

# Game Narrative Review

**Game Title:** Heaven Will Be Mine

**Platform:** PC, iOS, Linux, macOS

**Genre:** Visual Novel

**Release Date:** 25 July 2018

**Developer:** Worst Girls Games

**Publisher:** Pillow Fight

**Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer:**

- Aevee Bee, Writing and Direction &
- Mia Schwartz, Art and Direction

---

## Overview

Heaven Will Be Mine is a sci-fi visual novel set in an alternate-history universe, where the start of the Cold War sees a united humanity battling against an alien presence in their galaxy, named the Existential Threat. For this war, orphans were drafted and trained to pilot Ship-Selves, mechanical robots capable of interstellar traversal and combat. Sent into space to combat this new threat, these first-generation pilots were accompanied by the Lunar Gravity Well Generator, a source of energy that would ensure the stability of these Ship-Selves and the survival of humanity in the vacuum of space.

Decades later, it was revealed that the Existential Threat was merely a shadow in humanity's presence, a force eradicated without fanfare. Efforts for humanity's expansion into space were deemed as failure. Yet, in the backdrop of Earth recalling its soldiers from space, three colony factions with different ideologies make their last stand in space. They pitch their pilots against each other for the right to control the Lunar Gravity Well.

The game follows the perspectives of their star pilots: Saturn, Pluto and Luna-Terra. All three are queer women, who won't shy from their desires for each other. Each perspective spells a singular playthrough, spanning 8 days of war; with each mission the player's pilot ventures on, they'll face one other from an opposing faction, during which the player is capable of deciding what occurs within their interactions. Perpetually, the question is posed: in each conflict, whose faction gets the victory? Or would their victory be better lost to love? Each choice the player makes in their playthrough against an opposing pilot culminates to one of three endings, forcing all of humanity's future in space to abide by the outcome.

From the developers of "We Know The Devil", Heaven Will Be Mine is a game that challenges the common 'coming-out' narrative often seen in queer stories, and discusses similar themes of alienation and acceptance on a larger scale. In contrast from its predecessor title, the emphasis on the setting of Heaven Will Be Mine suggests a deeper commentary on queer culture, beyond a study of the individual self. This analysis hopes to deliver a new perspective on Heaven Will Be Mine by examining the game's use of history, community, and sci-fi as a genre to deliver a narrative that resonates with queer audiences.

---

## Main Characters

### Luna-Terra

*First-Generation Pilot. Ace of the Memorial Foundation; Veteran of the Cold War.*

**Ship-Self:** The Mare Crisium, a prototype model for constructing other Ship-Selves. While it was constructed for combat, its weapons were crafted apart from itself, and it requires complete manual operation.

#### Personality

Luna-Terra is frigid and melancholic, with a tendency to hold others at a distance. Deep down, she has a lot of insecurities with herself and her future. She has a negative reputation from her past flings with other pilots, and her tendency for betraying her own loyalties. Her veteran status, alongside the mass of her generation's cohort returning to Earth, resulted in her title of Memorial Foundation's Ace by best-fit alone.

Having once fought for Cradle's Graces, she returned to Memorial Foundation, afraid of what Earth might do to Ship-Self pilots if the recall command is not abided by (this is revealed to be a potential genocide plan using autonomous military units to cull Ship-Self pilots).

—

### Pluto

*Second-Generation Pilot. Princess of Cradle's Graces; Psychic Prodigy.*

**Ship-Self:** The Krun Macula, a superweapon designed to fit Pluto as its sole pilot. It is intimidatingly large, capable of amplifying Pluto's psychic capabilities, and allows for the manipulation of spacetime and tidal forces.

#### Personality

A selfless, empathetic individual, who is also a psychic prodigy. She took it upon herself to champion for humanity's future in space. Despite this, she hates being deified and wants to be

seen as human, though she identifies as being alien to humanity on Earth as well. Her exuberance often begets others to label her as larger than life.

After Earth's recall, she was crowned Princess of Cradle's Graces, acting as the faction's spiritual leader, and chosen by its de facto leader to pilot the Krun Macula. Through her immense power, she hopes to be able to maintain a status quo in space, such that their culture and history may be saved.

—

## **Saturn**

Third-Generation Pilot. Reserve & Test Pilot for Celestial Mechanics. Hacker-Hijacker.

Ship-Self: The String of Pearls, a newly constructed prototype that is highly reactive to its pilot's orders. It is capable of secreting poisons and cheating distance.

## **Personality**

A reckless, capable pilot with a short attention span. She demonstrates confidence, often read as arrogance in the presence of others, and hates to be underestimated. Despite appearances, she cares strongly for her friends and allies, and likes knowing she is needed by others.

Saturn is known for being an overachiever, acting as Valedictorian of her generation's cohort. She stole the String of Pearls in defiance of faction orders. Her personal wishes are in alignment with Celestial Mechanic's vision, resulting in her continued dedication to the faction. However, she also holds a grudge against her leader, and has a mission to thwart his goals.

—

## **Ship-Self**

Ship-Selves are the robots used to navigate space by pilots, conceived of during the Cold War. They are humanoid by design, and are modelled after toys in composition.

