The History of *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*

Creators Tetsuya Takahashi and Soraya Saga

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Introduction

This article is partly inspired by "*The Secret History of Star Wars*" by Michael Kaminski, a book that was written in an attempt to shine a light on George Lucas' creative process and trace the many changes that occured in the *Star Wars* saga along the way. This is an analysis of the history of *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*, in an attempt to shine some light on how the *Xeno-* series evolved.

   I felt this was necessary because of the many rumors people have had over the years. Some believed Takahashi had *Xenosaga* written out from the beginning and that *Xenogears* was the result of Square forcing him to have it set on just one planet. Others have grossly assumed *Xenogears* was just a result of Square wanting to rip off *Neon Genesis Evangelion* following that series' success in Japan at the time and that *Xenosaga* has nothing to do with *Xenogears*, only using references as cameos and homages. Square and Namco have often been charged with claims that they must've been the reason for the games' incompleteness and that *Xenosaga II* was the reason the Saga never went past Shion's story arc.

There is a lot of controversy, confusion and assumptions on the subject. Blatant lies and petty rumors also keep getting perpetuated by fans and non-fans alike, since often the simplest explanation told in the simplest possible way is easier for most kids to type up on message boards. But the truth is always far more complex. Of course, when the lie or rumor is also more appealing, then the truth tends to be of less concern, and there's a desire to believe the lie. But I am above all interested in the actual truth here.

   This article will reveal that most people's perception of *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga's* development have been

false, and hopefully shine light on the truth.

It is also my hope that the examination here will further people's esthetic understanding of the series as with other articles on this study guide, even if it makes the article a bit more lengthy.

I will likely make additions to this article if more info should surface. Because of the sheer length of this article, I decided to create short-cuts in the form of Chapters.

    ---A.C.

Contains spoilers

Part 1: XENOGEARS

Origins of the story

Contrary to what many fans have believed, *Xenogears* did not begin with a story spanning from the beginning to the end of the universe. The original story idea was invented by Kaori Tanaka (from now on referred to by her pen name Soraya Saga) in 1994. At that time, Tetsuya Takahashi and Soraya Saga had finished their work on *Final Fantasy VI*, and Takahashi was working on *Front Mission* and *Chrono Trigger*, while Soraya was working on *Romancing SaGa 3*, and they would later get married in 1995.

Soraya with Director Ron Howard (unknown date)

The original concept was a story about "a young soldier of fortune with multiple personalities" that Soraya wrote that year. Soraya have given at least two accounts of what followed:

"Takahashi proposed the plan to our boss. Though the plan was rejected because it was too sci-fi for RPG, the boss kindly gave us an advice "Why don't you make it into a new game?". Then I came up with an idea about a deserted A.I. with feminine personality who becomes an origin of new mankind in the unexplored planet. Takahashi refined the idea into more deeper and mystic love story."
- Soraya Saga (Fringe FAQ, Mars 05, 2005)

"I and Tetsuya Takahashi originally submitted it as a script idea for Final Fantasy VII. While we were told that it was too dark and complicated for a fantasy, the boss was kind enough to give Takahashi a chance to launch a new project. Then Takahashi and I wrote up the full screenplay which contained cutscene-dialogues in final form, thus the project was born."
- Soraya Saga (Interview with Siliconera, June 11, 2010)

Xenogears, as a story, is a work primarily about anthropology, philosophy, psychology, science, and ideology. The works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Carl Jung are the most obvious influences, and happened to be part of common interests Soraya Saga shared with Takahashi. "*Xenogears* is basically a story about 'where do we come from, what are we, where are we going'. In that respect, we were inspired by those concepts a lot," says Soraya in the Siliconera interview.

A lot of the game's world mechanics and religious symbolism are also heavily influenced by Gnosticism. I will not go into detail in this article, but the references to Sophia (Greek for "wisdom") and Aeons (localized as 'Seraph Angels' in the U.S. version) are there. The concept of the Lower and Higher dimensional universe also parallels our sorrowful world and the heavenly "pleroma" in Gnostic tradition, while Deus is based on the Demiurge concept. The duality between Elly and Miang relates to the Gnostic imagery of the Demiurge as a lion-headed, snake-bodied entity, and so on. Even reincarnation was likely added because it featured in the early Gnostic's belief.

While many fans suggested that Nietzsche's concept of 'eternal recurrence' was the influence for Fei and Elly's reincarnation and repeated suffering, the suffering that Miang causes humanity by killing them off in cycles is more certainly based on the Demiurge concept from Gnosticism. The Demiurge who is sometimes called YHVH (Yahweh) is oblivious of Sophia but apparently knows of the true god's existence (known in Gnosticism as the "God-head" and appears in *Xenogears* as the 'Wave Existence'), and creates the material world, encasing the

power he has from Sophia in matter. To ensure that the souls trapped in matter remain so, he resorts to the repeated suffering that is suggested to have influenced Nietzsche's philosophy of the 'eternal recurrence' where he writes of a demon that condemns human subjects to live out their lives in endless repeating cycles. Gnosticism was also a big influence on Carl Jung.

What has been less known, and mostly suggested in the *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-* released in 2002, is that *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga* are works that also heavily explore Karen Horney and Claudio Naranjo's "theory of neurosis." This theory is an existential interpretation of neurosis according to which the bottom line of all psychopathology is the loss of being. The central idea is that we are looking for the key to our liberation, to our ultimate fulfillment, in the wrong places. This error, which is at the root of well constructed belief systems and ideologies, is the source of our unhappiness.

   The name of Fei's mother, Karen, is thought to be a reference to Karen Horney, a German psychoanalyst who looked at neurosis in a different light from other psychoanalysts of the time. Her expansive interest in the subject led her to compile a detailed theory of neurosis, pointing towards neurosis as the root of personality itself. Karen Horney's theories had a strong influence on Dr. Naranjo (along with Oscar Ichazo's "Protoanalysis") when he developed his theory of neurosis - more commonly known as the "Enneagram of Personality" - even dedicating his book *Character and Neurosis* to the memory of Karen Horney.

The characters in both *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga* were written using this "Enneagram of Personality" as a basis (though the exact sources are still unclear, as I will go into later). Understood properly, the Enneagram of Personality constitutes a tool to reach the roots of Ego's fixations, its conditionings and deformities; what Nietzsche would refer to as the "will to power" driving force in man. Naranjo compared the "theory of neurosis," or degradation of consciousness, in symbolical terms, with that of the spiritual traditions in the mythological stories of the "fall from paradise." These mythological stories of our genesis are featured heavily in *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*, with a clear portrayal of man's degradation of consciousness, to the point that we might even call the *Xeno*-verse a fictional representation of this "theory of neurosis."

   This is further expressed very poetically in the lyrics to *Xenogears*' ending theme song "*Small Two of Pieces*" where the imagery of humanity is painted as being fragments of a mirror that has broken into a million pieces. If one examines the psychodynamics of human types in relation to one another in the Enneagram structure, it becomes clear that each of us are a fragment of a larger body, and that, like fragments, we each connect and reflect our own psychodynamics with others in a complementary fashion. We all become "incomplete" and flawed, but remain a necessary part of the whole. In fact, Dr. Naranjo himself uses the mirror-analogy in his books, such as in *Character and Neurosis* published in 1994: "In particular I have imagined that the reader, as he or she has moved from one to another hall of portraits deriving from literature, psychology, or my own cumulative experience and its elaboration, would have felt as if she had been walking in a hall of mirrors reflecting back to her different aspects of her personality."

   While the lyrics for *Small Two of Pieces* were not written by Tetsuya Takahashi himself, it is likely that Masato Kato may have been instructed to write something with this imagery in mind, or Kato simply caught on to it after Tetsuya Takahashi must have introduced to the other writers the Enneagram of Personality. Kato added references to this mirror-imagery for parts he wrote in *Xenogears*, such as the Chu-Chus in Shevat:

   "You humans are truly unusual living beings, aren't chu? You're all like shattered fragments of a mirror."

It is also thought that the description of "*Thousands of Daggers*," the title for *Xenogears*' script book, also refers to this imagery, with the pieces becoming sharper and more likely to injure after the mirror has broken.

So when did all this begin? Clearly much of this had to be at the back of Tetsuya Takahashi's mind when he started writing for their project that would become *Xenogears*. The story is simply too ambitious to have been made up on the fly. One does not proceed from merely two ideas and then write up a full screenplay like the one in *Xenogears* filled with multiple references to psychoanalysts, philosophies, ideologies, religions, literature, history, science, names, and homages, without a lot of reading.

Born in 1966, Takahashi was a pretty small kid, so he was better at study than sports. Chemistry and physics were his favorites, "but I was awful at math" he recalls in an interview on Sony's Website in 2002. For art he would sometimes get good grades, sometimes bad, depending on teacher. "I used to read a lot of manga and those science fiction novels with the blue spines from Hayakawa Publishing" he says, referring to the publishers of Japanese translations of Arthur C. Clarke, Robert A. Heinlein, and Isaac Asimov, which have clearly influenced Takahashi. In fact, *Childhood's End* by Arthur C. Clarke was directly referenced in *Xenogears* in the naming of the character "Karellen" (localized as "Krelian" for U.S. audience) who, according to Soraya Saga on *Yggdrasil's Periscope Club BBS* back in 1999, was the name of Takahashi's favorite character in *Childhood's End*. The titel of "Guardian Angel," given to the character Citan Uzuki, was another reference. Clarke's idea for *Childhood's End* began with his short story "Guardian Angel" (1946). *2001: A Space Odyssey* is referenced with the "SOL-9000" computer that houses the Ministry, and also in *Xenogears: Perfect Works* with the discovery of Zohar - a monolithic artifact - on Earth in 2001. This event, with some rewrites, was later used as the opening cinematic in *Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht*.

No doubt *Childhood's End* served as one of the main inspirations for *Xenogears*. Many have assumed that the concept of evolving mankind into a singular being was taken from *Evangelion*, but it was actually from *Childhood's End* ideas such as humanity's evolution into a vast cosmic intelligence were borrowed from. In the

book, human children begin to display telekinetic powers a few generations after the alien Overlords arrive on Earth. In *Xenogears*, human children like Midori are displaying telepathic powers. Only 500 years before the present, humans in *Xenogears* began to evolve an ability called 'Ether'. The Gazel Ministry and Karellen are supervising humanity in *Xenogears* just as Karellen and the Overlords are supervising humanity in *Childhood's End*, and both Karellens take control because they know humanity will not evolve if left to their own devices.

However, the style and themes of Takahashi are in some ways radically different from those of Clarke. Most notably is Clarke's more optimistic view of science empowering mankind's exploration of the solar system, and his images of Utopian settings with highly developed ecology, and society, which were based on Clarke's ideals. Takahashi has a much darker vision of the future, with humans continuing to force their strong wills and ideals upon the world with the consequence of being trapped in darkness, unable to see the truth of things. But where Clarke's vision of humanity often ends with them getting help to evolve to a more mature and wise existence, Takahashi's vision is that humanity remains imperfect but should be proud of that non-perfection, and allow ourselves to love what is without ideologies or judgments.

In terms of his own ideals, Takahashi said in the *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-* that "I have this ideal of how carefree it would be to just ignore social matters and live like a child who doesn't think too deeply about things." There is a part of him that seems reckless, which is often reflected in his main protagonists, and is further supported by his view of death. He would say "I'm what you could call not very insistent regarding life, in that there's a part of me that doesn't care if I die. Especially when I was still single." He is known to have taken risks, with the break away from Square being one of them. On what kind of child he was, he recalls "It seems my relatives called me a strange child. Basically, I never listened to what anyone said. My parents must have had a pretty tough time."

Takahashi reveals that the messages in his works are also reflections of his own life:

"The many messages in the game are also reflections of my own life. Having said that, I am a selfish human being and when I'm creating I only say what I want to say."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-)

On *Yggdrasil's Periscope BBS*, while talking to fans, Soraya once stated that Elly (Sophia) was Takahashi's ideal woman. The webmistress of *Xenogears: Guardian Angels* fansite recalls it on her Livejournal in 2007 while ranting on feminine stereotypes:

"Elly of Xenogears is the ultimate feminine stereotype (and not just the mother of a small family, but an entire bloody religion), and I remember Clio Saga commenting that she was the director's ideal woman."
- Amber Michelle (livejournal, Jan 01, 2007)

If Elly was not only the product of Soraya's female A.I. concept, but also the result of Takahashi projecting his own ideal woman into the story, then perhaps those two characters who were to be in love with her would carry aspects of Takahashi himself... And perhaps no other character would be more similar to Takahashi in personality than Karellen, the character named after his favorite character from *Childhood's End*.

As the main antagonist, Karellen is a character that is thoroughly treated with dignity and intelligence, despite the atrocities he commits on a global scale. It is usually expected in RPGs to get a chance to fight each of your opponents, and usually the main antagonist is saved for a final epic battle, but *Xenogears* breaks off from this tradition, and not once do the player get a chance to fight it out with this character.

Karellen's actions are the result of the sorrow of having lost Sophia, his resentment at those who caused her death, and his lost hope (mixed with a love) for people, which turns him into a hardened scientist and holy man in search of a real God to save human beings from themselves. His ultimate plan is an Ark plan that the character refers to as "Project Noah," which would turn out to be the working title for *Xenogears*.

Karellen is an intense and sensitive character that tries to suppress his emotions, but ends up having a really hard time doing that, ultimately having to face the guilt of what he has done. Takahashi says of himself:

"My daily emotional life is pretty intense. If you look at it a certain way it's a burden to be going to the office, working, and meeting with a lot people. There's a part of me I have to suppress."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-)

He goes on to say, "Even if it's something you can't do [in society], you can always instead incorporate it into the story and the game." His unexpressed emotions can thus be seen pouring out in his writing in *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*, which sets the tone of the story in many ways. His friend - and composer for the series - Yasunori Mitsuda, when asked what he thinks of Mr. Takahashi, said:

"It's hard to put into words, but I really feel that there's a hidden anger inside him. Like, "Why the hell don't they realize this?!" That anger has been poured into this game, and people who resonate with it will be sucked in. My impression was that I sensed he was very similar to me. He's probably a dark person too, Mr. Takahashi (Laughs) But he's diligent."
- Yasunori Mitsuda (Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-)

Like Karellen, Takahashi also likes to read, though it is unknown if a woman had inspired this in him as Elly had inspired Karellen. Likely, Takahashi was always a curious man who would read everything he could to satisfy his desire for knowledge and understanding. Takahashi recalls:

"As a child, in the middle of a meeting with the chief priest of a Buddhist temple near my home, I began

having vague doubts myself on, "What is religion?" That's when I started having an interest in religion and I did research by reading various books."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-)

Combine his interest with religion and reading from an early age, along with his hobby of manga, science fiction novels, and finally cinema, it is not strange that he would end up being known as the "science and ideology" game director who attempts to "create game experiences that outdo films." The elements of romance, mystery, horror, and pop-culture camp that are frequently felt in his games could've been influenced from Futaro Yamada, prominent author of romantic, detective, horror, and bizarre ninja novels, as Takahashi recalls being a fan of his. But not everything in the games were conceived by Takahashi alone, as we will see.

As for robots, Soraya Saga explains:

"I'm of an older generation who grew up with classic giant robot anime by Nippon Sunrise (e.g. Raideen, Gundam, and Votoms). Besides the guy who enthusiastically created gear/AMWS/AGWS/ES mecha is more Takahashi than me. (His room is filled with vintage Chogokin Toys.) ;) "
- Soraya Saga (deviantART, Jul 7, 2008)

Finally, once getting in to college, Takahashi says he "began to grow up and started reading books on philosophy and ideology." He says he read a lot of Friedrich Nietzsche during university. At some point he must also have encountered the "Enneagram of Personality" in some published form prior to 1994, which was a time when the Enneagram still had not made it into the mainstream and was still fairly esoteric. Takahashi didn't speak or read English, so some Japanese publication must've appeared in Japan at some point before 1994 in order for Tetsuya Takahashi to have had time to grasp it. I wouldn't be surprised if he read about the Enneagram since his college or university years, but I will speculate more on this and what his sources might have been in Part 2: XENOSAGA.

