispute, in part since the anime regarded as the genre prototype and frequently discussed as a sekai-kei work in its own right,\(^5\) *Shin seiki evangerion,*\(^6\) does not fit, and partly because other works labeled as exemplary of the genre abandon one or more of the proposed defining elements, as well (e.g. *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu* [“Iriya’s sky, summer of UFOs”]), leading to claims of the same work being sekai-kei and anti-sekai-kei, and even to assertions that the term itself is a mere buzzword.\(^7\)

Narratives described as sekai-kei, situated firmly in the realm of popular culture and particularly otaku subculture, have been described as simplistic, and as one example of the postmodern degeneration of grand narratives. In that vein, Maejima Satoshi, the author of *Sekai-kei to wa nani ka: Posuto-Eva no otaku shi* (“What is sekai-kei? Post-Eva otaku history”) quotes Okada Toshio, the co-founder of anime studio GAINAX, as considering the ability of otaku to understand and extract an encrypted weltanschauung to have exceedingly diminished, which in Maejima’s view explains the success of simplistic “Post-Evangelion Syndrome” works such as *Hoshi no koe,*\(^8\) *Saishū heiki kanojo,*\(^9\) and *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu.*\(^10\) Cultural critic Azuma Hiroki, in turn, asserts that young otaku have displayed a degenerating interest in grand narratives since approximately

\(^5\) For example by Kasai himself, Uno Tsunehiro, and Maejima Satoshi; for their discussion of this work, please see subsequent chapters.

\(^6\) Released in English as *Neon Genesis Evangelion,* lit. “Gospel of a new century.” Frequently abbreviated to *EVA* or *Eva* in subcultural and critical discourse.


\(^8\) Released in English as *Voices of a Distant Star,* lit. “Star’s voice.”

\(^9\) Released in English as *Saikano: The Last Love Song on this Little Planet,* lit. “Final weapon girlfriend.”

\(^10\) Maejima (2010), 109; this work has not been released in English.
1995 in favor of adopting a “database consumption” model, preferring customizability by character attributes over narratives displaying shared societal values or ideologies.\(^{11}\)

Why, then, do a number of critical works still seek to analyze a genre ostensibly lacking complexity and even a unifying definition? The answer to this question can be found in the term’s frequent mention in connection to Japanese societal problems which spread after the burst of the country’s “bubble economy,” namely the hikikomori (“shut-in”) phenomenon and the increase of NEETs (“Not in Education, Employment, or Training”) and freeters (underemployed people). Motoko Tanaka goes so far as to claim in this context,

According to Lacan, children mature as they learn that they are not omnipotent: in other words, one becomes gradually mature as one accepts one’s lack of power and experiences resignation and loss. Sekaikei works circumvent this process of becoming, and seem instead to affirm withdrawal and refusal of maturity. In this regard, it is natural that sekaikei began to appear in conjunction with the hikikomori phenomenon and the rise of freeters and NEETs in late 1990s Japan.\(^{12}\)

This proposed correlation between sekai-kei and social withdrawal/lack of growth is echoed by Uno Tsunehiro’s analysis of Shin seiki evangerion in his book Zero nendai no sōzōryoku (“Imagination of the 2000s”),\(^{13}\) as well as in articles by Kasai Kiyoshi and Komori Kentarō, to name just a few examples.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{12}\) Tanaka (2013).

\(^{13}\) See Uno Tsunehiro, Zero nendai no sōzōryoku (Tokyo: Hayakawa Shobō, 2008), 16-7.


The critical works mentioned here will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.
In light of this near-universal criticism leveled at narratives considered sekai-kei, I would like to reexamine representative works employing an alternate hermeneutical approach, based on factors which the existing interpretive discourse in Japan has neglected so far.

First of all, while books and articles on the subject have compared narrative elements of sekai-kei works (such as character composition and situational background) in an attempt at definition, few attempts at a comparison of plot progression exist, particularly when it comes to the seemingly disparate resolutions of works regarded as exemplary for the genre. Secondly, the removal of a larger social context within the narrative is universally considered to intrinsically cause a lack of character growth in sekai-kei works, likely in an attempt to link the genre to the concomitant historical background, as can be seen in the Tanaka quote above. In doing so in spite of available evidence to the contrary, sociocultural commentary is prioritized over meaningful exegesis.

As analytical framework, I am proposing existentialist philosophy as posited by Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre, for the following reasons:

1. Sekai-kei narratives are inherently concerned with the self-definition of one or more primary characters; not only does ample proof for this assertion exist in the works themselves, this fact is also utilized to
criticize the genre by Uno Tsunehiro, who dubs this phenomenon *shinri shugi* (psychologism) and connects it to the *hikikomori* phenomenon.\(^{15}\)

2. One of the basic tenets of existentialism is that of subjectivity, which is in evidence structurally in multiple defining characteristics of *sekai-kei* narratives, e.g. the non-mediating social dimension as well as the employment of free indirect discourse (i.e. point-of-view narration, frequently including internal monologues/thoughts, as well as analepsis and surrealistic depiction of a character’s “inner world”).

3. The observable character development progresses according to existentialist thought as proposed by Kierkegaard (stages of despair), Heidegger (inauthentic, i.e. passive, existence towards authenticity, with dread as catalyst), and Sartre (“bad faith” existence of self-objectification towards being-with).

In utilizing an existentialist lens, I will contest the assertion that character growth does not occur in *sekai-kei*. Concurrently, I will show that, while a temporal correlation between the rise in popularity of *sekai-kei* narratives on one hand and the increase of *hikikomori* and NEET/freeters on the other does exist, the critical treatment of the genre so far has refrained from commenting on aspects of these works which seem to actively reject social withdrawal.

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\(^{15}\) Uno (2008), 17.
In order to do so, the initial chapter of this thesis will provide the sociohistorical and subcultural climate in which this form of narrative appeared and flourished. Thereafter, an overview of existing sekai-kei genre definitions will be given.

Building upon this background information, I will examine three sekai-kei works mentioned as definitive in critical discourse, namely *Saishū heiki kanojo*, *Iriya no sora*, *UFO no natsu*, and *Hoshi no koe*, in addition to the narrative prototype *Shin seiki evangerion*, for commonalities in plot progression in the second chapter. Furthermore, I will apply the existentialist exegetical framework with particular interest in character development and its influence on narrative resolution.

Finally, this thesis will introduce *Xenosaga*, a work which was released in three installments during the height of the sekai-kei boom, in the third chapter. It explicitly utilizes existentialist philosophical themes in conjunction with sekai-kei narrative elements as defined within existing critical discourse; additionally, it incorporates ideological questions emblematic of a grand narrative, proving that the sekai-kei structure is not inherently antithetical to complexity. As such, it can be regarded as a pinnacle of the genre.

*Historical background of sekai-kei genre development*

Since the sharp cultural criticism of the sekai-kei genre is based on sociocultural history as well as changes in narrative consumption within otaku subculture, both of these

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16 The games were released in 2002, 2004, and 2006, respectively; Maejima Satoshi considers the sekai-kei boom to have lasted roughly from 2000 until 2007. See Maejima (2010) 66-7; 226.
aspects require clarification in order to understand the near-universal disparagement of these works.

*Sekai-kei* narratives, as previously stated, arose after *Shin seiki evangerion* was first broadcast on Japanese television from October 4, 1995 until March 27, 1996. In 1995, two tragic incidents on a massive scale occurred, namely the Great Hanshin Earthquake on January 17, and the Sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system perpetrated by members of the Aum Shinrikyō cult on March 20.17 According to Motoko Tanaka, these events “decisively made Japanese society as an imagined community insecure and unreliable.” Uno Tsunehiro remarks in regard to the Sarin Incident in particular that it was perceived by society as “completely manga-like,” indicating the culmination of loss of a sense of realism.18

However, the deterioration of faith in society is not only related to these isolated catastrophic events; Uno describes a monumental shift in world view as the Cold War ended at the end of the 80s, and Japan experienced the Heisei recession caused by the burst of the 80s “bubble economy” in the beginning of the following decade after years of prosperity.19 The change from the “unfree, but warm (easy to understand)” 80s to the “free, but cold (hard to understand)” 90s ultimately caused a spread of *hikikomori* tendencies in the latter half of the decade.20 In addition, downsizing and a “hiring ice age” after the economic downturn created the “lost generation,” graduates who earned their degrees between approximately 1993 and 2003 and were forced to settle for contract

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17 Tanaka (2013), footnotes 2 and 3.
18 Uno (2008), 29.
20 Uno (2008), 59-60.
work with low wages and minimal job security, *haken* (temp agency) work, or low-skill part time jobs.21

In conjunction with these sociocultural changes, Azuma Hiroki observes after approximately 1995 the subculture’s sudden loss of interest in stories in favor of a database consumption model primarily concerned with character attributes, which he considers to be a symptom of the degeneration of “grand narratives.”22 The problem of narrative deterioration is also clearly reflected in the market geared toward otaku.23 “Grand narratives,” in Azuma’s estimation, are stories which contain shared societal values or ideology, and preserve shared norm consciousness and traditions.24 In the postmodern period (i.e. since the 1970s), individual self-determination and diversity in lifestyle were gradually affirmed, whereas the communality of “grand narratives” was restrained.25

The *sekai-kei* boom period coincided with otaku subculture finding its way into the mainstream press after Miyazaki Hayao’s movie *Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi*26 won the Academy Award for Best Animated Picture in 2003; for several years, anime and game analyses as well as articles about the content industry were published under the aegis of “Cool Japan.”27

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22 Azuma (2007), 16.
26 Released in English as *Spirited Away*; lit. “The spiriting away of Sen and Chihiro.”
According to Maejima Satoshi, the sekai-kei boom has since come to an end; he considers the trend to have abated within otaku subculture after 2007.\textsuperscript{28} As potential reasons he names the limited marketability of these narratives due to their comparatively short length (whereas manga and light novel series these days frequently exceed 10 or even 20 volumes, \textit{Hoshi no koe} is a short film of 25 minutes, the \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo} manga has been completed in seven volumes, and the \textit{Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu} light novels are comprised of four volumes) and questionable affinity to modern media mix techniques, as battle scenes have been removed from the anime versions of \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo} and \textit{Iriya} and the strong focus on the protagonist character is difficult to maintain.\textsuperscript{29} Additionally, the war imagery of \textit{Evangelion} and early 2000s sekai-kei narratives was primarily modeled on World War II, which also explains the unknowability of the enemy in these works.\textsuperscript{30} After the 9/11 terror attacks in New York and the resultant “war against terror,” the image of war has changed.\textsuperscript{31}

Uno, likewise, sees 9/11 as a turning point, alongside the structural reforms enacted by the Koizumi government in Japan.\textsuperscript{32} Additionally, the continued spread of the Internet, as well as progressing globalization and the emergence of an increasingly unequal society contributed to a change in imaginative patterns evident in subcultural narratives, which he considers to be an overall more combative reaction to adversity

\textsuperscript{28} Maejima (2010), 226.
\textsuperscript{29} Maejima (2010), 217-8.
\textsuperscript{30} Maejima (2010), 227.
\textsuperscript{31} Maejima (2010), 227.
\textsuperscript{32} Uno (2008), 29.
expressed in the phrase *tatakawanakereba, ikinokorenai* (“If I don’t fight, I won’t be able to stay alive”).

Sekai-kei *definitions as proposed in critical discourse*

This section will provide a short overview of critics’ attempts at defining the *sekai-kei* genre. Approaches range from holistic extraction of narrative elements over specification of a particular factor (primarily the degree of societal omission) to differential analysis by naming works which are not *sekai-kei* and pointing out why they are not considered as such, or by attempting to draw a delineating line between *sekai-kei* works and narratives of subsequently evolved genres. These definition attempts will be listed in that order.

*a. Holistic definitions*

Maejima Satoshi presents a number of definition attempts in his book *Sekai-kei to wa nani ka: Posuto-Eva no otaku shi* (“What is *sekai-kei*? Post-Eva otaku history”). As the earliest example, he mentions the explanation given alongside the term’s original coinage on the website *Purunie bukkumāku* (“Purunie’s bookmarks”) in an article published on October 31, 2002; webmaster Purunie states that he uses *sekai-kei* in reference to “*Eva*-like (=intense in terms of single-person [i.e. point-of-view] narration) works while including a small measure of ridicule,” describing the genre’s characteristic feature as the tendency of the narrator’s own thoughts being expressed in exaggerated terms such as

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33 Uno (2009), 70.
“world.” Maejima also cites Kasai Kiyoshi’s “textbook definition” quoted in the introduction, alongside similarly worded examples presented on Yahoo! Jisho and in Bishōjo gēmu rinkaiten (“Beautiful girl game critical points”), a special issue of Hiroki Azuma’s mail magazine Hajō genron released in August 2004.

Critic Uno Tsunehiro provided a similar definition on the website Wakusei kaihatsu iinkai (“Planet development committee”), albeit without the kimi to boku element, i.e. the romantic connection between the protagonist and a heroine: “Also called ‘Post-Evangelion Syndrome.’ A series of otaku-type works which remove [concepts such as] ‘society’ and ‘nation’ while extending ‘one’s own feelings’ or ‘self-consciousness’ to perceive them on the scope of ‘the world.’”

A more specific delineation of what is meant by ‘extension’ in Uno’s definition can be found in a statement of anime studio GAINAX co-founder Okada Toshio on the television program “BS Manga Night Talk” broadcast on October 28, 2002, where he defined ‘Post-Evangelion Syndrome’ as follows: “One’s own inner problems end up drawn along the same line as a world-scale catastrophe, such as a war or that sort of thing.”

Maejima himself attempts to narrow down the definition in his introduction, positing the following typical elements: love between male and female youths is directly

34 Maejima (2010), 27-8
35 Maejima (2010), 26-7
36 Maejima (2010), 28.
37 Maejima (2010), 29.
linked to the fate of the world; only the young woman fights, while the male youth remains removed from the battlefield; and a portrayal of society is excluded.\textsuperscript{38}

However, he immediately points out that, problematically, the narratives said to be representative of the genre, i.e. \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, \textit{Iriya no sora}, \textit{UFO no natsu}, and \textit{Hoshi no koe}, do not fit these criteria, as the first involves the male protagonist in the war, the second surrounds the protagonists with a social entity (i.e. the military), and the third features a relationship of protagonists which is not directly linked to the fate of the world.\textsuperscript{39}

Maejima mentions that Purunie’s definition of “\textit{Eva-like}” came to be primarily applied to the latter half of the TV series and the theatrical alternate ending \textit{Shin seiki evangerion gekijō-ban: Air/Magokoro o, kimi ni,} \textsuperscript{40} i.e., the parts depicting the interior world of the characters.\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{Eva} boom had just begun to ebb when, between 2000 and 2002, a number of works using similar elements appeared, which in turn prompted them to be designated \textit{sekai-kei}, although doubts as to whether they had so many similarities that one could go so far as to lump all of them together have been voiced multiple times.\textsuperscript{42}

Developing the initial definitions by examining the \textit{sekai-kei} prototype \textit{Shin seiki evangerion}, Maejima states that protagonist Ikari Shinji comes to live on a strange battlefield on which the regular school life and the extraordinary battle to intercept the

\textsuperscript{38} Maejima (2010), 7.
\textsuperscript{39} Maejima (2010), 7-8.
\textsuperscript{40} Lit. “Gospel of a new century theatrical edition: Air/Yours sincerely,” released on DVD in the United States as \textit{The End of Evangelion}.
\textsuperscript{41} Maejima (2010), 64-6.
\textsuperscript{42} Maejima (2010), 66-7.
Angels (shito = ‘apostles’) coexist. The Angels are depicted in various abstract forms defying understanding or empathy; however, as they come to attack, they must be fought. As a result of Shinji’s complete ignorance of why the Angels are attacking or why he must fight, his thoughts revolve in circles, become abstract, and end up arriving back at his own problems. For that reason, the always-present daily life setting of Neo-Tokyo 3, with its schools and convenience stores, and the Angels are both needed in the narrative.

Moving on to Saishū heiki kanojo, Maejima observes that both the fictional Hokkaidō, where protagonist Shūji resides, and Ikari Shinji’s Neo-Tokyo 3 are frequently involved in the wars raging within the respective fictional contexts, yet the very next day, daily life continues again without change. This work shares another “deficiency” in narrative construction with Shin seiki evangerion’s latter half: while the “large” (= “world”) situation of war provides the setting, elaborations on the war situation and its origins are completely omitted. These elements remain unclear from beginning to end, in favor of putting the focus on the relationship between the protagonist and the heroine.

In Shinkai Makoto’s short animation Hoshi no koe, meanwhile, the narrative unfolds almost exclusively between the two characters Noboru and Mikako, the latter of which leaves for an investigative mission into space after they both graduate from middle

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43 Maejima (2010), 82.
44 Maejima (2010), 83.
45 Maejima (2010), 84.
46 Maejima (2010), 83-4.
47 Maejima (2010), 86.
48 Maejima (2010), 86.
49 Maejima (2010), 86.
school; as the ship to which Mikako’s giant robot is assigned is separated from Earth by multiple light years, the e-mails they are sending to each other via their cell phones take years to arrive.\textsuperscript{50} Maejima compares \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo} and \textit{Hoshi no koe} in observing that similarly exaggerated measures are used to tell these respective narratives’ love stories; in the former case, the “ultimate weapon” is depicted as an incurable disease, whereas the long-distance relationship in the latter is described utilizing robots and space exploration.\textsuperscript{51}

Finally, while \textit{Hoshi no koe} and \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo} are defined as “Eva-like” due to responding to the creators’ characters and the era [of Post-\textit{Evangelion} Syndrome], creator Akiyama Mizuhito deliberately conceptualized his light novel series \textit{Iriya no sora}, \textit{UFO no natsu} as “UFO Ayanami,” i.e. he wrote a narrative in which a girl resembling this most popular \textit{Evangelion} character pilots a UFO and fights.\textsuperscript{52} Furthermore, the plot of \textit{Iriya} engages in metanarrative commentary by having the military deliberately place the heroine within proximity of the male protagonist in order to give her someone to protect, resulting in Maejima positing an ultimate powerlessness, i.e. “the love of you and me determining the fate of the world is not possible,” and “if this is the case, society has just designed it that way.”\textsuperscript{53} He considers \textit{Iriya} to be a precursor of the works deliberately created as \textit{sekai-kei} narratives, which mostly began to appear from the mid-2000s on.\textsuperscript{54}

Summarizing the preceding elements, Maejima points out the similarities in these otherwise dissimilar narratives: 1. They omit the social setting, 2. \textit{What} is fought and on

\textsuperscript{50} Maejima (2010), 88.
\textsuperscript{51} Maejima (2010), 88.
\textsuperscript{52} Maejima (2010), 95.
\textsuperscript{53} Maejima (2010), 98.
\textsuperscript{54} Maejima (2010), 99.
which principle it functions is not understood, 3. These omissions are deliberately included in order to induce sympathy for the protagonist’s self-consciousness or the (often tragic) love between the protagonist and the heroine in the consumers.  

From 2004 on, the genre underwent a transition due to its discovery by art criticism, and additional defining elements were introduced. These elements consisted of overt metanarrative commentary on the genre (one such example is the title of a light novel by Nishio Ishin, *Kimi to boku no kowareta sekai [Your and my broken world]*), as well as “looping narratives,” i.e. the world being suspended a recurrent time loop, which requires the resolution of a particular situation usually related to love or personal relationships. In reference to the looping narrative, Maejima’s assertion that it is in line with the sekai-kei definition of character relations being tied to the fate of the world is supported by the article “Zero nendai ‘sekai-kei’ anime ni okeru shakai ryōiki kōkyōken [Sekai-kei (The ‘World-Type’ Fiction): Anime of the Noughties and the Public Sphere]” by Nakagaki Kōtarō et al., in which section author Goshima Kazumi points out that this type of narrative shares the symbolic impossibility of future prospects with prior sekai-kei narratives.

To sum up the proposed definitive elements of sekai-kei narratives, such works contain a dualistic problem situation composed of small-scale (personal) and large-scale (world crisis) conflict without a mediating social context, in which the latter remains

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55 Maejima (2010), 102.
56 Maejima (2010), 136.
57 Maejima (2010), 151-4.
deliberately undefined to allow the consumer to focus on the former. Furthermore, the large-scale and small-scale situations are frequently assumed to be directly linked to each other, and the ‘daily life’ setting remains largely static in spite of the crisis situation. This world crisis may either consist of a concrete threat such as war, invasion and/or human extinction, or of the more abstract problem of a recurring time loop, both of which impede advancement into the future.

b. Specification of defining factors

The discourse in this section primarily concerns the societal dimension displayed in sekai-kei narratives, as it is one of the few factors within the given definitions on which critics unanimously agree.

Kasai Kiyoshi attempts to widen the concept of society removal in sekai-kei in his article “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai” (“Sekai-kei and the state of emergency”). He states that, while society is not completely erased in Shin seiki evangerion (unlike in the very short but “pure” sekai-kei narrative Hoshi no koe), it leaves the impression of having been wrecked and scattered.59 Giving the example of Death Note, a work which remains in dispute as to whether it is a sekai-kei narrative or not (cf. Uno below), he states that protagonist Yagami Raito’s actions lead to society entering a state of emergency and disintegrating, as the rule of law is put out of order.60 In this context, Kasai considers

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60 Kasai, “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai” (2009), 44-5.
Death Note part of the genealogy of sekai-kei, even if Raito does not fight in the physical sense.  

Likewise, Fujita Naoya emphasizes that complete erasure of social entities is not strictly necessary for a work to display sekai-kei sensibilities. Questioning why the genre-defining works Saishū heiki kanojo, Hoshi no koe, and Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu all seem to be set on Hokkaidō, he refers back to the sekai-kei necessity of excluding society. In this context he inquires whether staging the narrative in places like Toyama or Ōsaka would not produce a feeling of community (i.e. regional, familial, interim) with a historical background, which would in turn dilute the ‘feeling of certainty’ (zettaikan) of the depicted love. Following this, he posits that a ‘society’ as such may exist in a sekai-kei narrative, but community does not; if a society is in existence, it is intrinsically cold and does not offer a ‘meaning of life.’ For that very reason, people withdraw from it and can only acquire meaning in life from love.

These attempts at further specification of the function and non-functionality of the social dimension in sekai-kei narratives permit the synthesis of an additional factor: If society can either be absent, scattered, in a state of emergency, or cold towards its members in these works in order to achieve the desired effect (i.e. the focus being placed on the small-scale situation), the implication is that the connection of small-scale and

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61 Kasai, “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai” (2009), 45.
63 Fujita (2009), 270-1.
64 Fujita (2009), 271.
65 Fujita (2009), 271.
large-scale narrative does not require society to be absent, only that it is unwilling or unable to mediate either situation.

c. **Differential analysis**

This method of inquiring into the framework of the *sekai-kei* genre is utilized in two ways, namely to test and discard vague definition attempts with a non-*sekai-kei* narrative, or to highlight a factor which distinguishes narratives within the genre from thematically similar works.

Maejima combines these objectives in applying Purunie’s original statement that *sekai-kei* narratives are “*Eva*-like (=intense in terms of single-person [i.e. point-of-view] narration) works” to the anime *Mugen no Ryvius* (1999), stating that while this work was strongly influenced by *Evangelion* and features a lot of monologues by the youthful protagonists, it is not usually regarded as *sekai-kei*.\(^{66}\) This narrative revolves around a group of hundreds of youths finding themselves on a spaceship without supervision after their station was sabotaged and all adults sacrificed themselves to save them; due to a misunderstanding, the government believes them to be the terrorists who committed the sabotage.\(^{67}\) Maejima points out the following possible reasons why *Mugen no Ryvius* is not considered *sekai-kei*: 1. The group aboard the *Ryvius* establishes a pseudosociety in which they conduct themselves as adults, 2. Concrete problems such as discrimination, bullying, and food shortages are addressed, and 3. The enemy is clearly defined.\(^ {68}\)

\(^{66}\) Maejima (2010), 84.


\(^{68}\) Maejima (2010), 84-5.
Within the context of persistent criticism being leveled at the fact that an adult societal dimension is often lacking in sekai-kei narratives, Maejima goes on to inquire why it is that popular manga and video series such as Dragonball and Dragon Quest, which also omit society and feature youthful heroes, are not tarred with the same brush. He extrapolates from his answer, namely the fact that this omission is not overtly stated in Dragon Quest, that this very self-referentiality is characteristic of sekai-kei narratives.\(^{69}\)

Uno Tsunehiro, meanwhile, approaches the genre from a perspective of cultural criticism in his book Zero nendai no sōzōryoku (“The imagination of the 2000s”). Considering a dichotomy of thought based on socio-cultural changes from the 90s to the 2000s responsible for producing disparate narrative forms, he dubs fictional works produced between 1995 and 2001, among them Shin seiki evangerion, the products of “old imagination,” or shinri shugi (psychologism), whereas “new imagination” narratives such as 2003’s Death Note constitute ketsudan shugi (decision ideology).\(^{70}\) Uno points out that, while the protagonists of both narratives reject society, Shinji withdraws into himself (hikikomoru) in order to avoid being hurt or inadvertently hurt others, whereas Raito, rather than growing timid and withdrawing when being presented with a disintegrating social order, accepts it and takes it upon himself to construct a new one out of his own power.\(^{71}\)

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\(^{69}\) Maejima (2010), 198.
\(^{71}\) Uno (2008), 22-3.
Kasai Kiyoshi, in turn, challenges Uno’s equation of sekai-kei’s deletion of society with “hikikomori/psychologism”-like imagination as erroneous in his article “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai,” as he does not think that narratives displaying a tendency to what Uno has termed ketsudan shugi escape the the 21st century inevitability of the collapse of the societal domain.72 For example, in Death Note, Protagonist Yagami Raito’s actions, motivated by idealism (i.e. the elimination of crime by murdering criminals via the Death Note), lead to society entering a state of emergency and disintegrating, as the rule of law is put out of order.73 In this context, Kasai considers Death Note part of the genealogy of sekai-kei, even if the protagonist Raito does not fight in the physical sense.74 Instead of Uno’s firm delineation of psychologism v. decision principle, he suggests transitional sekai-kei forms of hikikomori-type sekai-kei and battle-of-intellect-type sekai-kei.75 However, as both rely on society being either absent or caught in a state of emergency, ketsudan shugi cannot be regarded as separate from sekai-kei.76

In his article “‘Sekai-kei’ sakuhin no shinkō to tairaku” (“The progression and downfall of ‘sekai-kei’ works”), Komori Kentarō proposes another rule for a sekai-kei definition: Past shared values such as justice and fellowship cease to be shared.77 Elaborating on this, he attempts to delimit sekai-kei protagonists by juxtaposing them

72 Kasai “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai,” (2009), 30.
73 Kasai “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai,” (2009), 44-5.
74 Kasai “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai,” (2009), 45.
75 Kasai “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai,” (2009), 45.
76 Kasai “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai,” (2009), 49.
77 Komori (2009), 151.
with protagonists following the “Golden Rules” of *Shōnen Jump* narratives: Effort, friendship, victory. In this regard, he considers “effort” to be synonymous with “growth,” whereas *sekai-kei* protagonists, in his estimation, do not grow, forge friendships, or win; summed up simply, they do not become adults.

However, this definition is partially contested by Motoko Tanaka; while agreeing with Komori on the *sekai-kei* protagonists’ suspension of growth, she sees the problem in the narratives affording the main characters the potential to “indirectly control the world through their empowered girlfriends and negate the experiences of resignation, refusal and loss,” which, in accordance with Lacanian theory, result in maturation.

From these points, it can be surmised that overtly referencing the primary characters’ alienation from, or disbelief in the mediating ability of, society is thought to be another hallmark of *sekai-kei*, as active participation in society as shown in *Mugen no Ryvius* regardless of its dysfunctionality/state of emergency, or omitting society’s mediating ability without comment, are thought to be disqualifying factors. The contentions regarding character growth and *Death Note*’s contested status as a *sekai-kei* narrative will be discussed in the philosophical exegesis portion of the next chapter.

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78 *Shūkan Shōnen Jump* [Weekly Shōnen Jump] is a weekly manga anthology magazine specializing in comics for a young male target demographic.
79 Komori (2009), 152.
80 Komori (2009), 152.
81 Tanaka (2013).
Chapter 2: Comparative analysis of sekai-kei narratives.

Sekai-kei plot progression

a. Shin seiki evangerion

For a comparative exegetical approach to sekai-kei plot progression, the first necessary step is to establish a basis. In order to do so, I will address the ending of the television version of *Shin seiki evangerion*, as it is the narrative most frequently analyzed and criticized for its protagonist’s ostensible withdrawal into himself. For example, Uno Tsunehiro states in *Zero nendai no sōzōryoku* that, in the second half of the narrative, [the protagonist] Shinji refuses to pilot the Eva and withdraws inside, which, rather than a social realization of the self, represents a demand for an existence which is unconditionally acknowledged/approved of by others (i.e. the “to be/to not be” [*-de aru/-de wa nai*] dichotomy of the self-image is chosen over social self-realization through action [*-suru/-shita*]). In the same vein, Kasai Kiyoshi’s analysis of *Shin seiki*...

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82 Written and directed by Anno Hideaki, first broadcast on TV Asahi from October 4, 1995 until March 27, 1996; the franchise has since branched out into various *otaku*-related media such as manga and video games. This thesis will only treat the original television animation, as well as its first alternate ending provided in a theatrical release in 1997 (see below).

evangerion’s plot in “Sekai-kei to reigai jōtai” concludes with the assertion that Shinji rejects reality in the end and falls into a hikikomori-like mental state.  

These analyses neglect to mention a number of salient points evident in episodes 25 and 26 of the series. For one, while the shape of Shinji’s “inner world” is initially determined by his rejection of others due to fear, the reason for this inner world becoming the mise-en-scène for the final two episodes is the initiation of his father Ikari Gendō’s “Human Instrumentality Project” (jinrui hokan keikaku), in which all of humanity reverts to its original, undifferentiated state, with individual bodies as well as barriers between consciousnesses dissolving. In short, the shift from the outside world is not initiated by Shinji himself, who, in fact, is terrified enough of this solitary setting in the beginning of episode 25 to call out for all of his acquaintances and even his father, whom he admits to hate and fear: “So, where should I go from here? Someone, tell me!”