**SATURN:** They made (Ship-Selves) specifically in a shape that did not allow for death and war.

Depending on the modernity of their designs, Ship-Selves may be piloted manually or mentally, feeding its pilot with external sensory data. Saturn describes her experience as such:

**SATURN:** I'm a human being with five senses and (String of Pearls) [is] trying to cram a dozen more into me.

If broken apart, Ship-Selves also have the ability to regenerate their form through a built-in gravity engine. Given this fact, it is widely known that no pilot has ever died in space, even during the Cold War. Hence, the conflicts between Ship-Self pilots is often seen as non-fatal:

**SATURN:** This don't-call-it-a-war is nothing but play fighting.

**PLUTO:** You can't die. Only lose and try again. That's why it's not a war. Just a noisy argument.

Luna-Terra is quick to provide a warning, however:

**LUNA-TERRA:** Your body can't be killed or destroyed, but it can be changed.

**LUNA-TERRA:** When you are hit, truly hit, you're bent into a different kind of shape, and through that you can change.

—

## Earth

The planet Earth, in which most of humanity resides. It can be perceived as the game's primary antagonist, and is spoken of with great disdain by most characters in the game, due to humanity's terrestrial culture. It is known to desire conformity of all humans:

*"We have created magnificent, delicate creatures, and Earth wants them back for what? To crush them again under their own Tidal forces?"*

– 'Cradle's Graces Formation Archives'; Dr. Nix, Cradle's Graces

It is also quick to alienate and exclude individuals who do not conform by its rule, extending this to encompass all of humanity in space:

*"Earth is getting impatient. (...) While the kids are fighting, Earth is getting ready to list the humans remaining in space as part of the Existential Threat..."*

– Internal Report, Celestial Mechanics

*"(Humanity has) already decided that any human without their feet planted on the Earth is in fact not a human."*

– Internal Communication, Cradle's Graces

Furthermore, throughout the Cold War, Earth has had autonomous military units (AMUs) to defend their native sphere, which turns hostile on those it has alienated. AMUs are also the only threat that can destroy a Ship-Self.

---

## Analysis Breakdown

The premise of *Heaven Will Be Mine* starts with the beginning of an alternate interpretation of the Cold War. This time period (past WWII) is significant to our reading, for it gives us an approximate beginning with which to examine cultural landscapes as they pertain to queer culture. From here, chronological parallels could be drawn to the rise of different factions in the game: the Memorial Foundation, Cradle's Graces, and finally Celestial Mechanics.

Based on a study about generational gaps in LGBTQ+ communities (Bitterman & Hess, 2021), we can identify the different generational layers that might inform both representative pilot and faction, alongside their appeals to the game's audience:

### Memorial Foundation

*Representing the Past.*

As part of the original space program, it was informed by the start of the Cold War, and tasked with protecting humanity against potential threats outside of Earth's native sphere. In the conflict between factions, it is the only one remaining loyal to Earth, and advocates for all of humanity to return to Earth from space.

*"There is no future for humanity in space. Let's come home."*

– The Return Resolution, Memorial Foundation

### Historical Similarity: *Silent Generation—Baby Boom Generation*

During these generations' time frame, the study states that there was "little freedom or tolerance to express gender or sexual orientation outside of the defined societal norm" (Chauncey, 2019), which sets up the game's context for Earth's culture, as described earlier.

Queerness was also "illegal in most jurisdictions" during this period, leading to queer individuals forming safe havens "as escapes from persecution and harassment" (Lewis 2012). Legality is enforced by state actors that execute punishments, often violent, on individuals who have committed crimes. In this case, it includes the crime of being queer.

This strikes similarity to how, in *Heaven Will Be Mine*, Earth has constructed AMUs throughout the Cold War that threaten the existence of Ship-Selves. This implies that Earth had always seen Ship-Selves as a potential alien force that deviates from their norm, and is considered a crime against humanity. The threat of this violence leads pilots to stay away from them, and subsequently turn against Earth during the faction war. In addition, Earth often communicates with the rest of humanity in space through the Memorial Foundation. This allows the Memorial

Foundation to regulate the “safe haven” that is space, away from the AMUs guarding the native sphere.

Since the Memorial Foundation also has the most familiarity with AMUs since the beginning of the Cold War, they would be most wary of Earth's potential dominion over the other Ship-Self pilots, and hence would want to protect them from Earth's violence. By trying to convince other Ship-Selves to abide by Earth's recall, violence could be avoided:

*"What, why don't I go home too? And leave (them) to ... die on a rock? Who do you think we're doing this for?"*

– External Communication, Memorial Foundation Troops

The study also claims that at some point during this time period, queerness started to become tolerated. This may suggest how Luna-Terra, among other pilots, was able to transition during the pilot training program. Hence, despite Earth's treatment of the pilots, most of the Memorial Foundation attribute their identities strongly towards Earth, and believe strongly about the rest of humanity in space returning to it:

*"You're projecting. Why do you need space to think about Earth? Why are you ignoring all of the people and places on Earth that are like you but a little different? Why is that dream more important than us?"*

– Ambient Tidal Information, Anonymous, taken from Luna-Terra's email log.

While not explicitly stated, it is possible that the prevalence of "social stigma and shame" (Troiden & Goode, 1980) in these generations leads members of the Memorial Foundation to be willing to accept Earth's alienation of themselves. In a sense, they believe that their own discrimination is justified, and hence are willing to obey Earth's orders in fear of retaliation:

*"Just because we want Earth back doesn't mean Earth wants us back."*

– Luna-Terra

One final curious observation is that Luna-Terra's Ship-Self, the Mare Crisium, was created in 1969. This aligns with the year of the Stonewall Riots, and additionally, Pluto is able to thank Luna-Terra about her transitioning normalizing this culture for the rest of the other pilots:

**PLUTO:** You were the one who didn't let Earth's gravity choose your body.

**PLUTO:** I wouldn't have been able to choose if you hadn't shown me.

## **Cradle's Graces**

### *Representing the Present.*

In pursuit of exploring humanity's future in space, Cradle's Graces is a colonial branch that declared independence from Earth and the Memorial Foundation. Its intention is to preserve the culture of Ship-Selves, and force humanity on Earth into space should Earth want to exert its rule.