All this knowledge and passion for study on these and many other subjects, would finally be given an outlet for expression after Takahashi joined Squaresoft as a Graphics artist and subsequently met and became romantically involved with Soraya Saga, who was to come up with the original story idea that Takahashi would turn into the game known today as *Xenogears*.

What lead Tetsuya Takahashi to aspire to become a game developer were his fond memories when *Xanadu*, an action RPG released in 1987 by Falcom Japan, was released. "When I played it on the PC-8801, I became interested in the game industry. Falcom Japan happened to be hiring part-time employees at the time, so I came to Tokyo and started working there. I was living alone and supporting myself. I entered right when *Y's II* came out, and I started working as a designer. I only knew BASIC at the time, so I helped out, learning as I worked. The first [game I participated in] was the fonts for *Sorcerian*. We had to make our own fonts for our games in those days. If we used the standard system font, things would look all blocky, so we had to rewrite everything." What made Soraya Saga interested in the medium was similar, in an interview with *LuminoMagazine.com* in 2011 she states that "*The Legend of Zelda* (1986), *Dragon Warrior* (1986) and *Final Fantasy I* (1987) inspired me a lot. Those [games] let me know a new type of fun that differed from what other media e.g. books and movies had."

Takahashi, when giving his reasons for leaving Falcom Japan, said: "The designers were at the core of Falcom Japan as a company. Also, there were a lot of opportunities to learn. But with our first computer, the PC8801, we could only use oblong dots and 8 colors for character designs. So we were pretty frustrated by that. At that time we ported *Ys III* to the X68000 and used sprites. It had a large memory capacity and allowed us to use a lot of colors. Because of that I became interested in doing sprite work. At just the same time, Falcom Japan itself moved away from taking shortcuts on their games and released unusual games such as *Brandish* and *Lord Monarch*. I thought I'd like to try making games on home consoles if given the chance, so I left Falcom. I read a job listings magazine and looked for a part-time job. Right then Square was recruiting for part-time jobs. That was when *Final Fantasy III* had been released on the Famicom. I thought I'd give it a try, so I applied."

When Takahashi joined Squaresoft he started work on *Final Fantasy IV*. "I had a strong impression I'd joined an organization that was the polar opposite of Falcom Japan. Even though we were using the Super Famicom, memory used by the program was given priority over memory used for the image. So at best we could only display 8 colors at the same time. 'This isn't very good!', I thought." Hironobu Sakaguchi, the creator of the *Final Fantasy* franchise, recalls in an interview with Iwata in 2011 (*Iwata Asks: In Conversation with Takahashi & Sakaguchi*): "Back then, [Takahashi] was the top graphic design man in the FF team. I can still clearly remember being really taken aback by how realistic his design for the stone wall in the background was. I remember thinking: 'That's really something!'"

Takahashi had been a fan of titles Sakaguchi had been responsible for, such as *Cruise Chaser Blassty*, "So I thought of [Sakaguchi] as someone who had created games that I had spent a lot of time playing," says Takahashi in the same interview. "I advocated strongly for [graphics on *Final Fantasy IV*]. When we wanted to make the graphics better, the designers advanced that opinon about the contents of the game, and the programmers and planners changed its specifications. The director, Hironobu Sakaguchi, helpfully approved of us working that way," Takahashi continues in the other *Creators Talk* interview. "This might be one of my good sides, or maybe it's annoying from other peoples' point of view, but I'm the type who changes my environment to make it easier to do my job. So when I joined Square, I constantly let them know my opinions so I could work

more easily."

On his impression of Sakaguchi he comments: "What I always found really impressive was how [Hironobu] would get to the office before anyone else and be the last to leave. He was someone who was always at his desk, with a capacity for work far beyond that of a regular person. Back then, arcade machines had higher specifications than home consoles, so our ambition was to create something that would surpass them. But back then Square had its own particular culture. On the one hand, there was a real desire to change things, while at the same time there was this sense that things shouldn't be tampered with. I would always worry about whether I was on the right track. But there's always the need to actively push things forward, otherwise nothing changes."

Takahashi was on the *Final Fantasy* team up to *VI*. The impetus for wanting to create his own game was that he was growing frustrated with *Final Fantasy*. "When it came to making a role-playing game, I had the planning ability, and I wanted to try my hand at presenting a world, character modelling and things like that," he continues. During *Final Fantasy VI* he had worked together with Soraya Saga and, as I stated at the beginning, Soraya came up with a story about "a young soldier of fortune with multiple personalities."

"...back in 1994, I wrote a story about a young soldier of fortune with multiple personalities. Takahashi proposed the plan to our boss. Though the plan was rejected because it was too sci-fi for RPG, the boss kindly gave us an advice "Why don't you make it into a new game?".
- Soraya Saga (Fringe FAQ, Mars 05, 2005)

Takahashi relays his version in an interview with the *Xenogears* staff in 1998, stating: "In the beginning, when the base plot itself was first in production as a 'FF' or something like that, I sent a proposal [to the higher-ups] saying 'How about this?'. Then they told me, 'Well, if there's something you want to make, why don't you give it a try?' So that was how it all got started in the first place. [...] there wasn't a name yet, and at the stage of that first proposal I presented, we had summon beasts [the standard term used in all the Japanese FF games] instead of robots. So that's basically it. When I originally decided to do [this project], I came to feel certain that we should have robots instead, so that's how it ended up."

So the original idea appears to have been a "FF VII," that was "too dark," too complex, too "sci-fi," and "too complicated for a fantasy," with a soldier hero who suffered from "multiple personalities" and could possibly ride "summoned beasts." Given the influence Takahashi had in the *Final Fantasy* team back then, being friends with both Sakaguchi and Tetsuya Nomura (the latter whom had also joined Square during development of *Final Fantasy IV*), it is perhaps not surprising that the game which would eventually become *Final Fantasy VII* (directed by Yoshinori Kitase) would feature many similarities with this initial concept that Takahashi proposed. *Final Fantasy VII* has far more science fiction concepts than previous FF, the soldier hero (Cloud Strife) suffers from serious identity confusion, and supposedly Sakaguchi's original script for *Final Fantasy VII* was completely different from the finished product.

At any rate, it seems that the concept for Deus might have come after the initial proposal, as Soraya goes on to say in the same FAQ entry; "Then [after Takahashi proposed the plan] I came up with an idea about a deserted A.I. with feminine personality who becomes an origin of new mankind in the unexplored planet. Takahashi refined the idea into more deeper and mystic love story."

This suggests to me that the religious symbolism and greater maturity came to fruition *after* the initial proposal, once the project was independent from the FF franchise, along with the concept of "Gears" instead of summonings. It is also possible that it was at this stage that the project may have been developed as "*Chrono Trigger 2*," when you consider the initial similarity between Soraya's concept and that of Lavos in *Chrono Trigger*. Takahashi states in the "Creator's Talk" interview from 2002, "With *Xenogears*, in the very beginning we started from the point of making a sequel to *Chrono Trigger*. But as various arguments with the publisher piled up, some practical difficulties came up... Thanks to Sakaguchi-san's great efforts on our behalf, we were allowed to make it an original title. So when we started development, we had parts that wouldn't fit in a fantasy world, and I was worried about the motivation of the staff. To an extent, we made *Xenogears* as a cross [between sci-fi and fantasy]."

"From the beginning, we decided on the word 'Xeno' [for the title] ***between the staff. In itself, that has the implication of 'Something strange or alien', but what kind of title could we draw from that? So I made a few alternatives for things we could put after 'Xeno'. After that, we finally decided on 'Xenogears'."***
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Interview with Xenogears staff, 1998)

Developing the game

Starting with Soraya's original story idea in 1994, *Xenogears* would not be released until February 1998. In the official source book, *Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~*, released about 8 months after the game,

Takahashi states in the "Main Staff of Xenogears" section, that "The development of *Xenogears* took a little more than 2 years (any ideas about it taking 3 years or more is just rumor)." He goes on to reflect on the development:

"Looking back on this, it was a day by day, person by person struggle that was all-engrossing, and when returning to the everyday world, it felt like only one part in 3 was actually there. When I think about the work that lies in the years ahead, I get dizzy thinking about that now. (hah, hah.)"
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~)

So what happened between 1994 and February 1998, during the planning, which would have ended at the end of 1995, and the development of *Xenogears*, which would have started just before 1996 rolled around? How big was the story going to be? When did Takahashi decide on a 6-part episodic structure similar to that of *Star Wars*? Why did Takahashi feel afterwards that *Xenogears* was only "one part in 3" and not one part of 6?
   Although practically nothing is known, we will have to examine the little we know, and make educated guesses based on various information and quotes.

Xenogears Staff:
Junya Ishigaki, Kunihiko Tanaka, Tetsuya Takahashi, Hiroshi Uchiyama, Yasuyuki Honne, Yoshinori Ogura (1998)

Some evidence actually suggests that *Xenogears* was going to begin with "Episode IV." In 2008, a list of "random facts about *Xenogears*" appeared on a now defunct *Xenogears: Perfect Works* scanlation site called *Razael Central*, which said that "At the beginning of its development, the game was going to be divided into two separate games -- one covering Episode IV, and the other Episode V."
   While at the time these "random facts" were met with some skepticism, they did also mention that the game was considered a possible *Final Fantasy VII* during its planning stages, and was then developed as "*Chrono Trigger 2*" before being established as a completely independent game - both facts which could be verified later. The "random facts" are these days considered authentic:

"Random facts about Xenogears:

- Xenogears was called Ura FFVII (Bizarro FFVII) in Japan because development on the two games began around the same time, as well as the fact that while FFVII had polygonal characters with prerendered backgrounds, Xenogears had polygonal backgrounds and hand-drawn (prerendered) characters.

- Xenogears was considered a possible FFVII during the latter's planning stages, though Hironobu Sakaguchi decided against the idea. It was then developed as Chrono Trigger 2, but various circumstances meant it was reformed into Xenogears. This is also a reason why it shares a number of similarities with Chrono Cross, in addition to sharing some staff members.

- At the beginning of its development, the game was going to be divided into two separate games -- one covering Episode IV, and the other Episode V.

- Xenogears was not an offered choice in the recent 100 Items Representative of Japanese Media vote, but it did make the #3 write-in spot in the Entertainment category.

- Square had decided that a sequel to the game would be made if it sold 1 million copies, but in the end it only reached just shy of 900,000, so the plan was dropped."

Apart from the previously cited "Creator's Talk" interview on Sony's Website in 2002, the "*Chrono Trigger 2*" rumor can also be verified with the DVD that came with the *Xenosaga Fanbook with DVD* where the developers talked about *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga* during a Monolith Soft conference that was held in the summer of 2001. Square has also gone on the record as identifying a connection between the two games in the *Chrono Cross Ultimania*, and the Japanese Wikipedia on *Chrono Cross* stated that *Xenogears* began development as *Chrono Trigger 2*. Also, in a demo movie of *Xenogears* the following line was used:

"So let love's blood flow! Like the seas of hell, it runs red and deep...!"

This line appear in *Xenogears*' system files, as a deleted part of the script when Fei wakes up after having destroyed Lahan (possibly it was meant to appear just before he wakes up, or while staring at Weltall, or after leaving Lahan behind), translated as:

Now, Fei, allow me to spill the blood out of love... Like the sea of hell, crimson, deep...!

Presumably this is Id speaking, but was removed (probably due to it being too heavy a foreshadowing). Instead

Masato Kato later used it in *Chrono Cross*' script, for Dark Serge, translated as "Now, let love bleed! Darker and deeper than the seas of hell!"

Furthermore, Lucca, a character from *Chrono Trigger*, appears in *Xenogears* as a guest, whose last bonus line makes a reference to the Silbird (The Epoch), etc.

So then, we must assume that the project began to be referred to as "Project Noah" some time in 1995, as well as the idea of turning it into two games. The exact year the game settled on the title "*Xenogears*" is unknown. Takahashi's profile on the official website would eventually read:

"He supervised the graphics division from Final Fantasy V until VI. With the switch in hardware, he's decided to start working on an RPG with a new style and taste, Project"NOAH" (Development code name, it was later given the title Xenogears). With the style and sense of the graphics and the cohesion of the scenario, he's aiming to make a game where the total balance will be outstanding."
- *http://www.playonline.com/archives/psgame/Xenogears/staff.html*

A "Project NOAH" logo is hidden on the game discs

"[Takahashi] has always had a talent for motivating people and bringing them together as a team," says Sakaguchi in the 2011 interview. "I remember that back then those teams would always be dividing into smaller units. If someone displayed leadership skills, they would be given the independence of having their own team. At the same time, they would often ask me: 'Is *Final Fantasy* all this company can let me create?' I used to worry about that. But Taka-chan [Takahashi] had some really good people working for him, and I think it was for the best that he got to head his own team."

As Takahashi had begun development on *Xenogears* he felt that the budget was limited, and "Soon they were making *Final Fantasy VII* right next door to us, and they had a quite different budgetary scale. So I couldn't help asking for [money for animation]," Takahashi told Sony in 2002. Takahashi also began working on *Final Fantasy VII* but partway through *VII* Takahashi left that team to be fully in charge of his own team working on *Xenogears*. "I recall going to see Sakaguchi-san and telling him that I was looking for a new challenge. That was when we were all in the middle of *FFVII*," says Takahashi. *Final Fantasy VII* marked a real turning point in the *Final Fantasy* series, and for someone like Takahashi, who was such an integral part of that series, to start out on their own, was a bit of a blow to the continuation of that series. Sakaguchi himself says that he felt a little lonely afterwards. "One really clear memory I have is that no sooner had Taka-chan formed a separate team than his desk became completely covered in Gundam models and toy guns. It was then that I realised he'd always wanted to work on this kind of thing."

Rough draft of Weltall, the first Gear to be designed

Takahashi wanted to see whether they could make a game entirely in 3D, not simply the event scenes. His initial motivation was to try to make games that achieved that. "I felt that the company needed to develop knowledge on how to utilise 3D in a different way from that of *VII*. I wanted to make levels entirely three-dimensional and allow the player to freely alter the angle they view the game world at. Ninety percent of my team were actually new kids who didn't know the first thing about 3D. The most difficult thing was the psychological side: helping people adjust to the team, talking through their worries and concerns with them, and so on. It was then that I realised that Sakaguchi-san had been dealing with this kind of thing all along."

Despite facing the immense challenge of running his own team, Takahashi had a strong sense that he could definitely pull it off. But, "Now when I look back at it, I realise that if I'd done more to inspire that same feeling in my staff, it would have been easier to build a team," he says in 2011.

He also let his true feelings about the development be known in a message to fans in a magazine in March 1999 where he said, "Frankly, I remember not having a very good feeling at the beginning of development. We were squeezed in between the two big titles Square were promoting heavily, *Chocobo* ['s *Mysterious Dungeon*] and *Parasite* [*Eve*], so like water flowing from a high place, the world's attention was totally focused on them. In that situation, if we'd had an owner who showed the proper sensitivity, we might not have fallen into a mental state where we were liable to get everything from stomach ulcers and twisted intestines to hernias and spot baldness. But even if we hadn't been squeezed between those two games, the company's intentions were like that anyway, so it might not have made much of a difference in practice. In addition, there was naturally a significant 'divergence' between the direction Square was aiming to take with their exisiting games as represented by FF and the direction I wanted to go in. [...] and for a company to push things to the extent that there's such a divergence isn't just reckless, I knew [about] that from the start - that is to say, I think they were aiming for that to a certain extent. All that said, considering how it all ended up, while I honestly thought I might go bald, in the end I didn't lose any hair, and my health wasn't ruined. It might be a bit shameless for me to say so myself...what we did was admirable. (Laughs)"

Hiroshi Uchiyama, Yasuyuki Honne, Makoto Shimamoto and Yoshinori Ogura had worked with Takahashi on *Chrono Trigger* and Uchiyama was in charge of modeling for the Gears (ending up modeling around 190 Gears all by himself), while Honne did background art supervision and texture mapping, Shimamoto served as Battle Planner along with Hiromichi Tanaka, and Ogura did sub-mecha design.

"Battle Gear modeling is figuring out how the sliding polygons come together in a system.
   20 years ago, my heart was touched watching the technique of modeling various devised prototype robots. And there were many TV programs showing robots. It was my dream when I grew up to create the Super robot.
   So here I am today, my job is making robots. For me, Xenogears is an unforgettable experience.
- *Hiroshi Uchiyama (Xenogears: Perfect Works, Main Staff page 289)*

Kunihiko Tanaka was in charge of main character designs, Junya Ishigaki designed the main characters' Gears, Hiromichi Tanaka supervised the battle system, and Tetsuya Takahashi handled everything to do with direction and "writing the entire scenario," (according to Staff interview in 1998).

