

Game Narrative Review

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Game Title: *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil*

Platform: PlayStation 2, PC, PS4/PS5, Xbox One/Series X/S, Nintendo Switch

Genre: Platformer

Release Date: March 21, 2001

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namco

Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer: Hideo Yoshizawa, Yoshihiko Arai

Overview

"...Help...Help me..."

A faint silhouette shimmers in the distance. It's barely tangible, almost like a mirage. You're not entirely sure who this voice belongs to, let alone where it comes from. Yet, your objective is crystal clear. Someone needs your help.

And so, Klonoa wakes up.



(Klonoa opens his eyes.)

In *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil*, the world of Lunatea is introduced in media res, amidst the backdrop of a stormy sea. Two mysterious figures aboard a plane survey a teenage boy's body floating in the water. This boy is Klonoa – the protagonist and namesake of the game – called to Lunatea by an unknown entity. But before the two pilots can approach, Klonoa washes ashore, brought to safety by Lolo, a kind priestess in training, and Popka, her brash, dog-shaped companion.

Upon relinquishing control to the player, *Klonoa 2* introduces its “2.5D” platformer gameplay in a state of urgency. Klonoa may jump over and avoid obstacles, as well as pick up enemies with his Wind Ring, either to throw or use as a double jump. Although Klonoa can only move left or right, he can face away from or towards the camera and reveal secrets only accessible upon clever use of environmental hints and props.

And as the player slowly uncovers the joys and plights of Lunatea, *Klonoa 2*'s narrative unfolds itself as a metaphor for emotional detachment and the implicit danger of neglecting one's grief – through dialogue, narrative-woven gameplay mechanics, and music composition that encompasses the two mainline *Klonoa* titles.

Characters

Note: Each character listed will have their associated leitmotifs (short musical themes) listed alongside their description. I will refer to these in the Breakdown section.

Klonoa

The titular, anthropomorphic protagonist and “projection of the player,” according to character designer Yoshihiko Arai. Known as the “Dream Traveler,” Klonoa is a soft-spoken, kind person with traces of an attitude. He travels across anguished worlds, assisting in times of their desperation. Many of Klonoa's actions are directly informed by his lived experiences, including his role in the first *Klonoa* title: *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile*. And in this second game, Namco presents a much more resolved and mature Klonoa, who still retains that same spunkiness that players are likely familiar with from the first game.

Still...Klonoa is noticeably different from his previous excursion. He never directs attention to himself, nor does he mention Phantomile even once. Almost as if he purposefully chooses not to remember his past. Ultimately, Klonoa is a tragic character, forced to part from those he saves and befriends. But has he truly accepted his role?

“I may leave this world...But we'll always be...together.”

– *Klonoa*

Associated Leitmotifs:

Note: Many of these musical cues come from the first Klonoa title, "Klonoa: Door to Phantomile."

- The Windmill Song (0:14-0:25), composed by Junko Ozawa
 - Plays in the first level of *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile*.
 - https://youtu.be/UOcn03M4CGo?si=RNxLHJSOAVDV_ZDj&t=14
- Grandpa's Chair (0:00-0:18), composed by Eriko Imura
 - The theme of Grandpa, a parental figure and mentor to Klonoa.
 - https://youtu.be/H_j22IDmN0Y?si=OV63OSPW3xMRxtJr
- Untamed Heart (1:41-1:51), composed by Eriko Imura
 - Plays in the penultimate level of *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile*.
 - https://youtu.be/pEmi9cuFId4?si=YV-b-KdQKUGC_s62&t=101
- Song of Rebirth (1:15-1:29), composed by Tomoko Tatsuta & Eriko Imura
 - Plays during *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile*'s ending, as Klonoa is torn away from Phantomile.
 - <https://youtu.be/t8BNWxgVYbc?si=uERPgPlyGGruYVuR&t=75>

Lolo and Popka

The two deuteragonists. Lolo hails from La-Lakoosha, the Kingdom of Tranquility, where she studies to become a priestess under the worship of the Goddess Claire. She is able to power the Wind Ring, Klonoa's primary instrument of mobility and the franchise's signature gameplay mechanic. Unbeknownst to the others, she suffers from impostor syndrome, believing her strength comes not from herself, but from the people around her.

Serving Lolo, Popka is a rowdy sidekick who often heckles Lolo and Klonoa, while still harboring a deep affection for them. Throughout their travels, Lolo slowly builds her confidence as an individual through the continued support of her companions.