*"We're thankful for our cradle's graces, but we're not coming back."*

– Independence Declaration, Cradle's Graces

### **Historical Similarity:** *Generation X–Millennial Generation*

Within these periods, queer individuals started shedding cultural shame, celebrating liberation and freedom. Additionally, there was also a need for them to learn to stand up for themselves "in the face of adversity" (Bitterman & Hess, 2021). These values can be seen in the formation of Cradle's Graces:

*"To power the Ship-Selves we made to fight the Cold War, we made Tidal Resonators to bring the gravity necessary for humans and Culture to survive in space. And that gravity is ours now! Enough to make a new world, free from the weight of Earth."*

– Independence Declaration, Cradle's Graces

From the study, it is noted that queer individuals were also beginning to recognize systemic oppression, and organizing for activism to change it. Similarly, pilots had gathered around Cradle's Graces' ideals for similar reasons and goals, as they struggle against Earth for recognition and acceptance:

*"Culture is made of tiny humans, and enough of it together can decide what's real and what isn't."*

– Internal Communication, Cradle's Graces irregulars

The history of this generation was also marked by the AIDs Epidemic, where queer individuals passed enmasse due to a lack of government response. While there is no exact equivalent within Heaven Will Be Mine, the absence of Ship-Self pilots returning to Earth is felt by characters within the story, leading to the idea of the preservation for Ship-Self pilots, supporting Cradle's Graces' motive:

**PLUTO:** There are so few of us left, I've got to cling to everyone.

In addition, the study introduced "Helicopter Parenting", which "decreased the ability for children ... to play outdoors unsupervised" (Woolley & Griffin, 2014). This may mirror the way pilots were raised in this generation in the game, implied by a conversation between Pluto and Mars, the latter a veteran in the Cold War:

**PLUTO:** I was too precious to send out during the Cold War, they never let me fight like all of you.

...

**MARS:** It's dangerous! Maybe you can't die, but there's a lot that can happen to you that's painful and hard.

...

**PLUTO:** I guess that's why you didn't want me fighting, isn't it?

**MARS:** It's complicated. I don't want you to get hurt learning that.

It is also worth noting that Generation X could observe their successors struggling to reconcile conflicting values, "to acknowledge homosexuals as productive members of society while admitting that previous treatment of LGBTQ+ people may have been unkind or immoral" (Bitterman & Hess, 2021). This may be demonstrated in the character interactions between Luna-Terra and Pluto, which will be discussed further later in the essay.

—

### **Celestial Mechanics;** representing the Future

Similar to Cradle's Graces, Celestial Mechanics is looking to secure humanity's future in space through different means. Its objective is to create a true alien that Earth would label a proper Existential Threat, hence receiving Earth's support for space expansion, in addition to extending the Cold War.

*"We'll finally have something alien in space."*

– Private Communications, Celestial Mechanics

### **Historical Similarities:** *Millennial Generation—Generation Z*

In the universe for *Heaven Will Be Mine*, while the third-generation pilots exceed the time frame for the end of the Cold War, it is justified by the chemical modifications they received when they were younger:

**SATURN:** For the third generation, they wanted to kickstart the process, you know. Not a whole childhood of care and attention, but condensed, chemically assisted, cybernetic-enhanced growth.

The study also does not have a lot of information about these generations, but some similarities may still be demonstrated. It does write that "members of more recent LGBTQ+ generations often are unaware of specific details of the struggles and challenges encountered by previous generations" (Bitterman & Hess, 2021). In *Heaven Will Be Mine*, examples demonstrating this can include Saturn's lack of information on Earth's AMUs, or the unsuitability of weapons for Ship-Self



prototypes from the Cold War, which likely meant that benched third generation pilots would not have known either:

**SATURN:** Wow, I didn't... think it was even possible to have a gravity less suited to you, let alone for you to be so good at using it.

In addition, the study writes for Generation Z that "they will find greater acceptance as they explore various paths related to sexual orientation and sexual identity" (Bitterman & Hess, 2021). Keeping in line with queerness as alienation, this perspective aligns with Celestial Mechanics' goal on achieving true alienation in spite of Earth:

*"Earth or space, we are just short of 100% human.*

*So let's see how much less than 100% we can get."*

– Internal Report, Celestial Mechanics

It is interesting to note that the study brings up the re-emergence of violence and discrimination against queer individuals. This ties into the motivations of the leader of Celestial Mechanics, who wants to secure humanity's future in space by sacrificing Ship-Self pilots to become its new enemy. By becoming true aliens, a new pursuit to eliminate these queer individuals will arise, uniting Earth against a new Existential Threat:

**SATURN:** since humanity doesn't care about them anymore they'd never expect that we would find a way to evert our Tidal Reactors and become the aliens ourselves

...

**MERCURY:** I think he's happy to let us complete the project and go home.

**MERCURY:** Because he'll have exactly what he and the rest of humanity is longing for.

**SATURN:** a scapegoat

**SATURN:** someone to be an alien humanity could guiltlessly fight against

Despite each pilot from their respective factions being from different generations, after all 8 days on any playthrough, they will unite together towards the ending that the player achieves. This unity between the three pilots is inevitable, which suggests the importance of the queer community, in parallel with humanity in space, needing to band together to work towards a singular goal towards how to approach Earth / normative society.