Early screenshot when "chibi" versions of characters were used as battle portraits (unknown date).

Hiromichi Tanaka had designed the battle system for *Chrono Trigger* and *Secret of Mana*, so the battle system in *Xenogears* is an evolution of those. Supposedly an old promo reel of Square's from mid-1996 contained footage of a "Chrono Trigger 2" which showed early footage of *Xenogears*. If this is true, then development on the game had begun before they settled on the title "*Xenogears*." This would explain why the "*Chrono Trigger 2*" thing has been mentioned so often.

The episodic structure of the grand story was likely established during the "*Chrono Trigger 2*" phase after the initial proposal, which might eventually have distanced the project too far from the *Chrono Trigger* series. Tetsuya Takahashi makes the following comment at the beginning of *Xenogears: Perfect Works*:

"The world of Xenogears is divided into 3 large parts. The first takes place approximately 5000 years ahead of our time, with the vast universe as its stage. The second is the game itself, the story of Fei and the others' world. The third part tells of what comes after.
   We can further divide the second part into 4 smaller episodes. From the beginning [of development] the [story's] secrets were contained in the various episodes, and I pondered every concievable medium in order to reveal them, for example as simulation games, or as novelizations, but I ended up putting them all together in the one game. In a sense, Xenogears is a game whose main episodes, IV and V, are intermittently supplemented by Episodes II and III that must be pieced together from fragments.

So, you're probably wondering about Episodes I and VI now. Actually, I really hope you are wondering about them, and I think that they should certainly, at least, appear in print. The transition from fragmentary stories to finished product shall come about gradually. Maybe you could all make a "wish" to Zohar that they will happen."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~, Director's Comment, page 3)

(Note: There are at least 3 different translations of this comment. Here I have combined UltimateGraphics' rough literal translation with that of Razael's in order to cram out as much potent information as possible while making it easier to read.)

The above Director's Comment by Tetsuya Takahashi is one of the most revealing comments he has ever made, not only on developing *Xenogears*' story and the grand vision of it, but also for the development of the *Xenosaga* series (as we will explore later). It supports the idea that *Xenogears* is about Episode IV and V, and so it makes sense that it was originally going to be two games with spin offs for Episode II and III. It is also very clear that Takahashi didn't have a developed plan for what Episode I and VI were going to be about, but mostly left them open to future possibilities - which explains why all the focus is on the four episodes in the middle of the story.

By the end of development, however, Takahashi would feel that even after having 4 episodes crammed into the game, if only by fragments, it was still only a third of what he felt he needed to tell. Episode I and VI were now visualized as being the size of the 4 combined episodes *each*, and the scale of the story and the *Xenogears* universe had expanded in scope. It was no longer just a story about a soldier with multiple personalities, or a "mystic love story," or even a story about the history of just one planet... It was a huge scale space opera that portrays the creation of the cosmos until its demise.

The 3 large parts of the *Xenogears* universe.

From a philosophical standpoint, it is not surprising that a story about humanity, religion, and the nature of existence, would evolve into a larger canvas. Especially since there were apparently other human civilizations out there in the vast universe who had to have created the "female A.I." that gave birth to the civilization in *Xenogears*. However, this would cause a problem for Takahashi, since now people would wonder why "Episode V" appeared in the game's credits, and Takahashi would not be able to deliver 5 more episodes on that scale, but rather just the two; Episode I and VI, with Episode II-IV absorbed into Episode V. Because of this, he would update the episodic structure for *Xenosaga*, where each of these 3 large parts would be divided into two episodes each. But we'll get back to that later.

As the story of *Xenogears* was originally written, Takahashi first had his core ensemble of main characters; Fei, Elly and Karellen (who would in some ways be mirrored in the *Xenosaga* trilogy with chaos, KOS-MOS and Wilhelm). Fei was the central character with multiple personalities that Soraya conceptualized with her original story. Elly (and Miang), were Soraya's female A.I. that gives birth to a new mankind. Finally, the character he created by himself - Karellen - would also play a part in this mystical love story. As Takahashi refined Soraya's ideas into the core story of these three characters, the most logical approach to the development of *Xenogears* would indeed have been to start with "Episode IV," the period of 500 years before the game would actually be set. Not only is this logical from such a conceptual standpoint, it is further supported by the previously mentioned "random facts about *Xenogears*." Thus Lacan, Sophia, and Karellen would've been the main characters and supported by Roni, Rene, and Zephyr as the main protagonists. Lacan and Karellen would then "turn to the dark side," so to speak, and become the central antagonists for "Episode V."
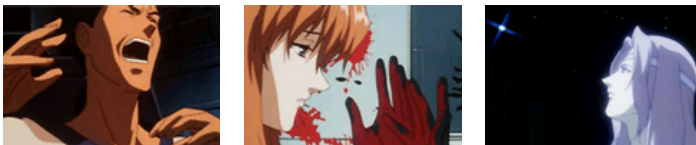
However, most likely the story Soraya originally wrote centered more on Fei as he appears in the game. Episode IV was then added as a prequel story similar to George Lucas' *Star Wars* prequels. Once development began, the idea of beginning with Episode IV must've been appealing, since "Episode IV" is both the numbered episode of the first *Star Wars* film, and centered on the relationship and struggles between the three core characters of Lacan, Elly, and Karellen. Takahashi would then decide that it wouldn't work, for one reason or another, and went back to the original story arc beginning with Fei and his multiple personalities (Episode V).

While we're on the subject of George Lucas' *Star Wars* it might be the right time to examine how *Star Wars* have influenced *Xenogears*. As a fan of cinema, Tetsuya Takahashi would of course be very familiar with George Lucas' original trilogy of *Star Wars* at the time. The biggest influence is obviously the character of Grahf as a homage to Darth Vader, and Takahashi is not subtle about it. In *Xenogears: Perfect Works* he states, "[Grahf] looks like Darth Vader - as ordered. In terms of the masked design, we had a hard time with this one. The mask, because it was worn, had fairly complicated lines, and it is hard to find another example of such careful balance. However, behind Id and Grahf, there are many tears in the drawing process (Ha, ha)."

The "dark father" aspect of *Xenogears*, as well as the possibility of Fei giving into his dark sides (Id and Grahf) are clearly reminiscent of Luke, Darth Vader, and the "dark side of the Force" in *Star Wars*. The game, just like the original trilogy of *Star Wars*, begins with an orphaned hero with little knowledge about his parents, who is also under the supervision of a wise and knowledgeable guardian - who becomes a sort of mentor figure - and soon after the hero's farm-like home is torched he sets out with his guardian and finds himself in a lively Desert town, becomes involved in a war between an Empire and a rebellion, befriends a pirate with a heart, and encounters a masked man in black as a central antagonist; who turns out to be the hero's father and his potential fall to darkness, but who ends up sacrificing himself for his son. Fei would even be frozen in Carbonite at one point.

The similarities doesn't end there, and would also carry over to *Xenosaga* as we will examine later. The episodic structure of a 6-part saga also screamed "*Star Wars*." Though some fans will compare Fei's reluctance to fight in the beginning of the story with that of Shinji Ikari from *Evangelion*, and Fei's father issues with that of Shinji and Gendo, the influence here is clearly *Star Wars* more than anything.

However, Takahashi's style and themes are far more complex and adult than George Lucas' rather simple fairytale. *Star Wars* is not intellectual sci-fi, and was mainly aimed at children and teenage boys. I doubt it if Lucas would even be capable of including heavy philosophical discourse and scenes of human beings turning into zombies and eating each other, or have a mother torture her child, an insane man waving a knife in front of a little girl[1], or soldiers shooting a woman's face at point-blank range in *Star Wars*. Even the dark *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* would not come anywhere near the often disturbing and morally grey stories that *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga* presents. The pachydermically good natured Lucas has often been concerned that even some of the smallest things, like Vader revealing himself to be Luke's father, or Han "shooting first" at Greedo, could have a negative impact on children.[2]

[1]The original Japanese version of *Xenosaga Episode I* showed Albedo mutilating himself with a knife in the confrontation between MOMO and Albedo in the Song of Nephilim.

[2]I identify Lucas as a person with an aversion to psychological exploration, including a stubbornness or resistance to change, and also a concern for norms and practicality at the expense of the subtle and the mysterious. The "narcotization" of the dark content in *Revenge of the Sith* through poor direction of the actors and their almost hilarious deadpan delivery suggests a deliberate distraction from anything disturbing, which leaves the impression of a certain immaturity or undeveloped quality on the part of Lucas' psychology. Tetsuya Takahashi doesn't shy away from dealing with mature and dark subject matter, as the graphic content of the sequence with Albedo cutting his head off and then stomping on it, along with his symbolic rape of MOMO, illustrates the sort of content that would never make it into a bloodless, PG-rated *Star Wars* picture. It is as if Takahashi is drawn to this sort of content, in contrast to Lucas' aversion and conservative ideas.

Xenogears and *Xenosaga* also more explicitly portray sexual relationships.[3] While both have been criticized for their script writing, Takahashi actually have the style, substance and desire of a true novelist (as we will explore) while George Lucas admits that he doesn't like to write and frequently doubt his ability.[4] Both are rather humble people, but Takahashi is clearly more interested in having substance and messages in his sci-fi.

[3]In *Xenogears*, for example, the characters Ramsus and Miang appear in bed together, clearly indicating they are lovers. (Similarly, in *Xenosaga Episode III* Shion is shown leaving Kevin's bed during the night, wearing his shirt.) Furthermore, several dialogues are quite suggestive of sex, such as one where the character Billy mentions that he almost sold his body for money.

[4]- "Well, I did terrible in script writing. I hated stories, and I hated plot, and I wanted to make visual films that had nothing to do with telling a story." (O'Quinn quoted in Kaminski 29: "The George Lucas Saga" by Kerry O' Quinn, Starlog, July 1980)
"I'm not a good writer. It's very, very hard for me. I don't feel I have a natural talent for it—as opposed to camera, which I could always just do. It was a natural. And the same thing for editing. I've always been able to just sit down and cut. But I don't have a natural talent for writing. When I sit down I bleed on the page, and it's just awful. Writing just doesn't flow in a creative surge the way other things do." (Sturhahn quoted in Kaminski 29: "The Filming of American Graffiti" by Larry Sturhahn, Filmmakers Newsletter, March 1974)

Psychologically speaking, Takahashi has the capacity to retain knowledge or information with an ease that corresponds to the schizoid personality of the American DSM III classification and individuals who internally demand a lot of themselves, who minimize their needs, who are shy and have great difficulty expressing their anger.[5] In that respect he is not too different from Kubrick, director of such radical films as *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *A Clockwork Orange*, also known for his technical perfectionism, meticulous attention to detail, and reclusiveness.

On the other hand, Lucas has an interpersonal style more reminiscent of the dependent personality of DSM III and individuals that have a resigned over-adaption, who are contented, loving, and hard-working. Both have a rich inner world and imagination, but as can be determined from Lucas' orientation towards children and his own childhood, contrasted with Takahashi's mature themes and struggle with nihilism, they both become widely contrasted. Note Takahashi's attentive care for his story versus Lucas' preference for more action and quirky creatures (the tendency Lucas has to fill the frame with eye candy, including numerous alien races and creatures, while Takahashi focus on human beings and their relationships). Also, Lucas primarily draws on sci-fi

pulp film serials and Japanese samurai pictures (*The Hidden Fortress* in particular), while Takahashi is heavily influenced by sci-fi novels, including those of the 'hard sci-fi' variety.

    Generally speaking, it can be said that directors such as Takahashi and Kubrick will be more likely to be identified as extreme, excessive, or markedly abnormal by the outside world, while Lucas is among the least likely to make a problem of himself or appear pathological to others.[6]

[5]Schizoid personality disorder (SPD), according to Wikipedia, is "characterized by a lack of interest in social relationships, a tendency towards a solitary lifestyle, secretiveness, emotional coldness, and apathy. They may also demonstrate a simultaneous rich, elaborate, and exclusively internal fantasy world, although this is often more suggestive of schizotypal personality disorder." Takahashi expresses in the *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-* that he didn't use to care if he died, which suggest apathy. He often finds it a burden to be meeting with a lot of people and that he's not much of an outdoorsman (video-senki.com interview), and so on. Shyness is usually attributed to this kind of person, even though it may not be the most accurate word to choose. Martin Johansson ("*Viljans Makt*" interview) referred to Takahashi as "a man of few words," and *andriasang.com* describes that "Takahashi was a little shy in fully explaining the *Xenoblade* name to the magazine."

[6]One reason schizoid people are pathologized is because they are comparatively rare. People in majorities tend to assume that their own psychology is normative and to equate difference with inferiority. Therefore the so-called schizoid personality disorder is one of the more blatant examples of the APA's pathologizing of normal human differences. (Wikipedia)

This can further be observed in their characters. Although Fei is indeed a resigned and conforming type character, it should be more obvious by now that the character most similar to Takahashi and his intellectualism would be Karellen who is characterized with a schizoid personality, who tends to be regarded as pathological or frightening by many of those who played *Xenogears*.

    On the other hand, Mark Hamill has said that "Luke is George," and the character of Luke Skywalker is characterized with the adjusted, daydreaming, loving, and hard-working characteristics of George Lucas.

In terms of the Enneagram of Personality, Takahashi corresponds to Ennea-type 5 and Lucas to Ennea-type 9; just as Karellen corresponds to Ennea-type 5 and Luke Skywalker to Ennea-type 9. Fei, of course, also corresponds to Ennea-type 9, but it is more likely that his personality was carefully selected among the Ennea-types to be a 9, as necessity dictated that he have multiple personalities. Disassociative Identity Disorder, the psychiatric diagnosis that describes the condition in which a person displays multiple distinct identities or personalities corresponds to Ennea-type 9's level of pathological destructiveness. Once you realize that the developers are more or less teaching you about the Enneagram personalities in the *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-* it becomes abundantly clear that the characters in both stories were always written using the Enneagram of Personality as the basis in addition to psychoanalysts like Jung, Freud and Winnicot.

In this respect there is also a similarity between Tetsuya Takahashi and Hideaki Anno, the latter whom portrays a very strong characterization of the schizoid personality in Shinji Ikari, the protagonist of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, who is considered something of a "self-portrait" of Hideaki Anno in addition to representing a big portion of Anime's fan base. There's no indication that Anno used, or was even familiar with the Enneagram of Personality though, since his characters tend to be more allegorical than what Takahashi and Soraya Saga portrays in their *Xeno*-verse (though they have also used characters for allegories and religious symbolism). However, it should be pointed out that even if Anno was familiar with the Ennea-types, Shinji is still a different personality type from Fei. So, regardless of how one twists and turns it, the comparison is never anything more than superficial.

    As Soraya Saga has denied that *Xenogears* was influenced by *Evangelion* I will not regard it as having been an influence, but we will get back to a comparison between the two soon.

If the influences from *Chrono Trigger* in Masato Kato's parts of the story (Lahan and Shevat) were not enough, there were also small influences from Kitase's *Final Fantasy VII*. The globe shaped designs on the chest of El Renmazuo came straight from the command 'Materia' in *FFVII* as a reference point according to Ishigaki. As they were in development at the same time the two games also referenced each other. In Solaris there is a poster of *Final Fantasy VII's* Tifa, while Cloud, when recovering in Mideel, says among gibberish:

> "A billion mirror fragments... small... light... taken... angel's... singing voices...zeno...gias"

As Kato wrote this scene he was obviously making a reference to the ending song *Small Two of Pieces* which he wrote the lyrics for, and "zenogias" is the romanized spelling of "*Xenogears*." *Final Fantasy VII*, in turn, would borrow from both its predecessor *Final Fantasy VI* and *Xenogears*. Most notably is the hero's mental problems with identity. While nothing has been confirmed, it seems rather likely that *FFVII's* darker, dystopian science fiction setting, and plot elements like having the heroes be stuck in prison for a portion of the game, where influenced from *Xenogears* - since the concept for *Xenogears* was pinched first, as a possible "*Final Fantasy VII*" no less - and Tetsuya Nomura was even a part of *Xenogears*' development team at a very early stage in *Xenogears*' development.