*"I didn't...become a priestess on my own.
All I wanted to do was...show them that I could become a priestess."
– Lolo*

*"Lolo, you're just as bad a fool. The LEAST you can do is keep trying!"
– Popka*

Associated Leitmotifs:

- Lolo! (0:00-0:15), composed by Eriko Imura
 - Lolo and Popka's shared theme.
 - <https://youtu.be/DDJeW3EtaL4?si=nEC7CyuA-g7Qlhiv>

Leorina and Tat

The two secondary antagonists and the pilots mentioned in the *Overview* section. Leorina, a Sky Pirate originally known as the priestess Leo, broke away from the strict hierarchy of La-Lakoosha's religious society to find her own power, in hopes of being recognized by the gods of Lunatea. Tat, her snarky sidekick, offers a comedic punch to Leorina's typically brooding, serious dialogue. Leorina, although similarly stifled by the expectations of La-Lakoosha's church, serves as a fundamental foil to Lolo. She is consumed by her individuality to such a point that, in *Klonoa 2*'s third act, Leorina doesn't realize she is being used by the King of Sorrow – the true villain of *Klonoa 2*.

*“Damn it! Damn it all...Power is worthless.
It cannot even overcome sorrow...”*
–Leorina

*“Just for the record...I don't like you!
You were mean to Leorina, in the past!”*
–Tat

Associated Leitmotifs:

- “Leorina’s Theme” (0:00-0:10), composed by Kohta Takahashi
 - Leorina’s theme, often playing while she is speaking.
 - https://youtu.be/NCakwLcA-Pc?si=Keu_Umslp2ssVeKZ
- “Masked Strength” (0:00-0:08), composed by Eriko Imura
 - A rearrangement of Leorina’s theme, which plays in the scene following Leorina’s defeat.
 - <https://youtu.be/uKiA0jpcAC8?si=e1klo0UQIqDIbou5>

Baguji/King of Sorrow

The “Prophet” of Lunatea, and the eventual true villain of *Klonoa 2: Lunatea’s Veil*. Baguji initially presents himself as an all-knowing prophet, directing Klonoa and his friends to visit each of the four kingdoms in Lunatea in search of their “elements.” Baguji is eventually revealed as the King of Sorrow, the ruler of a forgotten fifth kingdom, the Kingdom of Sorrow. Upon utilizing the power of the elements through Leorina, he seeks to destroy Lunatea, whose inhabitants shunned his people.

“You were led on with false prophecies...You false saviors, of a foolish world.”
– King of Sorrow, under the disguise of Baguji

Associated Leitmotifs:

- Baguji the Wiseman (0:00-0:15), composed by Eriko Imura
 - Baguji's theme, often playing during his premonitions.
 - <https://youtu.be/HTGvX--KN04?si=OLF8mQd012KoFISj>
- King of Sorrow's Theme (0:05-1:05), composed by Asuka Sakai
 - Plays before and after *Klonoa 2*'s final boss fight.
 - <https://youtu.be/n0JoWPrtS4Q?si=GAoer6ljiQAMDOO9&t=5>
- King of Sorrow (0:30-1:00), composed by Asuka Sakai
 - King of Sorrow boss fight. Utilizes the same sitar in Baguji's theme.
 - <https://youtu.be/EkXEwd69GeY?si=wfz0AgFSeejPGVpp&t=30>

Breakdown

"There's a forgotten dream.

Was it a dream I can't remember? Or a dream I won't remember?

Have I forgotten the dream? Or has the dream forgotten me?

But surely there was a dream..."

– Introduction Monologue From "Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil"

Much like its predecessor, *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile*, the second game opens with an introspective monologue that dances around the concept of dreams. But given the game's position as a direct sequel, the meaning of these lines change upon a player's familiarity with the original game. Although *Klonoa 2* can be enjoyed as a standalone title and narrative, knowledge of the original *Klonoa* is necessary to fully grapple with the portrayal of Lunatea and the themes put forward by the sequel's narrative.

A Summary of *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile* – Friendship, Loss, and Deceit

After dreaming about an airship crashing on Bell Hill, Klonoa awakes to this very event – much to the surprise of the people living in the normally peaceful Breezegale. With the help of Huepow, his childhood best friend, Klonoa traverses the mountain and finds a mysterious, unconscious woman with two figures hovering over her. These two are Ghadius and Joka, two villains set on plunging Klonoa's world, Phantomile, into darkness and eternal nightmare. They refer to the woman as Lephise, a diva who can return the world to normal with her "Song of Rebirth."

However, Ghadius and Joka forget a pivotal element to their plan: the Moon Pendant, which unbeknownst to Klonoa, summons the kingdom of Cress – a place that gives Phantomile form. Klonoa finds this pendant, and seeking to learn more about it, he sets off on a journey

through Phantomile's forests and oceans. However, Klonoa leaves the pendant with his Grandpa, and when Joka overhears him mentioning this, he immediately leaves for Breezegale.