---

## Strongest Interactive Element

Heaven Will Be Mine's **User Interface** is its greatest mechanical aspect, especially with regards to the Hub interface, in which players are led towards at the start of each day to select the mission they would go on next. Presentation in this aspect lends the game a strong sci-fi appearance, beyond what is discussed in Mission gameplay. Here, the game deserves commendations in customizing the interface per pilot, changing colours, themes and textures depending on the pilot's Ship-Self, which brings the player a sense of immersion as though they were piloting the mech themselves.

For example, Krun Macula's interface is of a unified red, with a minimalistic layout, its varying shades evoking a sense of determination and mystique in between punctuations of white and cyan. The interface, being against the backdrop of a sea of stars, as though the player is looking through the cockpit glass, is clear. This contrasts with the Mare Crisium's display, which has overlays of line noise, reminiscent of older technological monitors. In addition, the colours used for the Mare Crisium are of orange predominantly, but also blue; the latter is meant to indicate wear or stain of the monitors against a clear glass, while the warm palette built off orange gives the display a vintage feel.

Additional appreciation deserves to go towards the Mission and Alignment visualisations. The former invokes recollections of space diagrams from NASA, with its focus on planetary geography and statistics through graphs and charts. They suggest three-dimensional spatial form through the use of lines, dots and the gestalt theory, alongside astronomical notations overlaid as addendums through numbers and text. The latter displays the player's alignment towards the three factions after making their choices within missions — here, each faction's loyalty is represented by a growing mass, with the field of space-time bending as it grows bigger. Given that a lot of the game's text makes allusions to culture and gravity in its theories, this also represents the unification of humanity in space as a decision for its future is starting to formalize. Both of these clearly indicate strong astronomy themes that build upon the immersion of being in a Ship-Self (and in space) for the player.

Beyond imagery, however, is the game's ability to create the story of community through its exposition delivery in three methods in the mechanics. One of them is through the missions, which represents physical interactions between the pilots, and is mandatory to interact with in order for the game to progress. But the other two are optional, and accessible through the Hub interface: **Mail & Alerts**, and **Comms**.

For **Comms**, the player is invited to engage in a dialogue with each pilot's mission control. It is displayed in a layout reminiscent of modern messaging apps, with the messenger's dialogue

aligned to the right of the display, and the recipient's replies on the left. It is also accompanied by an image display of the conversationalists, alongside personal statuses, with a field at the bottom of the conversation with a keyboard icon appended to it, meant for the pilot in-universe to input text through.

The conversations the player often has through Comms often delve deeper into the pilots' personal reflections, while also offering what the culture within each faction is like. Specifically, however, is the way the game takes advantage of this to display character vulnerabilities in either conversationalist, to shed a light on how the culture of each faction attempts to support each other, beyond the interactions between pilots within the Missions.

An example to demonstrate would be for Luna-Terra and her mission control, Europa. This is particularly unique because Luna-Terra often has difficulties showing vulnerabilities in her interactions with the other pilots in Missions, but we are able to get a better understanding of her character through Comms:

**EUROPA:** I certainly never wanted a carbon copy of myself. I wanted you to improve on what you'd been handed.

**LUNA-TERRA:** Did you think you did a good job?

**EUROPA:** Shouldn't you be asking yourself that question? Since you're the one in charge of the education?

In **Mail & Alerts**, players are able to sift through different emails that the Ship-Self has received. Emails are listed in a vertical manner, displayed solely through text, with a subject header, an origin field to ascertain the email's purpose, and an author. Selecting the email to read loads its body below the aforementioned fields.

All of these emails are pieces of information related to building the larger setting of Heaven Will Be Mine. Most are relevant either to the historical context of the game, or the faction itself. Some of them pertain to the history of individuals residing within the faction — examples can include interviews with either the pilot, mission control or the faction's leader. Some of them are misfired transmissions, or were emails not meant to be received by any party. Rarely will any of the emails be directed towards the pilot.

The messages that do relate to game's familiar context (ie. history to factions and known characters) reward the players directly with relevant information. But what should also be considered relevant in these emails are messages that are not meant to be received by the player's Ship-Self. These messages imply the existence of a variety of other individuals in a similar situation to the pilot, which makes the idea of a community or faction more relatable or

palatable to the player: by considering the personal motivations, emotions and thought processes the stranger behind said email has written, the player gets to interpret who these pilots are and empathize with nameless strangers they will never actually get to meet:

**SUBJECT:** Who is this?

**ORIGIN:** Ambient Tidal Information

**AUTHOR:** [A Love Story]

*I don't know who I'm sending this to. But I think about you all the time. In the back of my mind. I know a lot about you. Does that mean you know about me, too? Or are you just glowing brightly in way that I don't understand? Is anyone else seeing this? Do you get messages like this all the time? Are you aware of how much you loom in the heart of someone you haven't met?*

Together, the three methods of communication in the game work together to deliver a sense of community within the game, on multiple levels:

1. Comms, as a reflection of the individual pilot and as a conversation with a close companion in their faction, operates on the intrapersonal and interpersonal level.
2. Mail & Alerts, capturing historical communications between different factions and within the pilot's own faction, operate on the organisational and environmental level.
3. Missions, as physical interactions between pilots of different factions, operate on an interpersonal level, that additionally builds towards making changes for the future of humanity in space on a policy level.