Soylent Green, was another influence on *Xenogears*, as was *Solaris* and *The Assemblers of Infinity*. Balboa (Big Joe's last name) is a reference to Sylvester Stallone's 'Rocky Balboa' of the *Rocky* films and the exploding collars that are placed on prisoners in Nortune's D-Block prison appear to be based on those in the Rutger Hauer film *Deadlock* (also known as *Wedlock*). From Anime there were references to *Macross* with "Super Dimensional Gear Yggdrasil IV" and the bridge of the Eldridge in the opening movie, while G-Elements was a reference to *Voltron*. The term "Overtechnology," describing parts of the Deus System in *Xenogears: Perfect Works*, was likely borrowed from *Macross* where it refers to the scientific advances discovered in an alien starship. Finally, with the wealth of backstory Tetsuya Takahashi made up - not just a single plot with a set cast of characters, but an

evolving story that takes the form of a universe represented in many different ways with political themes, gives the impression that he may have been aiming for something closer to *Gundam* rather than *Evangelion*. A common trope of the *Gundam* series is that the robot pilot hero starts trying to live a peaceful life but gets forced into combat in strange machines where he discovers he has amazing power. He then gets put as a force trying to even out two major powers in a conflict.

Arguments that *Xenogears* must've been influenced by *Evangelion* simply because the staff were fans of mecha, because Masato Kato was an ex-employee of Gainax (though before *Evangelion* entered production), because some of the animation directors from *Evangelion* worked on the game's anime cutscenes, and because *Final Fantasy VII* included a homage to "B-Type equippment" from *Evangelion's* episode *Magmadiver*, has persisted in spite of this, but what would these supposed influences be then?

Xenogears does not allude to *Evangelion* but use a few similar devices, and has thus been charged with claims that it must have ripped off *Evangelion*. However, nothing of substance can be produced to support this claim, and the co-creator denied it. What they have most in common is actually an identical reference to something *else* - Jewish mysticism. The strongest common trait between the two is the use of religious symbolism, but religion itself doesn't really play much of a part in *Evangelion* like it does in *Xenogears*. *Evangelion* was decidedly deconstructionist, with a message that criticized the "super robot" genre and its fans, much like Alan Moore's *Watchmen* did with the super hero comic genre. In *Evangelion* the mecha represented isolation, rather than unity, while the "super robot" genre generally focused on teamwork and championing the right cause. A lot of focus in *Gundam* and *Space Runaway Ideon* was on the horrors of war, or the idea that war doesn't change even as technology improves - something they have in common with *Xenogears*. Boy hero finds giant robot, learns bravery and friendship, and triumphs over evil, is the standard arc of the giant-robot genre. An ancient robot left by an alien civilization was the hero's robot in *Space Runaway Ideon* which referenced several western theological themes such as a "Messiah," and is more similar to the concept of *Xenogears* (and *Xenosaga*) than *Evangelion* is.

 Both *Xenogears* and *Evangelion* were also influenced by *Childhood's End* and *2001*, which is where their themes of evolving mankind came from, as well as the mysterious committees; Seele and the Gazel Ministry.

 The psychological themes in *Evangelion* were mainly used to make a commentary on fans of the genre and the political climate in Japan, the Anime industry, and as an outlet for depression and isolation, while the psychological themes in *Xenogears* were used to comment on humanity, religion, ideology, problems facing individuals and society, and what it means to be human.

So what's left that could've been influenced from *Evangelion*? The scene where Id rises up, holding the Yggdrasil and throws it, has been compared to when Asuka lifted a NERV ship and threw it in *The End of Evangelion*. But *The End of Evangelion* came out in July 1997 when *Xenogears* was already 75% finished, and the scene in question is a pivotal scene that takes place early on in Disc 1. This example would be more suitable to illustrate how these similarities more often are coincidental rather than intentional (unless both got their inspiration from a much older anime, which is just as likely).

 The destruction of the second gate, where Billy has to reload and shoot twice while enemies are attacking, has been compared to the battle with the blue crystal angel in *Evangelion*, but the scene from *Evangelion* was already borrowed from *Future Police Urashiman* where a yellow crystal known as "Super-X" is fired upon with no effect at first. If you have a scene where a character needs to hit a precise target then it is quite natural to have him or her miss with the first shot to amp up the tension and make it more believable.

 Elly has been compared to Asuka for having "red hair," but Elly's hair color was likely chosen for the "Lion" symbolism and is meant to be auburn as Fei describes in the game's dialogue:

SAMSON
"Right, that's the spirit!
But, be careful! A female Gebler just came by for some reason..."

FEI
"!? Did she, have auburn hair?"

SAMSON
"Yeeaah, that's her!! What, you're friends?
Come to think of it, she was looking for someone...
She still oughta be around here somewhere. You oughta look for her."

Finally, Fei and Shinji. Almost every individual has self image issues at one point or another, especially after tragedy strikes. Shinji had it before the story starts and is part of what *Evangelion* is about. Fei was at peace in the beginning and often he acted very reckless even while he was depressed. The first time Fei pilots Weltall he jumps into the robot without hesitation. Fei was also written using the Enneagram as a basis, which explains his characterization, so we know he wasn't based on Shinji.

Takahashi says (for *Xenosaga* in the *ODM*, though it probably applies to *Xenogears* as well) that he put in religious parodies and metaphors that are difficult to see, but the parodies that you can see, especially those of movies and anime that are easy to understand, he left to the staff.

So by now other team members were contributing to the writing of *Xenogears*, and it will be necessary to talk a little about them. Citan Uzuki was actually suggested by Tetsuya Nomura, the character designer who replaced Yoshitaka Amano for *Final Fantasy* starting with *Final Fantasy VII* and later directed the *Kingdom Hearts* series and the CGI animated film *Final Fantasy VII Advent Children*. "Our old friend Tetsuya Nomura was in the team for a short time at a very early stage of development. He said 'Don't you guys think there should be an Asian, tactician type of a character in the game?' Takahashi came up with Citan from that remark. It was fun working together with friends," says Soraya in a comment to fans on *deviantART* in July of 2008.

Masato Kato would write Shevat, Chu-Chu, and Maria Balthasar's story in addition to Lahan village. It is believed by fans that he was responsible for the pastoral feel of the game that Tetsuya Takahashi wanted to resist. "I wrote them to my own personal tastes... er... maybe I should learn to listen more to what other people tell me (laughs)," Kato said of the scenes (also referring to scenes he wrote for other games) in an interview on Yasunori Mitsuda's Official Website.

Event Planner Masato Kato (unknown date)

Much has been discussed regarding Kato's influence on the game, and there have been several fans who have suggested that Kato wrote the actual screenplay, and that this is one of the distinct differences between *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*. This is not surprising, since both the U.S. game credits Kato with "Script" and the official Japanese website at the time stated in Kato's profile:

"Starting with Chrono Trigger, he's been in charge of events for various games. As soon becomes clear to everyone who pays attention, he brings stories to life with his own distinctive kind of lyrical lines. This time with Xenogears, how will he unfold Takahashi's foreshadowing-laden story for us?"
- http://www.playonline.com/archives/psgame/Xenogears/staff.html

However, Soraya Saga have stated that Square America had made a misdescription in the credits, and that she and Tetsuya Takahashi wrote most of the screenplay, not just the basic scenario. Takahashi himself said he wrote the entire scenario in the 1998 interview with the *Xenogears* staff. Accordingly, Masato Kato was absent from the "Main Staff of Xenogears" section in *Xenogears: Perfect Works* where Tetsuya Takahashi was also credited with "Performance/staging," which had been attributed to Masato Kato in the Japanese game credits and mistranslated as "script" by Square America, hence the confusion. Apparently Kato should only have been credited as an Event Planner (which was his title on the official website), but someone put his name second only to Takahashi with "Performance/staging."

"When Xenogears was in the early stages, while it included all sorts of different situations, it was actually a work with a [rather] pastoral atmosphere to it. That goes for Fei too, and the design I ordered for him had the feel of a [rural] martial artist...[such as those] living in a temple. However, as I went ahead with the script work, I found myself more and more tempted to get rid of the pastoral elements, until I couldn't resist anymore, and several script revisions followed. (Honestly, I don't really care much for pastoral settings. That's because I'm more of a doom and gloom kind of guy.) As you might have noticed, Fei's design ended up being a bit out of place compared to the atmosphere of the game (especially the second half). But there wasn't any time to revise it, and in the end we decided to go with it as it was. To be honest, Fei is the character whose design I'd like to refine the most."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~, page 237)

Above I used Gwendal's translation instead of UltimateGraphics', since Gwendal said that UltimateGraphics left out some things (I also made some improvements based on Gwendal's page 237 comment). Takahashi also talks about the work of an "Event Planner" in a *Xenosaga* interview:

"Usually the planner takes his script and assigns the animator the task of character movements... For example, let's say there's a scene where a character turns around while walking. Using a script to generate that will almost always result in a jerky transition, so it's usually the job of the animator to fix things like that. The planner's job is to direct the animation, timing, message displays, and camera positioning."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenosaga Interview)

That excerpt gives a new meaning to the label of "Event Planner," which Masato Kato, Tanegashima Takashi and several others are credited with in the credits - which means that no one besides Tetsuya Takahashi himself was credited with the scenario (screenplay) in the original credits. We can only confirm that Kato and Tanegashima wrote parts of the screenplay from Soraya's and Kato's comments and CVs outside the game itself. With that in mind, the line "how will he unfold Takahashi's foreshadowing-laden story for us?" might just be referring to how Kato will "stage" Takahashi's story as an Event Planner, not as a script writer.

You can read a more in-depth article about this here.

In addition to this, there has been some suggestion that all of the 10 Event Planners credited in *Xenogears* contributed with script writing for small parts, because the 10 Event Planners in *Final Fantasy VII* supposedly contributed with script writing for that game. So Takahashi (and Soraya) wrote the scenario, then the Event Planners would've written individual events and staged those events. The Debug Room lists who was responsible for staging what scenes, and since Kato also staged the scenes he says he wrote, it has been suggested that what each Planner staged is also what they wrote. And since Kato is also responsible for staging inside Fei/Id's mind during the carbonite freeze, the scene when Fei/Id breaks free, and the crucifixion scene, it has been suggested that he wrote those as well. The problem with that rationale, however, is that the main writers - Takahashi and Soraya - weren't Event Planners, so the Planners would have had to have staged quite a few bits they personally didn't write as well.

Frankly, we can tell much of the script was indeed written by Takahashi and Soraya, since a lot of the style is similar to that of *Xenosaga*. And those parts that doesn't have the flavor of *Xenosaga*, such as the Captain of the Thames, were likely written by an Event Planner.

"It would be nice if there were a guide book which lists the sections everyone was responsible for. We know some things, but not enough. It could be that some of the events linked from the Debug Room were written and staged by the planning staff, but others were taken directly from Takahashi's scenario and staged by the planning staff.

There's no way that certain events I listed earlier weren't written by the planning staff. The Thames, especially the Captain of the Thames, simply reeks of Nobuaki Komoto. Why didn't Soraya Saga mention him? If Tanegashima was responsible for Emeralda, the Element girls and the crew of the Yggdrasil, why doesn't she credit Komoto for the Thames?"
- *Xenogears Fan*

Continuing with the character designs, Takahashi goes on in *Perfect Works* to say of Fei; "In relation to the past Fei, because of time considerations for the main illustrator Tanaka-kun, the designs were made in-house. At first, [Kim] had japanese style clothing, intending to show that Zeboim was very close to the present day world. As a doctor [Kim] had a white lab coat. Originally Lacan was to have had a separate design, but during [development] there wasn't a lot of time to draw new characters, so it couldn't be helped, he had the same clothes as Fei, and with Fei having the memories, his point of view as the main observer kind of had it make sense - at least that's how it comes out."

"Elly was originally envisioned with a lighter version of her clothing. It had a strong pastoral feel. Elly is different from Fei, and more direct by comparison, which I wanted Tanaka-kun to reflect in his drawings. The past Elly, Sophia, was drawn like Fei for the same reasons inside the company. The same for each time period's concept. There wasn't really a design for Sophia's clothes, and finally getting down to it, the staff helped to make an outfit that suited her perfectly. Tanaka-kun wanted to draw the Zeboim Elly (nurse) himself. (Heh, heh).

The first notes on Elly said that she had to have long hair. Anything else was all right, and almost all drawings got the O.K. The concept of her clothes was something sleek, (like a race queen). The slit in the hip area wasn't there at first, but we wanted it (heh, heh). And the shoulders were on a draft that we liked - for a total costume that we liked the most. On the other hand, too complicated and the cosplay guys would have real problems! (Hah, ha!) And the stockings couldn't get too colorful, (hah, hah). They were more of a undercoat (leotard type thing) and it came together. However, compared to most stockings, these might be really expensive (luxury item). And normally would have been like the clothes, white also.

Citan's clothing also ended up pastoral. It didn't bug me as much as Fei's, so we went with this. There weren't any revisions in the design process, and the original got an O.K. On the surface, he's a traveling doctor. A protecting presence in the party. He gives the impression of great knowledge - kind of old fogeyish - as ordered. I increasingly felt that this was perfectly suited to the character."
- *Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~)*

Kunihiko Tanaka goes on to say, "To give you an idea of what goes into character design, I'll see if I can describe it.
    Let's start with Fei. As he's the hero he has to have a distinctive hair style. When people see him, they have to say 'Ah, he's different'. And for this reason, Fei was given a very "different" hair style. There are a lot of results from this. The concept of the heroine, Elly has her with long hair. I wanted to see it go straight down to her

knees. And Bart's outfit I thought, 'what kind of jumper to put him in?'. Maria's goggles are swiss goggles. Seraphita is of the house of rabbits. Emeralda as an adult? Margie as stubborn. Big Joe's chin. Rico's chin, too. Zephyr as a calm and serene beauty. Citan's glasses like 'Snoop Dog's' and Ramsus having the belly from Gundam F91. Really...I mean it!"

Kunihiko Tanaka struggled very hard to design Karellen. As a symbol of holiness in western culture he was given a head band, and apparently Takahashi wanted him to be good looking. The design of Karellen as leader of Nisan's Monastery army was made by the interior staff. The only directive for Maria's design was sending out the idea of "How about the fastest to be made is a girl?" along the staff, "and everyone got the drift (heh, heh)," Takahashi says. For Chu-Chu a koala type animal was ordered, and until she was finally finished it caused unrest. "A real pinch" says Takahashi.

"The quick death of all the Lahan Villagers that appear except Dan, was not ordered specifically by me," Takahashi continues. "Alice is the first main event's character as ordered, and after the destruction of Lahan, while Timothy's death as her fiance sounded good, we thought about leaving her alive to follow Fei around. A woman like that couldn't come between Fei and Elly's path to love, so she died off right away with the other villagers."

Soraya Saga would write the script for Bart, Billy and their families and enemies as well as the former Elements - Jesiah Blanche, Kahran Ramsus, Sigurd Harcourt, and Hyuga Ricdeau - though "Takahashi wrote Citan," Soraya says in her infamous FAQ, and he probably wrote Ramsus during the present as well. She also contributed with countries and area concepts, concept of a terraforming weapon out of control (Deus), and naming concepts of Elehayym, Myyah Hawwa, Kahr(Carlin) Ramsus, Emeralda(Emerada), Elements girls, and the former Elements.

Finally, Tanegashima Takashi wrote the script about Emeralda, the Yggdrasil's crews and the Elements girls, while Tetsuya Takahashi wrote the rest of the screenplay - including Fei, Elly, Karellen, Grahf, Miang, Cain, Gazel Ministry, etc. "After the main story and integral sideplots were done, Tanegashima applied a sense of humor and his knowledge about science and military hardwares. Kato added a poetic and mysterious touch to Maria's story. An alchemical reaction of various creativity made the game enjoyable like a plate of all-you-can-eat," Soraya recalls.

Event Planner and World builder Tanegashima Takashi (1998)

Bart was designed around the same time as Fei, "and by now we didn't want a hint of anything pastoral" says Takahashi, "so the clothing is really sci-fi style with strong colors just as I remember ordering. As a result, both Bart and Elly are decked out rather 'expensively' (Heh, heh). Out of all the male characters, I like his clothing the best. And that's just the clothes", he continues, suggesting he became real fond of the character. "The eyepatch should be on the left eye, so when it sometimes show up as the right eye, that mistake was on Square's side. My appologies to all the gamers."