Additionally, Uno’s statement that Shinji withdraws because he demands acknowledgment and approval by others is only partially correct and misrepresents the resolution of the narrative. In the beginning of the Instrumentality process, Shinji does admit that he wants to receive praise and be regarded as valuable by others. However, it is precisely because of this wish that he did take action in piloting the Eva in the first place (this is stated at after being asked whether he pilots for others’ sake: “That’s right. Isn’t that a good thing? Isn’t that a really good thing? If I do that, I’m being praised by

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everyone, and regarded as important”). Furthermore, the construction of his own, separate “inner world” within Instrumentality occurs, as Uno rightly states, due to despair of inevitably erring whenever he attempts to achieve something or be involved with others, and of hurting someone and being hurt oneself. This is also pointed out to Shinji by Misato at the beginning of episode 26. However, no comment is made on how the narrative progresses from there, i.e. to Shinji’s admission that he does not consider himself to have any value beyond piloting the Eva: “By piloting the Eva, I can be me.” In response, it is pointed out that while this is certainly a part of him, if he clings to the Eva as his sole raison d’être, it will eventually become all he is. He is then told by his mother Yui that only he himself can determine his own value. The narrative moves on to Shinji’s lack of self-definition, all other characters explaining to him in turns that he is shaped both by his own mind as well as the world around him, and that he cannot understand himself in a world that contains no one but him. After being shown a possible alternate world in which Shinji is a regular middle school student with an average family life, he realizes that his existing without being an Eva pilot is a possibility. As a result, he does not reject the real world itself anymore, but moves on to state that he

87 Uno (2008), 16.
88 Neon Genesis Evangelion Episode 26: “Eva ni noru koto de, boku wa boku ga irareru.” (time index 5:30).
89 Neon Genesis Evangelion Episode 26: “Sore wa anata jishin de mitomeru shika nai no yo, jibun no kachi o.” (time index 9:15).
90 Neon Genesis Evangelion Episode 26: “Omae o katadotteiru no wa, omae jishin no kokoro to sono mawari no sekai dakara na... Hoka no hito to no kabe o miru koto de, jibun no katachi o imejī shiteiru. Anata wa, hoka no hito ga inai to, jibun ga mienai no.” (time index 12:45).
hates himself.\textsuperscript{91} It is explained to him that his truth is subjective, and that it can be changed by the way he accepts it.\textsuperscript{92} Shinji wonders about others’ perceived hatred of him, which is dismissed as only being in his imagination, as he never learned how to deal with fearing what others might feel about him. Furthermore, his self-hatred is contingent on his sustaining this attitude. This leads to the ultimate narrative outcome of \textit{Shin seiki evangerion} as, at the end of episode 26, Shinji realizes that the possibility of liking himself exists; concomitantly, he states that he wants to be himself, and that he wants to exist in the world.\textsuperscript{93} Alongside these statements, the backdrop of Shinji’s solitary world begins to crack, until it breaks away with the final statement. After this, all other characters are portrayed congratulating him, and the screen fades to black with the words “To my father, thank you. To my mother, farewell. And to all the children, congratulations.”\textsuperscript{94}

As these final episodes never progress out of the phenomenological paradigm of Instrumentality, it is admittedly not immediately apparent that Shinji is rejecting the merging of humanity in this instance, until one examines the above statements more closely: If other people do not exist, one cannot define oneself. Instrumentality’s purpose is to eliminate Otherness by fusing all of humanity into one undifferentiated existence. Therefore, accepting Instrumentality would equate to non-existence as a self. Considering

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{91} Neon Genesis Evangelion Episode 26: “Genjitsu sekai wa, warukunai kamoshirenai, demo jibun wa kirai da.” (time index 19:04).
\item \textsuperscript{92} Neon Genesis Evangelion Episode 26: “Uketorikata hitotsu de maru de betsu no mono ni natte shimau zeijaku na mono da, hito no naka no shinjitsu to wa na.” (time index 20:04).
\item \textsuperscript{94} Neon Genesis Evangelion Episode 26: “Chichi ni, arigatō. Haha ni, sayōnara. Soshite, subete no kodomo-tachi ni, omedetō” (time index 21:55).
\end{itemize}
that Shinji’s final self-defining statements such as “I am me, I want to be me” indicate a
desire to continue existing as an individual, his rejection of the process becomes clear.

Additionally, this interpretation would indicate a parallel plot development to the
alternate ending portrayed in Shin seiki evangerion gekijō-ban: Air/Magokoro o, kimi
ni,95 in which Instrumentality is shown in a more externalized manner. In the Magokoro o,
kimi ni part, a full explanation of how the process works is given by Shinji’s father
Gendō, the mastermind behind the plan: The AT fields which separate human hearts from
each other are dissolved alongside their bodies, and all souls are fused into one.96

Furthermore, it is explicitly stated that Shinji will be the one to determine the future of
mankind.97 Rei explains the situation to him at time index 1:18:00, namely that all living
beings are in the process of being combined into an indistinct whole in which there are no
boundaries and the self ceases to exist. Then, she gives him the choice to wish for the
restoration of AT fields, once again allowing human beings to separate from each other,
but warns that the fear of others will begin once more.98 Shinji chooses this option after
stating that he wants to meet people again, even if they may eventually betray him again,
because at the time he met them, his feelings were real. As the Instrumentality process is

95 Shin seiki evangerion gekijō-ban: Air/Magokoro o, kimi ni, directed by Anno Hideaki, was produced by
97 End of Evangelion, by Fuyutsuki at time index 58:44.
98 End of Evangelion: “Tanin no sonzai o ima ichido nozomeba, futatabi kokoro no kabe ga subete no
hitobito hikihanasu wa. Mata, tanin no kyōfu wa hajimaru no yo” (time index 1:19:15).
halted, it is stated that those who can picture themselves in their hearts are able to return to human form, which Shinji does.99

As is evident, the protagonist of Shin seiki evangerion, when given a choice, affirms himself and the world simultaneously in both versions of the narrative rather than opting for withdrawal. Additionally, this affirmative decision, even though it is related to being, constitutes an action on Shinji’s part, disproving Uno’s posited dichotomy. As the “inner world” presented at the end of the television series is irresolvable by piloting the Eva, and the alternate theatrical ending of the narrative includes a scene in which Shinji, confronted with a giant Rei about to initiate Instrumentality, attempts to move his Eva unit by manipulating the controls without success, it is, in fact, the only meaningful action leading to a resolution.

However, is this ultimate affirmation of living with others and rejection of withdrawal evident in subsequent sekai-kei works, particularly if the narrative paradigm does not afford its characters the option of reversing an apocalyptic process?

b. Saishū heiki kanojo

In Saishū heiki kanojo100 the male protagonist Shūji, a student, starts a relationship with Chise, a girl who turns out to be the SDF’s ultimate weapon in a worldwide war with unspecified factions and objectives. He watches Chise’s humanity deteriorate as her bodily augmentation evolves, while simultaneously shedding his own

100 Takahashi Shin, Saishū heiki kanojo, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2000-2001). Although, as in the case of Eva, versions in multiple entertainment media formats exist, this narrative was originally published in manga form.
alienation from his home town’s society. After a futile attempt of the couple to escape Chise’s status and duties as a weapon by leaving their hometown and attempting to live together in anonymity, the remainder of her humanity is consumed after an attack and running out of her medication. The narrative ends in the obliteration of mankind, with Shūji as the sole survivor; Chise still exists, as well, but she is not human anymore; she has become the weapon.

In its plot, Saishū heiki kanojo incorporates a theme which Shin seiki evangerion only marginally addressed with the clone Ayanami Rei, namely the question of how “humanity” is defined, via Chise’s gradual dehumanization. Notably, both Chise and Rei exclusively identify themselves through others.

It is left unclear whether “heroine” Chise personally brings about the apocalypse or not, although she does annihilate her hometown in order to spare her family and acquaintances the pain the end will bring, as well as the remaining fighting factions.

Warning Shūji about the impending end of the world in a letter, Chise asks him to come

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101 The couple’s escape and life in another town is depicted throughout volume 6.
102 As shown in volume 7, page 144 of the manga; Chise’s arm disintegrates, and she explains to Shūji that she assumed a body like that of the “original Chise” (moto no Chise) for the purpose of coming to meet him, but that it may have been too much.
103 Cf. Neon Genesis Evangelion episode 25, time index 7:45: “Hito no mane o shiteiru itsuwari no buttai ni suginai no yo.”
104 Neon Genesis Evangelion episode 25, time index 7:58: "Watashi wa watashi. Watashi wa kore made no jikan to hoka no hito-tachi to no tsunagari ni yotte, watashi ni natta mono;” see also Rei’s speculative, but unresolved poem in episode 14, featuring the answerless question “Hito wa nani?” Compare the above line to Saishū heiki kanojo vol. 2, page 136: “A, atashi ga koko ni iru koto o, Shū-chan ga... chanto koko ni iru yo tte, oshiete hoshii n da.” Cf. also vol. 7, pp. 303-10.
105 In her letter to Shūji, she writes, “Jitsu o iu to, chikyū wa mō dame desu” (vol.7, 205); on page 206, she elaborates that on the other side of the world, terrible things affecting the planet itself have been happening, which could indicate that an external cause is responsible for the end of the world. Finally, on page 207, she states that she has decided to end the lives of the people in her hometown painlessly: “Watashi no umareta kono machi no hito-tachi to, minna issho ni itakunai yō ni karashimana ni yō ni. Ino wa watashi ni wa, sore ga dekiri kara.” The obliteration of the remaining fighting factions is mentioned by Chise on page 302 of volume 7.
to their regular meeting place at the observatory overlooking their town.\textsuperscript{106} As he ascends the hill, he is surprised by a mudslide caused by an earthquake.\textsuperscript{107} At that point, the background becomes white and featureless as Shūji falls unconscious while lamenting the fate of the world, caused by humanity continuing to engage in warfare.\textsuperscript{108} He finds himself on a plain full of corpses, among them his friends and family, and wishes that he had lived life by himself without ever knowing any of them in the face of their deaths, as well as his responsibility for their demise.\textsuperscript{109} Shūji asks himself what he can do to atone for it, and how often Chise had to face similar scenes.\textsuperscript{110} Crying, he apologizes to the dead multiple times, only to find himself in front of a featureless background once more.\textsuperscript{111} Wondering whether this is a dream, and where reality has gone, Shūji goes on to assume that the whiteness symbolizes that he has done nothing with his life, wishing that he had not awoken.\textsuperscript{112} He then states that he only wants to live in a world in which people exist, even if it includes fighting, sin, and dead bodies, and even if a lot of pain awaits him there.\textsuperscript{113}

While the incorporation of whiteness at this juncture is reminiscent of the “freedom” scene in episode 26 of \textit{Shin seiki evangerion} cited above, the accompanying text showcases a large difference in narrative context: Whereas Shinji is transposed into

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{106} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, vol. 7, 205-8.
\item \textsuperscript{107} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, vol. 7, 262-4.
\item \textsuperscript{108} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, vol. 7, 265-6.
\item \textsuperscript{109} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, vol. 7, 268-71: “Me o fusai de dare to shirawazu ni ikite ita. Tada hitoridake de ikite ita to shitara.”
\item \textsuperscript{110} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, vol. 7, 272.
\item \textsuperscript{111} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, vol. 7, 273-4.
\item \textsuperscript{112} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, vol. 7, 278-9: “Miro! Kono sekai... Boku no jinsei wa nanimo nakatta ja nai ka? Konna ni shiroku... samishii... Me o samashitaku nanka, nakatta.”
\item \textsuperscript{113} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, vol. 7, 280: “Aa, yappari hito no sumu sekai ga ii. Soko de shika ikite itakunai. Tatoe, soko ga tatakai ya tsumi ya takusan no shitai de ippai da to shite mo. Takusan no itami ga matteita to shite mo.”
\end{itemize}
this featureless environment in order for the other characters to deliberate on freedom and self-understanding for his benefit, Shūji’s thoughts are solitary and epideictic in nature, delivering a eulogy to his own life, as well as to the world as a whole.

After finding a stone slab from the observatory on which Chise had inscribed their names as proof of his existence in spite of the whiteness of his life, she appears before Shūji in the form of a “gigantic ship.”\(^{114}\) Hesitant at first, he eventually decides to board it, even though he does not sense a human presence inside.\(^{115}\) What is left of Chise’s consciousness communicates to him that she ended all fighting, that this was the last “work” she had to accomplish.\(^{116}\) She tells him that she cannot manifest into a physical form resembling her prior body anymore as she leaves Earth, but due to Shūji’s memory of her, it becomes possible, after all.\(^{117}\) A final noise is heard from the planet, which sounds like Chise’s heartbeat to Shūji.\(^{118}\) The manga ends with the words, “We will love each other. We will live.”\(^{119}\)

The ending of *Saishū heiki kanojo* obviously bears some resemblance to the final episodes of *Shin seiki evangerion*; not only does it employ similar visual rhetoric in its display of the protagonists’ “inner world,” it also features a seemingly paradoxical ultimate declaration. Why are congratulations being expressed to “all the children” (i.e. the child pilots of the Eva units, as *kodomo-tachi* is glossed with *children* in katakana)? How are Chise and Shūji going to live, and is the latter still alive in the first place,

\(^{114}\) *Saishū heiki kanojo*, vol. 7, 284-96.
\(^{115}\) *Saishū heiki kanojo*, vol. 7, 298-9.
\(^{116}\) *Saishū heiki kanojo*, vol. 7, 302.
\(^{117}\) *Saishū heiki kanojo*, vol. 7, 303-10.
\(^{118}\) *Saishū heiki kanojo*, vol. 7, 318.
considering that his last instance in the “real world” shows him being immersed in a mudslide? The consumer of these narratives is left to ponder these questions.

In *Saishū heiki kanojo*, no framing device such as Instrumentality is given for the transition from the outer to the inner world, leaving Shūji’s and Chise’s ultimate fate, as well as the meaning of the final lines, open for interpretation. However, Shūji’s thoughts after realizing his status as sole survivor of humanity are of interest in this context. Shūji’s perceived ineffectuality is expressed multiple times throughout the narrative prior to this stage, as he can only helplessly observe Chise’s deterioration along the worsening state of the world. He takes personal responsibility for the deaths that have occurred while grieving among the corpses; it is implied that he feels his less-than-perfect conduct in his relationship with Chise is to blame for the ultimate outcome throughout the final volume of the manga, even though he is explicitly told that “there was no choice, it was nobody’s fault” by one of her former handlers. Faced with a return to the featureless white background, he recants his initial wish that he had never existed alongside others, stating that living in a world with people is worth the pain. While neither Shūji nor Chise are capable of reversing the apocalypse, leaving them withdrawn from a social context, the rejection of solitude is clearly expressed, even if it means accepting pain.

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120 *Saishū heiki kanojo*, vol. 7, 71: “Shikata nakatta n desu. Daremo warukunai n desu.”
c. Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu

Compared to the prior two narratives, *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*\(^1\) is of a more simplistic nature, as the large-scale crisis setting is barely featured in favor of emphasizing the daily life setting. Secret aircraft pilot Iriya Kana is introduced to Asaba Naoyuki’s class in the small town of Sonohara as a transfer student after he initially meets her while clandestinely sneaking into the school pool. He becomes her confidante after listening to her story of losing a comrade in the desert and realizing that she was alone and unwanted.\(^2\) From that point, he takes care of her repeatedly as her health deteriorates due to the strain of piloting the Black Manta. When she eventually sickens to the point of losing her hair and going blind, and her seizures require multiple intracardiac injections to abate, Asaba asks her to run away with him.\(^3\) Their money is stolen by a vagrant after a few days and Iriya is sexually assaulted, causing her mental state to deteriorate alongside her continually worsening physical health problems. When Asaba loses his patience with her shortly thereafter, she suffers a psychotic break and ceases to recognize him.\(^4\) These circumstances force him to turn to his grandparents for help.

The motif of an attempted escape from the large-scale situation portrayed here is also in evidence in *Shin seiki evangerion* and *Saishū heiki kanojo*, as is the narrative

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\(^1\) Akiyama Mizuhito, *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, 4 vols (Tokyo: Media Works, 2001-2003). Originally released as “light novel” (i.e. novels which include illustrations and are usually targeted at the same demographic as anime and manga), although versions in alternate media formats also exist.

\(^2\) *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, vol. 2, 70-1: “Watashi-tachi igai ni wa, daremo... Watashi-tachi wa, mina iranai ko nan da, sono toki omotta... Ikite iru chidatte, daretomo accha ikenakute, daretomo hanashicha ikenakute, shindara saishō kara inakatta koto ni sarechau n datte omotta.”

\(^3\) *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, vol. 3, 248: “Nigete yaru... Kyō kara Iriya wa kichi ni wa kaeranai. Iriya ga jibun kara kaeritai to omou made kaeranai.”

\(^4\) *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, vol. 4, 144.
outcome of the endeavor: Witnessing Asuka and Rei being defeated by an Angel in episode 19, Shinji, who resigned his commission with NERV earlier in the episode, returns to fight, after all. Chise’s and Shūji’s attempt ends in the former’s consumption by her inner weapon, after which the latter turns her body over to the military. In *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, likewise, Iriya’s health and mental state deteriorate to such a degree that Asaba is forced to resort to outside help. In short, all of these instances, which occur near the climax of the respective narratives, feature the protagonist admitting that the organization engaged with the large-scale situation cannot be avoided, as it is connected to the small-scale situation (i.e. Shinji’s self-worth and the survival of the respective “heroine”).

When Asaba and Iriya arrive at his grandparents’ house, Iriya’s handlers are there, as well. One of them explains the situation to the Asaba while Iriya’s health is being stabilized for the moment: humanity is engaged in two wars, one with a human enemy over the anti-gravity technology used in the Black Manta, and the other with attacking aliens, with the final battle scheduled to be in three days. Asaba returns to Sonohara to wait for the world to end, only to hear on the news just after the clock passes midnight on the third day that the war is over. However, the following day, a military helicopter arrives at the school building, and he is escorted to an aircraft carrier, where Iriya is refusing to sortie, holding other soldiers at bay by force. Her handler, stating that the news of the war being over are untrue, wants Asaba to convince her to fight. After managing to reach Iriya’s side and ascertaining that she recognizes him once more, Asaba

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125 *Saishū heiki kanojo* vol. 7, 53-61.
126 *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, vol. 4, 247-56.
apologizes to Iriya for the things he said to her, confesses his love, and states that would rather risk the fate of the world than Iriya’s life. However, this convinces Iriya to go to battle, after all, stating that she is doing so, and will die, for his sake alone. Asaba never sees her again; as life in Sonohara returns to normal and military personnel are leaving town, he receives a letter from one of the people responsible for Iriya, explaining that he was specifically set up to form an emotional connection to Iriya in order to motivate her to fight; after she lost all of her comrades to the wars and to equipment malfunction, her effectiveness was decreasing, leading to concerns that she would not be able to stop the alien invasion. She needed to establish emotional rapport with another person in order to want to succeed.

*Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, although on the opposite end of the spectrum from *Shin seiki evangerion* in that it emphasizes a daily life setting and depicts the large-scale situation primarily through its effects on the “heroine” Iriya, nevertheless parallels the two preceding narratives in two aspects. Not only is the attempted flight from the large-scale situation a narrative element, the choice about the fate of the world ultimately lies in Iriya’s hands, due to her crucial role in the war as the only person who can pilot her craft. Asaba’s decision to place her fate above that of the world, including himself, ultimately convinces her to deliberately embrace her role for the sake of another, i.e. finding her own value in their coexistence and leading her to affirm the world, albeit not for herself.

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127 *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, vol. 4, 296-7, 299: “Boku ga settoku suru to omotteta n nara oainikusama da!! Iriya wa shutsugeki saisen kara na!! Zettai ni shiniasen kara na!! Iriya ga ikiru tame nara jinrui demo nan demo horobeba ii n da!!”

128 *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, vol. 4, 300: “Watashi mo, Asaba no tame dake ni tatakatte, Asaba no tame dake ni shinu.”

129 *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, vol. 4, 310-8.
The genre subversion Maejima perceives in the military deliberately bringing Iriya and Asaba together only partially applies;\textsuperscript{130} while manipulation of the primary characters is not in evidence in \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, the child pilots of \textit{Shin seiki evangerion} are likewise not aware that they are not just fighting the Angels, but furthering the Human Instrumentality Project as envisioned by NERV commander Ikari Gendō and SEELE.\textsuperscript{131} However, \textit{Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu} does subvert one of the genre conventions in Asaba not displaying any signs of alienation or psychological instability from beginning to end; he has a normal family life, and his participation in a school club occupies a large part of the narrative. It is Iriya who solely bears the psychological burden, rather than both primary characters as in \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, or most of the main cast as in \textit{Shin seiki evangerion}.

\textit{d. Hoshi no koe}

\textit{Hoshi no koe},\textsuperscript{132} finally, is the sparsest of the definitive sekai-kei works as a short animated film of approximately 25 minutes run time. No characters other than the male and female leads, Noboru and Mikako, are depicted. Mikako joins the U.N. after middle school to participate in the war against the extraterrestrial Tarsians, leaving Earth in a robot unit attached to the battleship \textit{Lysithea}. She keeps in contact with her classmate and love interest Noboru via her cell phone, although, due to the immense distances covered by traveling at faster-than-light speed, their e-mails to each other take years to arrive. On

\textsuperscript{130} cf. Chapter 1; see Maejima (2010), 98.
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Neon Genesis Evangelion} episode 21.
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Hoshi No Koe}, created as a one-man project by Shinkai Makoto, was released in Japan on DVD by CoMix Wave, Inc. in 2002.
the planet Agartha, Mikako experiences an illusion of herself in various Earth settings shown in the beginning of the narrative, apparently caused by a Tarsian, and begs her double to let her see Noboru again so she can tell him she loves him. An attack on the fleet occurs, and she is able to protect the Lysithea from being destroyed. Meanwhile, Noboru, after being depicted checking his phone in various settings for the first half of the story, eventually decides to “harden his heart and become an adult, even by himself,”133 considering that messages from Mikako will now take eight years to reach him. By the time her message sent from Agartha arrives, mostly garbled except for the beginning sentence, Noboru is set to enter the U.N. as an officer the next month; the newspapers on his table report the victory of the Lysithea against the Tarsians from eight years ago, but also state that the ship sustained damage. In the end, both characters muse in a voiceover what they would say to each other if their thoughts could connect them across time and space, and come to the same conclusion: “I am here” ("Koko ni iru yo").

This narrative is the only one among the definitive sekai-kei works which does not claim its central large-scale conflict, i.e. the war between humanity and the Tarsians, to result in devastation on an apocalyptic level within a specific time frame or set of circumstances. Furthermore, Noboru is never depicted or described as being in danger, and Mikako never explicitly claims to fight for a specific purpose, resulting in no direct connection between the existing large-scale and small-scale situations beyond their enforced spatial separation. However, even within this sparse context, one point stands

133 *Voices of a Distant Star - Hoshi No Koe*. dir. Makoto Shinkai (United States: ADV Films, 2003), time index 15:09: "Dakara boku wa mokuhyō o tateta. Motto motto kokoro o kataku tsumetaku tsuyoku suru koto... Ore wa, hitori demo otona ni naru koto."
out, namely Noboru’s decision to grow up, i.e. refusing to withdraw in order to wait for Mikako. Two other commonalities with the narratives discussed above exist, namely an “inner world” depiction (albeit from Mikako’s perspective, as most of the plot is told from her point of view) and the final declarative statement.

*The philosophy of sekai-kei narratives*

The preceding section has presented evidence that withdrawal is, in fact, not the preferred mode of existence of sekai-kei characters. However, does this affirmation automatically signify the potential for maturation in a setting where the social dimension is largely or wholly absent? Motoko Tanaka states,

> According to Lacan, children mature as they learn that they are not omnipotent: in other words, one becomes gradually mature as one accepts one’s lack of power and experiences resignation and loss… Sekaikei works satisfy the desire of omnipotence by allowing their protagonists to indirectly control the world through their empowered girlfriends and negate the experiences of resignation, refusal and loss.¹³⁴

However, this explanation does not bear out in the narratives considered so far. In fact, not only is loss arguably an integral part of the definitive works in this genre, it also leads to the character growth projected by Lacan. This is evidenced in Shinji’s realization that to live means to live with others in both versions of *Shin seiki evangerion* analyzed, as well as Shuji’s wish to live in a populated world after the apocalypse in *Saishū heiki kanojo*, even after experiencing personal losses and concomitant temptation of withdrawal in order to avoid emotional distress. Shinji enters the Instrumentality process after being forced to kill Kaoru, a new member of NERV with whom he had

¹³⁴ Tanaka (2013).
established a friendly relationship, upon discovering that he was the final Angel in episode 24. Shūji says his farewells to his parents immediately prior to the apocalypse, and is confronted with their dead bodies in the field of corpses he encounters. Both protagonists enter a state of resignation due to their losses, but ultimately still express a desire to exist in the real world. Iriya sacrifices herself for the sake of Asaba, and, by extension, the world in *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*; in her case, the experience of loss precipitated her withdrawal from social interaction prior to the narrative, as she only acknowledged her fellow pilots as Others before forging a connection with Asaba. Her decision, in turn, is preceded by the protagonist’s willingness to sacrifice himself alongside the world to affirm her in refusing to enter the final battle. *Hoshi no koe*, finally, revolves around Mikako’s knowledge that she is unable to maintain communication with Noboru after arriving on planet Agartha, and Noboru’s resignation at this fact being channeled into the decision to become an adult without her.

The growth of characters depicted in these works, albeit occasionally paralleled in the world situation and relating to a desire of socialization, is primarily of a subjective nature, namely that of the character striving to find meaning in his or her personal life. The progression toward this goal often follows the Kierkegaardian existentialist stances of despair, which, in his ontology, arise from man being a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, or, restated, of freedom and necessity, the relation between the two states representing the self.135 This despair is described as the “sickness unto death,” not in the

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literal sense of representing a mortal illness ending in death, but rather as the torment of not being able to die.\textsuperscript{136} Kierkegaard elaborates on this concept as follows.

When death is the greatest danger, we hope for life; but when we learn to know the even greater danger, we hope for death. When the danger is so great that death becomes the hope, then despair is the hopelessness of not even being able to die … For to die signifies that it is all over, but to die death means to live to experience dying; and if this is experienced for one single moment, one thereby experiences it forever. If a person were to die of despair as one dies of a sickness, then the eternal in him, the self, must be able to die in the same sense as the body dies of sickness. But this is impossible; the dying of despair continually converts itself into a living.\textsuperscript{137}

Applying an existentialist framework is not only apt in the sense that the above quoted idea of “despair being the hopelessness of not even being able to die” is reproduced in unmitigated form in Shūji’s realization of being the only survivor of mankind; existentialism is also used explicitly in episode 26 of \textit{Shin seiki evangerion}. At time index 11:25.\textsuperscript{138} the voiceover provided by the other characters explains to Shinji how he can come to understand himself as a white world without limitations is presented to him. This world is then limited by a horizontal line, giving him a ground to stand on. From there, the line of reasoning that existential possibility requires limitations for individuation to occur is followed to the conclusion that the Other is necessary to understand oneself. Kierkegaard writes in that regard in \textit{Sickness unto Death}, “Possibility and necessity are equally essential to becoming (and the self has the task of becoming itself in freedom)… The philosophers are mistaken when they explain necessity as a

\textsuperscript{136} Kierkegaard (1980), 18.
\textsuperscript{137} Kierkegaard (1980), 18.
unity of possibility and actuality – no, actuality is the unity of possibility and necessity."\(^{139}\) Likewise, Martin Heidegger states in *Being and Time*,

Knowing oneself is grounded in Being-with, which understands primordially. It operates proximally in accordance with the king of Being which is closest to us – Being-in-the-world as Being-with; and it does so by an acquaintance with that which Dasein, along with the Others, comes across in its environmental circumspection and concerns itself with – an acquaintance in which Dasein understands.\(^{140}\)

Jean-Paul Sartre, finally, conceives of freedom as a “nihilation of a given; and to the extent that it is an internal negation and a consciousness, it participates in the necessity which prescribes that consciousness be consciousness of something,”\(^{141}\) the latter statement signifying that freedom can only be conceptualized by placing limits on it.

Kierkegaard’s *The Sickness unto Death* describes three different forms of despair. The first is despair over *something* while being unable to acknowledge that one’s anguish is in actuality directed at the unrealized self.\(^{142}\) In other words, instead of assuming the role of subject, the person perceives her despair as externally imposed. The initial alienation from society apparent in *sekai-kei* protagonists can be regarded as emblematic of this state. Scenes such as Noboru sitting by himself in a variety of settings or Shinji riding the train all day after running away in episode 4 of *Shin seiki evangerion* visualize this stage without explicit commentary, but Shūji’s questioning in the first *Saishū heiki kanojo* manga volume what stories in the newspapers concerning corporate bankruptcies,

\(^{139}\) Kierkegaard (1980), 35-6.
\(^{142}\) Kierkegaard (1980), 19.
wars in far-off countries, and earthquakes mean for someone who is struggling with love in a small town \textsuperscript{143} provides a more overt example, as does Iriya’s feeling of being unwanted and therefore alone while searching the desert for her comrade.

The second form of despair entails recognition of the internal synthesis via self-reflection or a sudden crisis, and subsequently opting to resolve the conflict by immersion in the temporal aspect of the self, i.e. seeking fleeting satisfaction or mundanity in an attempt to disavow the need for self-affirmation through a consciously assumed overarching goal, described as “despair at not willing to be oneself.” \textsuperscript{144} This tendency can be clearly observed in \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo} in Shūji, who seeks fleeting sexual satisfaction with a prior girlfriend during Chise’s absence in an unsuccessful attempt to mask his realization of ineffectuality, \textsuperscript{145} in Noboru’s initial preoccupation with waiting for Mikako’s texts in \textit{Hoshi no koe} and suspending his process of growing up, and in Shinji piloting his \textit{Evangelion} because he receives praise for doing so. Likewise, the couples’ attempts at fleeing from the large-scale situation and living in obscurity in \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo} and \textit{Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu} are expressive of this type of despair.

The third form of despair as described by Kierkegaard is that of “despair of willing to be oneself,” i.e. the attempt to embrace the events of one’s life willfully, but without the courage of the self to lose itself. \textsuperscript{146} He states that “no derived self can by regarding itself give itself more than it is in itself by paying attention to itself… In so far as the self in its despairing striving to be itself works itself into the very opposite, it really

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo} vol. 1, 25.
\textsuperscript{144} Kierkegaard (1980), 54-6, 66.
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo} vol. 2, 113-8.
\textsuperscript{146} Kierkegaard (1980), 67.
becomes no self.” A possible solution to this conundrum is the “ethical life” featuring a constantly renewed decision to commit to another, as posited in the example of marriage in the second volume of *Either/Or*; however, the primary way of dealing with this despair, for the Christian Existentialist Kierkegaard, is the continuous commitment to religious life.\(^{148}\)

Within the atheist existentialist stream of thought, this type of despair can be roughly equated with Martin Heidegger’s concept of anxiety, which is described in *Being and Time* as follows:

Anxiety individualizes Dasein [i.e. being in awareness, which is peculiar to humans] for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities. Therefore, with that which it is anxious about, anxiety discloses Dasein as *Being-possible*, and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization.\(^{149}\)

Restated, Heideggerian anxiety leads to the realization of individual possibility, as well as the potential to self-affirm through the willingness to Be with Others, or *live authentically*, which is described in *Being and Time* not as a different type of Being, but as a different subjective perception of Being:

The “world” which is ready-to-hand does not become another one “in its content,” nor does the circle of Others get exchanged for a new one; but both one’s Being towards the ready-to-hand understandingly and concernfully, and one’s solicitous Being with Others, are now given a definite character in terms of their ownmost potentiality-for-Being-their-Selves.\(^{150}\)

\(^{147}\) Kierkegaard (1980), 69.  
Kierkegaard (1980), 71.  
\(^{149}\) Heidegger (1995), 237.  
\(^{150}\) Heidegger (1995), 245.
As mentioned above, here Shinji’s realization that he wants to be himself and exist in the world, as well as Shūji’s statement after the apocalypse that he misses the world, even if it was filled with conflict, sin, and death, affirm the world and simultaneously themselves. A similar, albeit smaller-scale affirmation occurs in Iriya’s decision to fight (and sacrifice herself) in the final battle against the aliens and thereby committing to her role out of her own free will in Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu. Noboru’s conscious resolution to not wait for Mikako in becoming an adult while simultaneously affirming their connection by keeping his old cell phone in Hoshi no koe could also be understood in this manner: The attitude towards one’s own Being changes, while the “content” of the “world” remains.