In line with the generations of pilots, the three methods of communication in the game – Missions, Mail & Alerts and Comms – also illustrate chronologically the capability of humanity's communication mediums over the progression of time, starting with face-to-face interactions, then emails, and ending with virtual real-time chats.

---

## Weakest Element

Heaven Will Be Mine is well designed for a single route's playthrough, considering the amount of exposure to the story it provides the player. However, should the player be invested enough to comb through the game for more pieces of information, the game's experience may become repetitive. Players would encounter similar narration pieces from each faction that occur every two days.

Additionally, the game lacks a feature that reminds the player which choices they have selected on a previous playthrough, hence per mission, players might select an option that they have already read prior. This is also not helped by the fact that *Heaven Will Be Mine* is a visual novel; hence, the only method of interactivity is through singular clicks, and may stand to lose the player's attention over time.

Besides interactivity, the game's text uses some amount of technicality that may be difficult for new entrants to the game to decipher, as expected of a story within the sci-fi genre. Tidal Reactors, Unified Culture Theory and Eversion are examples of such terms. A different example would be understanding the danger and/or definition for the actual Existential Threat, which is only better aided should the player have known the story from the developer's past title, *'We Know The Devil'*:

**SATURN:** okay theyre a nth-dimensional shadow cast by the gravitational impression of human culture in spacetime but that makes them a few shades sort of real and much less dangerous than their cousins on Earth, and even those are so weak kids with radios can take them out

Similarly, the game's language can get quite artistic at times, which potentially makes it an engaging read for the player, if not a little confusing. It can be observed that the game uses the concept of gravity to relate to culture, but also to narration, which can be understood as a form of subtext, mood or atmosphere of a social situation:

**SATURN:** You can't perceive spacetime as a story? A narration spun out of the ambient gravity of humans? Telling you about everything that is, if you can listen? You can't see how obviously your envy is bleeding out and everywhere, can you?

While the game doesn't shy away from its queerness, perspectives that it could be lacking include the angle of non-queer allies and queer individuals who may be stuck on Earth. Granted, characters that are not labelled in the story could be relegated to the ally role, and considerations to include Earth-bound queer allies are written into the endings (to be discussed later). The importance of including these perspectives would be to recognize the trend of greater normative culture validating queer perspectives if there was a normative representative that spoke on queer individuals' behalf as an ally, and to provide hope for individuals who may not identify as queer yet that they could be welcomed into the community.

---

## Highlight

Heaven Will Be Mine's highlight is in the three endings of the game, that correspond accordingly to the different factions of the game. In each ending, the faction's representative pilot is the agent that carries out their faction's plan with the Gravity Well. Through our lens, each of the endings can be viewed as a faction's response to the collective trauma their pilots have in lieu of Earth's discrimination. Since these traumas are experienced individually and hence can vary between pilots of different generations, the responses towards Earth, and hence the ending for humanity's future in space, vary greatly depending on the faction that won.

It is also worth noting that the main characters, affected by each other individually, also have their own spin on their respective factions' plans. Additionally, we can summarize how each faction's goals or motivations appeal to a queer audience here.

### Memorial Foundation

*"If we kill the dream, no one will die. We really, really hope that's true."*

– Luna-Terra's Letter

The original plan of the Memorial Foundation was to seize control of the Gravity Well and disable it, so that pilots would decide to return to Earth of their own accord for survival's sake. However, Luna-Terra, with the aid of Saturn and Pluto, are able to steal the Gravity Well from Memorial Foundation's leader, and use the last of its power to push the moon closer to Earth, such that its future colony for humanity in space is no longer seen as a threat beyond its reach. In this manner, while Earth would still believe space humanity are still aliens, it has no justification for starting conflict with individuals in space, fulfilling Memorial Foundation's wishes to ensure safety for humanity in space.

The Memorial Foundation's outcome may resonate with individuals who desire to assimilate into normative culture, in spite of being different by being queer. While the guarantee for universal acceptance in said culture, in reality of the present day, may be far off, having a tolerance at minimal for queer individuals allows them individuals to progress past worrying for their own basic needs (safety included), so that they might start on the process of enjoying life at the same quality that their normative counterparts do. This can be seen during the ending when Luna-Terra, Pluto and Saturn can be seen living domestically with each other in a simple scene of them waking up from sleep together, illustrating the simple joy of appreciating each other's company in lieu of times of peace:

*(Luna-Terra) wakes up, tries to focus her eyes. Her head hurts, just a little. So she thinks she'll go ahead and make coffee. Except Saturn's arm is tugging at her shirt. And Pluto's*

*legs are tangled up in hers. So maybe she can't make coffee just yet.*

– Narration, Memorial Foundation's Ending

### **Cradle's Graces**

*"All I want is to stitch these two humanities together."*

– Pluto's Letter

With the Gravity Well in control, Cradle's Graces' objective was to destabilize Earth's gravitational field, to the point where it would be unlivable for human life, and force humanity to adapt to space. Pluto was the key to making this happen through self-sacrifice, a plan that would establish her as a martyr. However, through the power of friendship with Saturn and Luna-Terra at her side, she decides for herself to declare war on humanity instead, forcing Earth to label present humanity in space as the new Existential Threat. The last of the Gravity Well's power is used to eliminate the possibility of military units, such as AMUs, from space, which forces Earth to develop Ship-Selves in order to hunt down pilots as part of the Existential Threat. This outcome still manages to maintain the culture of Ship-Selves as a forever-roaming band of outlawed individuals in space, while also forcing Earth to take to space for their pursuit against the Existential Threat as aliens.