Rico was the fastest character they designed. "If he looks familiar from other games, that's just in your mind, the first I've heard of it. Anyway, we'll let that one go," says Takahashi with a laugh, alluding to the fact that Rico looks like the character Blanka from Capcom's *Street Fighter* series.

"Billy's appearance is a remnant of the lost civilization in the Aquvy area (partly excavated in the present). Originally, he was to have had long hair, but we wanted him to come off as a little more cool than that when compared to Bart. So can a bishounen with a pretty boy face be a 'cool and dry' kind of character? That's the concept of Billy. Why a holy man bearing guns? That's what we were asked all the time, and for the gun bearing holy man (shepherd) this is a popular image in some cultures (assuming Billy is a son of God).

From the beginning, [Emeralda] was Tanaka-kun's design along the lines of a [Key the Metal Idol] character, and was created as an artificial life that has no heart. Her clothing was destroyed when she didn't like what was supplied to her in Solaris, at least that's what Tanaka-kun says, and she asked for [the clothes she wears in the game]. Originally, because she was able to transform her body, her face was the result of the personal data collected from Fei and Elly, the desired child they had always wanted (expected looks of their child) - and this might be why she is very precious to them."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~)

Sigurd was designed almost completely by Soraya Saga, and because of schedule conflict Tanaka was only able to draw the official face portrait. Maison was ordered to have an impression similar to that of Batman's Alfred, or the actor Max Von Sydow. Ultimately he became closer to Alfred. Margie was a playable character at a very early stage in development, but the plan was dropped. Takahashi asked for Miang to have short hair to contrast Elly's long hair. "There is absolutely no genetic between her and Elly and as one of 'those awakenings 'as Miang", Tanaka-kun requested a woman reminiscent of Elly around 26 years old or so. He directed her clothing be a grade up from Elly's. The tight skirt gave a more adult look."

The rough designs for the Elements girls were done by Takayama and were not totally solidified. In particular their lower halves' clothing. "Dominia was drawn as a forceful character. Kelvena regardless was a character as service to the boys," explains Takahashi. Not much was expected of Tolone other than she's a cyborg, and she came together quickly. Seraphita was ordered as a 'demi-human' and Tanaka, who loves bunnies, came up with the design.

Emperor Cain was vizualized with a silver skeleton look but ended up in gold color. "The face behind the mask would probably have Ramsus' style of beauty," says Takahashi, although "Ramsus himself was fused with Solarian Kahran, so even though he is a copy of Cain, he doesn't have his exact appearance," Takahashi continues.

From the beginning, the story had centered on a protagonist with multiple personalities, and so it became necessary to make him appear as different persons.

"Unlike Fei, [Id] is really out there. The first drafts were really hard, and after much thought, Tanaka-kun made him much better looking. For the clothing, at that time, Tanaka-kun adopted something along anime lines. When Fei changes to Id, how the clothes changes too is still a mystery to me."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~)

Fei's father, Kahn, came together pretty fast due to Tanaka-kun's love of martial arts movies. A designer from Square's *Front Mission* team, Hamaeda, came up with Hammer's appearance. "Hammer and Rico's relationship was aided by asking the input of FF designer Yashiro-kun. Hamaeda-kun says "crap!" often," Takahashi explains. In the course of writing, Kunihiko Tanaka asked for the addition of an awesome non-playable character and thus Big Joe was created.
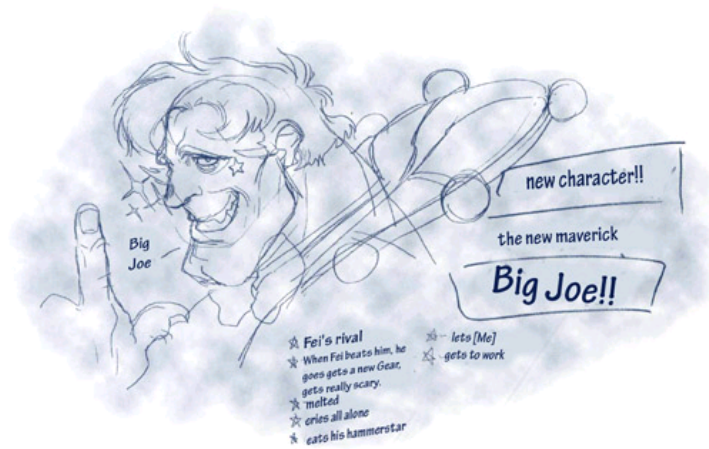
Rather then just CG, the game would incorporate animation scenes into various parts of the game, because "I just like it personally," says Takahashi. "That, and it's hard to turn Tanaka-kun's art into CG (laughs). Anime was the most natural way we could present it." However, Takahashi eventually felt, around the point the 3D screens and maps were completed, that he really wanted to go for 3D instead. For this reason he would only use CG for *Xenosaga Episode I*.

"Actually, when you think about the fact that we were doing a game, there's quite a bit of non-movie animation there. It's something like real-time 3D anime that's being calculated on top of the actual game screen. That was the biggest reason we didn't use CG movies this time. "Xenogears" uses 3D maps, and if it had been 2D we wouldn't have been able to move the camera freely, effects would have to been processed in 3D anyway, and so for those reasons "Xenogears"' engine itself was suited to real-time 3D anime," says Hiromichi Tanaka.

Probably because the story started out as a mystic love story, a major theme of this story would be "tragedy" and "grief." The grief that both Lacan and Karellen felt at losing Sophia results in the central conflict of "Episode V." However, Takahashi would not stop there, but turned it into a main theme that extended to all the characters in the game. All of them experienced loss, grief, or the absence of love in their lives, and almost all of them are motivated by a desire to retain that loss. Ramsus is probably the best example of this, but Hammer's desire to acquire super strength like his friends, Emeralda's isolation for 4000 years, or Stone's hatred of Jesiah for "stealing" the things he desired, are other strong examples. Even Id is revealed to have been trying to form a connection to others through destruction.

For this reason and more, the story playing out in Episode II through V would feel like one part with a theme of Grief, while the degradation of man's consciousness starts with Fear, another theme that wasn't explored, but referenced in the game's genesis mythology:

*"Long ago, humans were with God in a paradise in the sky called Mahanon. The place was protected by the power of God. Humans were never exposed to the **fear** or **danger of death**. However, one day, humans entered God's*

forbidden garden and ate a fruit which bestowed upon them tremendous intelligence and power. God found out about the incident and the humans were banished from the paradise. The prosperous times were over, an era of **sorrow** *and* **hatred** *began..."*

"Humans banished from the paradise were foolish enough to revolt against God. In order to resist the power of God, they created twelve Vessel of Anima, and called themselves gods... For 10 days, 10 nights, the world shed its blood, Mahanon was enveloped in flames. But human strength was no match for God and the arrogant humans were destroyed by God's anger. Only a few righteous men were left on the land. However, God was also tired and wounded. He decided to rest in the deepest depth of the earth. God's rest was long. But eternity is only a moment to God. Since then, the righteous men who didn't revolt against God had to live in the harsh nature by themselves, **being in constant fear of death***..."*

The central human emotions mentioned here are Fear, Sorrow and Hatred, in that order, with a lot of emphasis on Fear. However, Fear - especially the fear of death - was not explored in the game. Likewise was Hatred (Anger) not given nearly as much focus as Sorrow (Grief). Thus the origin of the story in the *Xenogears* universe as "3 parts" may very well have had its origin in its desire to thoroughly explore these 3 central themes of Fear, Sorrow, and Hatred. As a starting point, the burden of bondage to Sorrow has its root in the darkness of unwisdom, a darkness that often comes with organized religion, but also with self-assertion, lust, hate, and attachment, as the Indian philosopher Patanjali puts it.

Because the game was now only "Episode V," and the plan to release Episode II-IV in separate media fell through, Takahashi ended up putting II-IV into the game as fragmented flashbacks. Karellen was thus introduced rather late, and his story with Sophia and Lacan was only briefly told through flashbacks late in the second disc. Due to scheduling issues a scene of Karellen's first meeting with Elly during the attack on the Penuel convent had to be dropped, same with Citan's childhood tragedy and other scenes, and they ended up only being mentioned in *Perfect Works* instead:

Extract from unused script -- An encounter

"You've come to kill me?"
...She spoke, standing before the man as though not afraid of her own death.
That expression devoid of thought. A face that showed him as separated from all others, alone in the world.
In contrast to this colorless -monochrome- girl, he is stained in red.
Those he had slaughtered, their blood stains his hands even now. And the man bathing in red, instead of answering her question, stands silent, while raising his sword over his head.
"...I see, thank you"
When did his will become a thing that could change? And all for a girl's gentle smile.
And for that brief moment, she shone with color.
How could such a pure and radiant smile exist in this dark world of everlasting hypocrisy and falsity, he thought.
This was the meeting of Elehayym and Karellen.

"Because of scheduling problems, some events were cut," says Tadahiro Usada, designer of monsters and NPC Characters in the game. "And some of them were where an NPC would appear once. And some of those were my designs...Ah well, just bad luck I guess. It isn't the first time (laughs). 'What, another one of my characters~...' is what I said, and I was pretty blue that day. The ones I liked the best out of all, were the Aveh soldiers."

These scheduling problems and the ever expanding storyline would turn out to be the main problem with *Xenogears'* development, in contrast to the rumor that Square cut the budget - an assumption made purely by fans who felt a need to justify the approach taken for the 2nd disc of the game to its detractors, but with no basis in reality. Other fans suggest that disc 2 was always meant to be like that, but this is most certainly not correct, since even *Perfect Works* include an essay from a university student that pointed out that Disc 2 was a flaw:

"...the story in Xenogears wasn't finished. And not just limited to the monologue. It wouldn't have been so simple to make it like the game of disc 1. Probably, it's as finished as it ever will be. Maybe if the players are

aggravated enough, it could be redone in the future."
- Sawaduki You (Xenogears: Perfect Works, 'The Xenogears Experience')

Furthermore, *Xenogears* mainly suffered because the budget was smaller than a *Final Fantasy* title to begin with, and as cited earlier Takahashi actually asked for *more* money, so they could feature stuff like the Anime cutscenes. If fans want to justify the incompleteness of the game, it is more appropriate to point out that *Xenogears* didn't have a very large budget to begin with, and Square didn't much care. Fans have also asked Soraya about disc 2, but she has given no reply, which suggests it was something they resorted to near the end, and that she, like Takahashi, is slightly embarrassed with it:

"It is now 6 months since Xenogears was released. Looking back on it, there are things that appear rushed that I must admit sheepishly, make me a little embarrassed. For that reason, this book is to try and correct some of that. Of course, "What's that, isn't it different from the game?" will probably be heard in anger at some point, but hey cut me some slack. (hah, ha)."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~)

As we can conclude from the above excerpt of Takahashi's comment, it seems he was adding to the storyline and making subtle alterations to it even after the game was released and tried to present a more elaborate universe in *Perfect Works* than that of the game, but we will get back to this later.

Making *Xenogears* had been a great labor, and if you listen to its main staff from that time you can't really blame them for making it easier on themselves with Disc 2.
   "God that was hell," says Yasuyuki Honne, Finishing director. "The current map this time has small subtle traces where light might peek out at the cracks, or be buried deep, and all of these textures were added in. All this had to be considered for the overall effect. Out of all the staff working on this, how many hundreds do you think worked on the map? Things like light and shading and the mixture of both. Ultimately, the image boards for the map, topography, placement of towns, all had to somehow come together. The hardest thing of all was this great endeavor. I can tell you, I'm not going to go through it again. Do you understand how unbelievably huge this world is? How we ever finished it is still a mystery to me."

Koh Arai (Design finishing - Map Design) said, on a night when he was not sleeping under his desk, "Even though I didn't know if it would ever end, my work was drawing various things and maps, figuring out modeling textures, tying together characters and events, and slowly but surely the game began to come together... It was tough and only a total nut would have gone through it. Something new sprang up from nothing...So this is how it's born, hm? It was really rough on the girls. I am a man you know."

Chief Artistic Designer Koh Arai (1998)

Mecha designer Yoshinori Ogura said "If you speak of the difficult labor of mecha design, how about design on transforming mechs? 'Here it must pull inward and revolve out...' 'Screw in tighter until flush with mount... make it bigger here...' are the kinds of instructions, it's gotta stretch here, make it go all the way over there, it gives you the feeling of making a puzzle after a bunch of mistakes one after another. However the result in terms of the transforming mechs came out pretty good, I think."
   While Gear designer Junya Ishigaki recalls, "It would start with an unclear image, and with very hard work on my part finally come together. Looking back on it now, I thought the design-up took a long time, and I got a lot of calls from Square to try and pick me up once more many times. I am truly grateful to Square.
   Upon thinking a little further, I've always loved robot design and doing my own CG. This time, I've had a truly wonderful experience. I definitely would love to make another game with this team."

Although it wasn't the first time it happened to him while working on a game, *Xenogears'* composer Yasunori Mitsuda worked so hard on the soundtrack that he ended up in the hospital due to overworking.
   "When I compose for any game, I always first set up a "theme." In this project, I had a story in my mind that was far larger than any theme I had in any game. I was ready for pressure as big as it, though," he writes in the Original Soundtrack Liner Notes. "I'll be thinking about a project so much that melodies will come in my sleep," he says in an interview with Sam Kennedy in 2008. One melody that came to him in a dream was "Bonds of Sea and Fire," Bart's theme.

"The developing took time as I predicted, and I had the most difficult time. I anticipated it. Of course, because I was trying to do beyond what I had done. I often thought "Agh! I can't do this anymore!" followed by "..no! I CAN do this! I must!" and advanced little by little everyday. The sound team supported me alot. The sound programmer Hideki Suzuki and sound engineer Tomoyasu Yajima, recording engineer Takashi Nagashima, and the event planner Masato Kato... Without their help, my director Tetsuya Takahashi, and your letters, I couldn't have done this. Thankyou everybody.
[...]
Creating something out of nothing requires the most power. I haven't done anything but composing, but I think the same thing could be applied to anything. I often wonder "Why am I doing such a painful thing?", just like how mothers bare and grow their children. (I'm a man, by the way) Women who bore children say that they never want to experience the pain of giving birth again, but they often forget their pain as they grow their lovely kids. There is a never ending love in it.
[...]
This game has been created by a huge number of people. In the music field by its own, there are as much as a hundred people involved. It is certainly the biggest project I've ever been involved. [...] This [soundtrack] is filled with such hopes and wishes of many people. Ireland's air, Bulgaria's air, and Japan's air [...]"
- Yasunori Mitsuda (Xenogears Original Soundtrack Liner Notes)

When Tetsuya Takahashi started to direct *Xenogears*, he found something "missing." There was something missing from the image he had drawn in his mind and the computer graphics in front of him. He knew that the lack of physical things such as time, quality, and determination were the reasons, and he had to sadly conclude that that was his limit, which resulted in the game's eventual feel of "incompleteness." However, when Takahashi decided to look at the graphics simultaniously with the music that had been finished he realized that he had also been saved by Mitsuda's music, and "I had to admit the importance of music," he says in the Liner Notes.

"I also realized that I was being supported by many other people. Of course, there were some times when I was betrayed by someone. I could feel other people's feelings as we were desparate in the last moments. Still, I could not have come here without the help of all the people who tried to support me.

Yasunori is one of the people who heavily supported me in Xenogears. Without his music, the game would have been a lot worse than our goal. My determination wouldn't have continued either. This soundtrack holds everything that enhanced me and this project."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears Original Soundtrack Liner Notes)

At some point during development, as U.S. localization was being considered, the now long-time game localizer Richard Honeywood, who was new at the time, felt it was like translating a game in which God was the final boss. The attempt to include overt references to Judeo-Christian figures in the game would cause a few translators to quit - fearing a violent backlash - and prompted a change in the name of the game's final boss, "Yahweh," the terraforming weapon out of control.

Honeywood recalls in 8-4 Play's podcast, 1-Up, in 2011, "It was the project from hell. Translators walked off it. One [reason] was that it was too technical... and....the other was the religious content. It was a game, where, at the end of the game you basically kill God. And - a secret thing - back then, they actually called it Yahweh."