While Shinji’s affirmation in Shin seiki evangerion is shown to have the potential of changing humanity’s fate in accordance with Sartre’s explanation in Existentialism and humanism that man lives in a world of “inter-subjectivity” in which he “has to decide what he is and what others are,”¹⁵¹ Shūji’s affirmation in the final volume of Saishū heiki kanojo occurs seemingly too late to be of value – the world has ended and he is humanity’s only survivor, saved by a transformed, no-longer-human Chise. However, in his discussion of the concept of facticity (i.e. the concrete details placing limitations on the freedom resulting from fundamentally essence-less being, e.g. by having happened in the past) in Being and Nothingness, Sartre states that “to be free,” in the philosophical sense, does not imply “to obtain what one has wished,” but “by oneself determine oneself

to wish;” in short, freedom signifies the autonomy of choice. Additionally, he emphasizes that “I alone in fact can decide at each moment the bearing of my past … by projecting myself towards my ends, I preserve the past with me, and by action I decide its meanings.” Thus, within the existentialist paradigm, Shūji’s statement remains ontologically relevant although Saishū heiki kanojo’s plot is inherently deterministic, as neither Chise’s struggles with her humanity nor her boyfriend’s eventual affirmation have an effect on the inevitable apocalypse. In fact, Shūji’s belated anguish over the loss of the world is the most poignant indicator within the definitive works of the genre that sekai-kei does not affirm withdrawal as proposed by Tanaka and Uno, but rather rejects it in an expressed desire for intersubjectivity, i.e. Being with Others or, in the case of Iriya, Being for Others.

Within this existentialist framework, it also becomes possible to define Death Note, a narrative which has been alternately described as sekai-kei and a work surpassing the form. Notably, the protagonist Yagami Raito makes the decision which defines him throughout the narrative at its very beginning: Rid the world of all crime by utilizing the supernatural Death Note to execute criminals and becoming “Kira,” the mysterious vigilante. Instead of pursuing intersubjectivity or an authentic life in the Heideggerian sense, he never shows the potential of growing past seeing the Other-as-object, seeking to suppress the Other’s freedom. The underlying reasoning is the hatred

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152 Sartre (1966), 621-2.
153 Sartre (1966), 640.
155 Maejima (2010), 9; see also the discussion of Uno and Kasai regarding Death Note in the definition section above.
156 Sartre (1966), 532-3.
and desire to suppress all Others in an attempt to recapture his own freedom, as his alienation from society constitutes his own enslavement to objectification.\textsuperscript{157} Even in his success as Kira, Raito is ultimately doomed to failure according to Sartre’s considerations: If the abolition of the Other is to be lived as the triumph of hate, it implies the explicit recognition that the Other \emph{has existed}. Immediately my being-for-others by slipping into the past becomes an irremediable dimension of myself … He who has once been for-others is contaminated in his being for the rest of his days even if the Other should be entirely suppressed; he will never cease to apprehend his dimension of being-for-others as a permanent possibility of his being. He can never recapture what he has alienated; he has even lost all hope of acting on this alienation and turning it to his own advantage since the destroyed Other has carried the key for this alienation along with him to the grave. What I was for the Other is fixed by the Other’s death and I shall irremediably be it in the past … The Other’s death constitutes me as an irremediable object exactly as my own death would do. Thus the triumph of hate is in its very upsurge transformed into failure.\textsuperscript{158}

This proposed self-objectification is also echoed in Kierkegaard’s description of self-loss in the state of “despair of willing to be oneself,” and in Heidegger’s exhortation of authenticity requiring Being with Others (see above). While atheist Existentialism such as espoused in Sartre’s and Heidegger’s works does not per se comment on morality, the words of the former in \textit{Existentialism and Humanism} make clear that Raito’s actions constitute a flight from anguish, and therefore from the responsibility which signifies the Sartrean concept of freedom:

The existentialist frankly states that man is in anguish. His meaning is as follows – when a man commits himself to anything, fully realizing that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind – in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility.

\textsuperscript{157} Sartre (1966), 533.
\textsuperscript{158} Sartre (1966), 534.
There are many, indeed, who show no such anxiety. But we affirm that they are merely disguising their anguish or are in flight from it.\textsuperscript{159}

If we regard \textit{sekai-kei} narratives as containing existentialist considerations, particularly within a framework of becoming through self-affirmation after successfully confronting one’s despair, \textit{Death Note} cannot be regarded as belonging among works defined as such.

\textsuperscript{159} Sartre (1977), 30.
Chapter 3: *Xenosaga*: Proof of sekai-kei’s potential as a genre.

As mentioned in the introduction, sekai-kei works, particularly those produced in the wake of the prototype narrative *Shin seiki evangerion*, are regarded as simplistic and devoid of grand narratives concerning shared societal values or ideologies. Okada Toshio stated in that regard in 2002 that he considered the ability of otaku to understand and extract an encrypted weltanschauung to have exceedingly degenerated. Azuma likewise alleges in *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals* that, even at the height of *Shin seiki evangerion*’s initial success during the mid-1990s, the third generation of otaku (i.e. those born around 1980) were not interested in the entire world this work presented, choosing instead to focus on character design and setting elements which could be added to the otaku “database.”

The three definitive Post-Eva sekai-kei narratives invite agreement with this assessment, as neither of them exhibits *Shin seiki evangerion*’s complexity in terms of plot resolution. One readily discernible example of this increase in simplicity is evident if one compares the elaborate mythology surrounding the Angels and the Human Instrumentality Project with the unspecified purpose of war in *Saishū heiki kanojo*, the

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dual wars threatening the world being relegated completely to the narrative background in *Iriya no sora, UFO no natsu*, and the interstellar war with the undefined Tarsians not even providing an expressed apocalyptic threat in *Hoshi no koe*.

However, examples disproving Okada’s and Azuma’s assertions do exist, although they have not surfaced in critical discourse regarding *sekai-kei* so far. One such work, the *Xenosaga* series of video games, will be introduced in the following sections.

This series was the inaugural project of Monolith Software; the company’s establishment was precipitated by creator Takahashi Tetsuya’s differences with *Final Fantasy* developer Square over creative differences, as he stated in an interview with GameSpot correspondent Ike Sato on November 8, 2001:

> GameSpot: What led to the establishment of Monolith Software? We've heard that one of the reasons was that Square was not interested in making a sequel to *Xenogears*.
> Tetsuya Takahashi: A few years ago, Square was already planning to focus primarily on the Final Fantasy series. I personally did not favor the idea, and at the same time, such plans can possibly lead to big losses for the company. So I decided to leave Square and started seeking a company which our team can work with in creating a game that we desire. That company turned out to be Namco, so with a mutual understanding in developing this game, Monolith Software was established.\(^{162}\)

*Xenogears*, a science fiction role-playing game with philosophical and religious themes, was released in Japan in on February 11, 1998 and voted the 16\(^{th}\) most popular game of all time in Japan by *Famitsu*\(^{163}\) readers in the beginning of 2006.\(^{164}\) This game is

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\(^{163}\) *Shūkan Famitsu*, published weekly by Enterbrain, Inc. and Tokuma, is considered to be the most widely respected video game news magazine in Japan and frequently cited by game publications worldwide, e.g. *GameSpot*.

considered the spiritual predecessor to *Xenosaga*, which shares its game genre; after leaving Square, Takahashi decided to reboot the narrative he had originally envisioned for *Xenogears*.

GS: Watching the trailer, we can’t help notice that there are some familiar faces from *Xenogears*. Are these characters somehow related in *Xenosaga*?

TT: Now that we are under a different company, we figured we should start everything from scratch all over again…

The three primary titles in the series, all developed for Sony’s PlayStation 2 video game entertainment system and published by Bandai Namco Games, feature episode titles taken from the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. *Xenosaga Episode I: Chikara e no ishi/Der Wille zur Macht* (“The will to power”) was released in Japan in February 2002; *Xenosaga Episode II: Zen’aku no higan/Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (“Beyond good and evil”) saw release in June 2004; and *Xenosaga Episode III: Tsaratsusutora wa kaku katariki/Also sprach Zarathustra* (“Thus spoke Zarathustra”), the final title in the series, was published in Japan in July 2006. Additional materials published for *Xenosaga* include the peripheral games *Xenosaga Freaks* (a PlayStation 2 title released in June 2004) and *Xenosaga Pied Piper* (a Vodafone Live cell phone title developed by Namco which started episodic release in July 2004). These games are not of high significance to the main narrative, and necessary components are explained in the primary plotline. A 12-episode anime covering some of the events featured in the first game, *Xenosaga: The
Animation, premiered on TV Asahi on January 5, 2005. In addition to the customary game guides, Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials, a 239-page hardcover “bible” presenting character and setting information, has been published by EnterBrain in September 2002. This is only a small selection of products released in affiliation with this title, proving that this game series managed to achieve a wide market penetration.

While neither box art nor software manuals of the Japanese versions of the first two games contain remarks on the basic plot of the narrative, the manual of Episode III features a short synopsis of all three games; the description of Episode I begins as follows: “A world in which Lost Jerusalem was lost 4000 years ago due to the mysterious ‘Zohar’ object. Humanity, which has spread across space, is on the verge of perishing due to the mysterious hostile ‘Gnosis’ force.”

As an apocalyptic science-fiction narrative featuring religious symbolism, the thematic closeness to Shin seiki evangerion is easy to discern; however, as has been shown in prior parts of this thesis, this fact alone does not necessarily qualify it as sekai-kei. In the following sections, I will show that it not only adheres to the genre paradigm as established by the definitive sekai-kei works, but presents a narrative far surpassing Shin seiki evangerion in complexity, going so far as to incorporate grand narrative elements which are presumed to be absent from otaku subcultural works produced after

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1995\textsuperscript{170}. As such, \textit{Xenosaga} can be considered an example of \textit{sekai-kei} genre potential, proving that popular culture narratives concerning the apocalypse while bypassing the societal dimension do not necessarily present an “apocalypse without Otherness, change and maturity.”\textsuperscript{171}

\textbf{Xenosaga: Plot synopses}

As this section is an attempt to summarize the plots of three games with a projected length of over 40 hours each, these outlines are, by necessity, very general and cannot reflect all intricacies of character development or plot, although they endeavor to cover the relevant points for the subsequent analysis. For detailed plot breakdowns, please see the respective appendices.

\textit{a.} Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht

\textit{Xenosaga Episode I} is set 4,000 years in the future, according to its prologue. The plot centers around Shion Uzuki, the engineer in charge of Vector Industries’ KOS-MOS Development Project. KOS-MOS is an anti-Gnosis battle android, designed to battle these mysterious creatures, about which little except their hostility to humans is known. When a problem occurs during a systems test on KOS-MOS, Shion sees a young girl before being rescued from the virtual environment. She then encounters the Zohar, an artifact which was salvaged by the \textit{Woglinde}, the ship to which she is currently assigned,


in the hangar. The Zohar is a sought-after source of energy and has unexplained mystical functions, but it emits waves that attract Gnosis. Shion then once again encounters a vision of the girl. Shortly thereafter, the Gnosis attack, and KOS-MOS activates on her own with the directives to protect Vector employees and secure the Zohar. However, the Gnosis escape with the artifact, and Shion and her direct subordinate Allen Ridgeley only barely manage to evacuate along with the ship’s commander, Andrew, who is secretly an agent for the U-TIC organization, which also attempts to obtain the Zohar. Shion, Allen, and Andrew are rescued by a salvage freighter named Elsa, whose captain they petition to bring them to the planet Second Miltia. One crew member, chaos,\(^{172}\) demonstrates a special ability to dissolve Gnosis with his touch.

Meanwhile, a cyborg named Ziggurat 8 is tasked by a Federation Subcommittee to rescue a prototype Realian, i.e. an artificial biological being resembling a human, from a U-TIC base. She was kidnapped because she carries within her all research data of her creator, Joachim Mizrahi, who is described as a madman and the founder of U-TIC. Additionally, she contains the Y-Data, a key to a sealed-off sector of the galaxy which contains the original Zohar (the one aboard the Woglinde was just an emulator). Ziggurat 8, nicknamed “Ziggy” by the Realian (who calls herself MOMO), manages to rescue her, but they are pursued by U-TIC fighters. The Elsa encounters them in hyperspace and aids them in their escape.

\(^{172}\) “chaos” is spelled all lower-case in all sources and promotional materials featuring Roman characters, including his profile on page 44 of the *Xenosaga Episode I Official Design Materials*, likely to juxtapose his name with the all-capitalized KOS-MOS, as both the names and the characters symbolize opposing concepts.
On their way to Second Miltia, the *Elsa* is pulled out of hyperspace by an armada of Gnosis, and encounters a planet-sized type which turns out to be what remains of the vanished planet Ariadne. Inside this Gnosis, Commander Andrews’ past as a murderer having undergone multiple personality modifications comes to light, and he eventually is turned into a Gnosis, himself. After defeating him, the giant Gnosis dissipates, and the group returns to the *Elsa*, which is encountered shortly thereafter by the *Durandal*, a ship commanded by Gaignun Kukai Jr., one of the heads of the Kukai Foundation. The *Durandal* also picks up the Zohar from the *Woglinde*, which was in the giant Gnosis. It turns out that there are twelve Zohar emulators, the results of research on the original by Mizrahi, of which the *Woglinde* specimen was one. The original Zohar is sealed away on a planet called Old Miltia.

Knowing that the Foundation houses MOMO at this point, U-TIC attempts to frame them for the destruction of the *Woglinde* in an attempt to re-obtain the Realian, which necessitates a dive into KOS-MOS’ Encephalon (i.e. subconscious) to obtain an unalterable data log as evidence of what really happened to the ship. In that environment, Shion and Jr. are forced to face their respective pasts on Old Miltia, the site of a conflict 14 years ago, during which the Gnosis first appeared in large numbers. The girl from Shion’s visions appears to them, stating that this encounter is necessary, and shows them a future in which KOS-MOS will face an existence known as U-DO, which will lead to large-scale destruction. Shion also encounters Febronia, a Realian she knew during her childhood. Febronia asks her to save her sisters, but does not specify how.
U-TIC is relying on Albedo, Jr.’s brother who has gone insane after being contaminated by U-DO, to retrieve MOMO and extract the Y-Data from her. Albedo only manages to extract an incomplete copy of the data before battling with the characters, but Mizrahi’s additional research data allows him to summon a giant space station with which he destroys an entire Federation fleet before threatening Second Miltia. The party attempts to stop Albedo and manages to destroy the station, but Albedo escapes. In the background of these events, the CEO of Vector Industries, an enigmatic individual named Wilhelm, observes the proceedings along with his helpers, men in mono-colored cloaks and masks. He was the one who caused KOS-MOS to self-activate and gave her the original orders, and he is aware of, and guides, everything that occurs according to his “Compass of Order.”

b. Xenosaga Episode II: Jenseits von Gut und Böse

Xenosaga Episode II begins in the timeframe of the Miltian conflict, i.e. 14 years prior to the beginning of the first episode. Alongside a Realian named Canaan, chaos is sent into the battle zone to evacuate the U.R.T.V. forces, which include Jr., Gaignun, and Albedo. After finding themselves in a bind, they are aided by Jin Uzuki, Shion’s brother. He has obtained data proving that the Miltian conflict is a means to frame Joachim Mizrahi.

In the present, the Elsa is on its way to Second Miltia, as KOS-MOS is to be turned over to Vector, and MOMO will be analyzed at the U.M.N. Control Center.
Meanwhile, U-TIC operative Margulis meets with the leader of the religious Ormus organization, stating that the reason they abandoned their pursuit of MOMO in the prior episode was because they need her protective layer removed at the U.M.N. Control Center. MOMO’s analysis is interrupted due to a trap planted in her subconscious by Albedo; he hacks into her from the outside in an attempt to obtain the entire Y-Data after the protection has been removed, but MOMO scatters her own consciousness to prevent his access. The group dives into her subconscious in order to save her; it is fashioned after that of Joachim and Juli Mizrahi’s daughter, Sakura. Jr. knew Sakura from her medical treatments at the Yuriev Institute, the home of the genetically engineered U.R.T.V. child soldiers, 14 years ago. During the dive, they learn how Albedo was driven to madness: while U-DO was the final factor in his developing insanity, he was already unstable after learning that he was the only one of the U.R.T.V.s physically unable to die, as every part of his body, including his head, instantly regenerate if removed. Adult Albedo manages to trick MOMO’s personality into coming back online by threatening Jr., which gives him access to the Y-Data.

Afterwards, Shion encounters the Realian Febronia, who already appeared to her in the last game, in a dream. Febronia asks her again to free her sisters, who are held prisoner in the chamber of the original Zohar. Nephilim appears to her again, as well, stating that there is not much time left, and that Shion must go. After a failed attempt to approach Old Miltia with just Allen and KOS-MOS for company, the whole group bands together and tries again. Meanwhile, Gaignun Kukai, who has been suffering from
headaches and memory lapses, collapses. It turns out that his body is being taken over by
the mind of his father/creator, Dimitri Yuriev.

On Miltia, the party finds out that Joachim Mizrahi was the one who sealed away
the sector in order to prevent harm to the whole universe after the activation of the Zohar
and the appearance of the wave existence U-DO. In the Zohar chamber, they find
Febronia’s sisters’ mutilated, but artificially kept alive bodies integrated into the Zohar’s
control system. Shion has to make the decision to let KOS-MOS fire on them and release
them from their misery. However, their destruction unseals the superweapon Proto
Omega, which the Ormus patriarch intends to use to subdue the other political powers in
the cluster. It is revealed that the U-TIC and the religious Ormus contingent are the same
organization.

When the group confronts the leader of Ormus, they are unexpectedly joined by
Albedo, who is disintegrated by their enemy. However, after they defeat the latter, three
men in cloaks and masks appear; they are the helpers of Wilhelm, the Testaments. They
reconstitute Albedo, who links up with U-DO again and vanishes. It is up to Jr. alone to
confront him. The Zohar is left floating in space, until it is absorbed by a Gnosis the size
of a star system called Abel’s Ark.

Jr. proceeds into the anomaly Albedo’s contact with U-DO has created. Prior to
their confrontation, Albedo mercilessly taunts him by showing him images of being
violent toward Sakura and calling him nothing but a weapon. When Jr. defeats his brother,
it turns out that Albedo desired his death at his brother’s hands all along, as he was
unable to commit suicide due to his body’s ability. After the end credits, Wilhelm and the
three Testaments welcome a fourth, White Testament, whom Wilhelm dubs, “Weaver of the Eternal Circle of Zarathustra.”

c. Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra

*Xenosaga Episode III* is set one year after the events of *Episode II*. In the meantime, Shion has quit her job at Vector, and is now cooperating with the anti-U.M.N. organization Scientia. She is investigating the Miltian conflict and Vector’s hidden involvement in it, as well as the nature of the U.M.N., which appears to not have been created by humans. KOS-MOS has been superseded by a new anti-Gnosis weapon system, consisting of a revamped version of Omega and an android named T-elos, who looks a lot like KOS-MOS, but has three times her power output. Meanwhile, the crew of the *Elsa* investigate a floating landmass which both the Federation and Ormus consider to be of interest, when a space-time anomaly envelops both it and the ship.

KOS-MOS is pitted against the new system in a weapons demonstration; after she is defeated, she is ordered to be scrapped. However, the group needs her tertiary weapons system to break into the anomaly which holds the *Elsa* trapped, and so proceeds to steal her. They manage to break through to the landmass and find the ship, but it will not start. Upon investigating what may be causing the engine failure, Shion recognizes the environment from her dreams, and the party is confronted by T-elos, who destroys KOS-MOS, apparently irreparably.

Thereafter, the group suddenly finds itself in a forest, without the *Elsa*. They have somehow been transported 15 years into the past, to Miltia days before the conflict. Shion
is surprised to find out a number of facts prior to the start of the conflict: Her father apparently used her and her mother in experiments, and her former lover and the designer of KOS-MOS, Kevin, who passed away two years prior to the first game in an accident involving the KOS-MOS archetype, was Joachim Mizrahi’s assistant (this fact, however, is useful, as it enables her to obtain the necessary data to restore KOS-MOS). After the conflict begins, Shion is tasked with protecting her younger self, which leads to the revelation that it was her childhood self who called the Gnosis to Miltia. Adult Shion’s resulting outcry also causes Abel’s Ark to appear, which did not happen in the past as the other characters remember it.

Additionally, Shion finds out that the Red Testament is, in fact, Kevin, who accepted this role in order to gain the power to save her. She suffers from the same condition as her mother: The ability to connect with U-DO, which drains her of life, but cannot be suppressed. The experiments her father was conducting on them were intended to save them. Kevin asks her to come with him, but the group chooses to escape back to the Elsa, forcing Shion to leave with them. They leave the planet just before it is sealed by Mizrahi, and abruptly find themselves back in the present. Apparently, their experiences on Miltia all happened in Shion’s subconscious, but with real consequences: Due to Shion’s experiences triggering her connection with U-DO, Abel’s Ark has materialized in the real universe, as well. This materialization was the purpose of confronting Shion with her past; the shift of the group to her subconscious was caused by the Testaments in accordance with Wilhelm’s plan. The Ark’s movements cause a sudden wave of planetary disappearances.
Soon thereafter, Dimitri Yuriev, the creator of the U.R.T.V.s who has taken over Gaignun’s body, invades the Durandal in order to obtain the Zohar emulators held there; he is planning on bringing them to Abel’s Ark, which holds the original Zohar, to use them alongside Omega in order to elevate himself to godhood. He seems impossible to stop, until the White Testament, Albedo, lends Jr. his power to form the U.R.T.V. psychic link in an attempt to drive out Dimitri’s spirit. Albedo is willing to sacrifice himself, but Gaignun realizes his intentions and pushes his brother’s spirit out of his own body into Jr.’s. As a result, Dimitri and Gaignun are both killed, and Albedo, Jr.’s other half, is reabsorbed into Jr.’s body.

The group proceeds to planet Michtam, where Zarathustra, the relic to which Abel’s Ark is drawn, rests. Since the events Shion experienced in her subconscious, she has withdrawn from everyone, considering herself to be alone in her anguish over being responsible for the Gnosis phenomenon, and in light of the revelation that she will inevitably succumb to her condition soon. She wishes to join Kevin and is resentful toward the other members of her group for preventing her from doing so, although it is rightfully pointed out to her that Kevin not only deceived her, but also seems to harbor ulterior motives aside from saving her.

In the underground facilities of Michtam’s capital, it is revealed to her by Nephilim that KOS-MOS hosts the will of a higher being, Mary Magdalene (“Maria”), who existed with chaos on Lost Jerusalem during the time of the messiah. Shion is a reincarnation of her maiden, and must awaken Maria’s will in order to progress and rejoin Kevin, but this process will substantially accelerate the deterioration of her health.
Shion opts to do so in spite of the party’s protestations. The awakened KOS-MOS/Maria is then confronted by T-elos, who is the body of Maria and the intended vessel for her will, but KOS-MOS prevails against her, reunifying Maria’s existence.

Progressing further through the underground complex, the group happens upon Kevin, who once again calls for Shion to join him. He reveals Wilhelm’s, his superior’s, plan of imposing the Eternal Recurrence on the universe, as well as KOS-MOS/Maria being a part of the scheme. Shion’s comrades point out that she has been used by him. Her former subordinate Allen, who has been shown to have feelings for her since the beginning of the narrative, particularly objects to Shion joining forces with Kevin, stating that her former lover ignored her feelings and only seeks to further his own agenda. Kevin in turn attacks Allen until Shion falls into his arm, choosing her friends over him. Kevin battles the group until Wilhelm calls him back.

Proceeding into the Zarathustra chamber, the group confronts Wilhelm, who explains that he has been steering all major factions in the galaxy all along in a bid to prepare for the Eternal Recurrence. The universe will be destroyed soon, and as there is no way of stopping the process, the recurrence is the only way to preserve it. The destruction is caused by human wills rejecting each other and the universe within the U.M.N. – the collective unconscious which is the foundation of the cosmos. In order to initiate the recurrence, he needs Shion’s pendant as key, willingly given, and Maria’s cooperation in leading the wills to Zarathustra. Shion refuses, stating that not everyone will reject the universe, but Wilhelm points out that a lot of wills have already gathered on their own: the Gnosis. They are the form of people who have rejected the world and
everyone else. Shion is still not willing to do as Wilhelm says, so he resorts to force, striking the entire group down and torturing her, attempting to get her to cooperate. Kevin betrays his superior due to Shion’s plight, but is unable to completely contain Wilhelm, who now attempts to convince Maria to hand Shion and the key over, as the recurrence is the only way of saving Shion’s life. After initially appearing to heed his words, KOS-MOS/Maria crushes the key in her hand, telling Wilhelm that she identifies not as Maria, but as KOS-MOS. At this point, Kevin attacks Wilhelm, running him through and stating that their scheme has been rejected.

Without the key, the Zarathustra system goes out of control. Kevin suppresses its energy with full knowledge that both he and Wilhelm will perish, and tells Shion to stop it. After the deed is done, Wilhelm warns that, since he is the operator of the system, the universe will vanish with him. Chaos replies that he believes in the power of human will. Wilhelm dissipates, and Shion says her goodbyes to Kevin before he, too, vanishes.

Zarathustra is still active; due to the already accumulated wills, it cannot be shut down. Chaos, who is a higher being like Wilhelm, takes charge of the situation in light of his companions’ determination. With the help of Nephilim, who takes the spirit of Maria inside of her, and one of U-DO’s aspects, he plans to shift the whole region of space back to the sector in which humanity originated in order to stabilize the universe for the time being. All access points to the U.M.N. are destroyed with Wilhelm’s disappearance. Shion is tasked by Chaos with finding Lost Jerusalem, humanity’s long-lost planet of origin, which may hold a key to stopping the destruction of the universe, after all.
KOS-MOS is destroyed while protecting chaos and Nephilim, but the shift is put into action. The Elsa detects one final U.M.N. gate, kept open for them by chaos. They manage to escape the region just in time. After gate-out, they receive a radio transmission from Vector’s flagship, which is nearby. Shion, Allen, and Jr. set out on their quest for Lost Jerusalem aboard the Elsa, although they have no faster-than-light travel at their disposal. The final scene depicts KOS-MOS’ upper body floating in space towards Lost Jerusalem - Earth.

Xenosaga as sekai-kei narrative

At first glance, the plot of Xenosaga functions within a larger context than the definitive sekai-kei narratives listed in prior definitions. Set in the far future, the setting is not Earth, but a cluster of star systems inhabited by humanity. However, this fact does not necessarily equate to an immediate disqualification considering that, aside from the Gnosis, which are a mysterious adversative faction with which humans cannot negotiate for peace, similar to the Angels of Evangelion, only humanity and its sentient creations (i.e. Realians, cyborgs, androids) exist. The proliferation of these sentient quasi-human beings allows for the examination of the question what “humanity” entails, an inquiry which Xenosaga explores in depth in the context of Realian-human relations at multiple points of the narrative. In this respect, it parallels Shin seiki evangerion and Saishū heiki kanojo, the sekai-kei works which feature similar characters.

Additionally, the societal dimension in Xenosaga is unable to mediate between the protagonists and the large-scale situation. The various organizations struggling for
control of the Zohar for divergent purposes, i.e. containment of the Gnosis threat, attainment of individual power, or spiritual pursuits such as finding the vanished Earth, are all disclosed as having been led by the final antagonist Wilhelm all along, directly or indirectly furthering his plans. Prior to the ultimate confrontation, he admits to having been the leader of the Federation’s executive council, the patriarch of the religious Ormus organization, and the CEO of both Vector and Hyams Industries, the latter two of which are the manufacturers of every piece of in-game technology and weaponry. Wilhelm’s machinations to achieve the Eternal Recurrence are reminiscent of Ikari Gendō’s role in Shin seiki evangerion: Officially, Gendō is the commander of NERV, an organization dedicated to stand against the Angel threat, as stated from the first episode of the TV series. However, while the Human Instrumentality Committee to which he reports is officially a United Nations institution, it is in reality comprised of the inner circle members of the secret organization SEELE, the cabal controlling the U.N., as stated in episode 21. In addition, the supposedly independent Marduk Institute, introduced in episode five, which is tasked with identifying potential Eva pilots, is revealed as a dummy organization in episode 15, created for disguising the fact that Gendō and his affiliates directly appoint pilots. In short, the complex organizational network is ultimately revealed as a conspiracy created to bring about Third Impact and Instrumentality, just as Wilhelm utilizes the organizations of the Xenosaga universe in order to create the conditions necessary for the Eternal Recurrence.

173 Xenosaga Episode III; See “Zenosāga episōdo III 90/99,” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQw39YnYMYc) from time index 2:29.  
174 As mentioned in the database of Xenosaga Episode III.
Furthermore, uninvolved civilians, while in existence in the urban areas of Second Miltia and the Kukai Foundation, do not contribute to the progression of the *Xenosaga* narrative; they can be engaged in optional short conversations and occasionally provide side quests yielding additional equipment in the ergodic portions of the games, but these interactions have no influence on either the large-scale or small-scale situation presented in the series’ cutscenes and mandatory dialogues, which contain all narrative elements.

When, at the beginning of disc 2 of *Xenosaga III*, 50% of all inhabited Federation planets are projected to be erased within 72 hours,\(^{175}\) it has no measurable bearing on the plot, as these societies are never shown nor visited; here, the narrative bears resemblance to *Saishū heiki kanojo*, as the devastation of cities outside of Chise’s and Shūji’s personal sphere is only alluded to in occasional reports or brought up in passing by minor characters. In short: The devastation is treated as a mere side effect of the large-scale situation, rather than as a humanitarian tragedy.

Finally, and most importantly, the ultimate rejection of Wilhelm’s Eternal Recurrence in *Xenosaga Episode III*,\(^{176}\) like the rejection of Instrumentality in *Shin seiki evangerion*, hinges on the protagonists’ experiences and self-definition, the latter of which includes Being-with-Others. This aspect will be further elaborated upon below.


\(^{176}\) *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide [Zenosāga episōdo III ‘Tsaratusutora wa kaku katariki’ kōshiki konpurīto gaido]* (Tokyo: Bandai Namco Games, 2006), 444.
In order to understand the resolution of Xenosaga’s narrative, it is necessary to first present an overview of how its “world” is constructed.

According to the chapter “The Truth about Xenosaga” in the Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra Official Complete Guide, a game guide officially licensed by Bandai Namco Games, the cosmos consists of multiple domains (ryōiki), namely the Real Number Domain (jissū ryōiki), which contains material things, including the human body, and the Imaginary Number Domain (kyosū ryōiki), which is the realm of the human mind and will. This latter domain is known as “Unus Mundus” (Latin for “one world”) and identified within the third game as the human collective unconscious; “The Truth about Xenosaga” identifies both concepts as having been proposed by C.G. Jung to be the deepest layer of human consciousness, directly connected to the consciousness of the universe as a whole; this domain is used by humanity throughout the series as the U.M.N. (Unus Mundus Network) for faster-than-light communication and travel.

A third domain, the Higher Domain (jōi ryōiki) also exists and is juxtaposed with the Real Number and Imaginary Number Domains, which together form the Lower Domain. This Higher Domain remains inaccessible to humanity; even though it can theoretically be accessed through the Zohar artifact, whose function is that of a gateway connecting the Higher and Lower Domains, humans cannot pronounce Lemegeton, the

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177 Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide, 432.
178 Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide, 432.
179 Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide, 433.
key which must be recited for its activation.\textsuperscript{180} The Higher Domain is the dwelling place of the energy existence called U-DO.\textsuperscript{181} U-DO has no known origin, and humans coming into contact with it invariably succumb to madness (such as in the case of Albedo, as showcased in \textit{Xenosaga Episode II}), all-consuming fear (in the case of Dimitri Yuriev, as evidenced in \textit{Xenosaga Episode III}), or a progressive inability to function within the Lower Domain (referenced in the affliction of Shion’s mother in the Old Miltia chapter of \textit{Xenosaga Episode III}). On the second disc of \textit{Episode III}, U-DO is equated with god by both Yuriev and the CEO of Vector, Wilhelm. However, its interest in the beings of the Lower Domain, as evidenced by its deploying observational terminals, as well as its conversations with Shion in \textit{Episode III}, indicate that U-DO is incognizant of its effects on humans and does not understand humanity; rather than an all-knowing god as proposed in Christianity, it is more reminiscent of a Gnostic interpretation of the transcendent god.