Cradle's Graces' outcome may resonate with queer individuals through familiarity, especially in individuals who perform activism. These individuals may often go against resistant others who are unwilling to accept queer views and growing queer acceptance. Challenging these views are important not only to assert the acceptability of queerness in an individual, but also, it is possible that through queer individuals exposing their views to normative culture, more individuals will discover that they belong to or feel inclined to ally with the community, lending more legitimacy to the acceptability of queerness, and extending a safe environment to more queer individuals.

Additionally, this outcome allows for the ability for individuals, queer or otherwise, to change their mind about their perspectives. While this may not always be for the benefit of the queer community, great importance is placed on the autonomy for individuals to make the choice of if they would join or leave the community at all, an antithesis of the conformity expected by normative culture. After all, though not often, there are individuals who decide that they are not queer despite having a history in the community, and hence their partings should be respected and accepted. The ending reinforces these notions as such:

*"If we lose, we lose on the terms we set, and that proves our point, so haha, we win. If you hate that logic, and think it's stupid, come over here and mess me up about it. Come here and make out with me about it!"*

– Narration, Cradle's Graces' Ending

## Celestial Mechanics

*"The shortcut to attaining (alienation) is to forsake everything that humans already are."*

– Saturn's Letter

In pursuit of humanity's future in space, Celestial Mechanics' plan was to poison the Gravity Well as it was active, which was successful. When this happened, Ship-Self pilots in conflict that were pushing their capabilities beyond expected limitations Everted, fusing themselves to their Ship-Selves, attaining new bodies and subsequently becoming the true alien Earth wishes to pursue in space. However, Saturn was displeased with the outcome of a never-ending conflict with Earth at the expense of humanity in space. Hence, together with Luna-Terra and Pluto, she decided to turn that potential conflict into something else with the last of the Gravity Well's power. This resulted in the creation of an Existential Threat that is metaphysical, unable to be hurt by humanity, but able to be perceived by those on Earth — there is also an implied caveat that queer individuals on Earth simply need to reach out to connect with these aliens to join them.

*"And everyone is invited, who wants to become a world, and never touch Earth. That's a different world now."*

– Narration, Celestial Mechanics' Ending

Celestial Mechanics' ending is speculative, so there are two approaches to considering what kind of queer individuals it would resonate with. The first approach is to consider Celestial Mechanics' hatred for Earth, most notably demonstrated by Mercury, Saturn's mission control, when talking about Eversion as part of their faction's plan for the Gravity Well:

**MERCURY:** I am fine with abandoning Earth. It hasn't given me anything.

This rationale's intent is to consider individuals with a desire for a full separation from normative culture. A similar manner for queer individuals in the community might be finding insular safe spaces, so as to attempt to disconnect themselves with individuals that do not agree with their world view entirely. In these spaces, queer individuals can ensure their safety from normative culture, yet making it difficult to communicate with others who lie outside of their communication bubble. While this may not be fully possible physically, it *is* possible to do so virtually, to the point where we are able to label these spaces as "echo chambers", and that it happens to be a common recurring pattern across many individuals (including non-queers) in the modern age.

The second approach is to consider the appeal of the Eversion process as a literal transformation, or an undefinition of the self. Not only does this include trans individuals, but it may also encompass individuals who are questioning, do not want a label or feel like they lie



outside of common queer definitions; one example might be intersex individuals, who are also considered to be part of the queer community. The ending mentions what the possibility of these aliens might be like, but each definition is ambiguous — this is considered an intentional move, since the ending is speculative, but it would resonate with individuals who find dealing with ambiguity in their identity familiar, as part of being in the queer community. As the experience of being queer can be personal to each individual, the understanding of some ambiguity existing between each queer experience can help us better understand, accept and better include individuals into the range by which it means to be queer. The ending also professes the joy within that idea as such:

*"Their strange intimacy can touch us even now. Longing to teach us, and tell us what they've learned, what they share laughing without laughing with each other even now."*

— Narration, Celestial Mechanics' Ending

## **No True End**

In Saturn's route, the game makes several references to the universe of *'We Know The Devil'*. Past the mention of radios in eliminating the Existential Threat, there is also the method by which to reach out to the aliens in the Celestial Mechanics:

*"There is nothing to fear when there is two against the devil. But we can't wait to see what they'll do against the three worst girls since Eve."*

— True End, We Know The Devil

*"They just need one, or three, to reach out to them again. Even if it's just to fight. To touch them once again."*

— Narration, Celestial Mechanics' Ending

The mechanics of Heaven Will Be Mine are equally similar to that of *'We Know The Devil'*. Should the player take these hints and attempt to normalize their alignment of each faction within a route's playthrough, the three main characters will come together and acknowledge that there is no true ending for this game:

**PLUTO:** We don't need a true ending.

**PLUTO:** Whatever it is, we'll make it the true ending.

But it is a curious implication that the pilots suggest we *pick!* The justification that was proposed is such:

**PLUTO:** We can take whatever ending we get, and make the ending we really want out of it.

**SATURN:** It's not like it doesn't matter.

**SATURN:** But no matter what future we get, can't we make it the one we wanted?

If each of the endings is viewed as a faction's response towards their collective trauma, the implication of a lack of a true end and the decision to allow the players to decide on the ending they want most holds heavy importance. Not only does the game turn to the player to reflect upon themselves and their desires for a particular ending, but it also attempts to assuage the player and lift the burden from them that the other pilots will not hold the decision against the player or their fellow pilots should their desired ending not be chosen. In that way, *Heaven Will Be Mine* implies that it acknowledges and lends validity to the variety of reactions queer individuals have towards a collective trauma the community faces, in lieu of differing individual experiences.