Honeywood was concerned that this bold bit of naming could offend portions of the game's audience, and confronted the development team - with unexpected consequences.

"At a development meeting in Japanese I was saying 'You can't call it Yahweh. You can't do that.' I was getting exasperated, and in Japanese [I said] yabeh-o [the adjective yabai is Japanese slang for something dangerous, unfortunate or otherwise inconvenient], and they all laughed and thought it was the greatest pun ever. And so, the last boss was suddenly called Yabeh. [They] took every biblical reference they could and tried to twist it. One of the translators was a bit worried about this and was like 'I don't want to have fundamental Christians or other religious groups being upset and blowing up our office.' And I guess in the States, at that time, it was a concern. So I had two translators walk off it and I was stuck there by myself."

Yabeh was then given a new name - "Deus" - which became the name for the Strategic Subjugation Weapon in both the Japanese version as well as the U.S. version, though Honeywood did add one reference to "Yabeh" in the U.S. game, during the Raziel computer scene, probably as an inside joke, while the name was completely erased from the Japanese game and *Perfect Works*. However, the rough sketches for Deus in *Perfect Works*' picture gallery have "Yahweh" written on them, which means that when they were ordered it was still going by the name "Yahweh."

"[The hardest project for me to translate] was "Xenogears." The game was ambitious even for Japan. It was the first major title I had to manage and translate myself. Because of its controversial content and the linguistic and conceptual challenges it presented, the original translators assigned to it quit or asked to be assigned to other titles. When it went over schedule, I ended up having to not only direct, but translate and program as well. (Heck, I even burned the master disks!) The team basically left it in my hands as they went on to their next game. I worked around the clock, sleeping in the office for months to bring it to a shippable state. (At the same time, I had trouble with my own religion when the elders heard about the content of the Japanese version.) As a translator, I wanted to respect the game's creators and keep the content as close as possible to the original. Even the non-controversial parts were hard to translate-- all those scientific concepts and philosophies. I look back and wonder how we ever finished it. I guess my naivety at the time was a blessing in disguise. If I knew then what I know now, it would have been a totally different game."
- Richard Honeywood, senior member of the Square Enix localization team (http://www.ffcompendium.com/h/interview.shtml)

"In Xenogears, you had rather mature themes, with an evil 'church' betraying its common believers ('lambs' with Hebrew-sounding names) to an evil empire ('Solaris', a city in the sky whose inhabitants had German-sounding names, who slaughtered the lambs for use as Soylent Green). It was an obvious parable of WWII with sci-fi references thrown in. It also dealt with young priests being molested by the clergy, etc. Although this was fine in Japan (a country that has a long history of being betrayed by religion), the US distributors were trying to make me tone it down. They ended up forcing me to change the name of the 'Church' to 'Ethos', but I was able to get the themes across regardless, by careful rewording," Honeywood explains of some of the other name changes in an interview with *squarehaven.com* in 2006.

Ultimately a ton of material, which was created for the game and can still be found on the game discs, was not enabled. Hundreds of sounds, over half a dozen gears, over a dozen locations, and quite a few items never made it into the game. There's even English voice work that never made it into the game, including an English voice actress for Emeralda saying things like "Humans break easy" and "I'll repair...again."

Other deleted voice work include Elly saying "No good. I can't shoot", Bart saying "Have a taste of the Sig whip!" and Billy saying "Only one more shot... So close!" The debug room has pictures of Babel Tower being destroyed, as well as several deleted lines. It would seem that the game was even more rushed and abandoned towards the end than fans originally realized. But this would not make *Xenogears* any less of an experience.

A fandom is born

When *Xenogears* was released, nobody in the Western world knew who Tetsuya Takahashi or Soraya Saga were, and the game mainly had its appeal as a game developed by Square - the king of RPGs at the time - but wasn't a *Final Fantasy* title, so the game only got attention from a few hardcore gamers at first.

These gamers mainly knew the title from the rumor that Square wouldn't bring it overseas due to its heavy religious overtones, but not much more. The names that were regarded as most relevant at first were Masato Kato and Yasunori Mitsuda, both whom had gained some fame from the success of *Chrono Trigger*, and many gamers thus considered the game a successor to *Chrono Trigger*, where Deus could be likened to a Lavos 2.0 antagonist. Masato Kato was praised for the "script," as the credits mistakenly gave the impression that he was responsible for the screenplay, and soon his previous affiliation with Gainax had gamers try and force a connection with *Evangelion*, which had been gaining much fame in the West at the time. Since nobody knew of the game's origin or its true creators, people wondered how Square - after producing mainly lighthearted games such as *Final Fantasy*, *Chrono Trigger*, and *Secret of Mana* - could suddenly come up with something as serious, complex, and intricate as *Xenogears*. Sure it had several tropes and references to previous Square games, most notably *Final Fantasy VI* and *Chrono Trigger*, but the storytelling had a completely different flavor to it and was unlike anything that Square or roleplaying had come up with before. Thus the theory that Square had adapted someone's anime screenplay, or that Square wanted to copy the maturity, originality and genre of *Evangelion* started to emerge, and has unfortunately persisted to this day with some fans.

This was also a time when Japanese RPGs would finally break into mainstream gaming in the West with Square's *Final Fantasy VII*, the sibling game to *Xenogears* that had been in development at the same time and released only a few months before *Xenogears*. In fact, *Final Fantasy VII* would become the most successful JRPG of all time and made "*Final Fantasy*" almost a household name with both gamers and pop-culture in general, despite having an even worse translation than *Xenogears*.

While not on the level of *Xenogears*, the first PSX *Final Fantasy* would feature a more dark and mature story than

previous entries, much as a result of the passing of Hironobu Sakaguchi's mother. To this day (2012) it is also the only entry in the series to feature a more present day styled world with people in suits, mad scientists, and corporations unwisely exploiting the natural order of things. Themes that are very easy to relate to and the most similar of all the *Final Fantasy* games to that of *Xenosaga*.

Final Fantasy VII's CG anime aesthetics, originality, attractive looking characters, addictive game play and cool, cyberpunk setting, also helped drew gamers to it like moths to a flame, while *Xenogears* looked rather familiar on the surface, if not downright traditional and "cliché" in comparison, with a simpler and somewhat stale battle system. The giant robots also turned some people off the game if they weren't fans of the mecha genre. In fact, Mugitani would reveal in *Xeno Emission E3* design book that the Gears in *Xenogears* received a response of harsh criticism in Japan when they were first revealed. However, opinions would change as time went on and the designs took root when Japanese players experienced the finished product.

Thus *Xenogears* struggled to attract gamers who, if they even gave it a shot because it was another game by Square, often gave up on the game early on. However, it is still thanks to the success of *Final Fantasy VII* that *Xenogears* enjoyed a larger fanbase in the West than it probably would have had otherwise. Even European Square fans imported the game following the success of *Final Fantasy VII* in Europe, despite the fact that *Xenogears* never reached European shores.

The North American game had a different tagline written on the back of the CD case. The japanese tagline had been a brief outline of the subject of the "tragedy" aspect of the game, ending with the line "God only knows," while the American marketing guys simply put "Stand Tall and Shake the Heavens" on the back. While the American tagline became very popular with fans, it also contributed to the confusion about the game's ultimate message, since the message in *Xenogears* appears to be that humans are imperfect, highly flawed beings, but that their weaknesses and "incompleteness" is what makes them capable of love and admiration for one anothers complementary strengths and helpfullness.

The reason why many gamers had trouble getting into *Xenogears*, often giving up before the game even leaves the Ignas continent, may have been in large part due to the fact that the story was character-driven rather than action-driven. Mainstream movie screenplays and mainstream game screenplays, even *Final Fantasy* to a large extent, tend to have action-driven plots. Writers who prefer writing action-driven stories tend to focus on logical thinking, rational analysis, accuracy and tend to rely more on the left side of their brain. These writers approach writing as a linear function and see the story in its parts and they like structure. On the other hand, writers who write character-driven stories tend to focus on aesthetics and feelings, creativity and imagination. These writers access the right side of their brains and enjoy playing with the beauty of language. They are more intuitive, and like to work things out on the page. Character-driven writers see the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts. They are holistic and subjective, and can synthesize new information but are somewhat disorganized and random.

Thus, subconsciously, most gamers expect a story where the Protagonist has an overall story goal, they like to know what stands in the way of achieving this goal and what they stand to lose if not successful. Most RPGs have a clear-cut baddie right from the start, and then pursues this antagonist for the entire game, with a hero that is commonly a soldier or a mercenary of some kind.

  Rather than following this conventional template, *Xenogears* focused on actual *drama* and a main character who was reluctant to fight at all. Not only did the game not have a clearly defined conflict in the set-up, but it seemed as if the game's first tragedy was caused by the central protagonists themselves. Fei had destroyed his village in an out-of-control Gear, while Elly had been responsible for the Gears landing in Fei's village in the first place. For most casual gamers, even fans of *Final Fantasy VII*, this was simply aggravatingly slow and awkward. The gamer would ask himself, "Where is the baddie? What is my goal? Why is Fei so whiny? Why should I continue to play this game? *Does it get better?*"

Martin Johansson of the Swedish gaming magazine *Super PLAY*, who interviewed Takahashi in 2002, wrote in his article "*Viljans Makt*" (*The Power of Will*) that "Tetsuya Takahashi's strange adventure did not follow the established template that Square's games tend to follow. Instead of obsessively hunting the game's villain for hours, Tetsuya Takahashi wanted to provoke players into question themselves and their existence in an extremely complex science fiction saga; part anime, part game. *Xenogears* was a game that never truly fit into Square's repertoire, which was one of the reasons a huge part of the team left for Namco and Monolith Soft."

  Of course, *Xenogears* does have a transition towards an action-oriented plot in the second half of the story, and is actually a blend of character- and action-driven writing. But the build-up is intentionally slow and puts emphasis on developing the characters, the story's themes, the poetic imagery and the story's mysteries and intrigues before it truly starts to take off - which is a trait of some of the best works. Those with the patience to play through the entire game while enduring its long cutscene segments were all rewarded with an enormously satisfying experience, save for a few detractors who couldn't let go of some of the game's flaws.

  Since writers like Takahashi who write primarily about Character Emotional Development have a more random writing style and rebel at anything too structured, it comes as no surprise that the game contains numerous plot-holes, logic gaps and inconsistencies in some of the events depicted. It is likely that while the game's detractors, and even fans complain about these gapses of logic, for Tetsuya Takahashi these gaps can be joked about because they were never the point of the work in the first place. Takahashi's comment about how he doesn't know how Id changes his appearance from Fei in *Xenogears: Perfect Works* is somewhat telling of this, and more examples of Takahashi poking fun at his own concepts can also be found in *Xenosaga's* in-game database.

In addition to this, Takahashi implied that *Xenogears* was primarily written for the female audience, or at least stated that *Xenogears* wound up being more satisfactory for female users, by saying in an interview with *The Playstation* in 1999: "... women think a lot about the characters' personalities and mindsets, so it's easy for me to make games women would enjoy. It's about the organization of the story and the creation of the characters. But instead of the characters' personalities and mental parts, men tend to place more emphasis on their external appearance, so to speak, and that makes writing stories [for them] harder." He also said that "next time I'd like to make something that should be satisfactory for men too," but with *Xenosaga* Takahashi and MonolithSoft would again target mainly female users.

While many gamers had issues, some longtime fans of Square and *Final Fantasy* had a different attitude, feeling that *Final Fantasy VII* was just a messy and convoluted version of *FF VI* that was severely overrated and didn't measure up to its previous installment. A prevailing sentiment among many of these gamers was that *Xenogears* had taken its place as their favorite game, and that *Xenogears* was what the next gen *Final Fantasy* franchise should have been. With *Xenogears* they felt that the genre had finally grown up.

The game was released without any controversy whatsoever. Although a few Christian game reviewers gave the game negative reviews due to the premise of "killing God," many Christian gamers actually became fans of the game and were not offended. Rather, most of the criticism were perhaps from Atheists who felt that the game's religion and concept of "God" in Deus was too far removed from the real world to be provocative, and the potential for a compelling philosophical argument for or against Judeo-Christian religions and "God" was lost in the somewhat clumsy metaphor. After all, in the game, the Church is promoting the theory of Evolution, a "lie," while the truth is a spin on Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* premise - that our ancenstors were alien beings. In fact, with Zeboim looking like the present day world - complete with Christmas trees and a reference to Elvis - many gamers speculated that the planet was supposed to be Earth. At least up until Western fans started translating *Xenogears: Perfect Works*.

As time quickly went on, and as both newcomers and longtime fans of the genre craved more JRPGs in the wake of *Final Fantasy VII*, *Xenogears* finally gained its short-lived, but much deserved momentum due to word of mouth alone. *Xenogears* may not have had *Final Fantasy VII's* eccentric Japanese style and otherworldliness, but the story was ultimately much larger, with much more substance to ponder for those of a more cerebral predilection, not to mention being more relevant to our everyday existence and human history than *Final Fantasy's* more magical escapist fantasy world with quirky characters (even if part *VII* did have a compelling theme of "life" and environmental messages). *Xenogears* was hailed as having *the greatest story of all time*, a strong reputation the game has maintained even to this day in some gaming circles, finally reaching a peak in fandom in 2001-2003. Some fans even went so far as to state that *Xenogears*' story *will never be surpassed*, and to say that many fans were suffering from "*Xenogears* withdrawal" would not have been an exaggeration, as they literally couldn't think about anything else for months. The effect it had had on certain people was unprecedented in fandom of any kind that I've witnessed (at least until 2002 when the American TV show *The Wire* had its fans proclaim it was the greatest achievement in TV history that will never be surpassed). A fan at the time put it this way:

"I have a confession to make. I hate Xenogears fans.
Oh, it's not that I hate Xenogears or anything; it still has a spot near the top of the Azusa List O' Best Games Ever. It's just that in the past year or so, I've found myself increasingly possessed by an urge to stay very, very far away from any Xenogears-related forums or debates, or to engage anyone in conversation about it. I'm somewhat reticient at the thought of even approaching them unless they've proven to me that they're capable of thinking about and focusing on something which is not Xenogears.
Xenogears is their entire existence in a way that it never was for me, even at my most obsessive, and folks, I was pretty damn obsessive back when it first came out. It's not uncommon to hear them spout lines like "I LIVE for Xenogears!" or "Xenogears is my LIFE!" [...] they cling to it like remoras on a shark, to the point where they happily proclaim that they will never play any other game, because they just KNOW that Xenogears was the ultimate gaming experience and that there will never be a better game, ever. Nostradamus would have been impressed at their Amazing Powers of Prophecy. One marvels that Weekly World News hasn't caught on to them yet. I like Xenogears. I consider myself a fan. But these people are a damned cult."
- Azusa (Excerpt from 'The Last Word on Xenogears Fans' rant, 2001)

The online *Urban Dictionary* lists the term "xenogears" as "*The name of the best game ever made. Usually used to describe perfection.*" and "*most intellectually stimulating and emotionally deep RPG ever made.*" Of course, raising expectations like that has made a few gamers disappointed once they finally beat the game, but not to the extent that you might expect. After all, the game wouldn't earn this reputation if it didn't have something to say. One gamer made the following remark on *GameFAQs* in 2009: "This is the only game I have ever played that lived up to the hype. Maybe not "the best game ever" hype, but considering the hype for the story, it is amazing I actually thought this game was as good as it was."

"The value in [Xenogears] *is not whether it's 'boring' or 'fun' but in what you take away with you.*

Players can now broaden the scope of their discussions by using the Internet and their 'persocons'. This story is on a much larger scale than most robot and mech animes.

Usually it is not a light experience for those who have liked it. For those who are not satisfied, what the problem is, I don't know. It's not something you can analyze and logically explain.

Here is where the player and the story come together and make a whole new thing, just like in paradise. Now that's kind of scary, when I think about it. What kind of game pulls out such feeling? And the next game I play, I will be looking for something like this.

Games are usually considered kids' fare, but this is way beyond in scope and imagination, and it utilized technology in sound and graphics that were not possible in a game years ago. It will probably have quite an impact on the players. Many will ask: Why did Xenogears have to be in a game format? What are the players doing with a controller for tens of hours? So some will wonder if it needed to be a game at all.