In his book \textit{The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity}, Hans Jonas defines this being as follows: “The deity is absolutely transmundane, its nature alien to that of the universe, which it neither created nor governs and to which it is the complete antithesis; to the divine realm of light, self-contained and remote, the cosmos is opposed as the realm of darkness.”\textsuperscript{182} This transcendent god is juxtaposed in most Gnostic belief systems with supernatural entities called \textit{archons}, who govern the physical universe by \textit{heimarmene} (Greek: “universal

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{180} \textit{Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide}, 438.
\bibitem{181} \textit{Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide}, 433
\end{thebibliography}
fate”), frequently led by a being named the *demiurge*, who is regarded as the artificer of the cosmos.\textsuperscript{183}

This Gnostic dualism and the idea of universal fate feature heavily into the *Xenosaga* narrative, as Wilhelm and his Testaments, who all directly confront the protagonists during *Episode III*, are clearly meant to symbolize the demiurge and his archons. Wilhelm in particular is described in “The Truth about Xenosaga” as a being who has surpassed human existence, and although the original creation of the universe is not directly attributed to him within the narrative, his role is explicitly stated as “protecting the Lower Domain.”\textsuperscript{184} Testaments are created by him from a pool of humans who have the ability to actively access the power of Anima, enabling them to manifest in the Real Number Domain even after the deaths of their physical bodies; their purpose is to aid Wilhelm in his goal of achieving the Eternal Recurrence of the universe.\textsuperscript{185}

This recurrence, the *Xenosaga* equivalent of *heimarmene*, is considered a necessity in preserving the existing Lower Domain by Wilhelm, as the higher occurrence of Gnosis attacks is caused by people’s wills in the Imaginary Number Domain rejecting the existence of others, as well as that of the universe itself.\textsuperscript{186} In turn, this rejection causing a dispersal effect within the collective unconscious, which will eventually spread into the physical universe.\textsuperscript{187} This dispersal may even be unwittingly helped along by those wills sensitive to U-DO’s waves receiving its visions of the end of the universe,

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\textsuperscript{183} Jonas (1963), 43-4.
\textsuperscript{184} *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide*, 436.
\textsuperscript{185} *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide*, 437.
\textsuperscript{186} *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide*, 432, 434.
\textsuperscript{187} *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide*, 432, 434.
intended as a warning but misunderstood as a revelation of the future. Should the dispersal effect exceed critical mass, the universe’s failsafe – the power of Anima, as embodied in the Real Number Domain by chaos – moves into action, deleting and re-initializing the universe in order to protect the Higher Domain. The recurrence, in turn, does not require the deletion of the Lower Domain, but dooms humanity to eternally repeating the same events.

The underlying Gnostic concepts of this complex world construct are directly related to the employed Jungian concepts, in that Jung regarded Gnosticism as the intellectual predecessor of his approach to psychology, although his individuation process ultimately regards as a stepping stone what Gnosticism seeks as goal, i.e. the return to the collective unconscious. Robert A. Segal proposes that Jung considered the metaphysical tenets of religion as projections of the unconscious, and that it is necessary to distinguish between the mind and the world, connected through the synchronicity inherent in the Unus Mundus, in order to recognize the projections and become able to reroute them. This provides the possibility of interpretation that Wilhelm, chaos, and U-DO itself may, in fact, have arisen from the collective unconscious as projections to begin with, indicating that, as in Evangelion and Saishū heiki kanojo, humanity may ultimately be responsible for its own impending destruction or reset. chaos’ final voiceover during the credits of Xenosaga Episode III, as KOS-MOS’ body is floating in space, corroborates this theory: “It seems that both you and me still exist in this world. As long

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188 Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide, 438.
189 Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide, 433.
191 Segal (2010), 168.
as people and the universe desire it, we will exist. What we are supposed to accomplish is not over yet, is it? Until then, rest well, KOS-MOS.”

Xenosaga character analysis

As has been established in prior chapters, the sekai-kei genre connects the becoming process of characters by way of self-definition with the world situation through existentialist affirmation. This process is also at work in Xenosaga, albeit at a much larger scale than in the definitive works and even Evangelion, as will be shown below. However, initially, I would like to concentrate on the character growth exhibited by the two characters functioning as protagonists within this series; their narratives, while intersecting in various points, are fundamentally separate.

a. Shion

Shion Uzuki, the 22-year-old chief engineer of the KOS-MOS Development Project, is the protagonist of the narrative arc presented in Xenosaga Episode I and most of Episode III. A young professional woman rather than a middle school student, she is atypical as a sekai-kei primary character, although Maejima considers doubtfulness as to the necessity to specify an age range valid, since the media in which such works emerged, i.e. manga, anime, video games, and light novels, are universally geared toward a young target audience and thus naturally feature young

people in the main roles.\textsuperscript{193} In her profile given in the \textit{Official Design Materials}, an English line proclaims, “The side of her optimism-like [sic] originated in her feeling of nothingness.”\textsuperscript{194} This is elaborated upon in the section of her views on life and death, where it is explained that she came to see life as a mere “situation different from death” after watching her parents die at a young age, and her lover a few years before the beginning of the narrative.\textsuperscript{195} Due to these experiences, Shion’s life was controlled by a sense of meaninglessness; for that reason, she threw herself into her work to an abnormal degree, in order to avert her eyes from death.\textsuperscript{196} By keeping her eyes on her work, she was able forget about this feeling of nothingness.\textsuperscript{197} Her light-hearted words and deeds are in truth rooted in this nihilistic feeling.\textsuperscript{198}

Shion’s lack of self-definition is evident in a conversation with chaos after initially being rescued by the \textit{Elsa} after the first Gnosis attack; expressing her surprise at his ability to dissolve Gnosis, chaos asks Shion what defines her, a question which she is unable to answer.\textsuperscript{199}

Likewise, an earlier conversation on the \textit{Woglinde} with the scientist in charge of Realian maintenance reveals her as defining herself through the opinion of others when she mentions considering a transfer from Vector’s R&D division to the division dealing

\textsuperscript{193} Maejima (2010), 108.
\textsuperscript{194} \textit{Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials} [Zenosāga episōdo I: Chikara e no ishi ofisharu settei shiryōshū] (Tokyo: Enterbrain, 2001), 40.
\textsuperscript{195} \textit{Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials}, 40
\textsuperscript{196} \textit{Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials}, 40.
\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials}, 40.
\textsuperscript{198} \textit{Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials}, 40.
with Realians. When this is met with surprise as R&D only recruits the best scientists, she states that her family is wondering how she got assigned there and suspects a mistake in the paperwork; for that matter, so does she. While she initially presents herself as integrated with the world, it is revealed that this is not the case in a scene after the group is forced to kill Commander Andrew’s Gnosified form. Shion is then able to view his memories, and finally encounters him alone on a featureless beach presented in black and white, where he tells her,

> But the language I spoke was different from that of the world. I thought the world had rejected me … After everything that happened, I had not changed whatsoever. Now, I understand. I rejected the world. Shion, I like it here. Only I exist here. There is nothing else. No anger, no sadness, no happiness, no future. The only thing that is here is me. And I will soon dissolve. It feels good. This is exactly the feeling I wanted. Shion, you will soon come here, too. Before long. Undoubtedly. I know that.

This assessment by another character in a paradigm in which their psyches appear to be connected, in addition to her frequently repeated assertions that “it is nothing” upon being asked whether something is wrong (“Nandemo nai wa,” a parallel to Ikari Shinji’s repeatedly uttered “Iya, betsu ni…” [“No, nothing in particular…”] to similar questions posited prior to episodes 25 and 26 of *Shin seiki evangerion*), indicates that Shion, in spite of appearing well-adjusted, is, in fact, in the first stage of despair as defined by Kierkegaard: Occupied with ostensibly externally imposed factors, she is not cognizant of the fact that she is in anguish over herself.

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At a later stage of *Episode I*, Shion must enter KOS-MOS’ Encephalon, an artificially created “subconscious” which serves as the android’s database. The artificial environment resonates with her and Jr.’s memories, manifesting as the planet Miltia, in whose conflict both characters were involved. Within this paradigm, she encounters Nephilim, the girl who has appeared to her in dreams before; Nephilim explains to Shion that good memories are only half of the whole, and that consciousness can only truly exist when all memories are accepted. It is here, as well as in the ensuing crisis situation prior to leaving the Encephalon, that Shion enters the second stage of despair: She has become aware of the need for acknowledgment and affirmation, but rejects doing so due to her painful memories of seeing her mother and her Realian nanny Febronia murdered on Miltia, which are presented in a flashback.\(^{203}\) This is acknowledged by Nephilim after showing the group a potential future with the words, “Before that [i.e. being able to change the future], I wanted you to face your pasts. But that is still too much to ask, isn’t it.”\(^{204}\) Shion’s resulting “despair at not willing to be oneself” manifests in her focus on KOS-MOS to strengthen to the point where she is willing to risk the Elsa being lost when the Proto Merkabah space station disintegrates, and again when the ship enters Second Miltia’s atmosphere at the wrong angle, rather than chance the destruction of her creation.\(^{205}\) In other words, she withdraws further into her daily life role as chief engineer.


\[^{204}\text{Xenosaga Episode I; See “Zenosāga episōdo I 43/57,” from time index 7:57.}\]

of the project in order to not have to think of her past and what it entails, as indicated in her *Original Design Materials* profile.

As *Xenosaga Episode II* is not primarily focused on Shion, there are few instances where she is the focus of attention. Early on, her estrangement from her brother Jin is showcased in an argument in the Uzuki family home on Second Miltia, where Shion refuses to visit her parents’ graves and blaming her older brother for not having been in time to save them; prior to this scene, she actively attempted to avoid communicating with Jin at all, going so far as to physically hide from him and, upon discovery, lying about work not allowing her to stay.\(^{206}\) These scenes further corroborate Shion’s avoidance of acknowledging her past. Her only other major scene in this episode shows her attempting to come to terms with one aspect of her past by heeding Febronia’s wish, already expressed in *Episode I*, of saving her sisters. She realizes after the sector has been opened and Nephilim and Febronia appear to her in a vision that the girls are on Miltia. However, “saving” them, she finds after she finally manages to locate them, means having to allow KOS-MOS to kill what remains of their artificially kept-alive bodies.\(^{207}\) This leads to her sinking further into the second stage of despair, which Kierkegaard regards as a “significant step forward,” namely the progression from despair in weakness to despair over her weakness:


Consequently, there is only a relative difference, namely, that the previous form has weakness’s consciousness as its final consciousness, whereas here the consciousness does not stop with that but rises to a new consciousness – that of his weakness… In so doing, his whole point of view is turned around: he now becomes more clearly conscious of his despair, that he despairs of the eternal, that he despairs over himself …

Whereas in Episode I, no self-reflection on Shion’s part occurs after the initial confrontation of her past, in Episode II, Shion is confronted by Jin, and states the following:

Didn’t I say leave me alone? That was… nothing changed from fourteen years ago. It was like that back then, too. Feb was… she was killed right in front of me. I was alone, and I could not do anything by myself, so I ran! And again… I could not do anything…

Jin responds that it is her choice now whether she will withdraw from this painful world, or learn to accept it. The self-recrimination Shion displays here is very similar to that of Shinji after having to kill Kaoru, the final Angel, after a final attempt to reach out to what he believed was another human being in episode 24 of Shin seiki evangerion.

In Episode III, Shion has left her position at Vector Industries in order to research the events surrounding the Miltian conflict, i.e. to actively occupy herself with the past as it relates to herself, particularly since she has found out that her father was involved in the development of the conflict. This is equivalent to the final substage of the second stage of despair as delineated in The Sickness unto Death, namely “inclosing reserve,” which is described by Kierkegaard as follows:

The self-inclosing despairing person goes on living horis successivis [hour after hour]; even if not lived for eternity, his hours have something to do

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208 Kierkegaard (1980), 61.
with the eternal and are concerned with the relation of his self to itself—
but he never really gets beyond that.\textsuperscript{210}

In this state of despair, synthesis and affirmation of the self is attempted, but it is rooted in self-perceived and self-admitted weakness, which in turn leads to pride at having been able to admit one’s weakness to oneself.\textsuperscript{211} As such, the despair caused by this weakness cannot be resolved, although Kierkegaard asserts that such a person would be on the right path to a resolution:

\begin{quote}
\ldots In fact, this is precisely the course you have to take: you must go through the despair of the self to the self. You are quite right about the weakness, but that is not what you are to despair over; the self must be broken in order to become itself, but quit despairing over that \ldots \textsuperscript{212}
\end{quote}

This substage of despair is only apparent for a short time in \textit{Neon Genesis Evangelion}, in the scenes of episode 26 where Shinji is openly aware of his self-hatred (while claiming that everyone else hated him prior to this stage), which quickly give way to his realization that a change of perspective through self-affirmation is possible. In Shion’s case, this stage continues through the first disc of \textit{Episode III}, showcased by her monologue after her break-in into Vector’s S-Line division to steal data about the U.M.N.:

\begin{quote}
At that time [i.e. when Vector collaborated with U-TIC], the name of the person in charge of this office was - Suou Uzuki. When I found my own father's name there, neither surprise, nor sadness, nor anger came welling up. Expecting it somewhere within my heart, the time for it to come up had merely arrived. Inside me, there were only thoughts resembling resignation. And, I quit [my work at] Vector. Everyone I had become friendly with, KOS-MOS, they were the only link connecting me and that person [Kevin], but I could not stand being there. Was it atonement for the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[210] Kierkegaard (1980), 64.
\item[211] Kierkegaard (1980), 65.
\item[212] Kierkegaard (1980), 65.
\end{footnotes}
people who became victims? Was it opposition against my late father, who abandoned my mother? No, surely that wasn't it. Probably, I...

The monologue ends at this point; as inclosing reserve as a state of despair calls for not sharing the matter of the self, it makes sense to not finish the sentence (in Shinji’s case, the disintegrating barriers between individual consciousnesses due to Instrumentality presumably do not give him the opportunity to hide the contents of his self). In a scene near the end of disc 1, Shion is then called on her behavior, and specifically her remaining inauthenticity in the Heideggerian sense, by Virgil, the Blue Testament, stating that she is doing things she does not want to just to escape her guilt, exhorting her to “Be more true to yourself!”

Soon thereafter, Shion learns that, by way of her ability to link to U-DO via the Zohar, she called the Gnosis down on Miltia as a child after her parents were killed, thus ostensibly being responsible for all of the destruction caused by them within the last 15 years. When she is told at this juncture that she will soon die due to her inherent connection with U-DO by Kevin, whom she had believed to have died three years prior until now, she wants to go with him as he promises to save her, but the remainder of the group does not trust him. Ultimately, Shion is forced to escape along with the others.

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The shock caused by these revelations leads to Shion’s complete loss of self-definition, as is evidenced by this exchange with U-DO at the beginning of disc 2:

U-DO: Shion, is what is filling your heart anxiety? Is it sadness? Is it joy?

Shion: I don’t know. I don’t even understand myself.

U-DO: Are you afraid? What are you afraid of? Why are you afraid? Is being isolated from the world frightening? Is being rejected by people frightening? Is the death that will soon come frightening?

Shion: Afraid. I am afraid. I am afraid of being alone.

U-DO: What is loneliness? Is it even more frightening than death? Why do you make such a face?

Shion: I don’t know. I don’t understand anything. Help me. Please, someone help me. Tell me who I am.218

This confused state remains until she is confronted with the possibility of seeing Kevin again and “being saved” through his powers as a Testament, at which point her despair progresses to the state of defiance:

First comes despair over the earthly or over something earthly, then despair of the eternal, over oneself. Then comes defiance, which is really despair through the aid of the eternal, the despairing misuse of the eternal within the self to will in despair to be oneself … Through the aid of the eternal the self has the courage to lose itself in order to win itself. Here, however, it is unwilling to begin with losing itself but wills to be itself.219

After arriving on Planet Michtam, the final setting of Episode III, U-DO asks her, “Shion, why do you exist in this world? What does your heart try to see in the pit of despair? Where is the real you?”220 This question proves to be a catalyst for her actions in the next scene; when Shion is faced with the choice to open a door which will lead to

Kevin and awaken Maria within KOS-MOS, but which will likely drain her life force even more, she openly shows her defiance to the other characters:

They know? Everyone does? What do you say they know about me? Nobody knows anything about my feelings. I was always alone. Even though I asked for help, no one listened to my voice! The only one who listened was Kevin... Just like touching damaged goods, they would not even come close to me! It would have been better to be condemned, or to be abused! ... Don't worry, it’s okay. I will undo the seal. But, I am not doing it for you, I am doing it for myself, and to take responsibility for the universe having become like this.\textsuperscript{221}

Soon thereafter, the group does encounter Kevin, who once more asks Shion to join him. Still confused and convinced that no one else understands her, which Kevin also implies, Shion does so, forcing the other characters to fight the couple.\textsuperscript{222} The battle comes to a halt when Shion’s assistant Allen, who has been with her throughout the narrative and has been shown to harbor feelings for her from the beginning of \textit{Episode I}, interferes, telling both sides to stop, and antagonizing Kevin for first abandoning and now manipulating Shion.\textsuperscript{223} When Kevin uses his powers to attack Allen in order to show him his powerlessness, Shion realizes that she cannot define herself through him.

Kevin, if I could be with you, it would be great. Even if I was being used, even if I was being deceived, as long as I could be by your side, I thought that was fine, too. But that is wrong, isn’t it? To go so far as turn others into sacrifices, to desire something like this, that is wrong... I love you. Surely, if I was with you, I would become happy. But I can't stand being the only one who is happy. If I can't share it with everyone, then there's no meaning to happiness. And I do not want to be alone anymore... If you want me to decide, I won't hesitate. I will save the universe together with everyone... Kevin. I can't be with you. I am not your tool.\textsuperscript{224}

\textsuperscript{221} \textit{Xenosaga Episode III}; See “Zenosāga episōdo III 82/99,” from time index 6:13.
\textsuperscript{224} \textit{Xenosaga Episode III}; See “Zenosāga episōdo III 88/99,” \textit{YouTube, LLC} 2009,
This is Shion’s existential decision, as it finally accepts her past as fact without letting it define her any longer, in accordance with Heideggerian authenticity, as well as Sartre’s assertion that the meaning of the past is decided by individual action. In making this choice and affirming it throughout the final confrontation, this decision precipitates the emergence of a third possibility beyond stagnation in recurrence and apocalypse.

c. Jr.

The narrative arc surrounding Jr. spans *Xenosaga Episode II* and part of *Episode III*. While significantly shorter than Shion’s, it is somewhat harder to evaluate, as it functions on a symbolic rather than progressive level, primarily because Jr. and Albedo are portrayed as two separated halves of the same entity which are ultimately rejoined. After a summary of events pertaining to this arc, the particulars of this symbolism will be discussed.

Gaignun Kukai Jr. is a representative trustee of the Kukai Foundation. This foundation is a former private military organization which now engages in private business and humanitarian efforts. The ODM claim him to be 12 years old at the time


227 *Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials*, 45.

228 *Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials*, 68.
of *Episode I,* \(^{229}\) which is, however, proved incorrect in the same episode by a private conversation between him and Gaignun, the director of the foundation. In this talk, Gaignun the “elder” states that Jr. is, in fact, the older one of the two. \(^{230}\) *Episode II* reveals the background of both these characters, as well as of the antagonist Albedo: The three characters are brothers, genetically-engineered bio-weapons known as U.R.T.V., or U-DO Retro-Virus. Their original designations were Units #666 (Jr., also known as Rubedo), #667 (Albedo), and #669 (Gaignun, also known as Nigredo). The last U.R.T.V.s to be created, they are variants on the standard model, possessing special powers and an individual consciousness (Units #1 through #665 all share a collective consciousness). \(^{231}\) Rubedo and Albedo were born as conjoined twins and both display abilities to manipulate their cellular growth: Rubedo’s is to halt his aging process, while Albedo’s is that of instant cellular regeneration, potent enough to even regenerate his head once removed, as demonstrated on multiple occasions. \(^{232}\) Neither is able to control their particular power, leaving Rubedo suspended in the body of a 12-year-old boy and Albedo immortal; this is remarked upon by the Kukai Foundation aides in the case of Rubedo, \(^{233}\) and prominently features in the narrative surrounding Albedo’s descent into madness in *Episode II.* Albedo’s madness stems from two causes: contact with U-DO during the U.R.T.V. mission on Miltia during the conflict, as well as the realization that

\(^{229}\) *Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials,* 45.


\(^{231}\) *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide,* 475.


his regenerative powers render him the only U.R.T.V. variant unable to die. He does not understand this fact until it is explained to him by his two brothers, instilling in him an obsession with death; soon thereafter, he is shown digging “practice graves” for Rubedo and Nigredo.  

At the climax of Episode II, he forces a confrontation with Jr., who is the only one possessing the ability to kill him. However, after the credits of this episode, he is shown to join Wilhelm’s Testaments, and he appears in Episode III once more to unite with his brothers against their creator, Dimitri Yuriev. Nigredo, the final U.R.T.V., has the unspecified power of being able to kill Rubedo, should he go out of control; in that regard, he is referred to as “Executioner” by Albedo. Additionally, he does not react negatively to U-DO’s waves, as Albedo reveals at the end of Episode II, and he seems to have been ultimately created as a new vessel for his creator, Dimitri Yuriev, who possesses the power to transfer his consciousness to different bodies. Yuriev, who provided the genome for all U.R.T.V.s and is referred to as “father” by the variants, in turn sees his creations primarily as tools in his goal to destroy U-DO, to whose visions of the end of the universe he was exposed during the U.M.N. experiments.  

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239 Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide, 440.
realizing that U-DO cannot be destroyed in *Episode III*, he instead seeks to surpass U-DO by ascending to the Higher Domain by any means necessary; for this purpose, he takes over Nigredo’s body, captures all Zohar emulators as well as the original to activate the gateway between the Lower and the Higher Domain, and seems unstoppable before Albedo intervenes by using his Testament powers to temporarily free Nigredo from Yuriev’s influence. Nigredo asks to be killed while he is in control, and the three U.R.T.V.s use their ability to psychically link with each other. Within this link, Nigredo realizes that Albedo is trying to sacrifice himself, and forces Albedo’s consciousness to join with Rubedo’s, completing the two brothers who, in *Episode I* and *II*, consistently refer to themselves as halves of the same entity. The bodies of Nigredo and Albedo disintegrate together with Yuriev’s consciousness.240

The problem with evaluating the U.R.T.V.s under an existential framework is the fact that, in a sense, their essence precedes their existence, as they were created by Yuriev for a stated purpose, i.e., the eradication of U-DO. On the other hand, all three U.R.T.V. variants live to see this purpose ostensibly end, as *Xenosaga Episode I* and *II* show that U-DO’s entrance “window” into the Lower Domain was on Miltia, which was sealed off during the Miltian Conflict. Additionally, Yuriev, their creator and de-facto commander, was killed by Nigredo shortly thereafter.241 As a result, all three units subsequently attempted to define their own meaning: Rubedo and Nigredo established the Kukai Foundation, an organization which became a haven for victims of the Life Recycling Act.

a law in existence until 13 years prior to Episode I which allowed for the recycling of the
dead as cyborgs (such as Ziggy), cloning, and genetic and cranial nerve modification
(permitting the creation of the U.R.T.V.s). Albedo’s self-defined purpose, meanwhile,
is to die, as seen at the end of Episode II. As he cannot kill himself, linking up with U-
DO and being eliminated by a fellow U.R.T.V. is the only means to do so.

In this regard, the self-objectification resulting from his immortal state, and
subsequent objectification of his brother, is of interest. In the first confrontation between
the two U.R.T.V.s at the end of Episode I, Albedo refers to both of them as “monsters,”
trying to goad Jr. into attacking him with his powers rather than his weapons by
reminding him “who he is” and “what he must do,” but the ensuing confrontation is
interrupted. During the final confrontation of Episode II, this battle is resumed without
any interference, as Jr. confronts Albedo alone. Here, the latter states, “You are an anti-
U-DO weapon. My heart is filled with anticipation. A weapon need not feel shame for
wanting combat. For all we know, humans themselves might be weapons desired by the
world.” Jr. agrees that he is, in fact, a weapon, allowing himself to be used by his
brother for his purposes, only to finally be corrected by Albedo after the fight that they
are not foolish because they are weapons, but because they are men. His final words to
Rubedo before dying are “Look, Rubedo, I am free!”

242 Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials, 84.
243 Xenosaga Episode I; See “Zenosāga episōdo I 50/57,” YouTube, LLC 2008,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzbKDsKF080 (accessed February 25, 2014), from time index 0:40.
244 Xenosaga Episode II; See “Zenosāga episōdo II 37/39,” YouTube, LLC 2008,
245 Xenosaga Episode II; See “Zenosāga episōdo II 37/39,” from time index 3:40.
246 Xenosaga Episode II; See “Zenosāga episōdo II 37/39,” from time index 5:00.
In Albedo’s objectification of Jr., the two brothers display an existential sadistic-masochistic dynamic until Albedo’s death as proposed by Sartre: “The sadist does not seek to suppress the freedom of the one whom he tortures but to force this freedom freely to identify itself with the tortured flesh.”\(^{247}\) Likewise, Albedo, in provoking his brother by objectifying him as a weapon, seeks to force Jr. to identify himself in that manner. However, Jr.’s assumption of the masochistic attitude, i.e. of willingly succumbing to his objectification, in turn frees his own subjectivity.\(^{248}\) Prior to this point, he consistently referred to Albedo as “his other half” and thereby objectified himself in relation to his brother; only by willingly accepting the objectification through Albedo did he gain the ability to detach himself enough to kill him.

Albedo’s inability to die posits another conundrum in the existentialist sense, namely that he is denied resolution of his fundamental project of life. As Kierkegaard stated, “the dying of despair continually converts itself into a living.”\(^{249}\) Heidegger casts death, as a potential “ending” to the Dasein, as constitutive for its totality in his concept of Being-toward-death; if the possibility of death is absent, the potentiality-for-Being is negatively affected: “Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein. Thus death reveals itself as that \textit{possibility which is one’s ownmost, which is nonrelational, and which is not to be outstripped}.”\(^{250}\) Sartre, meanwhile, rejects Heidegger’s equating “death” with “finitude,” pointing out that an immortal man, by choosing between possibles within a temporal paradigm, effectively renders himself

\(^{247}\) Sartre (1966), 523.  
\(^{248}\) Sartre (1966), 493.  
\(^{249}\) Kierkegaard (1980), 18.  
\(^{250}\) Heidegger (1995), 239.
finite even without death.\textsuperscript{251} However, in his assertion that total freedom equates to total responsibility, he writes about a hypothetical war being an individual’s responsibility:

\begin{quote}
If I am mobilized in a war, this war is \textit{my} war; it is in my image and I deserve it. I deserve it first because I could always get out of it by suicide or by desertion; these ultimate possibles are those which must always be present for us when there is a question of envisaging a situation. For lack of getting out of it, I have \textit{chosen} it.\textsuperscript{252}
\end{quote}

Albedo clearly did not choose his immortality, as evidenced by his reaction upon discovery that his brothers were not likewise immortal. Choosing death, therefore and paradoxically, is the only way to authentically affirm his being in both the Sartrean and the Heideggerian sense, resulting in his ultimate expression of freedom. This sentiment is also echoed in episode 24 of \textit{Shin seiki evangerion}, where Kaoru remarks prior to being killed by Shinji, “One’s personal death/death for oneself, that is the only absolute freedom.”\textsuperscript{253}

In \textit{Xenosaga Episode III}, it is revealed that Albedo has become a Testament, seemingly negating his prior choice. However, rather than a negation, his decision here only represents a continuation of the Being-for-others aspect he revealed in his childhood. As he stated in \textit{Episode II} to his brothers, “I don’t want to be alone” and “If you are going to die, I am going to die, too.”\textsuperscript{254} In spite of his brothers still being alive, alienation resulted, opening a rift between the three characters, as Jr. mentions while the group witnesses Albedo digging “practice graves:” “We did not understand what it felt like to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[251] Sartre (1966), 698-9.
\item[252] Sartre (1966), 708.
\item[253] \textit{Neon Genesis Evangelion}, Episode 24, time index 19:03: “Mizukara no shi, sore ga yuitsu no zettaiteki ji\textdegree{}nan da yo.”
\end{footnotes}
have a body that could not die.”

By standing with them against their creator after having been freed from his alienating immortality in *Episode III*, Albedo’s second project of rejecting that alienation comes to a conclusion as he is reunited with his “other half.”

This reunification with his formerly conjoined twin Rubedo, while it obviously plays on the Jungian alchemical understanding of the *nuptiae chymicae* as described in *Psychologie und Alchemy*, ultimately also constitutes an existentialist symbol by way of Jung’s psychological approach:

Jung saw the psyche as a complex of opposites and regarded psychic development in terms of their reconciliation in what he came to call the *coniunctio oppositorum*, the conjunction of opposites. He never saw this as an end-result but as something that was continually in the process of becoming.

In this synthesis of the two characters, a self as described by Kierkegaard emerges, i.e. “a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity,” Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* proposes the same concept in “the double property of the human being, which is at once a *facticity* and a *transcendence*.” Albedo, in assuming agency, is the transcendent factor in the equation, as well as the eternal and infinite element in his two immortal states (as Testaments do not age, although they can choose to end their existence as evidenced in the case of the Blue Testament), whereas Jr.,

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255 See “Zenosāga episōdo II 20/39,” from time index 4:54.

256 C. G. Jung, *Psychologie Und Alchemie* (Zürich: Rascher Verlag, 1944), 318: The albedo is the first primary goal of the alchemical process, also called tincture alba, *terra alba foliata*, or lapis albus. However, the ultimate goal, or the ‘sun state’ of the procedure, as opposed to the ‘moon state’ the albedo represents, is the rubedo or reddening, caused by strengthening... The white state and the red state are regarded as queen and king, respectively, who are enabled to celebrate their *nuptiae chymicae* in this final metamorphosis.


259 Sartre (1966), 98.
reactive and halted in his physical development, represents facticity. The restored potentiality of becoming is subsequently shown in Jr.’s final communication with Nigredo in his mind before his brother vanishes: Jr. is shown his adult form, referred to as his and Albedo’s “proper form” by Nigredo (omae-tachi no honrai no sugata).260

The existentialist decision in Jr.’s arc, then, is Jr.’s assumption of responsibility for the death of his brother at the end of Episode II; only through it does it become possible to stop the cataclysmic events resulting from Dimitri Yuriev’s ambitions to godhood while at the same time restoring Jr.’s potential of becoming through synthesis with his “other half.”

Xenosaga’s world crisis: Existentialism vs. existential nihilism

Xenosaga as a sekai-kei narrative is unique in that it utilizes both the apocalyptic vision of early sekai-kei examples and the time loop element evident in later works, thus juxtaposing two similar yet different streams of philosophy.

In regard to looping narratives, Goshima Kazumi invokes the Heideggerian existentialist idea of self-awareness as “Being-toward-death,” pointing out that in preventing that progression toward death, being able to experience living in the present may be difficult.261

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Within existentialist thought, the idea of Eternal Recurrence is most prevalent in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. In §341 of *The Gay Science*, “The heaviest weight,” the concept is first presented as a thought experiment:

> What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ‘This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once again and innumerable times again’ ... Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’ If this thought gained possession of you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to long for nothing more fervently than for this ultimate confirmation and seal?