---

## Lessons

- **Queer stories in games shouldn't be limited to the traditional coming-out narrative.**

There are a variety of other queer experiences to be considered, as seen with the histories and motivations from each faction in *Heaven Will Be Mine*; the loss and regret of what could be in lieu of acceptance, anger and righteousness towards normative culture for the unchanging status quo, and also pride and confidence for being different in the way a queer individual can appreciate themselves for being who they are in the face of a world that wants them to conform. The game asks us to think about these other, different parts of the queer experiences, and then figure out how to incorporate them into stories within our games.

- **To incorporate queer undertones into the story as a whole, the game's commentary on queerness should be considered from the ground up.** On the surface, *Heaven Will Be Mine* has the obvious metaphor of transitioning through attaining and piloting a Ship-Self, with most (if not each) of its pilots being trans queer women who want to find love. But from this analysis, we can see that there is also much more at work that has gone into the text to deliver queer subtleties, in reference to queer history and generational differences. Additionally, if a few factors were changed, such as the game deciding to focus on queer men or aro-ace individuals, the culture, context and history of the pilots and their interactions would change to better fit that narrative; for the latter, a prospect of romance may not even be as dominant a theme in the game. Since these elements can have such a great impact on a queer narrative, it is imperative for us to identify who is involved in these stories, and what we want to say about them.

- **Don't be afraid to write flawed or messy characters.** The main characters of *Heaven Will Be Mine* are all queer women who would rather give up their work to fight or make out with each other, and while this can be read as unproductive or inefficient for personalities in real life, these motivations make for compelling reasons to follow them as characters, simply on the virtue that they are able to emphasize on our hearts desires in a space of virtual freedom, away from proper consequences of the world. Sure, Saturn admits that she gets scolded for shirking her duties once in a while, and this consequence can have lingering manifestations in our everyday life. However, if the point of stories is to be able to explore a life outside of our present self within them, then we should be unafraid of doing so, especially with gusto. Hence, find the courage to say that the consequences would not matter to us in an ideal world, so Saturn, as a result, does not care about the scoldings in the slightest.
- **More Visual Novels should consider using Cinematic Techniques as part of their gameplay to convey their stories.** It is commonplace for Visual Novels to showcase characters and their individual expressions during conversations in gameplay, yet this static setup can be monotonous and unattractive in the modern day. Much of the heavy-lifting relies on the player's interpretation of the actions, emotions and intent written into an abstract text, which can make it difficult for readers to feel engaged with the story. Hence, to add to the spectacle as players read through the story, some small amount of action implied through movement should be considered. *Heaven Will Be Mine* is able to do this on its low budget development: examples include the firing of bullets as travelling beams of white light, from one end of the screen to the other, or the overlay of illustrations where characters interact atop one another, in sequence, as though forming comic panels. By tying in methods of storytelling from other mediums into the imagery of Visual Novels, it not only presents more novelty in a title, but also keeps the player engaged, and inspires their imagination to come alive.
- **More games should operate on speculative, fictional premises.** Games offer a medium where large concepts or settings can be processed in a more digestible manner, beyond cinema (visual-audio) and through engagement. Hence, it is more possible to introduce fictional premises to its audiences, where our understanding of reality may be questioned. In the same way that games are able to invite the player to empathize with characters, games should take advantage of this ability to prime players into considering the hypothetical; in this manner, games not only become a learning experience, but also an interactive meta-narrative, for the players bring the ideas imparted from the game on the go, and are able to deeply connect with the game for having thought about its messages for long periods of time. These speculative premises also help offer games

the ability to deliver veiled messages through their stories, and invite players to recognize its uniqueness, on the basis of being experimental and new.

---

## Critical reception

---

**SUBJECT:** Heaven Will Be Mine Review; **5/5**

**ORIGIN:** videogamechoochoo.com | [August 12, 2018]

**AUTHOR:** Janie

Janie acknowledges that Heaven Will Be Mine is a game that she's wanted for a long time. She describes the game's narrative and art as impressionist, and the setting as "charmingly postmodern and ridiculous". What captivates her is the topic of this essay's analysis:

*"At its core, the question of whether humanity should stay in space, is also a conflict over the value of separatism in queer communities, about whether separating from society is an attainable goal, or whether we can change society to fit our needs."*

Which is more intrinsically digestible to her as part of the target demographic, a queer audience, but more specifically a trans individual:

*"Space, how it is described, reminds me of trans spaces I've been lucky enough to find myself in, places where I felt like I could express myself without fear of judgement or repercussions. This comparison is wanted and intended by the authors, space in the game is explicitly a place where trans kids could find the freedom and access to resources necessary to fully express themselves."*

---

**SUBJECT:** Heaven Will Be Mine: **90/100**

**ORIGIN:** rpgfan.com | [September 23, 2018]

**AUTHOR:** Robert Fenner

Robert identifies the game as "a little Mobile Suit Gundam, a little Neon Genesis Evangelion, and very, very queer"; he describes that the interactions between the main characters are "erotically charged and tender, as seductive as they are sweet". He also manages to lend credit to the game's music, which while not talked about in this analysis, is something to be appreciated:

*"I'd be remiss not to mention Alec Lambert's fantastic soundtrack, which effortlessly drifts between the genres of melodic minimal synth and crushing power electronics. It's an erotic dream of a score for fans of alternative electronic music, and one that is completely fitting to the game."*