Klonoa tries to make it back to Breezegale in time, but as he arrives, Joka fatally wounds Grandpa and obtains the Moon Pendant. As Klonoa is forced to grapple with the loss of his only parental figure, Huepow reminds Klonoa of their newfound mission to save Breezegale from eternal nightmare. As the two journey on, Huepow is forced to reveal himself as the Prince of Cress, tasked to guide Klonoa in saving the world – the first admittance of his deception. After a final showdown with Ghadius and the living nightmare Nahatomb, Klonoa expects to continue living a peaceful life with Huepow. However, a distraught Huepow reveals the most shocking revelation of all: Klonoa was brought into this world as its savior, and Huepow fabricated Klonoa's memories to make him more willing to undertake his destiny. And since Lephise's "Song of Rebirth" returns Phantomile to its original state, Klonoa must return to his original world. As Klonoa is sucked into a dimensional vortex, Huepow attempts to pull him back – likely because of their genuine, if not short-lived, bond – and ultimately fails. The credits roll.

Years Later – An Older Klonoa, An Older Audience, and New Hardware

Klonoa: Door to Phantomile ends on a gut wrenching note. Klonoa, not only having lost his Grandpa, is forced to confront his best friend's betrayal and the validity of his own memories. As such, the introduction of *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil* is especially striking – Klonoa is thrown into a completely different, stormy backdrop with little to no address towards the previous game.

"Our image for the first stage of Klonoa was light-hearted and warm...But we think that for PS2 users, they would find that a bit lacking if that's all we did. That's why Klonoa 2 begins right away with a stormy ocean stage—we've pushed that "spectacle" feeling to the fore."

– Tsuyoshi Kobayashi, Lead Designer

The onset of new video game console technology, through the release of the PlayStation 2 (PS2), heightened the anticipation for more cinematic games that explored the latest boundaries of 3D rendering. *Klonoa 2* was a pioneering example of Namco's push to make use of the PS2's newfound graphical fidelity. Whereas the original game's first level allows the player to saunter through a beautiful green pasture, *Klonoa 2*'s dark and dingy first level accentuates the ultimate goal – a belltower enveloped by light in the middle of the sea. These kinds of cinematic decisions, alongside the grander-orchestrated soundtrack and more complex storyline, encapsulate the different approaches that *Klonoa 2* takes in comparison to its predecessor. And with character designer Yoshihiko Arai's philosophy of

Klonoa as a projection of the player (who likely played the original *Klonoa* as a child), this older Klonoa's personality is more thoughtful, and less brash, than his wild-spirited appearance in the original.



(The first levels of “Klonoa: Door to Phantomile” and “Klonoa 2: Lunatea’s Veil” respectively.)

The game is so much different, with such little acknowledgment of the original (sans gameplay mechanics, enemies, and musical references) that a returning player might position *Klonoa 2* more as a spiritual successor than a direct sequel. But it is precisely this lack of addressing that sets into motion the narrative, structure, and people of Lunatea and how they relate to Klonoa's character as a whole. This is still the same Klonoa that we saw in *Door to Phantomile*. He's just...different.

The Four Kingdoms of Lunatea...And Perhaps One More?

The world of Lunatea is split into four separate kingdoms – La-Lakoosha, the Kingdom of Tranquility; Joilant, the Kingdom of Joy; Volk, the Kingdom of Discord; and Mira-Mira, the Kingdom of Indecision. The sum of these kingdoms, each representing a contrasting emotion, can be interpreted as a physical manifestation of the state of human consciousness, especially since the kingdoms create a unified Lunatea (a “well-rounded emotional state”) by the end of the game. However, as a vehicle to the narrative and what Klonoa, Lolo, Popka, and even Leorina experience, Lunatea additionally takes on a more sophisticated metaphor for emotional detachment and the effects of grief-related coping mechanisms, through excessive emotional escapism. Not to mention, these kingdoms closely resemble the four psychological responses to threat: fight, the act of standing up (Volk); flight, the act of avoidance (Joilant); freeze, the inability to act (Mira-Mira); and fawn, the act of pleasing the threat (La-Lakoosha). For example – partying or drinking the sorrow away is best exemplified through the happily ignorant people of Joilant.