The title of this part of *The Gay Science*, as well as the central leading question, indicate that Nietzsche himself considered the idea of Eternal Recurrence to be burdensome. However, in a marked difference from the sekai-kei narratives featuring such a looping mechanism, Nietzsche’s concept does not provide a possibility of escape. Instead, Günter Abel explains that Nietzsche considered the recurrence to bestow the imperative of limitless affirmation upon the individual, i.e. the need to want and embrace every aspect the circular existence this concept proposes. This is also expressed in *Ecce Homo*: “My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants

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nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it … but love it!”

However, *amor fati* within an eternally recurrent paradigm cannot amount to existentialist affirmation, as it negates the possibility of Being-towards-death, thereby eliminating anticipation, which is in turn necessary for Dasein to authentically be itself, not the “they-self,” i.e. the objectified self defined by others. Kierkegaard likewise points out that “Possibility and necessity are equally essential to becoming (and the self has the task of becoming itself in freedom)” in *The Sickness unto Death*. If possibility is absent, “The determinist, the fatalist, is in despair and as one in despair has lost his self, because for him everything has become necessity.” Finally, Sartre states, “The very act of freedom is therefore the assumption and creation of finitude. If I make myself, I make myself finite and hence my life is unique.”

As recurrence equates to the infinite return of the same, necessity/facticity makes any notion of freedom/possibility out to be impossible, rendering authenticity and even *amor fati* itself likewise impossible. After all, if *amor fati* is not chosen in the initial iteration of one’s life, and recurrence is posited as the endless repetition of the same events, it is by definition not possible to opt for embracing fate in subsequent iterations.

It must be noted that no looping *sekai-kei* narratives, by definition, perfectly replicate Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence, as this would amount to repeating the exact

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266 Kierkegaard (1980), 35.
267 Kierkegaard (1980), 40.
268 Sartre (1966), 698.
same narrative multiple times without the possibility of resolution; works of this type typically resolve with the characters trapped in the loop being able to escape by resolving the concomitant small-scale situation (examples of this include the narratives cited by Goshima, i.e. *Higurashi no naku koro ni* and *Endless Eight*, a short story in the *Suzumiya Haruhi* series of narratives).269

In *Xenosaga*’s case, it is left unclear whether a prior iteration of the recurrence has happened and what it would entail; in *Xenosaga Episode III*, Wilhelm lets a young Kevin believe that, in a reset universe, he would be able to be with his recently deceased mother, and only refers to guiding the rejecting wills back to the past, not specifying whether the recurrence would be truly changeless.270 In that regard, Günter Abel mentions that a perfect recurrence would exclude the possibility of external observers, and that it would require a foreknowledge of prior experiences to discern a difference, which precludes absolutism in regard to cyclical determinism.271 Given the existence of the Compass of Order and Chaos, and of U-DO as a god-like being existing on a different plane which is unlikely to be affected, a fully deterministic model of the recurrence can not be assumed.

What makes *Xenosaga* interesting in its juxtaposition of two different modes of apocalypse, i.e. eternal stagnation (albeit not fully realized) and annihilation, is that these concepts have been personified into characters. chaos is the embodiment of the power of Anima, whose dispersive properties, originally meant as the universe’s “failsafe,” are to

271 Abel (1984), 219, 239.
blame for the disintegration within the collective subconscious; he explains to Shion at
the end of *Episode III*, “Ever since the moment I began to exist, my power of Anima has
caused the universe to be on the path toward destruction.”

His power was sealed by Maria in order to slow down the process, but the dispersive effect of Anima remained in
action, causing wills passively resonating with it to reject the collective subconscious;
these wills turned into Gnosis. Gnosis are shown in all episodes of the narrative to
infect those with whom they come into contact, resulting in a spread of the rejection and
the subsequent dispersal. This, in turn, risks the activation of Anima in its original
“failsafe” function, as Wilhelm points out when attempting to activate the recurrence in
*Episode III*: “You are a failsafe implanted into this universe. If you release your power,
‘fluctuations’ will not be what I would call the situation.” Wilhelm’s purpose, in turn,
is to preserve the lower domain; since he sees it as doomed either by full activation of the
failsafe or by the gradual dispersal via the rejecting souls, he proposes the Eternal
Recurrence as the sole solution.

However, chaos, based on the display of wills rejecting their supposed purpose in
order to follow their own path throughout the narrative, finally does likewise, opposing
the stagnation of recurrence as personified by Wilhelm by challenging his own fate. This
causes the latter to yield by vanishing with the words, “Is that your answer? That is just

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273 *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide*, 433-4.
275 *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra official complete guide*, 436.
like you, Yeshua.”276 This is, in essence, the assumption of the freedom proposed in Sartre’s existentialist paradigm – or, to stay in the Nietzschean realm this series of games overtly references, the will to power:

My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (- its will to power:) and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement (“union”) with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power. And the process goes on...277

This element of Xenosaga can be considered self-referential genre commentary: whereas in other sekai-kei works, the decisions and self-definition of a given character or characters shape the world, here, these decisions and self-definitions precipitate the universe endeavoring to save itself via its embodiments.

276 Xenosaga Episode III, See “Zenosāga episōdo III 93/99,” from time index 0:29.
Chapter 4: Conclusion.

Are sekai-kei narratives incapable of incorporating a grand narrative?

As mentioned before, sekai-kei narratives emerged during a period in which grand narratives are considered to have deteriorated due to the progression of postmodernism. Grand narratives are defined as follows in the *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*:

The term “grand narrative” was introduced by Jean-François Lyotard (1924–98) to describe the kind of story that underlies, gives legitimacy, and explains the particular choices a culture prescribes as possible courses of action. A grand narrative, also called a “master narrative,” provides coherence by covering up the various conflicts, the differends, that arise in the history of a society… Each grand narrative provides its own set of elements (a hero or subject, a journey fraught with dangers, and a great goal) and promotes a different ideology.278

This definition given by Lyotard is primarily applied to the espousal of political ideology, particularly if the grand narrative is applied instead of objective legitimation to endeavors such as societal structure or scientific pursuit; in this sense, he considers the postmodern little narrative taking the grand narrative’s place to be a “possibility of evening the playing field for the *language games* of the disenfranchised.”279

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279 Taylor and Winquist (2001), 165.
However, this type of “grand narrative” seems to be inapplicable to fictional works; rather, the term sekaikan (world view, Weltanschauung) used by GAINAX founder Okada\textsuperscript{280} should be applied as an initial hermeneutic.

Jerome Ashmore writes in his article “Three Aspects of Weltanschauung” published in The Sociological Quarterly that this term “usually denotes a perspective and interpretation of the universe and its events held in a sustained way by an individual or by a group. The perspective functions normatively and as a point of articulation. It implies cognition and values and may or may not include a supporting theoretical structure.”\textsuperscript{281}

Azuma contends that third-wave otaku,\textsuperscript{282} rather than being interested in the entire world of Evangelion, were primarily interested in database elements, i.e. “grand nonnarrative” elements such as settings and character designs, stating that, “for them, a grand narrative or fiction with a Gundam style world was no longer desirable, even as a fantasy.”\textsuperscript{283} This quote somewhat conflates the existence of a grand narrative with an elaborate fictional world, once again implying that a systematically espoused Weltanschauung may be what is called for in a paradigm not intended to reflect the real world, as would be the case in apocalyptical science fiction works such as the definitive sekai-kei examples.

Such a world view within the fictional realm, in turn, can be indicative of an underlying real world grand narrative in the Lyotardian sense, as it may be informed by

\textsuperscript{280}Maejima Satoshi, Sekai-kei to wa nani ka: Posuto-Eva no otaku shi (Tokyo: Softbank Creative, 2010), 109.
\textsuperscript{282}i.e. otaku born around 1980.
\textsuperscript{283}Hiroki Azuma, Otaku: Japan's Database Animals, trans. Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kōno, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009), 37.
ideology shared by society at large: “A grand narrative operates as a metanarrative providing a framework in which all other cultural narratives find their ground and acquire their meaning and legitimacy.” However, is this the case with the sekai-kei narratives analyzed above? The historical background would initially seem to answer this question in the negative, as Azuma indicates that the communality of grand narratives has been restrained in favor of individual self-determination since the advent of postmodernism in the 1970s. Yet, this observation poses another problem: If this belief in individual self-determination is culturally pervasive, does it not constitute a grand narrative in its communality? Lyotard himself seems to have thought so, as he proposes a postmodernist “great narrative of the end of great narratives” in his work *The Differend*. Furthermore, the *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* lists capitalism as an example of a grand narrative, identifying as subject the individual entrepreneur and as goal the accumulation of wealth, which indicates that a grand narrative can function on an individual level as long as its tenets represent views shared by a given society.

Having established the properties of grand narratives, it is time to move on to the subsequent questions pertaining to the fictional works treated in this study: Does a consistent Weltanschauung emerge in the sekai-kei works analyzed above, and if so, does this world view equate to the espousal of a sociocultural “grand narrative” with all its concomitant pitfalls?

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284 Taylor and Winquist (2001), 165.
287 Taylor and Winquist (2001), 165.
Kasai Kiyoshi identifies one problem with existentialism as a basis for decision-making, namely that such choices are by necessity made without being rooted in prescribed ethics as applied to a group. This criticism seems justified to a degree when applied to the studied sekai-kei works, as the decisions shaping the narrative outcome are not primarily grounded in moral considerations, but the individual desire to self-affirm.

This is in line with the fact that existentialism, being founded on the principle of subjectivity, does not propose an overt ethical framework. On the other hand, the mechanism of self-affirmation in a paradigm in which this affirmation is directly connected to the fate of the world does have moral connotations: In order to reach the existentialist goal of “living authentically,” i.e. identifying and affirming the meaning of one’s life, interaction with the world and others is necessary, which in turn necessitates the affirmation of the world. While this basic ethical guiding principle seems fundamentally rooted in individual considerations, this is the case in a number of ethical theories, such as virtue ethics, stoicism, and utilitarianism, allowing for the assumption that an existentialist ethics as proposed by Sartre in his essay *Existentialism and humanism* is, in fact, in evidence:

If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men. The world ‘subjectivism’ is to be understood in two senses, and our adversaries play upon only one of them. Subjectivism means, on the one hand, the freedom of the individual subject and, on the other, that man cannot pass beyond

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human subjectivity. It is the latter which is the deeper meaning of existentialism. When we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men. For in effect, of all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as he believes he ought to be. To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen.289

In agreement with this definition, Shinji’s ultimate affirmation of himself and the world in *Shin seiki evangerion* occurs in light of the fact that he can only understand himself in reference to a delimited world containing others. In accordance with Ashmore’s description of *Weltanschauung*, this affirmation is based on factors which are normative (characters switch in their explanation of this existentialist concept, and make no claim that it only applies to Shinji), imply cognition (self-evident) and include a supporting theoretical structure (the existentialist synthesis of freedom and facticity as a basis for being). The meaning of life is encrypted in Yui’s statement about Shinji’s value, as well as his realization after the alternate life scene that he chooses his possibilities:

There is no intrinsic meaning or set of values, which is not negative as it confers freedom (and its concomitant responsibility) upon the individual. In turn, this freedom/responsibility dichotomy determines the value of our actions and therefore the meaning of our lives both in our eyes and the eyes of the Other. This lack of inherent meaning, while derided by Uno as “I will think of a reason to make myself agree” in the context of his psychologism terminology on page 16 of *Zero nendai no sōzōryoku*, nevertheless constitutes a consistent systematic approach toward a *Weltanschauung*.

Furthermore, his juxtaposed “decision ideology” is ontologically the same as the “psychologism” which supposedly precedes it: a conscious decision to be carries the same meaning as a conscious decision to act within the existentialist paradigm.\textsuperscript{290}

The other definitive sekai-kei works are, as Okada observes, more simplistic; Shūji espouses much the same affirmative views on Being-in-the-world as Shinji does at the end of \textit{Saishū heiki kanojo}, but is unable to act on them, as the nature of this world’s apocalypse, other than \textit{Shin seiki evangerion}’s Instrumentality, is irreversible. Iriya affirms her role as pilot and thereby the world after Asaba is willing to sacrifice the world, including himself, for her. This is the most simplistic form of existentialist affirmation, a willful Being-for-others, which is furthermore revealed at the end of the narrative to have been encouraged from the outside by the military, but it is nevertheless authentic in the existentialist sense, as Iriya was not pressured in her decision as it was made. \textit{Hoshi no koe}, finally, while featuring an existentialist decision (namely the negation of withdrawal from the world in the desire to become an adult by Noboru), only espouses a world view in the solitary Mikako’s desire to connect with another, although more might be too much to ask from a narrative whose length is a mere 25 minutes.

\textit{Xenosaga}, in fully utilizing the existentialist paradigm, also provides the most obvious statements of \textit{Weltanschauung} as proposed by Sartre in \textit{Existentialism and humanism}:

There is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This relation of transcendence as constitutive of man (not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of self-

surpassing) with subjectivity (in such a sense that man is not shut up in himself but forever present in a human universe) – it is this that we call existential humanism. This is humanism, because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself; also because we show that it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself, an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realisation, that man can realise himself as truly human. 291

The aims of Shion (realization of her past and coming to terms with it, in the process rejecting the outside influences which shaped her) and Albedo (liberation from externally imposed immortality) particularly stand out in this regard; even creator Takahashi Tetsuya describes these two characters as “confront[ing] death in the most ideal ways” in an interview published in the Official Design Materials. 292 However, a number of characters display this trait in Episode III. Realian Canaan (also known in the past as Lactis) sacrifices himself for the group in tricking one of the testament to destroy himself, stating that he will not be used as a spy (externally imposed by his programming) any longer. 293 Nigredo sacrifices himself to reunite his brothers and reject his purpose as their executioner when momentarily freed from his possession through his father. Allen, although the weakest member of the group, stands up to Kevin for Shion’s sake, risking death in order to make her realize that the other man is merely using her for his ends. Shion subsequently rejects Kevin as well as the recurrence. This rejection, as well as KOS-MOS overriding Maria’s will in defying Wilhelm’s orders, causes Kevin to finally

292 Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials, 225.
come to the realization that humanity must choose its own path. He joins Shion and KOS-MOS in defiance of the recurrence, which ultimately convinces chaos to reject his own fate as the universe’s “failsafe,” and to think of a possibility to halt the destruction of the universe without resorting to Wilhelm’s plan.

Notably, even artificially created quasi-humans defy the often detrimental purposes for which they were designed, conclusively answering a question which both *Shin seiki evangelion* and *Saishū heiki kanojo* posed, but ultimately only indirectly referenced in their respective conclusions, and which stands at the beginning of existentialist thought: What constitutes ‘being human?’ Sartre describes a human being’s “double property … which is at once a *facticity* and a *transcendence*,” i.e. a factual background, often externally defined, and a possibilistic projection of the self toward the future; Heidegger and Kierkegaard echo this duality of necessity and possibility in their own writings. Ayanami Rei, within the Instrumentality paradigm, expresses a fear of being cast aside in the future, showing a potential for humanity which is, however, not addressed beyond this point. Chise, in turn, progressively succumbs to her facticity as a weapon, until she cannot materialize herself without the aid of an Other, i.e. Shūji; her humanity is lost.

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295 Sartre (1966), 98.
297 *Evangelion* episode 25, time index 8:30.
298 *Saishū heiki kanojo* vol. 7, 303-10.
This question of the nature of humanity, although not an overt element of sekai-kei narratives, serves to underscore the Weltanschauung of the works incorporating it:

Human beings, and particularly human selves, are a synthesis of necessity and facticity. To be human, one must possess the freedom, as well as the responsibility, to make choices. These choices, in turn, define the self as well as the shape of the world as they are projected into the future according to the principle of intersubjectivity.

Once again, Xenosaga overtly references this process, particularly in the theme of Episode III, “A single human thought can change the world,” stated by multiple characters throughout this last part of the narrative. It is left open whether the universe will eventually be saved, as a definitive conclusion would amount to determinism. All that is given is a message of hope in Shion’s final monologue:

Now I have a feeling I understand what Wilhelm wanted to do: Although the same life would be repeated over and over and over again, living that life without any regrets to the fullest. That is most likely the ideal shape of humanity. However, we are really not that strong. We cannot live like that. We are beings that are too flawed, weak, and small. We hurt others, we lie to ourselves, we hate, we regret, but, even though we are weak, and even if it is our fate to disappear entirely, I think the spirit to change the future is still an important one. To change the things around us, little by little. And even if everything is already determined, there is not one thing for us to be sad about. Rather, the future is overflowing with hope. Because there are infinite paths we can choose.

In this final statement, the rejection of amor fati as unfeasible for human beings, as well as Sartre’s concept of freedom (with the concomitant responsibility to make use


of that freedom in defining oneself and shaping the world), are featured. At the end of
Existentialism and humanism, Sartre writes,

> Not that we believe God does exist, but we think the real problem is not
> that of his existence; what man needs is to find himself again, and to
> understand that nothing can save him from himself, not even a valid proof
> of the existence of God. In this sense existentialism is optimistic, it is a
> doctrine of action…

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This, then, is Xenosaga’s Weltanschauung: Every human being has the
responsibility to take action and choose his or her own path; in being determined to
overcome limitations and obstacles, human beings are able to determine their own future.
While this sentiment is also expressed in Shin seiki evangerion gekijō-ban: Air/Magokoro
o, kimi ni in Rei’s and Yui’s words about every person having the power to return to their
own shape as long as they have the will to try and continue living,302 Xenosaga chooses
to frame the uncertain future of its universe in an optimistic light. Compared to
Magokoro o, kimi ni’s conclusion, in which only Shinji and Asuka exist in an apocalyptic
landscape and the latter calls Shinji “disgusting” after he attempts to strangle her only to
break down crying,303 the contrast is stark, but understandable when viewed in light of
Takahashi Tetsuya’s statements on what kind of message he wanted to convey:

> …My family was all about intense competitiveness. That is why,
> unconsciously, I started running. Personally, I am tired of running, but
> when I notice it, I run. Looking back at that, I was thinking, there are a lot
> of people who are thinking the same thing, are there not? That is why I am
> thinking of also showing parts like this [in the game]. In real life, as

301 Sartre (1977), 56.
302 End of Evangelion, time index 1:22:30: Rei: “Mizukara no kokoro de jibun jishin no imēji dekireba,
daremo ga hito no katachi ni mo modoreru wa.” Yui: “Shinpai nai wa yo. Subete no seimei ni wa,
fukumei shiyō to suru chikara ga aru. Ikite ikō to suru kokoro ga aru.”
303 End of Evangelion, time index 1:28:20: “Kimochi warui.”
Takahashi Tetsuya the individual, I probably cannot accomplish that. That is why I have my stories and my characters speak for me.\textsuperscript{304}

The observation in this interview snippet that “a lot of people” seek escape from competitiveness, in conjunction with Takahashi’s admission that he incorporated religious motifs to express his doubts regarding religion, particularly since he assumes that many young people feel similarly,\textsuperscript{305} indicate that Lyotard’s somewhat ironic proposition of a postmodernist grand narrative, i.e. the distrust of prior proposed grand narratives, is indeed an underlying factor of the existentialist Weltanschauung espoused in sekai-kei works. Not only that, existentialism, with its insistence on subjectivity, can be viewed as a substitutional grand narrative incorporating the espoused doubt inherent in Lyotard’s postmodern version, as it provides all elements the Encyclopedia of Postmodernism identifies as integral: A subject (the individual), a “journey fraught with dangers” (the descent into despair/anxiety in the attempt of self-realization), and a goal (embracing the synthesis of the self and living authentically, i.e. willfully committing to others).\textsuperscript{306} In this function, sekai-kei’s inherent existentialism, with its exhortation of responsibility being inextricably tied to freedom, is utilized to directly address a message to the consumers of these narratives via the protagonists’ shift from alienation towards the desire to exist in the world: Rather than affirming withdrawal, as critics have

\textsuperscript{304} Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials [Zenosāga episōdo I: Chikara e no ishi ofisharu settei shiryōshū] (Tokyo: Enterbrain, 2001), 225.

\textsuperscript{305} Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht Official Design Materials, 224.

\textsuperscript{306} For the elements of grand narratives, see Taylor and Winquist (2001), 165.
proposed, this message consists of “Stop watching anime and return to reality!” according to Maejima.\textsuperscript{307}

\textit{Concluding remarks}

This paper, with its limitations on scope and research time frame, obviously can only be a stepping stone in addressing the apparent misapprehensions about works considered to be in the \textit{sekai-kei} genre, particularly since it only analyzes five narratives. However, for the works discussed, the existentialist exegetical framework is apt as it addresses all perceived shortcomings of their plots: the alienated self of the characters in the beginning of these works, as they have not yet had the impetus of despair to self-affirm; the initial rejection of the world as a whole as objectifying Other; the lacking social dimension, as it is unable to mediate in the existentialist conflict of the self; the large-scale crisis escalating in conjunction with the characters’ personal level of despair in accordance with Sartre’s assertion that individual choice has an effect on everyone; and the eventual existentialist affirmation of the self overturning the rejection of the world. Even the lacking description of the world after the crisis has passed is a feature of this philosophical paradigm, as it avoids determinism in regard to the future.

In comparing the narratives described as “definitive” utilizing an existentialist hermeneutic approach, and in presenting \textit{Xenosaga} as a \textit{sekai-kei} work which espouses a world view as obvious as it is consistent, it can be discerned that the works discussed systematize the existentialist paradigm supposedly unsuitable for grand narratives due to

\textsuperscript{307}Maejima (2010), 46, in reference to the criticism of otaku inherent in \textit{Shin seiki evangerion gekijō-ban}: “\textit{Anime o miru no o yamete genjitsu ni modore!”}
its focus on subjectivity by emphasizing the responsibility attached to individual freedom. Not through “making oneself agree,” as Uno proposes, but by authentically embracing one’s role and making a commitment to Being-with-others, can one’s meaning of life be defined. “Authentically” is the key word in this regard, as merely doing something because others demand it without personal commitment is uniformly portrayed as negative or insufficient in these works.

It is this conscious decision to commit which disproves the assertion that sekai-kei narratives affirm withdrawal; in fact, the potential for a resolution of the large-scale crisis, if it is possible within the world depicted, only develops through the characters embracing their freedom as well as their responsibility, thereby finding meaning in their lives. Furthermore, in directly connecting the “world” with the “self,” the implicit exhortation towards the consumers of these narratives to reconnect with society, i.e. to Be-in-the-world, emerges.
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Appendix A: The Plot of *Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht*

This plot synopsis was compiled by the author of this thesis, and reveals information in the order it appears within the narrative.

The story begins in the year 20XX AD at Lake Turkana in Kenya. At a large-scale archaeological dig, the project leader, Dr. Masuda, is called to a plaque in the ground, into which he inserts a silvery object roughly shaped like a cross. The ground begins to shake as, at the bottom of the lake, a mechanism which makes a causeway to the center of the lake appear is activated. At its end, a much larger, golden version of Masuda’s object materializes, sending a white ray of light into the sky and making it rain.

The next scene presents the opening credits, showing the golden object floating in space and proclaiming the time to be “4000 years later.” A computer screen is shown, on which a “primary connection system” to something called “KOS-MOS” is booted up. A woman is taking a seat in what appears to be a virtual reality device in a highly technological environment. After switching back to space, ships approach the floating object. Drones secure it, and a man in a space suit approaches and touches it, only to be dematerialized. More drones arrive, trapping the object in a field of three concentric, glowing rings and transporting it to one of the ships. The woman connects to the now-prepared “Encephalon” system.
The Encephalon, a virtual reality system, first shows some signs of interference, but the woman coordinates via intercom with one of her co-workers named Allen, who manages to fix it. Then, a blue-haired female character is added to the simulation, introducing herself as “Anti-Gnosis Humanoid Fighting System, abbreviated name KOS-MOS.” KOS-MOS then identifies the other woman as Chief Engineer Shion Uzuki of the KOS-MOS project, employed with Vector Industries’ first R&D division. Shion talks to KOS-MOS, explaining that the anti-Gnosis weapon will have to go back to “sleep” after this test, which makes Shion sad; on the other hand, the next time KOS-MOS awakes will be a “time of much bloodshed,” so she also hopes that this day never comes. They proceed to test KOS-MOS by introducing drones to the environment.

Shion insists on skipping the test level they had proposed in favor of a higher level, causing Allen to worry about her and telling her that he will shut the program down from the outside if something goes wrong, indicating that they were only ten seconds away from not being able to get Shion out last week. The exposure to the new enemy causes a new network to be created within the KOS-MOS mainframe, which has never happened before. Allen tries to stop Shion from engaging the enemy as KOS-MOS Encephalon is evolving and therefore unstable, but does not manage.

Shion orders KOS-MOS to activate the Hilbert Effect, which causes the Encephalon to destabilize. Allen tells her to get out now, but she insists on staying just a little longer. Allen orders shutdown, but the command is rejected since Shion is overriding it. The enemy monster starts to glow under the influence of the Hilbert Effect and destabilization, and suddenly, a young girl emerges from the glow. Then Allen
intrudes into the simulation and pulls Shion out. He tells her that she can’t keep doingthis, to which she only responds that they probably got a lot of good data this way, andthat their deadline for it is today, so they better get to work.

The fleet emerges from hyperspace, having entered it after obtaining the object. Aview of the ship Woglinde’s bridge is shown, and references to “U.M.N. columns” as travel mechanism are heard (they are used to “gate jump,” i.e. travel through hyperspace).In a discussion of the captain with his subordinates, it turns out that the Galaxy Federation fleet’s original mission was to investigate a vanished planet, and that theypicked up the object in the course of that investigation ten days ago. They are currently out of comm range, and hiding in an asteroid field from “them.” The crew does not know what the object is, but apparently, there is a rumor that “they” are after it, as well. The only thing the captain knows is that the research team has their own orders, and that he was instructed to retrieve any salvageable objects in the area with top priority. The crew members talk amongst themselves about “that battle android” Chief Uzuki is working on, indicating that it’s outdated technology and indicating that they’re behind schedule. It turns out that they were already working on this project two years ago, and that there were casualties.

Shion is called to the bridge with the data. After she leaves, the other staff teases Allen about asking her out, and he tells them it is not not like that. He then says to himself as he follows Shion to bring her the items she forgot that he would like to, but cannot.
On her way to the bridge, Shion sees the object and reminisces about a late night work session, during which she is interrupted by her colleague Kevin. It’s the day before KOS-MOS is supposed to wake up in the past. Suddenly, time stops, and Shion sees the young girl again. Then, she suddenly is in a grayscale outside environment, and the girl talks to her, but nothing can be heard. Shion touches the object, which is standing in front of her. It creates a ripple effect. Returning to the ship just as suddenly, she is almost hit by one of the field generators keeping the object in place in the hangar.

Allen catches up with Shion and hands her the items, at which point, she receives a request to help with Realian maintenance. She runs off, and Allen is angry with himself that he forgot to ask her out.

In the Realian lab, Shion encounters Lieutenant Virgil after stating that she wants to learn more about Realians. Shion considers Realians people with the same emotions as humans, while Virgil considers them equipment and accuses her of hypocrisy, since Vector categorizes them as, for example, “weapons-grade Realians,” and has an override code to control them if necessary. Shion identifies Virgil as a DME addict, i.e. a person addicted to consuming Realian tissue. The Realian researcher tells her that he’s been different since “Miltia,” the scene of a war. Shion says she understands and reveals that she used to live there, herself. The conflict there was related to Realians in some way, as indicated by the researcher that anyone wanting to work with them in a professional setting would know about Miltia. No one can go there anymore, and the government and Shion’s family moved to Second Miltia after the war.
On the bridge, Commander Andrew is furious at Shion for KOS-MOS not being operational yet, mentioning that she is their main defense. The captain is more understanding; he also expresses a wish that he does not want to use “that thing.”

Andrew, meanwhile, talks in private with a man called Commander Margulis, who tells him that, since people have vanished after touching the “Zohar,” and since the fleet is currently moving through normal space, they have had to “move the plan up two phases,” and that the government cannot get their hands on the Zohar. He tells Andrew that Andrew made a grave mistake, and that “they” are coming.

In her quarters, having been told to take the evening off, Shion talks to a family member and, after ending the conversation and taking a look at her pendant, goes to bed. She dreams of the monochrome landscape and the girl again, and is approached by a silhouette of a person. In the real world, a projection of the girl watches her sleep.

The fleet is exiting the asteroid field and preparing to gate-jump when an alarm goes off. It is caused by KOS-MOS.

KOS-MOS is booting up on her own. The Vector scientists, led by Allen, try to stop it, but cannot. Shion is woken by the alert, thinks it is the same situation as two years ago, and has a flashback showing her checking on Kevin after he has been attacked by KOS-MOS. At the same time, another alarm goes off on the bridge: A large group of Gnosis emerges into real space and attacks the fleet. Regular weapons are shown to be ineffectual against them. One soldier is shown to be grabbed by a Gnosis; he turns into a white substance and crumbles to dust.
In the Vector lab, the power goes out, and KOS-MOS’ containment unit opens. After getting out, KOS-MOS locates Shion and the Zohar and moves to leave, terrifying the scientists.

In the corridors, Virgil and his A.G.W.S. squadron (A.G.W.S. being pilotaible battle robots) try to hold a line in the corridors and nearly accidentally kill Shion when she is attempting to get to the lab. Virgil tries to get Shion to go to one of the shelters, but she refuses. While they are bickering, the Gnosis suddenly phase through the wall and attack the squad. One of the Realians tells her to go to the hangar and evacuate. Meanwhile, a Gnosis takes over a fallen A.G.W.S. unit and begins attacking with machine gun fire. The Realian tells Shion when she refuses to leave without them that it is all right, as this is what they were born to do.

As the crisis worsens, the captain notices that Commander Andrew is not present. The commander is shown wearing a spacesuit and on his way to the hangar. Then, the bridge is hit directly. While Andrew is talking to the person in charge of the Zohar, he states that the Gnosis are insignificant in comparison to what happens when “it” awakes, and tells them on how to prepare for evacuation. Andrew will stay with the Zohar through a gate-jump even though it will likely kill him.

Virgil loses his whole unit in the corridor. It turns out that his addiction is to the consumption of Realian tissue. He uses the Realian override code to use them as bombs in an attempt to hold off the Gnosis, against Shion’s objections, pointing out that Shion could have disabled that function at any time, and that they can, in fact, use Realians like this because humans give Realians’ existence meaning in the first place.
Shion is touched by a Gnosis, sees her recent memories flash before her eyes, and a projection of the girl standing nearby. She is about to die when a fully activated KOS-MOS breaks through the wall and eliminates the Gnosis after making them attackable with the Hilbert Effect. Allen, who followed her, explains to Shion that Vector personnel have already been evacuated, and KOS-MOS tells her that her assigned duty is to “verify and preserve the integrity” of the object in the hangar, which is being targeted by the Gnosis, as well as to protect Vector personnel.

In the hangar, they happen upon Andrew and are forced into a standoff with a large group of Gnosis. When Virgil gets in the line of fire between KOS-MOS and a Gnosis threatening Shion, she kills him without a second thought. The Zohar is lost to the Gnosis and the entire fleet destroyed, but KOS-MOS emerges into space after Shion and Allen get into an escape pod and deploys a tracking device after the Gnosis who absorbed it. She has a conversation with an unknown party, affirming that the Zohar was not the original, but an emulator, and that she will proceed to Second Miltia as planned.

KOS-MOS happens upon the salvage freighter Elsa and forces the crew to rescue the escape pod and then gate-jump to Second Miltia immediately. It turns out that Commander Andrew is holding on to the escape pod while in the spacesuit, he is rescued along with Shion and Allen. One of the Elsa’s crew members, chaos, turns out to have an interesting ability when a remaining Gnosis infiltrates the bridge and grabs Andrew – he stops the Gnosis in its tracks and disperses it. Upon being asked how he did it, chaos says that it is just something he can do.
Meanwhile, a man called Wilhelm receives a report on KOS-MOS’ movements. He states that there is no more need to serve the Federation, and that “all phenomena are moving forward as per the Compass of Order. Gather the rest and wait for the other one to awaken.”