From his experience, he mentions that the game uses its sci-fi genre "to explore the human condition since the 1970s", and identifies themes of transhumanism and posthumanism in the designs of the Ship-Selves being piloted by humans:

*"The very nature of the protagonists' Ship-Selves doesn't just blur the line between biology and mechanics, but annihilates it utterly... These designs may not appeal to everyone, but I found them in synchronicity with the game's themes."*

He also ties those feelings into to the game's strong queer themes:

*"These themes echo a desire to break free from heteronormative gender roles, and the narrative's sentiment is an uplifting and powerful love letter to those who feel they do not fit cleanly within these roles."*

---

**SUBJECT:** Vonnegut and Queer Space Theory

**ORIGIN:** [wholesomerage.github.io](https://wholesomerage.github.io) | [August 8, 2018]

**AUTHOR:** Ross James

Ross' article is much less a review, and more so an analysis of *Heaven Will Be Mine's* narrative following Vonnegut's "Eight Rules" for writing a story. Nonetheless, he sings the same praises; the art is described as "expressionist in a way that both invites and defies your literal interpretation", and considers that the narrative "must have been written by an amazing conversationalist":

*"Worst Girl Games always manage to write the most real flesh-and-blood people, they bleed into the page, and I could listen to them talk for days."*

*I suppose I just did."*

He also doesn't shy away from the story that the game intrinsically wants to tell, and recognizes how important it is to have a game that summarizes this discussion through metaphors:

*"To remain so is to remain outside the mainstream, and to become a threat for a different reason – cultural competition. But to be consumed by it is to lose everything special about a community that was forged outside, in necessity."*

An interesting point to observe is that he brings up how the alignment system in the game tempts the player to pick an ending that deviates from their faction's own:

*"You get two interactions with the other two rival-protagonists per chapter, across four chapters. Betrayals get you 25% of a lean towards their faction, Loyalty 12.5% towards yours, represented by a wonderful spacetime chart..."*

And likewise, he was also just as aware of the statement that there is no true ending beyond the ending the player decides for the future of humanity in space.

---

All three reviews support the idea that the game is undeniably a queer metaphor, and discuss that it addresses themes surrounding the community's approach towards normative culture. This includes the audience's feelings of connection to the characters, in lieu that the debate about the community's approach still lives to this day, and the game's historical references to real world queer history only supports its narrative credibility.

---

## Summation/Conclusion

Heaven Will Be Mine is undeniably a commentary on queer communities and their relationship with normative culture, as revealed through its setting's parallels with real world history and the use of its communications-based mechanics to deliver communal exposition. It also invites the player to put themselves into the Ship-Self of a pilot who might be afflicted with the quandary of separatism from Earth... or otherwise. The endings it provides the player not only speak of the possible conclusions that queer individuals have taken to this debate, but also their motivations behind their actions, before giving each of these approaches validity behind their pilots' rationale.

Understanding that Heaven Will Be Mine is a visual novel, it does not have much in the way of interactivity, but it keeps the player engaged with an excellent delivery of visual-audio cinematic techniques coupled together with an interesting premise and an even greater story. With how it speaks on important and relevant topics in relation to the queer community, Heaven Will Be Mine makes me believe that it could demonstrate how games have the capacity to deliver narratives through an engaging medium, and how this should be seen as an art form. Oh, and...

*"If you hate that logic, and think it's stupid, come over here and mess me up about it. Come here and make out with me about it!"*

— Narration, Cradle's Graces' Ending

## References:

- Bitterman, A., & Hess, D. B. (2021a). *The Life and Afterlife of gay neighborhoods: Renaissance and resurgence*. Springer.
- Bitterman, A., & Hess, D. B. (2021b). Understanding generation gaps in LGBTQ+ communities: Perspectives about gay neighborhoods among heteronormative and homonormative generational cohorts. *The Life and Afterlife of Gay Neighborhoods*, 307–338.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66073-4\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66073-4_14)
- Chauncey, G. (2019). *Gay New York: Gender, urban culture, and the making of the gay male world, 1890-1940*. Basic Books.
- Fenner, R. (2020, May 5). *Heaven Will Be Mine Review*. RPGFan.  
<https://www.rpgfan.com/review/heaven-will-be-mine/>
- James, R. (2018, August 8). *Heaven Will Be Mine: Vonnegut and Queer Space Theory*. Heaven Will Be Mine: Vonnegut and Queer Space Theory - Wholesome Rage.  
<https://wholesomerage.github.io/writing%20advice/media/gaming/2018/08/08/heaven-will-be-mine-vonnegut-and-queer-space-theory.html>
- Janie. (2018, August 12). *Heaven Will Be Mine Review*. Heaven Will Be Mine Review - Gamesline.  
<https://videogamechoochoo.com/heaven-will-be-mine-review/>
- Lewis, N. M. (2012). Remapping disclosure: Gay men's segmented journeys of moving out and coming out. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 13(3), 211–231.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2012.677469>
- Troiden, R. R., & Goode, E. (1980). Variables related to the acquisition of a gay identity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 5(4), 383–392. [https://doi.org/10.1300/j082v05n04\\_04](https://doi.org/10.1300/j082v05n04_04)
- Woolley, H. E., & Griffin, E. (2014). Decreasing experiences of home range, outdoor spaces, activities and companions: Changes across three generations in Sheffield in North England. *Children's Geographies*, 13(6), 677–691.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2014.952186>