La-Lakoosha – Status Quo Masqueraded as Peace

Upon completing the stormy first level of *Klonoa 2*, Klonoa and the crew are introduced to Baguji, Lunatea's all-knowing prophet. He explains Klonoa's role in the prophecy, to ring the four bells in each kingdom and gather their "elements" to harness each of the kingdom's power. A classic video game fetch quest – echoing the Spiritual Stones in *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (1997), or the three keys in *Dragon Quest III* (1988). Baguji then warns of the emergence of a hidden fifth belltower already causing Chaos – unexplained natural disasters – within Lunatea.

*“This Bell, it must be the cause of the Chaos befalling the Kingdoms.
Oddly enough, many people don't seem to notice.”
– Baguji*

Immediately, we hear about the effects of emotional indulgence among the residents of this world. Despite the clear presence of tension and conflict, many of each kingdom's inhabitants stay blissfully unaware of the world around them, instead retreating to their familiar customs and way of life.

Perhaps the most functional and familiar Kingdom is introduced first – the Kingdom of La-Lakoosha, Lolo's place of residence. Being in a society of hierarchical religious power, the La-Lakooshans generally devote their worship to the Goddess Claire – a figure whose origins remain mysterious throughout the game. The High Priestess leads this society, guiding young devotees on the path to become fully-fledged priestesses. This High Priestess initially appears infallible, being a noble guiding figure who maintains a stable and peaceful society with happy inhabitants. Kanako Kakino's pastoral theme from “[Path of Goddess Claire](#)” utilizes acoustic, organic-sounding instruments (woodwinds, strings, etc.) to underline the comforting atmosphere of La-Lakoosha.

But with the existence of Leorina, the narrative shifts its focus towards the flaws of rigid hierarchy and the dangers of an unwavering dedication to the status quo. Leorina is, by definition, marginalized with her mindset. Her pursuit and passion for recognition was firmly decried by the High Priestess, leading Leorina to reject the church's structure and seek out power for herself. Such structure can be stifling and suffocating for those it doesn't suit.

This leads to a succinct example of *Klonoa 2*'s ludonarrative harmony – later in the game, Leorina is able to steal the four elements from Klonoa. Now that she finally holds the power she was looking for, the suffocating atmosphere of La-Lakoosha physically manifests through this newfound Chaos. In order to scale that same mountain and cave that the player had previously explored, Klonoa must brave noxious fumes and seek refuge near the

breathable air of Goddess Claire's statues – now accompanied by a contrasting, electronic synth-filled soundtrack: "[Cave of Poison](#)."

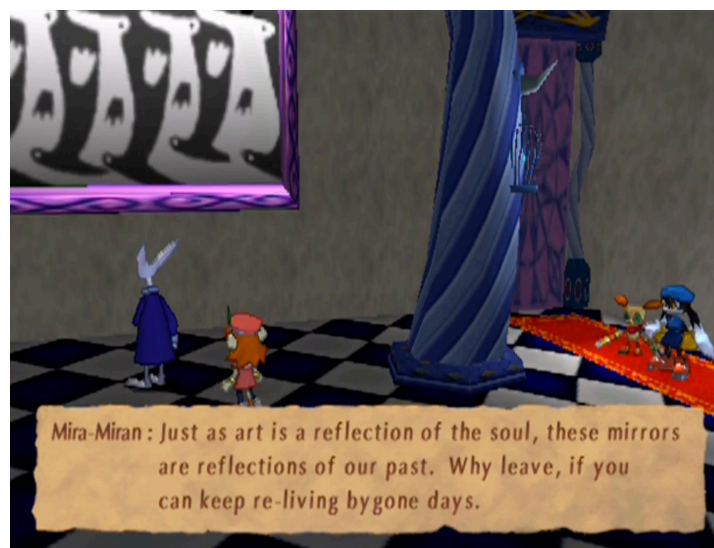
Drowning Out The Noise – The Kingdoms of Joilant and Volk

Klonoa 2 further explores Lunatea's status quo by taking Klonoa's crew to Joilant and Volk, the Kingdoms of Joy and Discord, respectively. Joilant is a perpetual amusement park, filled to the brim with bright lights, long lines, and a plethora of OSHA violations. Volk is a city whose residents are trapped in endless warfare, without any consideration of other involved parties.

Despite being so different in culture, the manner in which inhabitants of these two kingdoms interact amongst themselves and the world around them hinges on an intrinsic draw towards the familiar. Why sacrifice fun, if everything else appears boring? Why give up warfare, when a single moment of hesitation could spell the end for one's family?

And further interweaving narrative elements in gameplay, many of the hazards in Joilant and Volk are directly constructed by the kingdoms' peoples – whether it be the dangerous amusement rides in Joilant or the explosive flames from artillery in Volk's streets. Their fundamental lack of consideration for other people's experiences within their own land eventually harms those other people and disparages the idea of the "visitor." Rather than the natural hazards presented in La-Lakoosha, where Klonoa's only dangers were the hostile enemies and rushing cave waters, these hazards are more intentional, personal, and manmade.

Miramira – The Complexions and Simplicity of Lolo's Resolve



A Mira-Miran speaks.

One of the most important story beats in *Klonoa 2* lies in the conclusion of the game's second arc, where Klonoa's crew journeys across the snowy, xenophobic land of Mira-Mira, a kingdom purposefully secluded from the rest of Lunatea. Here, the Mira-Miran people wallow in their own mindspace, "re-living bygone days," good or bad. Many spend their time in the Maze of Memories, a disorienting art museum that distorts perspective, defies gravity, and most importantly, reveals the truth of oneself through its mirrors. On a pure gameplay standpoint, this level arguably contains the game's most challenging puzzles, requiring a mixture of reflex and analytical deduction as the player navigates its twisting, physically impossible hallways. The puzzle's complexions are layered with emotional confusion, as the player begins to hear laughing voices from unknown directions. And as the level concludes, Lolo finds herself in front of a mirror, reliving memories of her past.

"There's no way you can become a priestess, being as weak as you are.

Give up. It's for your own good.

You don't have what it takes. You're nothing but a failure and embarrassment to us all."

– Unnamed Priestesses

Like Leorina, Lolo found herself rejected by the very society she wished to acclimate into – shunned by her peers and denigrated for her apparent clumsiness. The soundtrack for this cutscene, "[Shattered Past](#)," composed by Eriko Imura, utilizes the "Lolo!" leitmotif in a more downcast context. To echo the twisting level the player just explored, Imura utilizes a pulsating, electronic bass drum amidst the comforting mallet instrument previously introduced in "Lolo!", which highlights her character's cyclical struggle in this scene.

After reliving these painful memories, Lolo actually refuses to power up Klonoa's Wind Ring for the first half of the Mira-Mira boss fight, out of fear for her own incompetence. But on a gameplay standpoint, it is fundamentally impossible to beat the game without the Wind Ring. This indirectly reaffirms Lolo's individuality without outright stating it, and when Popka eventually gives her a pep talk about how Klonoa unconditionally tries his best – the player already implicitly understands just how important she is.

Thus, after Popka's pep talk, Lolo joins Klonoa for the second half of the boss fight – a renewed determination that persists for the remainder of the game. To highlight her return, the boss theme "[Polonte Ver. 2](#)", composed by Sakai Asuka, includes the "Lolo!" leitmotif against a steadfast drum 'n' bass rhythm.

Grief Reveals Itself – Leorina, Hyuponia and The King of Sorrow

By now, *Klonoa 2* clearly asserts its stance on the harmful nature of the status quo and the ostracization of the apparent "misfit." Yet, despite Klonoa exemplifying the "misfit" himself, not being from Lunatea, he never attempts to fully empathize with Lunatea's struggle.

Everything he does in the story, everything he says – it's almost always reactionary. In a way, this dehumanizes his portrayal, reducing his personality to that of a selfless person who never fails to do what people ask of him. A rigid hero archetype. But with the context of *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile*, we already know that Klonoa was an incredibly emotional and flawed person, with his own desires of camaraderie and daily life. So, what happened to him?

*"It's 'cause he's a simple fool who doesn't know any better.
But he keeps on fightin', 'cause all he knows is to keep on trying!"*
– Popka

Within the third act of the game, Leorina successfully tricks Klonoa into giving her the four elements. Upon activating its power to “change the world,” she doesn't realize that she inadvertently cursed herself with sorrow – the fifth, hidden emotion of Lunatea. Klonoa successfully defeats this cursed version of Leorina as her arc's denouement approaches. The soundtrack “[Masked Strength](#)” plays, a rearrangement by Eriko Imura of the “Leorina” leitmotif. Instead of using the conniving harpsichord from the original theme, Imura utilizes the piano to ensure a sense of finality. From this point onwards, she begrudgingly decides to help Klonoa against a greater threat – Hyuponia, the Kingdom of Sorrow.

Here, *Klonoa 2* takes on a significant tonal shift. The penultimate level, titled “Kingdom of Sorrow ~Where Sunsets Dream~”, is one of the most difficult platforming sections in the game. This is also where knowledge of *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile* is paramount in understanding the narrative significance of Hyuponia. For this level, Eriko Imura composed an [eight-minute loop](#) of experimental, distorted, and explicitly downhearted music. She utilizes four different leitmotifs from *Door to Phantomile*, as well as three from *Lunatea's Veil*, which are commonly interpreted to represent Klonoa's own sorrow.

0:50 – “Masked Strength” (reversed): Likely to acknowledge the presence of sadness and Leorina's change of heart.

1:24 – “Lolo!”: Lolo has been an important personal part of Klonoa's journey through Lunatea. Ultimately, a person he must bid farewell to.

2:11 – “Grandpa's Chair”: Recalling the first time Klonoa experienced the death of a loved one.

2:43 – “Untamed Heart”: Calling back to when Huepow revealed his true form as the Prince of Cress, as well as Huepow's first lie.

3:26 – “Baguji the Wiseman”: Exemplifies the uncertainty of reason regarding Baguji's absence, while also hinting towards his true identity.

4:50 – *“The Windmill Song”*: The theme of Klonoa’s hometown...or perhaps, what he thought was his hometown.

7:15 – *“Song of Rebirth”*: The song that tore Klonoa away from Phantomile.

While he doesn’t mention it, the events of *Door to Phantomile* clearly still weigh on Klonoa. And as he ascends Hyuponia, the player hears a familiar voice...

“...Help...Help me...”

This is the King of Sorrow: the entity who called Klonoa into Lunatea. As the player enters the final boss arena, orange lighting cascades through the stained glass windows, gently basking the Gothic-inspired architecture in a faint glow. Here is the character who exemplifies all the flaws of Lolo, Leorina, Klonoa, and the inhabitants of Lunatea: a ruler of the land so shunned by the other kingdoms that a veil was placed over it. The King of Sorrow – a being so enshrouded by resentment towards the people who neglected or ignored him – is the final piece in the puzzle of Lunatea’s metaphorical “human consciousness.” To an extent, most of *Klonoa 2*’s characters have, in some manner, neglected their sorrow. But Klonoa in particular is such a poignant example of tragedy that it only makes sense for him to confront the King of Sorrow and come to terms with him.



And so, Klonoa fights. He avoids lasers, uses his Wind Ring to fling objects, but never once hits the King of Sorrow directly. Instead, the boss fight is spent whittling away at a shield the King of Sorrow puts up around himself. And upon his defeat, the King of Sorrow, tears streaming down his face, once again pleads with Klonoa.

“...Help me...pl...please...Help me...”

Klonoa, now physically holding the King, makes his final decision in his attitude towards Hyuponia, and by extension, his own past.

“The world, it won't forget sorrow anymore...And no one will run away anymore. After all, we've come too far to turn back, right?”

– Klonoa

Content, the King...smiles. He disappears into the light, his kingdom still standing. Now, responsibility falls on the people of Lunatea to accept Hyuponia, just as Klonoa did.

Lunatea as a Foil to Klonoa

Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil is largely dictated by perspective. The game deftfully takes characters in very similar situations and positions them on different paths, informed by their life decisions. Lolo with Leorina, Leorina with the King of Sorrow, just to name a few examples. But, in a way, the very *world* of Lunatea mirrors Klonoa's own experiences with grief, and the accompanying dangers of detaching oneself from their surroundings. The Kingdom of Sorrow was cast away by every other kingdom, invisible to the naked eye – whose resentment slowly built up after years of being ignored.

But if the King of Sorrow harbored resentment towards Lunatea, then what is Klonoa's role in this story? To me, it appears that Lunatea is a culmination of the tragedy in *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile*, serving to remind Klonoa that inaction will never allow one to move past grief. His repressed trauma, struggling to surpass his perceived indifference towards his past, finally catches up to him in the form of Hyuponia – a Kingdom whose name closely resembles that of the childhood friend he thought Huepow was.

Klonoa, throughout the entire narrative, never once talks about himself or his personality. He's a shell of his former self – where in a previous time, he would eagerly confide in Huepow, as well as introducing his name and his hometown to any stranger he came across. There is a popular interpretation that Klonoa forgets about the worlds he encounters, exemplified through the opening monologue of the game (refer to page 5). However, I personally find the interpretation that he recalls everything to be far more compelling, especially since he directly quotes Huepow during his farewell with Lolo.



“We'll be together...always...”

This is also where the first and only uninterrupted, narrative-specific instance of *Door to Phantomile*'s music in *Klonoa 2* plays – the very end of the game. It's almost time for Klonoa to leave Lunatea. Now, Klonoa can finally recall his past experiences with a resolved heart, unlike his arduous climb in Hyuponia. The track is titled "[Toward the...](#)", by Eriko Imura, and features *Door to Phantomile*'s "[The Windmill Song](#)" leitmotif, the very first area theme of the series.



Goodbye.

As a single tear falls from Klonoa's face – the first outward indication of sadness that he displays in game – he says, "Thanks..." with a forlorn smile. In this unceremonious fashion, the narrative of *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil* not only teaches Lolo that "it's okay to cry," but to Klonoa as well. Grief isn't such a bad thing, if you have someone to share it with.

So, unlike his sudden departure in *Door to Phantomile*, Klonoa walks back home of his own accord.

Strongest Element

From the perspective of a game designer, making a fun platformer is already incredibly difficult. But one that tells a compelling narrative, melds the gameplay mechanics based on it, and manages to remain cohesive, requires the combined effort of every single person on the developer's team – the director, designers, programmers, writers, artists, and composers. The strongest element of *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil* is precisely this. In Volk, where warfare never ends, the rubble of buildings and residual explosives naturally integrate man-made hazards into the level design. Upon visiting La-Lakoosha for a second time, the culmination of Leorina's suffering in the church hierarchy manifests into suffocating, noxious gas. Instead of attacking the King of Sorrow, the player must tear away at the shield he puts up, and embrace him – instead of attacking him. And with the artists'

and composers' work in creating thoughtful, distinct setpieces and music for each area, *Klonoa 2* is an exemplary model of a game that sincerely utilizes all aspects of its medium.

Unsuccessful Element

The “mascot platformer” is an interesting phenomenon – one that deserves its own paper – but I’ll quickly explain it. In the 90s, following the success of games like *Super Mario* and *Sonic the Hedgehog*, game companies scrambled to make sensational, mascot-worthy platformer games of their own. *Klonoa* came during a saturation of this market (well on its way towards commercial decline), and specifically falls into a few of the genre’s common traps.

The commercial marketability of “mascot platformers” dictates the emphasis on certain traits, such as Mario’s “fun” factor and Sonic’s “cool” factor – disassociating the mascot from its origin and positioning itself as an independent entity (similar to cultural critic Hiroki Azuma’s concept of the “Grand Narrative” and simulacra). *Klonoa* has an unwavering adherence to cuteness, through his bug-eyed, rabbit-eared design and his signature “Wahoo!” every time he double jumps with his Wind Ring. Generally, this is not a problem, since the majority of *Klonoa 2*’s levels are presented in a whimsical light, but this comes at conflict with more serious moments, and my personal highlight of the game: the Kingdom of Sorrow. Here, *Klonoa*’s voice actually distracts from the narrative being told with Eriko Imura’s eight-minute composition (refer to pages 12-13), creating a distinct tonal clash of solemnity and cuteness.

Highlight

I would highly recommend listening to Eriko Imura’s [Hyuponia / Ruin of Sadness](#).



The Kingdom of Sorrow – a land “where sunsets dream.” As the final level in *Klonoa 2: Lunateca’s Veil* that is traversed on foot, *Klonoa* brings himself farther from the safety of the ground, climbing closer and higher towards sorrow.

Upon starting the level, I immediately noticed a growling, ambient noise. *Where is this noise coming from?* I thought to myself. As wind materialized, transforming into a distant whistle, I realized it was a part of the music. I stopped by a dilapidated room, with two lonely chairs and a fireplace. And just then, I heard “Grandpa’s Chair,” harkening my mindset back to the original game, where Klonoa curiously asks Grandpa about the Moon Pendant in a similar room. The imagery was so apt, that I thought the leitmotif was diageetically playing within the room I had stopped at.

This music isn’t scripted. It plays independently of the player’s experience, yet I found myself with a unique perspective of the level’s set pieces – a perspective informed by my prior experience with *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile*.

I was floored. I rarely play video games where seemingly random sections of music completely recontextualize my in-game experience. And this begs the thought: how did other players explore this same level? Did they perhaps have different perspectives on the pulsating, painful recollection of these leitmotifs? As I ruminated, I found determination to move forward, the drums cutting through the dreary, mangled atmosphere to deliver a catharsis unlike anything in the series thus far.

I believe this level is the fundamental culmination of everything *Klonoa* and *Klonoa 2* builds up to – the narrative theming, challenging platforming gameplay, musical callbacks, post-apocalyptic imagery...all summed up in a beautiful, harrowing experience.

Critical Reception

Something additional to note – there are two releases of “Klonoa 2: Lunatea’s Veil”: the 2001 original and a 2022 rerelease. I’ve included one review from each time period, as to feature the difference in perspectives across console generations.

IGN: 9.2/10, by David Smith

David Smith, in his review of *Klonoa 2: Lunatea’s Veil*, applauds the game’s successful mesh of aesthetic design, gameplay, and sound, stating that *Klonoa 2* is “one of the most beautiful games on the system, because the artistic sense that shapes and guides it is so bright and original. He praises the narrative-informed gameplay, especially in the first level of the game: “The rocks and caves that lead to the goal spiral around in a complex loop that eventually leads to the island at the center, so the goal is always in sight, even if it doesn’t seem as if you’re headed straight there.” Overall, Smith denotes this review “the giddiest piece of work [he has] written in some time,” indicative of the lively experience he had with the game.

GameCritics: 8.5/10, by Cj Salcedo

The *Klonoa Phantasy Reverie Series* was a remastered bundle of the original *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile* and sequel *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil* released in 2022. While many of the reviews have prior experience with Klonoa and primarily focus on the visuals, Cj Salcedo details his first-time experience with these games. He critiques the simplicity of the gameplay — as opposed to Smith's review, who specifically lauds gameplay — but acknowledges that the game shines through its “aesthetics and emotions.” He states that *Lunatea's Veil* “has emotional moments while also presenting [an] understated approach that isn't often replicated in the genre.” He concludes the review, shocked about how the *Klonoa* series connected with him, as the player.

Lessons

Seize narrative-specific gameplay opportunities.

Every single area in *Klonoa 2* is rife with clever gameplay mechanics corresponding to the setting of the level. Natural hazards in La-Lakoosha, artillery in Volk, bottomless pits in Hyuponia – these are all examples of this. However, the game takes this ludonarrative harmony further by involving the emotional beats with the gameplay mechanics. For example, the Maze of Memories in Mira-Mira reflects the complexion of memories and conflict that Lolo feels about her insecurities.

Never underestimate your audience, even if they're young.

The *Klonoa* games are undoubtedly meant for children. Thus, in order to maintain their child-friendly age ratings, the games must take extra precautions in portraying sensitive content. However, some of the best video games utilize this limitation to their advantage, including one of the most lauded video games of all time – *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, which maintains a unique sense of horror through its show-not-tell approach to environmental design. *Klonoa 2*, on the other hand, utilizes a fairytale-esque story that appears simple on the surface, to appeal to a younger audience, but reveals itself as a rich metaphor for the aftermath of trauma and grief.

Musical coordination and theming is paramount.

When so many composers work on a game (*Klonoa 2* had eight!), the risk of conflicting musical identity increases rapidly, requiring a unified vision within a music team. *Klonoa 2*'s music team not only nailed the instrumental variety that encompasses Lunatea's music (through electronic-infused chamber music, big band jazz, drum and bass, and many others), but they also elegantly utilized each other's musical leitmotifs, often passing them around wildly different tracks depending on the scenario.

Summation

“It’s sort of like with movies you loved as a kid... sometimes when you watch them again as an adult, you realize they had a deeper story going on. It’s my hope that kids will experience Klonoa in a similar way—right now, they’re enjoying it as a grand old adventure, but I hope they come back to it as an adult too.”

– Hideo Yoshizawa, Creative Director

That’s the thing. I didn’t play the *Klonoa* series as a child. I went through these games as a bumbling grown-up, in my second year at university. Yet, Klonoa, with his wacky design and funky voice, still managed to win me over without the rose-tinted glasses of nostalgia.

Klonoa 2: Lunatea’s Veil is ultimately a children’s game at heart, but Yoshizawa and his team put a great deal of trust in their likely young playerbase – through a story that sidelines grief until it’s too painful to ignore.

“We’ll be together...always...”

Huepow and Klonoa both say this as a bittersweet, yet compassionate line preceding a farewell. But if we interpret this as a message to the player...it’s entirely true! Beyond the living, breathing worlds of Phantomile and Lunatea are formulaic lines of code that can erase, restart, or load any moment of the story for the player to relive. In this case, the dialogue also serves as a reassurance to the player that these games will physically never leave them. And like Klonoa, they must steel their resolve and look steadfast towards an unknown future. This echoes an ontogenetic metaphor – that Klonoa’s own maturity reflects that of the player – without diminishing the fundamental experience that is one’s childhood. Neither the player, nor Klonoa, have to always look back on *Door to Phantomile* with a heavy heart.

Sorrow ebbs and flows. Sooner or later, it’s time to say goodbye. Klonoa’s presence in Lunatea, like a ripple on water, disappears as he sets towards another unknown.



“Mascot and character games are fun for what they are, but if possible, I'd like players to empathize and identify with Klonoa...Klonoa is a projection of the player.”
– Yoshihiko Arai, Character Designer

The credits roll, and the TV turns off.

You're free to embark on another journey.

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