A planet is shown disappearing. It turns out that it was a result of Margulis using the Zohar emulator in an experiment, which he is now seeking to retrieve. He is willing to do this until he gets the results he seeks and states to his subordinate Pellegri, “we are the ones who determine life or death.” He learns that the Gnosis may have taken possession of this emulator.

At the Federation capital of Fifth Jerusalem, the Contact Subcommittee hires cyborg Ziggurat 8 to infiltrate the U-TIC organization, which is described as having been responsible for the “incident 14 years ago,” at their Pleroma base in order to rescue what appears to be a little girl, but is actually the prototype for an anti-Gnosis observational Realian. As payment, Ziggurat 8 asks to have the memories of his past life erased. After he leaves, committee member Juli Mizrahi explains that he committed suicide 100 years ago, was brought back as a cyborg against his will, and is kept from harming himself now by his programming.

At the U-TIC hideout, Margulis attempts to talk to the Realian girl, but gets nothing out of her. At that point, Ziggurat 8 infiltrates the base, recalling Juli Mizrahi telling him that this Realian was encoded with research data by her creator and the founder of U-TIC, and that this date could affect “the fate of all mankind.” This man was
Juli Mizrahi’s husband Joachim, whom she describes as a madman who lost himself to science.

Ziggurat 8 manages to locate the Realian girl, who introduces herself as MOMO. She shortens Ziggurat’s name to “Ziggy” because she resents being called by her model number, and he lets her call him that. When they have to fight against three A.G.W.S. units, i.e. are vastly outnumbered, it turns out that MOMO, too, can use the Hilbert Effect, although her output is low. They are about to leave the base when Margulis steps into their way, but Ziggy manages to distract him and board a ship with MOMO. They are being followed by U-TIC fighters. While the soldiers attempt to put out the fires caused by their escape, a white-haired man arrives and is greeted by Margulis stating that he is late.

Aboard the Elsa, the group has dinner together, and while doing the dishes, Allen tells Shion that this ship is affiliated with the Kukai Foundation, which was established by the Miltian government as a special military group, but nowadays is a place of refuge for victims of the Species Preservation Act (i.e. mutants etc.).

chaos goes to visit KOS-MOS, who is undergoing maintenance in her service module. He states, “So we finally meet. Where does the real you exist?” After he leaves, Commander Andrew, who was not at dinner, enters the room to look at her and remembers being given a connection module by a mysterious person. Afterwards, a memory of him being a U-TIC soldier and taking over a Vector facility is shown. It is the facility in which the KOS-MOS archetype was developed, and the android self-activates and kills a number of people. Andrew wonders whether the current KOS-MOS is the
same, and attempts to shoot her while she is sleeping, but cannot do it. A moment later, Shion comes in to bring him dinner.

On their escape ship, MOMO learns from Ziggy that she is not to return to her “mother,” Juli Mizrahi, on Fifth Jerusalem, but to go to Second Miltia. The scene switches to the Contact Subcommittee talking about the rescue mission, and while MOMO is so vital: She holds the so-called “Y-Data,” which includes the code to unlock the U.M.N. transfer gate which leads to Old Miltia; the sector has been sealed off ever since the events of 14 years ago. The committee is also planning a Zohar project; the original Zohar is supposedly on Old Miltia.

On the Elsa, Shion argues with her superior, as she refuses to turn over KOS-MOS to Vector’s second division because of her automatic startup. She manages to convince him to leave KOS-MOS with him.

MOMO’s and Ziggy’s escape ship, as well as their pursuers, happen upon the Elsa in hyperspace, and a battle ensues. Eventually, the Elsa manages to pull the escape ship into the hatch, but is boarded by some U-TIC units.

They manage to fight off the intruders, but multiple systems of the Elsa are damaged. The group and Ziggy and MOMO introduce themselves to each other, and the captain sets course on the dock colony to get repairs done.

The scene switches to a young boy floating in an A.G.W.S. in space and communicating with two women on the bridge of a ship. They are investigating the disappearance of planet Ariadne. The two women, Mary and Shelly, refer to the boy as “Little Master.”
On the U-TIC base, Margulis is contacted by Commander Andrew, stating that
the Realian (i.e. MOMO) is with him on the Elsa. After Margulis tells him to stick to his
orders and cuts off the communication line, the white-haired man who arrived earlier tells
the U-TIC commander that the prototype belongs to him, and that he will go after her as
he stands a much higher chance of success. After a scene change, “Little Master” and his
subordinates, investigating wreckage in A.G.W.S., are suddenly attacked by U-TIC
A.G.W.S. forces, and “Little Master” orders everyone to return to their ship, the
Durandal. A U-TIC fleet appears to do battle with the Durandal, which rams the
mothership in order for “Little Master’s” forces to take over the ship and obtain data from
the enemy mainframe. However, all the data is lost in a fight on the bridge.

After the Elsa docks at the dock colony, Commander Andrew is suddenly gone.
He is cornered by thugs, and a glowing Hebrew letter aleph (like the letter on the Zohar
emulator from earlier) appears on his forehead. A short while later, Shion and Ziggy find
the thugs barely alive, and Andrew back on the Elsa with MOMO trying to use a medkit
on him. Later, Andrew is breathing out steam and has flashbacks to being attacked by a
Gnosis, which he suppresses with a medicine injected into his neck.

Andrew’s condition continues to deteriorate; when he loses his medicine injector,
his vision blurs and his arm becomes transparent. Shion, after having fallen asleep on one
of the couches in the maintenance room, is called by the young girl she keeps seeing. In
her monochromatic dream, the girl is speaking to her for the first time, saying that it may
already be too late, that ultimately, the choice is up to him, and that Shion may be able to
understand him in his final moments, without elaborating whom or what she means.
Shortly after she wakes, the ship begins to shake, and she learns on the bridge that something is trying to make contact with them and pull them out of hyperspace. That “something” turns out to be an armada of Gnosis, and the *Elsa* is pulled inside the biggest one.

Within the Gnosis, KOS-MOS picks up a signal similar to that of the Zohar, as well as the *Elsa*. The group decides to locate both. Commander Andrew has been separated from them, and has hallucinations of Ariadne, the planet which vanished in one of the Zohar experiments. He sees a door standing in thin air and opens it, then being confronted with his childhood memories of war. Aboard the *Durandal*, an internal alert from the quarantine hangar leads “Little Master” to realize Zohar activities are going on, and he orders his crew to follow the wave that caused the alarm. The group around Shion slowly realizes that this Gnosis was once a world, Ariadne, and Shion sees the girl again, who tells her, “Hurry, he will be gone soon!”

Andrew has another flashback, this time of a trial where he was sentenced to personality reconditioning. After learning that his wife only married him to obtain a cloning permit for a baby, he killed her and underwent another round of personality reconditioning, as well as the revocation of his human rights, affording him the same treatment as a Realian. On the streets of Ariadne, he saw a child who reminded him of his wife – her clone. After the child called him “garbage,” he killed her and was detained again. The officials, surprised that he was able to reject level 8 personality conditioning, plan to use him as a test subject for the new level 9. Andrew murders everyone in the facility, and is found afterwards by Margulis.
In his next memory, Andrew is shown as conducting the Ariadne Zohar experiment. As he leaves the planet, he sees his wife and the girl standing underneath.

When Shion and her group enter the building in the center of the Gnosis, they find the Zohar with the letter aleph written on it. KOS-MOS informs Shion that this is but an emulator, and a real one exists somewhere else. Shion wonders how KOS-MOS knows that, since she did not program her with that knowledge. At that point, Andrew shows up, half-transparent, and informs the group that he was behind Ariadne’s disappearance. The commander is then lifted up in a crucified position by an unknown force, and transformed into a Gnosis.

After the group defeats the Gnosis, Shion is able to see Margulis talking to Andrew about how people on the world below have lost the will to create and succumbed to consumerism. He talks about resurrecting human consciousness, both for their and god’s sake. Andrew feels happy at this point, and Shion senses it. She wonders what Andrew was looking for. Then, she meets him in another monochromatic landscape, this time a beach, where the commander tells her that he never really existed at all. He was created as a weapon 36 years ago, but other than his compatriots, who either adapted to this existence or died on the battlefield, he never found significance in his life as the war ended. He thought the world had rejected him, but now finally understands that it was him who had rejected the world. After stating that he likes this beach, because he is the only thing there, and telling Shion that she will be there soon, herself, he fades. The giant Gnosis in which they are gradually dissipates, and the Elsa picks them up before the atmosphere is lost.
When the *Elsa* attempts to escape from the armada of Gnosis, the *Durandal* arrives and assists. However, they still cannot defeat all of them. This conclusion prompts KOS-MOS to exit the ship via the freight elevator. Her eyes have changed color from their regular red to blue. Facing the Gnosis, she activates a powerful beam from her abdomen, which disperses and then absorbs the Gnosis.

Shion and Allen did not know about this weapon. Shion wonders whether Kevin had something to do with it. While the group boards the *Durandal* and comes face to face with “Little Master,” who introduces himself to Shion as Gaignun Kukai Jr., Margulis is notified that Andrew’s signal has disappeared.

Jr. suffers from a nightmare, in which he runs through a ruined cityscape calling out for “Gaignun” until he finds a dead cat, which turns into another boy. He calls out the name “Albedo,” and then dreams of falling until he wakes up. On his hand, the number 666 can be seen. The following day, Jr. shows the group the quarantine areas, where the Zohar emulators the Kukai Foundation has obtained so far are kept. There are thirteen Zohars in all, one of them being the original, that one being called “Marienkind,” i.e. “child of Mary” (an epithet for Jesus).

The quarantine area also holds the bodies of people who died turned halfway into Gnosis. All human beings who survived a Gnosis encounter without being scattered to date have turned into Gnosis, themselves. Jr. speculates that Gnosis are beings from another dimension, but nothing is known so far, and Shion worries about meeting the same fate. There have been single Gnosis attacks for centuries, but the Miltian conflict caused them to show up in larger numbers. Jr. blames Joachim Mizrahi for calling the
Gnosis into this world, and MOMO is depressed by this since she cannot believe that her father did this. Shion tries to console her in her resulting identity crisis by pointing out that, even though Realians were created by humans for specific purposes, once they exist, they function as though they have existed all along, almost as if they were meant to be, that the only difference between humans and Realians is the length of their histories, and that both humans and Realians have a role to fulfill in this world.

The **Durandal** docks at the Kukai Foundation, a habitat satellite. There, the group meets the foundation’s director, Gaignun Kukai. When offering to shake hands, Shion notices that he has the number 669 on his hand. Later, Gaignun and Jr. discuss that Shion may be on to the fact that they are not human. Jr. also brings up that they both were there when Joachim Mizrahi met his end, and that they know the truth. Before Gaignun leaves, he suggests taking the group to the beach, and remarks that, since Jr. is older than he is, he should act like it once in a while.

The group goes to the beach, and Shion checks KOS-MOS’ data. After she, Allen, and MOMO wonder how Jr. and Gaignun are related, Jr. demonstrates that he can change the weather by pushing a button on a remote control, Shion displays a phobia of thunder.

Meanwhile, Gaignun contacts Representative Helmer of the Miltian government, who calls him “Nigredo.” Gaignun informs him that they secured the twelfth Zohar emulator, as well as MOMO. Helmer is available of the special abilities of Gaignun and Jr. Gaignun suggests watching U-TIC, as they may now go after the original Zohar sealed on Old Miltia, alongside something called “U-DO.” On Pleroma, Margulis consults with an unnamed scientist, who informs him that not only can they not open the door to “Lost
Jerusalem,” but that they cannot even find it without the original Zohar. The emulators were always just supplements, and even Mizrahi could not have opened the door without the original. Margulis replies that that is why he is working with the white-haired man to retrieve MOMO, since she contains all of Mizrahi’s research records and the Y-Data, i.e. the key to Old Miltia. Then, he contacts the white-haired man, whose name is Albedo, and suggests that they may have to use the “Song of Nephilim” to obtain the Realian again. Albedo is a U.R.T.V.; Pellegrini terms these beings “monsters born of life recycling” and likens his instability to that of Andrew.

The Durandal is about to leave for Second Miltia when the foundation is attacked by a fleet of Federation vessels. The Federation has received data indicating that the Durandal was the attacking ship leading to the destruction of the ship on which Shion and Allen were working at the beginning, leading to the Federation Parliament to dispatch a fleet. Shelly remarks that, since the Durandal footage stemmed from their attack on the U-TIC mothership, this conspiracy is U-TIC’s doing.

Helmer contacts Gaignun via a cell phone brought by his subordinate, an anti-U-TIC spy in the Federation fleet. This person is to secure the Durandal’s records before they can be altered. Afterwards, Helmer is contacted by Wilhelm, the CEO of Vector, who offers his help. Wilhelm is also interested in keeping U-TIC away from Old Miltia, particularly the original Zohar and U-DO. Helmer’s agent explains to the group that they will need unalterable records of the Gnosis and not the Durandal destroying their ship, and Shion replies that KOS-MOS’ database qualifies. To access it, they have to dive into
KOS-MOS’ Encephalon, as access from the outside would require permissions they do not have.

KOS-MOS’ Encephalon looks like Old Miltia, and Shion, who is with chaos and Allen, sees her younger self meet up with her father, before the girl appears to her again, telling her that they have much to talk about. She finally identifies herself as being called Nephilim. Nephilim explains that KOS-MOS sensed Shion’s memories from the Miltian conflict and recreated them, and that her memories are not just her own. Shion remembers destroying the KOS-MOS archetype two years ago, after the android killed Kevin. Nephilim tells her that good memories are only half of the whole, and that consciousness can only truly exist when both halves are combined. After Shion leaves to find KOS-MOS, Nephilim asks chaos if this is truly what he wants. Jr., who finds himself in a different spot along with MOMO and Ziggy, also identifies the setting as Miltia fourteen years ago. He sees a younger Gaignun shooting down U.R.T.V. children which Jr. identifies as “infected.” Then, Gaignun is attacked by a white-haired boy, and the illusion stops.

Jr., MOMO, and Ziggy, upon approaching the U-TIC organization’s central tower, Labyrinthos, see Joachim Mizrahi standing above, quoting from Revelation. Then, he jumps from the building. Afterwards, the scene dissolves around them, and they are falling, only to find themselves in a forested area. Shion, chaos, and Allen are in the same area, and they rejoin the others near an old church. They share their experiences and talking about the fact that, while this is still KOS-MOS’ mainframe, their shared memories of Old Miltia caused the creation of this world. Shion has visions of Nephilim.
telling her that she has been waiting for all of them, and that they must accept the entirety of their memories.

Inside the church, Shion’s group encounters a Realian woman named Febronia, whom Shion knew in the past. She refuses her memories, and a flashback shows Febronia being ripped apart by monstrous beings. Febronia asks them to follow her, and leads them to a door which, Nephilim explains, will lead them to an encounter with themselves, which will be full of sorrow and pain, but very important. Behind the door, it is dark, the walls are stained with blood, and a thunderstorm is raging outside. The scene is the acute neurosis treatment facility where Shion’s mother was hospitalized. Shion’s father is dead, and the same beings which ripped Febronia apart in an earlier flashback are preparing to kill her mother. Jr. sees a different scene: Albedo, the white-haired boy, kneeling on the ground, laughing insanely while redefining his existence to himself.

Thereafter, Febronia shows them the happy illusionary world in which her two sisters live, only to explain that this happiness exists to trap them, and that it was created by mankind to control the Zohar. However, as far as they know, their world is reality. Febronia asks Shion to release her sisters, for the future of all living beings with a consciousness. Nephilim explains that Febronia and her can only come in contact with the real world for a short time, and that they exist in this world of consciousness. She called for Shion and her group so that they may change the future.

Nephilim then takes them out into space, and shows them a vision of KOS-MOS being attacked by an energy emission from the being known as U-DO. If U-DO encounters KOS-MOS in the form she is meant to be, the galaxy will be destroyed.
However, this is just a potential future, and Nephilim decides that they are not ready yet. She tells Shion to come to Miltia, where it all began. Then, she and Febronia disappear, and Shion’s group opens a door floating in space to enter a cavern where KOS-MOS is tied to a stone cross in a crucifixion pose with cables. Shion accesses the data with her password, “You shall be as gods.” This enables the group to return back to reality.

Shion turns over the data to Helmer’s agent, and the Kukai Foundation is cleared of suspicion. Allen talks to chaos in the park area, stating that Shion never shares her pain with anyone. He wishes that she did not just regard him as a subordinate, and that he could take her tears away. Shion is alone in her room, worried about being fired for turning top-secret company information over to the Federation, and reminiscing about Allen’s recent invitation for a lunch date, which she refused. She then recalls what Febronia told her, and admits that she does not understand what she is supposed to do.

Margulis notifies Albedo that “the vermin” have eluded the trap set for them, i.e. the conspiracy, and tells him to ready himself. chaos, Jr. and Gaignun hear the Song of Nephilim shortly thereafter, the former exclaiming that it must not be allowed to play. Wilhelm and a man cloaked in red hear it, as well, the former remarking that “It begins.” The song causes Gnosis to appear in the Foundation habitat. Albedo approaches the Foundation, stating that everyone is weak.

MOMO is abducted by Albedo, and wakes up alone in an unfamiliar location. She finds another 100-Series Realian – one of her younger sisters – collapsed by a wall. She realizes that this is “Daddy’s place,” and the other Realian shares her memories of Mizrahi and Albedo with MOMO.
Jr. and Gaignun talk telepathically about the fact that no one but them seems to be able to hear the Song of Nephilim, but then Shion picks it up, as well. MOMO finds a number of Realian corpses strewn across the floor. Then, she is confronted by Albedo, who mutilates another corpse in front of her. Talking about the differences between Realians and humans, he cuts off his own arm, only to immediately regrow it. He repeats the process with his head. MOMO loses consciousness.

The Federation fleet is about to fire on the Kukai Foundation due to their suspicion that it is the habitat to which the Gnosis are drawn, when a Vector fleet arrives and eliminates the Gnosis. Shion is given a cartridge for KOS-MOS which can deactivate the cloaking force field around the nearby Song of Nephilim, another one of Joachim Mizrahi’s creation, and the device which called the Gnosis to Miltia 14 years ago. The space station is finally revealed.

On the Song, Albedo reaches into MOMO’s body and mind in an attempt to extract the data within her. Jr. realizes that she is there, and that Albedo is with her. Jr. describes Albedo as his dark half, and states that he needs to save MOMO from him. Upon entering the Song, the group finds MOMO, but she seems devoid of consciousness. Jr. explains that in removing it from her, Albedo can take any memories he wants.

Eventually, the group encounters Albedo, and it is revealed that the MOMO that was with them was a disguised regular 100-Series Realian when she strangles Jr., who has to activate his power to free himself. Albedo calls him Rubedo and asks if he has told MOMO that both of them are monsters. Jr. in turn mentions that Albedo has been contaminated by U-DO, to which Albedo responds that he considers it evolution. chaos
explains that both Albedo and Jr. are U.R.T.V.s, created for the purpose of eradicating U-DO. Jr. attacks Albedo, who is at the same time expelled from MOMO’s consciousness by an image of KOS-MOS.

After a battle with Albedo, Jr. confronts him alone, but MOMO stops them. A man in a blue cloak and mask appears and tells Albedo to leave. The latter once again attempts to analyze the Y-Data, but is once again stopped by images of both KOS-MOS and Shion. The man in the blue cloak stalls them until Albedo has left, then takes his leave after taunting Shion to meet with him again.

Back on the Durandal, the group attempts to fire on and destroy the Song of Nephilim, but the rays are deflected and the space station draws in the remaining Gnosis in the area. Albedo manifests a much larger station called ten no kuruma, or Proto Merkabah, underneath the Song, destroying the entire Federation fleet. He received the information necessary to operate it from MOMO’s consciousness and taunts Jr. to stop him from destroying the capital of Second Miltia, if he can. This station’s original purpose was to discover the true form of the universe and humanity, according to a monologue by Juli Mizrahi, but Joachim used it to create MOMO, instead. The man in the blue cloak is revealed to be Virgil.

The party prepares to infiltrate Proto Merkabah. They confront Albedo in the core of the station once more, and Albedo blames Jr. for the U.R.T.V.s succumbing to the Song fourteen years ago, as Jr. was the one who broke the mental link out of fear. However, Albedo also claims to be grateful, as he was “shown a new world.” He then shows the party that he has fused the core of the station with a Gnosis and mentions that
they do not have much time left to destroy it before he leaves. After the destruction of the core, Proto Merkabah threatens to fall on Second Miltia, and the party is forced to break the station up into pieces to ensure they burn up before impact. Since one person has to stay behind to activate the process, KOS-MOS sends the remainder of the party away.

The *Elsa* is damaged while waiting for KOS-MOS to make it back to the ship, and eventually, they have to lift off without her. Shion is worried for KOS-MOS, but Nephilim tells her to “see with her heart,” and she realizes that KOS-MOS is on her way. Shion manages to catch her from the airlock, and the *Elsa* barely manages to escape.

Proto Merkabah dissolves into its constituent parts. However, there is a new problem: The *Elsa*’s approach into the atmosphere of Second Miltia is too steep and cannot be adjusted due to the damage. KOS-MOS leaves the ship in order to shield the *Elsa* with her energy field. Shion tells her to stop as she will be incinerated in the process, but KOS-MOS refuses. The ship manages to stabilize course, and it turns out that KOS-MOS has survived the maneuver, as well.

During the credits, Gaignun and Helmer discuss that U-TIC and Albedo are drawn to something on Miltia. Helmer is surprised that Albedo is still alive. Albedo states that MOMO just needs to link up to the U.M.N. for his objective to be completed. The man in the red cloak asks Wilhelm whether it is satisfactory to let Albedo gate-jump, which he affirms, as only Albedo can open the door to “Abel’s Ark.” The man in the red cloak is worried about Albedo linking up with U-DO again, but Wilhelm answers that Albedo is not powerful enough for that, and that he is only a key. However, he states, “Still, his will shines with a splendid light.”
The final scene shows KOS-MOS being welcomed back in the ship by the party, stating that the mission is complete.
Appendix B: The Plot of *Xenosaga Episode II: Jenseits von Gut und Böse*

This plot synopsis was compiled by the author of this thesis, and reveals information in the order it appears within the narrative.

The second game opens with a news broadcast showing outbreaks of Realian violence throughout Federation space. As they seem coordinated, the Federation considers these attacks terrorism. Only Realians produced in the last two years, or those being adjusted in the Miltian star system, are affected. Watching this news broadcast, Helmer, who is still in the military, is shown talking to a Realian called Canaan, who is about to go on a mission. Canaan was provided for this task by the chief of Vector, and Helmer has been assured that he cannot be affected by the source which drove the other Realians insane. Chaos enters and introduces himself. He is to accompany Canaan as navigator. Canaan tells him a normal human cannot ride in his craft, to which chaos replies that this is why he is there.

Their mission is to evacuate the deployed U.R.T.V. forces from the conflict site, and to extract the Y-Data from U-TIC’s computer motherframe. They deploy in the E.S. Asher, a type of humanoid-shaped robot. After a battle, they land on the planet – Miltia. It is the time of the Miltian Conflict. On the way to their target, chaos explains that using the U.R.T.V. in this setting is fraught with danger, due to the system which controls the
Zohar. It was originally meant to configure the U.M.N. transport system for single-person use, but experiments in that regard caused 99% of test subjects to die, and the remainder to lose their minds.

Suddenly, a large pillar of light erupts before them, and they hear the Song of Nephilim. The E.S. Asher is attacked and damaged severely by friendly forces who have succumbed to madness, and Canaan is beginning to feel the influence of the Song. They are rescued by another E.S. piloted by an unidentified man. After another battle, the Song ceases, and chaos, Canaan, and the unnamed pilot disembark their E.S.s. The pilot identifies himself as Captain Jin Uzuki. He knows about the U.R.T.V.s being anti-U-DO retroviral existences, and agrees to band together with chaos and Canaan for the time being. On the way, Jin explains that this whole conflict is a setup by an unknown group to make the U-TIC organization or possibly even all of Miltia appear like the guilty party. U-TIC itself is a cover for a larger, unknown organization, and this shadowy organization is using the conflict between Miltia and the Federation in an attempt to acquire the Y-Data. Jin has received data from an operative of this organization which corroborates his information.

The group is about to part ways when they are confronted by Margulis, still a colonel at the time. Jin fights him one-on-one in a sword duel. A strike by Jin deals Margulis the facial scar he has in the first game, and the fight is ended as the ground breaks in under Margulis. Jin stores the data on his disc inside Canaan, asking him and chaos to bring the truth of the conflict to light, and parts ways with the other two, stating that he still must go somewhere, as he has something to atone for. After Jin leaves, a wall
of shadow approaches chaos and Canaan, and the scene ends as if a monitor was suddenly turned off.

It turns out that the prior scenes were Canaan’s memories, relived during his maintenance. It is now the present day. The technician is identifying the shadow as the reason Jin’s data cannot be accessed within Canaan. The Realian then reports to Helmer, who once again emphasizes that this data is important, as it contains the truth about the Miltian Conflict. Helmer also informs Canaan that Jin Uzuki has since left the military, and that he is doing well. Canaan’s newest mission is related to MOMO. A dive into her subconscious domain is planned, and Canaan is supposed to escort them.

Meanwhile, a woman reports to a man in a clerical robe, stating that Margulis has details regarding the Y-Data to convey to him. The man, who is referred to as “Holiness” by both, is irate that MOMO is in the hands of the Kukai Foundation and the Second Miltian government, but Margulis tells him that the U.R.T.V. Albedo found out that the Y-Data within her is secured by high-level protection, which can only be breached at the U.M.N. Control Center on Second Miltia; this is why she was left there. According to rumors given to the cleric, the conflict pitting Second Miltia and the Kukai Foundation against the Federation in the last game was the result of a Cardinal Heinlein manipulating things behind the scenes; Margulis has no further information on this subject, but emphasizes that he has sworn fealty to the cleric.

After ending his conversation with the cleric, Margulis shows his contempt for the man and contacts Pellegrini, his second-in-command, authorizing her to use the E.S. Issachar for the next mission. It is revealed that E.S., although they appear to be similar to
A.G.W.S., are a thousand years old and powered by “Vessels of Anima,” relics which were discovered at the same time at the Zohar, and whose power output rivals that of a star system.

Now, the focus of the narrative switches to the Elsa and the protagonists. Shion recaps the developments of the first game, and explains that KOS-MOS is scheduled to undergo maintenance in Vector’s labs on Second Miltia. The group arrives at the Second Miltian space port, discussing how good it is to still be alive. Then, they split up: Jr., chaos, Ziggy, and MOMO will proceed to the government offices, while Shion, Allen, and KOS-MOS will move on to Vector’s second division to turn over the android. Ziggy asks Jr. to wait a moment before departing, as he has to inform the Contact Subcommittee of the events so far. He contacts Juli Mizrahi, and relays MOMO’s message that she is looking forward to seeing her “mother,” which causes Juli to be evasive.

The group around Jr. departs from the space port in a car. On the way, they are attacked by two robots and, the group barely manages to escape. Jr. contacts Gaignun, asking him to ask Helmer to send backup. Gaignun is shown being confused when Jr.’s telepathic message arrives; he states that he is not sure what he has just been doing.

Jr., chaos, Ziggy, and MOMO are once again confronted by the two robots while on foot, but then, their enemies are sent away by Pellegrini, who readies herself to attack in the E.S. she has been given. She is stopped when Canaan in the E.S. Asher arrives to stand in her way, and direct contact of the two E.S.s causes the controls to malfunction. Pellegrini and her two agents withdraw. MOMO wonders if Jr. knows their rescuer, and the latter explains that Canaan and him are “old acquaintances.”
Jr.’s ensuing flashback shows him crying and carrying an injured Nigredo/Gaignun in his arms, being saved by chaos and Canaan during their mission. Chaos likens the U.R.T.V.s with variant hair colors to the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Jr. tells them that the failure of the mission is his fault as he broke the link between the U.R.T.V.s, and brings up Albedo, who has also been infected by U-DO at that point, as a “piece of him.” Canaan searches for relevant information in his database and explains that Rubedo/Jr. and Albedo were born as conjoined twins.

After the flashback, during which Jr. apparently explains the situation to MOMO, she asks if she can call him Rubedo, as it is a pretty name, and Jr. states that he would rather she did not. In his case, as in Ziggy’s, their prior names are linked to bad memories.

At Vector, Shion talks to the leader of division two about the Zohar project, and learns that, due to Gnosis activity, over a hundred star systems have already been decimated. It is becoming difficult to keep the devastation a secret. In the worst-case scenario, humanity will be wiped out by the Gnosis within the next few years. Shion wonders how this information relates to KOS-MOS, and the project leader shows her the tertiary weapons system developed for her, which has been shown before in Nephilim’s scenario of KOS-MOS confronting U-DO. In order to eradicate the Gnosis, Vector research has shown, they will need the original Zohar as a power source, the problem being that it is under U-DO’s control. They do not know how U-DO occurred, but that it is what made Miltian space into what it is today, and that it is related to the appearance of the Gnosis. The system with which KOS-MOS is supposed to be outfitted was developed by Kevin Winnicott for the KOS-MOS archetype, and is to be refitted for the current
version. Shion is still reluctant to turn her over, but is informed that, since the
government commissioned this work, she does not have a choice.

After leaving KOS-MOS with second division, Shion thinks back to Kevin telling
her that he hopes KOS-MOS will lead humanity into the future. The flashback also shows
a craft which is part of the android’s equipment, and which can interact with hyperspace
without the aid of a U.M.N. column. Kevin further elaborates that he wants KOS-MOS to
not just be an instrument of destruction, but instrumental in creating a world free of
differences and fighting.

When returning to the present, Shion tells Allen that she is going into the city, and
requests that he do not let KOS-MOS out of his sight.

In town, Shion visits the “Moby Dick Café,” whose proprietor she knew during
her high school days. She learns that her brother Jin comes there regularly, and states that
she has a hard time dealing with him when the café owner tells her that she should
contact him. Then, Jr. and chaos enter the establishment.

In the meantime, Helmer and Gaignun discuss recent developments: Factions in
the Federation are preparing for armed rebellion, and the Kukai Foundation may be a
focus of their activities since they are holding the Zohar emulators and MOMO.

Mary brings in MOMO next, and the Realian introduces herself to Helmer, who
reminds that she looks more like Joachim Mizrahi’s late daughter than the mass-produced
models do. Gaignun agrees. After MOMO leaves, Helmer asks Gaignun for unspecified
reconnaissance.
In the corridor, Gaignun makes telepathic contact with Albedo, offering him a chance to come to an agreement, which Albedo refuses, calling Gaignun “executioner.” Gaignun, while stating that he shed that role a long time ago, is goaded into severing Albedo’s arm after the latter mentions that he has plans for Rubedo. Albedo once more taunts him, calling him “two-faced” for offering life and delivering death, and mentioning that he is unable to die. The connection is broken, but Nigredo realizes that Albedo plans to link with U-DO once again.

At the “Moby Dick Café,” Shion, Jr., and chaos share a meal, discussing the relinquishment of KOS-MOS to the second division and MOMO’s task. At that point, Jin enters the café, causing Shion to unsuccessfully try and hide from him. Jin talks to chaos and Jr. about Shion, causing her to become flustered. She is trying to extricate herself from the situation by stating that she is busy. Just at that moment Allen contacts her, stating that refitting KOS-MOS’ tertiary equipment will take a few days, leaving her no excuse to evade going home any longer. Jr. and chaos agree to come along.

Upon arrival at the Uzuki family residence, the siblings continue to bicker over Shion’s dismay at the fact that Jin gave up on being a doctor in favor of opening a book shop.

The scientist who was working on opening the door to “Lost Jerusalem” in *Xenosaga I*, a man named Sellers, consults with Margulis at the same time, stating that he had the Pleroma fortress destroyed, as it has been “tainted” by the Federation. Margulis is not bothered by this, as the fortress was named by their current Patriarch, whom he considers mad. He then turns to Pellegri and states that Albedo will soon break the seal
on Old Miltia, which will cause the Patriarch to order the immigrant fleet to invade in an attempt to procure the original Zohar. Pellegrin is supposed to operate on her own, although her mission remains unspecified at this point.

At the Uzuki residence, Jin insists that Shion go to pay her respects to their deceased parents’ grave, which she refuses to do. Shion states that they are not even interred there, and that she blames Jin, who was there when they died, for not arriving in time to save them. Jr. leaves the house shortly thereafter, while Shion and chaos stay for the night.

Later that night, chaos and Jin have a conversation about the latter’s relationship with Shion, as well as the mission fourteen years ago. The discussion segues into philosophical pondering on the fact that man, once he finds a guiding light, follows it to the point of occasionally forgetting its nature. Jin asks chaos to look out for Shion, as he feels guilty for having been unable to do so in the past years.

The following day, Shion departs for Vector’s second division, while chaos proceeds to the U.M.N. Control Center to be there for MOMO’s subconscious dive.

At the U.M.N. building, Gaignun, Jr., Ziggy, and MOMO wait for Juli Mizrahi to arrive. When Juli arrives, she first ignores MOMO, but then exhibits warmth in order to further her purposes. When Jr. confronts her, she refers to MOMO as “that Realian” and treats her as nothing more than a tool, which was programmed by Joachim to respond to familial stimuli. Jr. states that he made a promise to Sakura, the Mizrahi’s deceased daughter, to treat MOMO like a real girl.
Juli then aids Ziggy in his maintenance. When the cyborg asks her what her problem with MOMO is, she explains to him that it is difficult for her to interact with a being that looks like her daughter, but is not. The 100-Series Realians scattered all across Federation space constantly remind her of the fact that she lost her child. It is also revealed that Ziggy committed suicide in his past life when his son died. Ziggy suggests to Juli to attempt treating MOMO as another daughter, rather than a mere copy, which Mizrahi states she will attempt.

MOMO is in the process of being prepared for the analysis by shutting down her artificial emotion and personality layer. She is sad about being reminded that her heart is just an optional function prior to shut-down. Jr. empathizes with her sadness, musing that the hearts of humans are also mere playthings created by god.

When MOMO’s final protective layer is removed, she is being hacked through the U.M.N., and it turns out that a trap has been planted inside her consciousness by Albedo. Juli is prepared to use an emergency code to destroy the data inside MOMO alongside her personality, when MOMO herself disperses her memories in an attempt to protect the information. Albedo taunts Gaignun and Ziggy by calling MOMO a mere puppet with foolish delusions of being able to become human, while Juli attempts to resuscitate MOMO.

Shion is holding a conference call with Jr. and Helmer, in which the latter requests Shion’s assistance in an attempt to restore MOMO’s shattered consciousness and retrieve the Y-Data. Shion agrees.
The Federation council is shown debating the immigrant fleet’s deployment to Second Miltia. The Patriarch casts the fleet as the ancestral protectors of the “treasures” sealed on Miltia, and states that the Second Miltian government is attempting to usurp these treasures and reignite conflict. Some council members state that this rumor has been proven to have been a ploy by U-TIC, but others are skeptical.

Helmer, meanwhile, visits Jin at the Uzuki residence, and wishes to learn the truth the data he had entrusted to Canaan fourteen years ago holds. Jin states that unraveling the data requires going “back there.” Helmer agrees to do so.

Shion, Jr., Ziggy, and chaos, alongside a virtual recreation of KOS-MOS, prepare to dive into MOMO’s subconscious domain, which is modeled after Sakura Mizrahi’s memories. Allen explains that, just as in the case of the KOS-MOS encephalon dive, shared memories might surface, to which Jr. replies that he might cause such a resonance, as he had contact with Sakura’s consciousness during her treatment at the Yuriev Institute (she was suffering from a nervous disorder caused by U.M.N. fluctuations, and the U.R.T.V.s were used to connect to her). Jr. also explains that U-DO is the “Unus Mundus Drive Operation System,” which was not created by humans even though the name would indicate otherwise. U-DO is described as an entity from another dimension, uncontrollable by humans. The official story that U-DO is an AI is a lie, which was known to Dimitri Yuriev, the father of the U.R.T.V.s, from the beginning.

Jr.’s memories show the U.R.T.V.s establishing a link when directly confronting U-DO, and Albedo being scared. At first, Jr. is reassuring him, but then he has a flash of insight showing the planet breaking up. He shuts down the link because he realizes that
contact of it with U-DO’s waves will cause this phenomenon. As a result, Albedo becomes contaminated with U-DO’s waves.

After the flashback, the party dives into MOMO’s subconscious. The world in which they find themselves is composed of a house in the middle of fields. MOMO sits on the porch, but does not respond to Jr.’s calls, as her personality layer is offline. The party proceeds inside the house and witnesses a scene of the three young variant U.R.T.V.s Albedo, Rubedo, and Nigredo unsuccessfully hiding in the bedroom closet fourteen years ago, only to be seen by Sakura. She is very happy that they can hear her.

Another vision shows the Yuriev Institute in the same timeframe, where Dimitri explains to Juli that he believes contacting Sakura’s consciousness with the U.R.T.V.s will help her, as he does not think the girl’s disorder is entirely natural. Rubedo relays a message from Sakura to Juli, proving that they were able to talk to her, and Sakura’s mother requests that he continue to tell her what her daughter says.

Later, Rubedo witnesses Juli playing piano with Sakura, and realizes that she cannot talk at all in the real world, as her neural pathways for that purpose have been severed.

Back in Sakura’s world, the girl explains to Rubedo that her father is creating a Realian that is supposed to have its senses linked up with her consciousness. She asks him about his parents, and Rubedo explains that he does not know his mother, and that there is no point in searching for her as they are nothing but genetically engineered bio-weapons. Sakura tells him that he is a nice boy, and requests that he look after her Realian sister and her mother.
In a talk of the variants in the institute garden, Albedo is jealous of all the attention Rubedo pays to Sakura, and asks for reassurance that he does not have to be afraid of U-DO. The three boys meet Citrine, a rare female U.R.T.V. variant, who is cold toward her brothers and considers herself superior. During preparation for another dive, Albedo expresses his disdain for the non-variant U.R.T.V.s, who all share one consciousness. When the non-variants question Rubedo’s authority, calling him a monster, Nigredo and Albedo reassure him.

The dive ends badly when U-DO’s waves manifest in Sakura’s domain, infecting the non-variants. Albedo begins attacking one of the uninfected non-variants, nearly killing him, Rubedo turns away from his brother. Back at the institute, Albedo, when confronted by Rubedo, does not understand what the problem is, as he figures that the injured U.R.T.V. can just regenerate. He shoots his own head off to demonstrate, only to be told by his horrified variant brothers that only he is able to use this regeneration power. This causes Albedo to break down, realizing that his brothers will eventually die while he will live on. Later, the party witnesses a vision of Albedo digging a hole in the Institute garden, next to a symbolic grave already completed. Ziggy remarks that the inability to die would make the world into an eternal prison, and Jr. feels guilty for abandoning him.

A subsequent vision finds the variant U.R.T.V.s and Sakura in a winter landscape. Rubedo wants Sakura to follow them in order to continue working on curing her, but she points to Rubedo’s shadow, which has changed. Albedo, whose own change has progressed, states that his brother is a monster just like him, and that he is glad about it. Rubedo refuses to acknowledge that it is his shadow, and Albedo’s voice begins to
change to his adult timbre, while MOMO’s image is superimposed on Sakura’s. It is another trap laid by Albedo, who confronts the group. Upon witnessing a direct confrontation between Jr. and Albedo, MOMO’s personality layer comes back online to stop him, which releases the Y-Data Albedo has been pursuing. The subconscious dive is ended, and Juli confirms that the data is gone. Albedo activates the key, releasing the seal, and his E.S. disperses as he accesses the closed-off sector. Jr. feels Albedo’s heartbeat fading.

With the path to Old Miltia having been reopened, the Federation and the immigrant fleet both proceed to the sector. The Federation is unable to stop the immigrant fleet with a blockade. Shion and Allen are reassigned to the Dämmerung, Vector’s flagship. Helmer plans a covert mission to secure the original Zohar before the immigrant fleet can claim it, with the cooperation of Vector and the Kukai Foundation. At this juncture, Jin joins the group to aid in the endeavor.

MOMO will take part in the mission, as her special abilities will enable the group to infiltrate the sector without being detected. Juli is worried for her, and tells her that she has finally realized that MOMO is not Sakura. She states that she will be waiting for MOMO when she returns.

On the Dämmerung, Shion has a vision of Nephilim, but the girl vanishes again almost immediately and without a word, leaving Shion to wonder why her face was so sad. While she sleeps that night, she has a dream of Febronia standing in front of the original Zohar. Febronia explains that her sisters are held prisoner there, and asks her once more to set them free from their curse. When Shion exclaims that she does not
understand any of this, Febronia says that she will visit this place soon, and repeats her request. Then, Shion wakes up.

In the communication room, Shion encounters Nephilim again. This time, the girl speaks, telling Shion that Febronia is waiting, and that no time remains – Shion must go and make an important choice, which is important to both her past and future. Shion then realizes that she must go to Miltia. Before vanishing, Nephilim once more tells her to go now, before “he” awakens again. Allen enters the room at that point, and Shion informs him that she is on her way to Old Miltia. To get there, she will use the transportation system developed for KOS-MOS, which does not require a U.M.N. column to travel through hyperspace. Allen, despite his misgivings, decides to come along. Wilhelm sees them leaving the Dämmerung, but does not seem inclined to stop them.

Upon approaching Miltia, Allen and Shion are suddenly attacked by unknown forces with maneuvering capacity exceeding everything they have seen before, prompting KOS-MOS to awaken and leave Vector’s second division on Second Miltia to come to their aid. After docking with the craft Shion and Allen stole, KOS-MOS’ eyes once again turn blue, and the craft transforms into an E.S., causing the enemies to flee. They receive a transmission from the Elsa, which has just arrived in the sector.

The Elsa attempts to sneak by the other forces in the sector toward Miltia when a giant space station appears in their path. As it is located between the gravitational wells of two black holes, there is no way around it; the group decides to infiltrate it and destroy it from the inside.
After setting the station to self-destruct, the group attempts to escape, but the Elsa’s drives are damaged. At the last moment, the ship is lifted off the station by the tractor beams of the just-arrived Durandal, which was ordered to the sector by Gaignun. For now, they return to the Foundation to regroup and repair the damage.

Gaignun, who is by himself, has a vision of Citrine asking his younger self why he thinks he does not react to the waves of U-DO, followed by Dimitri ordering young Nigredo to come closer, which he refuses, shooting his creator. He collapses on the floor, his hair color changing.

On the bridge of the Durandal, Jr. learns from Shelley that the immigrant fleet is already descending into Miltia. The Federation fleet is also preparing to descend, but cannot do anything if there is a chance that the Zohar has already been claimed. Resolving the situation is in the hands of the group around Jr. and Shion.

Gaignun’s body has been taken over by Dimitri Yuriev, and he contacts his own forces, asking to be brought up to date on U-DO’s status.

The Elsa once more proceeds toward Old Miltia, this time approaching the capital, which, the characters remark, looks just like the last time they saw it. As the group moves in the direction of the Zohar, U-DO’s influence on the environment begins to show.

In an analysis room within Labyrinthos, Jin begins the process of extracting the data stored inside Canaan fourteen years ago. It explains the background of the U-TIC organization. Originally, it was a part of the Federation, until Mizrahi apparently used the information gained from his work with the Zohar to convert it into a military organization. However, as the Federation was kept in the dark regarding this development, the funding
could not have come from them, and as U-TIC’s own enterprises were dummy corporations without real value, they could not have served as a source of funding, either. All, that is, except one: Hyams, which is led by a man named Heinlein, who just so happens to be a cardinal of the immigrant fleet. Jin states that Mizrahi and his research were merely being used, and that Mizrahi was the one who sealed the Zohar and U-DO away to protect the rest of the universe. Mizrahi was not a madman, he sacrificed himself for the greater good.

After leaving the analysis room, the group is confronted by Margulis, who claims that the Zohar is already in the immigrant fleet’s hands before once more fighting with Jin and leaving after being defeated.

The group finally gains access to the Zohar chamber, and Shion sees two capsules holding the mutilated, still-living bodies of Febronia’s sisters. They are fused with the Zohar control system. The Patriarch appears, explaining that it was necessary to isolate their consciousnesses in order for them to become useful. He then reveals that the true name of the immigrant fleet organization is Ormus, a group existing in the shadows since ancient times. Ormus has been guarding the Zohar since then, and claims it as theirs. The purpose of Ormus is to lead all life in the universe to a higher plane of existence with the guidance and power of the Zohar, a mission conveyed to them by god. In the face of Shion’s and Jr.’s disgust of what happened to the Realian girls, the Patriarch states that they are merely tools, and that they were created for this specific purpose. He activates the Zohar, and Jr. senses the voice of U-DO. KOS-MOS prepares to destroy the system, including Febronia’s sisters, in order to stop the process. Shion first stands in her way,
unwilling to let her kill them, but Febronia appears, asking her once more to set her sisters free, and Shion orders KOS-MOS to fire. However, the destruction of the system activates the superweapon Proto Omega, which is powered by the Zohar. The Patriarch plans on utilizing this weapon to destroy both the Gnosis and the Federation, claiming the cluster for Ormus.

The Elsa barely manages to flee from Miltia as the planet is disintegrated by the emergence of the Omega System. The Patriarch orders Margulis to eliminate the Federation fleet, but Margulis refuses. He explains that he is truly serving Heinlein, not him, and that the plan was all along for the Patriarch to die a martyr. Meanwhile, Dimitri Yuriev shoots Ormus’ mole in the Federation Parliament while the latter is communicating with Pellegrini, telling her that he has taken control of the council and will not allow them to continue their current activities. He gives her a message for Margulis: He is not going to die – ever.

Back aboard the Elsa, Shion is devastated by the recent developments. When Jin enters the room, she states that the situation now was just like fourteen years ago, when Febronia was killed right in front of her, and Shion was powerless to prevent it; she could only run. Jin speculates that Febronia regarded her as a sister, as well, and that it was for this reason she asked Shion to release the two girls from their prison. Shion collects herself and leaves, and Jin wonders what he can do to ease Shion’s memories of the past – or his own.

Aboard the Durandal, Jr. is contacted by Dimitri, who tells his son to eliminate Albedo before he can re-establish contact with U-DO. Rubedo states he will make
Albedo reconsider, instead, and Dimitri states he is looking forward to seeing the results before signing off. The transmission cannot be traced, and Jr. does not recognize that Dimitri is in his brother’s body.

After the transmission, Nigredo manages to reclaim his body for a moment, stating his wish that Jr. not trust him.

Inside the Omega System, the group is ready to confront the Patriarch and Proto Omega when Albedo intervenes, stating that this power is his. He attacks the Patriarch by himself and is directly hit by Proto Omega, causing Albedo to disintegrate while stating that complete destruction does not sound bad to him. Jr. states that the only one allowed to kill Albedo is him, challenging the Patriarch.

When the Patriarch is about the activate Proto Omega again to obliterate the party, the system suddenly shuts down, and a disembodied voice tells him that the Zohar does not exist for him. Three men in cloaks and masks descend from the ceiling with their E.S.s, continuing to state that they would appreciate it if the “supporting actors” would stay within their roles. These “Testaments,” as the Patriarch calls them, proceed to obliterate him. The Black Testament takes off his mask, and Ziggy recognizes him as Voyager, the man who killed his family in his former life. Then, the Testaments reconstitute Albedo’s molecules. Albedo promptly connects to U-DO and vanishes. KOS-MOS holds back U-DO’s waves and tells everyone to get back to the Elsa. After their escape, the Omega System is consumed by a space-time anomaly created by U-DO.

In the Durandal’s park area, Jr. reveals to Shion that Albedo keeps calling to him, and that he will have to finish things. He says his goodbyes to MOMO, who at first asks
to go with him, but Jr. tells her that Albedo is calling for him, and that he has to settle this because he is his big brother. MOMO tells him to come back, and Jr. leaves aboard the E.S. Asher.

Inside the anomaly, Albedo confronts his brother in his younger form and taunts him about having abandoned him, calling Jr. a coward. The next scene shows Albedo digging “practice graves” for his two brothers, so that he will not cry when they die. He wonders if U-DO will kill him if he links up with him again. Another scene shift shows an angry Albedo beating Sakura, screaming that he hates her for flirting with his brother, and that he is glad she is dead. Sakura then turns into MOMO, and Albedo taunts Jr. further by implying that he is in need of this imitation to satisfy himself. Jr. then finds himself in a mirror hall, and Albedo takes over his reflections, telling Jr. to kill him. Jr.’s power activates outside of his control, but Sakura’s spirit helps him rein himself in again.

Finally, Jr. locates Albedo, who is sitting on a throne and connected to his surroundings by a number of large cables in place of his legs. He claims he intends to elevate all living beings to a higher domain in order to complete them, and taunts him once more to attack. Jr. finally gives in and defeats his brother, which causes the throne room around them to slowly break down. Albedo becomes transparent, musing that this is a release for him, as he will not have to fear losing anyone anymore. After warning him of “Nigredo’s shadow,” and to think about why he does not react to U-DO, Albedo is carried to a brilliant light above by angels shaped like 100-Series Realians. His final words are, “I am free.” Jr. grieves for his “other half,” but Sakura’s spirit tells him to be strong, and that there are people waiting for him to return. Instead of Sakura, Nephilim
and chaos appear, and the latter tells Jr. that it is time to go back. Both agree that things have only begun, even if Jr. is now able to find peace. The space-time anomaly vanishes, leaving behind the Zohar floating in space.

When Jr. returns to the bridge of the *Durandal*, he apologizes for worrying everyone. The crew confirms the coordinates of the Zohar when a massive spatial distortion indicates an object of immeasurable mass gating out. Wilhelm watches from his office aboard the *Dämmerung*, stating that “Abel’s Ark” is coming. The gigantic object absorbs the Zohar and vanishes again.

chaos observes the disappearance of Abel’s Ark while standing on top of the *Durandal*, where he is contacted by Wilhelm, who calls him Yeshua, and states that it has been a long time. Wilhelm asks whether he did not state that he would not interfere, to which chaos responds that he has made up his mind to not hold back anymore. Wilhelm is glad to hear that he will finally enter the stage.

After the credits, Wilhelm and the Testaments are shown discussing that the Y-Data is still incomplete, and that the answer to completing it lies below MOMO’s subconscious domain, i.e. in the Unus Mundus Network. Once the path to Lost Jerusalem is opened, KOS-MOS will awaken. In the last scene, Wilhelm welcomes a new White Testament as the “weaver of the Eternal Circle of Zarathustra.”
Appendix C: The Plot of *Xenosaga Episode III: Also sprach Zarathustra*

This plot synopsis was compiled by the author of this thesis, and reveals information in the order it appears within the narrative.

*Xenosaga: Episode III* is set one year after the events of the second episode. In the meantime, Shion has left Vector, as she started to doubt the organization’s motives, and joined with the anti-U.M.N. organization Scientia.

The first scene of *Xenosaga III* shows a devastated planet overrun by Gnosis. A mother places her son into an escape pod after giving him his pendant, and he sees her turning into a Gnosis before the pod is shot into space.

The four Testaments meet in a cave around a stone sarcophagus, where the Red Testament informs the others that the space-time anomaly 15 years ago was incomplete, a mistake which must be corrected. Blue taunts Red by stating that he bets Red cannot wait to see “her” face when “she” finally knows everything.

Shion and her friend Miyuki are being pursued through a cityscape by defense systems, and are saved by the Realian Canaan and the Scientia member Doctus. They are on the way to obtain information which will pose a threat to Vector. For the purpose of obtaining that top-secret data, they are infiltrating Vector’s S-Line Division.
Shion releases the seal on the data core after they successfully gain access, and explains to Miyuki after she wonders how this will expose Vector’s crimes that no one knows who built the U.M.N., which is used throughout the star cluster for warp travel and light-speed communication. She states that they need to find out the truth about the U.M.N., and the group proceeds to extract the data.

Before the group can leave, they are attacked by Gnosis, one of which was hiding in the data cores. They make a hasty retreat. On the way out, Shion has a vision of a young boy, and when one of the gates threatens to close on them, she is about to shoot it, but hears a voice telling her not to. The gate opens again, letting them through, and Shion tells Miyuki to disconnect now.

Shion was in a virtual reality environment; she is hiding at a beach. She learns that the data was backed up completely during a conference call with Miyuki, Doctus, and Canaan. Shion states that the Gnosis phenomenon is linked to the U.M.N., and that U-TIC, Mizrahi, or even the immigrant fleet had nothing to do with it, but that it may be linked to Vector, which might also mean that the development of KOS-MOS was begun for unknown motives.

She then receives a message from Allen, who still works for Vector, telling her that the KOS-MOS development project was cancelled and transferred to the military on Fifth Jerusalem, where a new model is supposed to be developed. A flashback shows her quitting after the Gnosis terrorism incident which happened in the last year. Another flashback shows Kevin explaining to Shion that KOS-MOS has a female form as she is
supposed to be a creator and protector, and that he wants to know the truth about Gnosis, since it may be the key to saving the universe.

Aboard the *Dämmerung*, Wilhelm is informed by the Red Testament that part of the S-Line data has been leaked, but is not worried, as Shion and her group have little power and are unable to change the world. He then asks if everything at Rennes-le-Chateau is ready, to which the answer is that everything is ready for the Zohar Project demonstration. Wilhelm says that Ormus needs proof to continue to sacrifice themselves to protect their idol. “She” has not much time left, either, since contact with KOS-MOS has taken its toll on her. The Red Testament will tend to her.

Helmer informs Juli via comlink that the Michtam system has been taken over by Ormus, which is the same situation as 100 years ago. Also, a battleship called *Merkabah*, which was originally another ancient relic, has been rebuilt. Finally, Canaan informs Juli of the data gathered on Rennes-le-Chateau, which is a part of Lost Jerusalem’s landmass. Juli has also been suspicious of Vector since the Gnosis terrorism incident. The *Elsa* is dispatched to reconnoiter Rennes-le-Chateau with Jr. aboard.

Margulis and Pellegric are on Michtam, talking about their forces holding off the Federation fleet from Rennes-le-Chateau. Michtam is the birthplace of Ormus, destroyed 18 years ago when the Federation unleashed the Zohar. Pellegric wonders why they are there, since their stated goal is to return to Lost Jerusalem, and Margulis answers that it is not for them to know why Heinlein sent them there. Margulis is informed of the Elsa approaching Rennes-le-Chateau, and sets out for that region, as well.
Upon their approach on the landmass, the *Elsa* and E.S.s are attacked by Ormus forces after determining that its underside looks as though it was artificially cut away from its original planet.

Margulis joins the offensive, but retreats after being contacted by Heinlein and informed that their “saint” has already been obtained from there. Rennes-le-Chateau is engulfed by an anomaly, and the *Elsa*, damaged by Margulis’ E.S. sword, falls into it. The E.S. units try to save the ship.

The *Durandal* cannot track the *Elsa* with its sensors anymore. Meanwhile, Shion sets out for Fifth Jerusalem in her E.S. while recapping the last year: The Gnosis phenomenon has increased in frequency, and yet still people fight against each other. Shion is investigating the Miltian Conflict and its connection to the Zohar and the immigrant fleet. Six months ago, she came in contact with Scientia while doing so. At the time an incident revolving around a program called Lemegeton happened. This program was a Zohar control program developed during the Lost Jerusalem era. Its creator, Grimoire, had transferred his consciousness to the U.M.N. and was searching for Nephilim. Shion found out that Vector’s S-Line division controlled Grimoire, and that there were ties between Vector and U-TIC, and therefore Ormus. Shion’s father was involved in this conspiracy before his death, as well. Therefore, she left Vector.

Gaignun’s mind is touched by U-DO, and tries to refuse it. Currently, Dimitri is in charge of his body, and being debriefed by Citrine. He visits with Sellers, who informs him that the “startup experiment” has succeeded, but that the values are unstable due to a number of substitutions to the system recovered from Miltia. Dimitri removed Vector
from the experiment due to the Lemegeton incident. The Merkabah is coming along, as well.

On Fifth Jerusalem, Vector personnel learn that KOS-MOS is going to be the opponent for the new weapon which is to be demonstrated. Additionally, they talk about Allen meeting with their former chief Shion. Shion meets Allen at her hotel, and learns that the cancellation of the project was very sudden. Allen also informs her about the weapons demonstration. After he leaves to prepare KOS-MOS further, chaos surprisingly contacts Shion. He informs her that the Elsa is missing due to a sudden U.M.N. shift forming an impenetrable hypersphere around the floating landmass. Shion responds that she unfortunately cannot be of help. Then, she suddenly collapses. While she is unconscious, she communicates with U-DO, introducing herself. She awakes in her hotel room. Allen contacts her and tells her that the demonstration is about to start. As they are about to leave, Allen informs her that the Zohar project has been transferred from the Subcommittee to Dimitri Yuriev’s hands. They arrive at the testing grounds, and witness the battle demonstration of T-elos, one half of the new anti-Gnosis weapon system – a female android who looks suspiciously like KOS-MOS. Allen lets Shion know that his team suspects that the Salvator faction in parliament, headed by Dimitri Yuriev, may be behind the fact that KOS-MOS was picked as opponent. Shion is appalled to learn that the Gnosis used for this demonstration came from Vector. No one knows who developed T-elos, although a man named Roth Mantel is now in charge of the project. Yuriev is attempting to investigate Mantel, as well, but cannot find anything. However, he feels a wave affinity from him that indicates he is a member of the immigrant fleet, as all
members have this affinity. KOS-MOS is pitted against the human-piloted part of the anti-Gnosis system: Omega Res Novae, a new version of the weapon used by the Patriarch. Omega goes out of control during the demonstration for a moment, and KOS-MOS is defeated. Juli Mizrahi is in charge of the pilot, and orders his ejection. Shion and Allen meet Juli in the corridor, and she introduces them to Abel, the child pilot of Omega. He draws a picture of Nephilim on the floor before leaving the room again.

After meeting with her old Vector team, Shion accepts Allen’s invitation to dinner. After she leaves, Roth Mantel comes by and informs the team that KOS-MOS is to be disposed of by orders of the Subcommittee.

Back in her hotel room, Shion sends footage from the demonstration to Doctus, asking her for an analysis. Doctus in turn informs her that something called “Canaan” (not the Realian, she suspects) has been used for over a hundred years to search for something, according to the data they extracted from the S-Line division. Then, Nephilim appears to her and informs her that Lemegeton is not to blame for the expanding Gnosis phenomenon, but that a certain existence is responsible for the impending destruction of the universe. Only KOS-MOS knows what is happening, and only Shion can open her heart. She vanishes again. Thereafter, Nephilim converses with chaos, stating that she could not tell Shion the truth, because it is too hard for her right now. Chaos responds that knowing the truth does not always lead to happiness, but Shion must learn it.

Canaan informs Juli that he could not find any data on Roth Mantel, either. He also researched the situation of the Elsa, and determined that energy output on the level
of Omega’s cannon or KOS-MOS’ tertiary weapons system would be required to break through the barrier.

Heinlein orders Margulis to abandon Omega, who objects. He also does not understand the retreat at Rennes-le-Chateau. Heinlein states he has already taken measures, and that Margulis’ assistance is not required. Meanwhile, Wilhelm receives a report from the Red Testament that all preparations for an unspecified project are complete. He remarks that everything follows destiny.

Allen wonders how to tell Shion that KOS-MOS is to be disposed of when he meets Juli. She wants to contact Shion about KOS-MOS, because she wants to prevent the disposal.

Doctus informs Shion that she cannot find information on T-elos, or on Roth Mantel. However, she did find an Ormus-affiliated freighter which dropped off unregistered cargo of approximately T-elos’ weight at Fifth Jerusalem, indicating that the organization is involved. Shion also learns that her father was the Federation government’s U-TIC inspector on Miltia, which means he either stood by or conspired with U-TIC in the events of the Miltian Conflict. She receives a call from Allen and suddenly collapses again. After she comes to, Allen is there and informs her that Juli wants to talk to her, but that cancels their plans. Shion suggests to go outside together now. They go to the park together, and Shion begins to reminisce about Kevin.

Doctus visits Canaan and asks him who he is, i.e. what he originally was made for. He is the carrier of the top-secret Vector program. Canaan claims he knows nothing about it. Doctus believes him, gives him the partial data they recovered, and leaves.
The following day, Shion meets Jr., Ziggy, MOMO, and Jin on the Durandal upon her arrival. She is informed by Allen and Juli that KOS-MOS is to be scrapped. Then, Jr. mentions the Elsa’s dilemma. They conclude that they need KOS-MOS, and Juli suggests they infiltrate the facility and steal her. Shion suffers another collapse. Her examination yields no results. When Juli meets with her later, she reminds Shion to always believe in KOS-MOS.

The group meets in the lobby of Shion’s hotel to prepare for the infiltration, and break into the facility with Miyuki’s help. However, the last elevator does not stop on the right floor, instead bringing them to Omega’s underground hangar. There, Shion is once more contacted by U-DO and stumbles, but claims she is fine. Then, she sees Abel standing in the door. He tells them to follow him. They find KOS-MOS deactivated on a scrap heap and start her back up, preparing to leave the facility. On the way out, Shion once more collapses. U-DO asks her what she seeks, telling her he wants to know her and her world. He describes himself as the will of the universe, and asks her what she desires from the world. Then, she wakes again. The party escapes through the exercise ground. The Durandal departs from Fifth Jerusalem soon thereafter. Roth Mantel and the Blue Testament look after them, standing in space. Roth mentions that “the compass” swings whenever Shion is in contact with KOS-MOS, and that they will reach the destined place anyway, as everything follows fate.

KOS-MOS manages to penetrate the hypersphere, and the group flies inside before the fissure created by her closes again.
Meanwhile, the Blue Testament meets with Mantel in the cave with the sarcophagus again, and talks to him about using the “daughter instead of the imperfect mother,” the “maiden who called the Gnosis.” Mantel replies that it is necessary for the new world. He also mentions that the only one who can destroy KOS-MOS is T-elas.

The group makes contact with the Elsa crew, who are thrilled to be rescued. Aboard, they learn that the Elsa’s drives are not working. They decide to investigate what may be causing it. In a cave on the landmass, they find Hebrew or Aramaic writing, which describes a scene from the resurrection; MOMO identifies it as having been in the Y-Data. Then, they are joined by the Blue Testament, who reveals himself to be Virgil. The Vessels of Anima inside their E.S.s begin to resonate with the writing; both begin to glow. The party does not know what it means, but Virgil does, and taunts them about it.

After a battle with Virgil, the White Testament appears, and Jr. recognizes Albedo’s voice. Albedo extracts the Vessel of Anima from Virgil’s E.S. and leaves. The party’s E.S.s are drained of energy due to the environment and become unusable. When the party emerges on the surface of Rennes-le-Chateau, Shion recognizes the place: It is the place where she met Nephilim in her dreams the first few times. They descend into a crypt, where they find opened graves which are inscribed with E.S. names. At the end of the crypt is a spot that looks like the end point of KOS-MOS’ subconscious domain in Xenosaga Episode I, where she was tied to a cross with cables. On the way out, they are confronted by T-elas, who claims that KOS-MOS is only an empty vessel, and demands that she return to dust so that T-elas may awaken. Shion’s pendant begins to glow as KOS-MOS is felled by T-elas. Shion has a momentary vision of a human woman.
superimposed over T-elos, then T-elos proceeds to destroy KOS-MOS, whose eyes turn blue. The stone sarcophagus behind them begins to glow, and the Red Testament, who has been watching, demands that she “reveal herself.” Wilhelm notices the Compass of Order spinning wildly, and comments that it has begun.

In a flashback, Shion remembers talking to Kevin about how, in the 4,000 years humanity has been in space, they have not encountered any other life forms aside from the Gnosis. Shion speculates that they might be a sign that the universe is rejecting humanity. Kevin responds that maybe humans are rejecting the universe by trying to change their fate. He was born on a planet that was destroyed by Gnosis, and he was the only survivor. Shion asks herself what her purpose is in life, and decides that, for the moment, it is to support Kevin in his hopes for KOS-MOS. Kevin gives her the pendant which she always wears around her neck in the present; it was his mother’s. After the flashback, U-DO contacts Shion again, and asks her whether she feels joy due to this memory, which she affirms. She states she wants to be like this forever.

Shion wakes up alone in an unfamiliar forest. Soon, she runs into the remainder of the party, except for the crew of the Elsa and KOS-MOS. Soon, they see Labyrinthos towering over the trees, and discover that they are on Miltia. Further along the forest path, they find a younger Virgil, who was injured in a fight with combat Realians. They tend to the worst of his injuries after he collapses, and transport him to Febronia’s church. Inside, Shion encounters her younger self, as well as a younger Kevin. Kevin points out that Virgil is Federation and they are affiliated with U-TIC, so they should not help him, but Febronia insists. Virgil’s injuries are extensive; when the group discovers that he needs
transplants, Febronia offers her organs. Since she is a transgenic type, her body composition is compatible even though she is a Realian, and she can regenerate her organs at Labyrinthos. Young Shion has seen the Elsa nearby, and the team decides to try and find the ship. After an interlude with mountain dwellers, they discover the Elsa. KOS-MOS and the E.S. craft were recovered, but the former’s core was damaged, and Allen concludes that she will never move again.

Aboard the Durandal, Mary and Shelley are still waiting for the group to return when they are contacted by Juli, who informs them that the Federation fleet is on its way to invade the Michtam system, driven by Dimitri. In the Y-Data, an object found on Michtam is mentioned: Zarathustra. Juli speculates that Dimitri wants to obtain it. On the Elsa, Shion dreams of Virgil’s surgery, but this time without the group being present and Kevin transplanting Febronia’s organs.

After waking up, she finds out that the E.S.’s Vessels of Anima have disappeared, possibly caused by their time travel. Additionally, the fact that they are in a time in which they do not belong may irreparably damage space around them. Shion decides to go into the city, as she cannot bear sitting around and doing nothing. Allen insists on going along. On the way into town, they run into a shot-up U-TIC transport, which is being inspected by Shion’s father. After he leaves, Shion forges them IDs and changes into one of the uniforms left behind; she is determined to find out how her father was connected to U-TIC. From the security guard by the door of the Acute Neurosis Treatment Facility near Labyrinthos, they learn that a connection experiment is planned soon, and that they should report to Mizrahi. They learn that the experiments involve using the Vessels of
Anima as mediators in trying to link people to the Zohar. However, the test subjects’ fear must be controlled. Furthermore, Shion’s mother’s name is on the list of test subjects, and Kevin Winnicott is mentioned to be Joachim Mizrahi’s assistant in this time frame. After notifying young Kevin that Mizrahi wants to see him, they find KOS-MOS’ basic design on his computer. Shion copies the data, hoping that it will serve in repairing KOS-MOS.

In the research wing, they come face to face with Shion’s father, as well as her mother. Shion is appalled at her father using her mother in experiments. Then, young Shion enters the room, but her father sends her away. Adult Shion offers to escort her out. Young Shion wants to return to the church to visit the hurt Virgil, and Shion agrees. While young Shion picks flowers outside of the hospital, Kevin antagonizes adult Shion for ostensibly wasting time. At the church, Jin states that Virgil will recover. The soldier is baffled when young Shion gives him flowers. After Febronia enters the room, he tells her to stay away, as he is consumed with hatred for Realians, because his comrades have been killed by them.

At Labyrinthos, Sellers and Margulis talk in the Zohar chamber, mentioning that it was Kevin who planned on framing Mizrahi for the ensuing conflict.

Back at the church, Virgil slowly warms up to Febronia. He asks her why she saved him, as he is her enemy, and she answers that she just wanted to do it, stating that there is nothing more important than life.

At Shion’s little hospital garden, Kevin talks to young Shion, wondering again why she bothers planting flowers there. He states that humans must destroy other organisms to live, which is why what she is doing is pointless. However, young Shion
persists, and tells him to lend her a hand, rather than just sitting around. The girl is then called by her father, and leaves Kevin to tend to her flowers, which he does. Aboard the Elsa, repairs on KOS-MOS commence. Shion muses about whether she can just let events on Miltia progress unchanged, even if it is the logical thing to do. Allen contacts her and lets her know that rebooting KOS-MOS does not seem to work, when an explosion occurs in KOS-MOS’ maintenance room. There, the Black Testament is attempting to steal KOS-MOS in her maintenance bed. When he threatens Shion after she attacks him, KOS-MOS awakens and begins to battle him. She runs him through, but he remains unharmed. The Black Testament leaves after being told that the Testaments must plan their next moves now that “she” has awakened. Shion expresses how glad she is that KOS-MOS is working again, then she collapses. She finds herself on the empty beach alongside Joachim Mizrahi. He talks about relationships between people being like waves, and remarks that he was hoping to create a world in which all beings could live in happiness. Finally, Shion and Mizrahi turn around to see a dark-haired woman who looks like KOS-MOS standing in a flower field. When Shion awakens, Jin is in her room, and they talk about their father. Allen comes to bring food, and overhears her proposing changing the past and saving everyone using the Vessels of Anima. Jin states that the risk is too great, but Shion insists on trying it. She leaves the room, and Jin remarks that she needs her past to be who she is now. The group forces their way inside Labyrinthos. There, they overhear Sellers talking to Mizrahi, telling the latter that he is going to take over all experiments, if Mizrahi cannot stop concentrating on his doll of a daughter. MOMO follows him and talks to her father, finding out that he studied the Zohar, the
U.M.N., and U-DO for the sole purpose of bringing his daughter back to life. He explains that the Unus Mundus Network is the collective subconscious which has existed since the birth of the universe. He discovered that human consciousnesses are born from the U.M.N., and return there when a person dies. However, Sakura’s consciousness has disappeared. However, Mizrahi hopes that the Realian he is creating, even if it does not possess his daughter’s consciousness, will be the hope of all Realians. In one of the labs used by Shion’s father, MOMO discovers Shion’s name on the list of test subjects, right below her mother’s. They also find the prototype combat Realians which killed Shion’s mother in her past. While trying to obtain the Vessels of Anima, the group sees her father and Kevin interacting with Margulis, who explains Ormus’ motive: Collect the relics of God scattered across space, and return them to their original form, so that they may return to Lost Jerusalem. The Zohar and the Vessels of Anima were created for that reason. The experiments to connect with the Zohar use Realians because they are all connected at the subconscious level and do not reject each other out of fear like humans do. To control the Zohar, Lemegeton is used to convey will from the Vessels of Anima via the U.M.N. Since this results in direct contact with U-DO, fear must be eliminated as a factor.

Shion’s father also mentions that Vector has recently offered its aid in the experiments.

The group locates the Vessels of Anima and retrieves them. On their way out in their E.S.s, the Vessels of Anima begin resonating again. chaos muses about what will happen when the synchronization of their wills with the Vessels continues, and wonders why Wilhelm wants this power. They are on their way out of Labyrinthos when Shion, overhearing transmissions from inside, hears that her mother is being prepared as a test
subject, and goes back in. The remainder of the group has no choice but to retreat to the Elsa for now. On the way to her mother’s room, Shion is confronted by the Red Testament, who reveals himself to be Kevin. Shion is startled and gets apprehended by U-TIC soldiers, who cannot see Kevin. Seated in an interrogation room, Shion realizes that the Testaments are people who have died. Margulis and Pellegrini attempt to question her, but she does not answer their questions. They call in her father and young Kevin, as they know she has tried to make contact with them. Meanwhile, Shion’s father confronts Kevin about using the prototype combat Realians. Kevin states it is the only way, as the Song will be activated soon. He says that Shion’s father betrayed the Federation and sacrificed his wife to save their daughter, to which her father responds that Kevin does not understand. Kevin, in turn, says that Miltia’s sacrifice cannot be avoided anymore when a U-TIC soldier requests their presence at the interrogation. Shion confronts her father again for using her mother in experiments.

Febronia comes to the Elsa, stating that she has important news. Allen confronts Jin about not going back for Shion, and her brother admits that he is concerned about both her fainting spells, which are the same her mother used to experience, and that something is going to happen that she must not know. MOMO calls them to the bridge, and Febronia lets them know that Margulis is planning to extract information from the captured Shion by force. They will have to rescue Shion while the Miltian conflict begins, but their knowledge of the events of that day will aid them in their effort.

As the conflict begins, Kevin finds Shion in her flower bed; the flowers have been trampled. Margulis is planning to deploy Proto Omega and the combat
Realiasts, as well as the Song of Nephilim even though it is incomplete, against the Federation troops, which Shion’s father tries to prevent without success. He then makes the decision to let the captured Shion go, and explains to her that his original plan was to protect his family, rather than sacrificing them. He asks her to save young Shion, as he needs to protect his wife. However, before they can leave, Pellegri confronts them, stating that she knows Shion’s father is leaking information to the Federation. She plans on killing them, but the group stops her. As they escape the city, the Song is activated. At the church, tainted Realiasts appear and kill Febronia in front of Virgil and young Shion. Virgil fights them and tells Shion to run, giving her a key that allows her to get to Labyrinthos from the forest to be with her family. When Adult Shion arrives, she finds Febronia dead and Virgil under attack. He tells her that he needs to save the child Shion, and Shion gives him the Realian self-destruct code. Virgil locks her out of the church and tells her to go after Shion before using the code, blowing up the building. Virgil the Blue Testament appears before her, laughing at the scene and calling Shion a hypocrite for giving him the destruct code and doing things she does not want to do in order to distract herself from her past. Then, he tempts her to come to their side to see Kevin again. The spirit of Febronia asks him to stop rejecting the truth and accept who he really is. Virgil claims to feel nothing for any Realiasts, but Febronia states that he became a Testament so he could come back to this point. Eventually, Virgil decides to go with Febronia’s spirit.

The group hurries after young Shion, and arrives just in time to save her from being attacked by Realiasts. Then, they return to Labyrinthos in an attempt to save
Shion’s mother. The conflict is now at its most destructive, and Mizrahi asks Sellers if
this was what he wanted. He also tells him that Lemegeton must not be used, as it is
incomplete. Sellers only cares about the fact that it can activate the Zohar. Shion’s father
is running toward his wife’s room, where he finds his daughter being threatened by the
prototype combat Realians. He locks her in the room to protect her, and is killed. The
Realians manage to open the door and young Shion, hiding under the bed, witnesses them
killing her mother. Adult Shion rushes to rescue her younger self, taking on the Realians.
Young Shion cries out, which activates the Zohar. Gnosis immediately begin to appear.
Adult Shion realizes that it was her who called the Gnosis into this world, and her
anguish causes Abel’s Ark to materialize above Miltia. Chaos figures out that this is not
the past, but that this reality is inside Shion’s head – she is being used. Kevin appears,
confirming that Shion did indeed call the Gnosis when she was a child. He states that he
has come for her. When Shion asks why he hid himself for so long, he answers that he
needed power, and that he did everything he did for her. He then explains that Shion has
the same illness as her mother, and that she possesses a special power related to that
illness: that of communicating with U-DO, and conveying her will to him. Since the
direct contact damages her consciousness, she weakens. Cutting off contact with U-DO is
impossible. Kevin claims he became a Testament to save her, and that it will take him
and T-elas to do so. KOS-MOS was just a prototype, created to collect data for T-elas,
and to keep an eye on Shion. However, since KOS-MOS is powered by U-DO via the
Zohar, every time KOS-MOS uses her abilities, Shion’s body is weakened. Kevin asks
her again to come with him, but Jin stops her, stating that he does not believe him, and
calls for KOS-MOS to leave with Shion. Kevin tries to command her to hand her over, to which KOS-MOS replies that the body he designed was destroyed. She brings Shion to the Elsa and informs the captain that the other members of the group are still inside Labyrinthos.

Sellers confronts Mizrahi as he attempts to stop the Zohar. Mizrahi states that he will destroy this planet if it means saving the universe, and that the Zohar is beyond human control. He shoots Sellers in the knees before leaving for the roof, beholding the sky full of Gnosis, and jumps off the building after reciting lines from the Revelation.

The Song of Nephilim is ascending and Labyrinthos is about to collapse. The Elsa picks up the group and barely manages to escape the sealing.

On the Dämmerung, a light appears in front of Wilhelm, and he states that the first awakening has gone well. Kevin responds that the other Vessels of Anima will follow. The Vessels of Anima are the body of god, which was divided in order to keep the universe from dissipating. Wilhelm says that they cannot allow the universe’s “failsafe” to activate, which is why they must control the body of god with their own hands.

The Elsa crew, meanwhile, finds out that they are in their present timeframe, and at the same location at which they first came into contact with the hypersphere. Abel’s Ark appears before them again. chaos posits that their time on Miltia was actually spent in Shion’s subconscious, and that the purpose of her reliving her memories in a slightly changed way was the awakening of the Ark. The Ark shifts into the U.M.N., making a planet vanish in its wake. Aboard the nearby Durandal, scans indicate that the Ark
moving though the U.M.N. causes the columns to resonate, which in turn has planets vanishing all along its path. It is projected that half of all Federation planets could be gone within 72 hours at this rate. According to the Y-Data, Abel’s Ark seeks Zarathustra, i.e., it is going to Michtam.

On one of the Federation fleet ships, Dimitri Yuriev and Sellers come to the same conclusion. They discuss Abel, and Dimitri states that he already knew him hundreds of years ago, and that he has not changed since then. As the Y-Data, which describes him as essential in controlling Omega, is thousands of years old, he must have already existed in the Lost Jerusalem era. Dimitri then reveals that he is planning to gather all divine artifacts, ascend to the realm of god, and challenge him with Abel’s help. The Ormus fleet under Margulis’ orders also begins to head to Michtam.

Shion is contacted by U-DO again. She tells him she does not understand herself anymore, and he asks if she is afraid of being isolated and rejected. She replies she is afraid of being alone, and asks him, or anyone, to tell her who she is. Back on the Elsa, she antagonizes Jin for keeping her from going with Kevin. Her brother remonstrates himself for not being able to do more before leaving. Shion wonders if it would not be better if she died, as the Gnosis would disappear. She says to KOS-MOS that she is not mad at Jin and does not want to burden her friends, but that she is afraid to wind up alone. Nephilim appears and tells her to not reject everything. She warns Shion that Kevin’s idea of salvation might not bring her happiness, and if she goes to him, she will have to make a difficult choice. To meet with Kevin again, she has to set Abel free from his curse.
On the *Durandal*, the group learns that Second Miltia is evacuating to escape the planetary disappearance phenomenon, and that the Federation fleet is engaging Ormus near Michtam. They wonder about Dimitri’s objective; he seems to be after the original Zohar, but they do not know why. Therefore, they plan to infiltrate the *Merkabah* and secure Omega. The *Elsa* sets out for the *Merkabah*, which has already made contact with Abel’s Ark. Aboard, the group comes across Sellers, who reveals to Jr. that his brother Gaignun has been taken over by their father Dimitri, and that that was always his purpose. He also explains that Dimitri was the only one to ever survive the U.M.N. transfer experiments, and that he came into contact with U-DO during them. There, he also gained the power to transfer his mind to others. The Zohar emulators are not just imitations of the original; each one corresponds to a Vessel of Anima, and they are used like ignition lasers to activate the original. Jr. realizes that Dimitri is after the *Durandal*, where the emulators are kept. At the same time, the *Durandal* is invaded; on the bridge, Dimitri reveals to his aides and Juli that he has taken over Gaignun’s body, and tells them to give him the Arbiter code which is hidden inside their bodies. The group invades the occupied Durandal, eventually learning that Yuriev has received the Arbiter code and is on the way to the isolation hangar, where the emulators are kept. There, the group happens upon Citrine guarding the door; she states that, as U.R.T.V., her mission is to destroy U-DO, and the fate of the universe is secondary to her. Before she dies after the battle, she asks why Jr. is still alive even after defying his purpose, and Jr. explains to her that he has to keep his promise to Sakura.
Dimitri has already activated the emulators and tells the group that he is not planning to destroy U-DO – he is indestructible. He is planning to become a god, himself. After setting the Durandal on collision course with the Ark, he leaves. The group flees on the Elsa just before the Durandal crashes into the Ark. Inside it, Dimitri reunites Omega with the original Zohar, which Wilhelm and Kevin detect on the Dämmerung. Kevin warns that Dimitri will try to absorb Zarathustra, to which Wilhelm responds that that is not Zarathustra’s only function, and that the “measures” he has taken are not recorded in the Y-Data. Meanwhile, Margulis is confused by Heinlein’s orders to pull back the Ormus fleet, even though the original Zohar is within their reach. The Elsa receives help from Scientia in gate-jumping inside the Ark to confront Dimitri. Canaan explains to chaos in the hangar that he now knows what he is due to the information on “Program Canaan,” and that as a Realian, he cannot deny his purpose, even if it will hurt people.

Inside the Ark, the group dismantles the protective mechanism Dimitri established using the emulators. During this, their E.S. Vessels of Anima begin resonating with the original Zohar. When they are finally able to confront Dimitri directly, he explains to the group that the fear born from his initial contact with U-DO, which is latent in all living beings, is what shackles them to the lower realm. The group cannot subdue Dimitri, who has fused with Omega and the Zohar. Albedo appears and tells him that this power is not his father’s, just as it was not his when he sought it. He removes the Zohar from the Ark and extracts Dimitri from the fusion. Albedo then calls for Gaignun, forcing his spirit to shake off Dimitri for a moment. Gaignun asks Jr. to kill him, while he still has his will. After Jr. initially refuses, Albedo convinces him that it must be done, and they form the U.R.T.V.
spiritual link. In the link, Gaignun pushes Albedo’s spirit into Jr.’s, reuniting the two halves. He holds up the link in Albedo’s body, telling Jr. that his sole purpose in life was to kill his brother, and that he never should have existed. Albedo knew this from the start.

Then, he vanishes along with Dimitri. Jr. and Albedo talk, and then Albedo states he will go to sleep. Before he fades into Jr.’s psyche, he tells him that the Zohar and Abel are on Michtam. Another Vessel of Anima awakens on the Dämmerung.

After leaving the Ark, the Elsa is pursued by the Ormus fleet, and has no choice but to land on Michtam. Margulis has disobeyed Heinlein’s orders, as they go counter go Ormus’ stated mission to return to Lost Jerusalem. Heinlein then reveals himself to be Wilhelm. He states that Margulis has served him well all this time, but faith is too strong and clouds his eyes. He tells Margulis that Ormus was created after the death of “the man they call their lord” 6,000 years ago. Its purpose was to guard his words, Lemegeton, which is a failsafe installed into the universe by god which can dissipate it. However, even their lord did not know that, because the words were really Yeshua’s. Wilhelm created Ormus back then to watch the words and the artifacts of god to prevent the universe from dissipation. Ormus’ stated mission was a lie; Lost Jerusalem vanished because it was fated to due to human action. Margulis asks if everything they worked for had no meaning, to which Wilhelm replies that it is only meaningless if Margulis believes it is. That is why he continues to exist. He presents Margulis with a decision that will define who he is: Leave this place as ordered, or stay and appear on the final stage.

The Elsa lands, and the group prepares to move out to find Abel and the Zohar.

Canaan is acting strangely. On the way into the city, they appear the two Ormus
operatives in E.S.s they have fought multiple times before, and after they are defeated, a Testament collects their Vessels of Anima. Shion’s pendant begins to react when they reach the escape pod platform. She senses sadness and fear from it. Then, they are confronted by Pellegri, who tells them that Ormus, the people of Zohar, came here with the relics of god after wandering for a long time. They were the ones who conceived of the Zohar project, and the Federation sought to usurp it, invading the planet and killing the people. She knows that everything they did was ultimately meaningless, and states that being in their way now is her reason for being. Pellegri’s E.S. explodes while she states that she cannot fight anymore, and the Vessel of Anima is collected by the Testament.

In the Ormus cathedral, where Ziggy suspected the Zohar to be after recognizing the planet as the one where he used to live while still human, the group meets Voyager, the Black Testament. This is where he killed Ziggy’s wife and son. Voyager reveals that the entire group has the potential to become Testaments, which is why “he” has had them watched. That is why Canaan (who was formerly known as Lactis, and worked with Ziggy when the latter was still alive) was with the group – to observe them. Canaan offers Voyager a deal in order to conquer his remaining fear of death, as his superior’s death might cause his own. His subconscious is directly linked to the Compass of Order; absorbing the compass would grant Voyager the power of god. Voyager links with Canaan and follows the subconscious link, only to begin to dissipate. Canaan states that he touched something that must never be touched, and also starts to scatter. He sacrificed himself in order to destroy the Black Testament. His last words are that he does not want
to exist only to watch those he cares about die, or to betray them, and that he wants another reason to exist: To protect everyone.

Underneath the cathedral is a Zohar research facility. Margulis is waiting for them there; he knows Pellegrí is dead. He knows that he has no reason to fight anymore, but states that the only thing that he has left which will not betray him is a final confrontation with Jin. Jin destroys his opponent’s E.S., and Margulis tells him that Jin is now all alone in the world before dying. His craft’s Vessel of Anima is collected. Shion’s pendant begins to glow again: She is being called by someone ahead. They arrive at a crystalline door, which is made from the same material as Shion’s pendant. Shion is being called again, and collapses. U-DO talks to her, and the red wave-form solidifies into Abel. Abel is U-DO, or rather, one of the ways he is perceived. U-DO wants to know why there are wills who desire a dissipating world, and why they insist on hurting themselves and others. U-DO seeks for someone who will define him. After Shion awakes, Nephilim appears, telling her that what she seeks lies ahead. Only she can open the door, as it was sealed by a woman who was able to call upon the power of god, in order to keep what is behind it from falling into the hands of mankind. This woman must now awaken, but her awakening will cause Shion’s life to erode. Nephilim says everyone understands Shion’s pain, which she does not believe, as she feels alone in the world. She decides to open the door. Allen tries to stop her as it will hurt her, but she tells him that he has no power to help her, and to get out of the way.

Shion awakens in an outside environment that resembles the floating landmass, but realizes that she is actually on Lost Jerusalem. She enters the crypt, and finds chaos
standing behind the stone cross. He points her to the stone sarcophagus, in which Shion finds a human woman looking like KOS-MOS and T-elos. Upon seeing her, she has a vision of this human woman and chaos listening to a man preach on a hill, and of the woman suffering from pain and sadness. Shion understands that the woman has lost sight of herself, just like her, and that she feels alone. She suggests to look for the answers together, and the woman calls her by name.

When Shion comes to back in the Michtam underground facility, KOS-MOS’ eyes are blue – she has awakened. T-elos approaches and states that the will of Maria Magdalena, which now dwells in KOS-MOS, was supposed to be hers. Maria was the partner of the messiah; T-elos’ body is her body, while KOS-MOS harbors her will. Maria’s full resurrection in one body will effect the convergence of dissipating wills, the rebirth of the soul, and will cause Zarathustra to speak. However, as T-elos threatens the group, KOS-MOS/Maria states she is forced to stop her. KOS-MOS defeats T-elos and absorbs her.

In the chamber of Zarathustra, Wilhelm states that everything is ready, and that the awakened Maria will lead all consciousness to Zarathustra. She only has to insert the “key.” On the remaining Federation planets, people turn into Gnosis and disappear into light rays. The Gnosis in the Michtam system are converging on the planet. The Ark begins to glow. A code similar to Lemegeton moving through the U.M.N. is detected by the Elsa, and more than 80% of the Federation are unreachable. chaos identifies Shion’s pendant as the key needed to start Zarathustra.
Shion and the group meet Kevin again, who tells her that he was as lost and alone after the destruction of this planet as she was. Wilhelm appeared to him, and explained to his younger self that the universe is inexorably moving toward destruction, that nothing can stop it, and that the only way to counteract it is the Eternal Recurrence. Young Kevin stated that he hates the world, and that he wants it gone – he wants to live in a new universe, with his mother. Back in the present, Kevin states that everything, including the creation of KOS-MOS, was part of the plan to bring about the recurrence. His death was also necessary in order to deepen the bond between Shion and KOS-MOS in preparation for the recurrence.

Allen speaks up now, saying that Kevin was just using her and ignored her own wishes and feelings. Shion, however, sides with Kevin. She is confused, but does not want to suffer anymore. After she decides to go with him, Jin draws his sword, stating that he will do what he must to save their world. Allen steps in and refuses to move. He tells everyone to get a hold of themselves, and that he has enough of this. Kevin tells him that he is pathetic and powerless, but Allen denies this, saying that he has resolve, resolve which the Testaments lack, considering that they ran away from their human lives. Allen admits that he is a weak human being, but he refuses to leave Shion and states he will stand firm. Kevin attacks Allen multiple times, taunting him, until Shion stops him. Kevin then asks whether Allen would do that much for her pity, to which Allen replies that he understands her feelings and her pain, that he would do anything for her, and that his feelings for her will never change. He would never abandon her, and he will not lose her to the likes of Kevin, who ran away. Kevin attacks him again, but KOS-MOS protects
him. She asks Shion if she really wants to betray everyone. Stating that the will of Maria must have awakened in KOS-MOS incorrectly, as she disobeys Wilhelm’s original orders, Kevin readies himself to obliterate both her and Allen when Shion falls into his arm. She says she will not sacrifice her friends for her happiness; if she does not let go of the past, she will only repeat the misery inside of her, and if she cannot share her happiness with others, then it is meaningless. If Kevin forces her to choose between him and her friends, she chooses the latter. He tells her that she will die, but she responds that she will not be his tool any longer. Kevin battles the group until Wilhelm calls him back, stating that he must have expected too much from him.

They progress into the Zarathustra chamber, where Wilhelm summons their E.S.s with a snip of his fingers and removes their awakened Vessels of Anima. When asked what the CEO of Vector is doing there, he replies that he is known by many titles: Vector’s CEO, director of Hyams, Patriarch of Ormus, the Federation’s executive committee director. However, none of these define him; only Yeshua can do that. He requests the key from Shion, but she refuses.

Zarathustra was created by Maria, and powered by Yeshua, but God did not permit them to ascend with its aid as planned. Now, Wilhelm is using it for another purpose. Everything in the universe is connected through the collective unconscious. The role of Zarathustra now is to redo everything from nothing by acting on that collective subconscious. Abel and his Ark are the two observational terminals for U-DO, God, outside of his higher domain, and must be sealed away for the purpose of recurrence. That is the reason for Wilhelm’s existence. If Shion uses the key, Maria can lead all
consciousness to Zarathustra and start the process. Shion refuses, stating that not everyone will reject the universe, but Wilhelm points out that a lot of wills have already gathered on their own: the Gnosis. They are the form of people who have rejected the world and everyone else. Shion is still not willing to do as Wilhelm says, so he resorts to force, striking the entire group down and torturing her, attempting to get her to cooperate.

Shion begs Kevin to help her, and he attacks Wilhelm, releasing Shion from his hold. Wilhelm tells him that his act of betrayal was expected. He calls Kevin’s reason for his actions, love, ridiculous and without value, and attacks both Kevin and Shion. Then, he orders KOS-MOS/Maria to bring Shion to him. KOS-MOS/Maria appears to obey in spite of Shion, Allen, and Kevin telling her not to, as it is the only way to save Shion. However, then she destroys the key, defying Wilhelm. He tells her that now the universe will perish, and even Yeshua will not be able to stop it. Her eyes turn back to red, and she tells Wilhelm that her name is not Maria, but KOS-MOS. Kevin attacks Wilhelm from behind, running him through. Wilhelm states that it is unthinkable that mere humans are rejecting him, and that the universe is now hanging by a thread. Kevin tells him that Wilhelm is the one who does not understand – humans will attempt to walk their own path across that thread. Wilhelm considers that impossible, but chaos tells him that this world is more flexible than he thinks.

Without the key, the Zarathustra system is going out of control. Kevin suppresses its energy with full knowledge that both he and Wilhelm will perish, and tells Shion to destroy it. After the deed is done, Wilhelm warns that, since he is the operator of the Zarathustra control system, the universe will vanish with him. chaos replies that he
believes in the power of human will. Wilhelm dissipates. Shion says her goodbyes to Kevin, and thanks him. He replies that he has been waiting for this day for a long time, and vanishes. Zarathustra is still active, and Jr. wonders how to stop it when Nephilim intervenes, leading Abel out of it. She explains that the system is still in operation because of all the Gnosis wills gathered inside it. She will absorb these wills together with Abel and dimensionally shift this region of space to Lost Jerusalem. Nephilim and Abel cannot stop the dissipation of the universe, but they can prolong the process so that humanity can attempt to use the potential inherent in their wills to do so.

chaos tells Shion that she was not the one who set the universe on the path to destruction, he was. His “Power of Anima” causes the dissipation, and back on Lost Jerusalem, Maria separated and sealed it into the Vessels of Anima, costing her her life. This relegated him to a spectator, and he was wondering for what reason his power existed, until now. He, Nephilim, and Adam cannot stop the dissipation, but once they vanish, the destruction of the universe will slow down, and it will last for another few tens of thousands of years at most. chaos tells Shion that the key to stopping the destruction of the universe is on Lost Jerusalem. She must do what must be done, and then come find Lost Jerusalem.

After the group says their farewells, KOS-MOS releases Yeshua’s power from the Vessels of Anima. All Gnosis begin to be drawn in, but are rejecting the guidance, forcing KOS-MOS to protect chaos and Nephilim as they effect the shift.

The group also realizes the problem; after dropping Jr., Ziggy, MOMO, and Shion off near the Elsa with their only remaining functional craft, Jin decides to sacrifice
himself in aiding chaos and KOS-MOS, saying good bye to his sister and asking Allen to protect her. He admits to being terrified, but he knows that this is what he must do.

On the *Dämmerung*, the rapid disappearance of all U.M.N. columns, i.e. the access gates, is detected; all faster-than-light communication breaks down.

On the way to the *Elsa*, Shion is threatened by one of the resisting Gnosis, which is dispatched by Allen.

Jin dies and KOS-MOS is destroyed while protecting chaos and Nephilim, and the change is effected. The *Elsa* detects one final column, kept open for them by chaos. They manage to escape. After gate-out, they receive an old-fashioned electromagnetic transmission from the *Dämmerung*, which is nearby.

The group disbands; MOMO will be working with Scientia in an attempt to construct a new network not dependent on the U.M.N., and Ziggy will stay with her and Juli. Shion, Allen, and Jr. set out on their quest for Lost Jerusalem aboard the *Elsa*, although they have no faster-than-light travel at their disposal. As they leave the *Dämmerung*, Shion thinks that she understands Wilhelm’s motives in wanting to live the same life over and over, but believes it is most important to live it without regrets. The problem is that humans are too flawed to do so. However, the will to change the future is still important, even in the face of apparent predetermination, because it opens up infinite paths to choose from.

After the credits, KOS-MOS’ body is shown floating toward Lost Jerusalem – Earth.