But the question has no meaning. Xenogears could have been a novel, anime or whatever, the story would have been told anyway. But Xenogears is a game, with a story the player can interact with. This is the most important element, I think.

And even incomplete, that just leaves room for the players' imaginations. Because it is unfinished, many are left with a sense of dissatisfaction with Xenogears. But isn't that dissatisfaction the actual meaning of Xenogears?"
- Sawaduki You (Xenogears: Perfect Works, 'The Xenogears Experience')

Tetsuya Takahashi eventually peaked fans' interest after being repeatedly pointed out as the game's director who came up with the scenario, while Soraya Saga had begun talking directly to Western fans on the internet, kindly answering their questions about the game. Her original handle was Kanon Saga, then Clio Saga and finally Soraya Saga, SORA+YA, and Solaryear (the latter on *deviantART* and seems to be a pun on the similarity between the pronunciation of "Soraya" with that of a Japanese person's pronunciation of "solar year" in English).

Yggdrasil's Periscope Club was a Yahoo messageboard founded by Soraya Saga in 1999 that lasted until about the summer of 2000, but not many *Xenogears* fans knew about that place. I for one didn't, and I have had to rely on people's stories from that place for this and other articles. However, more than one person who visited that place has verified the information I provide as being genuine.

"Like any message board, [Yggdrasil's Periscope Club] *was mainly a place for idle conversation about our current obsessions. It wasn't heavily trafficked, but we had a good core of people to talk to, and regular chat sessions to keep us busy. The nice thing - the reason we were all there - was Mrs. Saga's presence, and her willingness to talk with us and answer our questions about the game. She was very kind, but I was afraid to talk to her much at the time."*
- Amber Michelle (Excerpt from 'Xenogears fandom: A History')

One thing of interest is that Soraya didn't draw art of Elly or include Elly in her doujinshi's (comics) since she was supposedly irritated with Elhaym for being "too stereotypical," something she expressed at one point during the time of *Yggdrasil's Periscope*. While it is understandable, if not likely, that most women will find Elly to be somewhat stereotypical, especially in Japanese society with the "mother" aspect, the fact that Soraya would go on to write the character MOMO in *Xenosaga*, a girl that is just as stereotypical as Elly, makes it seem strange that she would be so hostile towards Elly in particular. It makes more sense that she resented Elly for being her husband's "ideal woman." I am really curious how Takahashi ever revealed that to her. Did he joke about it and she took it seriously, or did he actually never say it and she just assumed or "sensed" it? It seems rather funny that a guy would say to his wife, "This is my ideal woman." Of course she would be frustrated and maybe even envious after that, but Soraya has always maintained that their marriage is peaceful.

In 2013, Soraya would say that she don't remember ever drawing Sophia, stating "I'm not good at drawing young and beautiful girls (particularly late teens). :p" Following that comment, however, she did draw a sketch of what looked like Sophia in a wedding dress.

In Japan, Takahashi would interact with fans by writing for a column titled *Xenolith* featured in THE PLAYSTATION magazine. In one of his messages he says: "When the reactions from the fans started coming in and we kept climbing on the user rankings in the game magazines, that became a big inspiration to me. But the thing that made me happiest was being allowed to write regularly for this magazine in the column called *Hakoere* (*Xenolith* at the time). It gave me an opportunity to interact with the fans in a back-and-forth manner about a work that was originally a one-way process, and that made me extremely happy as a creator. I was taken aback many times by the correspondence and letters [fans] sent in. It is a *Xenogears* that reflects the various viewpoints of the fans. That's where Fei, Bart and the others lived, with various facial expressions and shining with the color of a painter's heart. It's where the characters of my own work show facial expressions even I haven't seen before... In some ways, it's also a bit embarrassing, but again, it was a fresh [perspective] that left a deep impression on me. With everyone's encouragement, and I'm grateful to the other magazines for this [too], we were even able to take first place for software in the '98 fiscal year, which I'm very happy about."
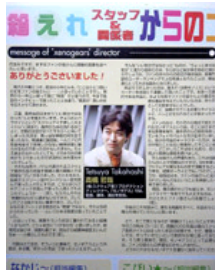
Message from Takahashi, THE PLAYSTATION magazine (1999)

"I'd say that was a fairly good result, so I honestly feel this has been a year where I was vindicated by the fans eventually. As of now, I don't have to put on a wig, and my head doesn't pound like a tumble-dryer, which is all thanks to the fans. (Laughs) Inspired by this, in the future I want to be even more active, and hope to be able to devote all my energy towards making new games.

So, you might be thinking about sequels when you hear that, but the situation as of today, right now (March 12) is that it's completely undecided what titles Square will release after the 2000 AD fiscal year. But speaking for myself in a personal capacity, I have a growing desire to make something. That means that right now, as for Xenogears, what's needed might be encouragement from you as fans. Please keep cherishing Xenogears with your usual enthusiasm."

- Tetsuya Takahashi, message of "xenogears" director (March 12, 1999)

Perfect Works / Episode I -- Transition towards "Xenosaga"

The now infamous book "*Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing*~" was the result of more hard work by the main staff of *Xenogears*, "and should make the world of *Xenogears* even more enjoyable" says Ogura in it.
   "[*Perfect Works*] shows a lot of the background of the work '*Xenogears*'. But since it's from the creator and those of the staff, it ought to be very interesting and they worked very hard on it," Usada added.

Working on *Perfect Works* were Tetsuya Takahashi (supervisor), Soraya Saga (short story), Tanegashima Takashi (supervisor), Junya Ishigaki ("Weltall" poster), and Kunihiko Tanaka ("Elly" poster). Yasuyuki Honne, Koh Arai, Yoshinori Ogura, Hiroshi Uchiyama, Tsutomu Terada, and Tadahiro Usuda also left messages on the "Main staff of *Xenogears*" pages. Masato Kato and Hiromichi Tanaka were completely absent.

"The book contains many terms and ideas that were not fully explained in the game. To elaborate, those things that hardly appeard that underlie the events and were the background of much of the story, we wanted to have in print, even to some of the "absurd" official illustrations. We discussed all the particulars at length.
   Also, this is meant to provide a service to those users who loved Xenogears and begged for more details (in the book we took great pains), so that just a little of the episodes and their time periods not shown in the story could be expanded upon. We even went so far as 'what were those things?' and 'what would the readers think?' (Hah, ha). So, the earlier things not spoken of would now be exposed, and this time, please read the book for a greater understanding of Xenogears' world.
As the months line up one after another, please keep looking over it forever.
--------1998 8/12 My house, listening to Snake manshou."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~)

The book begins with an overview, and an introduction to the 6 episodes on pages 2 and 3:

EPISODE V   The Truth

The created world of the game 'Xenogears' is a single part within an infinite flow of history. The time scale involved is more or less 15,000 years. The story is told through six large episodes and this book will closely examine 'Episode 5' in order to guess at its ending.

Due to the large amount of information about this world, it is possible to determine the cause and effect that takes place from past to the present. In order to bring the whole matter to light, we shall consider 'Episode 5'. Having heard the voice of the Producer, the facts that were not revealed in the story will now be known, and "the world's entirety" will be understood. At the time, 'Xenogears'

touched their hearts and its 'truth' is reflected as light from a mirror.

EPISODE I
Era of Interplanetary War
15,000 years before the story, humankind set out from earth and discovered a hospitable planet in the Archer constellation M24. It became known hereafter as 'Neo-Jerusalem' and once again, humans headed for the abyss of space. As a result, humanity enlarged the circle of living things to encompass almost the entire galaxy approximately 10,000 years ago... At the same time, the interplanetary war which had broken out intensified. The universe became the stage for the devastation caused by the winds of war.
The Deus System which appears in the story was developed in this era, but besides this phenomenon, this episode remains shrouded in mystery.

EPISODE II
Time of the Genesis
Sentient life forms began to increase at this time in the world of Fei and the others... Cain became the humans' progenitor and was revered as the divine emperor. Abel, a survivor of the Eldridge's fall to earth, opposed the religion of Cain. Both he and Elly began to grope for a new way of life. This is the background for Episode II as the story advances. At that time, it was thought that Cain's own mission was to bring about the resurrection of Deus, and that he did not seek "humanity's freedom", the main point of the story.

EPISODE III
Zeboim Culture
The stage for Episode III is close to that of the real world, it was the time of an advanced scientific culture. The level of human intelligence had attained its peak, but due to genetic damage, those unable to reproduce began to increase. Using nanotechnology, Kim (Abel's reincarnated form) worked towards finding a way to overcome this, but Miang's plot resulted in his complete failure... Emeralda was born in this era and nanotechnology was revived by one of the three Sages of Shevat, Taura.

EPISODE IV
Solaris War
Approximately 500 years before Fei and the others were born, the continent of Ignas was the stage for Episode IV. At about that time Cain and the Ministry judged humanity to be at the last stage of evolution, and Solaris was founded. This was done to establish direct control of the surface. But the humans of this era had evolved the ability to use ether and the surface war against Solaris reached an extreme. Before long, this great war of 500 years ago came to an end in what came to be known as the Day of Collapse.

EPISODE V
Xenogears
The resurrection of Deus having been held back until the year 9999, the story's hero, Fei lives in the frontier village of Lahan. Little is known of Fei's origin or why he lived in the village, but 3 years ago he was carried to house of the Lahan village chief, Lee by a masked man. At the time, Fei's mind and body had both been greatly damaged and until now, he had lost nearly his entire memory. Then came the event of the attack on Lahan... This event becomes the trigger which will set Fei on the path of fate.

EPISODE VI
While the time directly after Episode 5 is pivotal, at this point in time it remains an completely undeveloped Episode. It is only known to be the terminal point of Xenogears' world, and from now on the revealing of information is held back.

Bellow this synopsis is a column designated "Director Tetsuya Takahashi's comments," suggesting that the Episode descriptions above may not be Takahashi's own words. The person who wrote it writes "Having heard the voice of the Producer..." - which likely refers to something like the study groups Takahashi also did for *Xenosaga* to explain the story and his vision to the staff. The actual writer of most of *Perfect Works* appears to be "Yugai Kaisha Estif." So while the opening page said that "The story is told through six large episodes," because that's how Yugai interpreted Takahashi's talk about the story, Takahashi *himself* says in his "director's comment" that this universe is more akin to being divided into 3 main parts, with Episode II, III and IV being heavily marginalized as merely belonging to "Episode V," as has been cited earlier. But I will cite it again since it has a tendency to elude people:

"The world of Xenogears is divided into 3 large parts. The first takes place approximately 5000 years ahead of our time, with the vast universe as its stage. The second is the game itself, the story of Fei and the others' world. The third part tells of what comes after."
- *Tetsuya Takahashi (Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~)*

The 3 large parts of the *Xenogears* universe.

Xenogears: Perfect Works is essentially a book where the story is in the progress of being transitioned from what was "*Xenogears*," to what would become "*Xenosaga*." "EPISODE I" of *Xenogears* was not written yet, but Tetsuya Takahashi had a rough idea of what he wanted to tell, and outlined a few core ideas in the History chapter. Major conceptual ideas for *Xenosaga*, even the main theme of "fear," would be established or hinted at here. However, since they were very much concepts for *Xenogears*, it can't be said that they are exclusively "*Xenosaga*." But before we make that comparison, we should recognize a few differences between *Perfect Works* and the game. Inconsistencies within *Xenogears* itself, so to speak.

"Of course, 'What's that, isn't it different from the game?' will probably be heard in anger at some point, but hey cut me some slack. (hah, ha)," Takahashi, as cited earlier, comments in the "Main Staff of Xenogears" section. But what are these differences? The most apparent one is the origin of the Event Changing Engine, Zohar (mistranslated as "Zohar Modifier" in the U.S. version), of which creation had been established in the game as follows.

Official translation:

Wave Existence:

"Long ago, a 'modifier', or a pseudo-perpetual, infinite-energy engine was created. That engine was named 'Zohar'. That reactor was created by an ancient people from another planet to attain what is considered to be the ultimate energy possible within this four-dimensional universe. Eventually, those people used that same engine to create the ultimate inter-planetary invasion weapon, 'Deus'... Zohar was used as its primary source of power."

Alternate translation of the Japanese original text:

Wave-form Existence:

"Zohar was created in ancient times long forgotten, however the people of ancient times discovered its pseudo-perpetual, phenomenon alteration ability and utilized it to attain the highest output of energy level available in the 4-dimensional universe. Eventually, people created the ultimate weapon, Deus, an interstellar subjugation system. This system was the first entity to make full use of Zohar's energy and it adopted it as its main power reactor."

So, in the original concept, 'Zohar' appeared to be a creation by an ancient people. The Japanese original text is a little more ambiguous, but appears to say more or less the same thing. Likely Takahashi hadn't worked out the details yet, and, as the Zohar was a reference to the Monolith from Arthur C. Clarke's *Space Odyssey* series of novels and films, in which the Monoliths are advanced machines built by an unseen extraterrestrial species, he simply gave the Zohar a similar backstory.

In *Xenosaga*, the Zohar is a door or window to the Higher Dimension and is merely perceived to be an object by human beings, and it was already in existence from the time of our universe's birth. Thus, in *Perfect Works*, the description of Zohar is in a transitory phase from what was *Xenogears'* pseudo-perpetual, phenomenon alteration Engine, to what would become *Xenosaga's* window to the Higher Domain. On page 7 the origin of Zohar is laid out, where it is described that it was originally an eye shaped "Object" that was discovered on Earth in 2001, in a stratum dating back 3.9 billion years, while the Object itself was as old as the universe. The object was therefore no longer an artificial creation, but a mere aberration of nature; an intrinsic part of the 4-dimensional universe that was always in existence. The Object was given the term "Magnetic Abnormal Material," a reference to the *2001* Monoliths' "Tycho Magnetic Anomaly" terms, before given the name "Zohar." Thus a retcon occured, where the Zohar in the center and the rest of the Monolith became separate parts of the Zohar "Engine" in what was a much more convoluted tale. Once Takahashi didn't have to follow the original canon for *Xenosaga*, he simply made the entire Monolith the main Zohar that had existed since the Big Bang.

Another discrepancy seemed to be Abel's contact with the Wave Existence inside Zohar. In the game it is never stated when or where this took place, but above the Drama Diagram on page 203 the following is stated:

In Id's spiritual world, Fei makes contact with Zohar again. And so his memories of his previous life as Abel from 10,000 years before, on the space vessel when the Wave Existence had advented into Zohar and he first made contact are revived.

The scene referred to is the scene where Abel is looking at Zohar and where Elhaym has taken form within it. Apparently this is onboard the Eldridge. Contrast this with what the History chapter states about Abel's contact:

T.C. 4767
During a series of experiments on both systems in NGC 6744 (note 1) three months after Zohar is made Deus' main power source, construction of a space station in stationary orbit is begun at Michtam 04B colony planet which is undergoing colonization and terraforming. That year, during a series of experiments, an accident in which both systems run out of control for unknown reasons occur. (Page 9.)

Original Elhaym
A woman born when the Wave Existence made contact with Abel during a series of experiments on Deus and Zohar. (Page 10.)

It may be that the Drama Diagram were notes written earlier, maybe during the game's development, or that Yugai failed to keep his interpretation of Takahashi's explanation consistent, but it's clear when you compare them that we're looking at an inconsistency; where the contact happened on Michtam 04B during a series of experiments, and not onboard the Eldridge. Some might argue that they do not conflict, but it would be ridiculous to assume that Abel keeps bumping into Zohar, first on Michtam's testing facilities, and again later onboard the Eldridge a second time, and no connection experiments were performed onboard the Eldridge.

Another inconsistency is the number of causalities during 'The Day of Collapse.' Page 16 says 96% of the

population was annihilated, while page 160 says 98%, and page 25 says the entire population was reduced to less than 1%. It also seems as if Takahashi tried to come up with a scientific explanation for the Chu-Chus, other than merely being an aboriginal species of that world, and some parts of the book suggests they may have been created from Kadmoni as an abnormal form of prototype humans, and were later given intelligence during experiments in the era of Zeboim.

Also, according to *Perfect Works* it was nine years ago that Maria escaped Solaris, at the age of 4, but according to a line in the game, Maria claims to have been 5 years old while living in Solaris. In the game she also states that she escaped 5 years ago (which would be at the age of 8) and indirectly suggests that she was brought to Shevat right away 5 years ago. But the book states that she was taken in by her great grandfather Balthasar for at least 5 years before being taken to Shevat 3 years ago. And there may be more discrepancies.

With this in mind, we will now examine where the story of *Xenogears* appeared to be going before it became *Xenosaga*. The mystery of "EPISODE I." The following appears in the book's After Word:

<div align="center">

" The -Time- of the -Gospel- "

</div>

You most likely remember these words spoken by Cain, right?
This in the story was the eternal fate of those humans meant to resurrect Deus -- at least, that's the explanation.
There are other factors here, especially in regards to the true meaning of the words "time of the Gospel", and it's three attendant riddles --
"Why must Deus take the long time of 10,000 years to revive itself?",
"Why was there a time limit on this?",
"Why did the result destroy human beings?"
-- and in regards to these even to the very end the "actual aim was not shown". In addition, the various persons associated with this phenomenon had great differences based on their perspectives.

And so, let's take a look at the viewpoint of the Gazel Ministry's version of the 'Time of the Gospel'.

Their main interpretation is "If God is kept from being resurrected, human beings will also be destroyed..." And this is the meaning of the existence of the Gazel Ministry who were born to be parts for the weapon Deus. Deus -- "God"s parts that would live forever.
So in other words, for them to "live", they must merge with God, and if the resurrection system failed to function, they would also die.
They only wanted to resurrect "God" to lead to the path for Deus' revival. Ultimately, their destruction by Karellen's erasure of them, their lives as Animus, inheritor's by genetics, bringing about the resurrection of "God", in truth would merge many humans as parts with "God" on its path to returning -- thus "recieving life". So, they would avoid their interpreted "Day of Destruction" With this approach.

However, from a different viewpoint, the resurrection of "God" will only bring down humanity to destruction.
And that appears to be the next Miang's (Elly's) viewpoint.

The words spoken by Elly as Miang are as follows.
"When those who have created "God" become hindrances..."
These words mean that Deus' revival program has reached its last stage, so in terms of a hindrance, what kind of hindrance?
If the words are taken at their face value, it could mean the people of the civilization that created Deus. Deus being created as a weapon, the creators might see it as a threat to civilization and destroy it.
Those creators could even take it to a safe place where it could be confined - putting forth the consideration that it might enact a self-resurrection program, this was Citan's determination in the story as well.
However, think about it a moment.
Those people of that civilization at the time when Deus was born, would have been in agreement as well. Because of this, they separated Deus into parts and sealed them, and should have had it on its way to be transfered.
Was it really only a system that went out of control?
Who were the creators aiming at?
Were the ones they wanted to extinguish really Fei and the others?
So here we have, "If God is not resurrected human beings are destroyed" and "If God is resurrected, humans are destroyed." That is the -Time of the Gospel-, and these two opposite viewpoints will be explained further.
Why the opposing viewpoint? Let's see if we can look at it from their side.
Are "humans" likely the only parts to be used as parts for Deus? Due to this merging of the humans who become parts, they gain "life" and those who do not wish this union, those who have been elected to defend god hand out his punishment in the form of "destruction". There is no contradiction thus far with what the Gazel Ministry thought about this and what Miang (Elly) said.

However, Cain was different.

Cain was in "contradiction" to this.
Because he believed the fate as parts for Deus "shackled" humanity, he was against the Ministry's wish to resurrect "God" and desired instead to free "humans" from the binding of "God".
So Cain went through trial and error.
If there was meaning in trying to avoid the path to destruction in "God", the reverse might be "life" apart from God.
And for Cain, Citan and the others represented that possible "new kind" of humans that he had hoped for. And once the resurrection of "Deus" was imminent, Cain knew the odds were high that they wouldn't mutate. Because of this, Cain appeared to let them do as they wished.
Destroying the "curse of the System", and judging they might be annihilated by the "killing acts of the weapon Deus", to make "humans" into "human beings" he thought "God" should be bound, and from the very first years he desired this in secret.
At this time, Cain was freed from the cursed bonds of the System.

Cain was the one who cut the bonds of "God", and became a new central figure for the new "kind", that which is called "Ahnenerbe". He believed "Ahnenerbe" would rescue human beings.
And so Cain's interpreted Ahnenerbe -- Fei and the others destroyed "God". Not only destroying the flesh of God, but the ability to cause spiritual union and the fate of humanity was freed in the fight against Deus when it was destroyed and "humanity" was reborn now free from those bonds.

However, supposing it might not be avoidable, in that case he was against the meaning in the "Time of the Gospel". And at the core of this "God must not be allowed to destroy".
Also, was the will of "God" entirely that of Deus?
In the case that it was Deus' will, "Why destroy all of humanity?" is the question, and maybe someday that will come to light. Those other questions of why it must take the long span of 10,000 years to resurrect Deus, and why there is a time limit, are all unanswered questions.
In any case, it appears the true meaning of the word "Ahnenerbe" the coming man of God, -is the same as the root cause of the destruction of humanity.
The cause of Deus going out of control in the opening is still unknown.
The meaning of "Time of the Gospel". So many mysteries are wrapped up into the world of Xenogears and are still not understood.

(Note that "Ahnenerbe" was mistranslated as "Anonelbe" in the U.S. game.)

There are a number of things that are of interest in this After Word when speculating on where the storyline was heading. One thing that is clear is that Deus needed humans, specifically, as parts. The After Word also poses the question of "why" it needed humans as parts. This is a valid question, since there was no answer to this in the game, even though Deus ended up using Karellen's nanomachines to compensate for parts that were lacking.

Deus had an important mission to accomplish, and had a time limit of 10,000 years in which to accomplish this. Key words here include "humanity's destruction" and "spiritual union." If Deus wanted humans as parts, had the ability to cause spiritual union, and destroyed those humans who rejected this union, then it makes sense that Deus considered selfish human civilizations a threat to all existence. While it may seem like a big leap to make, the fact that the Gazel Ministry thought that "If God is kept from being resurrected, human beings will also be destroyed" suggests that Deus was vital to humanity's continued existence. Even if one dismisses the Ministry as being superstitious with a false religious "myth" about armageddon, the fact that Takahashi states that Deus had a "time limit" means there must be something to it. Thus Deus, as a metaphor for "God," becomes more compelling; because it is now a God that is supposedly humanity's only salvation, which is what compells religious people to believe in "God" in the first place. In the game's universe it has taken the role of Yahweh, which makes sense when Deus originally went by that name. This is further supported by a passage about Miang and the Uroborus ring on page 171 in the book:

As the Great Mother, Miang obstructs the formation of a person's Ego. A person who has been allowed to develop a conscious world (Ego) begins to act according to his own wishes. This is nothing but a hindrance to Miang's goal of leading people to a perfectly complete body. Therefore, Miang became the Great Mother, and eradicated any civilization too advanced (people with a sense of self).

Taken by itself, Miang's manipulation of human beings might be seen as merely a way to control those that would become parts for a mindless weapon system. But it doesn't make sense that she would care whether or not human beings become "selfish" or not. However, when taken within the context of the After Word, we can see that selfish civilizations that have overreached themselves would be less inclined to desire a spiritual union with "God," and would have to be destroyed.

What then, is the condition that threatens the existence of humanity? The "root cause of the destruction of humanity" is apparently the same as the Ahnenerbe, the human beings who wished to be free from the bonds of "God," according to the end of the After Word.

For anyone who has played through the *Xenosaga* trilogy, this question should be rather easy to answer. In

Xenosaga the people who desire rejection of others are the cause of a "collapse phenomenon" where the entire universe is ultimately destroyed from a collapse originating in the 4-dimensional universe's spiritual plane; the collective unconscious. Through the moebius-like circle of cause and effect, the universe is facing dispersal, and thus the universe's collapse has become unavoidable.

Add this aspect to *Xenogears* and this After Word makes sense, since Deus' action would then be the only thing that can prevent the universe from collapsing. From a philosophical standpoint the question then becomes; is the condition that Deus (Yahweh) offers a preferable compromise to death? No wonder Takahashi felt he had enough material and a burning desire to make two more epic *Xenogears* games; one telling a story of human fear and the cause for the collapse of the universe to explain the actions of Deus (EPISODE I) and another one that tells of what comes after the game (EPISODE VI). Let's quote a few key lines from *Perfect Works'* History chapter on EPISODE I:

Long ago, there was an era that came to be called historically "the Time of the Messiah". With the words left behind by notorious prophets to end their groundless fears, humankind faced the next 1000 years as the Third Millenium began.

The year T.C. 16 from the time that humanity set out for the stars marked the time when earth became "the forbidden place" and it is said that about this time it became impossible to enter its zone. Why earth becomes inaccessible no one knows, at least it is thought that no sudden change took place in the region.

Due to an accident of an unknown nature, "Project Zohar" causes the destruction of a planet. MAM is found floating in the nearby region and recovered.

These excerpts all have the concepts of "Time of the Messiah" (Mary and Yeshua's story), "groundless fears" (a main theme), "forbidden region" (Lost Jerusalem), "Project Zohar", and the "destruction of a planet" (Ariadne) - all key ingredients for *Xenosaga*, but here they are intended for *Xenogears*.

In fact, Takahashi and the team didn't waste any time getting together at the company to talk about the next project, and presumably Takahashi wanted to work on a *Xenogears* prequel next, so it figures he must've been enormously passionate about the series at this point. Kato states:

"I heard that on the day that "Xenogears" went on sale, while all of us were supposed to be still on vacation, the entire Xeno-team decided to get together at the company to talk about the next project. At that point, none of us knew which team we would be assigned to yet. Oh, and the reason why I say "I heard" is because I didn't go to the company on that day. I was off somewhere in the southern islands... enjoying my scuba-time (laughs). I also heard that because of this reason, some of the members decided not to work with the Cross-Team and decided to join a different team... Well, that's life I guess. Different people go their own different ways."
- Masato Kato (http://mitsuda.cocoebiz.com/friends/kato.html)

The meeting between the *Xenogears* team members sans Kato was, of course, not just to discuss a new *Xenogears* game, but what the team would do next. However, Takahashi likely started to "recruit" those who would eventually follow him to form MonolithSoft as early as this meeting. Following this meeting, Kato was being asked to direct *Chrono Cross*. The main reason Kato didn't go with others to MSI in 1999 was likely because he was stuck with directing *Chrono Cross*.

Apart from *Perfect Works*, the *Xenogears* team would mainly move on to develop *Threads of Fate* (Tsutomu Terada, Tadahiro Usuda, Makoto Shimamoto, Hiromichi Tanaka) and *Chrono Cross* (Yasuyuki Honne, Masato Kato, Yasunori Mitsuda, Hiroshi Uchiyama, Hiromichi Tanaka). Tanegashima Takashi would work on *Front Mission 3* while Yoshinori Ogura would "disappear" altogether (later working on *Final Fantasy X*). It is possible that he and Koh Arai, Kunihiko Tanaka, Junya Ishigaki and Soraya Saga were all in touch with Takahashi to plan the development of "*Xenogears Episode I*," but later Ogura wouldn't leave with the others to MonolithSoft. Hiromichi Tanaka also remained with Square. (Note that Ishigaki, Mitsuda, Soraya and Kunihiko Tanaka work freelance, so they wouldn't have any trouble moving.)

Xenogears was released in February 1998 and *Perfect Works* in August the same year, so when the book was released the planning stages must've already begun while *Perfect Works* was being put together, which would explain how the EPISODE I timeline could have such detailed information on concepts not revealed in the game. In many ways, the History chapter on EPISODE I and Zohar's origin was a "teaser" for the new game they were going to work on next.
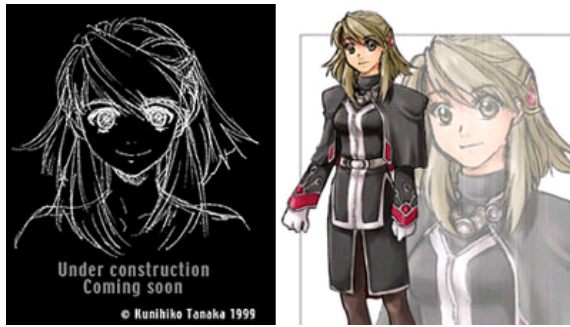
Shion Uzuki concept art (1999)

A few characters would be conceptualized during this time (before the break away from Square). Shion Uzuki was one, and sketches of her preliminary design appeared as early as 1999 on Kunihiko Tanaka's webpage. Soraya Saga's webpage *Harcourt Vega* (later renamed "*Ziggurat 9*") had artworks for the early concepts of MOMO, later renamed to 'Pretty in pink,' and Ziggy, originally called 'Vega' and later known as 'Otto'. Soraya had a character sample sheet in her mail section back then with Vega and this pink android whom he was talking with that wanted to do good deeds so that she could reach heaven and re-unite with her creator - which would turn out to be the story of MOMO Mizrahi in *Xenosaga*. Amber Michelle goes on to talk about it in her article "*Xenogears: A History*" (2004) on her fansite *Xenogears: Guardian Angels*:

"That concept was the rumored character sheet for the 'Xenogears prequel' that we talked about back then. I noticed the dates on the character sheet corresponded with the dates for the Transcend Christ timeline in the Perfect Works, so we started talking about it on the board. (I think the sheet was for Ziggy, but I think the name on the sheet was 'Vega.')"

This concept and rumor of "*Xenogears 2*" eventually ended up on a U.S. gaming site called "*TheGIA.com*" (*Gaming Intelligence Agency*), that was founded by Andrew Vestal, a guy who had previously founded and single handedly run *The Unofficial Squaresoft Homepage*, also known as *square.net*. The guy had serious connections at Square. A fan recalls, "When [Andrew] had problems with his service provider, [Square] let him host his site from one of their own servers for a few months. He unveiled *FFIX* to the world almost a full year before Square even announced that it existed at all. If he reported that Square had begun work on "*Xenogears 2*," it was probably because someone at Square leaked it to him, not because Soraya posted pics at her site."

Of course, friends of Soraya Saga accused Vestal and *TheGIA.com* for getting this info from Soraya Saga without giving her credit and Vestal put up a supposedly rude display on her BBS when he came to defend his article. However, by this time Soraya had disappeared from the internet and not long after this the *Xeno* team would break away from Square and form MonolithSoft.

Unfortunately, while it had been decided that a sequel to *Xenogears* would be made if it sold 1 million copies, in the end it only reached just shy of 900,000, so the executives at Square resisted the idea of making the prequel. "The reason I quit Square was that I wanted to make a series like *Xenosaga* and the executives claimed they didn't have enough money to realize my ideas", explains Tetsuya Takahashi to *Super PLAY* in the 2002 issue.

Tetsuya Takahashi had decided to leave Square to form his own company, Monolith Software Inc (MSI), and did so on October 1, 1999, over a year from when *Perfect Works* had been published. Takahashi and Soraya had been working on the concept and story up till then, when Takahashi finally left with nearly 50 other Square members, including Hiroshi Uchiyama, Yasuyuki Honne, Tanegashima Takashi, Koh Arai, Makoto Shimamoto, Tsutomu Terada and Tadahiro Usuda. Norihiro Takamien (the guy who developed Square's computer animation capabilities with *Final Fantasy VII* and *VIII*) and Toshiaki Yajima (*Front Mission Alternative*) would also follow Takahashi to MonolithSoft, despite not having been involved with *Xenogears*.

Fans were worried that this meant the end for the series, but those fans who were in contact with Soraya Saga suspected that a prequel would happen soon. The very name of the company as "Monolith" Software seemed to be named after the Zohar which Takahashi said was the nucleus of the story. Several months after that, MonolithSoft revealed that they were working on a game which went by the working title "*Project X*" - a PS2 RPG for which they announced they were looking to hire staff. The final title for the RPG would turn out to be "*Xenosaga*."

"A few years ago, Square was already planning to focus primarily on the Final Fantasy series. I personally did not favor the idea, and at the same time, such plans can possibly lead to big losses for the company. So I decided to leave Square and started seeking a company which our team can work with in creating a game that we desire. That company turned out to be Namco, so with a mutual understanding in developing this game, Monolith Software was established."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Interview with GameSpot, 2001)

However, the question remained: Would "*Xenosaga*" really be a sequel or prequel to *Xenogears*?

Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide